

# The Tsukurukai's Networking with Politicians : Conservative Diet Members Groups in Japanese Interest Group Politics

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(Abstract)

Those who are interested in the East Asian region might remember the considerable controversy over a history textbook published in 2005 by the *Atarashii Rekishi Kyokasho wo Tsukurukai* (Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform; hereafter, the Tsukurukai). Their history textbook was strongly denounced for glorifying Japan's wartime conduct and gave shocks to inside Japan but throughout East Asia, especially the neighboring countries. In response, researches on the Tsukurukai have exploded.

Previous literature focuses on how the movement driven by the Tsukurukai is reflected in nationalism in Japan and its influence on foreign policies and international relations; there are relatively few empirical studies of the Tsukurukai per se, including on the Tsukurukai's networking with politicians. Although many activists and scholars have pointed out the connection between the two, empirical researches on the relationship are understudied.

This paper aims to analyze the history issue related 'conservative group,' the Tsukurukai, and its networking with politicians from the interest group politics perspective. More specifically, this paper borrows the framework of lobbying venue selection of interest groups. Social groups, in order to achieve their goals, strategically choose a lobbying venue, primarily either politicians or bureaucrats. In this process, the presence of like-minded friends, political environments, and accessibility influence on the decision of interest groups.

This paper thus focuses on the Diet Members Group(DMG). Put differently, this paper argues that conservative groups tend to choose politicians as a lobbying venue because this DMG provides the high accessibility to civil groups for networking. Specifically, the study meetings (*benkyokai*) that DMGs hold play a substantial role; that is, it is where members of relevant groups and politicians share and formulate their preferences. To support the argument, this paper analyzes the "contents of the *benkyokai*."

Finally, this paper intends to contribute to academic discourse on Japanese interest group politics in terms of interest groups' lobbying venue selection and its position in Japanese political process, and enhancing understanding of controversies around the Tsukurukai and their movement in the region.

## 1. Introduction

Those who are interested in the East Asian region might remember the considerable controversy over a history textbook published in 2005 by the *Atarashii Rekishi Kyokasho wo Tsukurukai* (Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform; hereafter, the Tsukurukai). Their

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history textbook was strongly denounced, particularly for glorifying Japan's wartime conduct in the early twentieth century. The publication was shocking not only inside Japan but throughout East Asia, especially the neighboring countries that shared the historical trauma. The Tsukurukai's movements raised concerns among Japan's neighbors about rightist tendencies (*ukeika*) in Japanese latent historical consciousness. And this, needless to say, has brought strain to the region.

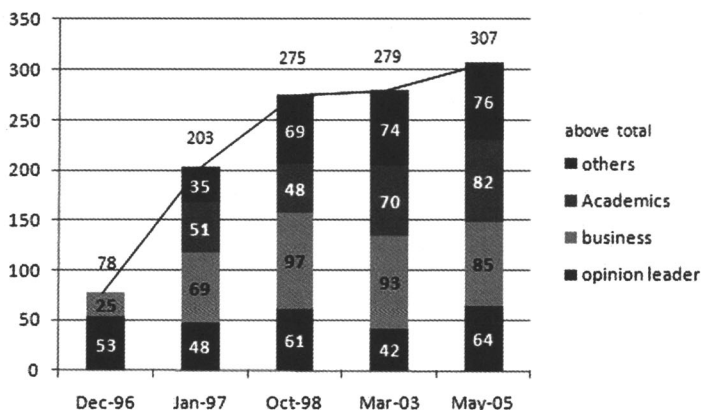
In this regard, this paper analyzes the Tsukurukai as a "conservative group" and its connection with politicians. More specifically, this paper draws on theories of lobbying venue selection by interest groups to analyze the relation between the Tsukurukai and politicians in the venue of the Diet Members Groups (DMG). The research ultimately attempts to enhance understanding of conservative groups in Japanese interest group politics and of controversies around the Tsukurukai and their movements.

### **(1) Literature Review: The Tsukurukai's Alleged Network with Politicians**

When the Tsukurukai's history textbook came out, it became controversial in both levels of civil society and political arena across Japan and East Asia. In response, literature regarding the Tsukurukai movement has exploded. Most previous literature focuses on how the movement driven by the Tsukurukai is reflected in nationalism in Japan (Yoshida 1997; Oguma and Ueno 2003) and its influence on foreign policies and international relations (Berger 2003; Hasegawa and Togo eds. 2008; Lind 2008; He 2009). However there are relatively few empirical studies of the Tsukurukai per se, including on the Tsukurukai's networking with politicians. Put differently, many activists and scholars have pointed out the connection between the two (Tawara 2005), claiming that politicians have supported the Tsukurukai's movements by creating a Tsukurukai-friendly environment and carrying out certain political actions that are likely to undermine confidence-building with neighbors. However, the relationship is not articulated enough.

Figure 1 shows the Tsukurukai's supporter composition, especially in terms of: (1) the rapid increase in the early years, (2) changes of supporter configuration, and (3) absence of politicians. Despite the difficulty of showing politicians' direct involvement in the Tsukurukai, it is noteworthy that the former mayor of Tokyo, Ishihara Shintaro, joined the Tsukurukai as a writer; this single example suggests that it is worth scrutinizing the relations between the Tsukurukai and politicians.

Figure 1. Tsukurukai' Changes in Supporter Composition



※ Source: Tsukurukai supporter lists (they have not disclosed these lists since 2005).

This paper, therefore, aims to elaborate the Tsukurukai's networking with politicians. Specifically, this paper asks how this relation evolved and developed; what their connecting venue is, what they share with each other, and what implications can be drawn from such Japanese interest group politics and East Asian relations.

## (2) Interest Groups' Venue Selection: Fresh Light on the Diet Members Groups

In order to explore this relation, this paper borrows the framework of interest group politics. Theories on interest groups offer a framework for interest groups' origins, activities, influence, and strategies for representing their interests and achieving their goals. To achieve their goals, interest groups lobby and select the most appropriate lobbying venues as strategic tools (Salisbury 1975; Schlozman and Tierney 1986; Walker 1991; Ishio 2002; Naoi and Krauss 2009).

The Tsukurukai can be also regarded as one of these social or interest groups. The Tsukurukai represents social voices, sets certain goals for their movements, and goes on activities to achieve their goals. In order to achieve their goals, they also need to lobby. In this section, I will review the lobbying venue selection approach.

