

Collective Memories of the Second World War in History Textbooks from China, Japan and South Korea

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Abstract: Informed by recurring international controversies, this study explores representations of the Second World War as official history in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean secondary-level textbooks and theorizes about how they influence and function as collective memories about this time period. Using grounded theory, it finds that the examined Japanese textbooks tend to present the Second World War in chronological order with a passive voice and avoid discussing why the war occurred and how it ended. The examined Chinese textbooks develop narratives in chronological order as well, but thematic units are structured to highlight the coalition of Mao's Communist Party and Chang Kai-Shek's Nationalists as the decisive factor in the victory against Japanese imperialists contributing to the worldwide fight against fascism. The examined Korean textbooks tend toward a single, patriotic perspective of a people that overcame Japanese colonialism and developed as an independent nation, often ignoring issues that complicated the relationship between the two nations.

Key words: History education, history textbooks, the role of education, comparative study, curriculum research, grounded theory.

History as a school subject can be an influential tool in shaping national identity (Barton & McCully 2005; Clark 2004, 2009; Epstein 2009; Seixas 2004; Wertsch 2002). For this reason, history textbooks can be seen as a vehicle for teaching an 'official' history of a nation to its youth (Foster & Crawford 2006; Hein & Selden 2000; Su, 2007). History textbooks are meant to inculcate in young people not only knowledge of their national history but awareness or acceptance of contemporary dominant/mainstream ideologies. Textbooks do this by showing how nations evolved from 'good' past policies or principles (e.g., the USA and narratives of 'freedom' or 'democracy') or how the contemporary polity has been redeemed from a lamentable past (e.g., the contemporary Japanese state has been transformed from an aggressor nation to a peace-loving and democratic nation after the 1940s). Overall, officially sanctioned history textbooks tend to promote patriotism or loyalty to the nation or national community, even if doing so at times leads them to portray historical periods, events, and experiences in ways which create controversy.

During the last several decades, international controversies have surrounded the teaching of the Second World War among East Asian nations – especially Japan, the aggressor nation during the war, and two targets of Japanese aggression, China and Korea¹. Studies have been conducted on the issues of history textbook controversy in Japan, China, and Korea (Cho 2002; Fiji 2005). However, these studies mostly focus on which 'facts' should be included, or how details are represented in Japanese history textbooks, rather than generating conversations about meaningful curriculum about the Second World War. More importantly, these studies do not necessarily consider social, cultural, or political contexts in Japan, China, and Korea where the textbook controversies took place

and how contexts outside of schools influence what and how to teach about the Second World War. This study aims to fill this gap in research and address the following question: How are the events of the Second World War and the Asian nations and people that participated in it framed and represented in a representative sample of history textbooks from Japan, Korea, and China in terms of collective memory? Our goal is to connect this analysis to further discussion in a global academic community on the purpose of history curriculum in public schools.

Research on History Textbook Controversies in China, Japan, and Korea

The existing body of research on history textbook controversies in Japan, Korea, and China is largely descriptive and evaluative. Researchers in history education have investigated chapters on the Second World War in Japanese history textbooks and identified patterns of content coverage (Barnard 2000, 2001; Cave 2002; Crawford 2006, Heiden & Seldon 2000; Nicholls 2006; Zhao & Hoge 2006) suggesting that Japanese history textbooks tend to avoid explicitly discussing the causes and consequences of the war and certain historical events during the war. In the analysis of a chapter on the 1937 Nanjing Massacre in 88 Japanese high school history textbooks, Barnard (2000, 2001) argued that Japanese history textbooks tend to vaguely gloss over details of the event and take the position that the Japanese people in the homeland were not aware of what was happening; he believes this position is problematic because it may give students the impression that Japanese people at that time and in modern Japan had and have no basis to respond to the Nanjing Massacre in a critical way. Similarly, Nicholls (2006) compared Japanese history textbook chapters on the Second World War with those from five other nations which played different roles during the war, such as Germany, Sweden, Britain, and the USA. He found that Japanese history textbooks portray the origins of the Pacific War as an inevitable decision for the security and well-being of a nation under threat. Nicholls also pointed out that compared to Germany, which confronted conflicts over legacies of the Holocaust and explicitly addressed not only national but also transnational identities and responsibilities, Japanese history textbooks have avoided discussing Japan's responsibility for the war.

These findings are indeed informative and meaningful to understanding Japanese history textbooks in how they represent the nation's past. However, there are limitations. First, most of the history textbook research on this issue relies on content analysis and highlights what is missing/misrepresented in Japanese history textbooks only. The critiques of history textbooks use language such as 'distorted', 'misrepresented', 'restricted', 'ignored', or 'slighted'. There are competing and contested stories about any national past, and judging them only in terms of essentialist claims of 'right' or 'wrong' can lead to a reductionist view of national history (Conrad, 2000) and easily miss capturing the contested and constructed nature of historical inquiry. Second, with the exception of very few studies (Dirlik, 1991; Hamada, 2002, 2003; Kamijima 2000; Soh, 2003), researchers tend not to ask questions about how countries like China and Korea that often assume the historical role of 'victim' of the war depict their wartime experiences in their textbooks. Most of all, researchers rarely consider these controversies as domestic and international struggles over war memory in each nation (Seaton, 2005, 2007).

Considering the limitations of the previous studies, this study purposely does not put Japanese history textbooks at the center in order to criticize them for misrepresenting/missing what they did wrong in representing the Second World War. Such an approach, we feel, would be based in problematic assumptions: (1) that a history textbook could exist that neutrally and 'correctly' represents all events in history, and (2) that history textbooks from other countries better represent the war without political and/or national biases. Instead, assuming that all national history

textbooks carry national and ideological perspectives, we will review history textbooks from Japan, China and Korea to analyze both the differences and functional similarities in how they represent the Second World War.

Theoretical Framework

This study builds on theories of nationalism and collective memory across disciplines – including political science, history, and educational psychology. During the last several decades, nationalism and collective memory were heated fields of research in political science and history. Scholars in both fields have argued that nation-states (particularly outside of Western Europe) are relatively modern phenomena, which some define (Anderson, 1983/2006; Conversi, 1995; Hobsbawm, 1992; Smith, 1994) as “an imagined community” where common accounts and narratives of the past are widely shared. They argue sustaining this “imagined community” consistently depends on longstanding myths, memories, values, and symbols such as family photographs and artifacts (Bodnar, 1993), museums, historical sites, and public sculpture (Gillis, 1996), and libraries, festivals, and museums (Nora, 1998).

In thinking about collective memory and official history for this study, we also draw on James Wertsch’s conceptualization of narratives as ‘cultural tools’ that are transmitted, both officially and informally, among individuals and are employed by them to construct identities within various communities, both official and implicit (Wertsch, 2002). In Wertsch’s view, official accounts of the past;

seldom fall neatly under the heading of analytic history or collective memory. On the one hand, states usually claim that the account they produce is based on objective historical scholarship, and to some degree this is the case. On the other hand, states have a strong interest in seeing their version of official history being accepted by citizens in such a way that they become a loyal imagined community. The intent is not simply for students to know the official history, but to believe it, to take ownership of it as a usable past (Wertsch, 2002, p.85)

Collective memory emerges from a multivocal and contested distribution of narratives and cannot be neatly separated from history. State-approved or official history curricula are one contributing stream to the construction of collective memory about a society and the past. We believe they serve as an example of what Wertsch calls ‘schematic narrative templates’—abstract, generalizable themes that underlie the construction of specific narratives and function as basic building blocks in a cultural tool kit (Wertsch, 2004).

