

The Nationalist Discourse in Contemporary Japan: The Role of China and Korea in the Last Decade*

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This brief paper will critically examine the contentions of Japanese nationalist intellectuals whose stated goal is to restore the Japanese people's pride in their nation through the rehabilitation of patriotism at home, consolidation of a state-centric view of Japan, and pursuit of a more assertive foreign policy. In particular, what roles do China and Korea play in the nationalists' arguments? The paper demonstrates that the nationalists engage in a selective use of ideas, events, and institutions of historical significance and that they reconstruct a past Japan in their ideal image and use that image to frame their discourse on the major political and foreign policy challenges facing Japan today. It concludes that the more critical the Chinese and Korean criticisms of Japan are, the more determined the nationalists will be in their rejection of those criticisms and appeals to the general public.

Key words: *nationalism, Yasukuni Shrine, history textbook, war criminals, constitutional revision, abduction, Rape of Nanking, comfort women, Takeshima/Dokdo Island.*

Introduction

This brief paper will examine critically the contentions of Japanese nationalist intellectuals whose stated goal is to restore the Japanese people's pride in their nation through the rehabilitation of patriotism at home, consolidation of a state-centric view of Japan, and pursuit of a more assertive foreign policy. More specifically, the paper will address the following questions: What goals and aspirations do the nationalist intellectuals espouse? What ideas, events, and institutions of the past are central to their

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advocacy today? What are the specific contemporary issues around which they are advancing their appeals? In particular, what roles do China and Korea play in their arguments? In order to answer these questions, this analysis will review articles in the three opinion magazines *Seiron*, *Shokun*, and *Bungei Shunju*, which regularly carry articles and discussions by nationalists, as well as several books espousing nationalist views of Japan both past and present. It should be noted at the outset that the purpose of the study is not to verify the factual accuracy of the nationalists' contentions but to identify the ideational foundations, value orientations, and reasoning in their claims. Nor does the study attempt to examine the impact of the nationalist discourse on the broader policy or political debate in the country. Rather, it is a discourse analysis.

The Japanese nationalist intellectuals desire the demise of what they regard as the defeatist view of Japan, the view that the nation had engaged in immoral, unjustifiable, and unlawful wars of aggression against its neighbors in the first half of the 20th century and that Japan well deserved the punishment it received under the US-led occupation forces following its defeat in the Second World War. They believe that the re-making of the nation in the postwar decades stripped the Japanese people of any sense of national pride, and that the postwar educational system perpetuated the sense of defeat and tarnished all symbols of patriotism. They argue that Japan's postwar pacifism, symbolized by the war-renouncing article of its constitution and supported by its left-leaning intellectual climate, allowed other countries, particularly the USA, China, and Korea, to dictate the limits of Japanese power and influence in the world. They further contend that the Japanese people have been forced to live far too long under the shadow of their defeat and it is high time they rid themselves of the sense of defeat and restored a national identity with dignity and pride. Their appeal resonated with the government of Shinzo Abe, who launched a highly visible campaign to revise Article 9 of the nation's constitution, introduce major education reform to stress patriotism, and pursue a more assertive foreign policy, particularly vis-à-vis those countries which, in the nationalists' view, stand to gain from a meek and self-effacing Japan.

It will be shown in this study that in order to articulate the above goal and present the above contentions, the nationalists engage in a selective use of ideas, events, and institutions of historical significance and that they reconstruct a past Japan in their ideal image and use that image to frame their discourse on the major political and foreign policy challenges facing Japan today. That is, the signification of a selective set of ideas, events, and institutions from the past is the methodology they employ in developing descriptive and prescriptive views on contemporary Japan.¹ Within the

1. *Nihonjinron* is the tradition of discourse within and on such a framework. As Aoki has argued, however, the framework is not fixed; it evolves over time, adjusting to the changing times and responding to the themes and issues of the times. See Aoki Tamotsu, "*Nihon bunkaron*" no henyo: *Sengo Nihon no bunka to aidentiti* (The Evolution of "Japanese Culture Discourse": Postwar Japan's Culture and Identity) (Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1990).

nationalist discourse, China and Korea, and to a lesser extent the USA are given a prominent role.

Defining “Nationalism” in Contemporary Japan

How should nationalism in contemporary Japan be defined? “Nationalism” has been defined in myriad ways, including state-led nationalism, popular nationalism, self-reflective nationalism, externally projected nationalism, emotive nationalism, instrumental nationalism, and cultural nationalism. Conceptually these aspects of nationalism can be differentiated, and nationalism in contemporary Japan is no exception.²

There are several characteristics of nationalism as it manifests itself in contemporary Japan. First, for most Japanese today “nationalism” is synonymous with “patriotism”. This is largely because the period of heightened nationalism in Japan’s recent history – and still fresh in the memories of Japanese intellectuals – was the period of modernization and westernization led by the state, that is, the Meiji Restoration through the period of imperialism and militarism dominated by the militarily-controlled state, culminating in defeat in the Second World War. During this period the state defined Japan as a nation; the state symbolized the Japanese people’s identity; and the state demanded the loyalty of its subjects. Therefore, intellectual debate about Japan today immediately and directly touches on the question of the role of the state in defining Japan as a nation and Japanese people as constituents of the nation-state. As will be noted below, the nationalists today advocate the essential role of the state and of patriotism in defining contemporary Japan. In their view, postwar Japanese national identity has been based on the rejection of what wartime Japan had represented, that is, the rejection of both nationalism and patriotism. To eradicate this legacy, the nationalists demand that the Japanese people embrace patriotism as an essential element of the post-postwar Japan.

Second, there is a widely shared myth (idealized image) among the Japanese that they are a homogeneous people, if not fully in racial terms, at least in ethnic and cultural terms. The notion of “nation” or “nationality” as a culturally rooted and ethnically defined reality is firmly held by most Japanese people, despite the various recent arguments debunking the myth of Japanese homogeneity.³ The idea of the Japanese as a people is a social construct defined in ethno-cultural terms. Cultural nationalism in Japan

2. For recent analyses of nationalism in Japan, see, for example, Suzuki Sadami, *Nihon no bunka nashonarizumu* (Cultural Nationalism in Japan) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2005); Hando Kazutoshi and Todaka Kazushige, *Aikokusha no joken* (The Qualifications of a Patriot) (Tokyo: Daiamondosha, 2006); Wakamiya Yoshibumi, *Wakai to nashonarizumu* (Reconciliation and Nationalism) (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 2006); Eiji Oguma and Yoko Ueno, “*Iyashi*” *no nashonarizumu* (A Healing Nationalism) (Tokyo: Keio Gijuku Daigaku Shuppankai, 2003).

3. For debate on the Japanese myth of homogeneity, see, for example, Chris Burgess, “Multicultural Japan? Discourse and the ‘Myth’ of Homogeneity,” “Japan Focus: An Asia–Pacific e-Journal” at <<http://www.japanfocus.org/products/details/2389>> (searched date: 10 June 2007); John Lie, *Multi-ethnic Japan* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001); John C. Maher and Nobuyuki

assumes that the Japanese people share a set of fundamental values, norms, beliefs, and understandings about themselves such that they constitute a unique culture.⁴ Cultural nationalism plays an important role in the nationalist discourse on contemporary Japan. It does so by introducing certain assumptions about what it is to be a good Japanese citizen, as a member of the Japanese state (*kokumin*) and a member of the Japanese nation (*Nihonjin*). In the nationalists' view, an ideal/idealized Japanese citizen is an individual with Japanese citizenship (*kokuseki*) who speaks the Japanese language, observes historical traditions (*dento*), engages in religious rituals rooted in Buddhism and Shintoism, and complies with certain conventional social norms that have stood the test of time, such as preference of social harmony over conflict, respect for the elderly, acceptance of seniority and other institutions that uphold a hierarchical view of the society, and self-sacrifice in favor of collective/communal goods. Although there are variations on this theme, these are the essential elements of cultural nationalism in contemporary Japan. The nationalists seem to believe that cultural homogeneity is essential to national unity and that national unity is necessary for a strong Japan. That is, the nationalists see Japan as an organic, natural community rather than a constellation of institutions artificially created to bring otherwise disparate peoples together. In other words, they fail or refuse to see the nation as a social construct. To the extent that members of the general public share these assumptions and views, the nationalists can readily take advantage of these premises in appealing to the natural, inborn sense of identity of the Japanese people as a nation and pursue their political campaign to remake Japan in their image.⁵

Third, there are several Japanese words denoting different aspects or types of "nationalism". They include *kokkashugi* (statism), *kokusuishugi* (ultra-nationalism), *minzokushugi* (racialism, ethnocentrism), and *nashonarizumu* (nationalism). In the liberal (and largely anti-nationalist) discourse on contemporary Japan, *nashonarizumu* carries the negative connotations of statism, ultra-nationalism, and ethnocentrism that are associated with Japan's wartime history.⁶ The nationalists deny or reject this unfavorable

Honma, *Atarashii nihonkan/seikaikan ni mukatte: Nihon ni okeru gengo to bunka no tayousei* (Towards a New Order: Language and Cultural Diversity in Japan) (Tokyo: Kokusai-shoin, 2001); John C. Maher and Gaynor Macdonald, *Diversity in Japanese Culture and Language* (London: Keegan Paul International, 1995); John C. Maher and Kyoko Yashiro, eds., *Multilingual Japan* (Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 1995); Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu, "Ethnic Diversity, Identity and Citizenship in Japan," *Harvard Asia Quarterly*, (Winter 2004), pp. 51–57; Oguma Eiji, *A Genealogy of "Japanese" Self-Images* (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2002); Michael Weiner, ed., *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity* (London: Routledge, 1997).

4. For a recent exploration of cultural nationalism in Japan, see Suzuki, *op. cit.*

5. In contrast, the anti-nationalists, most of whom are essentially "constructivists", prefer to see Japan, normatively or descriptively, as a more diversified Japan that is open to non-Japanese ethnicities and cultures.