### 1) Muramatsu's Research on Venue Selection: Politicians or Bureaucrats?

Research on lobbying venue selection in Japanese interest politics was pioneered by Muramatsu Michio (1986, 1998, 2010). He conducted three interest group surveys in 1980, 1994, and 2003, and based on data collected from around 250 interest groups for each survey, he analyzes configurations of Japanese interest groups, particularly their choice of lobbying venues, either politicians or bureaucrats.

Muramatsu (2010: 163-170) asserts that on one hand Japanese groups tend to lobby their friends, as the 1994 survey illustrates, but on the other, interest groups' venue selection is

affected by political environment such as one-party dominance and political alterations (Table 1). In addition, the significance of interest groups for politicians has changed; while politicians distance themselves from agricultural and labor groups, they perceive political civil groups as more significant than before (Table 2).

**Table 1. Japanese interest groups' venue selection**

	Political Party (%)	Bureaucrats (%)	Courts, etc. NA-DK (%)	%	N
Ohira Cabinet ('80 Survey)	46	48	7	100	252
Hosokawa-Hata Cabinet ('94 Survey)	33	60	7	100	208
Murayama Cabinet ('94 Survey)	23	64	13	100	39
Koizumi Cabinet ('02-'03 Survey)	36	51	13	100	235

※ Source: Muramatsu (2010: 165)

**Table 2. Changes of significant groups for politicians (%)**

	1994 survey	2003 survey
1. Agricultural groups	28.6	5.1
2. Welfare groups	9.2	6.6
3. Big business groups	0.8	2.9
4. Small business groups	18.5	23.5
5. Labor groups	21.0	11.8
6. Administrative groups	5.9	8.1
7. Educational	5.9	2.2
8. Professional	0.8	2.9
9. Civil/Political	4.2	24.3
10. others	5.0	2.2
11. NA	0.0	10.3

※ Source: Muramatsu (2010: 161)

Like Muramatsu's research, the research of Tsujinaka and colleagues on interest groups also provides insightful evidence. Based on an original data set, Tsujinaka (2002) and Ishio (2002) argue that venue selection of interest groups depends on accessibility to political actors. This accessibility is affected by the ideology of political actors; that is, influence of other actors being equal, interests groups opt to lobby where they are able to get access with ease.

These two prominent sets of research on interest group politics in Japan discuss interest group population, activities, and influence. However, as Muramatsu and Tsujinaka both point out, their data sets are too constrained to grasp the whole picture of Japanese interest politics, and moreover, more empirical studies are needed in this field.

## **2) Argument: Diet Members Groups provide Accessibility to Civil Groups for Network.**

Grounded on previous literature, this paper argues that conservative political civil

groups tend to choose politicians as a lobbying venue due to the presence of Diet Members Groups(DMGs).

First, this paper assumes "conservative groups" like the Tsukurukai as interest groups, as noted above, and puts them into an analyzable interest group category, "political civil groups," which have become significant for politicians (Table 2). In fact, no conservative groups have been surveyed since the 1990s.<sup>1</sup>

Second, this paper sheds light on a specific networking venue for conservative groups, the Diet Members Groups (DMGs), specifically, the study meetings (*benkyokai*) that DMGs hold. Parliamentary groups have rarely been spotlighted in Japanese interest group politics (Tsuji-naka 1988; Tsujinaka 2002: 38-41; Muramatsu 2010).<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding, it offers a very effective explanation in contending conservative issues, because conservative politicians, who have long been prominent in the postwar political arena, gather together at *benkyokai*, providing a locus where conservative interest groups can seek their friends and political accessibility.<sup>3</sup>

These DMG *benkyokai* play a substantial role as a lobbying venue; that is, it is where members of relevant social groups or experts and politicians share their thoughts, opinions, and suggestions and formulate and exchange their interests and preferences. Thus, this paper argues that history issue related conservative groups are likely to get access to the like-minded politicians who held the DMG *benkyokai*, which lowers the threshold of accessibility for networking and lobbying.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, profiles of three groups will be briefly introduced: the Tsukurukai and two major history issue related DMGs in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the History Review Committee and the Young Diet Members Group for Japan's Future and History Education. These two LDP groups represent several history issue related groups founded in the post-Cold War era and they have vigorously carried out diverse activities, including publication.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, other relevant groups have merged into or originated from these two groups. Next, each group will be analyzed in terms of how they are connected with each other in the *benkyokai*. In other words, by looking into who is invited to speak and what they discuss, I observe that the *benkyokai* of the DMGs emerge as effective lobbying venues to politicians for interest groups. Finally, in conclusion, the main argument is readdressed and its implications for Japanese political processes and East Asian relations are discussed.

## **2. Group Overviews**

### **(1) The Tsukurukai**

#### **1) Background**

The Tsukurukai announced their organization in December 1996, and officially launched in January 1997. They aimed to start a far-reaching national movement to revise Japan's history and ultimately to publish a history textbook. They declared their position:

[F]or Japanese children who will live in the 21st century, we are determined to publish a new history textbook and fundamentally reestablish history education in Japan... History education in postwar Japan has made Japanese people forget culture and tradition that Japanese people should inherit and lose pride as Japanese...After the Cold War, this propensity to a masochistic historical view has deepened...The textbook that we will make, therefore...helps nourish children to have confidence and responsibility as Japanese people, and devote themselves to peace and prosperity for the world.<sup>5</sup>

The Tsukurukai gradually emerged in the 1990s. With the end of the Cold War, Japan had sequentially experienced the shock of the Gulf War, which revealed the limits of the country's capability to make international contributions because of lack of man power; a political alternation, the so-called "collapse of the 1955 system"; and the Murayama Speech, an apology for Japan's wartime deeds. In this context, what sparked the Tsukurukai's actions was the description of "comfort women" - women coercively recruited by the Japanese military and government - in a new middle school history textbook approved by the Japanese Ministry of Education in June 1996.<sup>6</sup>

Against this background, the Tsukurukai drew attention as different from other previous conservative social groups (Oguma 1998). From its inception, the Tsukurukai drew its members from diverse backgrounds, such as academia, the media, and writers. For example, members included Fujioka Nobukatsu, a professor at the University of Tokyo, who criticized Japanese history education as self-flagellating; Nishio Kanji, a writer specializing in German literature, who claimed differences of wartime responsibility between Germany and Japan; and Kobayashi Yoshinori, a *manga* writer, who was known to deal with current social issues critically. Because participants had various backgrounds politically and ideologically and no historians were included, skepticism prevailed about their ambitions and movements (Oguma and Ueno 2003: 5). However, despite this skepticism, the Tsukurukai gradually gained the attention of ordinary Japanese people.