Collective Memories in Schools

Educational research on historical consciousness adds insights to explain the dynamics of how collective memories are created, circulated, and consumed. Seixas (2004) contends that in order to make sense of our understanding of the past, it is necessary to understand the complex relationship between academic history, which claims to advance historical knowledge, and popular history, where the past is constructed for the purpose of creating identities, justifying policies, teaching the young in public schools, and creating entertainment for profit. This means, even though official history may represent nation-states’ efforts to inform collective memory in a way that is consonant with their dominant ideology, this influence exists alongside other socio-cultural forces, such as academic history and popular culture. Individuals mediate all of these influences in how they

construct historical narratives through mastery, appropriation, and resistance (Barton & Levstik, 1998; Epstein, 2009; Hahn, 2001; Porat, 2004; Wertch, 2002; Wineburg, Mosborg, Porat, & Duncan, 2007).

Remembering the past occurs in multiple forms in schools. They include history tests (Reich, 2010), state standards (Van Hoover, 2010; Grant, 2002), history textbooks (Loewen, 1996/2007; VanSledright, 2008), national monuments visited for field trips (Seixas & Clark, 2004), and historical feature films (like Hollywood movies) that teachers show in the classroom (Marcus, Metzger, Paxton, & Stoddard, 2010; Wineburg, Mosborg, Porat, & Duncan, 2007). Among these, history textbooks are considered a main source for conveying “official” history, especially in relatively centralized systems such as China, South Korea and Japan. In such systems student are required to read and study textbooks authored and authorized by official institutions. Textbooks are also mandatory reading for the centralized exams – including college entrance exams – and, therefore, the historical narratives in the textbooks are deployed in an enforced official context (Goldberg, Porat, & Schwartz, 2006).

Grammars of History Textbook Narratives

White (1990) notes that both form and content in history writing are significant in the creation of meanings, and how a story is told is as important as what is told in that story. Barthes (1970) also argues that historians use “devices” to make their writing sound “factual” and “truthful.” Similarly, researchers in history education report that there are patterns of narratives in history instruction, in particular when national history is being told. Barton and Levstik (2004) argue that history is commonly taught in schools as a form of national narrative. This common approach highlights the cause-effect relationships among events and in a way that tends to be moralistic (or self-righteous) and humanistic, and by doing so often ends up depicting the nation or people as victimized (Searle-White, 2001). As a consequence, this approach tends to overlook events and perspectives of “others” that do not fit comfortably with the dominant narrative (Nodding, 1992; Loewen, 1996/2007). Research by educational psychologists has also found that there are two critical features of history textbook narrative that makes a narrative sound “true” or at least neutral: Subjects in the narrative are vague and abstract (typically national entities or peoples), and authors of the narrative are invisible to the reader (Nolen, 1995; Nolen, Johneson-Crowley, & Wineburg, 1994; Paxton, 1997; Shanahan, 1991; Wineburg, 1991). As a result, textbooks tend to come off as dispassionate, voiceless, or at least neutral – telling “the truth” about the past without revealing authors’ intentions or reflecting on their positionality.

Methodology

This study builds on previous work using a similar approach—in particular Su’s study (2007) of ideological representations of Taiwanese history in elementary social studies curriculum and Torsti’s (2007) analysis of representations of “the Other” national-ethnic groups in the 8th grade history textbooks used in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Through purposeful sampling (Patton, 2001), the most recent available and widely used editions of secondary history textbooks were selected in China, Japan, and Korea: one from middle school (or junior high school) and another from high school. However, considering the differences in the certification system and number of versions of history textbooks available in each country, we added two more textbooks in each country for a comprehensive representation of textbook accounts on the Second World War (see the appendix for the textbooks that were selected for this study). This study focuses exclusively on Asian experiences and perspectives on the Second World War, and for that reason intentionally does not include

German, American, or any Western textbooks.

In China's case, multiple publishing companies published history textbooks since 2001, though the interpretation of history in school textbooks has traditionally been a function of the national government and the responsibility and authority for producing collective accounts of the nation's past lie with Ministry of Education (formerly known as the National Education Commission). There are currently five different versions of history textbooks used in middle and high schools. For this study, the two most widely used history textbooks published by the People's Education Press in 2009 – one at the middle school level and one at the high school level – were selected. A different version of high school history textbook published by People's Education Press in 2009 (People's Education Press, 2009), and another by People's Press in 2007 (Zhu & Ma, 2007) were added. These versions are the most widely adopted textbooks in Chinese schools (Chen, 2007; Duan, 2010).

In Korea's case, the current history textbook certification system was put into place under the Seventh Curriculum Guidelines in Korea (2002). Highlighting the significance of contemporary history, the guidelines by the Ministry of Educational Science and Technology state that students will be able to develop the capabilities to solve the problems that they encounter now by understanding what happened in the near past. Thus contemporary Korean History textbooks covers the 17th century to the present and as a total six versions are available. *Kumsung*, the most widely used high school history textbook, and two additional high school history textbooks published by *Jungang* and *Doosan*, were selected based on their wide use in high schools (The Ministry of Educational Sciences and Technology, 2004). At the middle school level, only one version of the textbook, *Kuksa* [National History], which is published by the National Institute of Korean History, exists. It covers the beginning of Korean history (2,000 years ago). We reviewed *Kuksa* for the study.

In Japan's case, *Yamakawa*, the most widely used history textbook at the high school level, and *Tokyo Shoseki* at the junior high school were selected for the study. In addition, the least widely adopted texts for junior high and high school levels were also reviewed to illustrate a wide range of historical accounts in Japan's history textbooks, since they were the focus of recent history textbook controversies. The least widely adopted history textbooks at both school levels were drafted by the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (*Tsukurukai*). *Tsukurukai* was founded in 1997 to challenge 'masochistic (or self-defeatism view of history)' in Japanese schools (Tsukurukai, 1997). The organization aimed to introduce counter-narratives that emphasize national identity and a sense of pride to the nation's past to its children. The organization's efforts to draft a new history textbook attracted controversy; 0.039% of junior high schools chose to use this book when it was first adopted (Kimijima, 2000).

Similar to China and Korea, the Ministry of Education sets national curriculum guidelines in Japan. Independent publishers draft school textbooks, but the textbooks must go through the Ministry's rigorous certification process before they can be used in schools. The guideline sets topical divisions of history and provides minimum content requirements. For the Second World War the guideline states that textbooks must introduce the nation's political and diplomatic actions that led Japan into the war and relations with China and other Asian neighbors as well as Europe and the USA. Textbooks also must convey understandings about how the war led to atrocities for all of human society (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 1998). Tables that outline the three nations' textbooks selected for the study and pages that are allotted for the Second World War era are attached in Appendix A.

