Nationalism in Crisis: The Reconstruction of South Korean Nationalism in Korean History Textbooks (Han’guksa)

by

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Abstract

South Korea has undergone considerable transitions between dictatorship and democracy under Korea’s extraordinary status as a divided nation. The nature of this division developed an intense political contestation in South Korea between the political Left who espouse a critical view of top-down national history, and the Right who value the official view of South Korea’s national history. Whether it is a national history or nationalist history, in terms of conceptions of national identity and nationalism in relation to Korean history, disagreement continues. The purpose of this thesis is not to support nor refute the veracity of either political position, which is divided between a sensationalized political Right and a caricaturized Left. The aim of this project is to evaluate a series of developments in Korean history textbooks that can be seen as a recent attempt to build new national identities.
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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................ iii

Table of Contents ......................................................................................................... iv

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1

Chapter 1: A Divided Society ......................................................................................... 11

Chapter 2: Diverging Identities ....................................................................................... 28

Chapter 3: Consolidation ................................................................................................. 41

Chapter 4: Historical Consciousness and National Identities ....................................... 57

Conclusion ...................................................................................................................... 67

Bibliography ................................................................................................................... 71
Introduction

“Our children will properly come to know our history through ‘correct’ history education, which will teach them to have a sense of pride and self-esteem so as to grow into proper kungmin [people] of the Republic of Korea. This is crucial for the future of kukka [nation] and kungmin.”

President Park Geun-hye

The contemporary development of modern Korean history in textbooks is an issue that has become politically and socially divisive in the Republic of Korea (ROK). With the declaration to (re)nationalize Korean high school history textbooks, or Han’guksa, by abolishing all 8 Korean history textbooks from private publications in 2015, South Korea has entered a new stage in an ideological collision between the political Left and Right by enlisting activists, educators, politicians, scholars, and concerned citizens. Both the Left and Right demand a “true” Korean history while promoting different views of what constitutes Korea: The Left advocate for the continuity of minjok/kungmin achievements at the core of Korean nationalism, whereas the Right embrace the legacy and achievements of the ROK as a “true” source of Korean pride and nationalism. Provoked by Korea’s extraordinary historical experiment as a divided nation, the course of Korean history has become convoluted by its entanglement in the past, presenting a paradox for divergent groups in Korea. As a result of social, political, and cultural conflict on
this issue, history has become a conflict of opposing ideologies, a war to see whose vision of history proves to be true.\(^5\)

The nature of this division developed under an intense political contest between leftists, (made of communists, socialists, liberals, progressives, and revisionists)\(^6\) who espouse a critical view of top-down national history, and right-wingers ((neo)conservatives, far-right radicals, and traditionalists)\(^7\) who value the official view of histories written by the state. Leftists are often critical against the foundation of the ROK whereas right-wingers embrace the legacy of the South Korean state as a source of nationalism. For decades, the private publication of Korean high school textbooks has been a political issue. Both Left and Right political groups struggle to define and push their version(s) of the Korean history. Whether it is a national history or nationalist history, in terms of conceptions of national identity in relation to Korean history, disagreement continues. The leftist approach encourages students to be critical of any militaristic or autocratic (top-down) interpretations of Korea’s history, but promotes individuals’ or kungmin’s achievements.\(^8\) On the other hand, rightists want to convince students to be proud and patriotic toward the nation, and accomplish this by glorifying the achievements of the state.\(^9\)

South Korea’s ultimate dream is to reunify the peninsula, reunite the people, and develop a new unified identity. However, this goal is threatened by several key problems: the political and geographical division of the Korean peninsula into two states since 1945; unresolved tensions with Korea’s regional neighbours; and the internal divides in South Korea with political factions endorsing competing national and/or nationalist history. Since the foundation of the ROK in 1948, there have been systematic developments by the state to impose reeducation programs.

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\(^6\) While there are no “official” communists or communist party in South Korea, given the geographical and political division of the peninsula, there are many who were accused of being communists by right-wing radicals, politicians, and conservatives for their certain, but specific, behaviours and actions. However, it is also impossible to deny the existence of communists or North Korea sympathizers in the Republic of Korea.

\(^7\) Just as leftists are accused of being communists, right-wingers have been accused by leftists of supporting the Japanese colonial legacy and dictatorship. While there are those who are indeed supporters of those themes, it is not always the case. Certain politicians, activists, and scholars from both Left and Right have incorporated populism to simplify the complexity of Korea's history and to promote a certain political agenda. This also implies that the government has, arguably, actively participated to incorporate either a leftist or rightist goal since the founding of the Republic of Korea.

\(^8\) Hwang, “Textbook controversy is over competing forms of nationalist history.”

\(^9\) Ibid.
The ROK has had a total of 13 education reforms with three revisions in just six years since 2009. The 2013 textbook crisis, for example, was a direct confrontation in politics to “correct” the existing Korean history authored by conservatives and far-right radicals and supported by the government. The state believed that altering history textbooks was a necessary course of action to remove potential Marxist, communist, and Juche ideologies because there was a lack of effective internal opposition to these political ideas. For many conservatives, far-right radicals, and those who constitute the New Right, history textbooks provide the foundation to pressure the developing situation of crisis, as they believe the existing 7 out of 8 privately publicized textbooks support the Kim dynasty of North Korea. Many members of political Right, including the New Right, believe that altering history teaching is a way to contain and squeeze out dissenters, isolate intellectual and political opposition, and label political adversaries as either communists or North Korea sympathizers. On the contrary, the Left pressure the Korean and international societies and institutions to reject the state’s attempt to reassert an autocratic body of control through fear and intimidation.

The key issue in the 2015 textbook crisis is the New Right and the state’s effort to promote a certain version of patriotism and nationalism. These political commitments are a means to embrace anticommunism as a driving force for the political system. The opposition to the New Right’s narrative denounces the rewriting of history as propaganda to promote the legacy of the autocratic military government, and to restore a repressive system to make the population, arguably, docile and obedient. In contrast to accepting the “correct” historical narrative, the dissenting Left stresses the economic, social, and political achievements of kungmin as the source of national pride, whereas conservatives stress the inherited cultural and political traditions of embracing an absolute pledge of loyalty to kukka and anticommunism.

Nevertheless, in presenting a coherent narration of a “true” Korean history, a unification of both kukka and kungmin requires the promotion of an accurate, apolitical Korean history.

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The concept of ethnic nationalism, for one, is a fundamental idea which leftists incorporate into Korean nationalism. This specific form of nationalism was challenged during the collapse of traditional Korea in the late 19th century. The political system, economy, and society of Korea was forcibly twisted and redefined by foreign ideologies, wars, and violent political turnovers in the process of modernization. The introduction of foreign influence was sudden, but Korea was slow to industrialize, especially given Korea’s incapability to follow the examples of Meiji Japan. The attempted developments ultimately failed as the Korean Empire surrendered to the Empire of Japan in 1910, as seen in the Japanese annexation of the peninsula in August 1910.

Koreans lost its autonomous political system after annexation. However, Koreans found a new form of nationalism in the resistance movement with the hope of establishing an independent “nation.” Thus, the prospect of a united, independent, powerful, and politically sovereign Korea aroused concrete action among those who valued the “minjok” concept. Provoked by Japanese assimilation policies, Sin Chaeho reacted by characterizing Korean nationalism as minjok, and traced Korean lineage to a single ancestor of Korean blood. In doing so, Sin created the narrative of the “pure blood theory” of Korean ethnic nationalism. Thereafter, Koreans divided into two factions: those nationalists who attempted to achieve an independent, sovereign, and modern nation by colluding with the Japanese, and those who sought the radical, and necessarily violent rebellions against Japanese occupiers. These two factions foreshadowed the ensuing political division in the aftermath of Korean liberation.

With the changing circumstances under the Japanese annexation, a fundamental reinterpretation of “Koreanness” was made. At the same time, the Japanese occupiers, with the help of Korean collaborators, introduced legal, social, cultural, political, and economic reforms, either as a direct attempt to crush Korean nationalism or to serve the Japanese empire. Attempts by Korean activists to achieve political sovereignty, through protests and rebellions, had all failed. It was ultimately Korean communists who produced successful military actions in securing armed

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12 Hwang, “Textbook controversy is over competing forms of nationalist history.”
resistance against the Japanese. These communists were at the forefront of resistance movements and envisioned national sovereignty through the *minjok* and communist concepts. Meanwhile, many conservative nationalists divided national identity through the political divide occurring both inside and outside of the peninsula. Within this context, there had been a widespread tendency to favour the communists and their actions, as they were explicitly visible in struggling towards achieving Korean national independence. These visible feats garnered support, despite the fact that the majority of the population had no understanding of the communist ideology invoked by the rebels.

Following the Korean liberation in 1945, Koreans were left with fierce controversies and political cleavages on the issue of (re)interpreting Korean nationalism. Various attempts were made to define Korean nationalism, one of which was characterized by the modernization of the peninsula under Japanese rule. There have been calls to accept the benefits of the Japanese “colonial legacy” by certain individuals, including members of the New Right. However, this attempt to reconcile with the past justifies the Japanese annexation whereas the majority of Koreans emphasize the brutality, cruelty, and inhumane actions by the Japanese and their collaborators. These memories of oppression are accepted by many Koreans as reasons to consider the annexation period as a historical episode of national and *minjok* shame.

The entangled problem of defining Korean nationalism was further complicated by the emergence of two separate states in the peninsula since 1945: communism, under the umbrella of the Soviet Union, and democracy, with the support of the United States of America. As a result of this international byproduct, Koreans no longer characterized Korean nationalism in a unified fashion. Both the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) attempted to achieve a political unification under their respective ideology prior to the Korean War. However, both attempts failed and ultimately led to the outbreak of the Korean War on June 25th, 1950. In North Korea, Kim Il-Sung’s policies of Korean ethnic nationalism were the force to achieve a reunification. Meanwhile in South Korea, Syngman Robinson, 86-76.

North Korea has embraced the concept of *minjok* and claimed the continuity of “*minjok*’s” struggle against foreign invasions, including the Americans. Thus, the DPRK has also claimed that they have the “legitimacy” to reunify the Korean peninsula through North Korea since the ROK has no continuity of *minjok*. In addition, North Korea has officially denounced the ROK in 2005 for “tainting” the Korean *minjok*’s purity by allowing non-Koreans to work in
Rhee, President of the Republic of Korea, also proclaimed his desire to achieve unification under the leadership of South Korea.

Prior to the outbreak of the Korean War, the Americans established an American military occupation shortly after the end of the Pacific War in 1945. This interim regime ultimately reinserted Japanese collaborators as well as Japanese officials in Korean domestic politics. For the American military government at that time, the main task was maintaining a stable political structure in South Korea as a foothold against the communist expansion, not decolonizing South Korea. While Japan benefitted from the American economic recovery policies, South Korea did not, which highlights America’s marginalization of Koreans. Meanwhile, beginning in 1945, the Soviet Union helped North Korea to blossom.

With the outbreak of the Korean War, the course of Korean history changed once again: one ethnic people, one minjok, was now divided by foreign ideologies between capitalism in the southern and communism in the northern peninsula. Since then, many Koreans insist that developments of South and North Koreas after 1948 are two different and separate discourses. Even so, basic representations of political history are interpreted through the Cold War conflict, appearing to blame Americanism or communism. Many Koreans, both from the Right and Left, accept the fact that Koreans fought the brutal Japanese together and this shared history is one of the main narratives of the annexation era. However, Koreans fighting Koreans—mass arrests, torture, mass murder of both civilians and soldiers before, during, and after the Korean War on both sides of the divided peninsula—shredded any shared sense of history. Since then, many conservatives and far-right radicals of South Korea have disconnected the patterns of continuity in the minjok idea: the peninsula was now inhabited by two different “people.”

In South Korea, the military regime began with the May 16 coup by Major General Park Chung-hee in 1961, who declared a “revolution” for stability and change, and stressed the long-term

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South Korean farms. (Kim Sitŏk, “Ttŏ hanaŭi han kŭk ‘masŏk’” [Korea’s another ‘hearthstone’]. Chosun Ilbo, September 9, 2016. [link]


18 Ibid., 106-107.

19 Chinkwŏn Hyŏn, “Puk'aeang tol'aharyŏmyŏn 'saenggagŭi t'ŭloput'ŏ kkaeya” [‘The framework of thought’ needs to be shattered to overcome North Korean nuclear missiles]. Chosun Ilbo, September 19, 2016. [link]
structural determination against North Korean communism. At the expense of personal freedoms and democracy, Park Chung-hee became the president, then dictator after the Yushin Constitution was passed on November 21st, 1972. This newly formed government provided direct control over politics and society in the name of grand technological and economic visions. The speed of South Korea’s economic expansion was fueled by anticommunism and political propaganda as crises were manufactured, threats were exaggerated, and police and repressive measures were deployed. However, there was a continuation of the minjok idea in South Korea’s economic miracle. Defeated, hopeless, and devastated by the Japanese annexation followed by the Korean War, minjok served as a precondition and foundation of Korean national character. In other words, the role of individuals in the course of history was emphasized in the economic growth for Koreans who, refusing to inherit instability, hunger, and devastation for their children, united under one common goal of serving the nation, kukka. But again, contrasted with its success in economic development, basic satisfaction for workers was absent, and much blood and sweat from the Korean working class had to be sacrificed both domestically and internationally. As a result, mass support for political protests against an unjust and repressive umbrella system of anticommunism began the calls for democratization. Such pressures to reform the government were met with massive repression by the state, which was excluding the opposition by labeling them “reds”—Ppalgaengi—and North Korea sympathizers.

After Park’s assassination in 1979, the successor regime led by General Chun Do-hwan practiced exceedingly brutal methods against the opposition in order to maintain military dictatorship through another military coup. Following a similar system as the Park administration, Chun exploited anticommunism to justify military and police repressions in order to sustain his political regime, as well as economic prosperity. Perhaps due to their charismatic leadership, or due to the fact that a thriving economic miracle was achieved during their regimes, in spite of the brutality of their methods, there are individuals who remain loyal to Park and Chun and long for their authority. For a variety of reasons, both Park and Chun are topics of controversy, and many question their techniques for making kukka rich and prosperous at the expense of freedoms and democracy of the people, kungmin.

20 Robinson, “Political and Economic Development in South Korea,” 127-129.
21 Ibid., 137-138.
22 Ibid., 139, 144-145.
Nevertheless, the combination of autocracy and economic prosperity continued to flourish in South Korea. The 1988 Seoul Olympics became another turning point. Most obviously, North Korea failed to sustain its economy, barely maintaining the Kim regime. Following the ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union, North Korea’s weakness was exposed to the world. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) found itself broken, hungry, and isolated while South Koreans grew arrogantly aware of North Korea’s failures. From the former President Kim Young-sam of South Korea elected in 1993 and onwards, the ROK is portrayed as *kungmin*’s victory of achieving freedom from autocratic military regimes and establishing a functional democracy as well as South Korea becoming one of the world’s leading economic powers, thus embarking a leftist version of *kungmin* nationalism.

Clearly, 20th century Korean history is shaped by different patterns of development, making it impossible to understand specific debates without the wider context of each narrative. After all, history is not written in a linear process. The separation between South and North Koreas may be simple to understand in the context of a formal institutional process, but there is no formula to simplify such complex entangled histories. History itself is a nebulous narrative that cannot be explained solely in the context of an ideological split. There are no mechanical patterns or simple ways to rewrite the peninsula’s history: it involves combinations of multiple forces, developments, and factors operating in unresolved tensions. Nevertheless, the mechanism for rewriting a Korean national history exists through nationalism, divided between *kukka* nationalism and *kungmin* nationalism. As a Cold War proxy, South Korea’s focus was particularly given to portray communism as evil—and evil indeed were some of its outcomes. However, the spectre of communism has been exploited as a justification to tame the populace by autocratic military government(s) in South Korea. In seeking to establish stability and to sustain South Korea’s system, security overwhelmed the populace, intimidating its people while imposing economic developments in the domestic and international system by the Korean government.

Every stage of this conflict, however, was intensified by the divisions left by colonial and Cold War legacies. First, the debate over Korea’s history is premised on a person’s political position as identified by the individual’s participation in the last election. This idea was recreated and accepted during the 2015 textbook crisis, since support for the nationalization of textbooks labels an individual as a member of the political New Right, whereas opposition to nationalized
textbooks is automatically indicative of left-wing support. The popular media and internet have also complicated this great divide on an intergenerational level. By portraying the older generation, from age 50 and above, as conservatives and the younger generation, from 20 to 40, as progressives, the debate employs identity politics.

The simplified conception of intergenerational conflict is highly controversial and problematic in many ways. Indeed, while many supporters and politicians of the Saenuri Party favour the nationalization of history textbooks, this is not always the case. Furthermore, simply supporting or objecting to the government’s decision on complex political issues cannot identify a person’s political position. There are opponents to nationalized history textbooks from right-wing supporters as well as conservative groups, including politicians from the Saenuri Party. Moreover, there are politicians from the New Politics Alliance for Democracy (NPAD, renamed as the Minjoo Party of Korea since December 2015) who support the nationalization of history textbooks despite the party’s ideological position to object to this extreme commitment. Despite this notion, the issue of nationalized history textbooks is no longer about supporting or objecting to the textbook itself; rather, it has become an ideological conflict between a sensationalized political Right and a caricaturized Left. In mass media, there are debates and discussions on the nationalized textbooks, but these sources argue within their respective prescribed ideological positions, thus maintaining the Cold War narrative between the political Left and Right.