**Table 3. Founding board of directors**

Title	Name	Occupation
President	Nishio Kanji	Professor, University of Electro-Communications
Vice President	Fujioka Nobukatsu	Professor, University of Tokyo
Board of Directors	Sakamoto Takao	Professor, Gakushuin University
	Takahashi Shiro	Professor, Meisei University
	Otsuki Takahiro	Assistant Professor, National Museum of Japanese History
	Nishibe Susumu	Professor, Shumei University
	Ito Takashi	Professor Emeritus, University of Tokyo
	Nakashima Shuzo	Lawyer
	Haga Tooru	Professor Emeritus, University of Tokyo
	Namikawa Eita	Principal of Shinshokasonjuku
Secretary General	Kusano Takemitsu	Full time

## **2) Main Activities**

According to its founding statement, the Tsukurukai was founded in order to publish a new Japanese history textbook based on nationalistic views. They not only intended to write a history textbook, but also to develop national movements to revise existing historical views. For this goal, they have published newsletters and periodicals and at the same time they have held numerous meetings and symposia across the nation.

Nevertheless, their history textbook adoption rate remained low: 0.039 percent in 2001, 0.4 percent in 2005, and 1.1 percent in 2009. These rates were extremely frustrating to them because their initial goal was 10 percent (Fujioka 2005:222). However, the influence of the Tsukurukai can hardly be disregarded, for the Tsukurukai has established high public awareness of the issue of history across Japan and East Asia in the last fifteen years.

### **(2) History Review Committee**

#### **1) Background**

On August 23, 1993, the so-called Yasukuni-related three groups in the LDP - the DMG for visiting Yasukuni Shrine, the DMG for war-bereaved families, and the DMG for glorifying departed heroes - founded the History Review Committee (*Rekishi Kento Inkai*, HRC). Accusing Prime Minister Hosokawa's reference to the Second World War as an "aggressive war" on August 10, 1993, they claimed, "We cannot overlook the one-sidedly masochistic historical view... under the name of reconsidering war, as exemplified by PM Hosokawa's 'aggressive war' statement and the coalition government's intention to 'declare an apology for the war responsibility.' We are convinced that establishing Japan's own historical view based on impartial historical facts is an urgent task" (HRC eds. 1995: 444). They planned to review the entire Second World War at the council level.<sup>7</sup>

The HRC consists of 105 members in both Houses of the Diet, led by Chairman Yamanaka Sadanori and Secretary-General Itagaki Tadashi, and including such noticeable figures as Hashimoto Ryutaro, Mori Yoshiro, and Abe Shinzo, among others.

Figure 2. Distribution of Politicians in the HRC

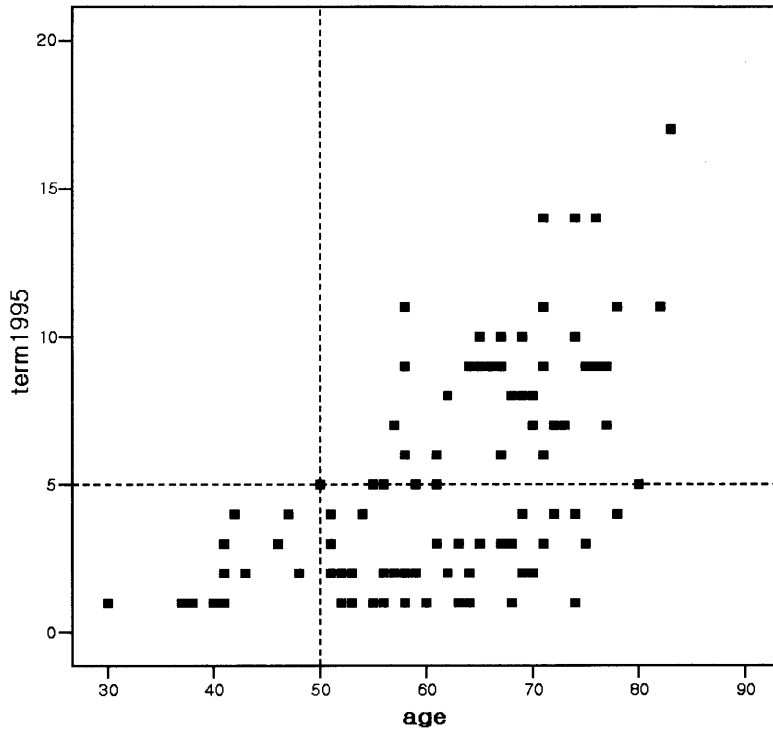


Figure 2 shows a scatterplot of committee members by their terms and ages. Interestingly, most politicians involved in the committee have served under five terms (67 out of 105 members, 64%), but in terms of the postwar generation, the number decreases dramatically to 14 members (13%).

## 2) Main Activities

This committee held twenty meetings from October 1993 to February 1995 (Table 4). Although they intended to hold biweekly meetings, they could hold meetings approximately once a month, inviting intellectuals and collecting relevant documents. And they had substantial attendance of Diet members for open-lecture-form meetings, with an estimated 56 attendees on average, and 1,116 in total. Considering the usual attendance at activities of other DMGs, these numbers in one and a half years of activity prove how proactively they had taken action.<sup>8</sup>

The meetings resulted in a real outcome: the publication of the book *Recapitulation of Greater East Asia War*. This book is a collection of lectures and discussions carried out in committee meetings, dealing with the following four subjects: the path to the Greater East Asia War, the end of the war in Asia, the occupation and the Tokyo Tribunal, and the 50th anniversary of the war's end.



