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The Abe Cabinet - An Ideological Breakdown 安倍内閣　所属団体を通してのイデオロギー的分析

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Children and Textbooks Japan Network 21

Translation and explanations of Diet groups by Matthew Penney

"Children and Textbooks Japan Network 21" is a NGO formed in 1998 to resist historical revisionism and fight the removal of material critical of Japan's war record from textbooks.

PM Abe and other LDP members tend to present a moderate "economy first" face on television and during election campaigns. In order to spread awareness of some of the extreme ideas held by key conservatives and the changes that they wish to make to Japanese education and ideas of citizenship, Network 21 has prepared a list of the various Diet groups to which members of the current Abe Cabinet belong. Following the list is description and discussion of the Diet groups and their key positions on such issues as Constitutional revision, Yasukuni Shrine, war responsibility and war atrocities, the comfort women, North Korea, and citizenship that clarify the core political principles of the Abe administration.

The Abe Cabinet:

Abe Shinzo (Prime Minister) – History, Japan (Vice Secretary), Textbooks (Adviser), Shinto (Head of General Affairs), Yasukuni, Constitution Revision, New Constitution (Adviser), Japan Rebirth, North Korea Kidnap Victims (Adviser), Comfort Women Ad, Parents and Education (Chair)

Aso Taro (Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Financial Services) – Japan (Special Advisor), Shinto, Yasukuni, Fundamental Education Law Reform (Adviser), Constitutional Revision, New Constitution, Japan Rebirth (Committee Member), North Korea Kidnap Victims (Adviser)

Shindo Yoshitaka (Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications) – Textbooks, Yasukuni, Constitutional Revision, Japan Rebirth (Assistant Secretary General), Comfort Women Ad

Tanigaki Sadakazu (Minister of Justice) – History, Japan (Adviser), Shinto, Yasukuni, New Constitution

Kishida Fumio (Minister of Foreign Affairs) – History, Japan, Textbooks, Shinto

Shimomura Hakubun (Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) – Japan (Secretary General), Textbooks, Shinto, Yasukuni, Fundamental Education Law Reform (Committee Head), Parents and Education (General Affairs Director), Constitutional Revision, New Constitution, Japan Rebirth (Vice Chair), Nikkyoso, Proper Japan

Tamura Norihisa (Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare) – Japan, Shinto, Yasukuni

Hayashi Yoshimasa (Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries) – Shinto, Yasukuni, Constitutional Revision, New Constitution

Motegi Toshimitsu (Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry) – Japan, Shinto, Yasukuni, Constitutional Revision

Ota Akihiro (Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism; Komeito) – Constitutional Revision

Ishihara Nobuteru (Minister of the Environment) – Shinto, Constitutional Revision, New Constitution (Vice Chair), Japan Rebirth (Committee Member)

Onodera Itsunori (Minister of Defense) – Japan, Yasukuni, Japan Rebirth (Committee Member)

Nemoto Takumi (Head of the Reconstruction Agency) – Japan, Textbooks, Shinto, Yasukuni

Furuya Keiji (National Public Safety Commissioner) – Japan (Vice Chair), Textbooks, Shinto, Yasukuni, Fundamental Education Law Reform (Committee Chair), Nikkyoso, Constitutional Revision, Japan Rebirth (Delegate Chair), China Memorial Photographs Protest (Vice Chair), Proper Japan, Protest American Comfort Women Resolution, North Korea Kidnap Victims (Secretary General), Comfort Women Ad

Amari Akira (Minister of State for Economic and Fiscal Policy) – Japan, Shinto, Yasukuni, Constitutional Revision

Yamamoto Ichita (Minister of State for Okinawa and Northern Territories Affairs) – Textbooks (Assistant Head of General Affairs),

Shinto, Yasukuni, Constitutional Revision, New Constitution, Japan Rebirth (Head of General Affairs), North Korea Kidnap Victims (Assistant Secretary)