6. For the liberal views on nationalism in Japan and elsewhere, see for example, Kang Sang-jung, *Nashonarizumu* (Nationalism) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2001); Kang Sang-jung, *Han-nashonarizumu* (Anti-nationalism) (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2005); Kang Sang-jung and Morisu Hiroshi, *Nashonarizumu no kokufuku* (Overcoming Nationalism) (Tokyo: Shueisha, 2002); and Wakamiya, *Wakai to nashonarizumu*.

view and attempt to remove the negative connotations from the discussion of nationalism in contemporary Japan.⁷

The most prominent political leader who exemplifies the nationalist view of Japan as outlined above is none other than Shinzo Abe. In his book *Utsukushii kuni e* (For a Beautiful Country), Abe does not use this label to describe himself, perhaps because of the negative connotations associated with this term, as noted in the next section. Instead, he calls himself a “conservative” (*hoshu*).⁸ Throughout this book, however, he describes his vision for an ideal Japan – a “beautiful” Japan – and his view nearly perfectly matches the nationalist view of the country and explicitly rejects the anti-nationalist view. The central theme of Abe’s book is that the Japanese people must restore the national pride they had lost in their defeat in the Second World War, reject the despondent view of Japan that permeated the intellectual community and the media in postwar Japan under the influence of “progressives” (*shinpo*) and the “liberals” (*riberaruha*) who opposed the Liberal Democratic Party and its policies, and respect the traditions the nation has built through its long history. The former prime minister believes that people should derive their pride and identity from the state to which they belong. He views patriotism (*aikokushin*) as an extension of people’s love of their native place (*kyodoai*). He also believes that the state can command its citizens’ respect if it can fully protect their lives and livelihood against domestic ills and foreign woes. As noted later, his brand of nationalism is a blend of statist, organic, cultural nationalism. Other nationalists complement this nationalism with racist overtones and xenophobic attitudes toward the outside world, particularly toward China and Korea.



What are the ideas, events, and institutions of historical significance that Abe and other nationalists use to advance their views of Japan past and present? Let us now turn to this question.

The Defeat in the Second World War and Its Impact on Japanese Nationalism

With Japan’s defeat in 1945 came the unraveling of the idea of Japan, established and sustained by the hegemonic state in the earlier decades, as a modern state with sufficient intellectual, spiritual, and material power to defend (indeed expand) itself in the age of imperialism and war and as a unified nation with a common history, identity, and destiny (*unmei*). The end of Imperial Japan marked the beginning of the remaking of the country under the US-led occupation forces. The Far Eastern Tribunal, it was assumed, would bring to justice all those responsible for plunging Japan into military aggression against its neighbors. The demilitarization of the

7. See, for example, a dialogue between two university professors, Toshio Watanabe and Kenichi Matsumoto in “Yomigaeru Nichiro senso no jidai,” (The Era of the Japanese–Russian War Returning) *Shokun* (June 2007), pp. 136–153.

8. Abe Shinzo, *Utsukushii kuni e* (For a Beautiful Country) (Tokyo: Bungei Shunju, 2006), pp. 18–19.

country, the adoption of a new constitution, and the establishment of a liberal education, it was believed, would establish a democratic Japan and eventually rehabilitate the nation to the community of civilized nations. Japan regained its independence by signing the San Francisco Peace Treaty, formed an alliance with the USA, joined the United Nations, and became a member of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade – all signs of a rehabilitated nation.

Many questions about Japan's prewar and wartime history remained unanswered, however. Who was responsible for Imperial Japan's war policy and who should be brought to justice for the atrocities the nation had committed against its neighboring countries? Should Japan compensate the individual victims of its wartime atrocities, and if so how? The results of the military tribunal did not offer unequivocal answers to these questions. In fact, the nationalists rejected and continue to reject the legitimacy of the judgments rendered by the tribunal. Nor was the restoration of diplomatic relations with the neighboring countries of Asia, namely the Soviet Union (in 1956), Korea (in 1965), and China (in 1972) accompanied by a full and complete accounting for Japan's wartime responsibilities. The onset of the Cold War and Japan's incorporation into the US-led alliances in Asia prevented the full and complete reconciliation between the Japanese and their neighbors. They also kept the Japanese intellectual community from a full, complete, and exhaustive search for answers to the essential questions posed above.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in the wake of the Cold War and as part of the national debate on the future purpose and direction of the US–Japanese alliance, Japanese intellectuals began to address a series of contemporary challenges, and this process opened up opportunities for the nationalists to reopen all the questions that the postwar settlement was assumed to have resolved but in fact did not, at least as far as the nationalists were concerned. Domestically raised contemporary questions related to the issue of constitutional amendment, most importantly the revision of Article 9, the role of the Self-Defense Force overseas and the status of the Defense Agency, the rationale and direction of the US–Japan alliance in the post-Cold War world, Japan's relations with North Korea, and education reform to promote patriotism.

The national debate has also been stimulated by developments overseas and a series of criticisms brought up abroad regarding Japanese political leaders' visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, the so-called "comfort women" issue, and the "history textbook" controversy. The following pages will offer an analysis of the nationalists' perspectives and claims about these issues.

The Yasukuni Shrine Issue

Among the most contentious issues of relevance to our discussion is the moral and legal justification for Japanese political leaders' visits to

the Yasukuni Shrine. The shrine was founded in 1869 as “Tokyo Shokonsha,” a religious institution memorializing as national heroes the Japanese war-dead who were so honored by the state and with an imperial blessing. The Shinto shrine served as a symbol of the Japanese people’s loyalty to the emperor. Following Japan’s victory in the Russo–Japanese war and the ensuing nationalist fervor throughout the country, Yasukuni came to symbolize and embody state Shintoism (*kokka shinto*). Moreover, it was placed under the administrative jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Army and the Ministry of the Navy and was home to some military installations.⁹ As a state-sponsored, religious body with a nation-wide network of subordinate shrines, and at the service of the imperial throne, Yasukuni was used as an instrument of war mobilization and a source of nationalist inspiration.

Japan’s defeat in the Second World War and the occupation forces’ decision to dismantle the remnants of the nation’s political-military regime threatened the very survival of the Yasukuni Shrine, but the Japanese government proposed and the US government agreed in 1945 that the shrine should not be destroyed but should be allowed to continue, not as a state institution or a state-sponsored war memorial but as a private religious establishment.¹⁰ With the promulgation in 1947 of the postwar constitution establishing the principles of the freedom of religion and the separation of state and religion, Yasukuni officially assumed its legal status as a private, religious institution. Since then, the Showa Emperor (Hirohito) visited Yasukuni seven times, the last time in 1975, but the present emperor (Akihito) has not visited the shrine. Among the 29 postwar Japanese prime ministers, sixteen visited Yasukuni while still in office.¹¹

Until Prime Minister Miki’s visit to the Yasukuni Shrine on 15 August 1975, the 30th anniversary of the end of the Second World War for Japan (*shusen kinenbi*), Japanese prime ministers’ visits to the shrine had been assumed to be official visits and their offerings (*tamagushiryo*) to the shrine had been paid for by the state. On the occasion of his visit to the shrine, Miki publicly stated that he was making this visit as a private citizen, not in his official capacity as prime minister. This made explicit and threw into

9. This brief description of the Yasukuni Shrine is based on Oe Shinobu, *Yasukuni jinja* (Yasukuni Shrine) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2005), and Takahashi Tetsuya, *Yasukuni mondai* (The Yasukuni Problem) (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 2005).

10. Oe, *op. cit.*, pp. 35–37.

11. They include Higashikuni Naruhiko (one visit), Shidehara Kijuro (2), Yoshida Shigeru (3), Kishi Nobusuke (2), Ikeda Hayato (5), Sato Eisaku (11), Tanaka Kakuei (6), Miki Takeo (3), Fukuda Takeo (4), Ohira Masayoshi (3), Suzuki Zenko (8), Nakasone Yasuhiro (10), Miyazawa Kiichi (1), Hashimoto Ryutarō (1), and Koizumi Junichiro (5). “Ronza” Henshubu, eds., “Yasukuni” to Koizumi Shusho: Watanabe Tsuneo, Yomiuri Shimbun Shuhitsu Vs. Wakamiya Yoshibumi, Asahi Shimbun Ronsetsu Shukan (“Yasukuni” and Prime Minister Koizumi: Watanabe Tsuneo, Yomiuri Shimbun chief writer vs. Wakamiya Yoshibumi, Asahi Shimbun editorial chief) (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbun, 2006), pp. 88–91. This book indicated Prime Minister Koizumi visited Yasukuni four times, but since the publication of the book, Koizumi visited the shrine one more time, in October 2005, for a total of five times.

public debate the constitutionality question, that is, whether a government representative's visit to the shrine violated the constitutionally established separation of state and religion.¹² The nationalists claim that this issue was settled when the Supreme Court ruled in 1977 that such a visit did not constitute a religious act if its purpose was to follow a ritual according to social customs. Moreover, since 1985 the government has maintained that as long as the official visiting the shrine does not follow the formally prescribed manner of praying, the visit does not violate the constitution.¹³ It should be emphasized that a private visit to the shrine is deemed constitutional and as such the individual's offerings to the shrine must be paid for by his/her private funds. This still raises the constitutionality question if a prime minister uses his official title in writing or otherwise on his visit to the shrine.

Japanese officials' visits to the shrine became a diplomatic issue when Prime Minister Nakasone paid an official visit to the shrine on 15 August 1985. A week earlier, the *Asahi Shimbun* had reported on Nakasone's impending visit to the shrine and on 14 August, the Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson warned that the visit would hurt the feelings of the people of Asian countries.¹⁴ The Chinese objection had to do with the fact that the Shinto facility enshrined Hideki Tojo and other Class-A war criminals. Following this incident, Nakasone refrained from further visits to the controversial shrine, marking him as a political realist concerned about Japan's national interests.

The enshrinement of war criminals at Yasukuni was initially a point of domestic controversy. In 1953 the House of Representatives passed a resolution calling for the release from prison of the individuals serving war crime sentences as a result of the Tokyo military tribunal. The discharge had been completed by 1956 for the Class-A war criminals and by 1958 for the Class-B war criminals, except for those who died while in prison. Class-B and Class-C war criminals were then enshrined at Yasukuni in 1959. Finally, in 1978, the Japanese government allowed the enshrinement of fourteen out of 27 Class-A war criminals, including Prime Minister and General Hideki Tojo and five other generals and three other prime ministers.¹⁵ These were obviously welcome developments for the nationalists who had questioned the legitimacy of the Tokyo war tribunal and who wanted to restore the honor of the wartime leaders. Because of the controversial nature of the issue, however, the enshrinement of Class-A war criminals was not made public until 1979.¹⁶

More recently, Prime Minister Koizumi's annual visits to the Yasukuni Shrine from 2001 to 2005 created anti-Japanese demonstrations and diplomatic protests in China and South Korea. They asserted that the

12. Abe Shinzo and Okazaki Hisahiko, *Kono kuni wo mamoru ketsui* (Determination to Defend This Country [Japan]) (Tokyo: Fusosha, 2006), pp. 145–146.

13. Abe, *op. cit.*, pp. 66–67.

14. Abe and Okazaki, *op. cit.*, pp. 146–147.

15. "Ronza" Henshubu, *op. cit.*, pp. 86–87. Enshrinement is known as *goshi* in Japanese.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 79–80.