In the end, there are no mechanical patterns or any simple ways of mapping the complexity of the peninsula’s course of history: it involves combinations of multiple forces, developments, and factors. Nonetheless, the mechanism to portray Korean nationalism exists in the tension between *kukka* and *kungmin*. In its moment of victory, however, another political division has arisen in South Korea concerning what constitutes Korea’s nationalism: South Korean conservatives encourage the state to enforce militaristic patriotism, and to embrace anticommunism as a driving force of the political system through the absolute pledge of loyalty to the *kukka*. The opposition denounces this narrative as a remnant of the autocratic regime, with its sensationalized and glorified history, and as an attempt to restore a repressive system. In contrast, dissenters stress economic and political achievements of the *kungmin* as the source of national pride, a foundation which they believe to be South Korea’s true nationalism.
Thus, the Republic of Korea is once again divided by defining Korean nationalism with unresolved questions regarding the Japanese legacy, the establishment of two separate nations, and the rise of (un)justified autocratic military regimes. This conflict, which is divided along lines of *kukka* and *kungmin*, has been resurrected in the 2015 history textbook crisis. To untangle the tensions in the history textbook debates, the Ministry of Education announced the dissolution of all textbooks from private publishers by producing a universal state-issued Korean history textbook starting in 2017. This measure has generated great anxieties and hopes, driving socio-political conflict in a search of what participants view as the “true” Korean history. Ultimately, this is an effort that can be seen as a competition to define Korean nationalism.

The purpose of this project is not to support nor refute the veracity of either political position. This paper seeks to confront and understand the contemporary development of modern Korean history textbooks which has arisen as a political and social issue in South Korea today. This thesis traces the ways in which the problems and conflicts have appeared in textbook crises since 2008, and seeks to understand if these textbooks are indeed extremely Right or Left by analyzing its historiography given by conservatives and progressives. Thereafter, the aim is to locate the conception of Korean nationalism within these textbook conflicts and to present an account of some of the wider controversies caused by this historical experiment.
Chapter 1
A Divided Society

“Who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past.”

George Orwell

Attempts to characterize and define Korean nationalism, or any nationalism for that matter, as a single entity are problematic and perhaps even nearly impossible. Of course there are certain scholars, politicians, and individuals from both sides of the peninsula claiming to what constitutes their own version(s) of Korean nationalism. Given the Republic of Korea’s inherited patterns of political behaviours and values, especially over specific political issues between North and South Koreas, the South Korean state produced and claimed a widespread conservative and far-right radical nationalism over the past decades. As the result, the populace has been tamed to preserve the government as their duty of survival in a divided nation. It may be argued that this characterized political culture is painted for a specific political circumstance, and to represent certain features of state-society (in)stability. In this sense, Korean history education has been more than a subject in a school curriculum: it has been the nexus of nation building and developing patriotism and nationalism.

This nature of inherited patterns of political culture is often extremely rejected by “leftists” 23 as being overly simplified, and that the debate legitimatizes any prospect of South Korea’s military dictatorships. For many Koreans, anticommunism remains a part of political and cultural values, recognized as a part of a distinctive profile of the ROK’s nationalism. Yet there are others who disagree on this specific form of national identity as in part having to do with the consequences

23 Although there are no specific ‘guidelines’ to differentiate a “leftist” to a “rightist,” or Right from Left, Korean media often place a total claim on individuals supporting Syngman Rhee, Park Chung-hee, and anticommunism as conservatives and right-wingers, while opposing and criticizing these concepts identify dissenters as leftists and North Korean sympathizers. In other words, this phenomenon frequently enforces a political identity of a person without recognition of internal characteristic features of an individual’s political attitudes and values.
of corruption and as an extreme nature of military dictatorship. What is to be noted, however, is the aspect of this great divide between individuals based on specific political expressions of South Korean dictators and anticommunism. From the point of view of the international audience under globalization, this political split can be seen as a typical drama—an everyday aspect of public phenomenon on politics: obedience against democracy. The point to be stressed is that this issue of Korean nationalism is notably bigger and much more complex than a simple differentiation of Left and Right, or right from wrong, however defined, as a vulnerable, and often forgotten, part of Korea’s search for nationalism.

The pursuit of achieving a “true” Korean history has been a source of conflict in the peninsula for many decades. There is some evidence to suggest that the conflict stretches back at least as early as the Japanese annexation or to late as 2013. Throughout this timeframe, especially during the autocratic military governments, efforts have been made by both conservatives and far-right radicals with methods to produce patriotic and loyal kungmin. On the opposite end, leftists have rejected this movement by criticizing the centralized version of Korean history offered by conservative regimes to justify autocratic state manipulations while promoting more diverse voices in history.

Subsequent developments in textbook policy in South Korea are heavily connected with the political division and political consciousness in the Korean peninsula. Since the foundation of the Republic of Korea (ROK) in 1948, schools adopted textbooks from private publications until 1973 where school principals were given the authority to adopt their own textbooks. Although it was a decentralized education system, textbooks remained conservative and orthodox, retaining political predominance on the mainstream of anticommunism, nationalism, and patriotism—interpreting North Korean responsibility for provoking and ultimately beginning the Korean War of 1950.

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24 Yong-rae Kim, “6Nyŏn Mane Tashi Kukchônghwat'syŏksa Kyogwasŏ Parhaeng Pyŏnch'ŏnsa” [Return to nationalized history textbooks in 6 years… A development on the publication of the Nationalization of History Textbook], Yonhapnews, October 12, 2015. http://www.yonhapnews.co.kr/bulletin/2015/10/11/0200000000AKR20151011020900004.HTML?input=1195m

In the months immediately following the liberation of the Korean peninsula in 1945, the question of the unification of the two Koreas was on the political agenda for both northern and southern Koreas. Many individuals raised their views on Korean unification, but a variety of international and domestic politics, along with the memories, violence, and remnant relics of the Japanese colonialism, had ensured a fragile development in the peninsula. Southern Korea, under the conservative United States military authority, General and military governor of southern Korea, John R. Hodge, established the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) in September 1945. Unlike the Russian occupation of northern Korea, where Russians recognized and allowed the local political committees and organizations to blossom throughout the country, thus achieving “...the advantage of staying in the background at the local level while directing events at the center,” the politics of the Americans had severe consequences.

The new Korean communist authorities, including Kim Il Sung, in northern Korea, with the help from the Soviet Union, had initiated the decolonization process with economic, political and social reforms, and were met with popularity from the masses. Under the leadership of General Hodge, however, the military government in the southern peninsula had failed to recognize the local committees and reinserted “…Japanese and Korean officials who had already been dismissed by the people’s committees” into government positions. Inevitably, many southern Koreans expressed outrage by widespread massive protests, demonstrations, and general strikes against the American occupation, as developments of political, social, and economic reforms were slow and inefficient. Although the American leadership adopted Korean conservatives to maintain the functionality of government, the focus of the American military government was to sustain a foothold in the peninsula, not to help southern Korea to flourish and become powerful like West Germany or Japan.

The establishment of a new regime in southern Korea can be interpreted as a regime predestined to fail from the beginning, with a burden of difficulties and misjudgments. Problems arose as both American authorities and Korean conservatives, Syngman Rhee and his advisories, emphasized political and social stabilities against communism by enforcing the military and

26 Robinson, “Liberation, Civil War, and Division,” 105-108.
27 Ibid, 106.
28 Ibid., 106, 113.
police, rather than achieving particular actions to address culminating issues. Ultimately, it overshadowed an unlikely peaceful transition to a new independent Korean state. The condition in which democracy of the Republic of Korea was born were limited and certainly unpopular; and as tensions between the two Cold War ideologies increased in the Korean peninsula, the Korean democracy was vulnerable to anti-democratic values.

According to Lim Sung-kyu, since “…anti-communism is linked to nationalism and chauvinism, it was located [as] the base of children’s literature education after wartime.”30 Given societal postwar trauma, the state exploited the experience of war to institute anticomununism as the foundation to South Korea’s survival, and shattered any other political perceptions that might offer alternative approaches to history. It is Lim’s belief that the state incorporated disciplines of centre-right and doctrines of anticomununism in children’s literature education in 1950s to conquer the next generation with the fear of postwar trauma.31

There is an interesting politics in history where many Korean guerilla fighters and resistance movements during the Japanese annexation era are omitted in conservative history textbooks, as these individuals are notably communists or have connection to the DPRK in the later period.32 The implication by conservatives and far-right radicals is that the ROK must separate those communists who later participated with the DPRK from rebels who have no connection to the DPRK. Officially, both North and South Koreans are indeed Koreans in ethnicity, but the two Korean states are currently in a state of war. For the DPRK, the fight against the perceived evils of American imperialism, capitalism, and the struggle for a utopian vision of communism play as a major theme for the Kim dynasty, whereas the ROK undoubtedly opposes revolutionary communism of North Korea. As a result of this complex politics, the conservative, right-wing, and far-radicals in the ROK present a genuine alternative history to both discredit communist guerrilla fighters and their contributions against Japanese imperialism.

30 Lim, 391
31 Ibid., 369-372.
But while their existence was undoubtedly important for minjok nationalism, it was much less appealing to conservatives and far-right radicals of the ROK who focused on a desire to create a harmonious, united nationalism under the South Korean state against communism, and eventually a reunification of the peninsula with the collapse of the DPRK. As far as the right-wing is concerned, two major visions were promoted: one was to establish a coherent history to neutralize any suspicious communists during the annexation era who later served the DPRK; the other was to emphasize negative elements of North Korean communists in order to propagate the threat of communism.

The ROK government has recently claimed that the state cannot acknowledge family members of Kim Il Sung for their contributions for the Korean liberation during the Japanese annexation despite appeals from certain individuals within South Korea. The individuals who appealed to the government argued that Kim Il Sung’s family members should be acknowledged for their sacrifice for the liberation of the Korean people, thus to the minjok nationalism, while the government maintains a resentment about the North Korean invasion with the ongoing clashes to this day. However, whether Kim’s family members should be acknowledged or not is beside the point; the fact that this issue has transcended into a conflict of nationalism(s) reveals a genuine complexity in Korean history. Certain leftist have promoted an ongoing argument that this particular case to acknowledge Kim’s family, for example, shows how conservatives and far-right radicals are indeed pro-Japanese, associated with Japanese collaborations to this day without acknowledging the suffering of the Korean people. In this broader argument, right-wing individuals are accused of being fascists, unwilling to accept aspects of nationalism to the Korean people (minjok nationalism) despite the fact that countless Koreans have indeed suffered under Japanese fascism.

Nevertheless, conservatives and right-wing circles stress a theme that these “Korean nationalists” are allegedly North Korean communists who later contributed the collapse of democracy and justice in South Korea, undoubtedly inheriting a legacy of instability, inflation, hunger, and destruction to people of the Republic of Korea. In another instance, these individuals who appeal

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33 Chŏng, “Kimilsŏng Ch’in, Inch’ŏge Sŏhan Kŭmji, Gitchŏngbuttae Kyŏllon.”
34 Often times, these specific individuals are labeled as “leftists” or “commies” in conservative circles for their alleged loyalty to the DPRK and the Kim family of North Korea.
for the *minjok* nationalism were targeted as North Korean spies or sympathizers to the Kim dynasty for their radical ignorance to the element against the ROK. Thus, there has been a trend to portray intellectuals, scholars, and educators who differentiate South Koreans from North Koreans by promoting nationalism to *kukka* over *minjok* nationalism as Japanese sympathizers as they prioritize anticomunism and the experience of historical grievances and fears of communism more than criticizing the Japanese colonial experience for the Korean people.\(^{35}\)

Atrocities of war always remain a painful chapter in historical consciousness, but South Korean society adopted various and extreme features of anticomunism as expressed in culture, politics, and education. These extreme features were promoted and radically intensified under Park Chung-hee in 1963. From Park’s political involvement in 1961 to his presidential election in 1963, he criticized the preceding government of formal Republics for its weak anticomununist stance, and argued for a greater commitment to anticomunism in order to promote both economy and better living conditions for the people.\(^{36}\) The Park administration continued to stress the importance of unification of the Korean peninsula, anticomunism, and economic effectiveness, including Saemaul Undong, as state principles throughout his regime. To facilitate the national economy and to enforce anticomunism in South Korea, the second education reform was initiated under the Park Chung-hee administration on February 1963. This education reform allowed the Ministry of Education to approve 11 Korean history textbooks from private publications.\(^{37}\) In conjunction with a stabilization of the economy and attempts to reduce the fiscal education burden, Park Chung-hee declared that he would abolish the private publication of history textbooks shortly after the October Yushin in 1972. Those who sympathized with anticomunism had a certain political orthodoxy to reassert dictatorship as a part of South Korean nationalism, as democracy offered instability and chaos under the previous democratic government. Thus, education became immensely centralized, followed by the introduction of a single, nationalized Korean history textbook after the third education reform in 1974.\(^{38}\)

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\(^{35}\) This explicit conflict can be seen in the later chapter of the 2013 textbook crisis.


\(^{37}\) Ibid., 219-221.

\(^{38}\) Ibid.
The investment of internal censorship of the third education reform brought widespread criticisms as it symbolized a retreat on democratic values. The wider spectrum of public and private opinions was silenced, and was effectively repressed, as dissenters were labeled as communists or North Korea sympathizers for their political activism in developing an alternative official views. By 1974, all high school Korean history textbooks were to be unified through the provision of state-issued textbooks, and thus students used only one type of textbook throughout the southern Korean peninsula. It was suggested that this mode of education discouraged critical arguments and an independent thinking consciousness, in favour of academic proficiency for career advancement and inculcating younger generations to become fully committed to the national cause. Arguably, some leftists judged these collective and hierarchical structured identities as encouraging self-reinforcing views of a docile and obedient populace, while solidifying autocratic dictatorship.

In relation to its anticommunist roots in the 1950s, the third educational reform could be seen as an evolution in education—a political consciousness solidified as the source of patriotism and nationalism. This heritage of authoritarianism represented a stabilization for the regime by uniting all South Koreans under a full allegiance to kukka, particularly encouraging the populace to contribute for a process of economic and technological advances of the ROK as an advanced, powerful nation. Any opposing ideas or dissenting individuals, however the state defined then, took focus away from the state ideology and were therefore considered as an enemy. It was as a consequence of this logic that the state believed that dissenting leftists needed to be silenced.

In relation to the authoritarian structure, the new political arrangements became centralized with less liberal control over education. With centralized textbooks, General Park Chung-hee’s military coup of May 16, 1961 was relabeled as a “revolution” in the nationalized history textbooks, not as a coup d’état as after the second education reform. In principle, the state textbooks, with their various sophisticated sociopolitical techniques and “appropriate” evidence, 

39 Yong-rae Kim, “Han’guksa Kyogwasô Parhaengch’eje Chônggwôn Immatttara ‘Orakkarak’” [Publishing system for Korean history textbooks are in accordance with pleasing a regime], Yonhapnews, October 9, 2015. http://www.yonhapnews.co.kr/bulletin/2015/10/09/0200000000AKR20151009031000004.HTML
40 “Manhwaro Arabonŭn Han’guksa Kukchônggyogwasô Pandaeiyu” [Discovering the need to reject the nationalized history textbooks through comics], Minjongmunjeô’nguso, November 27, 2014. http://www.minjok.or.kr/kimson/home/minjok/bbs.php?id=notice&q=view&uid=1071
justified the military revolution as an imperfect, inevitable development to serve as a vanguard to long-term national interests — protecting the Korean state and *minjok* from the communist invasion while achieving a stabilization of South Korea’s feeble national economy.\(^{41}\)

Nevertheless, a wide range of controversies were injected to serve in its true interests. Under this “new” history, when anticommunism and national policies were advertised as a part of South Korean nationalism, both Park Chung-hee and his military autocrats were, as many “progressives”\(^{42}\) argue, falsely represented as protectors of national sovereignty against the dreaded communism and poverty.\(^{43}\) With an ever larger provision for an increasing autocratic system of education, and the fact that the state controlled much media and scholarly attention at that time, the October Yushin was justified in the history textbooks as an inevitable course of action by General Park in his response to the political disorder of the preceding democratic government under the former President Yun Posun. There is much controversy in both official and unofficial narrations for this sensitive part of history, as a military coup d’état, or as a revolution, and Park Chung-hee along with his associates remained revolutionary defenders of the ROK against corruption, poverty, and communism in history textbooks until the 6th education reform\(^{44}\) in 1992.\(^{45}\)

The months following the democratic elections after military dictatorships brought a new civil government under the former President Kim Young-sam in 1993. The early reformations in the political and civil spheres under a new government brought rapid transformations in the previous historical consciousness. The fall of the military giants dramatically caused the reinterpretation of many aspects of far-right and pro-dictatorship elements in history textbooks to be revised and historically “corrected.” In these circumstances, an alternative reconstruction of history stimulated the hope of presenting a new way of remapping repressed and suppressed memories of the recent past. Although fear of communism and poverty played an important role in the rise


\(^{42}\) It is quite difficult to define who “leftists” or “progressives” are in the context of Korean historical consciousness as Korean right-wing theoretical dominance dictates that anyone who opposes Park Chung-hee is a North Korea sympathizing communist, as well as a leftist. Equally important, those in the Left often accuse anyone who favours Park Chung-hee as a fascist, subjugated to an authoritarian dictatorship.

