The Foundations of Multicultural Society
Represented in US History Textbooks in the 2000s:
Case Studies Using Descriptions Regarding "National Security" and "Civil Liberties"

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This paper deals with 10 kinds of history textbooks published after 2001 in the United States and attempts to understand the foundations of the multicultural society represented in them. The paper focuses on the following two points. First, it explores how these textbooks describe the relationships between national security and civil liberties in their explanations of a series of events that have happened since the simultaneous terrorist attacks in 2001, from the formulation of the USA Patriot Act to the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security. Second, the paper examines how these textbooks handle these cases, in light of the fact that national security concerns violated Japanese Americans' civil liberties during World War II. Especially concerning the latter, the paper compares 10 different textbooks published in 2001 to each of their older versions published before the terrorist attacks to examine how the descriptions in these textbooks changed before and after September 11th, 2001.

The analyses in this paper point out the following three facts. First, US media were dominated after the terrorist attacks by a frame of recognition that adopted Japan’s bombing of Pearl Harbor as a metaphor for the September 11th terrorist attacks, but these textbooks hardly adopted this framework. Only one of the textbooks examined, which was for junior high school students, compared these two incidents. This textbook’s descriptions, however, emphasized the differences between these two events. It is possible to conclude from these descriptions that although Japanese Americans’ civil liberties were violated after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the current American society would not allow this to happen again.

Second, regarding the US national security policies from the formulation of the Patriot Act to the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security, all the textbooks mentioned the criticisms and counterarguments against these events. Three of these textbooks merely mentioned the existence of these criticisms without aggressively referring to the reality of the damages being brought about by these policies. The other seven textbooks, however, revealed in detail that these policies infringed on the civil liberties of immigrants and Muslim and Arab Americans. The counterarguments against the national security policies such as the Patriot Act are presented based on America’s emphasis on civil liberties, and the reality of the damages done to civilians in the name of national security.

Third, concerning the relocation of Japanese Americans during World War II, all of the ten textbooks confirmed it as a case of infringement on civil liberties and maintained the perspective that they understood this incident critically. It can be concluded that this critical attitude toward violating a certain group of people’s liberties and rights in the name of national security has continued since the 1990s. The descriptions of the Japanese Americans’ relocation serves as an effective frame of reference to deal with the dilemma of national security and civil liberties as an issue that can apply to current society. The textbooks attempt to present suggestions regarding how to face current issues based on the lessons learned from the past. In this sense, these history textbooks still assess that the US is a multicultural society depending on the value of civil liberties in its society.