Japanese leader's visit to Yasukuni was tantamount to honoring the war criminals who were enshrined there. Koizumi responded that the issue was a "matter of the heart" and should not be made into a diplomatic issue between Japan and its neighboring countries. In fact, largely due to the Yasukuni Shrine controversy, no summit was held between China and Japan during Koizumi's entire term of office, and Japan's relations with South Korea were also seriously strained during Koizumi's premiership. The prime minister staunchly refused to heed the foreign protestations, maintaining that the disagreement over this one issue should not be allowed to disrupt the diplomatic relations. The nationalists defended the prime minister's visits as a normal act of the national leader to pay respect to those who sacrificed their lives in the defense of their country. For example, University of Tokyo emeritus professor Keiichiro Kobori praised Koizumi for rejecting the Chinese demand not to visit the shrine, viewing the prime ministers' repeated visits to the shrine as a diplomatic victory against Beijing. He also endorsed Abe's decision not to indicate whether he would or would not visit the shrine.¹⁷ In contrast, he criticized Nakasone's decision to stop visiting the Yasukuni Shrine as a shameful and guilty act.¹⁸

The nationalists offer various arguments regarding the issue of war criminals and the Yasukuni Shrine controversy. They maintain that the war criminals who were judged as such by the Tokyo military tribunal were never tried and found guilty of war crime by domestic law and, therefore, as far as Japanese law was concerned, those individuals were not war criminals.¹⁹ They assert that the fact that Japan signed the San Francisco Peace Treaty, accepting the outcome of the war tribunal, is one thing and the question of domestic law is quite another. The nationalists contend that the military tribunal was a scheme designed by the victor to impose its political judgment upon the vanquished and as such, it had no moral authority. They also maintain that the "crime against peace" or "crime against humanity," with which the Japanese wartime leaders were charged, were concepts concocted by the victorious powers to punish the vanquished and were applied retroactively since there had been no such crime established by any international law.²⁰

The more fervent the diplomatic protests in China and other countries become, the more resolute the Japanese nationalists' determination will be to defend their cause. Several solutions have been proposed, ranging from an end to the visits to the shrine by government officials to the establishment of a new state-sponsored war memorial, and the removal of the names of the Class-A war criminals from Yasukuni. None of the proposals has proved realistic so far, and the controversy continues. In fact, many Japanese nationalists see the Chinese criticisms regarding Yasukuni has

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 87–88.

18. Kobori Keiichiro, "'Gaikoteki ronsojutsu' wo Abe sori ni genjosu," (I Submit to Prime Minister Abe a "Technique for Diplomatic Argument") *Seiron* (August 2007), p. 87.

19. Abe and Okazaki, *op. cit.*, pp. 70–71; also Abe, *op. cit.*, pp. 70–71.

20. Abe, *op. cit.*, pp. 69–70.

been and continues to be an attempt on the part of the Chinese leadership to divert their people's attention from domestic problems and that Japan should not take Chinese criticisms seriously.²¹

There are other issues involving the Yasukuni Shrine that have been overshadowed somewhat by the recent diplomatic haggling over prime ministers' visits to the shrine. They include the separation of state and religion (i.e., the constitutionality of public officials' visits to the shrine in official capacity), the moral responsibility of Yasukuni's role in war mobilization and nationalist education, the moral justification for the enshrinement of individuals, both Japanese and non-Japanese, without notification or consent of their families,²² and the political role the shrine plays, if only symbolically, in the consolidation of nationalist forces in the country today.²³

The important point to be made in the context of our discussion is that as long as Yasukuni remains a diplomatic issue, it will be exploited by the nationalists to bolster anti-foreign sentiments among the otherwise disinterested members of the Japanese public.²⁴ Prime Minister Abe would not have hesitated to visit the Yasukuni Shrine had it not been for the diplomatic controversy that his predecessor's visits had generated. Upon assuming the top position Abe stated that as prime minister he would not make public whether he would or would not go there or had or had not visited there.²⁵ His view of the shrine and of the individuals who are enshrined there, including the Class-A war criminals, is clear. In a comment on "kamikaze pilots" (*tokkotai*) who were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for their country in the waning days of the Pacific War and many of whom are now enshrined at Yasukuni, Abe stated, "In the face of impending death, while thinking of their loved ones, they were praying for the eternal history of their country." Noting that Japan's postwar prosperity had been built on their sacrifices, he asked, "But how have we, the postwar generations, treated them? Have we shown respect to those who sacrificed their lives for their nation?"²⁶

21. See, for example, Kobori, *op. cit.*, p. 87; Saito Yoshihisa, "Yasukuni mondai wo toinaosu kokonotsu no shiten," (Nine Points for Reviewing the Yasukuni Problem) *Seiron* (September 2007), pp. 124–133.

22. Although several families have demanded the removal of their deceased from Yasukuni, the shrine has refused, arguing that it is against its religious belief system to separate the soul of a deceased individual from that of the others with which they have been joined through the process of *goshi*. It should also be noted that the enshrinement of the war-dead before the end of the Second World War was considered an act of mercy blessed by the emperor and not up to the wishes of the deceased of their families.

23. See, for example, Takahashi and Oe, *op. cit.*

24. For an example of an impassioned rebuttal to the foreign and domestic criticisms of Japanese prime ministers' visits to Yasukuni, see Nitta Hitoshi, *Shusho ga Yasukuni sanpaishite doko ga warui!!* (What's Wrong with Prime Ministers' Visits to Yasukuni!!) (Tokyo: PHP Kenkyujo, 2005).

25. "Japan Rivals in Row over Yasukuni," BBC News, 4 August 2006 at <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/5244792.stm>> (searched date: 11 June 2007).

26. Abe, *op. cit.*, pp. 107–108.

“Comfort Women,” “the Rape of Nanking,” and Takeshima/Dokdo Island

The controversy over the so-called “comfort women” has also become an important, if unwelcome part of the nationalist discourse in contemporary Japan. Domestic and foreign critics charge that the Japanese government coerced Chinese, Korean, Dutch, and other women, as well as Japanese women, into prostitution throughout Asia. They point to the statement (*danwa*) issued by Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono in 1993, in which the chief spokesperson for the Kiichi Miyazawa government admitted that during the war, Japanese military authorities ordered the establishment of comfort stations (*ianjo*) in many locations throughout Asia and the Japanese military was directly and indirectly involved in the coercive transportation of comfort women (*ianfu*). According to Kono’s statement, although the recruitment of comfort women was done by private businesses, in many cases recruiters used enticing statements and coercion against the will of the solicited women and in some cases government officials participated. The life in comfort facilities was subject to coercion and wretched. Most of the women who were transported to comfort facilities came from Japan and from the Korean Peninsula, which was then under Japanese control, and their recruitment, transportation, and control involved coercion. Kono’s statement went on to read, “The Government of Japan extends its sincere apologies and feelings of remorse to all those who suffered much pain and incurable physical and psychological damage as so-called wartime comfort women.”²⁷ The statement pledged that the Japanese would not close their eyes to this historical truth, would remember the problem for a long time through history studies and history education, and would never repeat the same mistake.²⁸

A year later Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama issued a statement expressing his “profound and sincere remorse and apologies” regarding the wartime comfort women issue.²⁹ In 1995, the Asian Women’s Fund (AWF) was created, headed by Prime Minister Murayama, and the Japanese people were asked to donate funds to the AWF. By 2007 over 570 million Yen had been collected, from which relief funds were issued to former comfort women in the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, the Netherlands, and Indonesia.³⁰ With its mandate expiring in March 2007, the Fund was closed.

The nationalists have long criticized both the Kono and the Maruyama statements, claiming that the government, eager to smooth over relations

27. The Asian Women’s Fund website at <<http://www.awf.or.jp/english/about/history.html>> (searched date: 11 June 2007).

28. The full Japanese text of the Kono statement can be found at <<http://www.cc.matsuyama-u.ac.jp/~tamura/kounodannwa.htm>> (searched date: 11 June 2007).

29. The Asian Women’s Fund website at <<http://www.awf.or.jp/english/atonement.html>> (searched date: 11 June 2007).

30. The Asian Women’s Fund website at <<http://www.awf.or.jp/ianfu/report.html>> (searched date: 11 June 2007).

with South Korea³¹ and determined to silence growing domestic criticisms, rushed to issue the Kono statement without confirming the authenticity and reliability of the evidence collected by a government study group on this issue.³² They assert that the government inquiry into the issue was based on biased and incomplete studies and flimsy evidence presented by self-claimed victims. They demand that the government retract the Kono statement,³³ but the government has so far declined to heed their call.

More recently, the comfort women issue has attracted renewed attention of critics at home and abroad. What triggered the recent flare-up of foreign criticisms was the statement by Prime Minister Abe in March 2007 that there was no evidence to prove there was coercion of comfort women into prostitution.³⁴ The statement seemed to contradict the Japanese government's earlier statements about the issue. Amidst mounting media outcry in Asia and in the USA, Prime Minister Abe met with President Bush in their first summit in Washington, D.C. in May 2007. At a press conference following the summit, Abe stated, "As both an individual and as prime minister, I sympathize with those women who were forced to taste life's bitterness. I also am full of a feeling of a need to apologize over the fact that they were placed in such a painful situation."³⁵ He offered the statement in the face of an impending non-binding resolution in the US House of Representatives demanding Japan's official apology to the comfort women. In response to the prime minister's statement, President Bush offered a supporting statement saying that in his opinion, the matter was settled.³⁶

As far as the Japanese nationalists were concerned, however, the matter was not settled because Abe's statement at the press conference had left the impression that Japan admitted to its inhumane treatment of the comfort women. Keiichiro Kobori opined that he had hoped Abe would be courageous enough to state that the Japanese government planned to officially renounce Yohei Kono's statement in 1993 as a statement based on unfounded falsehood, which was issued as a product of a political deal with South Korea and a distortion of historical truth.³⁷ According to Kobori, the only way to correct this situation and to restore Japan's honor would be for Kono to offer an apology for his falsehood.³⁸

31. Yagi Hidetsugu, "Rekisho wo kore ijo seiji ni uriwatashitewa naranai," (No More Selling of History to Politics) *Seiron* (May 2007), pp. 118–126.

32. The government report is available at the Asian Women's Fund web site at <<http://www.awf.or.jp/program/index.html#link>> (searched date: 11 June 2007).

33. See, for example, Yagi; Daishido Tsuneyasu, "Abe Sori, 'Kono danwa' no torikeshi ketsudan wo," (Prime Minister Abe, Please Decide to Retract the "Kono Statement") *Seiron* (May 2007), pp. 104–116. Daishido was a high-ranking official in the Japanese Government-General in Korea.