Data Collection and Analysis

This study looked at the written narrative text in the textbooks as the main data sources. Not every textbook in each country provided every kind of material, and for some textbooks the visual or supplemental materials received more emphasis than for other textbooks. Therefore, the narrative text was the largest body of material directly comparable between the countries' textbooks. Each textbook's content is analyzed in its original language. Notes about the texts were written in English to be exchanged among the researchers involved in this study. Furthermore, necessary textbook excerpts were translated in English by the researchers of this study.

Our analysis took place in multiple stages. First, we examined how the Second World War began, proceeded, and ended as presented in each textbook, roughly guided by the following questions (Werner, 2000):

- How much and where is the war represented in the textbook?
 - How many pages are devoted to chapters on the Second World War?
 - What are the chapters before and after those on the Second World War (i.e., how is the Second World War "framed" in the wider topical organization)?
- What is the storyline of each chapter on the Second World War, including how the war began, proceeded and ended?
- How are key wartime events positioned and framed?

These questions were addressed both quantitatively and qualitatively, considering each country's own context. For instance, neither Chinese nor Korean history textbooks have separate chapters on the Second World War itself. Chinese history textbooks situate the Second World War as a part of the War of Resistance against Japan that began in 1931. Similarly, Korean history textbooks position the war as a history of their resistance against Japanese colonialism since 1910. Thus, instead of singling out the page numbers or sections of the chapter that discuss the Second World War specifically, we included the chapters on the War of Resistance against Japan – in China's case – and resistance against Japanese colonialism – in Korea's case. We compared and contrasted the holistic summary of storylines in each chapter qualitatively (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to look for the patterns and themes across those chapters. Once the narrative of each case was written, we exchanged the case analyses and discussed the findings until the researchers all agreed.

Findings

In this section we describe and explain the ways textbooks from China, Korea, and Japan convey an 'official story' of the Second World War and the relationship to national identity¹. We begin by analyzing patterns of organization and content in the examined Chinese, Korean, and Japanese textbooks. Then we present our analysis of the Chinese, Korean, and Japanese textbooks structured around three thematic patterns that we observed – positioning the nation as a war victim, contributing to national progress, and establishing a singular interpretive narrative

Overview of Chinese, Korean, and Japanese Textbook Accounts of World War II

All the high school textbooks in China – both old and new – refer to the war as the Resistance War

¹ A table that overview the historical events in three nations' textbooks are attached as appendix B. This table is only a descriptive table of what contents are in most textbooks. It aims to give readers only an indication of which topics tend to be included. The historical events that are marked in the table are noted in at least three of the four textbooks from each nation.

against Japan. All mention that the invasion of China is the consequence of Japan's long-term policy to colonize Asia. In doing so, they examine the impact of economic depression on Japan's foreign policy and its decision to create the puppet state in northeastern China. All textbooks also describe how Japan was responsible for the Liutiaogou Incident (also known as Marco Polo Bridge Incident and '9.18 Incident')ⁱⁱ, which marked the beginning of the nationwide War of Resistance against Japan and the beginning of the Second World War in China. The second chapter of the high school history textbook published by the People's Education Press starts with an overview:

The Japanese imperialists launched the full-fledged war to invade China as an inevitable result of its long-prescribed plan to usurp China, dominate Asia, and become a world superpower. (*Zhongguo Jindai Xiandai Shi* (2) 2005, p. 28)

Such an overview is included in all the high school history textbooks selected for this study. Chapter organization also follows this pattern. Commonly, chapters of high school history textbooks on the war start with the '9.18 Incident'ⁱⁱⁱ in 1931 that led to a limited occupation of China's northeastern province by Japan as the beginning of the Japanese invasion. The chapters on the war continue to describe the establishment of the United Front between the Nationalists and Communists to resist the Japanese invasion. The chapters discuss the significance of the Communist Party-led Wayaobao Meeting^{iv}, the citizen-led 12.9 Movement^v, and finally the Xi'an Incident,^{vi} which pressured Chiang Kai-shek to adopt a resistance policy against Japan.

Middle school history textbooks published by People's Education Press cover the Second World War in a similar way. The unit on the Chinese Resistance War against Japan has three sub-sections: 1) The Unforgettable 9.18 Incident; 2) 'Rather Die in the Fight against Japan than Live as a Slave without a Homeland'; and 3) The Great Wall Built with Blood and Flesh. This unit features three maps, sixteen photos/pictures, and four other types of primary documents. While the middle school text offers less detail than the high school versions, it uses more primary sources featuring personal and emotionally charged accounts of each event, such as a description of the Nanjing Massacre, testimony of a Japanese military officer in his postwar memoir stating that the Japanese were responsible for the explosion as a pretext for invasion, and the lyrics of a popular song known as 'September 18' expressing the indignation and sorrow of the Chinese against the Japanese invaders who occupied Manchuria.

Similarly, all four textbooks in Korea situate the Second World War as a global context of Japanese colonialism by placing it in the first or second page of the unit that discusses Japanese annexation of the Korean peninsula in 1910. *Kumsung*, the most widely adopted high school history textbook in Korea, describes the beginning of the war this way:

The Great Depression in 1929 created a significant impact on the international atmosphere, which led to Nazism, fascism, and militarism. Japan's imperialism built a foundation to invade China by provoking the Manchurian Incident in 1931. Through the Sino-Japanese War and Pacific War, Japan entered the world war. This war caused our nation as well as people in Asian nations tremendous suffering and sacrifices (*Kumsung*, 2002/2009, p.142).

A similar description of the beginning of the war is found in the other three textbooks, although *Kuksa*, middle school textbook, provides a much shorter description. Instead of giving lengthy details of why and how the war happened, all the textbooks situate the Second World War in a series of wars such as the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), and the Second Sino-Japanese War (1931-1945) – in other words, the series of conflicts that

resulted in Japan occupying Korea as a colony. Among those events, the Second World War, which is labeled the Pacific War (1941-1945), is depicted as a historical event that set up the last stage of Japanese colonialist policies in the Korean peninsula.

This pattern is more evident in how the chapters are organized in the unit on Japanese colonization (titled “Korean People’s Resistance Unfolds.” This unit is structured by dividing the occupation period roughly by decade, and each chapter emphasizes how Koreans resisted particular policies. For instance, the first chapter covers the 1910s when Japanese soldiers and police ruled over Koreans, while the second chapter covers the 1920s, after the March 1st Independence Movement, when the Japanese government allowed Koreans limited freedom to create their own newspaper and schools. The third and fourth chapters – respectively – cover the 1930s and 1940s when Japan went to war with China and later the USA and Britain. The close relationship between Korea and Japan is highlighted, as Korea became a military and resource base for Japan’s war effort. Each Japanese war from the late 1800s to the 1940s is interpreted as a trigger to a change in Japanese colonialist policy in Korea.

