RECONCILING THE PAST: H. R. 121 AND THE JAPANESE TEXTBOOK CONTROVERSY

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The Japanese history textbook controversy emerged as an international affair in 1982. The controversy, which focuses primarily on conservative textbooks, concerns itself with events and issues from Japan’s World War II past. The ‘comfort women’ issue is one such topic which protestors argue fail to be recognized in textbooks, thus sparking debate over whether Japan has been able to recognize its responsibility for its past deeds. On 30 July 2007, the U.S. House of Representatives passed House Resolution 121 (H.R.121), a non-binding resolution calling upon the Government of Japan to “formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility” for the Imperial Armed Forces’ involvement in the “enslavement and trafficking” of “comfort women” during the Pacific War/World War II. Representative Michael Honda, a Democratic Congressman from the Fifteenth District of California, was the sponsor of this resolution. Supporting him and this resolution were 167 congressmen who were in favor of a formal apology from then Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzō Abe. But with World War II and the U.S. Occupation of Japan more than sixty years in the past, why, in 2007, was the U.S. calling for an “unambiguous” apology? H.R. 121, and the resolutions that came before it, were an American response to the “memory problem” in Japan concerning its war responsibility and apologies. While H.R. 121 was initiated over a matter of human rights, this thesis will argue that H.R. 121 serves as a formal U.S. demand for an apology from the Government of Japan for its wartime past, citing recent history textbooks as proof that Japan has yet to offer such an apology.
This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Deb and Jim.

Thank you for being such a great influence in my life and for all of your support throughout the course of my studies.
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INTRODUCTION

“…history is as much what historians choose to forget as what they narrate to others to remember.”

- Tetsuo Najita, Professor of History, University of Chicago

History education is an essential part of the curriculum in school systems worldwide. In order to teach their nation’s history, educators around the globe use narratives found in history textbooks. Textbooks not only tell a story or present information about the past, but in most cases, they also serve as a means to help prepare students to become good and responsible national citizens. In elementary, junior high, and high schools around the globe, history is only part of a larger course many nations refer to as social studies. In the United States, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), an association formed in 1921 whose focus is on supporting social studies education, defines social studies as “the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence.” With this definition, according to the NCSS, the goal of social studies education should be:

…to prepare students to identify, understand, and work to solve the challenges facing our diverse nation in an increasingly interdependent world. Education for citizenship should help students acquire and learn to use the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will prepare them to be competent and responsible citizens throughout their lives. Competent

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and responsible citizens are informed and thoughtful, participate in their communities, are involved politically, and exhibit moral and civic virtues.\textsuperscript{3}

In comparison, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT), a government agency responsible for the enhancement and success of educational curriculum of the nation, states that the objective of social studies education is:

To deepen students’ understanding and love of the land and the history of our nation, to cultivate a foundation of knowledge by raising awareness through the use and consideration of various versatile and diversified materials and sources for a broad outlook on society necessary to develop a basic foundation of a civic nature in a democratic and peaceful world. \textsuperscript{4}

Both nations seem to have similar ideals in place for their goals and objectives for history education in their nations, which, is overall, to create good citizens. But despite any similarities, there have been protests from governments, organizations, and citizens worldwide as to how Japan teaches its nation’s history.


For many centuries, historians and educators around the world have debated how history should be taught. Such debates have been kindled by the multifaceted views of history, which historians and educators argue can affect a student’s understanding of the past, depending upon how the information is presented and how the narrative is told. One recent example is how textbook authors in Japan have presented their nation’s history, specifically its World War II history, in its own textbooks since the end of the war. While the MEXT stresses the use of “versatile and diversified materials and sources” in their social studies objective, for over twenty-five years, Japan has had to defend its history to the world because of its history textbooks. The information presented to Japanese junior high school and high school students varies depending upon the textbook used and, therefore, each student may learn a different version of Japan’s past and about their nation. For some students, because of the textbook used in the classroom, they do not learn details about certain events of Japan’s past that have an effect on the world’s views of the nation today. Various wartime atrocities and events, such as the Nanking Massacre, the forced prostitution of comfort women, and the terrible medical experiments of Unit 731, are often omitted from the narrative that is provided to these students in textbooks. The wording and exclusion of such atrocities and events were part of a controversy that ignited worldwide in 1982 over Japanese history textbooks. Since this time, the Japanese government and the MEXT have struggled to improve the inclusion of information regarding these issues in many of its textbooks, but they only furthered the debate by allowing conservative groups to publish textbooks that continue to downplay or exclude controversial topics.

One of the most controversial topics left out of almost all of Japan’s history textbooks is the topic of comfort women. According to C. Sarah Soh, comfort women (often referred to as *ianfu* in Japanese) were usually women or children who were either forced, sold, or deceptively
recruited into brothels throughout Asia during World War II. While many were Japanese, there were a large number of them from other nations, such as Korea, who were made to be a part of the comfort women system as well. The exact number of women involved is hard to determine, but historians and scholars give various estimates, ranging from around 50,000 and stretching to around 200,000.\(^5\) The purpose of the comfort women system was to serve the sexual needs of the Japanese Imperial Army through a means of “sexual recreation.”\(^6\) Where the controversy lies with this issue is over the Japanese Imperial Army and the government’s involvement and knowledge of the coercion of women into the system. One major catalyst to this ongoing controversy was the Kono Statement of 1993.

The Kono Statement was the conclusion of a two-year study completed by the Government of Japan concerning the comfort women system and government involvement. On 4 August 1993, Chief Cabinet Secretary, Yohei Kono, announced that the Government of Japan would extend apologies for military involvement and for the suffering and pain endured by those forced to serve as comfort women.\(^7\) But, the government’s statement did not satisfy many of the surviving comfort women. As a result, in 1995, the Government of Japan founded the Asian Women’s Fund in order to better address ongoing criticisms. The Fund would organize the payment of reparations to surviving comfort women, and along with payment, they were to receive a letter of apology on behalf of the Japanese government from then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.

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\(^6\) Ibid, 213.
Authors George Hicks and Yuki Tanaka have provided background and understanding to the argument over comfort women. 8  Hicks’ book, The Comfort Women: Japan’s Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War, details the experiences of comfort women and what they had to endure. 9  Published in 1995, the book became a part of the growing attention given to comfort women during the early 1990s, largely due to the Kono Statement released in 1993. The last half of Hicks’s book focuses on the attempts of comfort women activists to seek a formal apology from the Government of Japan, as they argued that there had been significant government involvement in the comfort women system. Yuki Tanaka also traces the history and suffering of comfort women in his book, Japan’s Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution during World War II and the US Occupation. 10  Tanaka’s contribution to the literature on this topic is his thorough explanation of the organization of the comfort women system, and his argument that its purpose was to maintain the military discipline of Japanese Imperial Army soldiers. In addition, Tanaka explores the use of the comfort women system not only by the Japanese, but by American forces as well. He argues that the Allied Occupation’s use and ignorance of the comfort women system even before the end of the war only adds to the failure to address this topic as a “crime against humanity.” 11  By exploring controversial issues, Tanaka seeks to tell the story of these women whose voices and stories have not been properly told and explored since the end of the war, especially not by the Japanese themselves. Tanaka divulges the sentiments and feelings of many Japanese surrounding this

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11 Ibid, 87.
topic, which shows that not all Japanese refuse to believe the stories and accounts re-told by
surviving comfort women, nor do they doubt the existence or involvement of the government in
this system.

Another controversial topic not regularly found in Japanese history textbooks is the
Nanking Massacre. The Nanking Massacre is known by several other titles and names, largely
due to the Japanese revisionists’ refusal to see the event as a “massacre.” It has been called the
“Nanking Incident,” the “Nanking Atrocity,” and in more recent historiographical works by U.S.
scholars, the “Rape of Nanking.” In December 1937, Japanese Imperial Army troops entered the
city of Nanking, China, whereupon military discipline broke down and atrocities ensued.12 The
events leading up to this incident added to the chaos and confusion upon Japanese troops
entering Nanking. As the Japanese Imperial Army marched toward the city, General Matsui
Iwane, commander of the Secondary Expeditionary Force (SEF) and the Central China Area
Army (CCAA), became ill and command of the Japanese troops marching toward Nanking
transferred to his deputy, Prince Asaka, only a few days before the attack on the city. This
change in command has been cited as one catalyst for the Nanking Massacre in China. There
were rumors of a “killing contest” between two Japanese soldiers, in which the goal was to see
who could kill the most Chinese along the way to Nanking. This brutality and loss of control did
not change once they entered the city. As a result, acts of violence continued on for weeks,
going unstopped by Japanese military officials. During this time, Japanese soldiers killed several
prisoners of war and committed several acts of rape involving innocent, civilian women and
children, along with acts of arson and robbery.

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12 Joshua A. Fogel, “The Nanking Atrocity and Chinese Historical Memory,” in The Nanking Atrocity 1937-38:
After World War II, several Japanese soldiers and officers were put on trial for this atrocity, but when the Tokyo War Crimes Trial came to a close in November 1948, the Nanking Massacre seemed to fade from popular historical debate. For years, it appeared that the event remained silent in the scholarly world, only maintaining importance in the minds of the Chinese. After the war, most of the evidence that was collected about the massacre came from various civilian and soldier diaries and the memories of those who had witnessed the event. In 1982, the debate over the Nanking Massacre was rekindled when it was reported that the Ministry of Education in Japan requested a change to history textbooks in order to reflect a less negative attitude of Japan’s war record, which began the controversy over school textbooks in Japan. The debate over textbook revisions in Japan reopened the international discussion of Japanese wartime aggression, including the Nanking Massacre.

While Japan and China have primarily led the debate in scholarship and research regarding the Nanking Massacre, many Westerners, particularly Americans, have devoted time to exploring the subject as well. One book that sparked national interest in the subject was Iris Chang’s *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*, released in 1997. This book asserted that the number of casualties and rapes that occurred during this time was in fact higher than most had previously believed. Chang argues that the total number of casualties from the massacre amounts to around 300,000 dead. Japanese conservative revisionist, Tanaka Masaaki, challenges Chang’s argument in his book, *What Really Happened in Nanking: The Refutation of a Common Myth*. In this book, Tanaka Masaaki uses several documents from the

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Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone and compares them with the total population of civilians within the walled city of Nanking before the massacre in order to refute Chang’s number. However, beyond conservative historians and scholars refuting Chang’s work, the Rape of Nanking has received criticism from others as well. Chang’s book was criticized by academics and historians for her “wild assertions,” use of discredited sources, and her faulty explanations as to why the atrocity took place. Many authors, such as Masahiro Yamamoto, have argued that since a fair number of those who have read or will read Chang’s book are not scholars of history, they are likely to take the story as fact and will neglect to further research and analyze the text for themselves.16

Other accounts of this atrocity have been discussed and examined by authors from various nations and backgrounds such as Takashi Yoshida, Joshua Fogel, and Daqing Yang. Specifically, these three authors have examined the Nanking Massacre as being a struggle over historical memory between Japan and China, as well as the rest of the world. Taking this point into consideration, the link between how history is presented in historical monographs, and similarly textbooks, is of great importance to many worldwide who strive to present an accurate account of historical facts and memory of Japan’s past.

Another part of Japan’s World War II history that has garnered much attention for being left out of textbooks is the medical experiments of Unit 731, a division of the Japanese Kwantung Army, which carried out biological warfare experiments on Allied prisoners of war in China and Manchuria. Japanese scientists and medical doctors who were appointed by the military headed these programs. Not represented in most Japanese history textbooks, Unit 731 continues to be a debated part of Japan’s past, receiving attention worldwide from scholars. A

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part of the debate lies in the extent of knowledge and brutality of these experiments which occurred up until the end of the war.

In October 1981, John William Powell published an article in *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* outlining both Japan’s and the U.S. government’s involvement in a cover-up of Unit 731 and the medical experiments conducted during the war. Beginning the most recent discourse on the subject, Powell’s detailed article outlined the story of the biological warfare unit that was established in 1931. The article included pictures of alleged weapons and documents from SCAP headquarters discussing the bacteriological experiments and the use of human subjects. Powell’s report stunned the world and in Japan, it sparked investigations by various newspapers and elicited response from surviving members of Unit 731. By April 1982, the Japanese government acknowledged the existence of the unit for the first time.

Following Powell, British authors Peter Williams and David Wallace published a book-length study of the subject, *Unit 731: Japan’s Secret Biological Warfare in World War II*, released in 1989, seven years after the textbook controversy first emerged in Japan. Considered to be one of the most complete accounts of Unit 731 composed in English at the time, Williams and Wallace trace the origins of the program and explore the involvement of both the United States and Japan in a cover-up of the program after the end of the war. With publication of this monograph, they opened a dialogue amongst historians and explored questions about Japanese conduct during wartime.

Like Williams and Wallace, author Sheldon Harris expanded upon the subject of United States involvement in the cover-up of Unit 731 in his 1994 book, *Factories of Death: Japanese Considered to be one of the most complete accounts of Unit 731 composed in English at the time, Williams and Wallace trace the origins of the program and explore the involvement of both the United States and Japan in a cover-up of the program after the end of the war. With publication of this monograph, they opened a dialogue amongst historians and explored questions about Japanese conduct during wartime.

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Biological Warfare 1932-45, and the American Cover-up.\textsuperscript{20} This book was published after a series of television programs had aired on the topic in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Where Harris expands on Williams’ and Wallace’s work is his use of newly discovered documents to prove the existence of such a program and to describe the work of medical doctors who carried out these experiments during wartime. He uses these documents to reveal their acts and ask why they were not prosecuted during the military tribunals after the war ended. He also argues that Emperor Hirohito was well aware of such experiments and may have allowed them to continue, though he may not have known that human subjects were being used as test subjects. The desire to examine the involvement of the Japanese government with this subject and the failure of both Japan and the United States to prosecute those involved, along with Japan’s current failure to share this part of its past in textbooks, adds to the call by various nations to demand that Japan accept responsibility and apologize for its actions during the war.

Collectively, these historical works serve as a reminder that the memories of such events and incidents have yet to fade from the public’s mind.\textsuperscript{21} Historians contend that history and memory have become entangled, further complicating how historical events are remembered and taught globally.\textsuperscript{22} These monographs listed above, for example, focus on war atrocities while at the same time shedding light on these horrible events; however, their focus remains on the telling of this history and not specifically on why the debate over these issues continue to surface in Japan today. A subject explored by too few is how these events have been depicted in Japanese primary and secondary school history textbooks and how this affects the international perception


\textsuperscript{21} Since these two monographs were published, other authors have further explored the exact experiments and knowledge of such events by both the Japanese and Americans during the war. See, for example, Hal Gold, \textit{Unit 731: Testimony} (Tokyo: Yen Books, 1996) and Walter Grunden, \textit{Secret Weapons of World War II: Japan in the Shadow of Big Science} (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005).

of the nation. One monograph that explores this issue is Sven Saaler’s, *Politics, Memory, and Public Opinion: The History Textbooks Controversy and Japanese Society*, published in 2005.23

Saaler explores the most recent debate over Japanese history textbooks beginning with the publication of the 2001 version of *The New History Textbook* (*Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho*). He explores the idea of this publication being a sign of a revival of historical revisionism in Japan. Saaler attempts to explain how “historical consciousness” in Japan is affected by such textbooks and examines the groups who produce them. In addition to Saaler’s book, Christopher Barnard, author of *Language, Ideology, and Japanese History Textbooks*, published in 2003, examines the problem of history and memory from a different perspective.24 Barnard examined all of the current Japanese history textbooks (the first monograph on this subject to do so) by analyzing the language used within each and how they translate within society. Barnard argues that “different clause relations and different patterns of downgrading and upgrading” cause translators to generate different messages from the language used in textbooks, which can add to the problem of associating textbooks with the views of a society.25 Put simply, these books attempt to obscure the facts of the events within the language of the text. Barnard explains how authors and historians who write and produce these conservative textbooks do so in a manner reflective of the concept of “face theory” as they try to place certain periods and events in Japan’s history in a positive light. “Face theory” (aka politeness theory) is the concept of maintaining a positive image when socially interacting with others.26 Therefore, these books use different wording/phrasing in comparison to other textbooks.

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25 Ibid, 45.
While both Saaler and Barnard explore the issue of textbooks and their ties to historical memory within East Asia, they do not consider international reactions in much detail. The present thesis will focus on one way the U.S. government responded to this conservative revival of historical revisionism, and how historical memory transcends borders. In the case of House Resolution 121 (H.R. 121), the debate over the historical narrative concerning Japan’s wartime atrocities is not only about historical memory, but human rights and responsibility. One central reason Japan continues to experience difficulties with its neighbors in foreign relations is because of how the Japanese have insisted upon wording the narrative of war. An issue like the textbook controversy leads the world to question Japan’s view of its past and fosters reluctance to accept an apology for that wartime past. As a result, nations like the United States continue to push Japan to apologize for these past events through various means, one being H.R. 121.

