

Re-visiting Hiroshima: The Role of US and Japanese History Textbooks in the Construction of National Memory

Keith Crawford

Edge Hill College
United Kingdom

This paper originates from the perspective that school textbooks are crucial organs in the process of constructing legitimated ideologies and beliefs and are a reflection of the values considered important by powerful groups in society. This claim is explored through investigating the manner in which a selection of history textbooks in use in US and Japanese schools invites students to understand the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Linking narrative with historical analysis, the paper presents evidence which suggests that US and Japanese children are provided with a narrow view of the past which in promoting a sense of unity and patriotism limits the development of a critical historical consciousness.

Key Words: history textbooks, Japan, USA, Hiroshima, politics, ideology, curriculum

School textbooks are economic, cultural and political artefacts with contents and formats the outcome of concentrated periods of negotiation and compromise. Textbooks are social constructions fought over by groups representing distinct, and often competing, communities of interests and alternative cultural visions. The contents of textbooks are "...conceived, designed, and authored by real people with real interests" (Apple, 1991, p. 11). One way of viewing school textbooks is to see them not as "truthful" and objective narratives but as manufactured "accounts" which present claims to truth and knowledge. I find Usher and Edwards' claim that texts [here I include history textbooks] are stories or narratives that education tells about itself or that are told on its behalf, helpful. They write:

"These stories, like all stories, have a plot, a narrative, a cast of characters including heroes ... and villains (feared

and rejected others) and a style (a set of metaphors which 'animate' the text) ..." (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 34)

Graham Down (1988) claims that "Textbooks, for better or worse, dominate what students learn. They set the curriculum, and often the facts learned...The public regards textbooks as authoritative, accurate and necessary" (Graham Down, 1988, p. 14). Apple in reflecting upon the hegemonic potential of textbooks, has written "There is considerable pressure to raise the standards of texts, make them more "difficult", standardise their content, make certain that the texts place more stress on "American" themes of patriotism, free enterprise and the "Western tradition..." (Apple, 1993, p. 23). For Foster, US history textbooks have tended to "... instil in the young a sense of unity and patriotism and a veneration for the nation's glorious heritage" (Foster, 1999, p. 4).

In his critique of US history textbooks, Loewen claims that the teaching of history is dominated by textbooks whose contents are predictable, uncontroversial and exclude material which "...might reflect badly on our [US] national character" (Loewen, 1995, p. 34). Griffin and Marciano claim that "Textbooks offer an obvious means of realising hegemony in education ... Within history texts ... the omission of crucial facts and viewpoints limits profoundly the ways in which

Keith Crawford, Education and Head of Educational Research at Edge Hill College, Ormskirk, UK. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Keith Crawford, Reader in Education, Edge Hill College, St. Helens Road, Ormskirk, Lancashire L39 4QP United Kingdom. Electronic mail may be sent to crawfork@edgehill.ac.uk

students come to view history events” (Griffin & Marciano, 1979, p. 35).

Textbook Selection Process

History textbooks in the USA are written by academic historians from universities, the involvement of practising teachers is at the review stage where they offer advice on pedagogic matters. Textbooks are selected for use in school by state and regional textbook adoption committees, a process which can take as long as twelve months. This has long proved to be a contentious and highly political process and a number of authors have analysed particular textbook wars (See Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; Altbach et al., 1991; Castell de et al. 1991; Herlihy, 1992). In many states it is a public process during which different pressure groups mobilise populist support in an attempt to exert influence on the content and format of individual texts. This process often results in revisions being made to texts including the removal of text or illustration considered by a group to be inappropriate or offensive (Huyette, 1995).

Those voices given the authority to speak include state textbook adoption committees and the representatives of powerful political groups. This is portrayed in the *Guardian* newspaper which carried a report that the curriculum of Lake County, Florida can only consider other nations and cultures within the context of explaining that Americans are “... unquestioningly superior to other nations ... now or at any other time in history.” This was justified by a Board of Education member as being necessary for children who “If they felt our land was inferior or equal to others, would have no motive to go to war and defend our country”(Guardian, 1994, p. 7).