Although Japanese history textbooks need to follow the national curriculum guidelines set by the Ministry of Education (as in China and Korea), we note that Japan has more diverse publishers drafting and printing history textbooks since the Japanese history textbooks became the target of controversy and criticisms; and Japan has more experience of market control in publishing textbooks than Korea and China. In contrast to China and Korea that cover the war as part of their resistance war against Japan, Japanese history textbooks have separate chapters on the Second World War and slightly differ in tone, description of events, and supplemental information provided.

The most and least widely used textbooks frame the nation’s war experience slightly differently from one another. For the high school level, *Yamakawa* publishes the most widely adopted history textbook and at the junior high school level, *Tokyo Shoseki* publishes the most widely adopted history textbook (used by about half of all schools in Japan). *Meiseisha* at the high school and *Fusosha* at the junior high school level publish the least widely adopted textbook (no more than 2% of schools). The most prominent difference between these most and least popular textbooks is the way they name the Second World War. When Japan started the war against the US and other Allied nations, the Japanese government officially called the war the Great East Asia War. The least widely adopted textbooks use the Great East Asia War to differentiate the Second World War from the series of wars and conflicts that were ongoing before Japan launched its war against the Allied nations. The most widely adopted textbooks, on the other hand, do not mention how the war was officially named in Japan and only use the “Second World War” to identify the conflict.

How the Textbooks Position the Nation as War Victim

The first pattern we found across the three nations’ history textbooks is that every country positions itself or its people as victims of the war. This is especially evident in Chinese and Korean history textbooks. The Korean and Chinese textbooks position the Second World War to complement their narratives of national identity through their struggles against Japanese military aggression. The Nanjing Massacre, indiscriminant bombing, depopulating the countryside, human experimentation, and germ and chemical warfare, in China’s case, and colonialism, mobilization of war materials including labor mobilization, and the Japanese military’s sexual violence, in Korea’s case, are concrete examples to exhibit the kinds of violence both the state and its people faced during the Second World War.

All Chinese textbook versions – for both middle and high schools -- highlight the brutality of the Japanese during the war and the suffering of the Chinese people. All textbooks present the Nanking Massacre based on the presentation and analysis of the primary sources, which were news coverage of the time and the eyewitness accounts. All textbook versions describe the suffering of the Chinese people, who were severely affected by the war and who were forced to leave their homes and lived in grief after they lost their family members. All textbooks remind history learners of the unprecedented disaster and great loss as a result of the Japanese invasion of China. Texts representing such destructive results of Japanese invasion of China are multiple in all textbooks. *Lishi* published by People's Press, described the consequences of the war as such, "In the eight years fighting against the Japanese, the number of wounded and dead Chinese civilians and soldiers was above 35 million with direct losses as high as 100 billion dollars and indirect losses as high as 500 billion dollars." (*Lishi*, p.47). The high school textbook published by the People's Education Press confirmed such statistics with estimated Chinese casualties during the war as high as at least 35,000,000 people either killed or injured during the war, with a total of 560 billion dollars of property damage and war expenditures (*Zhongguo Lishi*, 2006). The middle school version is not as in depth as the high school versions as far as coverage of these events is concerned.

All four Korean textbooks, on the other hand, accentuate the Japanese government's cultural assimilation policy by devoting one of the five chapters to this period. The cultural assimilation policy included requiring Koreans to speak Japanese and to change their names to Japanese forms. This policy is emphasized both in the main text and the supplementary information, featuring the theories Japanese used to highlight the relationship between Japan and Korea. *Kuksa* notes that the Japanese cultural assimilation policy was based on *Il-Sun-Dong-Jo-Rhon*, the idea that Japanese and Koreans come from the same ancestors (*Kuksa*, 2002, p. 261). *Kumsung* elaborates the historical controversy over *Imnail* as a theoretical basis for *Il-Sun-Dong-Jo-Rhon*., explaining that some Japanese scholars claimed there existed a Japanese colony, *Imnail* (Minami), in the southern part of Korean peninsula which the Japanese Yamato rulers controlled from the fourth to sixth centuries.

All the textbooks also feature the materials including human resources that were exploited for the Second World War. *Kumsung* describes,

Japan's aggressive war expanded across Asia once the Pacific War began. For the continuation of reckless war, the national mobilization law was ordered. Most of all, young people in Chosun were drafted through the volunteer system by Japanese empire due to the shortage of the military forces.... In 1943, even students were drafted as soldiers through the student volunteer system. Finally in 1944, the compulsory military system was ordered and approximately 20,000 young people had been conscripted until Japan surrendered (*Kumsung*, p. 162).

The other three textbooks emphasize the economic exploitation by the Japanese empire during the colonialist occupation. They explain that Korean peninsula became a military base for Japanese military involvement with China, and the Japanese empire built armaments factories in Korea and pushed to increase the production of natural resources such as iron, coal, and tungsten.

One noticeable pattern here in both Chinese and Korean history textbooks is that violence emphasized in the textbooks was not always against the state *per se*, but the acts are consistently represented as violence against human beings and even humanity as a whole. When Chinese and Korean history textbooks set a narrative tone of victimization, they virtually anthropomorphize Japan-the-foreign-state as a kind of single, collectivized perpetrator of violence. In this respect,

wartime violence serves as a humanitarian perspective to draw a clear line between victims and aggressors in history and represent Japan as a single and monolithic actor without mentioning casualties or victims due to the constant domestic conflicts in both countries. The violence, then, offers a framework to give a common experience through which both the state and its people are grouped together to share a common sense of national history.

The Japanese history textbooks, on the other hand, victimize Japan by distinguishing the state and the people when interpreting what happened in the Second World War. For Japan, the war results in defeat: Tokyo Tribunal of War Criminals and other postwar penalties marked Japan as the culpable party responsible for the war and its violence. In this respect, representing the war through a perspective that emphasizes a nationally shared experience between the state and its people would necessarily situate both Japan and the Japanese people as the aggressor in history.

Our analysis, however, identifies that Japanese history textbooks also take a humanitarian perspective of history when looking at Japan's defeat at the end of the war. The most widely adopted textbooks in tone situate the Japanese people primarily as passive victims of war and of the military that dominated the nation-state. For instance, in comparing supplementary reading materials, *Tokyo-Shoseki* highlights war atrocities by Japan and the Allies and also the perspective of victims from Japan and other countries that were colonized by Japan such as Korea and Taiwan. The textbook provides the information about the Japanese children being separated from their parents to be evacuated to the countryside, about the people in Japanese-occupied Southeast Asia being mobilized to support Japan's war efforts, and about the number of casualties in the war reaching over 20 million throughout Asia to highlight Japan's causing war damages and losses in other nations throughout Asia. Then, the textbook provides a photograph of US forces using bombing in the battle of Okinawa as well as a large photograph of Hiroshima after the atomic bombing to depict the atrocities and horrors of the war brought by the Allied forces.