\(^{43}\) “Han’guksa,” http://contents.history.go.kr/viewer/webBook_kk_042.jsp?startpage=187

\(^{44}\) Although there were multiple curriculum reforms during Park’s regime, the fundamental system of Yushin education remained unchanged.

\(^{45}\) “Han’guksa,” http://contents.history.go.kr/viewer/webBook_kk_062.jsp?startpage=224
of Park Chung-hee, the desire for liberal and democratic values from the people eventually outweighed the authoritarian society. From the 1990s, reforms were implemented to turn some aspects of Park Chung-hee and his military circle as opportunists who exploited the feeble sociopolitical situations in South Korea during its time by promising stability and future through collective hope and fear.

The phenomenon of investing in education runs across all regimes in the Korean peninsula, as a part of the inheritance of particular form of control and political traditions. Even in North Korea, for example, the state has been effectively using history textbooks to fabricate the legacies of the Kim family of North Korea, particularly in order to legitimize the current leader by emphasizing aspects of the Kim lineage. The political motive to seek firm control over social discourse, and in particular the economic benefits, influenced the state to continue the universal nationalized history textbook provision in school curriculum from 1974 to 2002.

Under the Kim Dae-jung presidency, Korean history studies were split into two strands in the curriculum: premodern and contemporary studies. Starting from 2003 under the former President Roh Moo-hyun, premodern Korean history textbooks remained under state production, while the contemporary history textbooks for 2nd and 3rd year high school students were produced by private publications for the first time since 1974. This method has, arguably, established a wide range of views, and produced notably different patterns of historiography on South Korea’s recent past. By 2003, all contemporary high school Korean history textbooks were published by private publishing houses, dispelling the perception of these books as a remnant of autocratic militarism while asserting this apprehension as a key symbolic victory of democracy and liberal values.

According to one view, however, this “civil” and “disobedience” to authority has led to different definitions of nationalism, unleashing specific politicized views which are relatively destabilizing for the legacy of the South Korean people and the state. Many right-wing scholars,

47 Kim, “6Nyŏn Mane Tashi Kukchŏnghwat'syŏksa Kyogwasŏ Parhaeng Pyŏnch’ŏnsa.”
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
intellectuals, and social groups, for example, have argued that the privatization of textbooks are the source of the contemporary textbook crisis that is happening to this day. Certain conservative historians, moreover, have suggested under a certain political rhetoric that these rational debates and “history from below” are misrepresentations of history, a controversial reinterpretation to illustrate conservative values as a fascist, authoritarian theme. Those who sympathize with conservative values stress that these privatization of history textbooks geared towards youths are unpatriotic to the state.

Kwon Chul-hyun, a politician in the Grand National Party (GNP), argued that Kumsung Publishing, one of the private publishers of history textbooks, incorporated falsified information within its textbook. During a national hearing on October 4th, 2004, Kwon evaluated the textbook that the publication installed an ideological reinterpretation to favour North Korea, promoting the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) as independent and nationalistic to minjok ideology, while depicting South Korea as a weak nation, dependent on foreign powers. However, Lee Sun-min, a journalist, wrote that the opposition party to the GNP at that time, the Yeollin Uri Party, called criticisms of Kumsung Publication as a thinly veiled example of the “Red Complex,” a form of sensationalized politics of the recent past. Nevertheless, the textbook was widely distributed to high schools despite disapproval from right-wing media and certain conservative institutions.

With the rapid developments to alter the previous political and historical themes under a democratic regime, which was of course inevitably controversial, conservatives and right-wing groups characterized this reinterpretation as a threat to Korean national heritage. In response to the expansion of left-wing elements in school education and to overthrow the monopoly of leftist

51 Known as the Saenuri Party since February 2012
53 Ibid.
54 The party merged into the United New Democratic Party on 5 August 2007.
revolution, *Kyogwasŏp'orŏm* (co-presidents Pak Hyochong, Yi Yŏnghun, and Ch’a Sangch’ŏl), a scholarly group of New Right intellectuals who united to install “proper” Korean history from leftist education system, took over three years to produce an “alternative modern Korean History textbook” (*taegan'gyogwasŏ*) through a private publisher named *Kip’arang*, which was released on March 2008.\(^{56}\) In relation to other textbooks, the purpose of the alternative history textbook by this right-wing circle was to restore the principle values of South Korea, which are anticomunism, patriotism, and nationalism to the ROK, in the school education system.\(^{57}\)

The textbook was arguably an earlier confrontation by the conservative and far-right radicals to challenge problems posed by the leftists, who essentialized the right-wing element as a remnant relic of authoritarianism. Given the nature of this textbook’s purpose, it was heavily criticized as New Right’s propaganda, and was marketed in the mainstream media as a far-right, pro-fascist and pro-Japanese textbook. Kim Dong-kyu, a journalist for *Ohmynews*,\(^{58}\) wrote an article on the New Right’s textbook, titled “New Right, why National Foundation Day?”\(^{59,60}\) It is Kim’s belief that the textbook promotes the National Foundation Day over the National Liberation Day of Korea as he hints that the New Right’s alternative history textbook promotes distinguishing South Koreans from North Koreans.\(^{61}\) The main ideology of conservative and far-right radicals arguably establishes North Korean communists as a different ethical entity to South Koreans. Given this specific serious political atmosphere, the DPRK and many leftists argue that minjok/kungmin nationalism is different than *kukka* nationalism.\(^{62}\)

Given its weakness on both sides of the interpretation, there are debates about suppressed historical perspectives in both Left and Right textbooks, and how neither overcome differences in political affiliations. There was, however, an attempt to confront the Japanese annexation era

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\(^{56}\) Sŏngun Yu, “5 16Ŭn K’udet’aijiman Kŭndaehwahyŏngmyŏng Ch’ulbalchŏmt’e” [The May 16 is a coup d’état, but it is also the starting point of a revolutionary modernization], *Dong-A Ilbo*, March 24, 2008. http://news.donga.com/3/all/20080324/8558768/1
\(^{57}\) Ibid.
\(^{58}\) A South Korean online news site, often known to be critical of the South Korean government in favour of promoting the ideology and totalitarianism of the DPRK.
\(^{59}\) Not to be confused with *Gaecheonjeol*
\(^{61}\) Ibid.
\(^{62}\) Since certain leftists and left-wingers follow the official ideology and propaganda of North Korea, there is a trend to portray these individuals as North Korea sympathizers or spies as they appear to illustrate North Korean nationalism.
by the radical far-right circle, the New Right, through their “alternative history textbook” by private publishing house, Kip’arang. To them, the textbook accepts the historical narrative on the episode of the Korean people by legitimizing the Japanese annexation. However, the manner in which it relates a narrative that the Japanese had played an important role in the construction of a modern Korean state, and eventually contributed to the foundation of the ROK is questionable. Although this New Right’s textbook neither accepts nor denies the “colonial modernization theory,” the textbook incorporates historical facts that the free market economy and modern market system were introduced under the Japanese annexation.

Despite economic, political, and social difficulties under the Japanese annexation, the New Right’s textbook believes that the Korean people achieved a relative modernization in this period. This success is linked with an overall mechanics by the textbook that the personal property of Koreans was protected, and the Koreans were guaranteed to participate freely in market system just as the Japanese were at that time. While supervision and control remained in the hands of the Japanese, the textbook stresses that technological and market developments were relatively efficient for Koreans. According to a Korean newspaper’s analysis, Dong A-Ilbo, the textbook credits that there were less than 100 Korean-owned factories in 1910, whereas 4,000 “Korean-owned” factories were created in the Korean peninsula by the late 1930s. The emphasis, of course, implies that things were not as bad as “Koreans” insufficiently acknowledged due to “nationalism.” As a result of its “unique” recognition on this chapter of Korea’s history, the far-right radical group, the New Right, has been considered to be an extremely pro-Japanese, fascist group with controversial principles in the education system.

The analysis offered by Dong-A Ilbo also emphasizes the South Korean state nationalism over minjok nationalism as found in the New Right’s alternative history textbook. It is apparent in the Kumsung textbook that its emphasis on minjok concept stresses the people’s history and achievements, rather than the centralized focus on the glorification of the state as a whole. At

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63 Kim, “Nyurait’ŭ, Wae Kŏn’gukch’ŏrin’ga?”
64 Yu, “5 16Ŭn K’udet’ajijiman Kŭndaechwahyŏngmyŏng Ch'ulbalchŏmt'e."
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
the same time the New Right’s textbook emphasizes liberal democracy (*chayuminjujuŭi*) and the system of free market economy (capitalism) as the foundation of the ROK. Moreover, the New Right’s textbook glorifies the state’s involvement on export-led growth and the Miracle on the Han River by Park Chung-hee, and appears to have a certain dynamic glorification of skilled entrepreneurs like Lee Byung-chul, the founder of Samsung Group, and Chung Ju-yung, the founder of Hyundai Group. The textbook then praises both entrepreneurs for their achievements, and also glorifies many other Koreans like Myung-whun Chung, Sumi Jo, Park Se-ri, and others, who are known worldwide as heroes worthy of “national” pride for their contributions to the state.

Meanwhile, the New Right’s textbook also characterizes the former President Syngman Rhee as a hero for his unprecedented valor to promote “liberal democracy, anticommunism, anti-Japanese policies, Korean unification through invasion, and devotion to solid anticommunism” for the ROK. It also credits Rhee for his devotion to protecting the ROK from Kim Il Sung’s communism, and praises Rhee as the Founding Father of the Republic of Korea. While Syngman Rhee is also a topic of controversy in Korean history, the textbook discredits both Kim Kyu-sik and Kim Gu for their failed attempts at reunification by visiting Pyongyang as they, “…achieved nothing,” and “did not participate in the foundation of the Republic of Korea.” There is no clear statement as to why these Korean activists, who are known for their influential contributions to the Korean independence movement against the Empire of Japan, are discredited, but one can suggest that these two were political opponents to Syngman Rhee, with a controversial distortion that they were also connected with the DPRK. Thus, this positive characterization of Rhee could be an attempt by the New Right to solidify Syngman Rhee as the only rightful ruler of that time and by doing so, eventually altering Rhee’s overall legacy. This, in part, is susceptible to radical right-wing elements as it neglects many Korean independence

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68 Kŭm, “Nyurait’ŭ ‘Trtaean Kyogwasŏt'esŏ Tallajinŭn Inmul P'yŏngga.’”
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
activists (*minjok* nationalism) while succeeding to promote Rhee (*kukka* nationalism) in the context of building his image.

The Kumsung textbook from 2008, as illustrated on *Dong-A Ilbo* news article, indirectly blames the ROK and Syngman Rhee for the division of the peninsula, discouraging any techniques to promote the legacy of Rhee and nationalism to *kukka*. In the sphere of education, the New Right’s alternative textbook denounces these claims, and propagates a view that Stalin and Kim II Sung’s North Korea unleashed chaos on the Korean peninsula. Moreover, the Kumsung textbook incorporates the idea that, “unlike Syngman Rhee who favoured the establishment of a single government in the Korean peninsula, *minjok* nationalists like Kim Gu and Kim Kyu-sik along with political forces that were taking a moderate stance at the time attempted a peaceful solution to avoid division in the Korean peninsula.” While the Kumsung textbook’s intentions are unclear, the textbook blames Rhee for the establishment of the two separate states in the Korean peninsula as Rhee, according to the textbook, insisted on the legitimacy of the South Korean state as the only rightful state in the peninsula. On the other hand, Kim Gu is credited for his efforts to establish a single, peacefully unified nation by rejecting the election supervised by the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) for the creation of separate states in Korea.

The two textbooks also have diverse perspectives on Park Chung-hee’s history: The New Right’s history textbook acknowledges the May 16 incident as a military coup d’état, but it illustrates political credentials that Park’s leadership was essential for the national development. The luxuriant glorification of Park’s leadership in the New Right’s textbook implies that the authoritarian rule caused a paradoxical result by maximizing the potential mobilization of the people, and thereafter achieving an economic miracle and positive long-term consequences. The overall balance of historical narrative was altered in the New Right’s textbook in favour of a claim that under a military regime with its efficiency and order, South Korea experienced an

75 Yu, “5 16Ŭn K’udet'aijiman Kŭndaehwahyŏngmyŏng Ch'ulbalchŏmt'e,”
76 Ibid.
77 Kŭm, “Nyurait'ũ ‘Trtaean Kyogwasŏt'esŏ Tallajinŭn Inmul P'yŏngga,’”
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
80 Yu, “5 16Ŭn K'udet'aijiman Kŭndaehwahyŏngmyŏng Ch'ulbalchŏmt'e,”
economic boom since 1961, and thus interpreting the coup d’état as in fact a revolution towards a successful South Korean modernization.\(^{81}\) Professor at Seoul National University and one of co-presidents of *Kyogwasŏp'orŏm*, Pak Hyochong emphasizes the need to narrate history as it happened, and is critical of the Kumsung textbook’s attempt to distort the historical facts by disregarding and ignoring certain aspects.\(^{82}\) It is Pak’s vision that students should celebrate a centralized perspective of the state’s achievements rather than a history of individuals, subjected to aspects of leftist communism, as he believes that students can adopt a sense of pride and patriotism through national achievements.

More important than (un)justifying educational reforms in the school system is the fact that the radicalization from both Left and Right has been an ongoing issue in South Korea, especially since 2008. Kim Han-jong, professor of History Education at Korea National University of Education, stated that, “the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST)\(^{83}\) externally pressured high schools not to adopt textbooks from Kumsung publishing house in 2008.”\(^{84}\) In his interview with *Ohmynews*, he admitted that he was one of the authors for the 2008 Kumsung history textbook, and was accused by the state and conservative groups of producing an ideologically leftist textbook.\(^{85}\) He also pointed out that the textbook had been bought and used by 50% of schools nationwide, but that this number dropped to 20% after accusations from right-wing circles.\(^{86}\) Moreover, he stated that, “the MEST pressured high schools to remove the Kumsung history textbook from history curricula, but teachers rejected this request.”\(^{87}\) While this governmental pressure is indeed discriminatory and represents a distinctive use of force, there has been no proof on the governmental pressure other than from certain individuals, including Kim Han-jong.

\(^{81}\) Yu, “5 16Ŭn K'udet'aijiman Kŏndaehwahyŏngmyŏng Ch'ulbalchŏmt'e,”
\(^{82}\) Ibid.
\(^{83}\) The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology was established in 2008, but it was later dissolved and had been split into Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning and Ministry of Education since March, 2013
\(^{85}\) Ibid.
\(^{86}\) Ibid.
\(^{87}\) Ibid.
The new administration of the past-president Lee Myung-bak (February 2008 – February 2013) reinserted, arguably, systematically conservative measures. Under this conservative government, considerable complaints were made against the contemporary Korean history textbooks offered by private publishing houses, including Kumsung Publishing. But the issue, which mattered to many conservatives and far-right radicals, remained partially unfixed, as the main ideological narrative found in the Kumsung history textbook remained unchanged despite its revisions of 300 passages due to external criticisms since October 2004.\(^8\)\(^8\) In its commitment to act against leftists, the Grand National Party stated that, “although members of the National Institute of Korean History have given a grade of C to the Kumsung textbook for multiple flaws and biased perspectives, the MEST passed the textbook and allowed it to be distributed to high schools.”\(^8\)\(^9\)

The attempt to suppress subversive political radicalization of leftists, or progressives from the education system, was deemed to have failed, as Kumsung Publishing distributed over a million copies of its textbook nationwide, despite apparent multiple measures by specific politically associated individuals and groups to eliminate the vexatious question of leftist “nationalism.”\(^9\)\(^0\)

In October of 2008, the MEST ordered Kumsung Publishing to revise additional 34 errors from its textbook, with the argument that the textbook incorporated falsified information and misleading ideas.\(^9\)\(^1\) Furthermore, the opposition to the Kumsung history textbook discovered that the revised textbook maintained a leftist vision of history, including a misleading portrayal of Americans as occupiers and the Soviets as liberators, according to their conviction.\(^9\)\(^2\) The MEST, however, failed to orchestrate a definitive compromise as the MEST only requested certain “words” to be removed or revised, largely ignoring, as convicted by right-wing circles, leftist associated bias like the romanticization of Kim Il-sung’s legacy. However, authors of the Kumsung textbook rejected the request on a basis that the government had no rights to interfere with the textbook publication, which has been previously passed and accepted by the MEST.\(^9\)\(^3\)

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\(^8\) Yi, “No Chŏngbu Tŭrŏ ‘Kŏmjŏng’ Shihaeng… Chwap'yŏnhyang Nollan P'okpal, 2013Nyŏn ‘Posu Kyogwasŏ’ Naoja Chŏn'gyojoga Maga.”

\(^9\) Chŏng, “Nollanŭn 2003Nyŏn No Gitchŏngbuttae Shijaktaetta.”