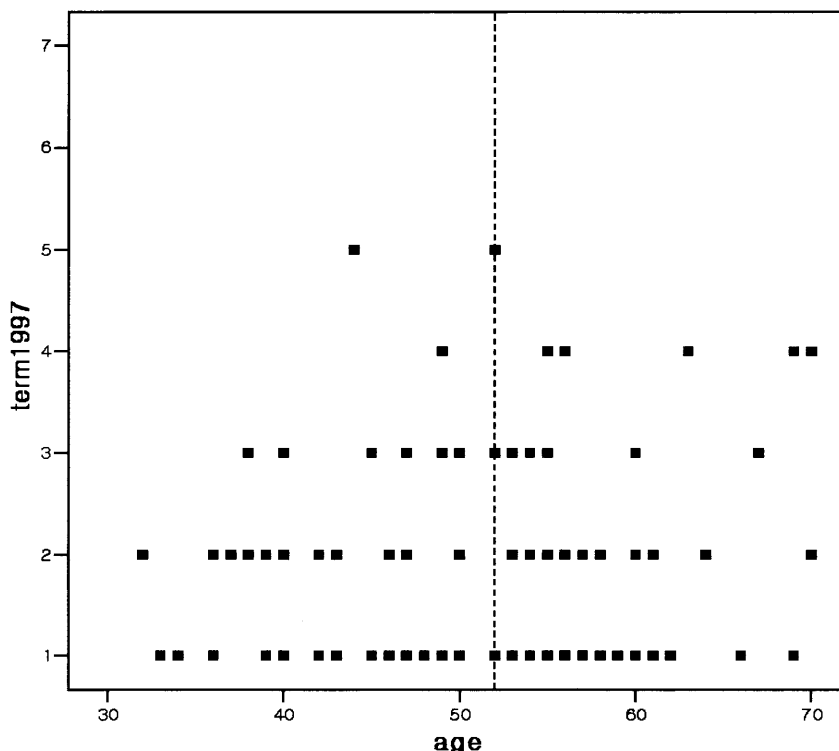
**(3) Young Diet Members Group for Japan's Future and History Education  
(History Education Group, HEG)**

**1) Background**

The Young Diet Members Group for Japan's Future and History Education in Japan (HEG) was established on February 27, 1997, with members of less than five or four terms. At the press conference, then-Deputy Party Secretary Nakagawa Shoichi, President of the HEG, asserted, "We are concerned about the problems that the middle school history textbook contains. We must shape Japan's own identity, not be disturbed by a specific ideology."<sup>9</sup> Later, in an interview, he said that "the problems" meant the description of comfort women.<sup>10</sup> Members of this group widely shared the view that "children are learning with a textbook in which history is depicted in an anti-Japanese way, ignoring the facts" (HEG 1997: 3). He also emphasized that the Diet members in this group had not experienced the war so that the word *wakate* (young) was put in the group's name. Their starting point was to revisit history education and to take action by evoking a national discourse on history.

The HEG received more attention than other groups because it had new generation members with influence in the Japanese political arena, from President Nakagawa Shoichi to Secretary-General Abe Shinzo. Overall, the HEG had 87 members in both Houses (107 including observers).

**Figure 3. Distribution of Politicians in the HEG**



As Figure 3 shows, the politicians in the group had served less than five terms. Several intriguing points can be raised; first, in the postwar generation, there are fifty-five members (51%) - this membership configuration delineates the DMG's object and purpose, which is encouraging postwar generation politicians to escape a masochistic historical view and take action. Second, compared to Figure 2, there are no horizontal moves from the HRC to the HEG (67 vs. 107) and the number of first-term members is 57 (53%). It can be assumed that the political terrain in Japan was transformed by the political turmoil, including the electoral reform and the 1996 election.

## **2) Main Activities**

About ten months after the HEG began, they published the book *Queries to History Textbook*. This book focuses particularly on the history textbook's description of the comfort women.

And the HEG took the next step of organizing a bipartisan parliamentary group, the Diet Members Group for the History Textbook, in order to be connected with the opposition, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), on June 26, 2001. Nakagawa as president and four leaders representing four opposition parties - Ueda Kiyoshi from the DPJ, Shiota Susumu from the Liberal Party, Koike Yuriko from the Conservative Party, and Nakada Hiromu from the Independents - were elected.<sup>11</sup> At the new group's founding press conference, 46 members were present directly or indirectly.<sup>12</sup>

But the HEG remained dormant after textbook adoption ended in 2001. Then, in 2004, they held a board of directors meeting and resumed activities by raising the issue that in the university entrance examination, it was treated as a confirmed historical fact that Korean people under colonialism were taken coercively.<sup>13</sup> At this time, the HEG omitted *wakate* (young) from the group's name and restarted as the Diet Members Group for Japan's Future and History Education in Japan. Later, in 2008, this group produced another book, *The Truth of Nanjing*, claiming that even the League of Nations failed to recognize the "massacre of 20,000 persons at Nanjing" (HEG 2008). Thus, the HEG has touched upon two sensitive issues, comfort women and the Nanjing Massacre.

## **3. A Venue for Networking: Diet Members Groups' *Benkyokai***

As assured above, three groups - the Tsukurukai, the HRC, and the HEG - were founded in different periods. Yet through the *benkyokai* that the politicians offered, the relationship between the Tsukurukai and politicians evolved and developed. By taking a close look at the content of discussions at the *benkyokai*, it will become clear that civil interest groups have an incentive to use *benkyokai* to get access to politicians with similar ideologies. In other words, the *benkyokai* that like-minded politicians offer can be a networking venue for building personal

networks and sharing opinions and preference, which can be translated into “lobbying.”

This section explores the two DMGs' *benkyokai*, and accounts for how the network between the Tsukurukai and politicians evolved and developed through personal connections and the study group discussions.

### (1) History Review Committee's *Benkyokai*: How the Relation Evolved

Despite the time gap between the outset of organizing the Tsukurukai and the History Review Committee (HRC), considering that Diet members who joined the HRC organized various relevant groups afterward and invited speakers joined the Tsukurukai later, its importance and connectedness can be pronounced.<sup>14</sup> The *benkyokai* of the HRC provided opportunities to Tsukurukai members-to-be and politicians to seek common ground for their arguments and interests, and to have informal access to each other. As the chairman noted, “By holding such meetings we could listen to insight-filled opinions from experts of various fields, and Diet members also could express their thoughts and make an argument. We, thereby, could spend a profitable time on a given discussion topic as we exchanged views” (HRC 1995: 3).

The HRC organized the *benkyokai* and invited scholars and relevant figures to share discussion on the Greater East Asian War. And this demonstrates that the *benkyokai* lowered the threshold for civil groups to get access to politicians. Additionally, through lectures and discussions, they shared their views and activities, and encouraged those who might launch organizations and movements without much resource.

#### 1) Invited Speakers: Personal Networking

In its twenty *benkyokai* (Table 4), the HRC offered a place for like-minded experts on “re-capitulating World War II” and participant politicians to connect with them.

Table 4 shows an overview of the meetings; nineteen different speakers were invited. Nakamura Akira was invited as the speaker at both the second and third meetings.