On 31 January 2007, Representative Michael Honda, a Congressman from the Fifteenth District of California, introduced H.R.121, a non-binding resolution calling upon the Government of Japan to “formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility” for the Imperial Armed Forces’ involvement in the “enslavement and trafficking” of “comfort women” during the Pacific War/World War II. On 30 July 2007, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R.121.27 Supporting Honda and the resolution were 167 co-sponsors who favored a formal apology from then Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzō Abe. But with World War II and the U.S. Occupation of Japan now more than sixty years in the past, why, in 2007, was the United States calling for an “unambiguous” apology? Why was this now a priority for the United States?28

28 Note: Attempts to contact Rep. Honda for an interview were made in January and February 2009. Three letters were sent to his offices in Washington D.C. and California, but as of July 2009, no reply was received.
Whereas past focus of this subject has been primarily on the effects of the controversy within East Asia alone, this thesis will explore the textbook controversy from an international perspective, specifically from view of the United States. In coinciding with the revitalized textbook controversy in Japan in 2001, this thesis will argue that H.R. 121, and the resolutions that came before it, were an American response to the “memory problem” in Japan concerning its war responsibility and apologies. H.R. 121 serves as a response by the U.S. government to the historical narratives being produced in Japanese school history textbooks. Due to the conservative language and descriptions in several history textbooks, H.R. 121 was passed because many Americans argue that these books are proof that Japan fails to accept responsibility for its wartime past.

Nations like the United States argue that the Government of Japan has still not offered a “formal” apology for its militaristic World War II past and for the atrocities committed during this time. The history textbook controversy in Japan in many ways lends credence to this argument. In 1982 and 2001, debates ignited over the presentation and inclusion of particular events and subjects in school textbooks. While in 1982 an alleged word change launched the nation into a debate over revisionist history, in 2001, the publishing of an ultra-conservative textbook, authored by The Japanese Society for Textbook Reform, took this issue beyond East Asian borders and drew the attention of nations worldwide. The expressed concerns over such textbooks were the failure to acknowledge or explain Japan’s role as an aggressor in the war and the exclusion of controversial topics important to understanding Japan’s behavior in the war. However, there are politicians and scholars who would argue that the Government of Japan has indeed presented apologies and services to atone for their past (e.g., the Kono Statement of 1993, Asian Women’s Fund), and that Japan continues to strive today to work towards an amicable
relationship with its fellow East Asian neighbors. Nevertheless, with this ongoing debate over textbooks, is it possible for others to “forgive and forget” and work towards reconciling the past?

Chapter One thus focuses on the origin and history of the textbook controversy in Japan, with special attention to the most recent episode, which occurred in 2001. In particular the conservative text, *The New History Textbook*, is important to examine because it was integral to reigniting so much of the controversy and ongoing debate over Japanese history textbooks, even though since 1982, there have been multiple textbooks that have failed to mention or fully develop a narrative around wartime atrocities and Japan’s war responsibilities. While Japan has struggled to improve its narratives in history textbooks, it still continues to approve ultra-conservative textbooks which present an alternative view of the nation’s past. Thus, nations worldwide, especially those in East Asia, do not recognize Japanese efforts toward accountability and reconciliation as sincere.

Focusing on this world response to the textbook controversy, Chapter Two examines H.R. 121 as an integral part of the formal U.S. response. This chapter will discuss the various versions of the resolution, beginning with its creation in the California State Legislature in 1999 by Michael Honda, only to be adopted for Congress by Illinois Representative, Lane Evans, in 2000, and leading up to its approval in the House of Representatives in the summer of 2007. Through examining the wording of each resolution and the response and comments made from various congressmen, part of this chapter will focus on how the wording changed with each version in order to reflect the current global situation and positions surrounding the subject to explain a world response to the textbook controversy. Also, this chapter seeks to explain how H. R. 121 influenced the U.S. relationship with Japan and how their growing involvement with issues of Japan’s war responsibility continue to be reflective of the U.S. view of Japan’s
contrition. The chapter concludes with a focus on Japan’s response to U.S. involvement and treatment of issues, like the textbook controversy, and how H. R. 121 has affected the worldview of Japan’s ability to own up to its past.

Chapter Three explores why many Americans continue to believe that no apology has been given by Japan, and how Japan has failed to overcome this perception. Where other scholars have focused on issues of collective memory (i.e., memorials and museums), this thesis will focus primarily on the U.S. response to the textbook controversy leading to increased calls for an apology. While many Japanese war memorials and museums, such as the Yasukuni Shrine, and their visitations by prominent Japanese politicians, have perhaps received greater attention by the media and have been offered by scholars as reasons for why the international community has not yet accepted Japan’s apologies as sincere, the ongoing debate over textbooks is another important factor which has yet to be fully explored. Since history textbooks are written to educate the public, they thereby raise concerns for many as to what narrative the Japanese government is advocating, and what is really being taught in schools. By exploring historical memory through textbooks, this chapter will focus on the reason as to why H.R. 121 was spurred by the Japanese textbook controversy and how it became the official call for apology. It will argue that while attempts to reconcile have been made by the Japanese government, the ongoing approval of the publication of conservative Japanese school history

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29 The Yasukuni Shrine is a Shinto shrine built in 1869. It is dedicated to those who have since fought and died on behalf of the Emperor of Japan. While it has operated independently from the Japanese government since 1946, it is the Imperial Shrine representing the Imperial family. It is famously known for inciting worldwide controversy over the enshrinement of various Japanese war criminals of World War II in the late 1970s, and for visits to honor such war dead by Prime Ministers like Nakasone Yasuhiro in 1985 and, more recently, Junichiro Koizumi in 2006. For example, see Andrew Gordon, *A History of Modern Japan: from Tokugawa Times to the Present*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
textbooks prohibits other nations from seeing these apologies as sincere and sufficient and in turn
prompts an ongoing demand for an apology.
CHAPTER 1

THE JAPANESE TEXTBOOK CONTROVERSY AND THE “RE-TELLING” OF HISTORY

The introduction of House Resolution 121 (H.R. 121) came before the United States House of Representatives for various reasons. Primarily, the sponsors of the bill promoted it as a resolution addressing the issue of human rights. In addition, it was an important national security issue that many American congressmen believed to be vital to maintaining a strong relationship between Japan and its neighbors. However, the sponsors did not publicize the fact that this resolution also called upon the Japanese government to reexamine how they presented their history in textbooks. While part of the preamble and part four of the resolved clause of the final version of H. R. 121 mention education and textbooks specifically, this very important piece of information in the resolution never received more than a brief mention in any newspaper article or in any Congressional hearing regarding H. R. 121. Yet, it is doubtful that any progress towards H. R. 121, and any of the resolutions that had come before it, would have been brought forth on such a large scale within the United States had the textbook controversy not been the catalyst for this bill to flourish and develop over the years. H. R. 121 was a direct response to the history textbook controversy raging on Japan.

Japan has been debating about how to “remember” its history as a past militaristic and imperialistic nation since the end of World War II. The atrocities perpetrated by the Japanese during this time are at the center of the textbook debate, which includes comfort women, the Nanking Massacre, and Unit 731. The controversy over how to present these issues, how much detail and what to include or omit, is the argument that wages between conservatives and liberals within Japan. However, the debate jumped beyond Japan’s borders to become an international
affair in 1982, at a time when the political, economic, and societal landscape of East Asia was changing, and as each nation involved struggled to find its place within the larger scope of the changing world. This chapter will examine the origin of the most recent history textbook controversy and provide context for understanding what prompted the U.S. response in H.R. 121. It argues that the textbook controversy in Japan prompted an international reaction from without, culminating in the passage of H.R. 121 in the United States.

Textbooks and Education in Japan since the Late Nineteenth Century

This particular controversy did not just begin in the late twentieth century. It has been developing since the late 1800s when changes were made to how history is taught in Japan. While advances in history education in Japan were made as early as the Tokugawa era, modern civic education in Japan emerged during the Meiji Restoration. In 1871, the government established the Ministry of Education (MOE), and in 1872, the MOE opened an Office for Compilation of Textbooks in order to begin work on compiling a national history of Japan. The MOE published the first textbook in 1872, and between 1872 and 1877, over 130,000 copies of the book were sold.\(^3^0\) The MOE began to control history education sometime in the 1880s, and in 1886, certain textbooks could be used in classrooms only with MOE approval.\(^3^1\) In 1887, the Imperial University in Tokyo established the first Department of History. Before this time, history had never been taught as an independent subject.\(^3^2\) In 1890, the Imperial Rescript on Education was issued, and it instilled a nationalistic perspective on education. This event would have an important effect on students’ education, and more importantly, on history textbooks.

\(^3^1\) Ibid, 55.
\(^3^2\) Ibid, 93.
Over the next twenty years, history textbooks and history education would flourish in Japan as history became part of a “modern academic discipline” and was considered an asset to the future of the Japanese nation.\textsuperscript{33} In 1903, the Japanese government established a national textbook system. However, debate over what history was to be taught and included in textbooks would spark controversy even in the early twentieth century. In 1911, the first textbook controversy erupted in Japan as a primary schoolteacher and two professors challenged the interpretations of historian Sadakichi Kita, whose draft of a new textbook proposed that two separate courts, a northern and southern court, existed between 1337 and 1392 in Japan. Attacks on historians and scholars of history ensued, and according to Margaret Mehl, this controversy has been viewed as “having sealed the separation of historical scholarship and education” in Japan.\textsuperscript{34} With this early controversy, the control of the state over education and textbooks increased the power of the MOE.

Over the next twenty years, nationalism grew steadily within the country and within the MOE, affecting how history was taught and presented in textbooks. In 1937, the MOE issued an ultra-nationalistic textbook for use in elementary and middle schools. The text stressed the importance of the imperial family and the role of the Japanese citizen to create a “new culture based on the divine emperor.”\textsuperscript{35} Between 1941 and 1945, the militaristic and nationalistic characteristics of textbooks increased as the Japanese government sought to justify its actions and ideas during World War II. As a result, upon the unconditional surrender of Japan at the end of World War II, the United States targeted Japanese history textbooks as one way to demilitarize and to democratize the nation. But before the American Occupation could begin to

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, 114.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid, 145.
institute its own changes to Japanese textbooks, the Japanese government made some changes of its own.

At the end of August 1945, the Japanese government ordered militaristic phrases in history textbooks to be “blackened-out” (suminuri). Teachers instructed students to take ink pens and cross out any phrases that glorified the militaristic nation of Japan. However, because history textbooks had been sources of propaganda for the Japanese government and military, this method was very impractical and, instead, new textbooks would have to be created.36 This task required the cooperation of both the American occupiers and the Japanese. Working with the Ministry of Education, SCAP leaders formed a history textbook project in order to compile and create a usable and democratically approved history text to be used by both elementary and middle school students.

Writing for these new textbooks began in the fall with the promulgation of the new “Educational Policy for the Construction of a New Japan” on 15 September 1945. Its aim was to remove militarism from the educational system.37 The plan was to work on creating three new texts, each designed for use at the elementary, secondary, and normal (high) school levels. Passages removed from textbooks dealt largely with the idolization of the emperor as a “divine being” and the mythological telling of the lineage and history of the emperors and empresses of Japan. Instead of building a history around these subjects, a new periodization method emerged, which placed Japan’s history into four periods: ancient, medieval, early modern and

contemporary. It took almost a year for the first postwar history textbook to be produced and approved for use.

One difficulty in publishing new textbooks was that in order for a text to be considered by the Ministry of Education and the Government of Japan for use a draft had to be submitted in both Japanese and in English. While this requirement slowed down the process and prohibited many from authoring texts, it ensured that the American Occupation leaders could also monitor and edit the texts. In early 1946, work on a new history textbook for elementary school students began. *Kuni no Ayumi (Footsteps of a Nation)* was approved and published for use by September 1946. Shortly after, *Nihon no Rekishi (The History of Japan)* was published for middle school students in October 1946, followed by *Nihon Rekishi (Japanese History)* in January 1947. While the last two textbooks were not used for a very long period of time, *Kuni no Ayumi* served as prototype for other postwar textbooks. It is important to note that while historians and scholars worked to create textbooks with this new sense of history, both the Fundamental Law of Education and School Education Law would outline for the next few generations the educational ideologies of a new Japan.

Enacted on 31 March 1947, the Fundamental Law of Education defined what the aim, principle, and goals of education were to be in Japan. This document was co-authored with SCAP leaders, specifically the Civil Information and Education section of SCAP Headquarters, and in accordance with the new Constitution. In the explanation of educational principle, the Fundamental Law of Education states that the Government of Japan will, in unity with the aim, “contribute to the creation and development of culture by mutual esteem and cooperation,

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respecting academic freedom, having a regard to actual life and cultivating a spontaneous spirit.” Teachers and administrators of schools were held to this principle, especially in subjects like political, social, and religious education. In addition to the philosophies and goals highlighted in the Fundamental Law of Education, the School Law of Education outlined the meaning of education. It included the definitions of what would be considered a public school versus a private school, and most importantly, how textbooks should be screened and thus approved or denied for use. According to the School Law of Education, at the elementary level, textbooks approved for use in the classroom were those which were “authorized by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, or textbooks, copyrighted by the said Ministry.” However, there is no mention of textbook restrictions for middle or high schools, which may be the reason why later, we will see that conservative textbook companies targeted their views of history towards this demographic.

After the publication of the first few government textbooks in 1946 and 1947, historians and scholars not affiliated with the MOE began to write their own textbooks. With so many editions of Japanese and world history textbooks being generated, this created competition for the MOE. In the late 1940s, many teachers throughout Japan were using “non-governmental” textbooks, since there were no standard textbooks being used at this time. In 1948, the new Textbook Authorization Research Committee, which was formed from the previous Textbook Committee, handled the certification and verification of outside textbooks. The committee ordered that textbooks intended for use in classrooms must be submitted for review in order to

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43 Ibid, 102.
receive certification for use.\textsuperscript{44} As a result, the amount of outside submitted texts increased, and by 1950, the MOE announced that it would no longer write textbooks itself. Instead, outside publishing companies would publish history textbooks composed by credited scholars and historians. However, in 1953, only three years after giving power to the Textbook Authorization Research Committee, the MOE took over textbook certification. According to Ikuo Amano, as soon as the San Francisco Peace Treaty was signed in 1952 ending the American Occupation of Japan, a “‘counterreformation’ got underway, with the Education Ministry pushing through new policies to revive and reinforce its control.”\textsuperscript{45} At this point, conservatives within the government influenced the MOE heavily and throughout the 1950s strengthened their influence on education and schooling in Japan.

By 1958, the MOE had established its own review board for the approval of textbooks. The review board established a rigid set of guidelines for textbooks to be used in classrooms, preventing not only history textbooks, but other textbooks as well from further consideration and ultimately from receiving approval for use. Until the 1980s, such control over textbooks remained as conservatives within the Japanese government kept their influence within the MOE. Yet, by 1982, the MOE and the conservative party encountered a challenge to their control over textbooks, and as a result, the controversy which ensued changed how the nation and the world viewed Japan as a modern and developing nation.

\textbf{History of the Postwar Textbook Controversy in Japan}

Since the beginning of the American Occupation of Japan in 1945, Japan’s history education and textbooks were part of an ongoing debate, fueled by the varying views of both the

\textsuperscript{44} Thakur, “History Textbook Reform in Allied Occupied Japan, 1942-52,” 32.

conservative and liberal parties in Japan. Conservatives, primarily those involved in or affiliated with the Liberal Democratic Party (the LDP), argue today that Japan appears weak in textbooks, and is often presented as the “victimizer,” which in turn teaches Japanese students to be ashamed of their nation’s past, hurting any chances of building national pride throughout the country. Liberals and progressives argue that Japan needs to be self-critical of its past, and by discussing such issues in textbooks, students and future generations are able to reflect on the nation as a whole in order to create both a stronger national image and relationship with other nations. These two varying views, based on the issue of historical revisionism, have been at the heart of this protracted dispute which continues today among politicians, parents, educators, and students, on both sides of the debate in Japan.

After the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1952, conservatives in Japan began to scrutinize history textbooks. Since that time, many demands have been made calling for changes to history textbooks in order to boost the image of the nation. Demands have been made by government and private groups, as well as individuals, ranging from calls for textbook revisions to more government involvement in the textbook production process. Beginning as early as 1955, the LDP initiated various campaigns to change the negative image of the nation in current textbooks. Pamphlets and articles were published to explain how textbooks being produced were “unsatisfactory.” One such pamphlet was titled, “Deplorable Problems Concerning Textbooks.” The mission of the LDP was to reach the public, versus the educators, in order to make their case for change. If they could persuade the parents, they could persuade the MOE to take into consideration their urge to develop guidelines and requirements for history

46 Ibid, 155.
textbook content. In 1956, the LDP presented a textbook bill before the Japanese Diet calling for complete control by the MOE over the textbook screening process, which would allow the MOE the right to deny or approve any textbook. The Diet, however, ultimately rejected this bill. Even though the bill did not pass, conservatives did not give up trying to exert control over the history presented in textbooks.

In 1958, the MOE itself decided to strengthen its screening criteria by adopting a nationwide mandatory curriculum for textbook content, while creating a review board whose primary responsibility would be to check each text for the set requirements. After the establishment of the review board, several texts were rejected by the MOE. They claimed that until authors could make “necessary revisions” in order to eliminate negative references to wartime history, their textbooks would not be published. As a result of the LDP influence in this event, school textbooks would be predominately infused with conservative ideals and notions by textbook authors for nearly the next thirty years, as more and more publishers gave up trying to write a “passing” history or social science textbook.