\(^0\) Ibid.

\(^1\) Yi, “No Chŏngbu Tŭrŏ ‘Kŏmjŏng’ Shihaeng… Chwap'yŏnhyang Nollan P'okpal, 2013Nyŏn ‘Posu Kyogwasŏ’ Naoja Chŏn'gyojoga Maga.”

\(^2\) Editorial, “P’ilchadŭri Sujŏng Kŏbuhan ‘Kŭmsŏng Kyogwasŏ’ Pŏptaero Ch’ŏrihara” [Let the law handle the ‘Kumsung Textbook’ which was rejected by authors for revisions], Chosun Ilbo, November 4, 2008. http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2008/11/04/2008110401561.html

\(^3\) Ibid.
Many left-wing sympathizers, along with those who agreed with these authors had seen the event as a political radicalization of the Right, given the possible intention to provoke public opposition to the new conservative regime. Far from resolving the tensions between politically divisive groups, it was later found by right-wing circles that the Kumsung textbook had numerous errors, with ideologically biased perspectives against the ROK. It was also discovered that the textbook had barely passed the Ministry’s procedures for its distribution but the KTU, which either concealed or partially ignored these criticisms, adopted the Kumsung history textbook for over 50% of schools nationwide. The right-wing circles highlighted the catastrophic defeat, and claimed that the “…youths are taught our history as shamefully defeated in justice through this anti-ROK textbook.” In the following years under conservative regimes, a cycle (re)appears to ultimately “purify” the pollution of radicalization, engulfing the southern peninsula in a conflict of unprecedented radicalization. Thus, the dramatic historical transformation over competing nationalisms is based on certain underlying arguments between Left and Right. The account developed in this conflict is premised on the motive to justify their own version(s) of history in this complex patterns of historical development without reference to the wider historiographical context, which then intensified with political powers appeared to win the conflict.

94 Editorial, “P’ilchadŭri Sujŏng Kŏbuhan 'Kŭmsŏng Kyogwasŏ' Pŏptaero Ch’ŏrihara.”
95 Ibid.
Chapter 2
Diverging Identities

“Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe.”

Herbert George (H.G) Wells

A demoralized population of conservatives and right-wingers felt a sense of urgency in regard to curriculum reforms, fearing the rapid expansion of a radicalization especially under, for the first time in Korean history, the progressive regime of Kim Dae-jung in 1998. With the former president Kim Dae-jung’s framework of political life, his occasional radical transformations against the previous conservative regimes, and “liberation” of the 50 years of separation of the peninsula by developments of normalization with the DPRK, conservatives were particularly uncertain on what to do with the advocated “progressivisms.” For example, Kim Hyŏngchun, Professor of Politics at the Graduate School of Kookmin University, has stated that the conservatives felt the need to overcompensate for the expansion of leftist affiliations in South Korea, including the 2002 ruling party’s attempt to abolish the National Security Act (NSA), which has been enforced since 1948.

The division of the peninsula, with the crystallization of separate states, required decisive and radical control to maintain an uneasy ceasefire between North and South Koreas. The NSA, on the one hand, was facilitated by communist fears that the North Korean communists might in fact sabotage and overrun the feeble state of the Republic of Korea (ROK). For another, the NSA was often subsequently abused and exploited by autocratic military dictators to justify their controls over the populace, silencing political and social disagreements against the state. Not only are there differences of opinion among various factions on the topic of the NSA, there are indeed

97 Ibid.
98 Kim, Tongashiamunhwayŏn'gu Che53chip, 224-227.
inevitable difficulties over justifying the claim of the NSA over individuals. It retained measures that could guard against threats to national security or prevent divergent political dissenters from rising against military dictatorships. On the whole, the fact that the ruling party attempted to abolish or to revoke the NSA was a great threat to conservatives and other right-wing circles since this was a major shift of policy within the leftist government to prevail over one of founding principles of the ROK—anticommunism. However, this was also represented as an outcome of diverging policies in certain political respects, especially the unfolding of a non-autocratic administration, which can be perhaps seen as an official democratization of Korean politics.

The spontaneous movement of the Kim Dae-jung government has represented an unforeseen hybrid outcome. This political attitude has overrun a range of concerned right-wing perspectives in favour of reorganizing the remnant of autocratic authoritarianism. Song Hokŭn, professor in the Department of Sociology at Seoul National University, has suggested that the ROK underwent a progressivist transformation, but it has created a number of resistance groups linked with conservative values. He believes that these political transformations were sudden and radical measures against the ROK, which undermine the “true” intentions of progressive/liberal values as it attempts to overthrow the foundation of the ROK. Kim Ilyŏng, Professor of Sungkyunkwan University, interprets the sudden political emergence of various conservative and far-right circles in 2002 as a response to their “missed opportunity” in maintaining their traditional political supremacy and the status quo—the preservation of “liberal democracy”, anticommmunism, and capitalism in all aspects of society. The progressive historical transformation which occurred with the progressive regime had presented particular debates about aspects of Korean nationalisms. South Koreans, therefore, disagreed, however justified the historical material may be, about the two histories of kukka nationalism and kungmin nationalism without acknowledging distinct patterns of historical tradition.

The immense pressure to reinterpret the new “leftist” Korean nationalism under the former President Kim Dae-jung was increasingly forced upon conservative and right-wing circles, as they were the vanguard of anticommmunism. The democratization emphasized a serious claim to

99 Chŏng, “Nyu Rait'ŭ, Ch'immugesŏ Haengdongŭro] <1> Wae Umjigigi Shijak'aenna.”
100 Ibid.
wider reinterpretation of Korean anticommunist politics from autocratic regimes, causing controversial conservative interpretation of “democracy” under South Korean dictators while against communist North Korea. Accordingly, the ROK is indeed a democratic state, even under military dictatorship, due to the political circumstances of the Cold War. Under the particular forms of Korean authoritarianism, however, South Korea’s politics became increasingly anti-democratic, causing a bitter interpretation of the ROK’s democracy in the theater of the Cold War. Thus, the idea of “liberal democracy” has emerged to describe the ROK during the Cold War to justify the means to remain under a system of democracy and fulfil a basic framework against international communism.

The conceptualization of democratic values has in some way convinced right-wingers of the error of conservative and right-wing perspectives of the past. Both the Kim Dae-jung administration and the Korean society at that time persuaded individuals of the need to cleanse the remnant authoritarianism of the past. It was a reconstruction of understanding the Korean political past, essentially reorganized the structure in the southern peninsula. Despite implications on reinterpretations of Korea’s past, certain far-right radicals were committed to defend the subverted conservative values; a distinct far-right group, for example, began to distinguish between conservatives and “real conservatives”—the New Right.

From the 1980s to the 1990s, especially with the eruption of the Gwangju Uprising, student and intellectual dissenters of the Korean dictatorship interpreted Marxism, Leninism and socialism as a vision of a utopia against an ascetic authoritarian dystopia, a vision which of course was denounced by conservatives and the state. At the heart of the protest movement, the 386 generation argued for a combination of democracy and justice while some even championed North Korean ideology, juche, as a mechanism to replace the corrupt, autocratic military regime of the ROK. These views were held by small groups of isolated dissenters, due to the fact that the state exploited the NSA to arrest and torture dissenters as spies of North Korea. However,

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102 The generation of South Koreans who were active politically in the democratic movements of the ROK.
103 Pae, “Haksaengundong ‘80Nyŏn Kwangju’ Kŏch’imyŏ Migukkwa Kyŏlbyŏl.”
some maintained their devotion to these ideologies in a search for altering South Korea’s *kukka* nationalism.

To a certain extent, there were likely North Korean spies and sympathizers within these protesters, but it was predominantly made of South Korean political dissenters with little or no connection to the DPRK. This struggle was ultimately redefined as a predetermined development toward Korean democracy, which remains as a complex chapter in South Korea’s history. Nevertheless, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the umbrella for widespread democratic developments had redefined the utopian state of the DPRK as, ultimately, a failed socialist nation. Multiple attempts were made by the DPRK to convince the globe that their state was relatively successful, at least compared to South Korea. By the 1990s, however, North Korea was exposed with the truth that the DPRK had failed to achieve a utopian society. Revelation of the actual “dystopian” nature of North Korea was an issue of great embarrassment and bitterness, both for the party and for previous supporters of the DPRK. Many of those who were once associated with North Korean propaganda felt betrayed by the catastrophic lies of the DPRK, and felt the need to secure peace and stability for the future rather than to jeopardize the fragile stability of South Korea as a whole.\(^{104}\) These individuals who were once “leftists,” thus converted to become conservatives and far-right members, including prominent members of the New Right, in the midst of subsequent decline of North Korea and socialist ideologies.

This paper is neither the one to evoke a detailed analysis of studies of the New Right movement nor differentiation between the New Right and conservatives. It is important, however, to mention that the developing situation of the textbook crisis has been, arguably, associated with the expansion of the New Right in South Korea. For example, Kim Hyŏngchun discusses that the New Right differentiates itself from traditional conservatives by promoting a new degree of social policies.\(^{105}\) This is illustrated, as Kim reveals, through a neoconservative school of political thought: the group is considered as unique because it is relatively less active politically and socially than its predecessor, but because of participation from young intellectuals, thinks much more rationally.\(^{106}\) The popular media fluctuates an image that this new political Right

\(^{104}\) Pae, “Haksaengundong ’80Nyŏn Kwangju’ Kŏch’imyŏ Migukkwa Kyŏlbyŏl.”

\(^{105}\) Chŏng, “Nyu Rait’ŭ, Ch’immugesŏ Haengdongguro | <1>Wae Umjigigi Shijak’aenna.”

\(^{106}\) Ibid.
movement, as driven by the younger generation of people in their 20s are reinventing conservatism, which ironically defies the typical image of “senile conservatives.” As the Republic of Korea is committed to democracy and systems of justice and liberal values, South Korea recognizes the pluralistic political system—a peaceful coexistence of different political bodies. Nevertheless, with the experience of the war and dictatorship, the ROK is paradoxically somewhat sensitive and intolerant to particular political values, and is therefore ideologically vulnerable to creating conditions that exclude certain reactionary forces.

The Kim Dae-jung administration played an ambivalent role in Korean history, and the state established a greater degree of democracy and pluralistic political and social systems compared to the former South Korean Republics. The New Right, however, have accused the Kim administration for being firmly loyal to “leftist” values, and denying the traditional principles of the ROK while issuing subsequent policy developments which devalue the constitutional virtues of liberal democracy and anticommunism. Since the movement appeared to be a deliberate belligerent attack upon the interests of liberals and progressives, left-wing dissenters perceived the New Right movement as an attempt to revive the remnant values of South Korea’s past. The manifestations of both right-wing and left-wing extremist values attracted the wider Korean media and populace, and they mouthed its slogans of the “Lost Decade” as a justification for whatever direction the political principle required.

The traditional conservatives who support the Grand National Party (GNP), for example, have claimed to “reclaim the Lost Decade,” according to a Korean internet newspaper. The framework from which this originates is the Japanese “Lost Decade.” In terms of Korean domestic politics, conservatives and right-wing circles have been using this specific slogan since the Lee Myung-bak’s administration. The coalition of conservative groups, Kukkasuhogungminyŏnhap and Chayushiminyyŏndae, for example, declared on August 23, 2008 to “reclaim the Lost Decade,” a statement which sought to revoke an ambivalent and

107 Chŏng, “Nyu Rait’ŭ, Ch’immugesŏ Haengdongŭro] <1>Wae Umjigigi Shijak’aenna.”
108 Ibid.
109 The party is now known as the Saenuri Party since 2012.
111 Ibid.
hypocritical leftist legacy, which undermined the foundation of the ROK, under the former Presidents Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun, and hence the decade-long retribution from oppressed right-wing circles against a leftist dominance. The emergence of abrupt right-wing dissent in 2008 was a shift from a leftist to a right-wing regime. At the same time, North Korean aggressions and instability in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) created a widespread uncertainty about the status of peace and coexistence in the Korean peninsula, particularly to the ROK. The Sunshine Policy, orchestrated by Kim Dae-jung, remains as a subject of controversy, and has been provocatively criticized for the humanitarian aid to North Korea as a means to prevent the collapse of the DPRK. The coalition of Kukkasuhogungminyŏnhap and Chayushiminyŏndae, along with conservatives and far-right radicals who share a similar perspective, believe that the Sunshine Policy and South Korea’s humanitarian aid to North Korea are a simple consistent practice to support the DPRK without particularly receiving anything in return. Thus, it can appear to right-wing dissent that this materialistic development to North Korea is simply to achieve a certain political popularity from the ROK through sympathy and hope.

In pursuit of altering the consciousness of the legacy of previous leftist regimes, the New Right has promoted a phenomenon that North Korea’s nuclear missile developments, promotion of dismantling the United Nations Command in the Korean peninsula, attempt to abolish the NSA, and social division and confrontation in South Korea are all the result of 10 years under leftist political authorities. In commitment to severe existing “leftist” practice, the New Right has demanded a list of policies to the GNP, such as strengthening the ROK-US alliance and abolition of Inter-Korean Summits, as an expression of widespread disaffection with left-wing policies. The co-president of Chayushiminyŏndae, An Ŭngmo has acknowledged that some aspects were undoubtedly the fault of right-wing circles due to persistent conflicting hostilities between conservatives, which led to a successful reinsertion of a second “leftist regime” with the former President Roh Moo-hyun, and that, “in short, we have lost everything over the last 10 years.”

112 Editorial, “Irŏbŏrin 10Nyŏn, Chŏnggwŏn'gyoch'ero Toech'atcha.”
113 One of many conservative groups in South Korea
114 Editorial, “Irŏbŏrin 10Nyŏn, Chŏnggwŏn'gyoch'ero Toech'atcha.”
115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
117 Ibid.
As he concluded, he hoped that the balance of power would be restored and reclaimed under the former President Lee Myung-bak and would demolish undue anti-ROK developments which provoked the DPRK and leftists in South Korea into becoming stronger, extremist forces in the Korean peninsula.

Right-wing extremism has been widely rejected by the opposite end, as the left-wing opposition has been alienated by their disapproval of the right-wing agenda, and accuses the New Right movement as a thinly veiled attempt to restore militarism of the ROK’s authoritarian past. Kim Han-jong has, for example, indicated in his interview with Ohmynews\textsuperscript{118} that conservatives are obsessed with history because of this idea of the Lost Decade.\textsuperscript{119} He has also asserted that, “it is my belief that conservative groups believe the regime was stolen for 10 years because the people failed to recognize the legacies of the Founding Fathers, Syngman Rhee and Park Chung-hee.”\textsuperscript{120} A Korean poet and novelist, Jang Jeong-il characterizes the New Right as “Nyuttorai,” which literally means a “new imbecile,” and claims the New Right’s movement as fascistic, while condemning the New Right for lacking common sense.\textsuperscript{121} Not only does Jang resent the New Right as the apparent invasion of right-wing extremists, he rejects racist attitudes of Kyogwasŏp'orŏm, a sub-group of the New Right, for example, to “write history properly”\textsuperscript{122} by eliminating all leftist-biased textbooks from school textbooks.\textsuperscript{123}

The condition in which the alternative history textbook by Kyogwasŏp'orŏm, as Jang asserts, is inadequate and insufficient, particularly due to the fact that the publishing house had only 5 officials of the Chunbiwiwŏnhoe\textsuperscript{124} and 11 editors, none of whom are historians.\textsuperscript{125} The general theme of this textbook then is venerated as the ideological expansion in right-wing education, and implies a widespread increase in the instability of pluralism. Furthermore, Jang questions the context of the textbook, since history cannot be written if historians are explicitly replaced by

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{118} A Korean online newspaper
\item \textsuperscript{119} Sun, “2008Nyeon Gyoyukbuga 'Geumseonggyogwaseo Gyoche' Oeap- Jeongchijeogeuro Gyoyuk Iyongharyeoneun Saenggak Beoryeoya.”
\item \textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{122} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{124} A textbook preparation committee for the publishing house, Kyogwasŏp'orŏm.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Jang, “P'ashijŭmŭi Akch'wirŭl P'ungginŭn 'Nyuttorai'Ŭi Nara.”
\end{itemize}
apparent ideologically biased individuals who cannot provide the research and objective evidence for the history textbook.\textsuperscript{126} Underlying the critical statement that there is no “historian” in \textit{Kyogwasŏp'orŏm}, Jang and other dissenters like Kim Kihyŏp assert that the New Right’s definition of history is in fact not a history, but political propaganda to misuse the history to establish a specific condition for a certain political atmosphere.\textsuperscript{127} In conclusion, Jang, although not explicit, labels the New Right as capitalists, Japanese collaborators, and opportunists who should be seen as “Nyuttorai,” whose crusade to re-write history is “…a comedy show.”\textsuperscript{128}

One opinion, as suggested in Yang Hŭisŏn’s article, states that this phenomenon of incommunicable accusations of political identities in South Korea’s multidimensional political spectrum has become nearly impossible to solve due to the nature of Korea’s entanglement of US-ROK alliance, North-South Koreas relation, state-economy, and various other elements.\textsuperscript{129} While leftists are identified for their \textit{minjok} nationalism with progressivism, as according to Yang’s analysis, conservatives have retained a solid anticomunism since the Cold War, and its political apparatus has repressed liberal and progressive values to achieve a certain uniformity and to avoid proliferating the nature of democratic liberation against a dictatorship.\textsuperscript{130} Apart from the response of conservatives and right-wingers to the expansion of leftist values, the New Right differentiates themselves both practically and theoretically from active conservatives, as their prominent idea is to expand its influence, and to reconstruct “conservative” values as the principle policy of the ROK.\textsuperscript{131} The competition between conservatives and the New Right for conservative values, and eventually to define South Korean nationalism, has begun to appear as both factions accuse one another of being uncommitted to conservative values.\textsuperscript{132} This political tension, however, remains peaceful, to a certain extent, as the coalition of conservatives and the New Right remotely acknowledge the need to recover from the “Lost Decade,” and perhaps both desire to foster support among the populace in order to dissolve the substantive

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{126} Jang, “P’ashijŭmŭi Akch’wirŭl P’ungginŭn ’Nyuttorai’.Ui Nara.”
\item \textsuperscript{127} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{129} Hŭisŏn Yang, “Nyurait’ŭ, Hammjŏk Uigin’ga Chaejipkwŏnŭl Wihan Toguin’ga” [The New Right, a rational Right or a tool for the reelection], \textit{Nodongsahoe 2006 December.}, (2006), 42-44.
\item \textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 42-45.
\item \textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 50.
\end{itemize}
leftist/progressive parliamentary party in the ROK, with a slogan that “a living jongbuk\textsuperscript{133} is much more frightening than a dead Japanese collaborator.”