**Table 4. Dates and topics of committee meetings**

No.	Date	Topic	Main Speaker	Tsukurukai Supporter	Reference to History Textbook
1	Oct. 15, 1993	Penetrating Historical View of a Defeated Nation	Kobori Keiichiro (Professor, Meisei University and Professor Emeritus, University of Tokyo)	✓	✓
2	Oct. 29, 1993	Why Did the Greater East Asia War Break Out?	Nakamura Akira (Professor, Dokkyo University)	✓	
3	Nov. 26, 1993	Process of Japan-US Negotiation and Significance of the Greater East Asia War			
4	Dec. 6, 1993	What Does the History Textbook Teach Children? (Focused on textbook's description of invasion and masochism)	Uesugi Chitoshi (Researcher on history textbook)	✓	✓

5	Jan. 18, 1994	The Tokyo Tribunal and International Law	Sato Kazuo (Professor, Aoyama Gakuin University)	✓	
6	Feb. 22, 1994	Historical Consciousness of Japanese People (Focused on "aggressive war" comment of PM Hosokawa)	Nishibe Susumu (Commentator)	✓	
7	Mar. 9, 1994	Did Japan Commit the Same Sin as the Nazis?	Nihio Kanji (Professor, University of Electro-Communications)	✓	
8	Mar. 29, 1994	Overview of the 50 Years since the End of War and National Strategy in Japan	Okazaki Hisahiko (Former Ambassador to Thailand)	✓	✓
9	Apr. 21, 1994	The So-called 'Unconditional Surrender' (Focused on origin of forgotten Japanese Foreign Affairs)	Eto Jun (Professor, Keio University)		
10	May 10, 1994	Fabrication of the 'Nanjing Massacre'	Tanaka Masaaki (Commentator)		
11	May 20, 1994	The Greater East Asia War and Asia's Real Intention (Slide explanation)	Nagoshi Futanosuke (Instructor, Takachiho Shouka University)	✓	✓
12		Independence of Indonesia	Nakajima Shinzaburo (President of ASEAN Center)		✓
13	Jul. 19, 1994	From the Law of the Jungle to the Era of Equality (Focused on Westerners' invasion of Asia and significance of the Greater East Asia War)	Fusayama Takao (Professor Emeritus, Tokyo Medical and Dental University)		✓
14	Jul. 28, 1994	From the Late <i>Maku</i> to the Greater East Asia War (Focused on the "White Flag" that Admiral Perry brought)	Matsumoto Kenichi (Professor, Reitaku University)		
15	Sep. 21, 1994	Thinking of the 50 Years since the End of the War (Focused on five perspectives on the "end of the war")	Ohara Yasuo (Professor, Kokugakuin University)	✓	
16	Oct. 18, 1994	The Tokyo Tribunal That I Experienced (Focused on denying the "Tokyo Tribunal historical view")	Fuji Nobuo (Former Navy Major and Tokyo Tribunal Material Editorial Member)		
17	Nov. 22, 1994	Japanese Mythology and Contemporary Japan	Izumo Iaki (Writer and Japanese painter)		✓
18	Dec. 12, 1994	Prospering Historical View of the Socialist Party and Ruining a Country	Yasumura Kiyoshi (Editorialist of <i>Sankei Shimbun</i> )		
19	Jan. 26, 1995	Reversed "Anti-War Discourse"	Hasegawa Michiko (Professor, Saitama University)	✓	
20	Feb. 16, 1995	The 50 Years since the End of War and the Occupation Policy (Focused on how Japanese redemptive consciousness was shaped)	Takahashi Shiro (Professor, Meisei University)	✓	✓

※ Source: HRC eds. 1995. Recapitulation of Greater East Asia War (rearranged and further items added).

In terms of personal connections between invited speakers and the Tsukurukai, among the nineteen invited speakers, twelve later joined the Tsukurukai as founding and supporting members. Three were directly involved in the Tsukurukai: Nishio Kanji, the seventh speaker, became President of the Tsukurukai; and Nishibe Tsutomu and Takahashi Shiro, the sixth and twentieth speakers, respectively, joined the Tsukurukai's board of directors. The rest are supporting members.

Moreover, invited speakers referred to one another, which clarifies that speakers invited by the DMG were connected and influenced each other. The speaker at the first meeting, Kobori, introduced Sato Kazuo, professor in international law and invited speaker of the fifth meeting; Nakamura Akira, author of *Path to the Greater East Asia War* and speaker at the second and third meetings; and Nishio Kanji, the professor of German literature who spoke at the seventh meeting. He strongly recommended that participants read their writings (HRC eds. 1995: 331, 335, 339). This way of introducing each other's ideas and writings continued during the *benkyokai*.

Of the Tsukurukai board of directors-to-be, Nishio was mentioned four times (first, seventh, eighteenth, and nineteenth sessions, which included his lectures). Takahashi was also quoted (fifteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth sessions). And as the main speaker at the last *benkyokai*, Takahashi introduced Fujioka Nobukatsu to participants as an activist who had eagerly engaged in the revision of Japanese modern history to overcome masochistic historical views.

Even when salient personal networks cannot be observed at this moment, it is certain that invited speakers at the HRC *benkyokai* were already connected, and meeting participants listened to and discussed issues with speakers. In this process, some politicians mentioned that they were inspired by the speakers' writings (HRC eds. 1995: 143). This clarifies that the HRC offered access to politicians for civil experts and activists and helped lay the groundwork for personal networking that later led to the founding of the Tsukurukai.

## **2) Topics of Discussion: Exchanging and Formulating Preferences**

The personal connections and the topics of discussion at the *benkyokai* give a glimpse of how the DMG's *benkyokai* worked as a lobbying venue for interest groups: they were a place for formulating and exchanging preferences. Through an analysis of the discussions at the meetings, we are able to see how preferences converged and understand how such preferences became a driving force behind the Tsukurukai. Participants expressed and forged preferences on three main issues.

First, throughout the twenty meetings, invited speakers and participants showed sympathy with the HRC's claim that PM Hosokawa's comment about "aggressive war" was improper and revealed a masochistic historical view. This seems to reflect common ground in their views on historical consciousness and a consensus on the need to take action.

