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History politics and policies of the Japanese Government in history textbooks in Japan. Domestic and Foreign aspects.

### **Summary**

This dissertation, inspired by the frequent “textbook controversies” of **Japan, aims to analyse domestic policies and politics of history of the Japanese Government** between 1982-2022. It focuses on the influence of those politics on Japanese education and especially on history textbooks. Therefore the **main research material is concentrated on textbooks** for lower and upper secondary schools authorised by the Ministry of Education (MOE and later Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, hereafter MEXT) between the “neighbouring countries clause” issuance in 1982 and 2022 when the last researched history textbooks for upper secondary school were authorised. The dissertation also examines Japan's history policies and politics and how they were influenced by various actors in the East and Southeast Asia region.

The following **hypotheses** were posed:

1. Japan's **historical policies and politics are not a coherent and preconceived system**, i.e., the government's historical policy actions mainly consist of responding to contentious historical issues raised by other political actors.
2. The **government's actions** in the field of historical policy **have only an indirect effect** on the content of textbooks.

3. The **content of textbooks changes after each certification**, depending on changes in the government's historical policy on a given topic.

4. **Foreign pressure**, as well as **various circles and non-governmental groups**, significantly **impacted the formation of historical policy** in Japan.

**The Introductory Chapter** deals with the **theoretical issues of the dissertation**, especially the definition of history politics and policies in the Japanese context and partially touches on **neoclassical realism as a possible framework** for such studies. Although the dissertation mainly deals with the **domestic aspect** of those policies, they are also influenced from the outside and the domestic system has in turn influenced how the government reacted to foreign pressure.

**Chapter I** discusses briefly the **chosen historical issues and their historical background** and is the backbone of the **research tool called “facts matrix”**. With each discussed historical issue such as “comfort women”, “Nanjing Massacre”, “Yasukuni Shrine” and others, this chapter introduces questions that were posed while examining textbooks, such as “Is the number of victims stated in the textbooks?” or “Is the issue mentioned at all?”.

**Chapter II** deals in depth in mostly chronological order with **various government stances, speeches and actions made by the government of Japan** in the discussed period on particular issues and history as a whole, with the background of historical statements from 1945 to 1982. It examines **how the wording in those statements changed** over time and **how the next governments tried to change the narratives**, especially with the emergence of nationalistic governments, mainly Koizumi’s and Abe’s time as prime ministers between 2001-2007 and 2012-2020. The main axis of discussed stances are statements on the 50<sup>th</sup> 60<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the Japanese surrender, respectively in 1995, 2005 and 2015. The chapter also discusses **how foreign influence and stances on historical issues, primarily from South Korea and China affected those Japanese stances**, for example on the “comfort women” issue.

**Chapter III** describes in detail **the institutional and law aspects of MEXT(MOE)** with a focus on **the textbook authorization system** and how it changed over time. Therefore, it briefly examines the state of education from 1947 up to 2022, focusing on laws on education and textbook certification and selection process and how government can influence them. It also

deals with **Japanese domestic struggles over the shape of education and the role of the certification system with a particular focus on “textbook controversies”**. It especially takes into account Ienaga Saburō’s trials and their influence on textbook writing and also the emergence of nationalistic textbooks by the beginning of 2000 and their connections with the government.

**Chapter IV** briefly describes the textbook publishing scene in Japan in the discussed period, and then delves into a **summary of findings made by the use of the “fact matrix”** on particular issues. It is also based on available documentation of the authorization process and **points out the changes made on particular issues using certification rules**, especially after 2014 when a certification rule basing the description of a historical event on the existing government stance was passed. **The government influence nonetheless was found to be indirect, not at least for the lack of trying**. Especially by the abovementioned Abe administration.

**The conclusion chapter** briefly summarizes all the findings of this dissertation and places them *vis a vis* **neoclassical realism theory**. History politics indeed were not created with a clear goal in mind. Rather it changed with the different stances which were in turn reactions to ongoing issues. The stage of reconciliation and apologies, which tentatively began in the eighties and was strongest in the nineties started losing traction with more nationalist-oriented governments. **As the changes to the policies were indirectly influencing textbook writing, some of the various government stances and deeds found their way into the textbooks**. Even the more restrictive changes to the education system could be bypassed within the rules.

Not less **important were the actions of differing progressive and conservative groups and movements, both domestic and foreign in influencing the history politics of Japan**. Those groups concentrated on particular issues, such as Ienaga’s trials against the textbook authorization system, which helped to relax the rules and made processes of authorization more transparent. On the other hand, nationalistic groups found allies in some politicians of the LDP party which helped them in the adoption of more conservative textbooks in some localities. Differing views made for differing approaches to history education.

**The government's stance on historical issues as neoclassical realism claims was greatly influenced by the international system**. The reconciliation was motivated first by the influence of the Cold War and later by Japan’s ambition for a more proactive approach on the international stage. The changes in stance on particular issues against other countries then

influenced textbooks domestically. On the other hand, the indirect governmental hold on textbooks and the certification system, while allowing a more pluralistic approach to historical narratives in textbooks also factored into the restricted reactions to diplomatic crises connected with education.

The **annexe** consists of a few examples of partial findings of the “facts matrix” to show part of the research work put into finding the overall tendencies of the certification system and to connect those issues with government stances.

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Reported Kachina