Inada Tomomi (Minister of State for Regulatory Reform) – Japan, Textbooks, Yasukuni, New Constitution, Japan Rebirth, Proper Japan (Head of General Affairs), Nanking, China Memorial Photographs Protest (Head of General Affairs), Comfort Women Ad, North Korea Kidnap Victims (Secretary General)

Mori Masako (Minister of State for Measures for Declining Birthrate) – Nikkyoso

Suga Yoshihide (Chief Cabinet Secretary) – Japan (Vice Chair), Textbooks, Shinto Yasukuni, Constitutional Revision, Japan Rebirth (Vice Chair)

Major groups with number (out of 19) and percentage of affiliated cabinet ministers:

Japan – 13 (68.4%)

Textbooks – 9 (47.4%)

Shinto – 14 (73.7%)

Yasukuni – 15 (78.9%)

Constitutional Revision – 12 (63.2%)

New Constitution – 8 (42.1%)

Japan Rebirth – 10 (52.6%)

Group Profiles:

History: 自民党歴史検討委員会 (*Jimintou rekishi kentou iinkai* – Liberal Democratic Party Committee for Historical Investigation)

This group was formed in 1993 with Abe Shinzou, then a rookie politician, as a key member. Its formation came after controversies over Japanese apologies and statements of contrition such as the Kono Statement on the comfort women system and Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro's general apology to victims of Japanese aggression (both in 1993) and a shift in textbook content toward the inclusion of more material critical of Japan's war record. The group became a key part of the conservative backlash against what they call "masochistic" history. The central assertion of the group is that the "Greater East Asia War" was not a war of aggression but rather a war to free Asia from Euro-American imperialism.

In 1995, to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of the war, the group edited a book entitled *Daitoua sensou no soukatsu* (A Summary Account of the Greater East

Asia War, Tendensha, 1995), for which conservative scholars and pundits, including individuals like Nanking Massacre denier Tanaka Masaaki, contributed essays. Members of the group have consistently suggested that the history of Japanese war crimes (especially the comfort women system and the Nanking Massacre) has been heavily or completely falsified and that a "true" historical record is needed. Abe and others have frequently asserted that politicians should stay out of historiographical debates, which should be left to historians. They then hand pick historians such as Tanaka or journalists and pundits outside of academia who do not submit their work to peer review such as Sono Ayako and Sakurai Yoshiko, as "representative" historians.

Japan: 日本会議国会議員懇談会 (*Nippon kaigi kokkai giin kondankai* – Diet Representative 'Japan Conference' Round-Table)

This group is the political wing of the Nippon Kaigi (The Japan Conference). Formed in 1997, the Nippon Kaigi organization has a broad membership outside the political center and claims over 30,000 members. When critics talk of Abe's "conservative base", this is what they mean. The website is here.

Overall, the group is dedicated to popularizing conservative ideas – constitutional revision, moral education, the centrality of the imperial family in Japanese history and culture, and respect for the flag and anthem. They have published a range of books and pamphlets which show the organization's basic ideological commitments including *Jugun ianfu kyousei renkou ha nakatta* (The Military Comfort Women Were Not Forced, 2011).

The group is particularly concerned with promoting "respect" for the imperial family and "2000 years of imperial history" and is one of the primary agents for promoting attendance at marches and events on National Foundation Day – the February 11 commemoration of the ascension of the mythical Emperor Jimmu to the throne. They are also active on a number of related issues including strong opposition to female imperial succession and parts of the broader conservative agenda such as constitutional revision.

Textbooks: 日本の前途と歴史教科書を考える議員の会 (*Nippon no zento to rekishi kyokasho wo kangaeru giin no kai* – Diet Member Group for Considering Japan's Future and History Textbooks)

A group of revisionist Diet members who press for the elimination of "masochistic history" (critical engagement with Japanese war crimes) from textbooks and the cultivation of "patriotic values" in schools. They wish to see the Nanking Massacre and comfort women dropped from textbooks and argue that there is no evidence that Japanese troops forced Okinawan civilians to commit mass suicide. The group oversaw the publication of the book *Nankin no jissou* (The Truth of Nanking, Nisshin Houdou, 2008) which asserts that mass killings and rapes did not take place at Nanking in 1937.