Nakamura, the second speaker, said in regard to PM Hosokawa's "aggressive war"

comment, "In order to review whether the war was really an 'aggressive war,' I'm deeply pleased that LDP launched the History Review Committee...and I hope that this gathering helps rebuild a healthy national spirit against a masochistic spirit and the consolidated LDP returns to power" (HRC eds. 1995: 12). Nishibe, the seventh speaker, severely criticized Hosokawa as committing an "ideological crime" (HRC eds. 1995: 131). Participant politicians also denounced Hosokawa's statement: Okuno Seisuke continued to reveal his concerns and Kasahara Junichi said that Hosokawa must have been educated by the leftist Japan Teachers Union (HRC eds. 1995: 68).

The second issue was to deter the "Diet Resolution on Renunciation of War" to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the war's end. This issue particularly shows that the DMG was a lobby venue for civil actors to influence politicians to carry out certain actions. As the drive for the Diet Resolution and the newly inaugurated Murayama Cabinet had been supported, Tanaka, the tenth speaker, urged absolute opposition to the resolution (HRC eds. 1995: 268). These pleas to deter the resolution went on until the last meeting.

The third issue was the history textbook. As speakers and participants discussed, they denounced Hosokawa's statement, the historical consciousness of the Japanese people, especially the postwar generation, and left-oriented journalism. And they pointed out that existing history textbooks contained masochistic views, so that reform was necessary.

At the fourth meeting, Uesugi Chitoshi, an activist on the history textbook issue, said, "PM Hosokawa's remark, as far as it reflects existing textbooks, is actually a reasonable and sound argument...This is one of the consequences that history education [and pro-leftist descriptions in history textbooks] in postwar Japan has caused" (HRC eds. 1995: 91). In the discussion, Uesugi asked Sakadani, Diet member and Secretary of the HRC, to make an argument in the textbook council against incorrect claims about the Nanjing Massacre. In addition, as the lecture ended, one Diet member came up to Uesugi and said, "Today's story of the comfort women issue is diametrically opposed to what I have heard so far. I'd like to study this issue more, so please send me other writings"(HRC eds. 1995: 103). This is clear evidence that the *benkyokai* influences participants' preferences.

As seen above, the DMG and its *benkyokai* offered a highly accessible venue to civil actors, either groups or individuals. Invited speakers and participant politicians could be assured that they had friends, and this supported further actions.

### **3) Bridging Organizations after the End of the Committee's Activity**

After the activities of the HRC ended, the drive for the Diet resolution on the history issue, including the apology, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the war's end and the middle school textbook's description of comfort women as coercively recruited by the Japanese military government became prominent issues. In the middle of the turmoil, the relation between the Tuskurukai members and politicians became salient, particularly on the comfort women

issue.

First, some Diet members took the step of founding the Diet members group Bright Japan, to take over the HRC's activities.<sup>15</sup> Okuno Seisuke, President of Bright Japan and a former advisor of the HRC, at a press conference, made clear that the group's object was to "re-pursue valuable things that were lost in the postwar period, and bring up sound Japanese people...we cannot agree with the masochistic historical consciousness or subservient apology diplomacy that condemns Japan as an 'agressive state.'"<sup>16</sup> Okuno emphasized that "(comfort women) gathered together for a commercial act, and that they were not recruited forcibly...Although Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono in the Miyazawa Cabinet admitted that the government was involved, but there was no military engagement."<sup>17</sup> And he insisted on eliminating the description of the comfort women from the history textbook. This statement brought controversy in Japan as well as in neighboring countries.

In the same context, Professor Fujioka Nobukatsu, President of the Liberal View of History Association (the so-called former Tsukurukai), mentioned that the comfort women issue should not be treated in the textbook. Following his statements, Fujioka was invited to Bright Japan as a speaker;<sup>18</sup> thus, we observe a continuation of the DMG's *benkyokai* as a venue for networking.

Moreover, on November 15, 1996, Bright Japan and the Liberal View of History Association planned to set up a Textbook Problem Association with scholars and intellectuals who were engaged in activities for the normalization of textbooks.<sup>19</sup> They claimed that they would fight for textbook reform, being united at the political and social level. They planned to hold the first meeting in mid-December, and called for participation of various groups interested in the normalization of textbooks.<sup>20</sup> This initiative came into being as the Tsukurukai, which announced its founding on December 2 of that year.

Although the activities of the HRC had ended, politicians subsequently founded bridging DMGs, which continued to maintain venues for conservative civil groups to have access to like-minded politicians. And such initiatives gave rise to actual outcomes, like founding groups and movements.

## **(2) Young Diet Members Group for Japan's Future and Historical Education**

### **(HEG): How the Relation Developed**

It has been asserted that the HEG is closely connected with the Tsukurukai and has empowered the Tsukurukai's movement (Tawara 2003). And this seems supported by the HEG's vigorous activities to take relevant actions and create an atmosphere for the Tsukurukai's textbook to be accepted and adopted across Japan. This is attested by Abe's comment:

Through eight study meetings...debating pros and cons and assessing documents, evidence supporting the fact of (comfort women) coercively recruited by the government ...was not found. I think that history education for elementary schoolers should help

make them feel proud of their own culture, history, hometown and country. Thus I have decided to do my best with the conviction that history education should not be something that teaches fabricated and shrewd narratives to children to whom Japan's future is entrusted. (HEG eds. 1997, 449-450)

The two groups were both founded around this period. This period is crucial because groups like the Tsukurukai and the HEG started to form a common ground for national movements against existing history textbooks, which, they argue, had undermined national pride. For this, they also utilized study meetings held by the DMG.

As already seen, through the HRC's *benkyokai*, relationships between the Tsukurukai and politicians evolved, and through the HEG's *benkyokai*, these relationships were developed and solidified. This fact further strengthens the argument of venue selection. But the difference from the previous *benkyokai* of the HRC, both in terms of personal connections and preference forging, was that the two groups now fully recognized each other and their mutual understanding and consensus on the issue ran deeper than before.

### 1) Invited Speakers: Personal Networking

Immediately after launching the DMG, the HEG held *benkyokai* on a weekly basis and began discussing the issue of history textbooks and history education. The *benkyokai* proceeded from creating a screening system for textbooks, to adopting a process for screening textbooks, to the central issue - the description of comfort women in textbooks. Table 5, which shows the speakers and their topics, illustrates this process.

Particularly at the beginning, according to the Chief Secretary (HEG eds. 1997: 15), the HEG, in line with the Tsukurukai's claims, had contacted policy makers and experts on the comfort women issue (fourth meeting), looked for a speaker to argue the opposite position (fifth meeting), and finally invited the former Cabinet Secretary Kono Yohei, who had made the "Kono Speech" that apologized for the comfort women.