34. Hiroko Tabuchi, "Prime Minister Denies Women Were Forced Into WWII Brothels," *Washington Post* online edition at <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/01/AR2007030101498.html>> (searched date: 3 March 2007).

35. Yukio Okamoto, "Prime Minister Abe's Visit to the United States," *Policy Forum Online*, 07-039A: 17 May 2007, Nautilus Institute at <<http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/07039Okamoto.html>> (searched date: 1 June 2007).

36. *Ibid.*

37. Kobori, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

The nationalists in Japan mounted a media campaign to discredit Congressman Mike Honda, the chief sponsor of the resolution concerning the wartime comfort women issue.³⁹ They claimed that Chinese-American groups with ties to the Chinese government were orchestrating and supporting Congressman Honda's action as part of their anti-Japanese campaign.⁴⁰ Some of them also asserted that Mike Honda had blindly accepted what they considered to be the false charges that Iris Chang had leveled against Japan in her book *The Rape of Nanking*.⁴¹

The nationalists have developed a conspiracy theory stating that China is behind the anti-Japanese campaign in the USA over the comfort women issue and behind the production of the movie "Nanking" by Ted Leonsis, Vice Chairman of AOL, which was inspired by Iris Chang's book. Yoshihisa Komori, a Sankei Shimbun editorial committee member stationed in Washington, D.C. noted that in her book *The Rape of Nanking* Chang had implied that the massacre in 1937–38 of over 300,000 Chinese civilians (a number he claimed had been totally discredited in Japan) resulted from a plan developed by the Japanese imperial army on order of Emperor Showa or his aides. Rejecting Chang's allegation as a falsehood, the Japanese journalist quoted several US scholars to support his contention that Chang's charges were full of unsubstantiated speculations and accusations.⁴² He went on to describe the background to the making of the movie "Nanking"⁴³ and claims that the movie was widely publicized by several Chinese-American groups in California to whip up anti-Japanese sentiments. He asserted that those groups were all linked to the World Association for the Preservation of Historical Facts in the Anti-Japanese

39. The full text of the resolution H. RES. 121 can be found at <<http://www.govtrack.us/congress/billtext.xpd?bill=hr110-121>> (searched date: 12 June 1007).

40. For these and other similar accusations, see Fujioka Nobukatsu, "Nichibeiri rihan wo shikakeru 'Chugoku no wana' wo uchiyabure," (Smash the "Chinese Trap" Set Up to Create Separation between Japan and the USA) *Seiron* (June 2007), pp. 76–85; Komori Yoshihisa, "'Reipu obu Nankin' eiga no wana," (The Trap of the Movie, "The Rape of Nanking") *Bungei Shunju* (April 2007), pp. 214–221; Matsuo Ichiro, "Chugoku no puropaganda ni sekai ga kontororu sareru hi," (The Day the World Will Be Controlled by Chinese Propaganda) *Seiron* (June 2007), pp. 102–111; Hata Ikuhiko, Ohnuma Yasuaki, and Arai Shinichi, "'Jugun ianfu,' okizarinisareta shinjitsu," ("Comfort Women", the Truth That Has Been Left Behind) *Shokun* (July 2007), pp. 26–43; Watanabe Shoichi, "Itsumade kusoteki heiwashugi de ikunoka, kaku niwa kaku de taikosurushikanai," (How Long [Does Japan] Continue with Fictional Pacifism? The Only Response to Nuclear [Weapons] Is Nuclear [Weapons]) *Seiron* (September 2007), p. 199.

41. See, for example, Matsuo; Fujioka Nobukatsu, "Tai 'reipu obu Nankin' junen senso no kyokun," (Lessons from the 10-Year War against "The Rape of Nanking") *Seiron* (May 2007), pp. 128–137. Fujioka has recently become the Chairman of the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform discussed later.

42. Among the scholars quoted by Komori are Stanford University historian David Kennedy, *New Republic* editorial board member Jacob Heilbrun, Harvard University sociology professor Ezra Vogel, and American University professor emeritus Richard Finn.

43. The film premiered at the annual Sundance Film Festival in 2007 and won the Editing Award. Leonsis sold the film's Chinese documentary rights to CCTV, the Chinese national television network. (Thomas Heath, "'Nanking' Documentary Rights Sold at Sundance," *Washington Post* online at <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/23/AR2007012301189.html>> [searched date: 8 June 2007].)

War,⁴⁴ which had close ties to the Chinese government.⁴⁵ Finally, Komori mentioned other documentary films on Nanking all premiering in 2007, the 70th anniversary of the Nanking Incident.⁴⁶

The conspiracy theory does not stop there. Another journalist wrote, “The most important aim in China’s anti-Japanese accusations in the United States is to drive a wedge between Japan and the United States according to their plan to regain Taiwan. Nor can it be denied that [China], in order to prevent U.S. cooperation with Japan for the resolution of the issue of North Korean abduction of Japanese citizens at the Six-Party Talks, brought up the similarly unjust comfort women issue.” “That is to say,” he continued, “by claiming that Japan has once forcibly abducted several tens of thousands of Korean women, [China] wants to block the resolution of the abduction issue.”⁴⁷ A Japanese university professor who often writes for the conservative magazine *Seiron* wrote in the magazine’s May 2007 issue: “For the Chinese, ‘the history issue’ is nothing but a tool with which to drive the enemy [the Japanese] into a corner, force them into self-criticism, and place them in perpetual subjugation. The expression ‘history as a mirror’ is also a method to force the opponent [the Japanese] to acknowledge their mistakes.”⁴⁸

Yoshinori Kobayashi, a popular cartoonist known for his nationalistic works, also subscribed to the conspiracy theory and wrote, “There is no question that China is engaged in an information campaign to establish an anti-Japanese encirclement around the world.”⁴⁹ He noted that the passage of the “comfort women” resolution in the House of Representative Committee on Foreign Affairs was spearheaded by Mike Honda who he claimed had received huge amounts of political contributions from Chinese groups in the USA.⁵⁰ He criticized China for obtaining large amounts of Official Development Assistance and other funds by exploiting Japan’s “friendship”, while insistently criticizing Japan and unabashedly expanding its military spending by two digits for 19 years in a row. He extended his xenophobic vendetta to North Korea which, according to him, abducted many Japanese, distorted history to criticize Japan, obtained rice aid in the name of humanitarian assistance, and continued provocative acts such as the launching of missiles and the nuclear test. He also lambasted South Korea for supporting North Korea and continuing its anti-Japanese rhetoric.⁵¹

44. Author translation of the Chinese name of the association.

45. Komori, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 220–221.

47. Matsuo, *op. cit.*, pp. 110–111.

48. Yagi, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

49. Kobayashi Yoshinori, “Rekishu wo mamoru kigai wo imakoso torimodose,” (Now Is the Time to Regain the Courage to Protect History) *Seiron* (September 2007), p. 46.

50. *Ibid.*

51. He further criticized Russia for scrapping a joint natural gas development project with impunity, shooting to death a Japanese fisherman within Japanese territorial waters and offering no apologies, not to mention compensation, and continuing its unlawful occupation of the Northern Territories, which were inherent territories of Japan, and reneging on its pledge to enter into territorial negotiations with Japan. He completed his anti-foreign tirade by noting that the USA demanded the participation of the

Kobayashi's central thesis is that the Japanese should see the world in terms of realpolitik and stop counting on the "friendship" and "goodwill" of other countries. In this context, he implies that even though Japan was defeated in the last war, the prewar Japan's cause was justified. In his view, wartime Japan conducted itself courageously and the way Japan was defeated, that is, the US atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Soviet violation of the neutrality pact with Japan, exposed those countries' prejudice against colored people. He asserts that the labeling of prewar Japan by the Tokyo War Tribunal as a "cruel and aggressive nation" and a "warlike militarist nation" is a "fraud on history" that the Japanese should not take seriously.⁵²

Another issue that brings forth nationalist criticisms of South Korea is the territorial dispute over the Takeshima/Dokdo Island that lies in the Sea of Japan/East Sea. The disputed territory is controlled by Korea but claimed by both countries. Since there are numerous articles on this dispute, here we will simply look at one Japanese nationalist's discussion of this issue as an illustration of the logic behind the nationalist claims surrounding this issue.⁵³

Masao Shimojo, a professor at Takushoku University, writes in *Seiron* that a Japanese study group on the Takeshima/Dokdo issue held thirteen meetings between 2005 and 2007 and submitted its interim report and its final report in April 2006 and May 2007, respectively, to the Governor of Shimane Prefecture, the regional administrative unit with jurisdiction over the disputed island. The author asserts that the two reports together

Japanese Self-Defense Forces in "its war" in Iraq in the name of Japan-US alliance but Washington selfishly abandoned the North Korean nuclear weapons problem, which was a big threat to Japan. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

53. Among the numerous published works on the Takeshima/Dokdo dispute, the following works are representative of the Japanese views on the issue: Kawakami Kenzo, *Takeshima no rekishi-chirigakuteki kenkyu* (A Historical-Geographic Study of Takeshima Island) (Tokyo: Kokonshoin, 1996); Ohkuma Ryoichi, *Takeshima shiko* (A Historical Overview of Takeshima) (Tokyo: Hara Shobo, 1968); Tamura Seizaburo, *Shimaneken Takeshima no shin kenkyu* (A New Study of Takeshima Island, Shimane Ken) (Matsue, Japan: Shimaneken Somubu Somuka, 1996); Taijudo Kanae, *Ryodo kizoku no kokusaiho* (International Law on Territorial Sovereignty) (Tokyo: Toshindo, 1998), particularly pp. 125–156, 197–200. Korean views are found in the following works among others: Ho-Sup Kim, "The End of the Cold War and Korea-Japan Relations: Old Perceptions and New Issues," in Manwood Lee and Richard Mansbach, eds., *The Changing Order in Northeast Asia and the Korean Peninsula* (Seoul: Kyungman University Institute for Far East Studies, 1993); Sang-Myon Rhee and J. MacAulay, "Ocean Boundary Issues in East Asia: The Need for Practical Solutions," in D.M. Johnston and P.M. Saunders, eds., *Ocean Boundary Making: Regional Issues and Developments* (London: Groom Helm, 1987), pp. 125–143. The official Japanese position on the sovereignty issue can be found in the Japanese foreign ministry's home page at <<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/takeshima/position.html>> (searched date: 19 March 2008). The official Korean government's position is presented at the Korea Net website <http://www.korea.net/news/issues/issueDetailView.asp?board_no=5728> (searched date: 19 March 2008). Also, for a succinct analysis of the two countries' claims from the perspective of international law and concluding that Korea's claims are stronger than Japan's, see Sean Fern, "Tokdo or Takeshima? The International Law of Territorial Acquisition in the Japan-Korea Island Dispute," *Stanford Journal of International Law*, 5 (Winter 2005), pp. 78–89.