Highlighting war victims and atrocities from both sides of the war can be said to bring a challenge to national or ideological perspectives in history. However, it also works to neutralize the narrative tone in national history by sharing the blame for inflicting such atrocities on humanity. While *Fusosha* focuses on Japan's humanitarian experiences in the Second World War and seems to challenge the exclusive castigation of Japan's wartime past; *Yamakawa* and *Tokyo-Shoseki* also neutralize the narrative by condemning war atrocities in general while avoiding serious inquiry into the nation's wartime conduct and its people's active involvement in it. *Yamakawa* and *Tokyo-Shoseki* both employ passive voice when explaining the war's events. When covering Pearl Harbor, for example, *Tokyo-Shoseki* states,

The USA exercised caution about Japanese aggression. The USA put restrictions on the sale of war materials and stopped exporting oil to Japan when

Japan occupied French Indochina. This USA trade embargo was made to pressure

Japan to negotiate a resolution to the Japanese-Chinese War, and thus Japan decided to wage war against the USA. On December 8, 1941, Japan launched a surprise attack against Pearl Harbor in Hawai'i, and the Pacific War began. With the entrance of the USA, the Second World War became a conflict between the

Axis powers—Japan, Germany, Italy and others—and the Allied powers—the USA, United Kingdom, Soviet Union, and others (*Tokyo-Shoseki* 2006/2009, p.192).

Tokyo-Shoseki presents factual information about the Pearl Harbor attack like a neutral chronicle. It avoids representation of any sense of agency at the time and presents the decision to attack Pearl Harbor as a passive, almost automatic outcome. The above excerpt also shows that it was not only Japan but also the USA involved in the Pacific War's opening. It could be said that this kind of representation is an attempt to be balanced, but this narrative also works to avoid identifying the party chiefly responsible for causing the war.

This historical interpretation represents the Japanese people collectively as victims of the war but without any clear responsibility for it. *Yamakawa* and *Tokyo-Shoseki* clearly hold the Japanese nation-state responsible for its wartime aggression, but the passive chronicle-like tone downplays popular support for Japanese militarism. *Meiseisha* and *Fusosha* offer a historical interpretation of the war in which the Japanese nation's singular culpability is subtly questioned through the emphasized wartime experiences and perspectives of the Japanese people. All of these textbooks, in a sense, reinforce a collective memory of victimization – though the memory is contested between a variant in which the Japanese people are exonerated from the past culpability of the nation-state through its postwar democratic transformation and a variant in which the Japanese nation, too, is a wartime victim and yet the past culpability does not undermine the continuity or validity of the nation-state.

Thus, the defeat gave a birth to a new democratic state, and the Japanese people are translated from a position of war aggressors to occupied subjects in a defeated nation and unique historical victims as the only nation ever to suffer atomic bomb attacks. The Japanese people were victimized by their state, which had wrongfully led them into the war of aggression. The defeat, therefore, marks the beginning of a new democratic state, and its introduction has liberated the people from the oppression of the old tyrannical state that had misled them. In this respect, the Japanese history textbooks also employ a humanitarian perspective of history that absolves wartime violence against humanity through a narrative of linear progress. This humanitarian perspective, in the case of Japan, builds a narrative to offer a collectively shared experience that situates the Japanese people as the victims of their state's violence.

How the Textbooks Describe National Progress

The second pattern we identified is that every country defines national progress differently. However, each country's textbooks do basically the same thing intellectually. All these textbook accounts are inherently reductionist, deterministic, and represent national development as linear and progressive. They all presume the way that things turned out today are normal and natural, which fits comfortably in the current global system that emerged after (and arguably because of) the Second World War. In doing so, all the textbooks downplay the historical contexts underlying the events that happened and the confusing, at times contradictory, diversity of perspectives and roles that historical actors and groups played during the period.

Chinese textbooks strain to reinforce a collective memory in which Nationalists and Communists, ultimately, are chiefly partners in the national story. All textbook versions, both middle and high school textbooks, describe the construction of a unified front as the leading factor to the success of the war against Japan. A common theme is found in all versions: Chinese people fought undauntedly in the war against Japan under the leadership of a nation-wide unified anti-Japan frontline to defend China against the invaders.

Under the leadership of the unified front to resist the Japanese, the Nationalist and Communist parties collaborated to fight against Japan. While the Nationalist party launched

multiple campaigns at the front battlefield, the Communist Party collaborated with their efforts to fight against the Japanese invasion by establishing battle fields at the rear of the enemy (*Lishi*, 2007, p. 44).

All the Chinese textbooks describe both the war's front battlefields and rear battlefields. The nationalist government led by Chiang Kai-shek was half-hearted in its resistance against Japan. The government was more interested in suppressing the growth of the Communist Party, which was still in its infancy and considered an unofficial bandit opposition. The nationalist government was divided within itself over the consequences of a broader war. Thanks to the high spirits and undaunted resistance efforts of Chinese soldiers and civilians, the national government eventually agreed to form a coalition with the communists and lead the whole nation to fight against Japan.

All textbooks published by People's Education Press, offer a chapter or lesson on the People's Liberation War led by the Communist Party immediately following the chapter on the War of Resistance against Japan, chronologically describing the Liberation War as an inevitable civil war as a result of Chiang Kai-shek launching a nationwide war against the communist armies. Using a thematic approach to organize its content, *Lishi* places the historical narrative of the war against Japan within its thematic unit titled "Struggles for Defending National Sovereignty in Contemporary China." The same unit offers accounts of multiple imperialist invasions of China from as early as the Opium War in the 1840s to the War of Resistance against Japan (1937-1945). This unit was followed by a unit with narratives about three major revolutions: the Taiping Revolution (1850-1864), the Xinhai Revolution (1911), and the New Democratic Revolution (the May 4th Movement of 1919) to argue that, despite the great impact of the Taiping and Xinhai revolutions, it was the Communist Party that eventually led the whole nation towards victory and peace in 1949.

While Chinese textbook chapters on the war seek to legitimize the leadership status of the Communist party through its efforts in fighting against the Japanese aggressors in a time of national crisis, Korean history textbooks emphasize the role of national government in the political independence from Japan, leading to the establishment of South Korean government. In Korean textbooks the war is found both at the end of the chapter on Japanese colonialism and in the next chapter on the birth of the Republic of Korea. At the end of the chapter on Japanese colonialism, *Jungang* states that the "Korean Liberation Army declared war against Japan and was about to advance into the Korean peninsula but it did not happen because of Japan's sudden surrender" (*Jungang*, 2002/2009, p. 215). None of the textbooks explains how the war ended or what happened in Japan. Only one textbook, *Kumsung*, mentions the atomic bombs. Instead, the end of the war is described mainly as the time when Korea gained its independence from Japan. *Kuksa* makes no comment on the end of the war and jumps straight to the birth of the Republic of Korea.

In the next chapter on the birth of Republic of Korea, each textbook tells a slightly different but similar story. According to the chapter goals, all four textbooks aim to explain the global contexts after the Second World War and how the end of that conflict led to the Cold War and the Korean War. Most importantly, the four textbooks want students to understand how Koreans made efforts to create their own governments under the political sway of the Soviet Union in North Korea and the USA in South Korea. *Kumsung* states that the provisional government of the Republic of Korea created the Korean Liberation Army and declared war on Japan and Germany in 1941. The Liberation Army participated in military action in China and Southeast Asia and also, along with the US military, planned to attack Japanese forces in Korea but did not have the opportunity to do so before the Japanese surrender in August 1945. Three of the four textbooks mention that the Provisional Government of Korea, the official predecessor of the current South Korean government,

declared war against the Japanese empire in 1941 from exile in Shanghai.