The group's 2008 "investigation" of the Nanking Massacre is available here as a Word document in Japanese. In it, the editors describe films and documentaries about the tragedy shown in the United States as "propaganda" that "… is not only an insult to the honor and dignity of past Japanese but at present and into the future puts forward the idea that the Japanese are the cruelest race in the world…." For members of the group and revisionists more broadly, the Nanking Massacre and similar war crimes are examples of violence that if "true" would be a stain on the Japanese race and culture. Individual or organizational responsibility is negated by the fundamental assumption that history unfolds from an ethno-cultural essence that must be defended by right thinking conservatives. With this assumption in the background, it appears that revisionists would have no choice but to deny war crimes even if they believed the historical accounts to be true so as to spare all Japanese past and present from shouldering collective responsibility. Along these lines, struggles over textbook content are seen as a form of struggle for Japan's soul.

Shinto: 神道政治連盟国会議員懇談会 (*Shintou seiji renmei kokkai giin kondankai* – Shinto Political Alliance Diet Member's Roundtable)

This group is dedicated to "restoring Japanese-ness" by promoting Shinto values. They oppose female imperial succession, promote official visits by prime ministers to Yasukuni Shrine, and oppose the construction of a non-religious site of war commemoration and the 'removal' of the spirits of war criminals from Yasukuni, push for constitutional revision and patriotic and moral education, oppose free trade of agricultural products because of what they describe as traditional ties between rice cultivation and Shinto, oppose giving permanent residents the right to vote in local elections and the sale of forest land, water resources, or 'important property' to foreigners, and oppose separate family names for married couples and "gender free education" which they see as examples of support for equality between the sexes gone too far.

Yasukuni: みんなで靖国神社に参拝する議員の会 (*Minna de Yasukuni Jinjya ni sanpai suru giin no kai* – Association of Diet Members for Worshiping at Yasukuni Shrine Together)

As the name suggests, this is a group of Diet members who vow to visit Yasukuni Shrine each year on August 15. The group was founded in 1981 although it has fractured and been reformed several times since. In the last five years, between 40 and 50 Diet members have visited Yasukuni as a group to mark the anniversary of the end of the war. Discussion of Yasukuni's meaning and the controversies which surround it take place in other forums such as the *Shintou seiji renmei kokkai giin kondankai*.

Constitutional Revision: 憲法調査推進議員連盟 (*Kenpou chousa suishin giin renmei* – Diet Member Alliance for Promoting the Assessment of a New Constitution)

A Diet group formed on the fiftieth anniversary of the postwar constitution in 1997 to press for constitutional revision. It includes members from multiple parties. Key goals include the overturn of Article 9 (the "peace clause") to allow for "collective self-defense" which critics hold could open a path to unrestricted brinksmanship and Japanese participation in America's wars. The push for constitutional revision, long a cornerstone of the Japanese conservative platform, has been detailed in English-language scholarship and in the *Asia-Pacific Journal* many times. For background on the revision movement, see John Junkerman, Gavan McCormack, and David McNeill's "Japan's Political and Constitutional Crossroads". **New Constitution** (新憲法制定議員同盟 – *Shinkenpou seitei giin doumei* – Diet Member Alliance for Enacting a New Constitution) is a similar group devoted to constitutional revision. It traces its roots to the 1955 自主憲法期成議員同盟 (*Jishu kenpou kisei giin doumei* – Diet Member Alliance for Promoting Our Own Constitution). At present, the *Kenpou chousa suishin giin renmei* is the larger and more influential group although many Diet members who favor constitutional revision belong to both.