present a most comprehensive study of the disputed island. He notes that the two reports confirmed Japan's legitimate claims to the Takeshima/Dokdo Island.⁵⁴ He also observes that Shimane Prefecture adopted an ordinance on the "Takeshima Day" on 22 February 2005 because South Korea continued to occupy the Japanese territory illegally.⁵⁵ He is critical of the Japanese government's lack of determination to confront the issue more forcibly. He observes, for example, that in renegotiating the 1965 fishery treaty with South Korea in 1998, the Japanese government shelved the Takeshima/Dokdo issue and agreed to delink the Exclusive Economic Zone border delimitation issue from the territorial dispute. He states that the Japanese government wanted to diffuse the anti-Japanese sentiment that had flared up in South Korea over the island dispute in connection with the fishery negotiation.⁵⁶ The final agreement ended up denying access inside the 12-mile limit from the disputed island for Japanese fishing boats. The accord also defined the ocean areas where the two countries' jurisdictional claims overlapped as a "provisional zone" and this area stretched farther into the Japanese claimed waters than into the Korean waters. Moreover, within the provisional zone, Japan would not be allowed to enforce its law against Korean fishing boats engaged in illegal fishing.⁵⁷

Shimojo is convinced that the Koreans see the Takeshima/Dokdo issue within the anti-Japanese framework based on their experience under Japanese control in the previous century. He believes that this framework has not changed since 1952, when the postwar occupation of Japan ended, and that from this vantage point the Koreans see Japanese claims to Takeshima/Dokdo as renewed aggression against them.⁵⁸ Because he is convinced that the Takeshima/Dokdo Island belongs to Japan, he asserts that it was Korea, not Japan that invaded Takeshima/Dokdo. He observes that Korean history textbooks maintain that Japan invaded Takeshima/Dokdo and demands that this wrong historical view needs to be addressed in the joint history study between the two countries that began in 2001 and renewed in 2004.⁵⁹

What is common to these nationalists' arguments is their determination to deny and reject what they see as the internationally imposed view of Japan's wartime history and the lasting effect of that view in postwar Japan. This becomes even more apparent in their discussion of the history textbook controversy.

54. Shimojo Masao, "'Nikkan' rekishi masatsu no genten wa 'takeshima' ni ari," (The Origin of the "Japan-Korea" History Friction Lies in "Takeshima") *Seiron* (July 2007), pp. 138-147.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 142-143. For a more positive assessment of the 1998 fishery agreement, see Tsuneo Akaha, "Japan-South Korea Fishery Agreement of 1998: Pursuing Pragmatic Interests without Compromising Sovereignty," in H.N. Scheiber, ed., *The Law of the Sea: The Common Heritage and Emerging Challenges* (The Hague: Netherlands: Kluwer Law International, 2000), pp. 249-263.

57. Akaha, "Japan-South Korea Fishery Agreement of 1998."

58. Shimojo, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-145.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 146.

The History Textbook Controversy

The nationalists – at least the most extreme elements of them – put forth the position that Japan’s resort to war against the USA was justified inasmuch as the US economic sanctions threatened the very survival of their nation. This argument is part of the larger nationalist thesis regarding the interpretation of prewar and wartime history, that Japan’s military and political actions against its Asian neighbors since the Meiji Restoration were no different from the Western powers’ acquisition of territories and other imperialist actions around the world. This thesis is prominently featured in the war history exhibits in the Yushukan Museum, which is part of the Yasukuni Shrine complex in Tokyo. This line of thinking leads to the conclusion that the Tokyo war tribunal represented a political outcome of the clash of imperialist forces. And this is the theme that is being advanced by those revisionist historians who have developed high school history textbooks that have become the target of much domestic and international controversy.

In 1982, the Japanese media reported that the Ministry of Education had ordered a reference in a high school social studies textbook to the Japanese army’s “aggression” (*shinryaku*) to be changed to “advancement” (*shinshutsu*). The report prompted Xinhua (the New China News Agency) to issue the charge that such action represented a distortion of history. This was followed by Chinese and South Korean protests. In response, the Japanese government introduced “consideration for neighboring countries” into the process of textbook screening. In 1986, the Asahi Shimbun criticized a high school history textbook under review by the Ministry of Education as revisionist, prompting Chinese and South Korean protests. In the end the authors of the textbook revised the relevant sections and the ministry approved the textbook. In 1997, a group of conservative Japanese scholars formed a Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform. In 2000, when the group made public the draft text of its high school history textbook, “The New History Textbook,” a large number of Japanese historians and educators protested that the textbook introduced Japan’s foundation myths as historical fact and characterized wars launched by modern Japan as wars to liberate Asia.⁶⁰ In 2001, the Chinese government demanded that the Ministry of Education should not approve the textbook, and the South Korean government followed suit. The Japanese ministry approved the draft textbook in April 2001, and the textbook was published with some revisions following the South Korean government’s demand for changes.⁶¹

Critics charge that the New History Textbook distorts historical facts regarding Japanese wartime activities in an attempt to whitewash Japan’s

60. Kathleen Woods Masalski, “History Textbook Controversies in Japan. ERIC Digest,” ERIC Identifier: ED464010, March 2002, ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, Bloomington, Indiana at <<http://www.ericdigests.org/2003-1/japan.htm>> (searched date: 12 June 2007).

61. Abe and Okazaki, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

responsibility for the atrocities the nation committed against its neighbors.⁶² Even though the adoption rate for this textbook among junior high schools in the country was very low,⁶³ the controversy generated much interest in Japan. Abe noted, for example, that about 600,000 copies of the textbook had been sold commercially. He decried the fact that only a handful of schools decided to adopt this textbook and blamed this fact on what he called the absence of “normal operation” of high schools due to the undue influence of the leftist Japan Teachers’ Union and the Communist Party.⁶⁴

The New History Textbook represents the revisionist historians’ agenda and reflects a view held by Japanese nationalists and conservatives. They believe that the postwar Japanese education created generations who had no pride in their country and who were afflicted by a self-incriminating view of Japanese history. In a roundtable discussion sponsored by the magazine *Seiron*, historian Shoichi Watanabe, known for his criticism of the Chinese claims regarding the Nanking massacre, stated: “There are shady parts in every country’s history. But if [a nation] collected and injected only those parts into its children, the nation could not but decline . . . The important point about a nation’s history education is to show a shining rainbow from myriad historical facts. The postwar education in Japan completely lacked a perspective from which to see a beautiful rainbow . . . It is only natural that the rainbow that the Japanese see should differ from the rainbows that the Chinese and the Koreans see, and it is nonsense to try to show the same rainbow. It is inexcusable to try to do so in compulsory education in Japan.”⁶⁵ The same sentiment led another Japanese writer to conclude that the Sino–Japanese agreement in October 2006 to conduct a joint history study was a mistake and that the Chinese aim in the officially sanctioned bilateral project was to impose their view of bilateral history on the Japanese. He saw the project as a Chinese attempt to interfere in the domestic affairs of Japan and called for the dissolution of the joint study group.⁶⁶ As discussed later, the textbook issue is clearly related to the education reform that Abe launched during his short term as prime minister.

62. For a more detailed examination of the history textbook controversy in Japan, see, for example, Sven Saaler, *Politics, Memory, and Public Opinion: The History Textbook Controversy and Japanese Society* (Muenchen [Germany]: Indicum Verlag [German Institute for Japanese Studies Monograph Series], 2005); Laura Hein and Mark Seldon, “The Lessons of War, Global Power, and Social Change,” in Laura Hein and Mark Seldon, eds., *Censoring History: Citizenship, and Memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 2000).

63. *Mainichi Shimbun*, 27 September 2004.

64. Abe and Okazaki, *op. cit.*, pp. 141–142.

65. Watanabe Shoichi, Chiba Shinichi, and Yagi Hidetsugu, “Rekishi no kagayaku niji ga Nihon saisei no gendoryoku da,” (A Shining Rainbow of History is the Driving Force for the Revitalization of Japan) *Seiron* (April 2007), p. 58.

66. Fujioka Kenji, “Nicchu rekishi kyodokenkyu ‘ketsuretsu’ no susume,” (I Recommend “Dissolution” of the Japan–China Joint History Study) *Seiron* (July 2007), pp. 128–137.

Constitutional Amendment

There are numerous scholarly and other treatises on the Japanese constitution and the issue of constitutional amendment. In the limited space available here, we will only sketch the outlines of the nationalists' goals in revising the Constitution. It should be noted at the outset that the advocates of constitutional amendment face a powerful opposition among the numerous, if unruly coalitions of intellectuals, politicians, teachers, journalists, unionists, business leaders, and ordinary citizens in Japan. Article 9 has symbolically represented the spirit of pacifism that has long been a core element of the national identity of most Japanese people and has substantively provided them with the peace and prosperity they have enjoyed in the postwar decades.

To the nationalists, Japan's present constitution is a reminder of their humiliating defeat in the last war and the imposition of the US-inspired provisions of the constitution, including but not limited to Article 9. Prime Minister Abe conveyed this sense in his statement commemorating the 60th anniversary of the promulgation of the 1947 constitution. Abe stated, "[W]hile we continue to uphold the fundamental principles of the present Constitution as abiding values, a bold review of the postwar regime all the way back to its origins and an in-depth discussion of the Constitution toward realizing a new Japan will lead to a spirit of laying the path to a new era."⁶⁷ Abe publicly stated that he was determined to see the constitution revised while he was in office, expecting to serve two terms for a total of six years.⁶⁸ The government moved a step closer to Abe's stated goal when in May 2007 Parliament approved the National Referendum Bill, setting down the procedures for a national referendum necessary for constitutional amendment.⁶⁹

The nationalists also want the constitution revised for national security reasons. They want to remove the constitutional constraint on the exercise of the right of collective defense. The nationalists share with political realists the concern that Article 9 and further expansion of its interpretation (*kakudai kaishaku*) over the years may no longer serve the needs of national defense today. Among the challenges they see facing Japan's national security are the nuclear weapons and missile development in North Korea, the growing power of China, the uncertain future of the People's Republic of China (PRC)–Taiwan relations, the instabilities in key strategic regions of the world, most prominently in the oil-rich Middle East, and the global war on terror. The nationalists and the realists differ on the degree of independence they desire from the USA over the

67. "Statement by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on the Occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the Enactment of the Constitution of Japan," Prime Minister's Office homepage at <http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/abespeech/2007/05/03danwa_e.html> (searched date: 8 June 2007).