As they won political battles against the liberals, conservatives were then able to influence the historical narrative of Japan through government policy statements and various media including museums, and most importantly, education. According to Leonard J. Schoppa, the MOE and LDP saw the centralization of their institutions as a chance to solidify control over Japan’s education policy. Throughout the late 1960s and into the 1970s, the LDP and MOE focused on both tightening textbook criteria and the screening process, as it began

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giving its attention to initiating several new educational reforms. In 1963, the MOE argued that it strived to make available to students a wider range of textbooks, and a broader range of opinions and ideas presented in those texts. But despite this argument, for some, the MOE was not doing enough to present a non-conservative interpretation of Japan’s history.

History teacher and textbook author, Ienaga Saburō, spent much time in and out of Japanese courts throughout the late 1960s and into the early 1980s challenging the textbook revision process. A co-author of the first history textbook published after World War II (Kuni no Ayumi), Ienaga claimed that on more than one occasion the sections he wrote in various textbooks since were being “censored” by the Japanese government due to his “progressive stance” on Japanese history. In a report published by the Japan Teachers’ Union (JTU) in 1975, many textbooks since 1958 had suffered both extreme changes and deletions to their original descriptions of historical events due to the strict examination process, along with complete disqualification by the MOE.53 Ienaga took his case to court and in doing so brought hope to other liberal authors who felt discouraged about ever publishing a textbook.

Ienaga first filed a lawsuit against the Japanese government in 1965, after two of his history textbooks, one published in 1957 and the other in 1962, failed to pass the MOE screening process. When he resubmitted these books after making the suggested MOE revisions, the books failed a second time to be approved. Ienaga made a third attempt in 1963, when one of his history textbooks was considered by the MOE for approval, but in order for it to pass, the MOE demanded that 290 revisions be made to certain areas and passages.54 As Ienaga’s cases against both the Japanese government and the MOE dragged on over the years, his story steadily gained the interest of the public. Other liberal textbook writers took notice of the case and also began to

54 Thakur, “History Textbook Reform in Allied Occupied Japan, 1942-52,” 34.
challenge the certification system, referring to its current practice as “unconstitutional.”  

Public interest in textbook censorship peaked in 1980, coinciding with the resurgence of power of the LDP within the government. As a result, various groups, on both sides of the debate, became more vocal in their demands to have their voice and ideas heard in national history textbooks.

Along with the LDP resurgence of power in 1980, the debate over textbooks swelled into a campaign aimed at the biases of the review and revision process. In 1980, the LDP began the Biased Textbook Campaign in order to enact stricter legislation for textbooks and teaching materials. As part of their larger goal to enact stricter legislation, they wished to prevent textbooks from reflecting specific periods of Japanese history, such as Japan’s colonial and militaristic history during World War II as a wicked or appalling part of the nation’s past. Their argument revolved around the concern over current textbooks being too influenced by progressive thought, which was in turn teaching students to be ashamed of their nation during these “bleak” periods of history. The nationalistic underpinnings of the LDP carried over into this desire to write history with a sense of pride and love for one’s country. The LDP saw history education as one way to instill in students a sense of respect and love for their nation by focusing on Japan’s accomplishments and highlighting great heroes and historical figures. In depicting Japan as the victimizer through vivid and detailed descriptions of wartime atrocities, and by denouncing their role in the war as one of aggressor, conservatives argued that current textbooks and teaching materials were in fact harming the future growth and development of students. They were thus determined to change how textbooks depicted events like the Nanking Massacre and the institution of comfort women.

55 Ibid, 33.
In late 1980s, the MOE began a screening process for new textbooks to be considered for use by the year 1982. Since 1977, the MOE had been using the textbook screening process as a way to assert their views on how history should be presented in textbooks and how Japan’s past should be taught in classrooms.\textsuperscript{57} In the summer of 1982, the Textbook Division of the MOE released the findings of their screening process, which included what textbooks were approved, which had revisions to make and those which were outright rejected. While it was common for the MOE to release its findings concerning textbooks, there had never really been a large public interest in the results. In June 1982, public interest grew, however, when major newspapers all across Japan began to examine the findings and reported that there had been some alarming requests and demands made by the MOE. Three days before results were released to the public, the \textit{Asahi Shimbun} published an article insinuating that the MOE was asking textbook authors to make changes to certain passages that used the word “invasion” regarding descriptions of the Japanese expansion into China, pre-World War II.\textsuperscript{58} The story, which ran on 26 June 1982, stated that the MOE was instead requesting the word “advance” be used in its place. With this story now thrust into the public eye, the questioning of the practices of the MOE began the domestic debate, and it soon evolved into an international debate over history textbooks in Japan.

Since Ienaga’s battles over textbook censorship with the MOE and the Japanese government had gained attention years prior, the Japanese public was not completely surprised by the allegations being made in the press. The reports published by these newspapers failed to mention that while suggestions were made within the textbook council about changing the word “invasion” to “advance,” nothing was ever implemented or enforced. Caroline Rose argues that some of the allegations made by the press about modifications to passages in history textbooks

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid, 284.
were in fact never suggested by the MOE. Therefore, when the Japanese public and newspapers began to make demands for the MOE to acknowledge such deletions in textbooks, they could not in fact do so, since no actual changes took place.\textsuperscript{59} Rightfully argued, Rose points out that any demands for the MOE to either withdraw or remove changes made were not reasonable. This did not mean, however, that the MOE should do nothing in response. In fact, there was a demand for action from various citizens throughout Japan. These allegations over the censoring or “toning down” of the depictions of Japan’s wartime atrocities angered more than just a few people. It offended liberals and some moderate conservatives and, as a result, people across Japan began to question and challenge their nation’s wartime role. From the descriptions of such atrocities in textbooks, and recent protests to such events, many now viewed their past as a militaristic nation acting as a “perpetrator of mass horror” versus a defender of all Asian nations.\textsuperscript{60} Furthermore, the controversy had now gained the attention of groups and organizations from outside Japan, specifically those from South Korea and China, who began to place pressure on the Japanese government and the MOE in order to initiate an investigation into the revision process for textbooks.

In July 1982, a Chinese newspaper, the \textit{People’s Daily Newspaper} (the \textit{Renmin Ribao}) published an article admonishing the distortion of facts that were appearing in Japanese history textbooks. This article was based on information released by both the MOE and several Japanese newspapers. While the article was only a short commentary about the subject, it Nonetheless fueled a debate amongst the Chinese government and the Chinese people.\textsuperscript{61} The response by the Chinese to such allegations and issues over Japanese history textbooks justified

\textsuperscript{60} Takashi Yoshida, “Advancing or Obstructing Reconciliation? Changes in History Education and Disputes over History Textbooks in Japan” in \textit{Teaching the Violent Past: History Education and Reconciliation}, ed. Elizabeth Cole (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2007), 64.
\textsuperscript{61} Rose, \textit{Interpreting History in Sino-Japanese Relations}, 83.
the Chinese government’s stance that these textbooks violated the Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed between China and Japan in August 1978. Their argument was that the changes in history textbooks were in violation of this treaty because the books downplayed Japan’s responsibility for its wartime past. They therefore saw the changing of this word to be a sign that Japan was going against their promise to promote exchange and improve relations with China. For many within the Chinese government, this then meant that the Japanese wanted to return to their past as a militaristic nation. In protesting such changes in textbooks, this turned the issue into a diplomatic matter between the Chinese and Japanese governments. In addition, the matter also spilled over into the public arena in China, drawing various interest and political groups into the debate. These groups called for Japan to present the historical truth and to rewrite the passages containing World War II material.

Like those in China, people throughout South Korea also responded to the news of the alleged word change. In South Korea, at the time the controversy was building in Japan, women’s activist groups were forming. These groups included women whose main goal was to seek justice for comfort women who were enslaved by the Japanese military for sexual purposes during World War II. These groups were particularly offended by the news that Japan was attempting to side-step its own historical past. In fact, victims of various Japanese atrocities began to speak out and tell their stories, both within South Korea, but also within Japan and China as well. This dissatisfaction with history textbooks and Japan’s “memory” of its past, ultimately led to a response by Japanese government officials, once they recognized that this issue was much more than just a domestic affair.63

62 Ibid, 123.
The pressure from both the Japanese public and outside actors forced the MOE and Japanese government to reconsider and to examine the textbook revision/screening process. On 26 August 1982, Chief Cabinet Secretary, Kiichi Miyazawa, made a public statement regarding the international criticisms over the newly authorized Japanese history textbooks. In his statement, Miyazawa acknowledged that the spirit of the Japan-Republic of Korea Joint Communique of 1965, and the Japan-China Joint Communique of 1978 (resolutions which normalized diplomatic relations between Japan and Korea, and Japan and China), should be upheld and therefore should also be a part of textbook authorization in Japan. In order to continue to build friendship and to maintain goodwill between these nations, Miyazawa promised that “Japan [would] pay due attention to these criticisms and [would] make corrections at the Government’s responsibility.”

While the promises of Miyazawa and the Japanese government sounded ideal, there were many skeptics, both within Japan and internationally, who doubted the sincerity of the statement. A New York Times article published on 29 August 1982 indicated that those who were the most upset by this statement were Korean and Chinese citizens, who argued that the revisions to such textbooks would not take place until the mid-late 1980s, which fell short of their expectations for action. Despite the lowered expectations of some, the Japanese government and the MOE did begin to discuss the notion of revising the Guideline for Textbook Authorization.

In November 1982, the MOE revamped its criteria for the screening process and put into effect the Neighboring Countries Clause, which provided textbook authors a framework for writing about certain atrocities and events of World War II, in order to show that Japan was

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working towards maintaining international relations, bearing in mind the perspectives of other nations and victims of such atrocities, when addressing these issues in textbooks. With this clause in mind, publishers and authors of textbooks now had to be aware of what they were printing, and how it was worded. After this declaration, though, Japanese textbook authors were provided more leeway to impart progressive ideals into textbooks in the sense that they now had more of a chance to include details and to be more explicit on the history of such events. As a result, some textbooks did begin to change and eventually included information on comfort women and the Nanking Massacre. Nonetheless, this clause did not do much to alter the course of history education in Japan.

As Claudia Schneider points out, additions made to textbooks after the clause passed were done so “not as reflections of revisions in the general agenda of the politics of Japanese history education” but as “signs of concession in the political push and pull.” It seems that the clause was only to appease other East Asian nations in order to deflect the negative international attention Japan was receiving. In order to maintain its political (and likely economic) connections with other nations, the Japanese government had to take a proactive step to ensure that positive relations would continue. The clause showed both China and Korea that Japan was taking a step to at least prevent future incidents like the 1982 controversy from happening again. While it seemed that the Japanese government had come up with a solution that might appease all those now involved or affected by the content in their textbooks, the controversy was far from over.

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Controversy: Reignited

In May 1986, only a few years after the initial controversy over history textbooks had exploded, the MOE screening council approved a textbook authored by a group called the National Congress to Safeguard Japan. This right-wing conservative group, headed at the time by Kase Shunichi, who had been a former United Nations ambassador for Japan, had produced a textbook entitled, A New History of Japan (Shinpen Nihonshi), which had taken active steps to actually remove the word “invasion” and replace it with those that described Japan’s move into China as one of “strategic advance.”68 In addition, this textbook also downplayed various wartime atrocities while it omitted others. By the end of May, the South Korean government publically condemned the use and approval of the textbook in Japan, directly criticizing the government in Tokyo.69 Soon after South Korea criticized Japan, China and Taiwan joined them in publicly refuting the MOE’s decision to approve such a textbook. In Japan, controversy over the book’s glorification of the emperor, and its portrayal of prewar State Shintō, elicited an unfavorable reaction amongst many in academia and in politics, specifically from liberals and progressives. It was barely four years since the textbook controversy had become a worldwide concern, and this resurgence of the debate thus placed great pressure on the Japanese government to make amends for approving the textbook.

Besides the fact that the recent debate was only four years in the past, the Neighboring Countries Clause, established in 1982, also affected the debate and was another reason why the Japanese government received such a backlash from surrounding Asian nations. In releasing such a text, many argued that the MOE was in fact ignoring their own promise to keep the victims or such atrocities in mind when screening textbooks. The entire backlash to the

textbook led many cabinet members to ask the MOE to “withdrawal its approval of the text,” a request which was denied.\textsuperscript{70} Instead, the MOE submitted the text for further revisions, which involved the collaboration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Japan. Despite these revisions, however, the textbook did not pass the screening and was resubmitted for its fourth and final revision within the MOE. Although the book eventually earned approval after this revision, the book sold poorly, likely due to the attention and backlash that it drew internationally. Tension caused by the textbook grew within Japan in the late 1980s. The tension also spread internationally, leading to the outbreak of protests by war victims and private groups demanding that Japan issue a formal apology and compensation to those who had suffered. This tension would affect the government over the course of the next twenty-five years, until again in 2001, when the focus of the controversy would come back to history textbooks in what Sven Saaler refers to as the “revival of historical revisionism” in Japan.\textsuperscript{71}

As the controversy in 1986 elicited response from those appalled by the omission of such atrocities, by 2001, the inclusion of such events sparked a very different response and new debate. By the mid-1990s, Japanese junior high school history textbooks had increased their coverage of Japanese wartime atrocities as the world watched Japan handle issues over reparations and apologies to comfort women. As a result, in 1996, the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (the \textit{Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho o Tsukurukai}; hereafter referred to as the \textit{Tsukurukai}) was formed. The formation of this ultra-conservative group stemmed from the beliefs of its members that the “liberal nature” of junior high school textbooks and their portrayal of Japan’s role in World War II, and its wartime atrocities, were a threat to the nation.

Therefore, the Tsukurukai made it their primary goal to address the current state of history textbooks in Japan.

On 2 December 1996, the Tsukurukai released a declaration of intent. In this declaration they outlined not only their objective, but also defined what they believed to be wrong with the current state of history textbooks. As they described the current textbooks, they stated that these textbooks contained several historical “inconsistencies,” beginning with the history of both the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War, leading up to the events of World War II.72 The Tsukurukai attacked the current description and views of the inclusion of comfort women into textbooks as “irresponsible,” and called this an example of the “decline of national principles” and a “loss of national historical perspective” that had plagued Japan for the last fifty years.73

Another potential reason for the Tsukurukai’s formation at this time could be linked to what authors Che-po Chan and Brian Bridges describe as a time of soul searching and introspection for many Japanese as fueled by “the prolonged economic recession since the early 1990s and the continued domestic political uncertainties,” which caused many to move toward “simplistic and even nostalgic expressions of national pride.”74 Many conservatives called for the nation to strengthen itself through new governmental leadership, and by enacting a series of political and economic reforms.75 Few followed and many ignored this nationwide call for a revival of nationalism. Those who did follow it, like the Tsukurukai, used more than just the state of textbooks as their rallying cry for change.

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73 Ibid, 3.
75 Jin Linbo, “Japan’s Neo-Nationalism and China’s Response” in East Asia’s Haunted Present, 168.
Japanese citizens witnessed the number of local court cases against the Japanese government steadily increase throughout the 1990s, and also saw the courts continuously rule in favor of war victims and award them compensation. Conservatives and nationalists throughout Japan felt that this was a step in the wrong direction for the nation. In addition, in 1995, Japan established the Asian Women’s Fund and so began a large-scale governmental campaign to issue an apology and to compensate each individual surviving comfort woman, or their immediate family. For conservatives and nationalists, this meant admitting governmental involvement in this matter and weakened Japan’s position as a major world player. These two events were only a part of what the Tsukurukai mentioned as the “decline” of Japan in the declaration they released in 1998. This belief that history in Japan was losing its principles was a sentiment that both conservatives and nationalists had been expressing vocally for years prior to its formation. This made it easier for the Tsukurukai to gain support for their overall project to create a new history textbook which was “appropriate” for classroom use.

In 1998, the Tsukurukai published a pamphlet titled, “The Restoration of a National History: Why Was the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform Established, and What are Its Goals?” with the hopes of gaining the support of the general public in Japan. This pamphlet begins with an introduction that answers questions surrounding the purpose and goals of the Tsukurukai. These questions, which undoubtedly were a response to feedback and negative claims against the group, also dealt with explanations for the “masochistic” view of history that they saw in current textbooks. Here, the Tsukurukai explains this view as a result of the American occupation and the attempts by the United States to expunge Japan’s history and replace it with one which they created. They argue that another reason for this view in textbooks was that China and South Korea were abusing its relationship with Japan in order for them to
come to terms with the past events of World War II.\textsuperscript{76} In addition to these questions, the pamphlet included various essays written by members of the \textit{Tsukurukai}. Such essayists included the current chair of the \textit{Tsukurukai}, Kanji Nishio, a professor of German literature at the University of Electro-Communications in Japan, and Fujioka Nobukatsu, one of the founding members of the group and a professor of education at the University of Tokyo. Each essay added to the overall principle of the foundation, along with questioning and examining postwar history textbooks in Japan and their “usefulness” for Japanese society.