Extremism itself is nevertheless not limited only to the Right. A series of prominent extreme left-wingers have developed a new “revolution” during the decade of Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun with frequent, and perhaps, widespread controversial policies. There were, for example, internal and external political aspects which were undoubtedly disturbing, particularly to conservatives, but also seemed “unpatriotic” to the constitutional values of the ROK which provoked the scattered right-wing dissenters into becoming more extreme in response to changing circumstances. The issue of right and left-wing dissents is not only constituted as a serious threat to South Korea’s pluralistic political and social systems, but it has also developed a new marginalized phenomenon of extremism in the ROK’s search for nationalism in the Korean history curriculum. The praxis response of the political Left and Right to extremism in education was considerably important in its pursuit to (de)legitimize the opposite side in intellectual, political, and public dimensions with its historiographical consciousness. Yet, while there is a widespread fear and anxiety on both sides, factions of Left and Right unrepentantly struggle to differentiate Left from Right, or right from wrong, as neither Left nor Right offers an alternative understanding of “nationalism” other than accusing one another of being fascists or communists.

This phenomenon of the Lost Decade evoked by conservatives and right-wing circles is a practice of new “prejudice” under the new conservative state of the former President Lee Myung-bak. The one possible implication of right-wing dissent for the development of this undoubtedly supportive slang within conservatives is arguably that contemporary South Korea’s social, economic, and political disorders are the result of the previous leftist regimes. One has even hinted that this development might be a new form of ethnic legitimacy in the Korean peninsula—the Korean War and the split of two Koreas wreaked havoc on the minjok idea, going as far as reshaping the previous concept of one minjok into “two minjok” by differentiating ethnicity between North and South Koreans.\textsuperscript{134} Equally disturbing is the right-wing views that the two former “leftist” presidents had financed the DPRK’s regime and its military programs, as

\textsuperscript{133} A word to describe a South Korean who is a pro-North, loyal to the Kim family of the DPRK.

\textsuperscript{134} Sungtai Hong, “The Politics of Dominant Discourses and Its Socio-political Effects in South and North Korea: Critical Examination of Anti-communism, Nationalism, and Juche Idea,” Han guksahoe Che6chip 2Ho (Seoul: Korea University Institute Social Research, 2005), 209.
evidenced by several controversies; but there is even a greater influence of popular pressure against the former South Korea polices on North Korea with the DPRK posing a serious problem for peace and stability in the Korean peninsula. A more widespread hysteria was evident in hostility formed by left-wing dissent in the ROK as they resented the rise of the right-wing conservative party as an attempt to establish right-wing extremism.

The phenomenon against the New Right has been an ongoing issue as this far-right radical group seems to advocate fascism. At the level of minjok nationalism, however, the New Right has also been known to advocate that the Japanese annexation had benefited the Korean peninsula which has been widely and considerably problematic for many Koreans. The New Right has also held a great degree of pro-Japanese elements, which were perceived to the general audience of Koreans as unethical and immoral principles in resisting Japan’s attempt to “neutralize” atrocities that happened throughout the annexation period. Professor Lee Young-hoon from Seoul National University and an associate to the New Right, for example, has provided a considerable justification for the Japanese tyranny. In contrast to popular dissent, Lee also argues that issues of Comfort women and forced Korean labourers under the Japanese annexation are an exaggeration on behalf of Korea, and criticizes many Korean textbooks for vilifying Japanese colonial period and de-emphasizing its positive developments to Korea. Yu Yongik, historian and the chairperson of the National Institute of Korean History, has also advocated that, “…Koreans failed to protect the national sovereignty [from the Japanese] because of Koreans’ low ethical standards by default.”

The controversial provocations by the New Right have simultaneously caused a reaction by leftist, rightists, and many Koreans as the New Right hypocritically respects the colonial legacy with some of the implications to justify the Japanese annexation. The unrest against the New

Right more or less intensified with the New Right’s favourable stance in the contemporary Japanese politics against South Korea, especially over the sovereignty claim over Dokdo.\footnote{In English, the island is referred to as the Liancourt Rocks whereas it is known as Takeshima in Japanese.} Ahn Byeong-jick, Professor Emeritus at Seoul National University and the representative director of the New Right Foundation, claims on the Dokdo Island dispute that, “…our country [South Korea] cannot insist that we have more legal, historical evidence than Japan in this current situation.”\footnote{Rora O, “Ilbon Pangwibaeoksŏ, 12Nyŏn Yŏnsok ‘Toktonŭn Ilbon Yong't'o’ Chujiang” [12 years of Japan’s claim over the sovereignty of Dokdo as stated in a Japan’s Defense white paper], Chosun Ilbo, August 2, 2016. http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2016/08/02/2016080201327.html} This approach implies a strong “antinationalist” context, especially with Koreans’ uneasy past over the Japanese annexation era. The coalition between conservatives and the New Right meant that the conservatives were also assumed to validate the New Right’s position over the rise of the pro-Japanese elements.

The resurgence of conservative values in recent years, however, which sought to embrace anticommunism, nationalism to \textit{kukka}, and to overthrow leftist elements, has differentiated conservatives from the New Right as this far-right radical group particularly enforced an idiosyncratic extremism with the accusations of being pro-Japanese: while it remains controversial that the New Right justifies the Japanese annexation of the Korean peninsula, this itself is distinctively contradictory to the idea of nationalism because the Japanese annexation symbolizes the destruction of Korean pride and the nationalism itself. With the commitment to sanitize such views, Sŏ Chŏngkap, military veteran and one of the most prominent conservative activists has declared that, “our history is different from the New Right,” and “…individuals who are prominent members in the New Right are the people which conservatives actually avoid.”\footnote{Sŏngkuk Ko, “Tokto Nollan, Uriga Ilbonboda Kkok Pŏmyulchŏk Saryojŏk Chŏnggŏ Mant’ago Hal Su Ïpsŏ” [Dokdo Controversy, we cannot claim that we have more legal evidence to Japan], Nocutnews, July 15, 2008. http://www.nocutnews.co.kr/news/473230} Despite the apparent resentment between conservatives and the New Right, the coalition maintained a bitter homogenous unity only to overthrow a leftist regime of the former President Roh Moo-hyun between 2003 to 2008.\footnote{Ch’ŏl Paek, “Nyurait’ŭnŭn Wae 8Nyŏn Mane Mollak’age Twaeamma” [Why the downfall of the New Right after 8 years], Weekly Kyunghyang, July 10, 2012. http://weekly.khan.co.kr/khnmc.html?mode=view&code=115&artid=201207031802201}
If anything, this phenomenon of internal unrest is quite impossible to ignore with media from both Left and Right encouraging widespread politicized provocations. With the development of political climate in the late 1980s, Korean newspapers began to adhere to a political base, focusing on their political perspectives and representing their respective political behaviours to their particular audience. According to one of many views, Choi Hyun Joo’s investigation reveals the spectrum of conservative and progressive news media, which implies that each politicized media outlet has a tendency to offer a unique perspective on an issue: either offering a deep, wide analysis or completely skewing the information through containment and repressing specific elements. The point to be made here is the following: the immediate news report of a protest, for example, has notably different patterns in its coverage than the news report of a natural disaster.

These differences, therefore, are subjected to particular forms of politicized messages. *Chosun Ilbo*, a traditional source of conservative news, and *The Hankyoreh*, traditional source for progressive news, are a popular comparison. On the one hand, *Minjuŏnnonshiminyŏnhap*, a civil group promoting for an “openness” of media, has accused *Chosun Ilbo* and *Dong-A Ilbo* for their multiple attempts to (re)construct an incomplete interpretation of a protest that happened in Seoul on November 14, 2015. The article harshly criticizes both *Chosun Ilbo* and *Dong-A Ilbo* for treating protesters solely as violent aggressors while portraying police as victims, and failing to offer a balanced perspective on the matter other than to delegitimize the protest as a whole. On the other hand, *Hankyoreh* newspaper portrays a notably different framework as its focus is on protesters as victims of police brutality and injustice. From the point of view of the majority of conservatives, however, this specific implication is vulnerable to biases since *Hankyoreh* fails, or deliberately omits, to provide a sufficient perspective of violence from protesters. In any event, these visible relations of diverse issues in politicized media in the quest for national identity have undoubtedly ascribed to limits on political orientations. Therefore, the

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145 Ibid.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid.
media have become a fundamental tool to legitimize the veracity of either distinctive natures of political asymmetries which can be seen in the later chapters.

The reframing of various Korean historical episodes has increasingly become an issue of discussion in popular news media, which has had a critical impact on the politicization of the education system. Although critical, these accusations and arguments made by dissenting leftist and progressive media, and equally to conservatives and far-right radicals, are largely interpreted as rumors, or facts exploited to oversimplify historical reality where netizens in South Korea accept and react to these sources regardless of any truth to the politicized accusations.\footnote{Kang, “‘P'ongnyŏk P'ŭreime Ppajyŏbŏrin Shinmun-Sajin'gisa.”} As far as the purpose of private publications for Korean history textbook, it was to eradicate politicalized prejudices and ideological biases in favour of prospect of historical balance over the national identity and its consciousness. In the end, the historical consciousness, with its relation to national identities, has intensified with political and ideological sentiments than to shed any alternative perspective on Korea’s already-controversial questions of the past. As a matter of fact, the present political and ideological consciousness of various factions and their respective sentiments seem to have nothing to do with “nationalism” itself. Rather, the issue is characterized by misrepresentations and misconceptions directly related to political and ideological values.
In 2008, the Republic of Korea (ROK) was politically shaken by the successful presidential election of the former President Lee Myung-bak, ultimately heralding the end of 10 years of the “leftist” regime. This dramatic victory for conservatives and far-right groups inaugurated a phenomenon of dismantling the “tainted” leftist history to make way for their vision of “true” Korean history, which seeks to prepare younger generations with nationalism and patriotism. But it was clear that their attempts failed, at least in countering the “leftist” Kumsung textbook in early 2008. To win in the competition for the historical consciousness of nationalism that had, arguably, emerged following the downfall of autocratic military dictatorships. In relation to the simmering nature of this political conflict, the newly elected President Lee had plans to reform the history curriculum by unifying *kuksa* (pre-modern Korean history) and contemporary Korean history into a history of Korea, known as *Han’guksa*, by Spring of 2011. This decisive decision ultimately accompanied a remarkable reconfiguration in education by making Korean history as a mandatory component of school curriculum for all high school students starting from 2012.

While some appreciated this restructuring of the curriculum, it appeared to others as distressing and notably problematic since two history courses were combined into one course with reduced

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150 Kim, “Han’guksa Kyogwasŏ Parhaengch’ejŏ Chŏnggwŏn Immatattara ‘Orakkarak.’”
teaching time to cover both pre-modern and contemporary histories of Korea.\textsuperscript{153} This radical reconstruction in education also led to the reconfiguration of teaching materials, as parts of the textbook were shortened and simplified to cover much of history within a limited time.\textsuperscript{154} Its implications for the reshaping of history education and its curriculum have been intrinsically chaotic, to a certain extent, but the concept remained considerably appealing to some who argued for the need to emphasize “Korean history.” The former Minister of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), Lee Joo-ho has called for the need to “strengthen Korean history education,”\textsuperscript{155} while the former President Lee Myung-bak also ordered the reconsideration of the inclusion of Korean history studies in various government examinations, including the civil service exam, which were excluded since 1997 and 2005.\textsuperscript{156}

It is notable that the “first” textbook conflict occurred in 2008 with textbooks from Kumsung Publishing and the New Right. There were obvious ideologically biases within these textbooks, constituting certain political perspectives. The “resolution” of this conflict was achieved, to some extent, by 2011 with the introduction of Han’guksa. The division of Left and Right supporters over the brand of politicking seemed to have dissolved with the introduction of 8 different textbooks from 8 private publishers, including Kyohaksa, to determine the content of Han’guksa curriculum. The consequence, however, by no means marked the end of political standpoints; as a matter of fact, neutralizing certain ideologically controversial perspectives from textbooks were left unresolved, and the goal of a peaceful cooperation of values between “leftists” and “rightists” was also unachieved.

Conservatives and far-right radicals, including the New Right, had sought a certain idealism, especially in education, in respect for the Korean national heritage. The confrontation between dissenting and diverse opinions has been represented through the conflict on textbooks from Kumsung Publishing and Kip’arang of the New Right in 2008. The cultivating link by the 2013

\textsuperscript{154} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{155} Pae, “Chahaksagwan Ije Kŭman Ti Kuksa Kyogwasŏ 6Chong Chung 4Chong, Rhee Syngman ŭi Tongnibundong Musi.”
\textsuperscript{156} Minsŏk Kang, “Kakchong Kongmuwŏn Shihōme Han'guksa P'ohamshik'yŏya” [Korean history should be included in various civil service examinations], JoongAng Ilbo, January 20, 2011. http://news.joins.com/article/4950290
Kyohaksa textbook accusation with the New Right is that intellectuals and scholars from the New Right contributed toward the publication of Kyohaksa’s 2013 Han’guksa textbook.\textsuperscript{157} There is some evidence to suggest that the New Right promoted an official publication of textbook to be used in schools rather than publishing a private alternative textbook, which has only been a symbolic source of struggle rather than being actually adopted in schools.\textsuperscript{158} While culminated dissenting opinions managed to overthrow the production of a textbook by the New Right, the textbook passed the official preliminary examination from the Ministry of Education\textsuperscript{159} on May 31\textsuperscript{st}, 2013.\textsuperscript{160} This issue was evident both in politics and academia thereby unsuccessfully averting another confrontation between diverging factions. The development of historical consciousness over Korea’s uneasy historical progress is extremely contentious. With a series of controversial official and unofficial interpretations of history, the methods of teaching history to younger generations and its representation to news outlets remain considerably acrimonious. History, therefore, has been the subject of heated controversial issue, with different factions either reviving or creating their respective themes, to spark either a sense of collective pride or shame for being Koreans.

With a renewed willingness to “balance” the controversial historical (mis)representations and (anti)nationalist sentiments in history textbooks, 8 private publishers have all passed the bureaucratic process to publish a history textbook: Kyohaksa, Kumsung Publishing, Doosan Dong-A, Liberschool, MiraeN, Visang Education, Jihaksa, and Chunjae Education. The proliferation of exploration of the history had encouraged rational arguments about the facts and disavowed political sentiments. The prominence of this fresh wave of approach, however, reasserted a great desire to revive pride in the Republic of Korea or to reflect features of shame and guilt for the Korean nation; by leftists, the latter could be a symbol of a public organization against distrustful dictatorship era at a heightened political movement in South Korea. The pride, on the other hand, is equated with national achievements, particularly with the official state

\textsuperscript{158} Yi, “No Chŏngbu Tŭrŏ ‘Kŏmjŏng’ Shihaeng … Chwap’yŏnhyang Nollan Po’kpal, 2013Nyŏn ‘Posu Kyogwasŏ Naoja Chŏn’gyojga Maga.”
\textsuperscript{159} It was created on March 2013 after the dissolve of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST).
\textsuperscript{160} Kang, “Nyurait’ŭ Kyogwasŏ Kŏmjŏng Tonggwa… ‘Yŏksagyogwasŏ Hŭndŭlgi’ Nonjaeng Pon’gyŏk’wadoena?”
developments as a whole. Hence with the collapse of the autocratic dictatorship in South Korea, Koreans had paid a special attention which promised an alternative voice in both private and public spheres. The political climate, therefore, responded to the possibilities to “question” the centralized historical consciousness with a wider spectrum of opinions and voices from individuals. If anything, it represented a development of Korean democracy after decades of repression for dissenters.