68. *Japan Times Online*, 4 May 2007 at <<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20070504a1.html>> (searched date: 10 June 2007).

69. *Daily Yomiuri Online*, 15 May 2007 at <<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/20070515TDY01003.htm>> (searched date: 1 June 2007).

long term, but they both agree that currently and in the foreseeable future Japan's only realistic option is to rely on the strong alliance with the USA.

Some nationalists, while recognizing the bilateral alliance as the only realistic alternative today, argue nonetheless that Japan should also develop military capabilities to defend itself so that it could someday pursue a political future independent of the USA. Terumasa Nakanishi states, for example, that East Asia is already in a "new Cold War," in which the coalition of dictatorial and socialist regimes in China, Russia, and North Korea is pitted against the US–Japan alliance. The Kyoto University professor expects that over the longer term a multipolar world will emerge, in which the USA, China, Russia, India, and Europe will be the major powers. In anticipation of such a world, Nakanishi argues that Japan should develop a grand design to join the ranks of world powers and eventually become a great power with its own civilization, "not an appendix of the United States." For now, he calls for a strong alliance with the United States as a practical necessity, "to buy time" and warns against South Korea's overtures for Japan to join the pro-North Korean coalition in Northeast Asia.⁷⁰ Another nationalist, Shoichi Watanabe, warns that if the United States should reach reconciliation with North Korea, the resolution of the abduction issue would be further delayed and he urges the fellow Japanese to be prepared for such eventuality. He entertains the possibility that the USA would abandon Japan, just as the USA abandoned Chiang Kai-shek and South Vietnam and may even abandon Iraq. He recommends that Japan should hint at the possibility of a nuclear option.⁷¹

There is some variation in the approaches the nationalists advocate with respect to the question of collective defense, one of the key issues related to the peace constitution. Some nationalists believe that the article does not need to be revised if the purpose of the revision is to establish Japan's right to collective defense because, in their opinion, Japan already has such right.⁷² Others want Article 9 revised in such a way that the nation can fully exercise the right of collective defense, including participation, if necessary, in combat operations within the framework of the alliance with the USA. Some political realists want to limit Japanese participation in military operations overseas to those that are undertaken under the auspices of the United Nations, that is, as part of a multilateral collective defense scheme as originally envisaged by the framers of the UN Charter or as part of UN peacekeeping. They differ on whether revision of Article 9 is necessary, some arguing that amendment is

70. Nakanishi Terumasa, "Seimeisen wa nichi-bei-kan 'hoshuha' no renkei ni ari," (The Lifeline Rests in the "Conservative Coalition" among Japan, the USA, and South Korea) *Seiron* (May 2007), pp. 63–64.

71. Watanabe, "Itsumade kusoteki heiwashugi de ikunoka . . .," *Seiron* (September 2007), p. 203.

72. This is the view of Hisahiko Okazaki, a former Japanese diplomat. See his statement on the issue of collective defense in Abe and Okazaki, *op. cit.*, pp. 74–76.

necessary and others contending that either the current or an expanded interpretation of the article will be sufficient.

Not only do the nationalists want the constitutional ambiguity removed, they also want the Japanese Self-Defense Force (SDF) to be recognized as totally legitimate armed forces empowered to conduct the full range of military functions recognized for armed forces in other countries. They want the SDF to be equipped with the necessary resources to carry out its function as normal armed forces. They have supported and welcomed the recent government decision to elevate the Defense Agency to the level of a ministry, viewing it as a necessary step toward achieving the above goals.

North Korea and National Security Debate

Among the challenges facing Japan's national security, two developments have been particularly important in facilitating the convergence of interests between the nationalists and the political realists in their support of the constitutional amendment. One is the spectacular economic growth of China since the late 1970s, its expanding military capabilities, and its rising status in international politics. The other is the nuclear and missile development in North Korea. The nationalists' response to these developments has been particularly alarmist.

The North Korean missile launches in August 1998 and July 2006 and the nuclear test in October 2006 sent shock waves through Japan. Following the North Korean nuclear test, Prime Minister Abe stated, "North Korea is delusional if it believes that by arming itself with nuclear weapons it has become a big power able to negotiate with the USA." He added that Pyongyang should instead provide food to its people and exert its utmost efforts to improve the people's lives.⁷³ Japan called for severe international sanctions against North Korea and urged the USA and other Security Council members to pass a tough sanctions resolution. On 14 October, the Security Council unanimously approved a sanctions resolution. It condemned the North Korean nuclear test, ordered the country not to conduct nuclear or missile tests, and urged it to return to the Six-Party Talks without precondition. In the meantime, the Japanese government instituted its own sanctions against North Korea, banning the entry of North Korean ships into Japanese ports, imports from North Korea, and North Korean nationals' entry into Japan.⁷⁴

73. *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 11 October 2006 at <<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/politics/news/20061011it11.htm>> (searched date: 12 October 2006).

74. North Korean residents of Japan are exempted from the ban on North Korean nationals' entry into Japan. (*Asahi Shimbun*, 12 October 2006 at <<http://www.asahi.com/politics/update/1011/011.html>> (searched date: 13 October 2006); Hiroko Nakata, "Japan Makes It Official: More Punitive Steps Kick In," *Japan Times Online*, 14 October 2006 at <<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/mail/n20061014a1.html>> (searched date: 14 October 2006).

Several prominent figures, including former Prime Minister Nakasone, suggested consideration (if not adoption) of a nuclear option for Japan. Ichiro Ozawa, the leader of the opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), also advocated Japanese nuclear armament in 2002.⁷⁵ Chairman of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Policy Research Council Shoichi Nakagawa called on the nation to discuss the nuclear option for Japan.⁷⁶ He stated that it was more important to discuss what Japan wanted to do than to simply point out how difficult it would be for Japan to go nuclear.⁷⁷ Some nationalist intellectuals see a nuclear card as a powerful tool for Japan to exploit. Terumasa Nakanishi, for example, proposed that Japan intimate willingness to go nuclear, even as a last resort, in order to force North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons development.⁷⁸

Prime Minister Abe stated that Japan would maintain its “three non-nuclear principles,” not to possess, not to develop, and not to introduce nuclear weapons in Japan, but there was no doubt that North Korea’s nuclear test gave plenty of ammunition to the Japanese nationalists to push for a nuclear option. Their cause would gather momentum if North Korea should proceed to conduct another nuclear test or if evidence emerged suggesting that the North Koreans were close to being able to mount nuclear warheads on their ballistic missiles.⁷⁹ An Asahi Shimbun poll showed 62 percent of the respondents favored sanctions over dialogue with North Korea as the preferable approach to be taken by the international community.⁸⁰

The Six-Party Talks in Beijing in February 2007 produced an agreement for North Korea to freeze its nuclear weapons development in exchange for energy supply to be provided by the USA and other participants in the talks during the first phase, to be followed, in the second phase, by a complete and correct declaration of nuclear programs, verified disablement of North Korean nuclear facilities, lifting of economic sanctions against Pyongyang, and normalization of relations with the USA

75. Eric Johnston, “North’s Gambit May Weaken Japanese Taboo on Nuke Talk,” *Japan Times Online*, 12 October 2006 at <<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/mail/nn20061012a4.html>> (searched date: 12 October 2006).

76. See the dialogue between Nakagawa and journalist Kan Ito in “Meiyoaru dokuritsu no tameni tozen no kokubo rongi,” (It Is Natural to Discuss National Defense for Independence with Honor) *Seiron* (May 2007), pp. 50–51.

77. For example, Nakagawa states he is aware that Japan is a party to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and the additional International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) protocol and that Japanese withdrawal from the NPT would spell an end to Japan’s nuclear fuel cycle in accordance with the Japan–US treaty on atomic energy cooperation (*Ibid.*, p. 56).

78. Nakanishi, *op. cit.*, pp. 66–68.

79. North Korea was suspected of having several more nuclear weapons. (*Asahi Shimbun*, 9 October 2006 at <<http://www.asahi.com/international/update/1009/009.html>> (searched date: 11 October 2006). It was believed that North Korea’s stock of separated plutonium was enough for about 4 to 13 nuclear weapons. (David Albright and Paul Brannan, “The North Korean Plutonium Stock Mid-2006,” Institute for Science and International Security, 26 June 2006 at <<http://www.isis-online.org/publications/dprk/dprkplutonium.pdf>> (searched date: 4 November 2006).

80. *Asahi Shimbun*, 10 October 2006 at <<http://www.asahi.com/politics/update/1010/011.html>> (searched date: 10 October 2006).

and Japan. As of this writing (17 March 2008), it remains uncertain whether North Korea will indeed declare all of its nuclear programs and submit to verifiable and irreversible disablement of all of its nuclear facilities.

As we have noted earlier, the nationalists harbor a deep-seated suspicion toward China and its political motives, particularly with respect to its efforts to constrain Japan's international role. They see China's unabashedly outspoken opposition to Japan's bid to gain a permanent seat on the UN Security Council as an example of China's efforts to limit Japan's international influence.⁸¹ The enemy clause that still remains in the UN Charter and the fact that the second richest country in the world does not hold a permanent seat on the Security Council are visible reminders for the Japanese nationalists of their nation's defeat in the Second World War. It is particularly irritating to them that China, which they hold in deep suspicion, gained its permanent seat on the Council by replacing the Republic of China (Taiwan), which many of them hold in high esteem and regard as a friend.⁸²

China's growing military power is also a concern to the Japanese nationalists. Chairman of the LDP Policy Research Council Shoichi Nakagawa stated, "There is no mistaking the fact that China, since its founding, has been a 'military-first state'. We cannot rule out the possibility that the military has sprung ahead of the Communist Party. I am certain that China is resorting to a hegemonic behavior in various places around the world. [China's] published military spending does not include its spending on nuclear research and development or arms imports . . . No matter how 'friendly' they say they are toward Japan, I believe it is the responsibility of we Japanese politicians . . . to keep these facts in mind."⁸³

The more ardent China becomes in its opposition to Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, its stepped-up alliance cooperation with the USA, its efforts to beef up its defense capabilities, or its move to amend its constitution, the more resentful of China the Japanese nationalists will become. The nationalists' anti-Chinese rhetoric will have more than a little appeal to the general public, who feel little or no affinity toward China.⁸⁴

81. See, for example, Yuasa Hiroshi, "Senryakugan wo motta 'shuchosuru gaiko' wo tsuranuke," (Carry Through an "Assertive Diplomacy" with a Strategic Vision) *Seiron* (August 2007), pp. 119–120.