One of the noticeable patterns across the Korean history textbooks is that there is no substantial explanation of why or how the war ended. The focus is more on what happened after the Second World War and how consequences of the conflict influenced the global contexts of the Cold War, which led to the establishment of the two Koreas. Possibly this cursory and vague coverage of the broader Second World War and emphasis on Koreans' resistance against Japanese colonialism reflects the war's limited stake in South Korea's collective memory of the era. As an annexed colony with little power or resources, Korea could not be a decisive factor in the war's outcome compared to the USA or China. Perhaps because of that, Korean textbooks, with considerable uniformity, reinforce a collective memory of the Second World War in which Koreans are central to their own liberation and definition of their identity in the postwar world.

While Chinese and Korean history textbooks found the legitimacy of the current political systems by highlighting their roles during the war, Japanese textbooks do the same by occluding from the collective memory popular support for the war effort. When examining how the Second World War is positioned, *Yamakawa* (the most widely adopted high school textbook) and *Tokyo-Shoseki* (the most widely adopted junior high school textbook) put the war in the second-to-the-last chapter, with the final chapter covering postwar and contemporary Japan. This clearly indicates the Second World War period for Japan as a distinct precursor of Japan's contemporary period. Both *Yamakawa* and *Tokyo-Shoseki* mark Japan's defeat in the Second World War as the end of the old, militaristic Japanese society. The Empire of Japan that had waged war against other nations as a way to resolve international disputes is abandoned, and the historical narrative in the textbooks establishes a clean break with the past for postwar Japan. The final chapter stresses the notion of peace and democratization of Japan. While *Yamakawa* gives a more detailed description than *Tokyo-Shoseki*, the chapter structure of both textbooks exhibits a Hegelian notion of history as linear progress. The division between war and peace clearly juxtaposes the disconnection between the chapters that illustrate prewar and the postwar Japan. The present peace emphasized in the final chapter, however, appears merely an attainment that was brought by the nation's defeat and the war's conclusion.

The least-adopted textbooks, *Meiseisha* and *Fusosha*, convey the same framework for positioning the war. However, a notable difference is that the textbooks published by *Meiseisha* and *Fusosha* have sections on "The War of the Twentieth Century and Victim of Totalitarianism" and "Inquiry into the Tokyo Tribunal Court." These sections cover Japanese war crimes while still emphasizing that atrocities were committed by both sides. In the section on Tokyo Tribunal Court, the textbook contains a photograph of newspaper articles that were censored by the General Head Quarters of Allied Occupation Force, illustrating Allied censorship in the postwar Japan. *Fusosha* also contains a two-sentence statement about Allied censorship:

[The Allied Occupation Force] built an understanding of the injustice of Japan's war effort through mass media. Such propaganda has contributed in building among the Japanese a sense of guilt about the nation's activities in the war, and it made impact on the historical consciousness of the Japanese people in postwar Japan (*Fusosha*, 2007: 215).

Only these few sentences subtly challenge the positivism of Japan's postwar reforms. All Japanese textbooks convey that imperial Japan was defeated and that the Allied occupation introduced a new and present Japan. The textbooks emphasize the nation's postwar peace and de-militarization as a natural, linear historical process without causal explanation or detailed elaboration on how the

nation had departed from its wartime past. In the chapter following the war, both the most and least widely adopted textbooks illustrate the series of structural changes brought to Japan by the Allied occupation. These changes include the dissolution of *zaibatsu* corporate conglomerates, the establishment of antimonopoly law, agrarian reform, labor reforms, and the enfranchisement of all adult males and females. Most notable is the introduction of a new constitution in which Japan renounced the nation's sovereign right to declare wars as means of settling international disputes. These reforms are symbolically represented to illustrate a new postwar democratic Japan.

The way that humanitarian perspectives are deployed in these textbooks, perhaps not surprisingly, remains uncritical of the contemporary state, if not necessarily its historical role or condition. Humanitarian narratives of victimization tend to construct contemporary problems and difficulties as the historical fault of others – even if those ‘others’ may be a previous generation or a particular group within the nation (as in the Japanese textbooks that attribute national culpability for the war to a regime of militarists rather than the people as a whole). Each country's textbooks, on the whole, position the contemporary condition as the necessary, natural, or inevitable product of past struggles. Thus, history in these official textbooks is presented as a linear path of progress. Even though these textbooks come from countries with far more strongly centralized curricula than the US, this historical orientation may not be altogether different from the sanitized narratives of national unity and progress that some American scholars see in US textbooks and common approaches to teaching history (Barton & McCully, 2005; Levstik, 2000, VanSledright, 2011; Wertsch, 2002, 2004).

Establishing a Singular Interpretative Narrative

Our analysis of these textbooks illustrates how the three nation-states deploy history curricula to try to shape collective memories and national identities consonant with the current world system. In the case of China, the textbooks selected in this study have a clear focus on the role played by the Communist Party in the national crisis. The communists' establishment of resistance bases and whole-hearted effort to fight are considered key factors in Japan's defeat in China and, therefore, contributing to the Allied victory in the world war. This perspective can be seen as reflecting the interests and needs of the current communist government, which helps to explain the selective interpretations of China's social, political, and military situation at the time.

All textbooks reviewed in this study depict a China going through an “old” and a “new” democratic and nationalist revolution. The old revolution, namely the Taiping and Xinhai revolutions led by the peasants and the bourgeois classes, ended in failure despite its great impact and merit. The new revolution (the May 4th Movement, the establishment of the Communist Party, the Nationalist Revolution, the communist “Rural Surrounding Urban” strategy, and the People's Revolutionary War, led by the proletarians) ultimately made China a unified country under the leadership of the Communist party. As seen in *Lish*, one of the high school textbooks:

The contemporary experiences of the Chinese revolutions prove that it is historical necessity that the Chinese people choose the leadership of the Communist party to lead them from the path of the new democratic revolution to the new path of the socialist revolution (*Lishi*, People's Press, 2007, p. 67).

It is therefore not hard to notice that the Chinese history for public schools is written to reinforce a collective memory of the Chinese people united under a coalition between Communists and Nationalists during a national crisis.

Similarly, scholarship in both Japan and Korea (Bae, 1987; Lee, 1993; Mizoguchi, 1988; Ogihara, 1991) contends that Korea had shown economic development under Japanese occupation, as there had been enormous Japanese investment to change – or “modernize” -- Korean agriculture and industry. Textbook accounts in Japan and Korea, however, rarely take much notice of this. All the three Korean high school history textbooks note that the Japanese empire enforced a plan to increase the yield of rice in Korea and solve food shortages in Japan. Once Japan invaded China, it “forcefully took over a huge amount of rice that was produced in Korea to supply food to the military” (*Doosan*, p. 217). Responding to the food shortage in Korea, the Japanese empire conducted food rationing and imported grains from Manchuria. The Korean textbooks also note that many Korean farmers lost their land as a result of the Japanese government’s survey of land ownership right after the annexation.