According to one of many conservatives and right-wing radicals, the implication of this dissent and opposition is a destabilizing factor for the ROK and its political structures, as dissenters question the legitimacy of the ROK. This could of course be found in the narrowly orthodox official view of the history on the Korean War. From the point of view of the majority of the Right, South Koreans are portrayed as the victims of the brutal forces of North Korean communists. Rather than interpreting the war as a manifestation of complex layers of political, social, and ideological conflicts, the Right has emphasized the characteristics of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and its communists as naturally violent and cruel fanatics, enforcing radicalization over peace and stability. On a broader level, the generalization of the war solidified South Koreans as victims, an inspiration for conservatives, far-right radicals, and anyone who is sympathetic with this tradition to embrace anticommunism.

The writing of history, especially the representations of history on the controversial nature of contentious topics, such as the Korean War, is considerably acrimonious. From the 1990s, and especially since the 2000s, new historical approaches shone a new light on the centralized conservative historical consciousness. Liberals and leftists questioned the nationalist themes of history, and sparked a wave of perceptions to explore previously neglected, and even suppressed, historical memories. The historiography of the ROK from the 1950s and onwards retained intense anticommunist sentiments, and certain traditional South Korean themes, such as statism, have overwhelmed a confrontation with the past. As the conservative orthodoxy began to decline under the rise of a democratic government, a new wave of activists, politicians, scholars, and historians explored the proliferation of controversial topics which were previously expelled from historical exhibitions.

The uniqueness of this “history from below” is the rise of new modes of historical (re)interpretation in a wider perception. South Korea’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission,
for example, was established under a progressive regime in 2005 to investigate previously neglected atrocities caused by US forces and the South Korean government. Chung Jin A’s essay, *Reconstruction of Damage Experience[d] by the Left during the Korean War: Challenge to the Official Memory of the State*, for example, explicitly states that, “…the civilian massacre[s] by the red guerrillas was[were] actually done by the ROK,”\(^{161}\) and that, “the ‘reds’ are human beings even as we are.”\(^{162}\) Although this idea may be considered tolerant for its alternative view on history, many in South Korea perceive such responses as problematic for a range of reasons, including the fact that the essay sympathized with North Koreans as victims.

Given these alternate views challenging the Cold War values of the ROK, the Right expressed their widespread discontent as they have seen this movement merely as an expression of intent to cause the downfall of the ROK. Conservatives and far-right radicals believe in a vision of society with discipline and sacrifice, loyal to *kukka* nationalistic values of the ROK to maintain its development against the DPRK and its propaganda. As these left-wing dissenters share features of North Korean propaganda, individuals in the ROK question if these critical reinterpretations of progressives have merit or if they represent baseless propaganda to hinder political, social, and economic growth of South Korea. The political system during the dictatorial regime obviously enforced bigotry, strategically silencing factors of dissenting expressions and political oppositions. With the introduction of a democratic regime, followed by a progressive party coming to power, dissenters against the dictatorial regime of the past have been expressing openly that the ROK guarantees instability as it is built on the wrong foundations. It has been constantly argued by dissenting Left, including the DPRK, that the ROK and its constitutional values undoubtedly intervene with political stability and concepts of Korean *minjok*.

Misconceptions, both from Left and Right, prevent a mutually agreeable solution to the question of Korean history because both sides are suspicious of one another. There have been intense developments as both dissenting groups only want to incorporate part of the facts that support their opinions, and have been exploiting facts as well as rumors to gain the upper hand in this contestation of political justification.

\(^{161}\) Jin A Chung, *Reconstruction of Damage Experience by the Left during the Korean War: Challenge to the Official Memory of the State* (Seoul: T’ongirinmunhangnonch’ong, 2013), 33.

\(^{162}\) Ibid.
The multiple new textbooks published by private publishers appeared, briefly, to be a solution in 2013. However, the new privately published textbooks for Korean history caused an overwhelming controversy, especially with the Kyohaksa textbook. It was argued by dissenters that the Kyohaksa textbook had too many internal errors compared to the other 7 textbooks as it had over 120 falsified representations, misconceptions, and misrepresentations. The textbook was also criticized by scholarly institutions like the Academy of Korean Studies, the Institute for Minjok Studies, and the Institute for Korean Historical Studies (which of course are considered as leftist institutions by various conservative and far-right radical groups in South Korea) with historical inaccuracies. Professor Shin Yong-ha, an Emeritus Professor at Seoul National University, also expressed his dissatisfaction with the textbook with a statement that the textbook distorts historical facts with misleading information and (re)interpretations of Korean historical developments, and claimed a clear connection between the textbook and the expansion of the New Right. Shin remarked that the publisher had a limited number of scholars and historians who are unfamiliar with the contemporary Korean history itself. An Emeritus Professor of Sungkyunkwan University, Seo Joong-Seok has also indicated that Kyohaksa publication revives the Cold War ideology of anticommunism in keeping with the New Right pursuit of specific political aims. He fears that the New Right movement is far more extensive in a scale than leftist dissenters could imagine, and is concerned about the impression that progressives lack knowledge, unity, and strength to overcome the political radicalization of the Right.

Outside of academia, dissenting politicians have also expressed their concerns over a modified form of conservative nationalism as indicated in the Kyohaksa textbook. Pak Hongkūn, member of the Democratic United Party, argued that the Kyohaksa textbook contained countless flaws

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165 Kang, “Sin Yongha Kyosu Teilbon Shinshingminjuŭi Sagwan Yuip'ei.”
166 Ibid.
168 Ibid.
169 The Democratic United Party changed its name to the Democratic Party in 2013. This party later merged into the New Politics Alliance for Democracy in 2014, which was then renamed as the Minjoo Party of Korea in 2015.
and errors which could make a student fail the Korean College Scholastic Ability Test, if the student were to use this textbook. Politician Kim Yun-deok also rejected the textbook on the basis of a private survey that 62% of 1438 random participants regarded the Kyohaksa textbook as unacceptable, while 28.2% considered as incomplete, and only 9% accepted the textbook. A different survey reveals that 77% of 1000 random participants from aged 19 and above indicate the textbook to be inadequate whereas only 18% voted in favour of it. With this rising resistance to the Kyohaksa textbook, the parliamentary opposition party pledged to cancel the distribution of the Kyohaksa textbook as the party argued that textbook had over 298 historical errors with countless historical distortions and misrepresentations.

In its origin and early developments, the Kyohaksa textbook crisis was initially subjected to an ideological confrontation, especially accusations that the textbook is a symbolic crown of the New Right radicalism. This negative reception was followed by notable controversies, which exhibited characteristic dissonance. These controversies raised many concerns, since the textbook espoused pro-Japanese narratives while romanticizing the autocratic military dictatorship of South Korea. The proliferation of dissent intensified with the Kyohaksa textbook’s hardline controversial materials, especially (re)interpretations of an uneasy past of the colonial experience with the depiction of “Comfort Women”; the claim that “Korean Comfort Women often ‘followed’ wherever the Japanese army moved.” This particular view on

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170 Misŏn Kang, “Kyohaksa Han'guksagyogwasŏro Sunŭngjunbihamyŏn Chŏlbanŭn T'ŭllyŏ” [Preparing for the SAT with the Kyohaksa’s Korean history textbook could result a devastating loss of 50%]. Money Today, September 14, 2013. http://m.mt.co.kr/renew/view.html?no=20130914121155000956&type=outlink#imadnews
172 Kŭnhyŏk Yun, “Chŏn'gyojo Ch'wiso Pandae’ 60%...'Kyohaksa Kyogwasŏ Pujŏkchŏl’ 77%” [60% of “Jeonggyojo opposed the textbook”...77% believe “the Kyohaksa textbook is inappropriate as a textbook”], Ohmynews, October 15, 2013. http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/View/at_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0001916132
Comfort Women is offensive to many Koreans, including Comfort Women survivors, as many believe these individuals were enslaved by Imperial Japan, an issue which has not yet been properly addressed to this day by the government of Japan.\textsuperscript{176}

While the tension between Koreans and Japanese continues over the issue of Comfort Women, the fact that the textbook insinuates that these victims voluntarily “followed” the Japanese seems inexcusable for many Koreans.\textsuperscript{177} Rather than seeking to provide any balance on this uneasy historical episode, the Kyohaksa textbook only seems to depict Comfort Women as prostitutes over a sense of identifying them as victims of systematic atrocities committed by Empire of Japan. The Kyohaksa textbook is, in fact, adopting the Japanese explanation of Comfort Women. As early as 1982, for example, the Japanese Ministry of Education produced textbooks which justified the Japanese colonial era with depictions of annexed Koreans “voluntarily” adopting the advanced Japanese colonial system, such as Soshi-kaimei, Shintoism, and war-time mobilizations, arguing that there was no historical evidence of Japanese coercion on Koreans.\textsuperscript{178}

In response to criticisms over the coverage of Comfort Women, the Kyohaksa publication inevitably revised the controversial depiction of Comfort Women by stating that these victims were forcibly mobilized and exploited, considerably changing its tone by emphasizing the forceful nature of its atrocities.\textsuperscript{179} However, the widespread concern with the history disciplines of Kyohaksa textbook continued with its controversies over the history of the dictatorial regimes of South Korea. While there are pedagogical concerns over how to present historical material, very often politicians, historians, and activists ignore any educational nuance when evaluating textbooks and instead concentrate on political and ideological controversies.

\textsuperscript{176} The underlying premise of the controversial issue of Comfort Women, or any issues regarding Koreans’ experience under the Japanese annexation era, is complex and entangled with various bodies of elements. One issue is that the Japanese government believes that they have apologized and concluded the colonialization in the past with the Korean government, and the new generation feel no need to embrace collective guilt anymore. On the opposite end, Koreans believe that the Japanese have failed to sufficiently apologize to Koreans. Also, many Koreans believe that the Japanese government disregards any ethical and moral principles, as Japan appears to be increasingly attempting to erase its traumatic acts of violence particularly with convenient lies and historical distortions which somewhat glorify the Japanese Empire and grant unspoken recognition to Japanese nationalism.

\textsuperscript{177} Chŏn, “Ch’inni’ilptokchae Mihwa’ Kyohaksa Kyogwasŏ Oemyŏn Tanghaja Kukchŏnghwaja Kongse.”


\textsuperscript{179} Hŭiyŏng Kwŏn, Yi Myŏnghŭi, Chang Seok, Kim Namsu, Kim Tohyŏng, and Ch’oe Hŭiwŏn, Han’guksa (Seoul: Kyohaksa, 2014), 249.
According to the analysis by a Korean historian, O Hangnyŏng states that Syngman Rhee is mentioned over 82 times in the Kyohaksa textbook while by Kim Il-sung, Park Chung-hee, and Kim Gu are mentioned only about 17 to 18 times each.\(^{180}\) It is clear to O Hangnyŏng that the Kyohaksa glorifies Rhee and his pivotal role against communism. Furthermore, the acclamations of the Kyohaksa textbook seem to solidify Rhee’s legitimacy as the only rightful leader of Korea over other Korean activists during that time. The representation of the Park Chung-hee era is also displayed in a similar manner in the Kyohaksa textbook, unlike the other 7 other textbooks which emphasize the repressive apparatus of the dictatorial era by relating the unspoken history of those who were exploited. Thus, the other 7 textbooks are providing a history of kungmin by uncovering the stories of the people as the victims rather than a history of kukka—a history dedicated to the achievements of the nation as a whole.

In response to multiple criticism of the Kyohaksa textbook, the New Right members and conservative groups refuted the accusations, and insinuated a statement that these complaints were nothing but propaganda from dominant leftist institutions. Professor Yi Myŏnghŭi of Kongju National University, allegedly a member of the New Right and one of authors for the Kyokhaksa textbook, has argued that 10 years of the leftist regime has corrupted every part of South Korean society, and urged both the Blue House and the parliament to interfere in the education system to overthrow a leftist historical representation which seeks to demolish the foundation of the Republic of Korea.\(^{181}\) In addition, he states that leftist coalitions dominate all spheres of society: 70% in education and media, 80% in culture, 90% in private publications, 60% in academia, and 70% in entertainment.\(^{182}\) Professor Yi Yŏnghun from Seoul National University shares a similar perspective that contemporary privately published textbooks “…focus too largely on portraying Syngman Rhee and Park Chung-hee as dictators and nothing more,” and argues that, “Their dictatorships are different from Stalinist and Hitler’s Nazi


\(^{182}\) Ibid.
dictatorships.” Politician and Professor of Myongji University, Cho Jun-hyuk criticizes leftist textbooks for portraying South Korea as a colony of the American Empire, while glorifying the DPRK and its ideology. He firmly believes that the Kyohaksa textbook is the new light to an uneasy past, and argues that Koreans must “… teach our children and the next generation the “real” history of the Republic of Korea with her celebration of success, achievements, and endurance.” In addition, conservatives and far-right radicals stress the need to promote the Kyohaksa textbook as the other 7 textbooks present an antagonistic version against the ROK while subsequently developing cogent arguments to favour the DPRK, including the outbreak of the Korean War. Furthermore, a wide range of right-wing critics claim that these other textbooks have inappropriately or insufficiently offered accounts of North Korea’s provocations, and that they have constrained the accounts of atrocities happening in North Korea.

The range of dissenting opinions in politics has also intensified the nature of this particularly difficult and politicized historical question. The Deputy Spokesperson of Progressive Justice Party, Yi Chian has criticized the result of the official preliminary examination for the Kyohaksa textbook since, according to Yi Chian, the New Right notoriously accuses private publishers for being leftists, while attempting to distort history textbooks just like any other conservatives, including far-right political radicals of Japan. The spokesperson of the Democratic United Party, Pae Chaechŏng shared a similar sentiment by denouncing the screening result of the Kyohaksa textbook, stating that she believed the textbook promoted radical conservative values with a distorted and militarized history of South Korea. Pae Chaechŏng also demanded the

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185 Yi, “Cho Chŏnhyŏk, ‘Ilchegangjŏmgi, Yongŏ, Puk P’ŭrop'aganda Ilch'I.’’
186 Sŏkchae Yu, “Han'guksa Kyogwasŏgat't Chŏngbusurip Ùimi Kyŏk'a” [The Han 'guksa textbooks downgrading the establishment of the South Korean regime], Chosun Ilbo, September 23, 2013. [http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2013/09/23/2013092300204.html?Dep0=twitter&d=2013092300204]
187 Ibid.
189 The party later merged into New Politics Alliance for Democracy in 2014
190 Kang, “Nyurait’ŭ Kyogwasŏ Kŏmjŏng T'onggwa… ‘Yŏksagyogwasŏ Hŭndŭlgi’ Nonjaeng Pon'gyŏk'wadoena?”
Ministry of Education and the National Institute of Korean History to make a “correct” decision over this specific issue prior to the final screening process for all history textbooks by the end of August 2013.\textsuperscript{191}

Perhaps certain aspects of accusations on the Kyohaksa textbook from the dissenting Left, in connection with the controversial Korea’s historical developments, may be valid in a variety of respects. However, many of these accusations have been exaggerated by their relationship with political discourse. On the one hand, the Kyohaksa publication denied groundless accusations of having falsified and distorted historical information, while stating that leftist media have characterized the Kyohaksa textbook of being pro-Japanese by portraying Kim Gu and Ahn Jung-Geun as terrorists and Comfort Women as prostitutes in the textbook.\textsuperscript{192} Altering the concepts in history, with the emphasis of being pro-Japanese, by any publisher regardless of its origin or history, will inevitably face problems both politically and socially: indeed “…Kyohaksa’s accumulated image and reputation has suffered tremendously”\textsuperscript{193} as a result of these accusations. On the other hand, it was later proven that certain negative criticisms and accusations against the Kyohaksa’s textbook have proven to be false. This list could be elaborated on, and perhaps explained thoroughly, but the vital essence of argument is that progressive media like Hankyoreh and Kyonghyang Sinmun have later said that they had actually not read the Kyohaksa’s unpublished history textbook prior to their accusations.\textsuperscript{194} It is only possible to assume that it would be impossible for outside audience to have a chance to read the manuscript of a textbook from the Ministry of Education until it has been finalized and approved by the legal process.\textsuperscript{195}

The political nature of the diverging factions of Left and Right is salient, as both sides accuse one another regardless of particular facts or truth. Beyond the obvious, dissenters are often identified as a destabilizing factor for the “normalization” of textbooks, which in response creates a greater distrust between Left and Right, and strengthens the boundary between them.