82. See, for example, the discussion between Yoshiko Sakurachi, a well-known conservative journalist, and Koh Se-kai, chief of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Japan, in "Jiyu to hanei no ko' wa Nittai no kizuna kara umareru," (The "Arc of Liberty and Prosperity" Will Be Born of Japan-Taiwan Solidarity) *Seiron* (June 2007), pp. 46–57. Sakurai states that Japan and Taiwan share much with each other as a community bound by destiny (*unmei kyodotai*) (*Ibid.*, p. 49).

83. Dialogue between Nakagawa and Ito (see endnote 74 above), p. 47. For Nakagawa's anti-Chinese views, see also Shoichi Nakagawa, "'Pekin orinpikku' boykotto mo sentakushi ni . . .," (Japan Should Keep] the Boycott of the "Peking Olympics" as an Option) *Shokun* (April 2007), pp. 36–43. See also Yuasa, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

84. A public opinion poll in 2006 showed that only slightly more than 34.3 percent of Japanese respondents felt affinity toward China, as opposed to over 61 percent who felt little or no affinity. Naikakufu Daijin Kanbo Seifu Kohoshitsu, "Gaiko ni kansuru seron chosa," (Public Opinion Survey concerning Diplomacy), 2006, <<http://www8.cao.go.jp/survey/h18/h18-gaiko/2-1.html>> (searched date: 21 June 2007).

The North Korean Abduction of Japanese

North Korea's abduction of Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 80s has also given the Japanese nationalists plenty of opportunities to spout their anti-North Korean vendetta. Compared with any other issue in recent memory, the public sentiment on the abduction issue played the most important enabling role for the Abe government's pursuit of a hard-line policy toward North Korea. It gave Abe a virtually unlimited opportunity to play up his nationalist credentials. The abduction issue indeed reawakened a sense of nationalism among many ordinary Japanese citizens.⁸⁵

Most political observers and analysts in Japan saw the Koizumi-Kim summit in Pyongyang in September 2002, which produced the so-called Pyongyang Declaration, as a major diplomatic accomplishment for Japan and a promising signpost toward an eventual normalization between the two countries.⁸⁶ The Japanese people were stunned by but nonetheless welcomed Kim Jong-il's admission to and apology for North Korea's abduction of Japanese nationals in the 1970s and 80s. Although most Japanese continued to harbor deep-seated suspicions about the Kim regime, the return of five of the thirteen officially recognized abductees to Japan in October 2002 seemed to vindicate the Japanese hopes for improved bilateral relations. Developments since then, however, have been a major disappointment for the Japanese government and people. North Korea's refusal or inability to give a credible accounting for the status of the remaining abductees and the revelation of other possible Japanese abductees have deepened the Japanese people's skepticism about North Korea's sincerity and political motives. Megumi Yokota, whose remains were submitted to DNA testing in Japan and proven not to be those of the abductee, has become a focal point of anti-North Korean accusations by the abductees' family members, a group of supporters for their cause, and the mass media in Japan.

At the forefront of the anti-North Korean rally in Japan is the National Association for the Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea (*Kitachosen ni rachisareta Nihonjin wo kyushutsusuru tame no zenkoku kyogikai*, or "Sukuu Kai" for short). The Association was established in 1998 to support the activities of the Association of the Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea (*Kitachosen ni yoru rachi higaisha kazoku renrakukai* or "kazokukai" for short). In 2003, "Sukuu Kai" established the Investigation Commission on Missing Japanese Probably Related to North Korea (*tokutei shissosha mondai chosakai*), with the Association's executive director assuming the position of the Commission's chief representative. Together these three groups have been carrying

85. For this view, see Shoichi Watanabe's statement in his dialogue with Kenichi Watanabe in "Yomigaeru Nichiro senso no jidai," (see note 7 above), pp. 152–153.

86. Tsuneo Akaha, "Japan and the Recurrent Nuclear Crisis," in Linus Hagstrom and Marie Soderberg, eds., *North Korea Policy; Japan and the Great Powers* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 19–37; Tsuneo Akaha, "Japanese Policy toward the North Korean Problem: Balancing Bilateralism and Multilateralism," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 42 (3–4 2007), pp. 297–320.

out a public campaign inside and outside Japan, demanding the return of Japanese abductees from North Korea and calling for international pressure on Pyongyang.

Many Japanese politicians have also joined the anti-North Korean chorus over the abduction issue. The most prominent among them is Shinzo Abe, who, as the Chief Cabinet Secretary under Koizumi, became the official face of the Japanese effort to resolve the abduction issue. His assumption of the premiership in 2006 was attributable in large measure to the strong popular support he had garnered as the most visible and outspoken advocate of the hard-line policy toward North Korea over the abduction issue. Abe also chaired the government's Headquarters of the Abduction Issue composed of all Cabinet ministers, which he established in September 2006.

The Abe government appealed to the international community that the North Korean abduction of Japanese nationals represented a flagrant violation of the human rights of Japanese citizens. Abe also argued that Japan should consider the abductions a national security issue because North Korea had violated Japanese sovereignty by successfully sending its agents into and out of Japanese territory and his government had failed to protect its citizens.⁸⁷ He also referred to the North Korean abduction as an act of terror.⁸⁸

The Abe government stepped up its economic sanctions against North Korea. The agreement at the Six-Party Talks in February 2007 has not changed Tokyo's position. The government has maintained that the resolution of the abduction issue is a precondition for the normalization of relations with North Korea and without progress on normalization Japan would not offer any economic assistance to the North.

Some observers in Japan are concerned that as the other participating countries in the Six-Party talks move forward on their commitments under the February 2007 agreement, Japan may become isolated if it continues to insist on linking normalization and economic aid to the abduction issue. Nationalists argue, however, that it is not Japan but North Korea who should be concerned about "missing the bus." They contend that if North Korea does not deliver on its commitment to freeze its nuclear weapons program, North Korea will continue to suffer the consequences of international sanctions.⁸⁹ There remains concern among some nationalists, however, that the "softening" of US policy toward North Korea might compromise Japan's interest in both resolving the abduction issue and preventing North Korea's nuclear armament. Kazuhiro Araki, who heads the Investigation Commission on Missing Japanese Probably Related to North Korea, states that the USA had been duped into agreeing to provide North Korea with energy, begin talks for diplomatic normalization, and

87. Abe, *op. cit.*, pp. 44–46.

88. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

89. See, for example, Nishioka Tsutomu, "Rokkakoku kyogi: Nihon wa okizari ni saretanoka," (The Six-Party Talks: Has Japan Been Left Behind?) *Seiron* (April 2007), pp. 106–112. See also Nakanishi, *op. cit.*, pp. 63–68.

start the process of removing Pyongyang from the list of state-sponsors of terrorism despite the fact that, in his view, North Korea was determined to continue with its nuclear weapons development. He also criticized Japan for joining the Six-Party accord. He implied that the USA might be able to live with a nuclear North Korea, but for Japan North Korea's nuclear armament would be a matter of national survival.⁹⁰

In the meantime, Abe's hard-line approach to North Korea was winning many supporters among the nationalists in Japan. Among them was a prominent journalist, Yoshiko Sakurai, who advocated stepped-up sanctions against Pyongyang, as well as anti-spy and national public security legislation to eliminate espionage and other activities that she claimed were being conducted in Japan to support North Korea.⁹¹ In an interview with Sakurai, published in the magazine *Shokun*, Prime Minister Abe stressed that he took every opportunity to speak up on the abduction issue in his meetings with foreign leaders. Throughout the interview, the prime minister outlined his views on the constitutional revision, education reform, the comfort women issue, policy toward China and North Korea, collective defense, all of which were issues on his political agenda.⁹²

Education Reform

The Abe government launched a two-pronged education reform campaign. The push for education reform was both a response to the growing concern about educational and social problems in the country, such as school violence and suicides, refusal to attend school, lack of respect for authority, and teen sex and pregnancy, and also an attempt to instill patriotism in future generations. In the book "For A Beautiful Country," Abe devoted an entire chapter to the topic of education reform. He began by noting, "Postwar Japan sought in *kokkashugi* (statist nationalism) the cause of the war 60 years ago and the reason for Japan's defeat. As a result, the equation State = Evil was built in the core of the postwar Japanese people. Therefore, it is difficult for them to draw inspiration from the standpoint of the state. More than that, there is a strong tendency to avoid [state-inspired ideas]. This is one of the failures of postwar education."⁹³ Abe noted survey results showing low levels of national pride among Japanese high school students (50%), compared with much higher levels in the USA (70.9%) and China (79.4%), and called for education reform.

90. Araki Kazuo, "Busshu no negaeri, Kin Shojitsu no choushou," (Bush's Turn-around and Kim Jong-il's Ridicule) *Shokun* (April 2007), pp. 68–76.

91. See Sakurai's interview of Mr and Mrs Yokota, the parents of Megumi Yokota in "Kazokukai kessei junen: 'Daihyo tainin' no shin'i wo kiita!" (10th Year of the Formation of the Association of the Families [of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea]: The Real Reason behind the "Representative's Resignation" Sought) *Shokun* (June 2007), pp. 24–38.

92. See Abe's interview with Sakurai in "Gekitotsu intabyu: Abe Shinzo vs. Sakurai Yoshiko – 'Sori, Koizumiryu wo suteraremasuka'" (Colliding interview: Shinzo Abe vs. Yoshiko Sakurai – "Mr Prime Minister, Will You Abandon the Koizumi Style?") *Bungei Shunju* (May 2007), pp. 94–107.