**Table 5. Dates and topics of study meetings**

No.	Date	Topic	Main Speaker
1	Feb. 27, 1997	General Meeting for Foundation	
2	Mar. 6, 1997	Overview of Screening Textbooks and Its Problems	Takahashi Shiro (Professor, Meisei University), Endo Akio (Director-General in Ministry of Education, in charge of secondary education) Takashio Itaru (Acting head of Secondary Education Division in Ministry of Education)



3	Mar. 13, 1997	Problems on Writing Textbooks and Overview of Adopting Textbooks	Takashio Itaru (Acting head of Textbook of Elementary and Secondary Education Division in Ministry of Education), Chouji Atsushi (President of Textbook Association), Urushibara Toshio (Executive Director of Textbook Association), Hasegawa Jun (Teacher at middle school in Osaka)
4	Mar. 19, 1997	So-called Comfort Women Issue and Its Details	Hirabayashi Hiroshi (Head of Foreign Affairs in Cabinet), Torashima Kazuo (Former senior head on "50th Year After End of War" project in ruling party), Takebe Tsutomu (Former Chairman on Comfort Women Issue group in ruling party), Nishioka Tsutomu (Chief Editor of "Kendai Korea"), Higashi Yoshinobu (Director-General of Foreign Affairs in Cabinet)
5	Mar. 26, 1997	About the "Description of Comfort Women"	Yoshimi Yoshiaki (Professor, Chuo University), Fujioka Nobukatsu (Professor, University of Tokyo)
6	Apr. 2, 1997	What Is a Real Partnership between Korea and Japan?	Oh Sonhwa (Writer and researcher on Korea-Japan culture)
7	Apr. 9, 1997	Background for Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono's Statement	Ishihara Nobuo (Former Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary)
8	Apr. 17, 1997	How Should History Textbooks Be Written?	Sakamoto Takao (Professor, Gakushuin University)
9	Jun. 13, 1997	Our Country's Dealings in the Postwar Era and the Comfort Women Issue	Tsuruoka Koji (Acting head of North America Division in Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
10	Jun. 17, 1997	Why Was the "Statement of Chief Cabinet Secretary" Made?	Kono Yohei (Diet Member and Former Chief Cabinet Secretary)

※ Source: *Queries to History Textbook* (rearranged).

In terms of direct personal contact between the two groups, throughout ten meetings, three speakers were members of the Tsukurukai board of directors: Takahashi Shiro in the second, Fujioka Nobukatsu in the fifth, and Sakamoto Takao in the eighth meeting. Taking into consideration that most of the speakers are policy makers and politicians, the fact that three Tsukurukai members were invited strongly suggests that they are interconnected.

Interestingly, HEG executive members also referred to the Tsukurukai's members; from the Chief Secretary, as noted above, to the president of the group, Nakagawa Shouichi, who mentioned several times, for instance, that he participated in a local meeting with Fujioka Nobukatsu, the Tsukurukai vice president (HEG eds. 1997: 289). This makes evident that the personal networks had been strengthened.

## **2) Topics of Discussion: Formulating Preferences**

With a more focused issue, the HEG *benkyokai* became a more efficient lobbying venue for interest groups. They had discussions on three issues primarily: a textbook screening system, ideals for textbooks, and the comfort women issue.

First, the first meeting after the founding meeting was on the textbook screening system. Takahashi Shiro, a board member of the Tsukurukai, was invited to speak, and he severely criticized the existing textbook screening system, which, he asserted, had facilitated the emergence of the anti-Japanese textbook. He emphasized the necessity to create better and sounder textbooks, as well as to increase efforts to eliminate inappropriate textbooks (HEG eds. 1997: 17-30).

The discussion sessions after lectures provide concrete evidence of how the actors formulated preferences at these meetings. At the third meeting, three speakers were bureaucrats from the Ministry of Education's textbook division; attendees reproached the bureaucrats, saying that the government had neglected its responsibility to develop an appropriate textbook screening system, as exemplified by the description of comfort women; they also expressed their agreement with Takahashi's position. One politician attendee strongly urged that the description of comfort women be erased from the textbook because it impeded the country's culture and traditions (HEG eds. 1997: 52).

And, at the end, Takahashi introduced the foundation of the Tsukurukai, saying, "The Tsukurukai was officially founded on January 30. In about one month, more than a thousand people have joined as members. Among them, participation from those in their 20s and 30s is tremendous, reflecting that a number of young people have shown their interest in this issue" (HEG eds. 1997: 16). Despite restricting the boundaries of his comments as a board member of the Tsukurukai, during his talk he mentioned the Tsukurukai five times, and even intended to include an explanation of what the Tsukurukai was currently undertaking (it was skipped due to time limitation).

Second, regarding the issue of ideals for textbooks, the HEG invited Sakamoto Takao, a board member of the Tsukurukai and professor at Gakushuin University, to speak at the eighth meeting. He argued that people should distinguish between general research on history and description for history textbooks, because people who agreed with Japan's wrongdoings during wartime could not understand the description of the comfort women in the textbook (HEG eds. 1997: 331). Put differently, he contended, textbooks should contain only "orthodox history," established on the tradition of Japanese history, which is not supposed to include a description of comfort women. While he did not mention the Tsukurukai, his contention is entirely consistent with the Tsukurukai's claims, in the sense that they both declared that the description of comfort women collides with the so-called "common-sense" understanding of history that ordinary people widely share (HEG eds. 1997: 371-372).

Participant politicians agreed with him. Nakagawa, citing Sakamoto's writing, asserted that

history education should be taught with consideration of what people were ready to see and hear. Additionally, Abe Shinzo assented to one of Sakamoto's arguments that different grade students should be taught different levels of historical materials. And many Diet members agreed that the comfort women description was not consistent with "common sense" and "orthodox history."

Third, on the contents of textbooks, specifically, the description of comfort women, they invited various speakers ranging from policy makers to historians. At the fifth meeting, the speakers were Fujioka Nobukataue and Yoshimi Yoshiaki, the latter a professor at Chuo University and an expert on the comfort women issue. Professor Yoshimi criticized Fujioka's arguments calling for eliminating the description of comfort women from history textbooks and concluded, "it is not desirable for political intervention in the contents of textbooks to be self-controlled" (HEG eds. 1997: 191). In response, Fujioka argued emphatically that the description of comfort women should be erased because it was not compatible with the guidelines for screening textbooks in compulsory education, and the story was fabricated.