\textsuperscript{191} Kang, “Nyurait’ũ Kyogwasŏ Kŏmjŏng Tonggw… ‘Yŏksagyogwasŏ Hŭndŭlgi’ Nonjaeng Pon’gyŏk’wadoena?”
\textsuperscript{192} Yi, “Nyurait’ũ Yŏksagyogwasŏ Nollant’kyohaksa Teohaedat’a.”
\textsuperscript{193} Kang, “Nyurait’ũ Kyogwasŏ Kŏmjŏng Tonggw… ‘Yŏksagyogwasŏ Hŭndŭlgi’ Nonjaeng Pon’gyŏk’wadoena?”
\textsuperscript{194} Yunhyŏng Han, “Nyurait’ũ Kyogwasŏ Chikchŏp Pon’ Saramūn Amudo Ŭpsŏ” [No one has read the ‘New Right Textbook’ yet], Mediaus, June 3, 2013. http://www.mediaus.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=34696
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid.
The nature of certain inherited patterns of political values has encouraged media to express specific attitudes and promotes modes of behaviours to their respective audiences. For example, *Kyonghyang Sinmun*, a progressive news outlet, expressed an opinion on May 31st, 2013 over a specific issue of the expansion of the far-right radicalism with the President Park Geun-hye administration, indirectly suggesting that the President has a connection with the New Right, which largely questioned the political entity of the President.196

Widespread opposition against the President and the Kyohaksa textbook was also fueled by *Hankyoreh*, a progressive news outlet, with a provocation that the textbook had concepts of radical extremisms and prejudicial behaviours.197 The same source also produced a distinctive profile for the Kyohaksa textbook by indicating that the textbook justified military dictatorships of Syngman Rhee and Park Chung-hee for a political purpose, stated by Professor Han Hongkoo from Sungkonghoe University.198 In this aspect of political orientation, the newspaper identifies the Kyohaksa textbook as an instrument of militarized education to revive remnant conservative values through *kukka* nationalism of the recent past.

This commitment to create a distinctive profile for conservatives and the far-right radicals has been widely interpreted as an attempt, arguably, by dissenting leftists and progressives to portray the Right as the anti-*minjok* nationalists who are loyal to fascism. An article from a progressive news outlet, for example, depicts the features of the 2008 New Right’s textbook as a pro-fascist textbook by relabeling the May 16 coup as a revolution, the May 18 Democratic Uprising as the May 18 Gwangju Uprising.199 Korean independence activists like Kim Chwa-chin and Ahn Jung-Geun as terrorists, and Comfort Women as prostitutes.200 Upon investigation of the textbook, many of these accusations were later proven to be incorrect according to the actual textbook.201 It was also later discovered that *Hankyoreh* made a formal apology on September

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196 Han, “‘Nyurait’ŭ Kyogwasŏ’ Chikchŏp Pon Saramŭn Amudo Ŭpsŏ.”
198 Ibid.
199 Although it is alternatively known as the Gwangju Uprising in English, Koreans refer the event as May 18 Gwangju Democratization Movement or Gwangju Populace Movement. The term ‘uprising’ was meant as a ‘rebellion’ in Nocutnews.
200 Han, “‘Nyurait’ŭ Kyogwasŏ’ Chikchŏp Pon Saramŭn Amudo Ŭpsŏ.”
201 Ibid.
16th, 2013 where the newspaper acknowledged errors and falsified information in regards to their earlier accusations and distortions against the Kyohaksa textbook.  

The only part of the “progress” of the normalization of textbooks was collaborations from various activists, intellectuals, historians, and scholars who stumbled through a series of evolving conceptualizations in their task to reconstruct Korean heritage and its history in the widest and most comprehensive sense to satisfy a host of values. It should be noted that the history of Korea is reminiscent of historical disorders, with powers representing centralized political affiliations of whoever is in charge with paternalistic policies prescribed to the populace, and the fact that these representations change based on a regime turnover. If anything, this grumbling about whatever the actual effects of re-education is necessarily undesired to the divergent political prospects. The official purpose of the abolition of the nationalized history textbook was in favour of empowering various interpretations and historiographical analysis through private publications.

In the attempt to develop new national identities, or to restore certain aspects of the past in relation to the present, the government recognized 8 different private publishing houses to publish their respective textbooks for Han’guksa. The course of the textbook development was imposed with a “laudable” goal of ensuring rapid periodization of Korean history with various political values and features. In terms of conceptions of historiographical doctrines, however, the textbook from Kyohaksa remained as a product of the New Right, because of extremely “suspicious” political values that were identified prior to its publication. The tension is almost the simultaneous revival of previously developed conflict—a restoration in the academic writing of history in search of national identities in diverging political fashions.

Determined to teach history correctly, or to rewrite the history in a way to satisfy the masses, the Ministry of Education stated an intention to identify the errors in the textbooks. On October 20th,

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202 Ch'ungchae Yi, “Han'gyôle "Kyohaksa Kyogwasŏe Kūrōn Naeyong Ōpta" Chŏngjŏngbodo” [The Hankyoreh’s correction report, “No such information has been found in the Kyohaksa Textbook”], Dailian, September 16, 2013. http://www.dailian.co.kr/news/view/386663/?sc=naver
203 Kim, “Han'guksa Kyogwasŏ Parhaengch'eje Chŏnggwŏn Immatttara 'Orakkarak.'”
2013 the Ministry declared that all 8 history textbooks contained over 800 errors, and ordered all publishers to make amendments prior to textbook distributions in March 2014, despite the earlier approval by the Ministry of Education on August 2013. In 2014, 1,794 high schools requested new history textbooks but only 20 schools throughout the southern peninsula pledged to use the Kyohaksa textbook. With the political radicalization to overthrow the usage of Kyohaksa textbook, the Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union (KTU) and dissenting groups used various methods to pressure schools to remove the Kyohaksa textbook. In spite of the approval from the Ministry, a coalition of leftist groups warned schools not to purchase the Kyohaksa textbook, and even threatened schools with violence. In addition, parents also displayed desire, either directly or indirectly, for the abolishment of the Kyohaksa textbook for their children, as rumors and the controversial nature of the textbook intensified. In the end, 19 out of 20 schools canceled their request for the Kyohaksa textbook for their Korean history education stating that the textbook represented right-wing extremism. The catastrophic uproar caused by the Kyohaksa textbook subsequently alarmed remaining conservative and far-right radicals as they perceived the event as a second defeat in a contest for reshaping the educational system to represent perspectives other than those held by the Left. Meanwhile, politicians from the conservative Saenuri Party and the Blue House were growing restless, hinting that stricter measures were required to overcome the ideological conflict occurring within the field of history education.

205 Süngryŏl Paek, “Kyoyukpu, Han'guksa Kyogwasŏ 8Chonge Sujŏng'tppowan 829Kŏn Kwŏn'go” [The Ministry of Education issued a recommendation to all 8 Korean history textbook publishers to revise 829 cases], Yohapnews, Oct. 21, 2013. http://www.yonhapnews.co.kr/bulletin/2013/10/21/0200000000AKR20131021173151004.HTML

206 Ch'angyong Sin, “Kyohaksa Kogyo Han'guksa Kyogwasŏ Kŏmjŏngshimŭi Ch'oejong Tonggwa” [Kyohaksa high school Korean history textbook passed the final textbook screening verification], Yonhapnews, August, 30, 2013. http://www.yonhapnews.co.kr/culture/2013/08/30/0914010000AKR20130830058000005.HTML


209 Sin, “Kyohaksa Kogyo Han'guksa Kyogwasŏ Kŏmjŏngshimŭi Ch'oejong Tonggwa.”


212 Šŏnkŏl Kim and Sin Hŏnch'ŏl, “Kyoyukŭn Paengnyŏndaegye, Chalmottoemyŏn Nara Mangch'yŏ” [Education is an investment which spans a hundred years. If it goes wrong, a country is ruined], Maeil Business Newspaper, October 8, 2015. http://news.mk.co.kr/newsRead.php?year=2015&no=964011
The shadows of South Korea’s past remain as strong as ever, even affecting those younger
generations who had personally never experienced either the North Korean or the South Korean
autocratic military dictatorship. However, there are solid personal connections, either through
direct experiences of the older generation, or vicariously through exploration of Korean history
through textbooks. The reconstruction of historical events and incidents of the ROK are
intertwined with political and ideological conflicts in ways that enable younger generations to
adequately trace *kukka* or *kungmin* nationalisms. This has proven to be one of the most
controversial debates in the search for “true” Korean national or nationalistic history, as there has
been no solution to overcome this difficulty. It remains as the past that refuses to pass away as
senses of guilt and pride are contradicting two factions of Left and Right in the search for Korean history.

The following survey, for example, conducted on February 2016 by the Ministry of Patriots and
Veterans Affairs claims that 7 out of 10 South Korean citizens voted to fight for the country in
the event of a war.\textsuperscript{213} The survey was conducted using 1000 random participants from aged 15
and above, 72.1% of whom affirmed their willingness to fight. In addition, the survey reveals
that those in their 50s responded with 83.5% to fight, those in their 60s with 81.5%, but those in
their 20s only responded with 50.7%, and those in their 30s with 59.6% willingness to fight for
their country.\textsuperscript{214} Finally, the survey concludes with a statement that those in their teens to 30s
have shown the lowest enthusiasm; in particular students with higher education credentials tend
to be below the average while a vast majority of Koreans in their 50s and 60s have agreed to
participate for the national cause.\textsuperscript{215} This specific form of nationalism is the very kind which
conservatives, the New Right, and the state demand from *kungmin*.

\textsuperscript{213} Rora O, “*Kungmin 72%, “Chŏnjaengi Nal Kyŏngu Ch'ŏng Tŭlgo Ssaugetta”...20 taenŭn 50% Kajang Naja”*
*[Kungmin 72%, “I will pick up a gun and fight in the event of a war”... 20 Years old have 50%, the lowest of all]*, Chosun Ilbo, March 30, 2016. http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2016/03/30/2016033001377.html
\textsuperscript{214} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{215} Ibid.
In the field of conservative media, however, many netizens\textsuperscript{216} from the \textit{Chosun Ilbo}\textsuperscript{217} found the result unsatisfying.\textsuperscript{218} Most notably, netizens place a vital importance on the notion that the younger generation of people in their 20s and 30s are seen as exceptionally unpatriotic. These netizens, therefore, believe this to be an inevitable threat for the future of the nation.\textsuperscript{219} If there is any truth to this analysis, netizens impose a blame on the current and previous education systems for failing to teach a “correct” history of Korea to students. These netizens, who subscribe the conservative view of historical progress, are convinced that the education system lacks “nationalism” and patriotism as leftists and communists — including members from the Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union (KTU) — have occupied and hindered the indigenous development of South Korean nationalism.\textsuperscript{220} Moreover, the South Korean conservatives promote the perception that Korean history education has failed to help youth to understand and to be inspired by a “true” patriotic Korean history.

The textbook debacle, therefore, became a split between extreme right-wing and extreme left-wing political factions, contesting for the education system to expand their influence and to (de)legitimize the other side with their own versions of nationalism. In the competing interpretations of Korean history and the search for nationalism, the Park administration proposed a dynamic course of action to end preceding conflict over the textbook crisis by returning to a nationalization of all privately published Korean history textbooks in 2015.

\textsuperscript{216} “A user of the Internet, often one who is actively engaged in uncensored online discussions of political and social issues.” (Source: www.dictionary.com)
\textsuperscript{217} The \textit{Chosun Ilbo}, one of the major newspapers in South Korea, is considered as one of the most influential right-wing, conservative news media.
\textsuperscript{218} O, “Kungmin 72%, "Chŏnjaengi Nal Kyŏngu Ch'ong Tūlgo Ssaugetta"…20 taenŭn 50% Kajang Naja.”
\textsuperscript{219} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{220} Ibid.
Chapter 4
Historical Consciousness and National Identities

“Imperfection is in some sort essential to all that we know in life.”

John Ruskin

This thesis cannot fully explain the dynamics of domestic politics of South Korea, or the relative origins of Korean nationalism, but it is necessary to explore some of the reasons for the development of internal division which has sustained its respective system for decades. It is now quite clear that two very opposite political and ideological systems are developed in the Republic of Korea (ROK) over the issue of nationalism found in history textbooks. South Korea, therefore, is divided under (pre)conditions which has much to do with the relationships between South Korea and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). For one thing, conservatives and far-right radicals embrace anticommunism, statism, and *kukka* (state) nationalism as means to protect domestic stability of South Korea. In opposition, leftist dissenters criticize such narrative as a combination of remnant features of the Cold War and apparatus of the autocratic military dictatorial state, and argues that the ROK is built on the wrong foundations without the acknowledgement of *kungmin* (people) nationalism. Both political Left and Right, in different ways and in various reasons, protest against one another in a political contestation and ensure that disagreement, in terms of conceptions of national identity in relation to Korean history, remains within the textbook transformation.

The argument developed by the Right is that the state is already in crisis as a result of a decade under a leftist regime (“the Lost Decade”). At the same time, however, cases of espiages and North Korean threats increasingly challenge the status quo of a divided peninsula. Of course there are certain inherited patterns of conservative values within the argument from the Right as there are indeed acts of espionage happening in South Korea which produce distinctive profiles of the political Left. Politicians from the now-abolished Unified Progressive Party along with numbers of dissenting Left, for example, have been allegedly advocating North Korean
propaganda against the ROK,\(^{221}\) and have been publicizing the satirical term of “Hell Joseon,” which criticizes the overall attitudes, values, and achievements of the ROK. As far as a “left-wing” identity is portrayed in this manner, it offers a controversial view of left-wing nationalism as certain of its features challenge the legitimacy of the South Korean state, while appearing to support the DPRK with its continuing commitment to minjok nationalism and to eventual reunification. In this aspect, many conservatives and dissenters to this specific left-wing nationalism are concerned that younger generations are explicitly taught to ridicule the state, while textbooks promote certain radicalized modes of left-wing behaviours, which only cause sociopolitical disorder and anarchy.\(^{222}\) With this widespread phenomenon, the Right has been advocating the importance of history education for younger generations as left-wing nationalism tend to produce a controversial interpretation against the ROK.

Prior to the phenomenon of the contemporary textbook crisis of 2015, the Ministry of Education and the South Korean state expressed as early as 2014 that a nationalization of history textbooks is an answer to the interventionist nature of the left-wing dissent over the textbook debacle.\(^{223}\) The national inspection was held on October 8\(^{th}\), 2015 in the National Assembly to address the possibility to nationalize all Korean history textbooks, which sparked an extreme variety of disagreements between the Saenuri Party and the New Politics Alliance for Democracy (NPAD).\(^{224}\) A member of the National Assembly, and the Chairman of the Saenuri Party until April 2016, Kim Moo-sung has stated that the unification of history textbooks is impossible to

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\(^{223}\) Hŭikyun Kim, “Chŏngbu Tryŏksagyogwasŏ Kukch’ŏng’gŏtt’ 4Kaebyŏ Palp’yot’10Wŏl Hwakch’ŏng” [The declaration to ‘nationalize history textbook’ with 4 plans by the government will be confirmed by October], *Donga Ilbo*, September 26, 2014. http://news.donga.com/List/3/00000000000098/20140926/66726455/1

\(^{224}\) Renamed as the Minjoo Party of Korea since March 2014.

delay as “…our future cannot be bright if the foundation of our history is weak.” Kim stressed that existing privately published textbooks degrade the ROK’s legitimacy while producing certain profiles to advocate the DPRK, rather than offering the wider spectrum of opinions in history consciousness. Another set of examples has to do with the 2013 Kyohaksa textbook controversy, as the textbook generated distrustful response equated with a form of far-right radicalism. Suh Chung-won, member of the Supreme Council of the Saenuri Party, agrees with Kim Moo-sung on the idea of the provision of one unified textbooks, and states that textbooks should not be the source of division among the Korean people.

If anything, members of the NPAD rejected the advocacy for the nationalization of history textbooks since the state involvement in a textbook production was seemingly a physical symbol of an autocratic dictatorship from the past. The criticisms from the members of the NPAD also characterized a nationalized textbook as a precursor of the autocratic military regime, and argued that the nationalized textbook may distort the history of Korea regarding the Japanese collaborators.

Yi Ch'unsŏk, senior Deputy Leader of the NPAD, criticized the Saenuri Party’s attempt to use the history textbook to “regress to the military regime,” while Yun Kwansŏk, member of the Parliamentary Education, Culture and Tourism Committee, also denounced the textbook reform as the nationalized textbook considered to be a “pro-Japanese textbook, textbooks for President Park Geun-hye, the Yushin textbook.” The range of criticisms against the controversial installment of nationalized history textbooks continued on the same day with Hwang Woo-yea, Minister of Education, and Deputy Prime Minister of South Korea, was brought by politicians from both political parties to the national inspection.

The debate over the issue of nationalization on history textbooks was characterized by a high degree of criticisms by the members of the NPAD, and participants resorted to their political

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226 Sŭngu Yi, Hong Chŏngkyu, and Im Hyŏngsŏp, “‘Kyogwasŏ Kukchŏnghwa' Chŏnggugū Haekŭrot’t’Kungmint'onghap’ vs ‘Yushinbuhwal’ [‘Nationalized textbook’ as the nucleus of the political development… ‘Unification of citizen’ vs ‘Revival of Yushin’], Yonhapnews, October 8, 2015. http://www.yonhapnews.co.kr/bulletin/2015/10/08/0200000000AKR20151008095100001.HTML
227 Ibid.
228 Ibid.
229 Yi, “Kyogwasŏ Kukchŏnghwa’ Chŏnggugū Haekŭrot’t’Kungmint'onghap’ vs ‘Yushinbuhwal’.”
230 Yi, “Kyogwasŏ Kukchŏnghwa’ Chŏnggugū Haekŭrot’t’Kungmint'onghap’ vs ‘Yushinbuhwal’.”
231 Kyoyungmunhwach'eyukkwan'gwangwiwŏnhoe
232 Yi, “Kyogwasŏ Kukchŏnghwa’ Chŏnggugū Haekŭrot't’Kungmint'onghap’ vs ‘Yushinbuhwal’.”
positions rather than achieving rational arguments. Yu Ŭnhye, member of the NPAD, asked the Minister of Education if the President is ultimately seeking to restore the legacy of Park Jung-hee, father of President Park Geun-hye, through the nationalized history textbooks. Sŏl Hun, member of the NPAD, also criticized the nationalized history textbook as the expansion of fascism. Pae Chaechŏng, member of the same party, stated that the President Park’s father achieved a military coup d’état while the President Park seek for another coup in history education. Politician Yu Int'ae of the NPAD, who also professed empathy with leftist arguments, paralleled the nationalized history textbook with the educational strategy of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan.

