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**Learning History Can Help Students Envision a Preferable  
Future: Teaching “Changes in the International Order and Mass  
Society” in the Future**

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**Abstract**

This study addressed how history learning contributes to developing futures foresight and the ability to envision a preferable future by implementing a history lesson based on Hicks’s *Citizenship for the future: A practical classroom guide*. This included teaching future skills in a “Modern and Contemporary History” course at a Japanese high school. The study analysed two types of data to examine the relationship between history learning and futures foresight: (1) a comparison of student responses to pre- and post-lesson questionnaires, and (2) worksheets used in the lesson. An analysis of these materials clarified that history learning contributes to envisioning a preferable future, by raising students’ interest in the futures and their keenness towards contemporary issues, and helping them realize the temporal connection between the past, present, and future. I also argue that futures foresight-based learning should be viewed from the perspective of social studies education because it motivates students to take action to solve problems and consolidates the positioning of learning history, geography, and civics.

**Keywords:** Modern and contemporary history, Future anticipation, Futures foresight, Contemporary issues.

**Introduction**

***New Course in High School History Education in Japan***

In 2022, Japan’s history education in high schools experienced a major shift from a “knowledge-intensive” teaching approach to a “thinking skills development” approach. This is now considered essential, because the past division between world history and Japanese history must be overcome. In response to these discussions, new high school courses of study were announced in 2018, and included a new subject, “Modern and Contemporary History,” which will begin in 2022. Harada (2016, pp.73-78) noted that the Modern and Contemporary History subject now has three expectations from high school students:

1. Understand modern and contemporary history from a broad and interactive viewpoint of the

world, and of Japan within it.

2. Consider modern and contemporary history in relation to the formation of contemporary issues, based on historical transitions and changes, and with a view to solving problems.
3. Learn how to study history by setting questions that will serve as the basis of the unit, and by using materials, focusing on the major historical changes.

Modern and Contemporary History is the first course to combine Japanese and world history after the war. It aims to help students master how to learn history, by emphasizing the connection between the past and the present as it considers modern and contemporary history related to the formation of various contemporary issues.

***Purpose of This Study***

Shirai (2020, p. 33) mentioned that “2030 is expected to be an era of VUCA,” where VUCA is the acronym for a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous, era. The project objectives of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development’s Education 2030 also include developing a framework to better understand the competencies (i.e., knowledge, skills, attitudes, and metacognition) that will prepare students for a more volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world in 2030.

As the COVID-19 pandemic transitions to an endemic status, social uncertainties are increasing, such as the war in Ukraine and concerns about the Taiwan contingency. What role should social studies education play in these difficult times? In this unpredictable period, we should not postpone or abandon thinking about the future; rather, we should develop the qualities and abilities necessary to envision a preferable future and then take action to realize it. Hicks (2001, p. 17) proposed a futures skills method for learning to envision a preferable future. Shibutani (2021, p. 32) organized Hicks’s proposed futures skills as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Futuristic thinking proposed by Hicks (5 futures skills)

	5 Futures skills	Contents
1	Anticipating the future	Hicks states that we need skills to foresee possible futures (e.g., dangers) based on past and present events and experiences.
2	Accepting consequences	Because the choices we make affect ourselves and our environment, but are not immediately and clearly visible, we need to consider the consequences for some other time and place.
3	Envisioning alternatives	When thinking about the future, it is important to envision multiple future scenarios. Doing so is a necessary skill to distinguish between anticipated and preferable futures and to clarify what our preferable future looks like.
4	Making wiser choices	When thinking about the future, we consider what is in the best interest of whomever is among the multiple scenarios of preferable futures that we have envisioned, and make better choices. Drawing multiple scenarios develops this skill.
5	Taking responsible action	True responsible citizenship results from exercising the first four future thinking skills. Learning to use the four skills develops the ability to consider responsible action, whether in one’s personal life, in one’s community, or in the wider world.

Created by the author based on Shibutani (2021, p. 32).

Shibutani (2020, p. 52) also described Hicks's (2001) futures skills as, "...different from conventional future anticipation-type classes in that the students draw a picture of the preferable future and choose the future. The difference is that the students are not only asked to anticipate the future as an extension of the present and to think about the consequences of what happens, but also to think about the preferable future through foresight."

In the VUCA era, it is necessary to cultivate the qualities and abilities that facilitate envisioning a different and preferable future, rather than anticipating a future that is a mere extension of the current situation. The futures will see an even greater demand for futures foresight-based lesson practices in studying history. Therefore, this study incorporated the futures foresight method in a Modern and Contemporary History lesson, to understand how learning history can contribute to futures foresight.