The intensity of conflict over the construction of official knowledge inside Japan is partly the product of the way in which textbooks assume the role of semi-official government documents providing authoritative statements of control and the manner in which they can be seen to reflect national policy imperatives. All school texts must be screened and approved every four years by a textbook screening committee made up of Ministry of Education appointed teachers and scholars who ensure they meet ministry guidelines that determine content and vocabulary.

A framework written by the Ministry contains criteria to be used in writing textbooks. These criteria are sent to publishing companies who contract professional historians and teachers to write drafts which are presented for approval. Publishing companies recognise that only textbooks that meet

the criteria can be published, in 1994 the *Daily Yomiuri* newspaper commented that “In an apparently self-imposed bid to gain government authorisation, five publishing companies have submitted drafts for primary-school social studies textbooks that include all 42 figures cited as examples by the Education Ministry as being “significant historic persons ...” (Daily Yomiuri, 20th July, 1994, p. 2). Writing in 1988 on the way in which history textbooks are controlled by the Ministry, Horio claimed that the “... inspectors have been uncompromising in their desire to constrain the freedom of authors with regard to a number of important issues ... Moreover, the Ministry has been quite meddlesome with regard to ...Japan’s repeated war-making...” (Horio, 1988, p.34). While attempts were made during the 1980s and 1990s to liberalise the textbook screening process, to simplify it and make it more transparent, final authority to decide textbook content remains with the Ministry of Education (Schoppa, 1993).

The “imagined community” (Anderson, 1971) is powerfully institutionalised in Japan and images of myth and legend remain at the heart of Japanese national identity at the beginning of the 21st Century. The intensification of textbook wars and the role of ultra-conservative nationalism gathered pace in the mid-1990’s within a context where the Japanese government began to publicly express regret for the Imperial army’s wartime behaviour. On 23rd August 1993, four years after the death of Emperor Hirohito, Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro in his maiden speech to the Diet expressed “profound remorse and apologies” for Japan’s wartime actions. In 1995, the Diet passed a resolution acknowledging national guilt. On 15th August Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi expressed feelings of “deep remorse” and “heartfelt apology.” These conciliatory gestures provoked intense challenges from Japanese conservatives and ultra-nationalists.

Between 1994 and 1995 senior LDP politicians made statements that played down Japan's wartime aggression. Interviewed by a national newspaper, *Mainichi*, in May 1994, justice minister Nagano Shigeto claimed that the Pacific War was a war of liberation and the Nanking Massacre was a “fabrication.” Two national newspapers, *Asahi* and *Yomiuri*, criticised Prime Minister Hata Tsutomu for not taking immediate action. Nagano was forced to resign only ten days after taking office and sent a letter of apology to his Chinese counterpart, Li Peng, and telephoned South Korean President Kim Young Sam. In August 1995 Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama issued a public apology after, Education Minister Yoshinobu Shimamura, said that Japan had no need to apologise further for its wartime activities (*Voice of America*,

10th August 1995). In January 1997, Seiroku Kajiyama, a senior LDP politician claimed that comfort women were professional prostitutes who had provided sex to Japanese troops for money. On 31st July 1998, agriculture minister Shoichi Nakagawa, who was opposed to describing Japan's wartime activities in school textbooks, denied the existence of comfort woman although he was later forced to retract the comment.