“The Restoration of a National History” was published in both Japanese and English, likely because the \textit{Tsukurukai} was trying to reach as many supporters as possible as work began on their first history textbook, \textit{The History of a Nation}. Their plans to release the book sometime in 2000 meant that they needed the public support for the book in order to show the MOE that such a textbook was desired for use in the classroom not only by educators, but by the public as well. It was the plan of the \textit{Tsukurukai} to release a pilot edition of the book in June 1999 in order to allow the public to preview its contents before publication. According to “The Restoration of a National History,” it is likely that if they released a preview of the book to the public, they would then gain grassroots support for their cause, which could make the approved edition of their book a national bestseller.\textsuperscript{77} This textbook, which would later be renamed \textit{The New History Textbook (Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho)}, would eventually be submitted as a draft to the MOE in April of 2000, and would be the textbook that reignited the controversy in Japan by 2001.

\textit{The New History Textbook} was intended for use in junior high schools and included a more emperor-centered focus on the telling of Japan’s history. After the \textit{Tsukurukai} submitted

\textsuperscript{76} Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, “The Restoration of a National History,” 6.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid, 31.
this textbook to the MOE for approval in early 2000, the book was rejected by the screening council, citing the need for massive revisions to various areas of the text before it could be considered for a second review. Such revisions included adding references to South Korean protests over Japan’s past colonization of Korea and the killing of both Koreans and Chinese after the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923.\textsuperscript{78} After 137 revisions to the text, the Tsukurukai resubmitted the book in March 2001, and the MOE (subsumed under the new Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology in January 2001; MEXT hereafter) approved the book for use that year.\textsuperscript{79} While many people both within and outside of Japan protested the book and its approval, there were others who became interested in using the new text for the upcoming school year.

After its approval, the book was adopted by the Shimotsuga school district in Tochigi Prefecture, located in the Kanto region of Japan. This district, made up of two cities and eight towns, was quick to drop the book only a few months after adopting it. In July 2001, every school board in the Shimotsuga Prefecture withdrew their decision from using \textit{The New History Textbook} in their classrooms.\textsuperscript{80} This decision was likely due to backlash and protests from those within Tochigi Prefecture and the pressure placed on the school boards from those outside the region as well. Despite the rejection of the book in Tochigi, two other regions adopted the book. Both the Tokyo Metropolitan Education Board and the Ehime Prefectural Education Board approved the use of the book in several schools throughout the district, primarily by schools for children who were either or both mentally and physically handicapped. While the number of students at such schools was not as high as mainstream public or private schools, these school districts accounted for the approximate total of 570 copies of the text distributed nationwide.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
which brought the percentage of schools that used the book to less than one percent (approximately 0.04 percent) by spring 2002. 

**Backlash to *The New History Textbook***

While the book did not receive a spot on the bestseller’s list after its release in 2001, *The New History Textbook* did in fact make waves across Japan as debates raged over the book’s “authenticity” and “accuracy” in its telling of history. Whereas many conservatives and nationalists lauded the book for its decision to reclaim the nation’s history, liberals, on the other hand, protested its gross misinterpretation of facts and its exclusion of others. Two very vocal opponents to *The New History Textbook* were the Japan Teachers’ Union (JTU) and the Historical Science Society of Japan.

Established after the end of World War II, the JTU has been known for decades in Japan as one of the most liberal organizations in the nation. It was a large part of the opposition during the dispute over the alleged word changes to textbook in 1982, and it has been a strong advocate of the inclusion of wartime events and atrocities in order to present future generations of Japanese with the “real” and most accurate history of the nation. Thus, when the MEXT approved *The New History Textbook* in 2001, it is easy to understand why this organization was part of a larger group that demanded a recall of the textbook, which would require it to be submitted to further screenings and examination of its content. In addition to the JTU, other groups and organizations comprised this group of early protestors, including The Historical Science Society of Japan. The Historical Science Society of Japan was troubled by the MEXT’s decision to publish the book. In response, they compiled their own list of errors and mistakes that had not been corrected before its release. They published their list of errors and oversights

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81 Ibid, 298.
in a small booklet in order to clear any misrepresentations included in the book.\textsuperscript{82} Both groups were influential in Japan, and their attention to this matter meant that more people all over the nation would focus on this issue as well.

Since the last history textbook controversy occurred twenty years earlier, and for many, had already been acknowledged and dealt with by the government, it is easy to see why the Japanese public was upset over the publication of \textit{The New History Textbook}. They felt that the MEXT was deliberately ignoring the past administration’s policy and efforts to bring Japan into a favorable relationship with its East Asian neighbors. As a division of the Japanese government, many argued that the MEXT represents the nation and its ideals as put forth in the educational system. Since the release of \textit{The New History Textbook} gained attention from nations worldwide, many Japanese wanted to reassure the world that this book did not represent the nation’s view of history. Many Japanese therefore wanted to dispel this notion that conservative and revisionist histories represented the views of the entire nation, and along with the JTU and the Historical Science Society of Japan, began to demand that the book be pulled from use.\textsuperscript{83}

Even after pleas from these groups and the general public, the MEXT refused to recall the textbook for further revisions. Instead, it held it to higher standards in the coming years, demanding that new revisions be made in the next edition. The next edition, however, would not be published for several years. In 2005, the \textit{Tsukurukai} released a revised edition of \textit{The New History Textbook}, but while changes were made in the textbook, they were minimal. In this new edition, there were still events omitted and those which were glossed over or relegated to only a footnote. Comfort women were not included in the 2001 version of \textit{The New History}

\textsuperscript{82} Saaler, \textit{Politics, Memory and Public Opinion}, 60.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid, 127.
Textbook, and therefore were not in the revised edition either. In this first edition, a paragraph that discusses the behaviors and actions of the Imperial Japanese Army in China during the mid-to late-1930s briefly mentions the Nanking Massacre, or as it is referred to in this text, the “Nanking Incident,” which took place in December 1937. The following was included in the text of the first edition of The New History Textbook:

このとき、日本軍によって民衆にも多数の死傷者が出った。南京事件。

Translation: At this time, the Japanese Army killed a great number of people. The Nanking Incident.84

The textbook provides absolutely no detail on this event, except that a “great number of people” lost their lives. It was entries like this that made the book’s protestors call for further revisions. In the 2005 revised version of the textbook, not much changed in the description of this event, with the exception of a newly inserted footnote. In an online translation of the revised version of The New History Textbook, provided by the Tsukurukai, the in-text mentioning of the Nanking Massacre is kept to a few brief and short sentences. The included footnote states that:

At this time, many Chinese soldiers and civilians were killed or wounded by Japanese troops (the Nanking Incident). Documentary evidence has raised doubts about the actual number of victims claimed by the incident. The debate continues even today.85

While this is an improvement from the previous version, it still does not provide much information about the Nanking Massacre, an event which was gaining much attention worldwide since the mid-1990s, thereby prompting many people to call for its acknowledgement in Japanese history textbooks.

While *The New History Textbook* certainly side-stepped and omitted information from both of its editions, it was not the only textbook in the early twentieth century to have removed traces of comfort women and to reduce its information on other war atrocities to a minimum. Since the mid-1990s, history textbooks for both junior and senior high schools in Japan had seen a drastic decline in the information provided on wartime atrocities. Textbooks from publishers such as Tokyo Shoseki, and Nihon Shoseki Shinsha both eliminated or reduced their inclusion of comfort women and events like the Nanking Massacre in their 2005 editions of history textbooks. In 2005, publisher Tokyo Shoseki’s textbook, the *New Social Studies: History*, made up about fifty-two percent of textbooks sold and used in junior high schools in Japan. In this new edition, there was no mention of comfort women, which was a drastic change from an earlier 1997 edition which had briefly mentioned this issue. In regards to the Nanking Massacre, the 2005 edition of *New Social Studies* included only a note which referred to how the Massacre was criticized internationally, but went unknown by Japanese citizens for many years. While this textbook and revised edition of *The New History Textbook* both point out the areas of debate which surround this topic, liberals argue that this information should, nonetheless, be presented in textbooks and in the classroom, thus alluding to the fact that these books still failed to portray an accurate view history. The revised versions of *The New History

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Textbook and others did not offer solace to those seeking to improve the appearance of the nation by turning others’ notions away from the nationalistic and conservative tones of this textbook. In fact, because these textbooks were re-published with very minimal changes, the backlash to this period of “historical revisionism” in Japan between 2001 and 2005 gained attention from outside the nation as well.

Demonstrations led by students in China in 2005 took place as the revised edition of The New History Textbook was released for use. What is interesting about these protests is that they were not only organized in response to Japan and its portrayal of history, but they coincided with a time when Japan began to bid for a United Nations Security Council seat. This is something that China was very much opposed to, since it would increase Japan’s influence and status worldwide and would put them into direct competition with China and the relationship they held specifically with the United States. As Norimitsu Onishi asserts, at the same time that China had been experiencing years of economic growth, Japan had begun to assert itself as a rising economic and political power, which worried the Chinese government. In response, the Chinese government itself began to encourage a rise in nationalism. Perhaps another cause of the reaction of the Chinese government to the revised text in 2005 was that in August, the world witnessed the sixtieth anniversary of the end of World War II. With the re-publishing of The New History Textbook, China and others interpreted this as a sign that even sixty years later, Japan had not moved away from its militaristic past. In fact, the argument that Japan was trying to revive its nationalistic and militaristic past once again resurfaced and further brought about demands for Japan to change and accept responsibility for its past.

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Conclusion

The textbook controversy began with the conservative mindset to reclaim Japan’s history for the nation, and to make it a history of which every citizen could be proud. Since groups such as the Tsukurukai sought to rewrite certain periods of Japan’s history, many argued that the line between improvement and revisionism had been crossed. As Japan slowly fought its way out of an economic recession and returned to the position of an economic and political world power, the release of The New History Textbook and the removal of such issues as comfort women from other textbooks, led nations to fear that Japan was again attempting to reorganize itself under a nationalistic mindset.

The textbook controversy has never been resolved in Japan, and today it continues to affect the relationship between Japan and its neighbors. This can be seen by the protests that continue on today in China and South Korea. Moreover, the actions of the United States, specifically in regards to H. R. 121, also highlights how Japan has not yet escaped the scrutiny associated with the history presented in its junior high school history textbooks. This controversy over history textbooks and education will continue to plague the Japanese as long as the telling of the past remains so contested by so many. As a result, textbook publishers in Japan continue to experience problems with the narratives of their books as the history that so many of them seek to change shares so much in common with other nations. This shared connection includes the history of the events of World War II, along with the portrayal of Japanese militarism and colonialism. For Japan, this struggle is one that seems to be unending since nations like China, South Korea and the United States maintain that Japan must be held responsible for its past, and continue to demand apologies and reparations as the production of conservative history textbooks carries on today.
CHAPTER 2

HOUSE RESOLUTION 121 AND THE U.S. CALL FOR RECOGNITION

The current relationship that the United States shares with Japan began with the Allied Occupation of Japan in 1945. The occupation oversaw the dismantling of both the military and the imperialistic Japanese government and provided Japan the opportunity to establish itself as a newly democratic nation. A result of this democratization carried out by the United States was that Japan was now a self-governing nation to be held to certain standards for its actions and future development. The San Francisco Peace Treaty, signed by both Japan and the United States on 8 September 1951, ended the American occupation. While the occupation was over, and while the United States had been declared the “victor” and Japan the “vanquished,” the United States would not abandoned its new relationship with Japan. Instead, it closely monitored and aided Japan on its way to becoming a rising world power. When concerns over Japanese history textbooks and war apologies became an international affair in the early 1980s, it was only natural that the United States would call for recognition of such issues. The U.S. House of Representatives responded with various pieces of legislation demanding an apology from the Japanese government beginning in the late 1990s continuing into the early 2000s. It would take the introduction of seven resolutions and approximately seven years for the U.S. House of Representatives to finally endorse and amend the need for Japan’s recognition and apology of its wartime past. But why did the United States feel an apology was necessary after fifty years? By examining the evolution of this legislation, we can begin to understand the call for recognition and what influenced U.S. Congressmen to take up such a cause. This chapter will outline the history of House Resolution 121 (H.R. 121) as a response by the United States to the issues over
areas of Japan’s history which have faced scrutiny since the textbook controversy began in 1982. While H.R. 121 was initiated as an issue of human rights, this chapter argues that H.R. 121 is representative of the growing international awareness of the textbook controversy since 2001, and serves as a formal U.S. demand for an appropriate apology in order to show support for those directly affected by the issue.

**Early Resolutions and the Demand for an Apology**

In June 1999, a California assemblyman, Michael Honda (D), introduced Assembly Joint Resolution 27 (AJR 27) before the State Legislature urging the Government of Japan to formally “issue a clear and unambiguous apology for the atrocious war crimes committed by the Japanese military during World War II” and to immediately pay “reparations to the victims of those crimes.” On 23 August 1999, the California State Legislature adopted the resolution after three amendments and with the support of advocacy groups such as the Rape of Nanking Redress Committee, and the American Ex-Prisoners of War. While alterations were made to the wording of this resolution and rearranged with each amendment, the basic message being presented by Honda and his supporters was that the Government of Japan had yet to admit responsibility and properly atone for its war crimes. While the initial proposal of AJR 27 acknowledged California state residents who had been victims of Japanese war crimes during World War II, Honda also intended for it to be adopted nationally by the United States Congress.

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of the final amendment of this resolution to each member of the United States Senate and House of Representatives. As a result, in 2000, Representative Lane Evans (D-Illinois) took an interest in AJR 27 and became the sponsor for presenting this resolution before the House of Representatives.

A representative of the Seventeenth District in Illinois, Evans began work on adopting this state resolution in order to bring it before the House. Much like AJR 27, his resolution also focused on both the Nanking Massacre and the comfort women issue, and advocated that reparations be paid to victims of these events by the Government of Japan. On 19 June 2000, Evans introduced House Congressional Resolution 357 (H. Con. Res. 357), a concurrent resolution “expressing the sense of Congress concerning the war crimes committed by the Japanese military during World War II,” before the House Committee on International Affairs.\(^92\) Being a concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 357 would not be passed along to the president and could not carry any “force of law” should it be amended.\(^93\) Knowing that this resolution would only stand as an opinion of both the House and the Senate, H. Con. Res. 357 called upon the Government of Japan to formally issue a “clear and unambiguous apology” for war crimes and atrocities committed during World War II, and called for reparations to be paid to the victims and survivors of the “Rape of Nanking” and to “women who were forced into sexual slavery,” known as comfort women.\(^94\) In all, the resolution received forty-six co-sponsors, including support from then U.S. Representatives Nancy Pelosi (D) and Dennis Kucinich (D). However,

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Despite such support, it failed to move beyond a referral to the House Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific in July 2000, officially bringing an end to the resolution.

While H. Con. Res. 357 was intended to be an adoption of AJR 27, it is important to note that the wording of each resolution, while similar, also differed from the other. As AJR 27 went through three amendments, it removed, added, and changed wording throughout various sections of the resolution. Amendments made to AJR 27 during committee meetings show changes that removed any sense of anti-Japanese sentiment from its language. The importance of removing such language stressed that neither the California Legislature, nor the United States, blamed Japan as a whole for never issuing an apology. Instead, the final mark-up and approved version of AJR 27 placed the blame on “revisionist” Japanese government officials and leaders whose actions and beliefs about Japan’s World War II history made it hard for an official apology to take place.\(^\text{95}\) By emphasizing such a specific group, AJR 27 had a better chance of being adopted by Congress and a better chance of persuading the Government of Japan to consider this resolution. In addition, AJR 27 added, removed, or changed its wording as any bill or resolution would in order to gain attention and support from the U.S. Congress as an important world issue. Therefore, the final amendment of AJR 27 cited the Geneva and Hague Conventions and condemned Japan’s failure to formally issue an apology and pay reparations due to comfort women and other victims of war crimes. Furthermore, this addition linked the importance of the resolution to a matter of fundamental human rights, thereby elevating its likelihood of adoption by the U.S. Congress.

This addition to AJR 27 was also a part of the resolution introduced by Evans in Congress as part of H. Con. Res. 357 in 2000. The second line of the resolution read as follows:

\(^\text{95}\) California General Assembly, Committee on Rules, \textit{Assembly Joint Resolution 27, Legislative Council Digest}, (August 17, 1999).
“Whereas during World War II the Government of Japan deliberately ignored and flagrantly violated the Geneva and Hague Conventions and committed atrocious crimes against humanity.”96 The inclusion of this statement signals that Evans recognized the importance of making the resolution appealing to other congressmen who may lend their support to an issue which concerns itself with human rights. AJR 27 provides a clear statement to justify U.S. involvement in such a matter of human rights. AJR 27 states that since the United States is “founded on democratic principles,” and because it is necessary to then safeguard human rights “in order to preserve freedom,” it is then necessary that such a resolution be implemented by the U.S. Congress and recognized by the Government of Japan.97 In comparison, H. Con. Res. 357 offers no such explanation as to why the United States should be involved in this issue. This could potentially be a reason why H. Con. Res. 357 failed to garner approval in the House. While forty-six congressmen did in fact support this resolution, it is likely that failure to include such wording persuaded many to ignore this piece of legislation or otherwise decline involvement.

Taking this into consideration, it is important to note that H. Con. Res. 357 also failed to reiterate the section of AJR 27 that placed blame on revisionist government officials and leaders in Japan, and not the entire nation itself. H. Con. Res. 357 does not distinguish between those Japanese government officials and leaders who outright oppose an apology or deny war crimes, and the government as a whole. The failure to acknowledge this difference could have been misconstrued by the Japanese government as blame being placed on the entire nation, and could be seen as Japan “bashing.” Therefore, it is likely that H. Con. Res. 357 did not gain approval of the House and Senate as it was presented due to the fear of harming relations with Japan.