The national inspection on October 8th, 2015 in the National Assembly had proven to be futile as opposing parties simply claimed a justified superiority over the issue of the textbook. The Minister of Education responded to spurious criticisms that the President ordered to produce a “correct” history textbook, and elaborated the impossibility of the Ministry of Education to produce a textbook which neither distorts the Japanese collaborators nor advocates on behalf of the ROK’s past dictatorships. Minister Hwang reassured the Ministry’s neutral position, and stated that, “the government is not seeking to impose a certain type of ideology. The government’s goal is to develop balanced materials based on facts and Constitutional values. We are working with experts and authors to that end.”

The Saenuri Party also reiterated the government’s position over the state-authored single history textbook and accused the main opposition party for making, “unnecessary controversies’ that cause social division.” Kim Moo-sung, for example, stressed the importance to foster a “correct” view of history, and thus essential for the Saenuri Party “to win the education war.” It was reported by Kim Moo-sung that “90% of contemporary Korean history scholars have

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233  Chang, “Yŏksa Gwaetdoet K’udet’a’ vs ‘Yŏksa Kyunhyŏngjapki… Kyogwast’ Chŏnjaengt’ŏ Toen Kukkam.”
234  Ibid.
235  Ibid.
237  Ibid.
switched to the political Left,“239 and that contemporary Korean history textbooks by private publishers placed strenuous efforts to change the content of education in school to restructure the legacy of the ROK. Ahn Hong Joon, member of the Saenuri Party criticized the NPAD for abusing historically sensitive terms like “coup” while Yun Jaeok argued that the widespread rumor with the connection between the nationalized history textbook and President’ Park’s attempt to restore her father’s legacy was simply a misunderstanding and misinterpretation.240 Legislator Pak Taech’ul also rebuked criticisms against the nationalized textbook by underlining the importance of “accurate” history education, as students were vulnerable to school teachers imposing pro-North Korean sentiments.241

The only part of the process in which the Saenuri Party and the NPAD collaborated was that both sides disagreed on one another over the guilt of Korea’s past, as well as that of the Korean government under the military and progressive regimes. The state and many political figures of the past were replaced, and even expelled, but many individuals of both extreme political Left and Right factions argued for an idea that it was essential to punish those guilty of sustaining either military and progressive regimes. By no means unimportant, left-wing conceptions of national identity are often persecuted with its controversial connection to the DPRK. While it is highly controversial to justify all left-wing agenda as North Korea propaganda, this allegation is amplified on a variety by right-wing factions focusing on the accumulation of aspects of pro-North Korean commitments happening within South Korea. The recent abolition of the Unified Progressive Party in 2013 due to its party members alleged involvement in the sabotage plot against the ROK, for example, was considered as a left-wing movement by which the political Right endorsed.242 Uncomfortable facts and eye-witness evidence of alleged accounts of deeds committed in favour of North Korea in the ROK had been found in a range of society, which increasingly gave rise to concern, including the importance of educating a younger generation to hamper the imburement of North Korean communism at various of levels. A member of the Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union (KTU), for example, was arrested for breaking

239 An, “Kim musŏng ‘Olbarŭn Kyoyuk Wihae Yŏksajŏnjaengsŏ Pandŭshi Sŭngni.’”
240 Chang, “Yŏksa Gwaetdoet K’udet’a’ vs ‘Yŏksa Kyunhyŏngjapki… Kyogwasŏ Chŏnjaengt’ŏ Toen Kukkam.”
241 Ibid.
the National Security Act for conducting a memorial ceremony to honour and glorify North Korean partisans with 180 middle-school students and their parents.\textsuperscript{243}

With this threat of a transformation of South Korean society, major efforts were devoted by certain population to the radical right-wing nationalism. For example, this allegedly “left-wing” nationalism was an indicative commitment to North Korean communist ideals, an attempt to overthrow certain rooted socioeconomic conditions of South Korea. Once this principle of distinction was accepted by those who share subsequent representations on leftists, the problem arose with the characteristic features of political Left. There are indeed those who wish to distinguish between real North Korean spies and leftists, but after appropriate fear having been motivated by right-wing sentiments, the question refocuses itself to an immense cycle of justifiability of either political factions.

The unmanageable differences over the textbook debate has ultimately led to the declaration of a government-issued single history textbook. The government’s decision to retake control of the publication of history textbooks was finalized on October 11\textsuperscript{th}, 2015 between the President Park’s administration and the Saenuri Party, followed by the official declaration to abolish all textbooks from private publishers on October 13\textsuperscript{th}, 2015 by Minister Hwang Woo-yea.\textsuperscript{244} The declaration led to immense political and social strife with dissenting population offering assorted criticisms, including that this represented a restoration of South Korea’s Yushin era. Park Hye-ja, member of the Supreme Council of the Democratic Party, condemned the declaration to nationalize history textbooks as an act of a 2\textsuperscript{nd} military coup d’état in South Korea as early as 2014 prior to the official declaration to the nationalization of history textbooks.\textsuperscript{246} A news article from a progressive newspaper, \textit{The Hankyoreh}, titled, “A funeral for history education, and

\textsuperscript{243} Ch’angkon Kim, “Ppalch’isan Ch’umojee Hakaengdŭl Teryŏgan Chŏn Jupchŏn’gyojo Kyosa, P’agihwanssongshim “P’yohyŏn Chayu Han’gye Nŏmōtta” [A previous KTU teacher who took students to a memorial ceremony of North Korean partisans lost the court case under the notion of breaking the limits of freedom of expression], \textit{Chosun Ilbo}, October 1, 2013. http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2013/10/01/2013100100087.html?Dep0=twitter&d=2013100100087

\textsuperscript{244} Chaehyŏn No, “Kukchŏnggyogwasŏ Øttŏk’e Parhaengdoelkkat’chŏngch’akkkaji Nan’gwan Sanjŏk” [How will the government-issued single history textbook publish…It’s difficult quest to reach a settlement], \textit{Yonhapnews}, October 9, 2015. http://www.yonhapnews.co.kr/bulletin/2015/10/09/0200000000AKR20151009026400004.HTML


\textsuperscript{246} Kang, “Minjoo Pak Hyecha, ‘Pak Chŏnghŭi, Pak Kŭnhye, Pu’k’anŭi Kong’ongjŏmŭn Kukchŏnggyogwasŏt’che2ŭi Yŏksa’k’udet’a’ Pinan.”
democracy, in central Seoul,” illustrated a wide range of criticisms by individuals against the declaration.\(^{247}\) Another article from the same news outlet also condemned the government’s ever-increasing control over different sections of society, and questioned whether the aim was to restore the remnant Yushin features or to expound the tenets of right-wing nationalism.\(^{248}\)

The Institution of Minjok Studies (Minjongmunjeūnyŏn'guso) also criticized the government’s declaration as the actual effects of fascism, and stated that no developed countries use a government-produced single history textbook other than Russian, Vietnam, and the DPRK.\(^{249}\) 160 professors from Korea University explicitly expressed their condemnation by signing a petition to abolish the state-issued history textbook, as they argued that the textbook symbolized a retreat in democratic values.\(^{250}\) A public poll conducted by the Ministry of Education on the issue of nationalization of history textbook revealed that 152,805 individuals voted to favour the government-issued single history textbook, whereas 321,075 expressed what appears to be condemnations.\(^{251}\) Another result of a survey was released by the NPAD in which only 44% of respondents voted in favour and 48.1% against the designated textbooks.\(^{252}\) A private survey conducted by legislator Kim Tae Nyeon of the NPAD also offered a similar attitude with over 24,000 of respondents made of middle and high school teachers, representing 78% of all relevant teachers, voting against the state-produced textbooks.\(^{253}\) There is also considerable evidence of condemnations among international scholars, including Bruce Cumings who stated that,


\(^{249}\) “Manhwarŏ Han'guksa Kukchŏnggyogwasŏ Pandaejyu.”


\(^{252}\) Lee, “History textbooks: a ruling party gamble that could backfire.”

\(^{253}\) No, “Kukchŏnggyogwasŏ Ŭttŏk'e Parhaengdoelkkat'chŏngch'akkkaji Nan'gwan Sanjŏk.”
“Imagine Donald Trump deciding what should be in a history textbook—it would end up as a comic book.”

A number of concerns, questions, and condemnations on the government-issued single history textbook, or the nationalized history textbook, remains problematic even after the formal declaration of commitment to “…foster students’ accurate view of history” by President Park.

A survey revealed that 2850 of respondents voted in favour of the nationalization of history textbook, whereas 1749 out of 4599 members of the Korean Federation of Teachers’ Associations voted against the reform. A different poll conducted by Gallup Korea 42% of participants voted in favour of the nationalized history textbook while 42% voted in disfavour.

The Park administration and the Saenuri Party have vowed to insulate against the leftist domination in history education, among others, conservatives and the New Right have also pledged to overthrow a “tainted” version of history. In a letter to the Editor of the New York Times, Gheewhan Kim, the Consul General of the Republic of Korea in New York, made a statement to defend the government’s decision to nationalize history textbooks:

…the textbooks have been subject of incessant controversy because they were ideologically biased and contained factual errors. The initiative we are undertaking is an effort to rectify the problems, not to pursue a political goal…In short, the South Korean government remains fully committed to democratic values and the rule of law.

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255 Do, “Park stresses ‘accurate’ history education.”


The former 32nd Governor of Gyeonggi Province and politician of the Saenuri Party, Kim Moon-soo articulated that history textbooks should inculcate nationalism in students. The emphasis he made was a desire to offer confidence to a younger generation, as South Korea, one of the poorest countries in the world for over a decade following the Korean War, became the 11th largest economy in the world. Kim stressed the essentiality of self-esteem and patriotism to the state as a source for young generations to be inspired for their success. Apart from the need to reform the contemporary education system, Kim endorsed the notion to overthrow leftist elements, including Kim Il-sung’s Juche ideology of North Korea, as rooted in history textbooks. Kim Jung-bae, the Chairman of the National Institute of Korean History, stated that controversies surrounding the government-issued single history textbook were false while stressing the need to install conceptions of patriotism for younger generations. Many other conservatives and right-wing radicals also share a similar sentiment, and are imbued with right-wing nationalism in a variety of ways as the bases of countering “North Korean” progressivism by South Korean leftists.

Views of the past remain diverse as different formations of political culture promote their respective views of a national identity. A new desire and willingness to confront the past through history textbooks caused particular political and ideological aspirations in shaping popular patterns and perceptions of history. Given South Korea’s extreme intimacy with both communism and anticommunism, the questions were unavoidable—what sort of “proper” nationalism is there for Koreans, are North Koreans the same as South Koreans in form of ethnicity—minjok? The dismantling of Korean history, with many participants mounting pressures from within, has posed considerable problems for Koreans. It has come to a point where it seems almost impossible to engage with rational arguments in this competing (re)interpretations of a controversial concept of “nationalism.” Is it possible, then, to find a

260 Ibid.
261 Kŭm, “Kim Munsu Chŏn Kyŏnggijissa Int’ŏbyu Chŏnmun.”
conclusion on this search for “true” Korean nationalism with a single narrative of Korean history?
Conclusion

“Life is a tragedy when seen in close-up, but a comedy in long-shot.”

Sir Charles Spencer “Charlie” Chaplin

Undoubtedly, it is clear that there are no simple methods to determine Korean national identity, and the way to change Korean national history, or nationalism, is immensely complex with cultural, political, moral, ideological, and historical elements involved. The division of South Korea, by political Left and Right, has sparked an immense collision in the reshaping of the political, social, and historical attitudes, systems, and values of the Republic of Korea (ROK) with the idea of kukka (state) and minjok/kungmin (people). The dismantling of the Japanese colonialism, military dictatorship, and progressive regimes inaugurated questions, issues and (re)interpretations on the legacy of the ROK and its people. There is the key issue of political, social, and intellectual dissents and oppositions over the issue of Korean history education as both Left and Right, including the Korean parliamentary parties, attempt to proliferate movements of support with a wider populace based on their political values. There has been a variety of ways to contain and isolate dissent from both factions, including portraying these dissenters as pro-Japanese fascists or pro-North Korean communists. For a variety of reasons, radical political movements of South Korea by Left and Right has affected patterns of historical consciousness for decades. Clearly, a particular mechanical formula was involved in the (re)construction of Korean history, which has been often resulted in disagreement between the Left and Right about how history is presented.

A twist to the problem of this consciousness is that any overview of Korean history is often defined by particular positions of both Right and Left. Any narrative account is based on relative factors of kukka and kungmin nationalisms, as castigating one or other has the potential to achieve the legitimacy of the ROK, particularly with South Korea’s origin. The precondition for

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263 Arguably, the concept of minjok evolves into kungmin with the introduction of a democratic regime in South Korea.
legitimacy appears to have a remarkable implication to justify either controversial fascism or progressivism, along with all of its atrocities and legacies of the past. However unjust the approach may be, it has been, in many respects, a continuation of the previous method to achieve a certain, but particular, historical interpretation as an attribution and allocation of blame in the historical outcome. Proponents of “distorted” versions of history, for example, has been embarking a variety of political and ideological values to offer a cogent version of their explanation in the development of South Korea in terms of failures and successes.

But can anyone in fact define a “proper” national identity or nationalism? There has been both broad and exaggerated structural distortions to determine Korea’s history with the emphasis on excessive militarism or progressivism—and South Korea is not the only one. As a matter of fact, South Korea’s northern neighbour, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), has been romanticizing Kim Jong-un, the current leader of North Korea. The fabricated “legacies” of Kim Jong-un are found in North Korean history textbooks, as these textbooks devote its vigorous, and controversy, focus for long-term impacts of loyalty and respect to the leader from younger generations. Nevertheless, it appears to be imperfect with the North Korean “utopian” education system as students, according to a news article, tend to scribble, or even damage, on portraits of Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un in textbooks. While this is clearly not the comprehensive example of Korea’s historiography, the field itself is unique and controversy.

The recent 2015 declaration to nationalize history textbooks has generated extreme forms of opposition, particularity within South Korea, where particular criticisms were made to prevent the state’s direct involvement in the (re)construction of a national profile. In the end, the resulting political divide is preserved regardless of whether the textbooks are from either private publishers or from the state. The cost, however, is that these extreme experiments would impose a tremendous financial burden to the state, and eventually to citizens, as new textbooks only last


266 Cho, “Puk, Haksaengdŭri Naksŏhaikkabwa Kyogwasŏesŏ Kimssi Ilga Sajin Modu Ŭpsae.”
for 2 to 4 years. Furthermore, these state-issued single history textbooks will be available starting in 2017, which provide a year for the national committees to produce a textbook, which will inevitably recreate the widespread chaos once again. The extraordinary success and stability of South Korea, the fact that South Korea became wealthy and powerful with its people achieving democracy, justice, and liberal values, is the true source of pride in the history of the Republic of Korea, but this is forgotten in this political drama.

After the May 16 Military coup d’état in 1961, drinking coffee was considered unpatriotic because it did not benefit the South Korea’s feeble economy. In 2015, reading from the wrong history textbook has become the new drinking coffee: a signal of one’s treachery to the ROK. Perhaps the greatest irony is the fact that high school students largely ignore existing school curriculum and textbooks. Instead, they turn to broadcasts and textbooks from Educational Broadcasting System (EBS), which offer a far greater knowledge for students to pass the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT or Suneung). It has also been widely demonstrated in South Korea that high school students would rather sleep in school as they prefer to study by programs offered by EBS or private tutoring.

For more than half a century, South Korea has been divided in a contest to win the education conflict in search for Korea’s “true” nationalism. Of course there are other set of factors which have not appeared in this project. But for a variety of reasons, dissenters of both Right and Left were able to proliferate their respective approaches, providing a foundation to pressure on the regime and the people. The very reality, however, is that actual soldiers of this ideological war, Korean youths, who will be using these textbooks are insensitive to this drama. For the time being, the search for “true” historical accounts will continue in South Korea. Herein lies the paradox—who is this search for history really for? Uncovering this answer is even more

267 Bang, 290.
268 Myonghwan Kim, “Köp’inûn Sach’i”… Chôngbyŏn Tlaemada Toensŏri… 5.16 Hu Hanttæ Modŭn Tabangsŏ P’anmaegŏmjî” [“Coffee is a luxury” …Coffee suffering a bitter blow during the political upheaval…Coffee was even briefly banned in coffee shops after the May 16 Coup], Chosun Ilbo, April 6, 2016. http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2016/04/05/2016040503525.html
awkward and controversial than the political game, but it is the only source of “true” Korean national history.
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