Tensions were further heightened in 1997 when the publication of *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* by Iris Chang created a storm of controversy and focussed international attention upon the massacre. Chang was unequivocal in her condemnation of Japan:

“The Japanese have for decades systematically purged references to the Nanking massacre from their textbooks. They have removed photographs of the Nanking massacre from museums, tampered with original source material, and excised from popular culture any mention of the massacre. Even respected history professors in Japan have joined right-wing forces to do what they perceive to be their national duty: discredit reports of a Nanking massacre” (*South China Morning Post*, December 13, 1997)

Chang's book fuelled the anxieties of ultra-nationalist conservatives promoting a view of Japan's not as an aggressor but as a victim of western violence at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan's ambassador in Washington, Kunihiko Saito, described the book as “...one-sided and filled with historical inaccuracies” (*Newsweek*, July 20, 1998, p. 19; *Tokyo Time*, May 11, 1998, p. 16). Japanese nationalists threatened action ranging from lawsuits to assassination.¹ So intense was opposition that the book's publication in Japan was dropped after threats of violence from right-wing extremists forced the Japanese publisher to withdraw (*The Times*, 20th February 1999).

In 1997 Seroku Kajuyama, the chief cabinet secretary, accused several comfort women of being professional prostitutes. In 1999 Tokyo elected a nationalist governor Shintaro Ishihara who called the Nanking Massacre a “lie” (*New York Times*, April, 22 1999). Accompanying this political attack have been campaigns by a conservative alliance of right-wing pressure groups, academics and politicians aimed at promoting a sense of nationalistic pride among children, ensuring that references to themes such as

comfort woman were deleted from history textbooks and encouraging a distinctive Japanese historical consciousness.

Controversy over events such as the Nanking Massacre and comfort women began to be used as political weapons and created a context within which debates over national identity were articulated. Professor of Education at Tokyo University, Fujioka Nobukatsu, co-founded the *Association for the Advancement of A Liberalist View of History*, in January 1995, and the *Society for Creating New History Textbooks*, in December 1996, aiming to revise what he dubbed Japan's “masochistic education” in history. In Nobukatsu's view “The people that does not have a history to be proud of cannot constitute itself as a nation” (Nobukatsu, 1996, p. 30). Nobukatsu and his supporters are implacably opposed to the politics of apology. Their objective is to “...inculcate a sense of pride in the history of our nation” (Otake, 1996). They are deeply uneasy about the economic and political rise of China and Korea, and this, against a background of Japanese economic decline, has bred an insecurity which has led ultra-conservative nationalists to construct an argument which sees Japan at war, economically, with the rest of Asia. Books the group have published, such as *History Not Taught in School Textbooks* containing 78 stories of “great” men and woman in Japanese history, have become best sellers. Their work is actively promoted by the national newspaper *Sankei shinbun* and the cartoons of Kobayashi Yoshinori published in the magazine *Sapio* are very popular and widely read.

The groups are particularly opposed to texts approved in 1997 that refer to comfort women and to accounts of the Nanking Massacre which, they argue, contribute to the manufacture of an anti-Japanese ideology and are the product of an international conspiracy aimed at undermining Japan against the background of a claimed “... loss of a national historical sense, textbooks should instead restore “correct history” (Hein & Selden, 1996, p. 59). In January 2000, the Japanese government came under pressure to cancel a seminar called *The Verification of the Rape of Nanking, the Biggest Lie of the 20th Century* at which it was argued that Chinese claims of 300,000 civilian deaths were exaggerated and possibly fictitious (*Daily Telegraph*, January 20, 2003; *The Guardian*, January 24, 2003).

Aims and Method

In the introduction to his book *Hiroshima: The Decision to Use the A-Bomb* Fogelman claims that “...there are serious questions as to whether the devastation was justified”

¹ Such threats are not made idly. In 1989, Hitoshi Motoshima, the Mayor of Nagasaki, was shot and badly injured for suggesting that Emperor Hirohito bore some responsibility for World War Two

(Fogelman, 1964). The fifty years since the dropping of the bomb has seen a continuation of the controversy. Since 1945 the release of documents into public archives in the USA, the publication of biographical accounts by key participants and the increasing number of academic accounts of the event have provided an extensive body of evidence from which textbook authors could construct a critical narrative.