Japan Rebirth: 創生「日本」(*Sousei Nippon* – Japan Rebirth)

A Diet group formed in 2007. Members pledge to "protect Japanese traditions and culture", "rethink the postwar order", and "protect Japan's national interests and make Japan a country respected by international society". They have hosted lectures by rightist pundits and authors such as Sakurai Yoshiko and Fujiwara Masahiko. After the ouster of the LDP from power, the group publically accused the Democratic Party of manifesting "socialistic and totalitarian tendencies". They pledged to stand against DPJ proposals to allow husbands and wives to have different surnames – something that the group argued would undermine "family togetherness" – and moves to allow permanent residents to vote in local elections, part of a larger pattern of assertions by conservative lawmakers that foreigners in Japan are neither loyal nor committed to the Japanese state and undermine the social order. The group has a limited web presence and seems to have had difficulty establishing a clear identity as many of its assertions on history, culture, and contemporary society are already covered by more focused Diet member groups. The group's "assertions" page is still under construction.

Fundamental Education Law Reform: 教育基本法改正促進委員会 (*Kyouiku kihonhou kaisei sokushin iinkai* – Committee for Promoting Reform of the Fundamental Education Law)

The Fundamental Law of Education is the core legal foundation for Japan's education system. Conservatives are seeking to alter the law and Japan's educational foundation to introduce "moral" education, bring more "patriotism" into schools, eliminate "masochistic" history, and create a more "competitive" educational environment. The problems with Abe's very rigid understanding of nation and patriotism are evident in assertions that education should aim to "… give students pride in being born Japanese." He ignores the fact that there are hundreds of thousands (or more) of children of different nationalities or mixed national and ethnic heritage in Japanese schools. Abe claims that a fundamental principle of education should be, "You need to have pride if you are going to be respected by the world." Statements such as these, seemingly innocent clichés on their own, are tied to the historical revisionist project. "Proper" history "full of pride", not rigorous and critical engagement with the darker side of Japan's history, is what he believes will win Japan respect from "the world" and education should be reformed to support this. Statements and proposals such as these have been roundly critiqued by scholars, educators, and activists. See here for Adam Lebowitz and David McNeill's "Hammering Down the Educational Nail: Abe Revises the Fundamental Law of Education" and here for Tawara Yoshifumi's critique of Abe's push for curriculum reform "The Hearts of Children: Morality, Patriotism, and the New Curricular Guidelines".

North Korea Kidnap Victims: 北朝鮮に拉致された日本人を早期に救出するために行動する議員連盟 (*Kita Chousen ni rachi sareta Nipponjin wo souki kyuushutsu suru tame ni koudou suru giin renmei* – Alliance of Diet Members for Acting Toward the Fast Rescue of Japanese Victims Kidnapped by North Korea)

This is a group of Diet members that has pledged to block any efforts to normalize relations between Japan and North Korea until the issue of kidnappings of Japanese citizens is "resolved". The group assumes that a large number of kidnap victims are alive in North Korea and "resolution" is defined as the return of these individuals to Japan. The group has advocated using economic and political sanctions to put pressure on North Korea. Wada Haruki has described this position as leading to "a dangerous stalemate". Sanctions have proven ineffective and the stance that Abe and other members of the "rescue" Diet member group have taken, Wada and other critics argue, has only served to ensure that profitable dialogue cannot possibly take place. Thanks to this group and particularly to the hard line toward North Korea that Abe took as Koizumi Junichiro's Chief Cabinet Secretary in 2005-2006, there is no way that Japan can "rescue" kidnap victims who may or may not be in North Korea (the NK government asserts that all survivors have returned to Japan) and there can be no dialogue either. The issue is effectively frozen along with Japan-NK relations.

Proper Japan: 正しい日本を創る会 (*Tadashii Nippon wo tsukurukai* – Association for Building a Proper Japan)