93. Abe, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

He stated, “The purpose of education is to bring up a people (*kokumin*) with aspirations and build a nation with dignity (*hinkakuaru*).⁹⁴

Abe argued that education reform was necessary to improve the students’ abilities and give them a purpose in life and that this required the ability of teachers to guide their students properly. To achieve these goals, he called for the introduction of a school assessment system, which evaluated not only the students’ abilities but also the quality of school management and student guidance. In improving the management of schools, Abe called for the expansion of the power of school principals and cooperation of the students’ guardians.⁹⁵ He lamented the low levels of morality among the young people in Japan today and stressed the importance of the family in reversing the trends.⁹⁶ He urged schools to provide their students with a good family model and questioned the appropriateness of the gender-free approach to education he found in Japanese schools today.⁹⁷ Abe presented his view of an ideal family: grandparents, parents, and children living together as a family are the happiest family.⁹⁸

In December 2006, the Abe government enacted a new Basic Education Law (*Shin Kyoiku Kihon-ho*), the cornerstone of Abe’s education reform agenda. This was followed by the passage in June 2007 of bills to amend three education-related pieces of legislation, the School Education Law (*Gakko Kyoiku-ho*), the Education Personnel Certification Law (*Kyoin Menkyo Oyobi Kyoiku Komuin Tokurei-ho*), and the Local Education Administration Law (*Chiho Kyoiku Gyosei-ho*). The School Education Law was amended to foster a sense of patriotism and discipline among young students. Accordingly, academic guidelines for elementary, junior high, and high schools will be changed by the start of the new school year in 2008, followed by a revision of textbooks for adoption in a few years. The amended law will also allow kindergartens, elementary schools, and junior high schools to hire additional management personnel and strengthen school administrators’ supervision of teachers. The revised Education Personnel Certification Law will require public school teachers to renew their teaching license every ten years following a 30-hour training program and thus encourage stricter teacher compliance with the curricular requirements of their schools. Education boards can require teachers deemed “incompetent” to take a training program lasting up to a year, and even dismiss them at the end of the training program. The revised Local Education Administration Law will allow the education minister to order boards of education to take corrective actions should the teachers fail to comply with education-related laws or otherwise fail to carry out their responsibilities.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 207. The expression “a nation with dignity” seems to borrow from a recent national best-seller *Kokka no hinkaku* (the Grace of a Nation), written by cultural critic Kiichi Fujiwara, which has the same purpose of presenting an idealized view of the nation, and urges fellow citizens to respect and admire the nation thus beautifully presented.

95. *Ibid.*, pp. 208–211.

96. *Ibid.*, pp. 212–213.

97. *Ibid.*, pp. 215–216.

98. *Ibid.*, p. 219.

The cumulative effect of these legislative changes will be to enhance the government's control over schools and teachers.⁹⁹ Critics are concerned that the government will use these new powers to punish teachers who refuse to follow government policy or obey instructions from education boards. For example, to stand up to sing "Kimigayo" (the national anthem) or salute the national flag during school ceremonies.¹⁰⁰

What did the nationalists see in the education reform launched by the Abe government? Ezaki Michio, a research staff member of *Nippon Kaigi*, the largest association of conservative opinion leaders in Japan,¹⁰¹ wrote, "The ultimate goal of the US occupation policy was to reconstruct and weaken the Japanese society so it would never again oppose the USA and to establish in Japan a subservient government that would follow the goals of the USA."¹⁰² He asserted that this goal dictated the US policy regarding the establishment of the postwar education system in Japan and this meant that the role of the state in public education was made ambiguous and substantially weaker than it was in the prewar and wartime educational system. Ezaki argued that the aim of the current reform should be none other than to restore the traditional values of Japan that disappeared in the US-inspired educational system of the postwar decades. He saw the restoration of the authorities of the state in public education and the strengthening of patriotism and national identity as top priorities in the education reform.¹⁰³ He contended, "In order to turn our children into *kokumin* who can conduct themselves as members of the national community (*kokka kyodotai*), we must not hesitate to teach morality, patriotism, national identity, and other such values . . . At last, in our country, our educational philosophy has been dramatically transformed with the enactment of the new law."¹⁰⁴ He then praised the new law's emphasis on public spirit, respect for tradition and culture, and a loving attitude toward the nation and one's

99. Akemi Nakamura, "New Laws to Reshape Education System," *Japan Times Online*, 21 June 2007 at <<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/print/nn20070621a1.html>> (searched date: 21 June 2007); Hiroko Nakata, "Education Reform Bills Are Enacted," *Japan Times Online*, 21 June 2007 at <<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/print/nn20070620it11.htm>> (searched date: June 21 2007).

100. Akemi Nakamura, "Lower House Passes Education Bills," *Japan Times Online*, 19 May 2007 at <<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/mail/nn20070519a1.htm>> (searched date: 24 May 2007). Since 2003, public school teachers in Tokyo have been under order by the metropolitan government to sing "Kimigayo" while facing the national flag, and as of 21 June 2007, 388 teachers had been punished for disobeying this directive, which they believed violated their constitutionally protected right to free speech and conscience. (Jun Hongo, "10 Teachers Lose 'Kimigayo' Lawsuit against Tokyo," *Japan Times Online*, 21 June 2007 at <<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/print/nn2007021a5.html>> (searched date: 21 June 2007).

101. Nippon Kaigi board members include former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Susumu Miyoshi, Yasukuni Shrine Chief Priest Toshiaki Nanbu, and Governor of Tokyo Shintaro Ishihara. (Nippon Kaigi homepage at <<http://www.nipponkaigi.org/0100-toha/0130-yakuin.html>> [searched date: 12 June 2007].)

102. Ezaki Michio, "Kaisei kyoiku kionho de gakko wa kokomade yokunaru," (With the Revised Basic Education Law, Schools Improve Thus) *Seiron* (May 2007), p. 224.

103. *Ibid.*, pp. 224–226.

104. *Ibid.*, p. 227.

birthplace.¹⁰⁵ He even made nostalgic and approving references to the Meiji Emperor's Rescript on Education.¹⁰⁶

Prime Minister Abe's traditional views of the family, the community, and the nation resonated strongly with the nationalists' goal of dismantling the postwar education system and replacing it with a system that would nurture patriotism and nationalist pride in future generations.

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis has outlined the major goals of the nationalists and their arguments. Their overriding goal is to free the nation from the memory of its humiliating defeat in the last war and to give the people a renewed sense of purpose. They want to bury the defeatist view of Japan that they attribute to the results of postwar liberalism and pacifism. They want to revamp the education system and foster patriotism in the younger generations who they believe are not yet infected by the liberalism of the left. And yes, they want to remove from their constitution the vestiges of the defeat in the last war and the Allied occupation.

The nationalists are selectively reviving ideas, events, and institutions from Japan's past and putting them in a new framework for discourse. They are attempting to remove the scars of Japan's defeat in the last war by putting forth a revisionist interpretation of the war, rejecting Japan's war responsibility and deflecting both domestic and international criticisms of Japanese wartime atrocities. They are recasting the prewar role of the Yasukuni Shrine into a war memorial where the Japanese can visit without a guilty conscience. They are attempting to popularize their version of history by rewriting history textbooks. They are pushing education reform to expand the power of the state, reduce the influence of liberal and progressive teachers in public education, and to foster patriotism. They are using their well-publicized rebuttal of international criticisms of Japan as ammunition for fostering xenophobia among the Japanese public. China's rise and North Korea's threatening behavior are just what they need in their nationalist campaign. The nationalists had found a powerful ally in Prime Minister Abe, who personally shared many of their political goals.

Abe's premiership abruptly ended in September 2007, as his approval ratings plummeted after a series of gaffes by his cabinet ministers and the revelation of missing pension data. Also weighing on his decision to resign was his inability to marshal the support of the opposition Democratic Party of Japan for anti-terrorism legislation to allow the Maritime Self-Defense Forces to continue supplying fuel and providing other logistical support for the US-led military operations in Afghanistan.

What are the future prospects for the nationalist campaign? With the end of the Abe government, the nationalists lost the unprecedented ideological

105. *Ibid.*, pp. 227–228.

106. *Ibid.*, p. 228.

access they had enjoyed to the highest level of government. Their anti-Chinese and anti-Korean appeals no longer enjoy a willing listener at the top of the government. Abe's successor, Yasuo Fukuda, took steps to improve relations with China and South Korea. Beijing and Seoul reciprocated by sending visible signals to Japan that they desired to improve ties with Tokyo.

The nationalists face many challenges. Public support for many of their goals is far from assured. The path toward constitutional amendment remains uncertain, as pacifism remains strong among the Japanese, including members of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party.¹⁰⁷ Politicians are also divided on some key questions regarding constitutional revision, such as the disposition of Article 9 with respect to the right of collective defense.¹⁰⁸ Although education reform has begun with the promulgation of a new basic education law, its implementation requires the cooperation of school administrators and teachers throughout the country, which is not at all guaranteed.¹⁰⁹ Diplomatic concerns also limit the scope and speed of defense policy change. Attempts at rewriting the nation's history also face formidable opposition, both at home and abroad.¹¹⁰

Disappointed as they are with the fate of Shinzo Abe, the nationalists have not toned down their rhetoric. Nor have the nationalists lost an audience for their rhetoric. This is in part due to the fact that the anti-Chinese rhetoric which has become a core element of the nationalist discourse resonates with a wider segment of the Japanese public, who are apprehensive about the future of Sino-Japanese relations. Their unease has been heightened recently by a spate of news reports about poisoned dumplings imported from China. The 14 February issue of *Shukan Shincho*, a weekly magazine, carried a series of articles reflecting and further inflaming the popular concern: "A Chinese Official Claims Poison Placed in Japan"; "Chinese Net Calls for Rejection of Japanese Goods . . ."; "An Amazing 10,000 Deaths a Year by Agricultural Chemicals in China."¹¹¹

107. See, for example, Koike Kiyohiko, Takeoka Katsumi, and Minowa Noboru, *Ware jieitai wo aisu, yue ni kenpo kyujō wo mamoru* (I Love the Self-Defense Force; Therefore, I Defend Article 9 of the Constitution) (Tokyo: Kamogawa Shuppan, 2007). It is noteworthy that the three authors held high posts in the Ministry of Defense.

108. For example, only 31.7 percent of the candidates running in the Upper House elections in July 2007 who responded to a Kyodo News poll favored revising the war-renouncing article and 49.8 percent opposed a permanent law to enable the government to deploy the SDF overseas on international cooperation missions at any time. (*Japan Times Online*, 8 July 2007 at <<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/mail/n20070708a2.html>> (searched date: 9 July 2007).

109. For a liberal critique of the education reform under the Abe government, see the series of articles on education in *Sekai*, June 2007. See also *Zenya*, October 2007.

110. For liberal critiques of the movement to rewrite Japanese history, see for example, Komori Yoichi, Yasumaru Yoshio, and Sakamoto Yoshikazu, *Rekishi kyokasho: Nani ga mondai ka* (History Textbook: What Is at Issue?) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2001); Rekishigaku Kenkyukai, ed., *Rekishi kenkyū no genzai to kyokasho mondai* (The Current State of History Studies and the Textbook Controversy) (Tokyo: Rekishigaku Kenkyukai, 2005); and Takahashi Tetsuya, Ishiyama Hisao, Tawara Yoshifumi, and Murata Tomoko, *Tomoyo! Senso eno kyoiku: Kyoiku kihonho "kaisei" to kyokasho mondai* (Stop the Education for War: "Revision" of the Basic Education Law and the Textbook Controversy) (Tokyo: Gakushū no Tomosha, 2005).

111. Author translation of the Japanese article titles from *Shukan Shincho*, 14 February 2008.

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