This paper will explore the following questions, to what extent do the sample of history textbooks:

- provide critical treatments of national heroes and heroines based upon valid criteria;
- allow pupils to consider the way in which the selection of evidence, the sources available and the historians' values influence interpretation of the past;
- use the achievement of past people to glorify and justify current power groupings in the national state?

The sample analysed consisted of chapters from eighteen texts, all published during the 1990s by major US and Japanese publishers. The US sample contained texts authorised by the state of Texas which, together with California and Florida, accounts for 21% of the US textbook market. The methodology focused upon employing qualitative techniques (Pingel, 1999). In a paper of this length I have chosen to focus upon the following questions and issues:

- the content of the text and its relationship with academic research; was there a set of characters and events, a core of national memory, that pupils had to learn;
- the discourse of the texts and their underlying assumptions, what do the authors think important, what is explained and taken for granted, what, if any, message does the text transmit; does the text inform and explain, invite investigation and argument or simply describe;

In order to provide an empirical framework for shaping the analysis a preliminary examination of the sample was undertaken. This revealed the following central themes in the presentation of Hiroshima as an historical event:

- In mid 1945, Japan was on the brink of defeat as a result of conventional methods of warfare;
- the Japanese government and military refused to surrender therefore bringing about the horror of atomic destruction;

- however painful the decision, there was no logical or sensible alternative to dropping the bomb.

The remainder of this paper uses these themes as a way of analysing and explaining the events of Hiroshima by linking textbook narrative and historical evidence in an exploration of textual inclusion and textual exclusion.

A Defeated Nation

The majority of USA texts acknowledge that by July 1945 Japan was a defeated nation. For example, *Links Across Time and Place* claims that "In the summer of 1945, Japanese forces were in full retreat on every front." (Dunn, 1990, p. 345). *World History: patterns of civilization*, states that:

"By this time, Allied planes were bombing Japan with ferocity. In a single raid on Tokyo in March 1945, 100,000 people died and over 60 percent of the commercial buildings were wiped out" (Beers, 1990, p. 706).

The *History of the World* maintains that "By mid-1945 Japan had been thoroughly beaten. Its armed forces were destroyed and its cities lay in ruins from American bombings" (Perry, 1990, p. 654). *America Past and Present* concludes "The defeat of Japan was now only a matter of time" (Divine, Breen, Frederickson, & Williams 1991, p. 705).

No US text invites pupils to investigate whether or not the continued bombing and blockading of Japan might have forced the Japanese into surrender. Each text claims that the bombing of Hiroshima was necessary to avoid a land invasion and to save the lives of US service people; seventeen of the eighteen textbooks provide this as the most significant justification for the bombing. For example, *The Pageant of World History* states that:

"Estimates of United States casualties ranged as high as 1 million soldiers. Such estimates must have been on President Truman's mind when he made the decision to use a new weapon developed during the war – an atomic bomb. According to Truman, the bomb offered the possibility of ending the war quickly and decisively with a minimum of a loss of life" (Leinwand, 1990, p. 626).

World History: patterns of civilization claims that "... the road to final victory would be long and costly ..." (Beers, 1990, p. 706). *History of the World* states that "Harry Truman ... hoped to avoid a costly invasion of Japan. He chose to use

America's secret weapon: the atomic bomb" (Perry, 1990, p. 654). *World History: traditions and new directions* says that "... allied military leaders estimated that such an invasion would cost the lives of as many as a million Allied soldiers"(Stearns, 1990, p. 704), and *America Past and Present* suggests that "... casualties were expected to run into hundreds of thousands" (Divine, Breen, Frederickson, & Williams 1991, p. 825). *The American People: a history* claims that "There was a way to avoid an invasion of Japan. It was called the atom bomb or A-bomb ...At that time it seemed a way to end the war. President Truman above all wanted to avoid the terrible cost in American lives that a land invasion would probably have entailed" (Maier, 1990, p. 456).