96 H. Con. Res. 357.
97 California General Assembly, Committee on Rules, Assembly Joint Resolution 27, Legislative Council Digest, (August 17, 1999).
In fact, it is interesting that H. Con. Res. 357 did not carefully consider and retain certain sections and statements included in AJR 27. In AJR 27, both Honda and the California Legislature took into consideration potential issues with such a resolution. Sections reflected the issue at large in the first proposal, while by the third amendment, AJR 27 began to take shape as a resolution of international importance. The third amendment of AJR 27, which passed 23 August 1999, was the final version of this resolution and took into consideration the ongoing debate over comfort women and war atrocities within a historical context, bringing to light the Japanese history textbook controversy. Twice the resolution refers to the modification of textbooks by certain government officials and leaders, and the removal of “modest language.”98 Nowhere in H. Con. Res. 357 is there a mention of textbooks being modified or highlighted as part of this issue with Japan. Evans neglected to put this issue into context within this resolution, which could have been one reason for its ultimate failure.

Although H. Con. Res. 357 was not approved for vote by the House, Rep. Evans would not give up on creating a piece of legislation to address this issue before the House. In November 2000, Michael Honda was elected to the House as the U.S. Representative for the Fifteenth District in California. With this election, Honda now had the chance to take an active part in helping Rep. Evans push these early resolutions forward and in urging approval for a U.S. sanctioned demand for an apology from Japan. With Rep. Honda as a co-sponsor, Rep. Evans re-introduced this issue before the House in 2001, under the title H. Con. Res. 195. Taking into consideration H. Con. Res. 357’s lack of detail, H. Con. Res. 195 emerged as a different resolution than before.

Whereas H. Con. Res. 357 focused on both comfort women and war crimes victims, like those of the Rape of Nanking, H. Con. Res. 195 focused solely on comfort women. The

98 Ibid.
resolution’s call for “a clear and unambiguous apology” spoke specifically to comfort women, but also referred to an apology “for other purposes.” 99 Presumably, these “other purposes” refers to the Nanking Massacre and other war atrocities. But why did Rep. Evans change the overall purpose of the legislation to specify only comfort women? In March 2000, a *Washington Post* article titled, “Lawyers Target Japanese Abuses: WWII Compensation Effort Shifts from Europe to Asia” reported that there had been a movement rising in the United States to “pressure Japan to compensate victims” due to a new group of politically active Chinese Americans. 100 With a growing sense of concern toward Japanese war atrocities in the United States, it would seem more logical that Rep. Evans would have kept his focus on both comfort women and the Nanking Massacre in his second attempt to make this resolution an issue of human rights.

In addition to calling for an apology and paying reparations, H. Con. Res. 195 raised new stipulations for the Government of Japan and stated that Japan should “educate future generations about this horrible crime against humanity” (referring to comfort women), and that they “should publicly refute claims that the subjugation and enslavement of comfort women never occurred.” 101 It appears that the inclusion of wording that raises the demand for Japan to “educate future generations” coincides with the section in AJR 27, which refers to revisionist attempts to replace modest language in Japanese textbooks, but there is no direct mention of textbooks as in AJR 27. Despite these new “suggestions,” this resolution failed to elaborate how to educate future generations and what kind of public refutation should be made. Like H. Con. Res. 357, Evans submitted H. Con. Res. 195 to a House subcommittee in August 2001, but it failed to make it to the floor for a vote.

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Two years passed before Rep. Evans once again introduced to the House another resolution calling for an apology and payment of reparations from Japan. On 23 June 2003, Rep. Evans introduced H. Con. Res. 226. In his remarks before the House, he stated that this resolution would call “for Japan to issue a clear and unambiguous apology, render state compensation to the victims, and provide historical accountability for these horrific crimes.”¹⁰² Whereas the previous two resolutions shared similarities and differences, H. Con. Res. 226 was word for word the same resolution as H. Con. Res. 195. In Rep. Evans’ remarks before the House, he mentioned “historical accountability,” but failed to be explicit, yet again, as to how to implement such an objective. The resolution referred to the House Committee on International Relations, but like the two that came before it, never made it to the floor for discussion or a vote.

Later that year, Rep. Michael Honda introduced a separate resolution calling for Japan’s apology. In September, he introduced H.R. 382, a simple resolution that called upon Japan to acknowledge its war crimes, apologize for them, and for Japanese companies that used prisoners-of-war as “slaves” during World War II to remit compensation for “whatever brutality the companies inflicted on those prisoners during their period of forced labor.”¹⁰³ Like the resolutions before it, Honda’s simple resolution acted only as the opinion of the House, should it be voted on and amended. While Honda’s focus was on apologies from Japanese companies and not on comfort women like the past resolutions, he did include some of the same facts and reasoning used in resolutions AJR 27, H. Con. Res. 357, and H. Con. Res. 226, but failed to mention textbooks as evidence of Japan’s lack of an adequate apology. Honda made sure to include a passage on the Government of Japan ignoring the Geneva and Hague Conventions,

¹⁰² Lane Evans, speaking for H. Con. Res. 226 “Calling on Japan to Apologize to Women Forced into Sexual Slavery During and Prior to World War II,” on June 23, 2003 before the House of Representatives, 108th Cong., 1st sess., Congressional Record 149, no.93: E 1325.
possibly in an attempt to keep those in the House focused on this issue as one of human rights. What is remarkable about H.R. 382 is the fact that Rep. Evans did not enlist himself as a co-sponsor of this resolution, possibly because he was focused on his own at the time, which had only been introduced just over three months earlier. Unlike past resolutions, however, H.R. 382 was not passed on to any committee for concurrence or review.

Despite all the defeats that both Reps. Evans and Honda had been experiencing, they refused to give up. Another two years passed until the introduction of H. Con. Res. 68 in February 2005. Sponsored by Rep. Evans, the resolution matched Evans’ last two resolutions word for word. This resolution only gained the support of fifteen co-sponsors and, while it was referred to both the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Relations and the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, in March 2005, the bill failed to make it past the referral process and to the floor for a vote. Nevertheless, in 2006, Rep. Evans revised the bill and presented it to the House on April 4 that year. Unlike his last attempts to pass the legislation as a concurrent resolution, Rep. Evans’ introduced H.R. 759 as a simple resolution, meaning that it lacked the joint support of the U.S. Senate. But Rep. Evans would have to change a lot more about the new bill in order to breathe life into this ongoing issue and to gain the support of his fellow congressmen.

Upon comparing this bill with those previous, H.R. 759 stood apart from Rep. Evans’ past attempts. The first distinction was that in this bill, there was no call for Japan to pay any kind of compensation or reparations to comfort women. The second, and the most important difference, was what the bill requested of the Japanese government. Whereas those that came before H.R. 759 asked for a “clear and unambiguous apology,” this new bill called upon the Government of Japan to “formally acknowledge and accept responsibility for its sexual
enslavement of...‘comfort women,’ during its colonial occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II, and for other purposes.” The wording had changed from demanding an apology for the past to accepting responsibility. While the change was minimal, the call for accepting responsibility for the past was in fact more severe.

In his address before the House on 2 May 2006, Rep. Evans asked his fellow congressmen to take this resolution into consideration. He stressed that “some textbooks” in Japan at this time either minimized or distorted the issues surrounding comfort women, concluding that the hope of the bill would be to “encourage Japan to be honest about its history and to educate current and future generations about the crime against humanity.” This statement implied that the entire Government of Japan failed to accept responsibility for its past behavior during World War II. As a result, H.R. 759 stressed that because “Japanese Government officials, both elected and career, as recently as June 2005, praised the removal of the term ‘comfort women’ from Japanese textbooks,” such acknowledgement and acceptance of past actions was now necessary. This then implies that the reason for the change from demanding an apology to accepting responsibility for their actions is linked to the textbook controversy in Japan, more so than the other legislation that came before it.

In 2005, in response to the current revision of Japanese history textbooks, students and citizens in China led demonstrations against the newly revised and approved Japanese history textbooks. The international attention that recent protests in China received gave Rep. Evans an opportunity to raise awareness about comfort women and the need for the Government of Japan to do something about it. Initially, only one other congressman, U.S. Representative Christopher

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106 Ibid.
Smith (D-New Jersey), gave his support to the resolution the day it was introduced. By April 26, nineteen others would lend their support, and by September 28, it would have a total of fifty-eight co-sponsors. But even with Rep. Evans’ pleas and the growing support it enjoyed, H.R. 759 spent five months in limbo in the House Committee on International Relations before it was brought up in a Committee meeting and before a mark-up session was held in September of that year.

On 13 September 2006, before the Committee on International Relations, H.R. 759 received changes, made by members of the committee, to its preamble and title. Before the changes, the preamble read as follows:

Whereas the Government of Japan, during its colonial occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930 through the duration of World War II, organized the subjugation and kidnapping, for the sole purpose of sexual servitude, of young women, who became known to the world as ‘comfort women.’

During the mark-up session, the committee changed the last half of the preamble. These changes removed responsibility from the Japanese government as a whole and included the direct parties involved with issues such as comfort women. The revised preamble read as follows:

Whereas the Government of Japan, during its colonial occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II, permitted the Imperial Japanese Army to organize, directly and indirectly, the subjugation, and in some cases,
the kidnapping of young women for the sole purpose of sexual servitude, who became known to the world as 'comfort women.'¹⁰⁷

These changes made to H.R. 759, while small, pushed the bill closer toward consideration by the House. More importantly, it took some of the blame off the shoulders of the entire Japanese government and put it into the hands of those from the past. Naturally, there had to have been concerns by the Committee about how the Japanese would absorb wording of the original resolution. Therefore, the wording changed so as to not offend them with this resolution.

Beyond changing the wording, entirely new paragraphs were added. The end of the original H.R. 759 lists the four recommendations of the resolution, including a call for an apology, the need to educate future generations, and for the Government of Japan to “follow the recommendations of the United Nations and Amnesty International with respect to ‘comfort women’.”¹⁰⁸ However, this last recommendation changed in the mark-up session. The following replaced it:

[The Government of Japan] should seriously consider the recommendations of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and of international human rights nongovernmental organizations, such as Amnesty International, in determining what additional forms of redress for comfort women may be necessary or appropriate.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ H.R. 759.
¹⁰⁹ House Committee on International Relations, Various bills and resolutions, 92.
The words “should seriously consider” differ greatly from “should follow.” Whereas the latter implies a direct statement, the first merely implies a suggestion. For this reason, it is clear that this change indicates the Committee’s desire to lessen this critical demand being placed on the Government of Japan. Overall, in the revised version, the Committee changed the language in order to identify more clearly the demands and the expectations of the resolution.

After the mark-up session on 13 September 2006, H.R. 759 was still not scheduled to be presented before the House for a floor vote. On September 29, Rep. Evans addressed the House with his final plea to put the bill to a vote. Remarking that “there had been no visible controversy about the bill from Members of Congress,” Rep. Evans stressed how other bills included in the mark-up session on September 13 had already made it to the floor and had been voted on. Why then had H.R. 759 not been brought forward for a vote? During this session, Rep. Evans promoted the bill as not one of a Japanese, Korean, or American issue, but as an “issue of human dignity,” and for the bill to “die at the hands of the Speaker” would be a personal insult to the comfort women.\(^\text{110}\) Despite Rep. Evans passionate plea, H.R. 759 befell the same fate as all of those which came before it.

In March 2006, a month before the introduction of H.R. 759, Rep. Evans announced that he would not seek re-election that year due to a pressing medical condition.\(^\text{111}\) H.R. 759 would be his last attempt to champion the rights of comfort women. After almost seven years of campaigning for the passage of such a resolution, Rep. Evans left Congress without any success. Despite the failure of multiple versions of this resolution, in January 2007, Rep. Michael Honda

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**H.R. 121 and Honda’s Victory**

On 31 January 2007, only weeks after the House convened for its 110th session, Rep. Honda, along with six other congressmen, including Lane Evans’ replacement, Rep. Phil Hare, introduced H.R. 121. Upon its introduction, remarks made before Congress by Rep. Honda acknowledged that this new resolution focused on the same issue that Lane Evans had been pushing for years. He “commended [Evans] for the hope he instilled in the comfort women,” and for raising awareness about the issue.\(^\text{112}\) Whereas Evans had emphasized the need to pass this kind of a resolution in order to acknowledge an issue of human rights, Rep. Honda urged the House to push H.R. 121 for two reasons. The first reason, Rep. Honda argued, was the lack of a clear and true apology. In his remarks on January 31, he stressed that while many believe that Japan has already delivered several apologies, including statements issued by Prime Ministers, these statements were “viewed by the Government of Japan with unequivocal respect,” thus leading many comfort women to not take these as formal apologies. The second reason was that the resolution should be passed in order to show support for the comfort women and for those among them who were ailing or dying, to help them achieve peace of mind.\(^\text{113}\) Rep. Honda’s

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\(^{113}\) Ibid, E 234-5.
remarks were an attempt to personalize the issue, both for the comfort women, and for the United States, on a different level than Evans had done before him.

While H. Res 121 stated that an official apology was necessary, it was Rep. Honda’s remarks that specified what kind of apology was needed. Citing H.R. 442, the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, Rep. Honda made a connection between the U.S. formal apology to U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry who were interned during World War II and the apology being called for by H.R. 121. He explained that the intent of such a resolution was to “encourage and provide for reconciliation” between the Government of Japan and comfort women. Using this past resolution, Rep. Honda provided his fellow congressmen a tangible example of what a “formal” apology from Japan should entail. This is something that no other resolution before it had done, which is one reason why 167 co-sponsors gave their support to H.R. 121.

After its introduction on January 31, H. R. 121 was referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. A few weeks later, on February 12, Rep. Honda stood before the House and introduced three surviving comfort women who would be speaking before the House Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment of the Committee on Foreign Affairs on February 15 in relation to the bill. Upon acknowledging each individual woman, Rep. Honda reiterated the purpose of H.R. 121 and the need for the Government of Japan to accept historical responsibility for its past. By briefly telling their stories, Rep. Honda was giving a face and a name to ‘comfort women,’ which helped to identify who this resolution would be helping and supporting. This tactic, used by Rep. Honda and not used by Evans, added to the support of this resolution and no doubt aided in its push forward in the House in bringing it closer to being passed. There would be, however, an incident which pushed many congressmen to support the bill, and that came from then Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzō Abe.

114 Ibid, E 235.
On 1 March 2007, Abe addressed the Parliament of Japan regarding the issue of comfort women. At one point during his speech, Abe said that in the case of comfort women, there was “no evidence to prove there was coercion, nothing to support it.”\textsuperscript{115} Abe’s statement quickly received backlash from people all over the world, including those within the United States government. According to an article published in \textit{The Washington Post}, this was just one of many statements made by Abe that led American lawmakers to support H.R. 121. Citing this one statement, it was apparent to many U.S. Congressmen that Abe was publicly backing away from past apologies offered by the nation of Japan.\textsuperscript{116} After Abe’s statement on March 1, H.R. 121 gained nine more co-sponsors, bringing its total to thirty. A March 6 article in the \textit{New York Times} prompted one such co-sponsor to speak before the House on March 7 in response to Abe’s statement.

In his remarks, Rep. Vito Fossella, a Republican congressman from New York, explained that while H.R. 121 could not undo the damage from the past, its approval in the House would signal to the surviving comfort women that nations like the United States understood the importance of asking the Government of Japan for acceptance and acknowledgement of its responsibility for its past. Furthermore, Rep. Fossella stated that an apology “would help strengthen and improve relations between [the United States’] friends and allies in the East Asian region.”\textsuperscript{117} The fact that this apology could not “undo” the past was a necessary piece of information that had to be addressed for this resolution to pass. A public statement like Rep. Fossella’s stressed the importance of the resolution in regards to maintaining relations between


\textsuperscript{117} Vito Fossella, speaking for H. R. 121 “No Comfort for Comfort Women Survivors of World War II,” before the House of Representatives, Extension of Remarks, 110\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 1\textsuperscript{st} sess., \textit{Congressional Record} 153, no. 51 (March 7, 2007): E 487.
Within a few months of its introduction, H.R. 121 made progress. On April 17, the resolution was referred for further review by two other Committees, the Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment, and the Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight. The Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight was never involved in the review of any of the past resolutions. While all of the previous resolutions stressed this issue as one of human rights, only H.R. 121 went before this subcommittee in Congress, meaning that this resolution was being considered by Congress as an important issue involving human rights. Two months later, on June 26, a mark-up session was held to discuss H.R. 121. Rep. Tom Lantos of California and Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida steered the committee regarding the resolution and provided suggestions to the amendment where necessary. Like H.R. 759, this resolution faced changes to both its title and preamble. While the changes to the title were minimal, the alterations to the preamble and to the resolved clause were more significant.