Much of contemporary conservative discourse in Japan is based around the idea that the country has "gone wrong". This is blamed on America and the "foreign-authored" constitution, consumerism, supposedly shiftless young people, "anti-Japanese" conspiracies to undermine national pride, women out of place (as in any place but the home), and other supposed betrayals of the traditional Japanese ethos. The "Proper Japan" group was formed in 2006. According to Fukuya Keiji, a key founding member and currently Abe's National Public Safety Commissioner, the group was created to bring together in a single forum discussions that were happening separately on constitutional revision, the Fundamental Law on Education, Yasukuni, North Korea kidnap victims, and other themes. It is essentially a space for discussion of key conservative ideas under a rhetoric umbrella of national crisis. Rightwing publishing house PHP has produced a book entitled *Nippon no seidou* (Japan's True Path, 2007) that credits the group as a collective co-author and includes contributions by members. The cover condemns "mistaken views of history". They wish to alleviate the fears of the people by "… sharing in Japan and abroad the true facts of history and correct historical awareness different from the mistaken 'Tokyo Trial Historical View' in order to give Japan a clear vision of its future." (p. 3) This is a typical turn in conservative rhetoric with everything from rising youth crime rates (a conservative myth - youth crime was far more prevalent in the 1950s) to Japan's economic malaise (which apparently has nothing to do with long ruling conservatives) blamed on "views of history". A "correct" understanding of the past would consist of knowledge that Japan has been a victim, first of Euro-American aggression, then of false history which was invented as part of the Tokyo Trial to rob Japan of national pride and martial spirit and force subservience to America, and then by an international conspiracy by Chinese and Koreans to invent war crimes in order to undermine Japan's position in East Asia. If Japanese young people only knew this, it is held, social order and the economy would be restored. For the far right, historical revisionism, at least in their favored rhetorical construction, is fundamental to national survival.

In terms of specific policies, the group is in favor of official visits to Yasukuni Shrine by prime ministers and opposes the building of any non-religious commemorative site. They describe the unbroken line of emperors as "unique in world history" and wish to make awareness of the imperial institution's "historical and cultural importance" a central part of public life. The kidnapping of Japanese citizens by North Korean agents is described by the group as an example of "state sponsored terrorism" (here, the word "terror" is simply a code for "evil", the kidnappings were carried out in secret). Rather than a plan to move toward normalization of relations with North Korea in order to resolve the kidnapping issue, they argue that there should be no normalization until the kidnapping issue is resolved. They point to economic sanctions as a way to achieve a resolution (with no concrete details on what a resolution would consist of or how sanctions are supposed to achieve this). They single out "gender free education" and separate family names for spouses as practices which they believe will have a harmful effect on society and should be resisted.

China Memorial Photographs Protest: 中国の抗日記念館から不当な写真の撤去を求める国会議員の会 (*Chuugoku no kounichi kinenkan kara futou na shashin no tekkyo wo motomeru kokkai giin no kai* – Association of Diet Members for Demanding that China Remove Defamatory Photographs from the War of Resistance Against Japan Memorial Hall)

A group that intends to pressure China to remove photographs from its war museums that members hold to have been faked or altered. Japanese authors seeking to minimize or deny the Nanking atrocities have made a strong case that several photographs are indeed fakes (see, Higashikuni, et al., *Nankin jiken 'shouko shashin' wo kenshou suru*, 2005) but they and the Diet member group go much further in suggesting that all photographs which represent Japanese war crimes are nothing more than propaganda and should be banned.

Nanking:

Supporters of the 2008 documentary film *Nankin no shinjitsu* (The Truth of Nanking) directed by rightwing media producer and Channel Sakura chief Mizushima Satoru. The first part is available online here:

The film and associated publications deny that widespread violence against civilians took place at Nanking in 1937, assert that war crimes were fabricated to defame Japan, and paint an affirmative portrait of Japan's wars of the 1930s and 1940s as a selfless crusade against Euro-American imperialism. The film was screened in the Diet Building for sixteen elected members in April of 2008. Despite support from some politicians, Mizushima was not able to raise enough money to complete the film, and production is currently on hiatus.

Comfort Women Ad:

Indicates supporters of an advertisement placed in the *New Jersey Star Ledger* entitled "Yes, We Remember the Facts" which rejects Japanese military and government responsibility for the comfort women system. New Jersey became a site of struggle over comfort women memories after a local Korean group erected a monument to the comfort women in a public park in 2010.