Japanese textbooks recognise that the nation was on the verge of defeat. *World History* states that "By the time that American troops landed in Okinawa Japan's loss of the war was obvious" (Kanda & Shibata, 1991, p. 308). *World History* states that: "Several major cities had already been destroyed by random bombing when America, Britain and China demanded that Japan accept surrender and recognise the Potsdam Declaration" (Shibata, Sato, Kondo & Kishimoto, 1997, p 149).

The potential of allied losses was an important consideration in justifying the use of the Hiroshima bomb. US Secretary of Henry War Stimson claimed that:

"I felt that to extract a genuine surrenderthere must be administered a tremendous shock which would carry convincing proof of our power to destroy the empire" (Stimson & McGeorge, 1947, p. 617).

Stimson and President Truman were aware of the controversy using the bomb would generate. Their conclusion was that the bomb should be used "... against the enemy as soon as it could be done..." (Recommendations on the Immediate Use of Nuclear Weapons", U. S. National Archives, Record Group 77, Folder #76).

This account, which dominates the pages of USA textbooks, argues that the war in Asia was a brutal struggle and that Japanese aggression was ended by the dropping of the atomic bombs, which saved enormous numbers of American lives. However, no Japanese texts offers an opinion or evaluates the possible allied losses that might have occurred from a land invasion of Japan or posits this as a possible explanation for the bombings. Neither does any Japanese text discuss possible doubts in the USA about Japanese surrender.

Questioning the Heroic Narrative

While recognising that whether the use of the atomic bomb was necessary is a different question from whether it was believed to be necessary, there now exists a range of evidence which questions the dominant narrative contained in textbooks. There is evidence that voices in the US were raised against the decision to drop the bomb but none of this appears in the US texts.

Szilard claims that the US Government was aware that "Japan was essentially defeated and that we could win the war in another six months"(Szilard, 1949, p. 14). Admiral Strauss (1962), special assistant to Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, has argued that Japan was on the brink of defeat and that this was known in the USA and Japan. Shigenori Togo, Japan's Foreign Minister, claimed that by June 1945 war production was fragmenting, food shortages were acute and that government ministers were telling him that Japan was defeated, he concludes that "It is certain that we would have surrendered ... even without the bomb" (Togo, 1956, p. 217).

A number of high profile military leaders were against dropping the bomb. Dwight Eisenhower said "...the Japanese were ready to surrender and it wasn't necessary to hit them with that awful thing" (*Newsweek*, November 11, 1963). Norman Cousins, a consultant to General Douglas MacArthur during the American occupation of Japan, writes:

"When I asked General MacArthur about the decision to drop the bomb, I was surprised to learn he had not even been consulted. What, I asked, would his advice have been? He replied that he saw no military justification for the dropping of the bomb" (Cousins, 1947, p. 65).

In July 1945, Paul Nitze, Vice Chairman of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, given the task of writing a strategy for the air attack on Japan, wrote "While I was working on the new plan of air attack... [I] concluded that even without the atomic bomb... Japan would capitulate by November 1945" (Nitze, 1945, pp. 36-37).

In July 1945, Truman travelled to Potsdam for a conference with Stalin and Churchill at which he informed them that the US had developed a new weapon of destructive force that they intended to use against Japan. On 26th July 1945, the allies warned Japan of the "...overwhelming character of the force we are about to bring to bear on the islands" if they did not agree to unconditional surrender" (Stimson, & McGeorge, 1947, p. 623). There was no mention,

in what became known as the Potsdam Declaration, of the existence or intended use of an atomic bomb. No text explores the bombing of Hiroshima from a Japanese perspective although reaction to the Potsdam Declaration can now be judged from the account of Togo who claims that he urged the Emperor to use it as basis for negotiation, however the Japanese military persuaded the Emperor to reject it. The Emperor did so on 28th July, Hiroshima was bombed on 6th August, Nagasaki on 9th August and Japan surrendered on the 10th August.