On the other hand, the most widely adopted Japanese textbooks, *Tokyo-Shoseki* and *Yamakawa*, have only a few lines about the Japanese role in economic changes in the Korean peninsula. Both *Tokyo-Shoseki* and *Yamakawa* discuss the Japanese government survey of land ownership in Korea after annexation through which Japan seized Korean land that was of unclaimed ownership. The least widely adopted textbooks, *Fusosha* and *Meiseisha*, also discuss Japan’s taking of Korean land as a result of the Japanese government survey. However, they add that it was Japan’s failure to provide sufficient time for Korean landowners to claim their land had that caused Koreans to lose their property ownership. Furthermore, *Fusosha* offers a single line that “a part of colonial governance policies, the Government-General of Choson (the Colonial Headquarters) had carried out the constructions of railroads, irrigation, and such when it started the survey of land ownership in Korea” (pp.170-171). However, in all four textbooks, Japanese responsibility for bringing or causing economic changes in Korea is almost non-existent.

Discussing such ‘possibly beneficial’ outcomes of the war and colonialism has been taboo in Japan because it can be considered as an act of justifying the war and annexation of Korea. Likewise, it is a taboo in Korea because an emphasis on such outcomes undermines the national narrative that Korea became a politically and economically independent modern country on its own. Thus, Japanese history textbooks do not mention these socio-economic changes in Korea due to Japanese investment, and Korean history textbooks only highlight that resources in Korea were exploited by Japan without noting how Japanese investments possibly helped modernize Korea’s agricultural system.

Discussion

This study confirms what at first glance appears to be a simple truth: Different countries—China, Japan, and South Korea—tell official histories (as reflected in approved textbooks) that differ. Although this study does not tell us how teachers use these textbooks in their classrooms, given the fact that these three countries are highly centralized in terms of their educational systems, we suggest that in China, Japan, and South Korea textbooks represent a kind of mediated space through which the state seeks to influence or shape what students learn in schools through a controllable mechanism (curriculum guidelines and textbook approval). In that regard, this study identifies a common practice in the ways all of these countries position the past in school curricula. It is in this common practice where we find an important implication for history educators, textbook writers, and policy makers on the inclusion of history as a part of school curriculum within a globalized context today.

Broadly, we find an underlying humanitarian perspective of history as the master narrative of how

the Second World War is portrayed in prominent approved history textbooks from China, Japan, and South Korea. In our interpretation, this master narrative has the following three functions: (1) It empowers people in the present to evaluate the past outside of its historical contexts; (2) it constructs a vision of historical justice (global humanitarianism) in which the contemporary society is absolved of the past and the past is reconciled with the society's place in the world system today; (3) it fosters a sense of national identity and homogeneity (or ubiquity) of historical-cultural experience in an effort to influence the contemporary society's collective memory through positioning present and past conditions in particular ways.

These official deployments of the past compete with other uses of the past, such as popular history and academic history (Seixas, 2004). Popular histories in each country often tell different stories than official history. In contrast to schools that do not want to use history textbooks that contain extreme perspectives (such as the *Tsukurukai* textbook), history trade books that are unapologetically nationalistic are sometimes bestsellers in Japan. In China it is well known that certain history is not taught in schools but often circulated and whispered among its people – the 1989 Tian An Men Square Protest, for instance. In South Korea there are stories that have been rarely taught in schools but that are found in popular tales or family lore, such as Korea student-soldiers who truly believed that they were Japanese and volunteered to fight for the Emperor during the Japanese colonial period.

This tension is discernible in how all three nations' textbooks in this study offer strongly singular national narratives in which official history is reinforced, academic history is carefully employed as a selective evidentiary support, and popular history is incorporated only so far as it illustrates the national story. All the textbooks in this study—Chinese, Japanese, and South Korean—avoid opening up school history as an interpretive space that would invite students to do authentic historical inquiry, an issue with history textbooks that has been observed in prior studies (Clark, 2009; Suh, Yurita, & Metzger, 2008). None of the international controversies over remembering the Second World War seem to be articulated in these history textbooks in a way that positions students to deliberate on or participate in these socio-historical debates. Values and meanings of historical events in the past and present are not compared and contrasted, and only one meaning of an event is presented.

In her analysis of national history curriculum debates in Australia and later Canada, Clark (2004, 2007) argues that these intense arguments over how to teach 'our national history' to 'our children' often ended up emphasizing the memorization of basic facts instead of critical historical engagement. Building on that argument, our study suggests that the misplaced sense of historical authenticity deployed in history textbooks can result in historical reductionism that mystifies critical thinking and the complexities of agency in history. In other words, the heated controversies about history, collective memories, and social identities that play out in the 'adult world' of international politics and global media are kept distinct from the 'school world' of students, for whom history is to remain a safely sanitized and largely academic experience.

As a consequence, interpretive historical orientations that may be advocated by educational reformers and researchers may conflict with nation-states' perceived need to use history curriculum to transmit unifying narratives of unity and progress across generations. This need may not be limited just to countries with centralized curricula like China, Japan, and South Korea, considering similar critiques brought against history teaching and textbooks in the more decentralized Australia, Canada, and the US. Given its centrality in creating the context of the globalized world system today, the Second World War is a particularly potent example of a historical topic important to

nation-state efforts to influence collective memory about the national past.

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Appendix A

Table 1: Chinese textbooks selected for the study and coverage of World War II

| Book title | Pages allotted to WWII Era numbers | Publisher | Year |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <i>Zhongguo Lishi (8th Grade Volume I & II)</i> [Chinese History] | 17 out of 243 total | Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe [People's Education Press] | 2006 |
| <i>Zhongguo Jindai Xiandai Shi</i> [Chinese Contemporary & Modern History] | 28 out of 310 total | Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe [People's Education Press] | 2004/2009 |
| <i>Lishi (Volume 1 & II)</i> [History] | 11 out of 399 total | Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe [People's Education Press] | 2009 |
| <i>Lishi [History]</i> | 4 out of 242 total | Zhu, H. & Ma, L., Renmin Chubanshe [People's Press] | 2007 |

Table 2: Korean textbooks selected for the study and coverage of World War II

| Book title | Pages allotted to WWII Era | Publisher | Year |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| <i>Kuksa [Korean History]</i> | 42 out of 359 total | National Institute of Korean History | 2009 |
| <i>Hankuk Gunhyundaesa</i> [Korean Contemporary History] | 106 out of 368 total | Kumsung | 2006/2009 |
| <i>Hanguk Gunhyundaesa</i> [Korean Contemporary History] | 112 out of 399 total | Chungang | 2006/2009 |
| <i>Hanguk Gunhyundaesa</i> [Korean Contemporary History] | 113 out of 384 total | Doosan | 2006/2009 |

Table 3: Japanese textbooks selected for the study and coverage of World War II

| Book title | Page numbers | Publisher | Year |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------|
| <i>Shousetsu Nihonshi [Revised Edition for Detailed Japanese History]</i> | 25/411 | Yamakawa | 2006/2007 |
| <i>Shinpen Atarashii Shakai: Rekishi [New Society (New Edition): History]</i> | 12/229 | Tokyo-Shoseki | 2007 |
| <i>Kohtogakko saishin nihonshi [History for High School (Most Updated)]</i> | 18/283 | Meiseisha | 2007 |
| <i>Atarashii Rekishi Kyokasho [New History Textbook].</i> | 20/245 | Fusohsa | 2007 |