The ad rehashes standard denial arguments but goes further in linking to this Youtube video described as "indispensable to the basic understanding of this issue" – Sex, Lies, and Comfort Women:

The video starts by describing how the South Korean government has supported K-pop music, suggesting that the government wields an unhealthy amount of control over Korean society and has also fabricated the comfort women issue to manipulate the public. Abe and others appear to support this insinuation. The video also argues that many Korean actresses and singers have been forced to have sex with directors, managers, and wealthy backers in order to advance their careers. This infers that Korea has a cultural predisposition toward the sexual exploitation of women, and the suffering of comfort women during the war is blamed entirely on "Korean brokers". This sort of commentary is apparently "indispensable to the basic understanding of this issue". Abe and other far right politicians are careful to avoid making these types of culturalist statements in public, but here a Youtube video by rightwing netizens is employed to dig at Korea's perceived essential "backwardness" and use it as an explanation for the suffering of women in the military brothel system while excusing the Japanese military and government from blame.

Nikkyouso: 日教組問題を究明し、教育正常化実現に向け教育現場の実態を把握する議員の会 (*Nikkyouso mondai wo kyuumei shi, kyouiku seijouka jitsugen ni muke kyouiku genba no jittai wo haaku suru giin no kai* – Association of Diet Members for Bringing to Light the Nikkyouso Problem and Ascertaining the True State of Our Classrooms to Normalize Education)

This group, formed in 2008, posits that the teacher's union Nikkyouso (the *Nihon kyoushokuin kumiai* – Japan Teacher's Union), which has long had complex ties to the Socialist and Communist Parties and has pressed for critical teaching on Japan's war record, is a source of "abnormal" practices. It promises to bring these practices to light and eliminate the influence of the group on Japanese education. Rightist politicians like Nakayama Nariaki, a minister in Aso Taro's cabinet who was forced to resign just four days after his appointment in 2008 for describing Japanese as "a homogenous people" and Nikkyouso as "a cancer", played a key role in the group's founding. It is because Nikkyouso has promoted alternatives to the "homogenous people" idea by promoting education on Ainu, Okinawan history, Burakumin, and other minorities, as well as leprosy sufferers, the victims of Minamata disease, and others, that conservatives like Nakayama consider the group "a cancer". Japan's new Minister of Education Shimomura Hakubun has allied himself with this position.

Parents and Education: 親学推進議員連盟 (*Oya gaku suishin giin renmei* – Diet Member Alliance for Promoting 'Oya Gaku')

"Oya Gaku"(Parenting Studies) is a concept promoted by Meisei University Professor Takahashi Shirou. It is based on the premise that parents need to be educated about correct childrearing. "Correct" in this context means emulating pre-war education. Takahashi and his supporters believe that today's parents have been infected by Nikkyouso-sponsored leftist ideology during their own school years and many are unfit parents as a result. Takahashi has pioneered his own "science" of autism and developmental delay in children and claims that they can be reversed. He publishes mass market books and gives public presentations, but he is an education professor, not a scientist, and his work in this area has not been peer-reviewed or accepted by the scientific community. In *Nou kagaku kara mita Nippon no detouteki ko sodate – Hattatsu shougai ha yobou, kaizen dekiru* (Traditional Japanese Education and Brain Science – Developmental delay can be avoided or fixed) he argues that developmental delay is a product either of a lack of effort by parents or of "Westernization" undermining Japan's traditional values. Abe is a strong supporter of what appears to be junk science.

In a 2012 letter to Abe and the *Oya gaku suishin giin renmei*, the Asperger Society of Japan described Takahashi's "Oya Gaku" as "nonsense" that flies in the face of all accepted scientific evidence and promotes discrimination against children with special needs while spreading the false belief that autism, Asperger's, and developmental delay can be explained by "improper" parenting or problems in the home. "Oya Gaku" is supported by a variety of figures on the right including author Sono Ayako, a denier of wartime atrocities in Okinawa and now an Abe education advisor, and journalist Sakurai Yoshiko. "Oya Gaku" shows the lengths that Abe and others on the far right will go to discredit postwar education and raise "traditional" values as a type of cure-all.

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