Joseph Grew, a US State Department expert on Japanese affairs at the time, has since claimed that "...it is quite clear that the civilian advisers to the Emperor were working towards surrender long before the Potsdam Proclamation ... for they knew that Japan as a defeated nation" (Grew, 1952, p. 1425). The US were able to intercept Japan's communications system and among messages intercepted was one from Togo to the Japanese ambassador in Moscow urging him to inform the Russians that Japan wanted the war to end. However, at that time the USA knew two things that the Japanese government did not; first, that the bomb existed and had been successfully tested; second that the Soviet Union was about to enter the war against Japan.

Grew acknowledges that the Japanese military were fundamentally against unconditional surrender, but argues that had Truman said that this would not mean the removal of the Emperor "... the atomic bomb might never have had to be used..." (Grew, 1952, p. 1427). Ellis Zacharias, Deputy Director of the Office of Naval Intelligence, wrote "What prevented them [the Japanese] from suing for peace ... was their uncertainty on two scores. First, they wanted to know the meaning of unconditional surrender and the fate we planned for Japan after defeat. Second, they tried to obtain from us assurances that the Emperor could remain on the throne after surrender" (Ellis, 1945, p. 17). Japan's Prime Minister Suzuki announced on 9th June, 1945, "Should the Emperor system be abolished, they [the Japanese people] would lose all reason for existence. 'Unconditional surrender', therefore, leaves us no choice but to go on fighting to the last man" (Pacific War Research Society 1949, p. 69). Togo, noted, in July 12th 1945 that as long as America insisted on unconditional surrender, "... our country has no alternative but to see it [the war] through in an all-out effort" (U.S. Dept. of State, Potsdam 1, p. 873, pp. 875-876).

The U.S. government knew of the Emperor's importance. Grew explained this to Truman on 28th May 1945. Strauss claims that communications intercepts were sent to Potsdam with Admiral Leahy who agreed that maintaining the

Emperor's position would mean Japanese surrender. But by the time the intercepts got to Truman the Potsdam Declaration had been issued and politically it was considered too late to go back.

No US textbook in this sample makes use to this evidence, none includes any references to surrender documents and only one considers the position of the Emperor as an explanation for Japan's refusal of unconditional surrender. The majority of texts claim that when asked to surrender Japan simply refused. *Links Across Time and Place* states that "On July 26, the allies issued an ultimatum to the Japanese government, demanding surrender. The government refused" (Dunn, 1990, p. 626). *The Pageant of World History*, claims that "In spite of the horror of Hiroshima, Japan refused to give in" (Leinwand, 1990, p. 626). *World History: patterns of civilization* states that "The Allied leaders warned the Japanese, without being specific, that if they did not surrender they would suffer "complete and utter destruction." The Japanese ignored the warning ... Despite the destruction of Hiroshima, Japan still refused to surrender" (Beers, 1990, p. 706). *History of the World*, maintains that "On July 26, 1945, allied leaders warned Japan that if it did not surrender at once it would suffer "complete and utter destruction". The Japanese sent no answer" (Perry, 1990, p. 654). *World History: traditions and new directions* states that "The Japanese did not respond to the Allied demand for surrender" (Stearns, 1990, p. 704) and *Two Centuries of Progress* claims that the warning "...fell on deaf ears" (Jackson & Peronne, 1991, p. 583). Only one text suggests that "The Japanese were unaware of what the Allies really meant by complete and utter destruction which is why they ignored the warning" (Davidson et al., 1992, p. 485)

The position of Hirihito is strongly represented in Japanese textbooks. For example, *Local Angle, New Viewpoint* claims that:

"When Japan became likely to lose the war in July 1945, America, Britain and the Soviet Union had talks in Potsdam ... which determined the conditions of Japan's surrender. The Japanese government expected the maintenance of the constitution and ignored the declaration. Soon after America dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima ... The Japanese government decided to accept the Potsdam Declaration..." (Mayuzumi, Ohashi, & Hoshino, R., 2000, p. 323).