Appendix B

List of Historical Events in Chinese, Korean and Japanese Textbooks

| | Chinese textbooks | Korean textbooks | Japanese textbooks |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Japanese imperialism in East Asia in the early 1900s | | | |
| 1. The three nations after World War I | | | |
| a. Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910 and Koreans' resistance | | x | x |
| b. Japanese annexation of Taiwan | x | | x |
| c. Xinhai Revolution and the Republic of China established | x | | x |
| d. Rise of Japanese militarism | x | x | x |
| 2. Japan strengthens the occupation of Korea | | | |
| a. Rule by the military police | x | x | x |
| b. The realities of cultural politics | | x | x |
| c. Economic policies and exploitation | x | x | x |
| d. Educational and cultural policies | | x | x |

| | Chinese textbooks | Korean textbooks | Japanese textbooks |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 3. National and social movements | | | |
| a. March 1 st Movement | | x | x |
| b. May 4 th Movement | x | | x |
| c. Social movements in the three nations | x | x | x |
| d. The Great Kanto Earthquake and massacre of Koreans and Chinese in Japan | | x | x |
| 4. Social and cultural changes | | | |
| a. Socio-cultural changes in Korea | | x | |
| b. Socio-cultural changes in China | x | | |
| c. Socio-cultural changes in Japan | | | x |
| Japanese invasion of East Asia and the Pacific War, 1931-1945 | | | |
| 1. Japan's invasion on China's North Eastern region | x | | |
| a. The Manchurian Incident | x | | x |
| b. Manchukuo (Manchu State) appears | x | | x |
| c. Society and economy of Manchukuo | x | | x |
| d. Resistance against Manchukuo and Japan in North Eastern region | x | | x |
| 2. Japan's conquests in Asia | | | |
| a. Sino-Japanese War | x | x | x |
| b. Asia Pacific War | x | x | x |
| c. Constructing 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere' | | x | x |
| d. Total war against China, Britain, U.S. | | x | |
| | | | |

| | Chinese textbooks | Korean textbooks | Japanese textbooks |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 3. Japanese atrocities against the Chinese people | | | |
| a. People and refugees in the battlefields | x | | x |
| b. Nanjing Massacre | x | | x |
| c. Indiscriminating bombing, full scale invasion of China, depopulating the countryside | x | | x |
| d. Germ warfare, gas warfare, and human experimentation | x | | x |
| e. Japanese military's sexual violence | | | x |
| 4. Japanese military policies in Korea and exploitation of Korean people and resources | | | |
| a. Japanese assimilation policies | | x | x |
| b. War industry during the war | | x | x |
| c. Mobilization of war materials | | x | x |
| d. Labor mobilization | | x | x |
| e. Korean women who were taken to be 'comfort women' for Japanese army | | x | x |
| 5. Strategic events | | | |
| a. Pearl Harbor and U.S. entry into the war | | | x |
| b. Fall of Singapore and the Philippines to Japan | | | x |
| c. Japanese invasion of Southeast Asia and Burma | | | x |
| d. Battle of Midway | | | x |
| e. U.S retaking of the Philippines and "island hopping" campaign to threaten Japan's home islands | | | x |
| | | | |

| | Chinese textbooks | Korean textbooks | Japanese textbooks |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 6. Japan's defeat and war damages | | | |
| a. China's war against Japan | x | | x |
| b. Koreans' resistance and preparation for building a new nation | | x | x |
| c. People's resistance in Japan's occupied territories in Southeast Asia | | | x |
| d. Atomic bombs and Japan's surrender, 1945 | x | x | x |
| East Asia after WWII | | | |
| 1. The three nation in the post-war period | | | |
| a. Japan's defeat and reforms after the war | | | x |
| b. Korea's independence and the division of North and South Korea | | x | x |
| c. Establishment of People's Republic of China, 1949 | x | | x |
| 2. Challenges after WWII | | | |
| a. Tokyo trial | | | x |
| b. The Treaty of San Francisco and war compensation | | | x |
| c. Colonial rule and social problems after the war | | x | x |
| 3. Cold War in East Asia and normalization of the diplomatic relations | | | |
| a. Cold War in East Asia and Korean War | | x | x |
| b. Establishment of diplomatic relation between Korean and Japan | | x | partially x |
| c. Normalization of diplomatic relation between China and Japan | | x | x |
| d. Establishment of diplomatic relation between China and Korea | | x | |

Note: The "x" marking indicates that a majority of the reviewed textbooks from that country covers that topic to some direct extent.

Footnote

ⁱ In this article, unless otherwise noted, 'Korea' is used interchangeably with the Republic of Korea (South Korea) as well as the united ethnic nation that existed prior to 1945.

ⁱⁱ On the night of July 7, 1937, a Japanese unit operating near the Marco Polo Bridge demanded entry to the town of Wanping in order to search for a missing soldier. The Chinese garrison refused, and shooting broke out between the two sides. In the face of growing anti-Japanese sentiment among the Chinese public, the Chinese government refused to make any concessions and the Japanese forces maintained their position inside Chinese territory.

ⁱⁱⁱ 9.18 Incident of 1931 is also known as the Manchuria Incident or Liutiaohu Incident. On September 18, 1931, a small quantity of dynamite was detonated by Japanese soldiers close to a railroad owned by Japan's South Manchuria Railway near Liutiaohu, Mukden (now Shenyang, China). The Imperial Japanese Army accused the Chinese of the act and responded with a full invasion that led to the occupation of Manchuria, in which Japan established its puppet state of Manchukuo six months later. The ruse was soon exposed to the international community, leading to Japan's diplomatic isolation and withdrawal from the League of Nations.

^{iv} At the Wayaobao Meeting in December, 1935, the communist leadership including Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai adopted a resolution of military strategy under which the civil war would be combined with a nationalist war against Japanese occupation.

^v 12.9 Movement of 1935 was a student-led resistance movement to demonstrate the desire of the Chinese people to defend their homeland after the Japanese army occupied Northeast China. It started with students in Beijing staging protests to call for the nationalist government to end the civil war against the communists and fight against Japan. Eventually, the movement spread all over China. Not only students marched to call for the government to fight against Japan, but also workers held strikes to support the student movement.

^{vi} The Xi'an Incident of 1936 took place in the city of Xi'an during the Chinese Civil War between the ruling Kuomintang (KMT) military government and the Chinese Communist Party, just before the War of Resistance against Japan. On 12 December 1936, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the Kuomintang, was suddenly arrested by General Zhang Xueliang, who used to be governor of Japanese-occupied Manchukuo. The incident led the Nationalists and the Communists to make peace so that the two could form a united front against the increasing threat posed by Japan. Many details about the incident still remain unclear even today, as most of the parties involved died without revealing exactly what happened during those chaotic few weeks.