In the discussion session, Yoshimi was assailed with questions by most attendants. Immediately after the lecture, Nakano Masashi, Vice Chief Secretary, bombarded him with eight questions criticizing Yoshimi's arguments, asserting that it was not convincing to him (HEG eds. 1997: 208). Starting with this, attendees kept criticizing Yoshimi's arguments by asserting that the description of comfort women in textbooks was inappropriate.

Furthermore, as the meetings went on, the members became aware that the Kono Speech mattered. They then invited Ishihara Nobuo, Former Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary, to explain the process that resulted in the Kono Speech. At this meeting, Ishihara assured them that official documents regarding "coercive recruitment" had not been found. After that, the HEG was determined to invite then-Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono, who made the "Kono Speech." And after the meeting with Kono, the HEG appealed for the Cabinet to reexamine the 1993 speech on the comfort women issue, and made a request for the Ministry of Education and textbook publishers to eliminate the comfort women description.<sup>21</sup>

Overall, the HEG, which was founded around the same time as the Tsukurukai, by holding study meetings, was able to invite Tsukurukai members as speakers at meetings where they could share their preference and develop their networks further. This in turn created a united front line in the discourse concerning historical education and textbooks and to make relevant proposals for action. As we can more clearly see in the case of the HEG's *benkyokai*, civil groups had a high level of access to friendly politicians; the study groups lowered the threshold of accessibility by founding the DMG and holding *benkyokai* that became an efficient lobbying venue.

## 4. Conclusion

This paper explores the relation between the Tsukurukai and Japanese politicians, and how and where they have connected. In order to articulate this relationship, this paper attempts to analyze it from the perspective of venue selection by interest group.

This paper empirically supports the existing literature on Japanese interest politics and argues that civil groups (i.e., history issue related conservative groups) can get access to politicians more easily because the threshold of accessibility becomes lower when politicians launch DMGs. By looking into how the Tsukurukai and politicians were connected in two DMGs, the History Review Committee and the HEG, some implications are drawn on Japanese interest group politics and its influence.

First, regarding conservative groups like the Tsukurukai as interest groups provides helpful lenses to comprehend their purposes, activities, and influence. Put differently, considering conservative groups as part of analyzable interest group politics may help us understand where they fit in the political process and, further, may inform proper responses to their actions.

Second, in this process, the DMG matters as a specific lobbying venue. As we have seen, in the HRC and the HEG, conservative politicians provided a lobbying venue for like-minded civil actors by founding the DMGs, which gave high accessibility to representatives of interest groups like the Tsukurukai. And in the *benkyokai* of the DMGs, the Tsukurukai's members expressed and elaborated their claims with the result that they were able to formulate and change the preferences of participant politicians, which can be read as interest groups' activities.

Finally, their close relations have effects not only in Japan, but also in the whole region of East Asia, particularly Japan's neighboring countries. As mentioned, the Tsukurukai's textbook had consequences in East Asian relations. Japanese politicians were denounced for supporting the Tsukurukai's action. Having a clearer understanding of how and where conservative groups and politicians develop their networks may provide those concerned with better information to inform policy measures.

- <sup>1</sup> Although Muramatsu notes the contention over ideological ties between groups and politicians, he focuses only on the relations between peace constitution related groups and the Japanese Socialist Party (JSP). Muramatsu's group list for the surveys has not included history-related conservative groups, although a "war-bereaved group" was included as a welfare interest group in the first two surveys, but not in the 2003 survey (Muramatsu 2010: 286-299).
- <sup>2</sup> Traditionally, Japanese politics has been known for the politics of factions and *zokugiin*. *Zokugiin* in particular has been covered by many eminent researchers as bridges between the state and well-financed and organized interest groups (Inoguchi and Iwai 1987). However, the Diet Members Groups in this paper show slightly different attributes than existing *zokugiin* in that the DMGs have a wide range of membership and are loosely bound together.
- <sup>3</sup> This paper, however, does not discuss the direction of approach from societal actors to politicians and vice versa due to the fact that which side approached the other first is opaque. But this paper acknowledges that understanding the direction of this relation is important from the perspective of interest group politics.
- <sup>4</sup> The publications of these two groups help clarify what they do and what they think. This factor also motivated the decision to investigate these two groups.
- <sup>5</sup> Tsukurukai Founding Statement.
- <sup>6</sup> This is supported by numerous comments. From the Tsukurukai Founding Statement: "The problem of history education is that since the defeat, it has had half a century to be discussed, but far from correcting distortion, it deepens its degree of distortion over time...for instance, despite lack of evidence, adopting a description of 'comfort women' as coercively recruited shows what this self-loathing historical view has borne." From the *Sankei Shimbun* interview (December 3, 1996): "With the description of 'comfort women' indicating a bias of writing modern history in textbooks, our object is that we make a history textbook suitable for the next generation in Japan."
- <sup>7</sup> *Yomiuri Shimbun*, August 23, 1993.
- <sup>8</sup> In fact, these numbers are tremendous for LDP Diet members, especially considering the turmoil of the 1990s (with events including the collapse of the 1955 system, the reform of the electoral system, the coalition government with the SPJ, the Hanshin earthquake, etc.). Secretary-General Itagaki also assessed attendance as successful (HRC eds. 1995, 444).
- <sup>9</sup> *Asahi Shimbun*, February 28, 1997.
- <sup>10</sup> *Sankei Shimbun*, March 22, 1997.
- <sup>11</sup> *Sankei Shimbun*, June 26, 2001.
- <sup>12</sup> *Sankei Shimbun*, June 26, 2001.
- <sup>13</sup> *Sankei Shimbun*, January 29, 2004.
- <sup>14</sup> Tawara Yoshifumi, who is secretary general of the Children and Textbooks Japan Network (CTJN21) - a leading civic group opposed to the Tsukurukai - suggests that this group was the first move in the political arena to be linked with the Tsukurukai (Tawara 2001).
- <sup>15</sup> *Sankei Shimbun*, June 6, 1966.
- <sup>16</sup> *Mainichi Shimbun*, June 5, 1996; *Yomiuri Shimbun*, June 5, 1996.
- <sup>17</sup> *Nikkei Shimbun*, June 5, 1996.
- <sup>18</sup> *Asahi Shimbun*, August 17, 1996.
- <sup>19</sup> *Sankei Shimbun*, November 16, 1996.
- <sup>20</sup> *Sankei Shimbun*, November 16, 1996.
- <sup>21</sup> *Asahi Shimbun*, June 19, 1997.

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