Japanese textbooks also present a different view of the manner in which the war was brought to a conclusion which

suggests that the Japanese government were not ignoring the warning. *New Japanese History* claims that:

“The Soviet Union, America and Britain presented Japan with the Potsdam Declaration which recommended that Japan accept a policy of post-war management and an unconditional surrender of Japanese troops. *While the Japanese government was struggling to respond*, America dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki” (Ishii, Kasahara, Kodama, & Sasayama, 1995, p. 323).

The authors of *New Society and History* argues that “After the surrender of Germany, the leaders of America, Britain and the Soviet Union assembled in Potsdam and presented the Potsdam Declaration, demanding unconditional surrender. While Japan *delayed its response* (author italics) America dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima on 6th August ... America also dropped the atomic bomb on Nagasaki on the 9th August” (Tanabe, Yoshida, & Sakagami, 2000, pp. 266-267). *Detailed Japanese history: a new edition* argues that:

“*While the Japanese government was discussing this declaration*, [author italics] America dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, and on Nagasaki on 9th August” (Ishii, Kasahara, Kodama, & Sasayama., 2000, pp. 334-335).

New Society History claims that:

“After the surrender of Germany, the leaders of the US, Britain, and Soviet Union gathered at Potsdam, near Berlin. They announced the Potsdam Declaration with China and demanded that Japan surrender unconditionally. *Since the Japan correspondence was delayed*, America dropped the first atomic bomb in the world on Hiroshima on August 6” (Tanabe, Yoshida, & Sakagami, 2000, p. 236).

The interpretation offered in Japanese textbooks presents a context within which Japan was bombed while the government was considering the declaration prepared at Potsdam. Blackett (1949), in reviewing a range of evidence, concludes that:

“... there was no compelling military reason for the clearly very hurried decision to drop the first atomic bomb on August 6, rather than on any site in the next six weeks or so. But a most compelling diplomatic reason, relating to the

balance of power in the post-war world, is clearly discernible” (Blackett, 1949, p. 13).

Blackett’s claim is that the dropping of the bomb was part of US diplomatic strategy focussing upon their relationships with the Soviet Union, the US wished to send a message to the Russian military to pre-empt any attempt to extend their influence over south east Asia and the Japanese mainland. For Blackett dropping the Hiroshima bomb was “... a clever and highly successful move in the field of power politics” and “ ... the first major operation of the cold diplomatic war with Russia” (Blackett, 1949, p. 154).

While this evidence is readily available for analysis little of it appears in the US texts. Two of the texts acknowledge that the condition of US-Soviet relationships might have been a reason for dropping the bomb. *The Pageant of World History*, claims that “In Potsdam, Truman hinted to Stalin that America had an atomic bomb. Some historians think that this was Truman’s way of trying to gain the upper hand with the Soviets. They maintain that Truman dropped the atomic bombs partly as a warning to the Soviets” (Leinwand, 1990, p. 627).

US - Soviet relationships is fully explored as a crucial context for the bombing within Japanese texts. For example, *Japanese History B* claims that;

“The Potsdam Declaration asked for the removal of militarism in Japan, the punishment of the war criminals, the return of invaded territories, and the establishment of democracy and basic human rights. In addition, the declaration included the Allies’ occupation of Japan until a new order would be established. “If Japan does not accept the declaration, Japan will be destroyed completely”, the declaration said. However, the government and military did not discuss this matter immediately. During this time, America, which had developed atomic bombs, dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6 in order to avoid military damage *and also to get a superior status to Soviet Union after the war*” [authors italics] (Aoki et al., 1999, p. 16).