The revised preamble included two new sections which read:

Whereas the United States- Japan alliance is the cornerstone of United States security interests in Asia and the Pacific and is fundamental to regional stability and prosperity;
Whereas, despite the changes in the post-cold war strategic landscape, the United States-Japan alliance continues to be based on shared vital interests and values in the Asia-Pacific region, including the preservation and promotion of political and economic freedoms, support for human rights and democratic institutions, and the securing of prosperity for the people of both countries and the international community.118

The addition of these two sections appears to offer an explanation to not only U.S. congressmen, but also to the Government of Japan to justify U.S. involvement in this matter. For many congressmen, as shown by Rep. Fossella’s statement in March, the way to convince the House to pass this resolution would be through stressing it as an issue of international security and human rights. In describing the United States-Japan alliance as “the cornerstone of United States security interests in Asia and the Pacific,” this amendment to H.R. 121 intended to explain and reassure the need for U.S. involvement with this resolution. In addition, it would be necessary to ensure that relations with Japan would not be harmed by demanding such an apology. With wording that emphasized the current state of relations and shared ideals of both nations, these amendments to H.R. 121 ensured that the resolution would be well received by both governments.

Along with the preamble, the committee changed the resolved clause, which reflected the desire to soften the wording and the demand for an apology in order to maintain relations with Japan. The second provision of the original resolved clause stated that the Government of Japan:

(2) should have this official apology given as a public statement presented by the Prime Minister of Japan in his official capacity.\textsuperscript{119}

In comparison, the amendment put forth by Rep. Lantos and Rep. Ros-Lehtinen of Florida to this part of the resolved clause contrasts that of the original. The amendment states that the Government of Japan:

(2) would help to resolve recurring questions about the sincerity and status of prior statements if the Prime Minister of Japan were to make such an apology as a public statement in his official capacity.\textsuperscript{120}

Upon examination, these seem like minor changes, much like those made to H.R. 759. But like those made to H.R. 759, the amendment to the second provision of the resolved clause for H.R. 121 indicates the need to improve the wording in order to avoid offending or placing demands on the Japanese government. What the amended version does, though, is offer the Government of Japan a strong suggestion in such a way that it sounds more persuasive than the original. Therefore, it can be argued that the modifications made by the committee were done in order to convince Japan that no ill-will was intended by this resolution, and to help convince Congress to pass the resolution.

Rep. Tom Lantos, during the mark-up session of H.R. 121, spoke before the Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight in order to state, for the record, the intent of Congress and their involvement with this resolution. According to Rep.

\textsuperscript{119} House Committee on Foreign Affairs, \textit{Various Bills and Resolutions}, 158-9.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid, 163-4.
Lantos, Congress did not want their “good friend and ally Japan to believe we regard them in perpetual punishment for their refusal to acknowledge the comfort women episode. We want a full reckoning of history to help everyone heal and move on.” Just as Rep. Fossella had reminded his fellow Congressmen back in March, Rep. Lantos was again stressing that the United States recognized that it was not possible to undo the past, yet for those comfort women who remained, it was necessary for the Japanese government to apologize in order to put the past behind them.

After the mark-up session in June, the amended resolution would sit until 30 July 2007 when it was brought to the floor for a vote. Both Rep. Lantos and Ros-Lehtinen, the congressmen responsible for the changes to the original version of H.R. 121, rose to speak in support of the resolution. Moreover, Rep. Honda, who had introduced the resolution back in January, also spoke before the House, stating that he believed that “reconciliation is the first step in the healing process,” and an unequivocal apology from the Government of Japan was that first step. In addition to these three speakers, seven other congressmen, who supported this resolution, took the time to speak about the need for its approval by the House. In attendance for this session was Koon Kim Lee, one of the surviving comfort women who had spoken before the Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment of the Committee on Foreign Affairs on February 15 of that year. Her presence on the day of the vote likely influenced many people since they were able to put a face to the victims for whom this resolution was created. After all remarks were made, the Speaker pro tempore, Rep. Rubén Hinojosa, acknowledged the motion by Rep. Tom Lantos to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution as amended. By a

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121 Ibid, 165-6.
voice vote, H.R. 121 passed with two-thirds of the House being in agreement.\textsuperscript{123} After seven years, the House finally passed a non-binding resolution, calling upon the Government of Japan to “formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear unequivocal manner” for its responsibility for the utilization of comfort women from the 1930s through the end of World War II.\textsuperscript{124} While many worldwide were excited by the passing of this resolution, there were some Japanese who believed that it would strain relations between the United States and Japan.

**H.R. 121 and the Japanese Response to U.S. Involvement**

The response within Japan to H.R. 121 was minimal, but this does not mean that it was non-existent. Due to a lack of coverage by the media, the U.S. resolution and its connection to the issue of comfort women was not seen as one of great importance by many Japanese. Hirofumi Hayashi, a historian of modern Japan and professor of politics at Kanto Gakuin University, states that while the domestic response to the international events was ignored and was not widely reported in Japan, Japanese citizens still understood the importance of H.R. 121 and its connection to the issue. Overall, the involvement of the United States in this matter signaled to them that the issue had not been settled.\textsuperscript{125} Those who did respond included government officials, along with various citizens who wrote editorials to different newspapers.

Opinions on H.R. 121 began to formulate in Japan almost immediately after its introduction in the House. Both conservative and liberals became involved and provided their reactions to the U.S. resolution. More often than not, though, it seemed to be conservatives who

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{123} Ibid, H 8876.
  \item \textsuperscript{124} H.R. 121, 110\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 1\textsuperscript{st} sess., Congressional Record 153, no. 123, Book II, (July 30, 2007): H 8871.
\end{itemize}
were more vocal and persistent in expressing their opinions. In an online editorial for the conservative newspaper the *Daily Yomiuri*, Satoshi Ikeuchi, an associate professor of politics at the University of Tokyo, agreed that the use of comfort women was “unacceptable, inconceivable and shameful,” but states that the idea of women being coerced and forced to prostitute themselves is absurd and a “far cry from reality.” While Ikeuchi does not believe that the government forced women into “sexual slavery,” he believes that the government should acknowledge its “moral responsibility,” but states that this apology had already been issued repeatedly by the Government of Japan. Therefore, the concept of H.R. 121, Ikeuchi argues, was an unnecessary and inappropriate move by the United States. Many Japanese agreed with Ikeuchi, raising concern over how such a resolution would impact U.S.-Japanese relations. This was certainly an issue that government officials in Japan had worried about as well.

On 13 February 2007, the Japanese Ambassador, Ryozo Kato, issued a letter to the members of the Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment, and others including the Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, urging that the resolution not be passed. In the letter, Kato urged that it was necessary for the congressmen to understand the “relevant facts” regarding comfort women, as any decision made by the House would impact the relationship between the United States and Japan. According to Kato, the mere suggestion of passing, or even considering, H.R. 121 meant that the United States did not feel that Japan had done an “adequate job” in apologizing publically and formally. Stating that “since 1996, every Prime Minister of Japan…has extended his sincere apology in a letter, together with atonement money,

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to each individual comfort woman,” Kato provided a list of examples highlighting how Japan had “clearly apologized and acknowledged its actions.” Kato’s letter responded to the potential danger that the Government of Japan saw which could arise between the two nations, should the United States continue to endorse H.R. 121. Besides Kato’s letter sent in February, the Japanese Embassy in the United States of America posted a response on their website to the resolved clause of H.R. 121. The points made on this website only reiterated Kato’s letter, restating that overall, H.R. 121 was harmful to the relationship between the United States and Japan. The website also reiterated that the “Government of Japan and the Japanese people have taken concrete measures for the victims.”

The U.S. response to these warnings was minimal. Rep. Honda, as quoted in the 12 July 2007 Washington Post article by Blaine Harden, stated that the letter and warnings were “lobbying blusters,” saying that he believed that neither the diplomatic nor the trade relationship between the two nations would be harmed as a result of the passing of H.R. 121. Within Japan, the view of H.R. 121 differed between political parties. From the introduction of H.R. 121, until Abe’s remarks in March, its primary co-sponsors were in fact Democrats, with only 6 out of 25 co-sponsors at the time being from the Republican Party. While many conservatives at first may not have seen the purpose of supporting such a resolution, with Abe’s remarks in March, along with his meeting with U.S. leaders in April, many began to fear that if such a resolution were not passed, there would be implications for the United States in its relationship with all of Asia. In an article featured in the New York Times on 12 May 2007, Norimitsu Onishi explained how conservatives had begun to worry that “being too closely tied to Japan’s

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128 Ibid.
130 Harden, “Japan Warns U.S. House Against Resolution on WWII Sex Slaves.”
nationalist leadership may hurt American interests in Asia.”\textsuperscript{131} This resolution could be a chance for the United States to distance themselves from the Government of Japan’s “denial of the facts” surrounding comfort women. In this same article, Onishi interviewed Rep. Honda, who stressed that this resolution would in fact not hurt the relationship between Japan and the United States, but would stress to Japan that “if you want to be a global leader, you have to first gain trust and confidence of your neighbors.”\textsuperscript{132} Therefore, for Rep. Honda, and many other Americans, this meant that H.R. 121 was a step in a positive direction in urging Japan to apologize in order to make amends with not only its East Asian neighbors, but those further across the waters as well.

Two days after H.R. 121 was passed, the \textit{New York Times} ran an article stating that Abe had “expressed some irritation…at the resolution approved by the House of Representatives” and that “the resolution’s approval was regrettable.”\textsuperscript{133} When asked by the \textit{New York Times} if he intended to comply with the demand for an apology, Abe’s reply was that “the twentieth century was an era in which human rights were violated. I would like to make the twenty-first century into an era with no human rights violations.”\textsuperscript{134} With such a vague statement, and with his previous statements about his feelings on the comfort women issue, it was unclear whether Abe and the Government of Japan would actually take the resolution seriously or implement its suggestions.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
While H.R. 121 put pressure on Abe and the Japanese government to respond in some way, no official response came. Also, while government officials in Japan had taken steps to persuade the United States that H.R. 121 would only harm relations between the two nations, there was almost no change between them. In addition, despite Abe’s “irritation,” the Government of Japan did little to protest the passing of the resolution. What is important to note is that as the resolution was passed in the U.S. House of Representatives, Abe faced defeat himself as the Liberal Democratic Party lost the governing rule in the upper house of the Diet only a few days before H.R. 121 was passed. Then, on 12 September 2007, less than two months after H.R. 121 was passed, Abe announced his intent to resign as Prime Minister of Japan, and two weeks later, he officially ended his term in office.

Conclusion

While no action was taken by Japan, the resolution signaled to those surviving comfort women that issues concerning Japan’s militaristic and imperialistic past were both recognized and important to nations outside Asia. For the United States, this issue was presented as one of human rights and the need for Japan to recognize this part of their past in order to move towards a more amicable relationship with its East Asian neighbors, and, the United States as well. It is clear that as long as issues like this threatened stability in the region, the United States had to show some kind of involvement in order to protect its own interests in the area. According to David Straub, Associate Director of the Korean Studies Program at Stanford University, “the long-standing U.S. desire for Japan to play an increasing role in regional security affairs threatens to backfire on U.S. interests as long as Japan’s closest and most powerful neighbors
fear that its failure to ‘understand’ the past may cause it eventually to repeat the past.”¹³⁵ H.R. 121 brought just one issue to international attention, which for many throughout East Asia, was considered to be unresolved. Therefore, by passing H.R. 121, the United States demonstrated its support for nations who were calling for Japan to publically (re)state its apology for its past actions during World War II.

The United States was not the first nation to draw international attention to the issue of comfort women, nor to the fact that there was a growing sentiment that Japan was unable to apologize and move away from its wartime past. Issues over historical responsibility and a formal apology from the Government of Japan have been a large part of this ongoing debate over the depiction of Japan’s history in its middle school history textbooks. The support and approval of H.R. 121, however, signaled that not even Japan’s closest ally had forgotten its past and had accepted their apology, leaving some Japanese to question how reconciliation with its East Asian neighbors could begin if it did not have the full support of the world’s number one superpower.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL MEMORY AND THE STEPS TOWARD RECONCILIATION

Citizens have gained power through their own governments and through rights defended by organizations like Amnesty International and the United Nations Human Rights Council as the call for apologies and for nations to reconcile with past victims has become greater than ever before. The textbook controversy may have gained international attention due to the political and economic aims of other nations, but it continues to thrive today due to continuous changes in the nations affected, such as an increase of individual interests of memory studies. In particular, it stems from issues related to differing historical memories, which have increased in importance worldwide. Those who suffered from Japan’s brutality in the past certainly will never forget what they had to endure so many years ago, and there are those who are determined not to let Japan forget. As a result, Japan continues to offer apologies in order to make amends in the hope to move beyond the past and look toward the future. But with the publication and circulation of conservative textbooks, and continued visits by various Japanese Prime Ministers to the Yasukuni Shrine—a shrine that honors known war criminals—the problem has only intensified.

History textbooks remain one type of evidence for nations like the United States who argue that Japan has yet to offer a full and unequivocal apology. This chapter explores how history textbooks and historical memory led some Americans to believe that the Japanese still need to offer an adequate apology, and what Japan has tried to do to answer that call for an apology. This chapter argues that because Japan and its Asian neighbors experience entangled memories of past World War II events and issues, like that of comfort women and the Nanking
Massacre, and due to the current ruling political party and its influence on governmental agencies in Japan, it is difficult for Japan to reconcile with its East Asian neighbors. As the Japanese government continues to allow the production of conservative textbooks, it becomes harder for Japan to make amends with its neighbors, but it is important for the government to make every effort to do so for the future and stability of the region.

**Textbooks as a Reflection of Society**

Across the globe, people view both history education and history textbooks as an important representation of a nation and its citizens. According to global education specialist and former National Director for School Services with the Foreign Policy Association, James M. Becker, “Textbooks tend to mirror the morality, social relations and consensus or lack of consensus in our society.”\(^{136}\) This statement can help us to understand why so many people worldwide have become involved in the textbook controversy in Japan. Since the MEXT approved books like *The New History Textbook* for use, it is easy for many people then to assume that the government backs the material presented in such texts and is actively trying to alter the past to their own specifications and needs. Overall, a worldwide concept of the purpose of history textbooks affects the way that others view these narratives.

In addition, textbooks are the main source for students to obtain access to their nation’s past and, according to Yali Zhao, a professor of social studies and multicultural education at Georgia State University, and John D. Hoge, a professor of social studies education at the University of Georgia, they also provide a chance for students to access the nation’s views of

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that past.\textsuperscript{137} This view of the past in Japan has evolved steadily since the end of World War II. Whereas prior to the end of the war, the outlook on Japanese history centered around an ultranationalistic perspective, most textbooks in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century have shifted away from nationalistic tendencies and, as a result, present more “liberal” views in how history is told. By presenting to students a textbook that provides an alternative view of certain events and omitting others, many scholars and citizens from around the world, especially China and South Korea, feel that these books are trying to inculcate into these students the need to revive the past and to mirror the textbooks from wartime Japan. The nationalistic views in these textbooks also leads the public to presume that Japan has yet to confront the truths of its past. For Rep. Michael Honda, and many other supporters, this belief was a motivating factor in the passing of H. R. 121.

During a teleconference between President George W. Bush and Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzō Abe, in April 2007, Abe explained to Bush his views on the comfort women issue and clarified that he had offered apologies for Japan’s past history dealing with this issue.\textsuperscript{138} In a news conference held by President Bush a short time after, Bush accepted the apology offered by Abe for Japan’s involvement with the comfort women system. However, according to an article in the \textit{New York Times}, Rep. Honda stated that the apology offered by Abe was not for President Bush to accept.\textsuperscript{139} No apology offered was satisfactory unless it was directly given to those who had suffered, that is, the individual comfort women. Yet, in 2001, previous Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi sent a letter to surviving comfort women as a part of the attempt by

\textsuperscript{139} Norimitsu Onishi, “A Congressman Faces Foes in Japan as He Seeks an Apology.”
the Asian Women’s Fund to atone for past misdeeds. While Koizumi took responsibility for the past on behalf of the Japanese government, still, this has not been seen as an acceptable apology by comfort women advocates.

For Rep. Honda, the issue over history textbooks and historical memory was a large part of his struggle to see H. R. 121 passed in Congress. While H. R. 121 largely focuses on an apology to be directed toward comfort women during World War II, it also serves as a response to the issue of Japan’s history as presented in textbooks. As a former schoolteacher, Rep. Honda shared in an interview with the *New York Times* in May 2007 that he feared that the textbooks currently being used in Japan were not teaching the truth about history. In this article, Rep. Honda states that his past experience as a schoolteacher leads him to an understanding of what could happen if a country does not teach its history correctly. While the article does not further elaborate on Honda’s thoughts about Japan’s teaching of history, the reader gains a sense that Honda’s statement reflects the importance of including textbooks in H. R. 121. The resolution reads:

> Whereas some new textbooks used in Japanese schools seek to downplay the ‘comfort women’ tragedy and other Japanese war crimes during World War II [.]

This part of the resolution emulates Honda’s statement to the *New York Times*, that “It's insane not to teach your children the truth.” Like all responsible educators, Honda obviously understood the universal value of teaching fact based history.