Powerfully presented in Japanese textbooks is the role of the Soviets where Japanese textbooks are highly critical of the manner in which the Soviet Union broke a treaty with Japan. For example, and typically, the authors of *World History B* write that:

“The atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima followed by Nagasaki and, in addition, the Soviet Union entered the war ignoring the Japan-Soviet Neutrality Treaty and finally Japan accepted unconditional surrender presented by the Potsdam Declaration” (Aoki et al., 1999, pp. 315-316).

In *New Society and History* the authors write that:

“On August 8, the Soviet Union, which broke the neutral treaty, entered the war and attacked the areas of Manchuria and Korea. On 9, America dropped an atomic bomb on Nagasaki, too”(Aoki et al., 1999, pp. 315-316).

After the war the Japanese education system was remodelled an American fashion, given what some might argue as the “Americanisation” of Japanese society and the continued close ties with the USA, it is not surprising that Japanese textbooks should emphasis the role of the Soviet Union in its defeat. Also of interest is the manner in which that defeat is analysed. Of particular interest is the way in which the concept of “saving face” is present within the texts. Although there is a recognition that Japan was a defeated nation following the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki the manner in which Japan surrendered is placed within the context of the Potsdam Treaty and is designed to suggest that Japan was not forced into a dishonourable unconditional surrender but that the ending of the war should be seen as part of a the wider development of post-war relationships between powerful nations – the emphasis is upon Japan’s surrender, not defeat.

Conclusions

What conclusions can we draw from this analysis? It would appear that US and Japanese pupils are generally ill-informed of many of the facts, opinions and interpretations surrounding the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima. There is a gap between what the historical evidence presents, what academic historians now know and the evidence presented to pupils. This analysis lends support to Foster and Apple who claim that US history textbooks tend to promote a sense of unity and patriotism and Loewen’s claim that they exclude material which might reflect badly on the national character or which present the actions of the US in a questioning light. It is apparent that the exclusion of important facts, issues and themes, of alternative viewpoints and perspectives limits development of student’s historical knowledge, understanding and a critical historical consciousness.

The texts analysed do not provide a critical treatment of national heroes or events of national and international significance. The texts do not allow pupils to consider the way in which the selection of evidence and the historians’ values might influence the interpretation of the past and cultural hegemony being maintained gives dominance to some voices at the expense of others. There was little evidence in the textbooks that students were invited to consider alternative discourses or to arrive at conclusions which questioned a dominant discourse.

The accounts of the bombing of Hiroshima present “... a plot, a narrative, a cast of characters including heroes ... and villains (feared and rejected others)...” (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 145) which are clearly and unquestioningly identified. I have not intended to substitute one “truth” with another “truth”, one dominant discourse with another because historical truth is a highly contentious concept. Instead analysing the bombing of Hiroshima ought to involve analysing differing and competing claims to truth, that variety of socially constructed “accounts” which will lead to a greater depth of knowledge and understanding. We see in the manner in which this sample of textbooks discuss the bombing of Hiroshima the relationship between power and knowledge. The cultural capital being legitimised through the exercise of a “selective tradition”, represents the ideologies, values and beliefs of dominant groups who engage in curriculum control.

The extent to which the sanctioning of particular history textbooks has become a highly politicised affair in the US and in Japan makes radical changes in content and pedagogic difficult, perhaps even more so in Japan where central government occupies such a powerful position in creating official school knowledge. The history curriculum should provide intellectually challenging activities delivered within a teaching and learning framework informed by knowledge and understanding of how children learn. Part of that involves promoting a curriculum, which recognises the inherently political nature of living, working in and contributing to social change and development and which validates the inclusion of controversial and value-laden issues in the curriculum.

The aim should be developing in pupils an informed understanding of their cultural, political and socio-economic world based upon concepts as organising tools for learning; a critical awareness of society and their place in it combined with the competence to apply their knowledge, skills, concepts to the analysis of issues and problems so that balanced and informed judgements are made with regard to

evidence. The history curriculum ought to develop in children the capability to participate positively in society based upon an awareness and understanding of social aspects of decision making from personal and family decision making to issues in the wider national and international community.

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