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140 Ibid.
Zhao and Hoge argue that “Textbooks have an enormous aura of authority, and young people tend to believe what they read in them.”143 Textbooks that provide a very narrow and subjective view of history may mislead students who trust what the textbook states, thus preventing them from learning the facts about certain events. For many Americans, Zhao and Hoge’s statement certainly supports the opinion on the textbook controversy as expressed in H. R. 121. The resolution criticized the new textbooks that downplayed certain tragedies and war crimes committed by Japan and, according to Honda’s interview with the New York Times in May 2007 this was the central problem that he wished to address. In addition, because middle school history textbooks worldwide typically present the history of the nation and the political views of its government, books like The New History Textbook in Japan, which were representing themselves as the “correct version” of history, made educators worldwide fear that future generations may never really know the uglier facts of Japanese history if such books were published and used in the classroom.144 For this reason, H. R. 121 was intended to be one way in which the United States could take a stand against the promotion and use of such books and to call for a retraction of such materials.

What about other books written for public consumption by authors who also profess that their work represents a “factually correct version” of history? Although not intended for classroom use, there are books published by conservatives representing their own versions of history colored by their nationalism or conservative ideals. One such book is What Really Happened in Nanking: the Refutation of a Common Myth, published in Japanese in 1987, and re-

142 Onishi, “A Congressman Faces Foes in Japan as He Seeks an Apology.”
published in English in 2000. Authored by Tanaka Masaaki, the English version was a partial translation of an earlier work and was released in 2000 in response to the publication of Iris Chang’s *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocauast of World War II.* Tanaka’s monograph serves as an apology for the Japanese government and the nation in World War II. His arguments concerning the Nanking Massacre are founded on studies by other conservative historians in Japan. As such, there are significant discrepancies between the narratives of Tanaka and Chang. Whereas Chang’s book asserts that the number of deaths from the Nanking Massacre is approximately 300,000, Tanaka argues that such a high number was impossible and inflated or invented by authors like Chang. Tanaka argues that there is a lack of sufficient evidence to prove such a high number and cites statistics stated in the *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone,* a series of documents about Nanking published in China in 1939, in order to challenge the figure put forth by Chang and other scholars. Numerous scholars have refuted Tanaka’s work, however, pointing out errors and flaws in his own research. For example, history professor at York University, Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, argues that conservative scholars, like Tanaka, are just as guilty of dishonesty and of showing biases in their work by refusing to acknowledge wartime media censorship and other influences on the contemporary narrative.

But Tanaka is not alone in his opposition to Chang’s work and to the conservative stance on the issue of the Nanking Massacre. In addition to Tanaka’s book, authors Takemoto Tadao and Ohara Yasuo published *The Alleged ‘Nanking Massacre’: Japan’s Rebuttal to China’s*

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Forged Claims, in November 2000. Their books present a very conservative view on the issue, and while many negative reviews were published about both books, unlike the textbooks, there were no demands to either recall them for further editing, or for them to be pulled from circulation. The difference between these monographs and the textbooks produced from the 1980s through the early 2000s was that they were not intended for use as part of an educational curriculum, but were intended as rebuttals to the rising backlash against Japan, incited, in part, by Chang’s book, and were marketed more for a more popular audience. Each of the books listed above were subjected to criticisms from the academic community, and continue today to be scrutinized and reviewed by scholars worldwide. Such books may be authored and published by anyone regardless of academic background as a reflection of free speech and, as a result, do not necessarily draw the attention on a public scale from those who oppose its views. Overall, since they were not supported by the MEXT or the government, there has been little response to such books by the U.S. government, unlike Japanese history textbooks which may downplay certain wartime events. Although, it can be argued that textbooks must also be considered along the lines of expressing free speech and therefore, conservative textbooks in Japan, while subject to review and revisions by the government, cannot be denied for publication for what some argue is simply because their views do not coincide with that of liberal or progressive thought. But for Japan, because of the governmental involvement in the approval of

textbooks, many nations believe that the government then supports all material within each book. The United States is one of these nations.

H. R. 121 demonstrates that the United States disagreed with the conservative textbooks produced and the Japanese government’s decision to permit these books to be used by school districts across Japan. The errors and omissions within texts like *The New History Textbook* alarmed some Americans, like Honda, who came to believe that the Japanese government was complicit on promoting this view of its past and that these books represented how the nation chooses to remember its history. Thus, these Japanese textbooks became the catalyst for debate over historical memory and promoted a call for an adequate apology from the Japanese government. In June 2007, Honda stated that H.R. 121 was “not about bashing Japan,” but “about acknowledging [the] past [and] coming to grips with it.” 151 By not addressing issues like the comfort women in history textbooks, the Japanese government was failing to demonstrate that it was able to admit responsibility for its past misdeeds and was proving unable to reconcile with its Asian neighbors.

The MEXT states in its objective for social studies education that its intention is to develop a sense of civic duty in its students through learning history. Textbooks are an educational aid that helps to develop this sense of duty by teaching the history of the nation. In Japan, the MEXT is a division of the Japanese government responsible for approving all textbooks, and all material within, as appropriate tools for teaching students. Since various conservative textbooks are approved for publication by the MEXT, and they reflect a very nationalistic view of the nation’s history, it may be assumed that the government approves of such material, linking the views in these textbooks to that of the government. Thus, it may be

argued that the narrative published in such texts as *The New History Textbook* reflects to some degree the accepted, official government view of history, since part of the MEXT’s objective of social studies education is “to deepen students’ understanding and love of the land and the history of [the] nation.”

In the United States, the editing and review of history textbooks are not handled directly by the government, but by individual publishing companies. Therefore, for many Americans, it is difficult to separate the notion that the content in Japanese textbooks is not necessarily reflective of the official view of the government, since the MEXT is a branch of the government that is responsible for selecting textbooks for approval. It is understandable why many would feel that apologies previously given by the Government of Japan cannot (or can no longer) be honored when textbooks are still being circulated throughout the nation that counteract any such apologies or statements previously provided. But is it fair to single out Japan for such an accusation? While it is true that Japanese textbooks omit certain wartime atrocities or include only a brief note about them, do not U.S. textbooks also omit or gloss over certain unfortunate aspects of their own history? In fact, most recent American history textbooks do confront the unfortunate parts of the nation’s past. For example, most history texts now include the harsh treatment of Native Americans, mention of the internment of Japanese-American during World War II, and atrocities committed during the Vietnam War.

Another point to consider when comparing American history textbooks to those in Japan is that American publishers and government officials should also examine their own depictions of events of the war in East Asia if they are going to critique those of Japan. While U.S. history textbooks are focused primarily on American issues and events, most of the major American publishers...
history textbooks also fail to mention atrocities of World War II like the Nanking Massacre, Unit 731, and the comfort women system. Yali Zhao examined eight American history textbooks in 2006 and found that not one mentioned these events or issues, but that they did mention the misdeeds of Nazi Germany and the Jewish Holocaust.\textsuperscript{153} Failure to include these events in these textbooks does not imply that the United States denies these atrocities. However, failure to include them might suggest that various social or political reasons have kept them from being a part of textbook history education. Maintaining good relations with East Asia since the end of World War II has been a priority for the United States. In 1946, the United States intended to rehabilitate Japan as a Cold War ally and today, Japan stands as an important ally in a region surrounded by nations that remain wary of the United States.\textsuperscript{154} Should the United States put these facts of history into the curriculum, it could lead them into disagreements with the three East Asian nations with whom it shares an amicable relationship. Thus, it can be concluded that even the United States approaches the content to be included in its own textbooks cautiously.

In the United States as elsewhere, textbook authors and editors must make decisions about what they deem important to either include or omit. Curriculum standards that each nation sets for itself factor into what is included in textbooks; therefore, it is part of the determining factor of what students are taught. Nevertheless, governments worldwide will continue to experience challenges to their selective national narratives as long as there are other models and conflicting views made available. As a result, calls to change the current textbooks in Japan will ensue as long as advocates worldwide continue to challenge the national narrative that ignores Japan’s violent past.

\textsuperscript{153} Zhao and Hoge, “Countering Textbook Distortion: War Atrocities in Asia, 1937-1945,” 427.
Textbooks and Historical Memory

Textbooks are not only an educational tool for students as discussed above, but are also important representations of the nation itself. They are indeed national narratives and their purpose is to tell past events as the nation remembers and views them. Most societies use history textbooks as a way to highlight narratives which help to shape contemporary patriotism and/or citizenship among its young citizens.155 People often challenge that narrative when they view a misrepresentation or lack of representation of a group of people who mirror themselves.156 In this case, the issue over comfort women is one such example, as the story of their group has been either misrepresented or omitted from these recent textbooks in Japan.

Claudia Schneider, a lecturer at the University of Leipzig in Germany, argues that history textbooks are a powerful symbol of “a country’s sincerity to deal with a negative past.”157 The way in which groups like the Tsukurukai choose to remember and present, for example, the Nanking Massacre in their textbooks affects the memory of such events and how they are passed on to future generations. A debate over historical memory thus ensues and, today, it has become a large part of the textbook controversy.

Sven Saaler, a history professor at Sophia University in Tokyo, Japan, explains that, in constructing a historical narrative, the very selection of what events to include affects the sense of collective identity within the narrative.158 Collective identity is a “shared definition of a group that derives from its members’ common interests, experiences, and solidarities.”159 Within textbooks, how the history of World War II is described is important to explaining the identity of the nation. However, events from this time are carefully selected by groups like the Tsukurukai

156 Ibid, 5.
158 Saaler, Politics, Memory and Public Opinion, 90.
159 The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology, s.v. “Collective Identity.”
when creating their narratives in order to include facts that they consider to be essential and to omit those which they deem not as important for the individual, or nation, to remember (e.g., comfort women system, the Nanking Massacre, or Unit 731). This then leads to issues over what kind of memory about these events the nation is portraying, and which are simply being denied. With the recent textbooks, the involvement of outside actors, like the United States, has created the argument that what should be remembered, and what is being remembered in these books is not factual.

The awareness of memory has become an important part of recent historical scholarship (known as memory studies), which has begun to affect how nations and people interact. Richard Ned Lebow, Centennial Professor of International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science, argues that a growing awareness of memory as “a source of political contestation will have serious longer term implications for the practice of memory.”160 With H. R. 121, this is evident, as nations who share a connected past use politics to argue how they believe others should remember history. H. R. 121 sought an apology for comfort women, and Honda stated that such an apology should be reflective of how the United States apologized for interning Japanese American citizens during World War II.161 If Honda was modeling his idea of apology based on his own memory of the apology offered by the United States in 2002, this affects his perception of what kind of apology Japan has or has not offered. In addition, the history presented in conservative or “revisionist” textbooks regarding World War II history is different from what Americans learn in their textbooks. Since the narrative regarding this shared global experience differs, then how each nation, or each individual, remembers the event differs.

161 Harden, “Japan Warns U.S. House Against Resolution on WWII Sex Slaves.”
This then leads to a disagreement over this history by groups who share opposing views, reminding us that history is a highly contested subject.

Lebow also argues that national narratives are “frequently challenged by individual groups who oppose the current government or regime.” Challenge to Japanese history textbooks will likely continue from liberals and progressives, since those who have held majority power within the Japanese Diet for well over thirty years are the members of the conservative Liberal Democratic Party. The struggle that occurs both within and outside of Japan over the narrative in history textbooks involves a fight between left and right-wing politics and politicians. In Japan, one reason why textbooks remain contested by those outside the nation deals largely with the way in which the content and memories in these textbooks are controlled. Since the MEXT is a government organization, whose job it is to review and edit textbooks, then the content is seen as being reflective of government ideology and national policy. Therefore, textbooks can be linked back to the government, and those who disagree with its power, will then disagree with the national narrative that is presented to young citizens.

Steps toward Reconciliation

While many educators and historians argue that the duty of a nation is to report and relay the facts of past events in textbooks, for some, the overall experience of what actually appears in a history textbook differs. Mikyoung Kim, a professor of sociology at the Hiroshima Peace Institute at Hiroshima City University, argues that “The ‘history problem’ is, in fact, a memory

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problem that historical facts cannot resolve.”

Based upon this argument, it can be said that no matter the corrections and insertions publishers make to their textbooks, how each individual and nation remembers the event will certainly impact the information presented in textbooks. Each person can experience the same event, but what they remember from it will likely differ. Therefore, the issue over Japan’s contested past is one which may never find resolution if historical memory continues to play a large role in how the past is taught in the classroom. This does not mean that individual memory should be removed or separated from the narrative; in fact, it might be quite difficult to do so. However, based upon Kim’s statement, it is necessary for those outside of Japan and for those victims of Japan to understand that clashes over memory and shared experiences will always occur and may never disappear. This means that those who try to seek a means of reconciliation will have to take this into consideration as they fight for improved history textbooks. Finding a middle-ground with textbooks may be one way to resolve the problem.

Cheol Hee Park, a professor of political science at Seoul National University, makes an excellent point in arguing that while “two nations cannot have the same historical interpretations,” it can be possible for them “to share common historical facts” within their textbooks. In recognizing that there are differences in how history is told, the Japanese, and those who oppose Japanese history textbooks, can come closer to bridging the gap and toward reconciling their differences. Only then can nations begin a step in the right direction to create histories that “transcend national boundaries” and work toward honoring the memory of various

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groups and people, while presenting the most accurate re-telling of the past as possible.\textsuperscript{167} There have been attempts over the last twenty years to work toward creating such a narrative by individuals and civil society groups from other Asian nations who seek influence over Japanese memory production.\textsuperscript{168}

Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, there have been various groups comprised of students, scholars and educators from China, Japan, and Korea, whose goals have been to create a joint history textbook to be used in classrooms throughout East Asia. One of the first groups, the Japan-South Korea Joint Study Group on History Textbooks, was created in 1989, shortly after the controversy began. From the beginning, the purpose of the group was to examine both modern Japanese and Korean history as presented within each nation’s textbooks in order to determine how they were described. The groups began first with Japanese textbooks, as they were the central issue of the controversy. As the study progressed, however, the group focused more on Japanese textbooks exclusively because Korea only had one book that all students studied from, while Japan had dozens, thus leaving less time for the group to study the textbook from Korea.\textsuperscript{169}

The group operated privately, separate from both the Japanese and South Korean governments, and included scholars of modern Japanese and Chinese history, both graduate and undergraduate students from various colleges and universities in Japan and South Korea, along with textbook authors, middle and high school teachers, and scholars of history education. Over the course of three years, the groups joined for international meetings to discuss the

\textsuperscript{167} Straub, “The United States and Reconciliation in East Asia,” 239.
\textsuperscript{168} Conrad, “Entangled Memories,” 97.
controversies within the textbooks. After four meetings, two in Japan and two in Korea, the study group disbanded in March 1993. Soon after, the analysis and findings of the group were published in a book. While the group raised interesting questions and suggestions concerning how to eliminate certain biases and prejudices within the textbooks, it failed to answer the question as to whether a common history textbook could be created. While the group disbanded without reaching any definite answers, many of the members from both countries went on to join new groups and take part in new discussions on how to resolve the issue over controversies within history textbooks, and some attempted (and succeeded) in creating a joint textbook.

In May 2005, the first joint history textbook, *The Modern and Contemporary History of Three East Asian Countries*, was published simultaneously in China, Japan, and Korea. This book, intended for use by middle-school students in each country, was three years in the making and was compiled and authored by over fifty members from the three nations, all from different backgrounds and occupations, such as textbook authors, editors, historians, and educators. What this textbook does differently than those before it is to offer the reader a view of history from the interactions among all three nations. This approach is very different than the typical single-sided view of history which had been offered in Japanese textbooks prior to its release. Most importantly, this book included sections that discussed the use of comfort women during the war, provided two pages on Unit 731, mentioned the problems associated with the Yasukuni

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170 Ibid, 204.
171 Ibid, 220.
172 The textbook was published in China and Korea under the same title, but in Japan, it was published under a slightly different title. *The Modern and Contemporary History of Three East Asian Countries* (*Dongya Sanguo de Jinxiandaishi*, in Chinese) was published in Beijing, China by Shehui Kexue Chubanshe in 2005, and was published in Korea by Hani Book in 2005. In Japan, the textbook was titled *A History that Opens the Future: Modern and Contemporary History of Three East Asian Countries* (*Mirai o hiraku rekishi: Higashi Ajia sankoku no kingendaishi*) and was published by Kōbunken in Tokyo, 2005.
Shrine visits by Japanese prime ministers, and even included a section on the textbook controversy itself. Inclusions of such content into a textbook was important as the group tried to honor both the memory of the victims, while also presenting a complete history of interactions between the three nations. 

In addition to this book released in 2005, members of the Symposia for Creating Common History Textbooks, organized by Kazuhiko Kimijima and Kimura Shigemitsu of Japan, and Korean professor Cheong Je-Cheong, began work on creating common history teaching materials as early as 1997, which could be used in both Japan and Korea. In 2007, they published the *History of Japan and South Korea’s Cultural Exchange* (Nikkan kōryū no rekishi). Unlike *The Modern and Contemporary History*, this book took over ten years and various drafts before a final version was published. Also, it was intended for use by senior high school students, not middle school, separating it from even the Japanese textbooks which were at the center of the controversy.

Despite all the positives of both of these books, they also presented new chances for conflict and disagreement over memory. Arguments and disagreements arose between the members, specifically those from Japan and China, as they discussed the Nanking Massacre and the estimates of the number of people who died during this atrocity. Eventually, the two sides decided to present three different numbers, each with some grounding in historical fact. Thus, *The Modern and Contemporary History* offers the reader only an international view, in that each event is looked at from a collective standpoint, versus supplying the reader with a more in-depth national history of each nation. Although the book talks about the individual experience and the

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suffering experienced by the people of each nation, it fails to provide detailed descriptions about the battles these individuals fought or periods of war they experienced. For this reason, some entries appear vague and too basic for a textbook, which many would argue is still a way of glossing over and forgetting the past. In addition, the focus on Japan is mainly negative throughout the book, as it constantly describes the Japanese aggression against people during the war.\textsuperscript{177} Regardless of these problems, the three versions of *The Modern and Contemporary History* together sold over 230,000 copies by May 2006. While the authors intended for the book to compete with other textbooks in all three nations, it has yet to be declared an official textbook in any of them. Currently, in Japan, it has not been vetted by the MEXT, or passed through screenings in the other two nations.\textsuperscript{178} Nonetheless, it provides an alternative to current textbooks and is available for use as a supplementary book for teachers and students in the classroom. Along with the books from other study groups and publishers that followed, each is a significant attempt for these three East Asian nations to begin a process toward reconciliation concerning history and memory.

On 26 December 2006, less than a year before H. R. 121 would be approved in the House, historians from both China and Japan met in Beijing for the first meeting of a government sponsored collaborative historical research project. Prime Minster Shinzō Abe and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao both initiated the creation of the project. The groups researched historical issues shared by both nations in order to find any similarities between how each nation perceived each event. After doing so, they discussed the differences between them.\textsuperscript{179} A historical moment for both nations, this meeting began to open lines of dialogue for understanding how each nation’s presentation of history affects the other. Nonetheless,

\textsuperscript{177}Mitani, “The History Textbook Issue in Japan and East Asia,” 89.
\textsuperscript{179}Ibid, 119.
conservatives in both nations viewed the meeting as just another stalemate which would not solve the problem over textbook controversies. Around the same time, some Japanese conservatives argued that to keep discussing the ongoing debate was reflective of a rising wave of nationalism in both China and Korea, and such a meeting was only exploiting anti-Japanese sentiments within East Asia.\textsuperscript{180} Despite the backlash, the meeting was a step in the right direction to at least opening the lines of communication between the two nations.

**Conclusion**

As long as conservative textbooks in Japan continue to be produced and approved by the government, Japan will be caught in a never-ending struggle to both prove to other nations that it is willing to recognize its past actions and that they have apologized for them, and to move past this issue as it fights to maintain its status as a world power. While conservatives in Japan want to be able to present the history of their nation from their own perspective, it is also important for the government to understand the need to work with other nations in order to create a more complete textbook that both recognizes and acknowledges those who share Japan’s history, and in order to work towards reconciling with its East Asian neighbors and the world. Politicians, writers, educators, activists, bureaucrats, parents, outside commentators, and representatives of foreign governments are just some of the people who have become involved in the construction and reconstruction of historical memory. At present, only a few junior high and high school textbooks have been published as a comprehensive history involving a narrative of all three East Asian nations, and those books still have some room for improvement from all sides. A comprehensive history textbook intended for use throughout East Asia may never be successful

\textsuperscript{180} Kim, 112-13.
as long as each nation is striving to create a narrative whose purpose is not only to simply
generate “common historical facts” but to tell a story of their nation’s past.

As a result, it remains to be seen whether Japan’s East Asian neighbors will ever
reconcile with Japan over its past, but it is, nonetheless, important for Japan to realize that past
mistakes must be answered for in today’s society, and something must be done to remedy this
problem. But with all of the above initiatives, many Americans still do not see Japan as living up
to its full potential as a nation that takes responsibility and apologizes for its past. A lot of these
perceptions hinge on the ruling political party and their influence over the governmental agencies
that determine what kind of content is to be included in textbooks, and what stance the prime
minister takes on issues regarding wartime atrocities. Therefore, because historical memory is so
entangled with politics in Japan, it is difficult to say what Japan can further do to show the
United States that it is actively taking steps to make amends with its fellow neighbors and with
the rest of the world.
CONCLUSION

Over the last decade, the U.S. involvement in the Japanese textbook controversy has centered on the comfort women issue and the apology that congressmen, such as Rep. Michael Honda, claim is still owed to the victims by the Government of Japan. Over the course of eight years, this issue received attention in the U.S. Congress through various resolutions, all of which were rejected by the House of Representatives until H.R. 121 passed on 30 July 2007. As a result, H.R. 121 can be seen as a formal demand by the United States for the Government of Japan to monitor their history textbooks closely and to reconsider how these narratives present certain issues and historical events that are a part of Japan’s World War II history.

The United States’ involvement began with Honda’s introduction of Assembly Joint Resolution 27 (AJR 27) during his time as an assembly member with the California State Legislature in 1999. The resolution tried to convince the Government of Japan that the existence of comfort women needed to be acknowledged by the government, and that comfort women still required an adequate and formal apology for past misdeeds and abuses carried out by the Japanese government and military during World War II. Of all of the resolutions submitted from 1999 through 2007, only two used Japanese history textbooks as evidence to argue that an apology from Japan in regards to comfort women and various other wartime atrocities is still necessary: AJR 27 and H.R. 121.

AJR 27 specifically mentions recent textbooks as the reason an apology is still necessary. AJR 27 states that even though “high ranking Japanese government officials have expressed personal apologies, supported the payment of privately funded reparations to some victims, and modified some textbooks, these efforts are not adequate substitutes for an apology and reparations
approved by the Government of Japan."\textsuperscript{181} This same reasoning carried over into the language of H.R. 121 under Honda, underscoring textbooks as proof that Japan had not offered an adequate apology. Compared with the above statement from AJR 27 regarding textbooks, the wording in H.R.121 differs from AJR 27, but is very concise. H.R. 121 states:

\begin{quote}
Whereas some new textbooks used in Japanese schools seek to downplay the ‘comfort women’ tragedy and other Japanese war crimes during World War II,\textsuperscript{182}
\end{quote}

These two resolutions were the only ones to directly mention history textbooks, but unlike AJR 27, H.R. 759, introduced before the House of Representatives in 2006, mentioned in its resolve clause that Japan should work toward educating its students about comfort women and World War II atrocities. Upon reading remarks made by the bill’s sponsor, Rep. Lane Evans, before the House of Representatives on 2 May 2006, direct references to the removal of the term ‘comfort women’ from Japanese history textbooks in 2005 suggests that the ongoing controversy in Japan directly influenced the call for an apology.\textsuperscript{183} Coincidently, AJR 27 and H.R. 121 are the only two resolutions to have been approved at either the state or national government level during this time. The five other resolutions put before the House of Representatives between 2000 and 2006, House Congressional Resolution 357 (H. Con. Res. 357), H. Con. Res. 195, H. Con. Res. 226, H.R. 382, and H.R. 759, all failed.

\textsuperscript{182} H.R. 121, 110\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 1\textsuperscript{st} sess., \textit{Congressional Record} 153, no. 123, Book II, (July 30, 2007): H 8871.
\textsuperscript{183} Lane Evans, “Demanding that Japan Acknowledge Its Enslavement of ‘Comfort Women’ During World War II,” Extension of Remarks, 109\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 2d sess., \textit{Congressional Record} 152, no. 50 (May 2, 2006): E 683.
H. R. 121 signals a formal U.S. demand for an apology. H. R. 121 represents an official stand against the promotion and use of Japanese history textbooks that fail to state the facts, and it called for a recall of such teaching materials. While the resolution failed to directly impact the Japanese government, textbook authors, or the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), H. R. 121 was not entirely a failure. Rather, the approval of H. R. 121, with its focus on the comfort women issue including how the subject is represented in history textbooks, demonstrated recognition for equal human rights worldwide. For many comfort women survivors and supporters, historians, educators, and the general public, the controversy continues to raise concerns about Japan’s ability to take responsibility for their aggressive wartime past. Moreover, H. R. 121 has demonstrated that the stability of East Asian relations, especially regarding security issues between China and Japan, has led to U.S. involvement with the controversy. Maintaining good relations between Japan, China, and South Korea certainly plays a role in the U.S. decision to continually seek an apology for war atrocities from the Japanese government. In 2007, Rep. Michael Honda directed a comment to the Japanese government stating that, “If you want to be a global leader, you have to first gain the trust and confidence of your neighbors.”184 With the approval of H. R. 121, however, the United States overlooked the potential harm to relations between the two nations. While H. R. 121 gave voice to those calling for Japan to apologize, it in turn alienated some of the Japanese public and members of the Japanese government.

Many in the Japanese government were disappointed by H. R. 121 and, while it did not directly interfere with U.S.-Japanese relations, for several Japanese it left behind a sense of distrust toward the United States. In June 2008, a meeting of the House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment

184 Onishi, “A Congressman Faces Foes in Japan as He Seeks an Apology.”
discussed relations between the United States and Japan. The Chairman of the Subcommittee, 
Rep. Eni F. H. Faleomavaega (D-American Samoa) opened the meeting with a brief statement 
reporting that the Congressional Research Service, a government analysis group, found a 
possible decline in the amicable relationship between Japan and the United States. In addition to 
various reasons given for the decline, Rep. Faleomavaega noted that the passing of H. R. 121 
was one possible cause. He mentioned that the resolution did not intend to point fingers and 
blame Japan for its past, nor was the resolution intended only as “a personal castigation or a 
criticism against” the people of Japan.\textsuperscript{185} Instead, Faleomavaega stressed that the U.S. resolution 
was not only representative of American feelings about the situation, but one that was shared by 
the entire world. He stated that it was his hope that H. R. 121 would be presented on an 
international level, hopefully before the United Nations, to ensure that in the future no woman 
from any country would endure such abuse ever again.\textsuperscript{186} As of June 2009, the resolution has 
yet to appear before the United Nations.

The textbook controversy is unlikely to end or find resolve anytime soon. Since 
Japanese newspapers alleged in 1982 that requests and demands had been made by the Ministry 
of Education to remove or change certain words or passages in history textbooks, Japan has 
gathered the attention of activists, academics, educators, and citizens worldwide. As a result, 
Japan has been working toward resolving the issue internally and externally. The establishment 
of the Neighboring Countries Clause in November 1982 provided textbook authors a framework 
for writing about certain atrocities and events of World War II as the Japanese government 
worked toward maintaining international relations through the consideration of the perspectives

\textsuperscript{185} Eni F.H. Faleomavaega speaking before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, \textit{U.S.-Japan Relations: An Overview, Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment}, 110\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 2d sess., serial 110-223, June 12, 2008, 1.
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid, 1-2.
of other nations and victims of such atrocities. While the MEXT and Japanese government have worked toward improving certain sections of history textbooks, the public debate over textbooks resurfaced beginning in 1986, and in 2001, and again in 2005.

The controversy centers foremost on the education of the current and future generations of Japan. Bearing in mind that the MEXT states that social studies education in Japan should “deepen students’ understanding and love of the land and the history of [the] nation,” the information presented to students in textbooks will continue to be scrutinized not only by the MEXT’s textbook review board, but also by the citizens of Japan and people worldwide. Social studies and history textbooks are often recognized as the sole source of history education for students. The narratives told in such texts are often seen as a reflection of the thoughts and ideas of the society that tells them. Since certain textbooks in Japan reflect a very conservative view, and almost all textbooks fail to mention any history of comfort women, people both within and outside Japan argue that the Japanese government has not been able to accept its past and is not yet ready to take full responsibility for past misdeeds and offer an apology. An opposing view, to this belief, however, is a conservative argument that the MEXT and history textbooks have been harming the psyche of the nation and its future generations by teaching students that Japan is “an evil nation,” and obstructing them from developing a sense of positive national identity. Such conservative ideals are publically stated by groups like the Japanese Society for Textbook Reform, also known as the Tsukurukai.

What many conservatives in Japan may not realize is that the continuous publication of nationalistic texts is seen by most of the world as a step backward for the nation. Conservatives

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and conservative groups, like the *Tsukurukai*, tend to believe that by presenting a “proper perspective” of Japan’s history the younger generations are more inclined to take pride in their nation’s past. In a pamphlet published by the *Tsukurukai* in 1998, Namikawa Eita, president of a Japanese cram school and a member of the *Tsukurukai*, stated that history textbooks should allow Japanese children to “derive pleasure and hope from being Japanese” and not to fear or hate it. For Namikawa, because the nation feared reactions from those around it, the government lowered the quality of textbooks making Japan “a nation ideologically and spiritually enslaved” to its East Asian neighbors. However, instead of rallying more voices to support these textbooks, it is views like this that lead the people of East Asia, the United States, and the world, to view Japan as a nation which has yet to atone for its past, keeping many throughout the world from accepting Japan as a postwar democratic nation.

Today, the MEXT, along with the Japanese government, remain at the center of the textbook controversy as they continue to be responsible for the approval of conservative history textbooks. The controversy continues to haunt East Asian nations and the political relationship between Japan and its neighbors. With political conservatives holding the majority of power within the Japanese government and selected government agencies, it remains to be seen whether Japan and its East Asian neighbors will ever reconcile. While Japan has made attempts to rectify its past misdeeds through improved textbook passages and public apologies for over twenty years, the controversy continues to haunt its victims, particularly those in China and South Korea, even after attempts were made for a collaborative textbook only two years ago.

In July 2008, a published guideline for both teachers and publishers of Japanese junior high school history textbooks urged avoidance of any discussion of claims between Japan and

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189 Namikawa Eita, “The Iniquities of History Education in Japan During the Postwar Period,” in “The Restoration of a National History,” 15.
South Korea over ownership of islands in the Takeshima Straits, located in the waters between Japan and South Korea. Both nations claim the islands, with South Korea using old documents and texts, such as the *Geographical Appendix to the Veritable Records of King Sejong: 1454* (*Sejong sillok jiriji*) and *A Revised Edition of the Augmented Survey of the Geography of Korea: 1531* (*Sinjeung Dongguk Yeoji Seungnam*), to prove ownership of the islands, which they refer to as Dokdo.\(^{190}\) This group of islets remains a contentious part of both Japan’s and Korea’s history and, since the end of World War II, Japan’s claims to the islands have signaled to South Koreans that the Japanese are not ready to confront their colonial past.\(^{191}\) According to an article published in the *New York Times*, the handbook instructed teachers in Japan to “touch on the fact that [Japan] and South Korea have different claims over Takeshima” and, in doing so, it would help students to “deepen [their] understanding of [Japan’s] land and territory.”\(^{192}\) This kind of teaching material, while separate from textbooks, still feeds into the notion that Japan, on some level, is trying to teach a disputed part of the past without considering its neighbors’ interests and thoughts on such controversial issues.

More recently, on 9 April 2009, the South Korean government once again spoke out against Japanese textbooks and the government when the MEXT approved a new conservative textbook set, for release in the spring of 2010. The new book, entitled *Middle School Social Studies and History* (*Chugakkō Shakai Rekishi*), authored by the *Tsukurukai* and published by Jiyu Sha, reportedly had to correct numerous errors and revise descriptions of “516 historical events from the original version” in order to receive approval for its 2010 release date from the


\(^{192}\) Ibid.
MEXT. Due to the numerous errors, the MEXT claimed that corrections were necessary in order for the textbook to “give an account of the serious damage and hardship Japan inflicted on other countries during the war.” With the Tsukurukai continuing to publish textbooks that refuse to fully acknowledge Japan’s militaristic past, the controversy appears never-ending for Japan, and the mistrust between Japan and its East Asian neighbors keeps this issue from being resolved.

In addition to revisions made to recent textbooks, joint textbook projects have made little impact over the last decade, as they have yet to be approved for use in China, Korea, and Japan. Since the controversy became an international affair in 1982, the MEXT has argued that it has worked to improve the standards of and the material included in textbooks. In June 1998, then Minister of Education, Nobutaka Machimura, stated that because history textbooks lacked balance, the Ministry of Education would work toward finding a way to resolve the problem. However, in January 1999, the suggestion made by the Ministry was to only ask textbook publishers to reconsider the authors they hired, and to include more balanced content. But asking for considerations is different than demanding changes.

Nations like the United States continue to contend that Japan truly has not apologized for its wartime past as can be seen in history textbooks. Currently, no history textbook used in Japanese classrooms mention the comfort women system and, as a result, there continues to be an argument over whether the Government of Japan truly apologizes for its past involvement in such a horrific exploitation of women during World War II. The ongoing production of

conservative textbooks also adds to the international view that Japan has yet to accept responsibility for its past actions and misdeeds. This view of Japan’s failure to confront the past keeps the controversy ignited and furthers worldwide doubt about the intent of Japan to actively work toward reconciliation with its East Asian neighbors.

Issues like the textbook controversy, which center around a debate over views of history, have little chance of ever being resolved. While the United States’ involvement in the Japanese textbook controversy is now decades old, the official history remains a growing international concern and continues to prompt demands for change. Involvement from other nations, such as South Korea and China, also led to further global involvement in the issue and as a result, demands from foreign governments are likely to continue. By understanding the past, we can only hope to better understand the future, and while reconciliation may not be in the near future, it is something that Japan can strive to work toward. By researching and exploring the past debates and issues that make-up the textbook controversy, the Japanese government can begin working toward reconciliation with its surrounding neighbors and the rest of the world.
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