This study defined "future anticipation" as predicting the future as an extension of the current situation, and "futures foresight" as envisioning a preferable future that differs from a predicted future based on an extension of the present.

What methods of historical learning promote futures foresight? What kind of changes in students' descriptions and perceptions does history learning produce, and in what ways do the results of history learning emerge? Based on these questions, the study investigated how history learning contributes to learning activities that envision a preferable future, to clarify the nature of futures foresight in history learning.

In this study, the author hypothesizes that history learning can serve as a basis for future anticipation and promote futures foresight. Presentism, or the easy application of the present perspective to historical learning, has long been debated in historiography. However, Miles and Gibson (2022, pp. 521, 522-523) described the benefits of presentism "given how complex current environmental, economic, political, social, and cultural issues are, perspectival presentism is essential for helping students understand the ways in which the past, present, and future are related." They claim—"we contend that presentism offers three main benefits for history education: it provides useful methods for analysing the past, it makes history more relevant for students, and it nurtures ethical understanding." According to their claim, to anticipate the future, humans need suggestions and lessons, and history learning may provide important clues here. Suzuki (2015, pp.77-88) said that historical thinking involves (1) critically and logically perceiving historical events and their interpretations based on knowledge and methods derived from history learning and situating them within historical wholeness; and (2) the intellectual ability that serves as the foundation for questioning the state of contemporary society and envisioning future society. History learning is an intellectual activity that allows humans to anticipate the future; it provides a foundation for critically rethinking contemporary society through the intellectual activity of anticipating the future. Future anticipation based on historical study not only plays a role in creating future social influences, but also functions as a catalyst for envisioning a preferable future society.

Based on these questions and hypotheses, this study aimed to clarify how history learning can contribute to futures foresight and to show how future foresight based history learning should be presented.

## **Research Method**

The study participants were 111 students enrolled in a Modern and Contemporary History lesson at the high school where the author teaches. The students were informed of the purpose and methods of the class and the handling of personal information, and their consent to participate in this study was obtained. The study unit

employed Hicks's (2001, p. 17) "Transformation of the International Order, Popularization, and Us" and "Futures Skills."

Students had studied the major topic, "Modernization and Us," and learned how the Industrial Revolution and the Civil Revolution affected modern society. However, they have not been sufficiently engaged in learning to connect the past with modern society and envision the futures, and few were aware of the importance of historical studies in gaining foresight into the futures. However, they have gradually become accustomed to the Modern and Contemporary History learning method, in which modernization and other concepts are explored as themes, and many students are more motivated to learn.

This study analyzed two types of data to investigate the relationship between history learning and futures foresight: (1) a comparison of pre- and post-lesson questionnaire responses, and (2) worksheets used in the lesson. The questionnaire verified whether students recognized that history learning promotes futures foresight and the factors that led to a change in recognition. From this, the author identified how students perceived the significance of history learning, and how history learning is related to future anticipation and futures foresight. Then, the author categorized and organized the meanings that students attached to history learning in their future anticipations and alternatives, and considered how foundational history learning could serve in their futures foresight. The lesson worksheets were used to situate futures foresight in history learning. The author examined how history learning can be made relative to civics and geography, learning from the perspective of their relationship.

## **The History Lesson**

### *Teaching Unit Structure*

The learning method of the classes practiced in this study will be mainly dialogue-based learning utilizing the jigsaw method. I expected students to consider historical facts from multiple perspectives, including through exchanges of opinion with others, and to effectively anticipate and gain foresight into the futures by building a community based on the exchange of their own and others' perspectives.

The study content examined how the two World Wars occurred, and how they changed international relations and people's lives. I used materials that allowed students to focus not only on the past, but also on the present and futures, based on their impacts on the global economy, the relationship between the masses and fascism, the horrors of war, as well as the future that people at that time were looking forward to. Finally, after studying World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II, the students were expected to anticipate the future of World War III and envision a preferable future that avoids World War III.

The class in this study was composed of the following four parts. The first part provided an overview of the history and contemporary issues that focused on popularization and transformation of the international order to motivate students to learn by having them ask questions. The second stage placed the jigsaw method at the centre of learning activities, and students were asked to consider how World War I affected the international relations and the lives of the masses. In the third stage, students learned that the Great Depression was a turning point that made life difficult for the masses, which led to support for dictators and the military. This helped them understand the future of colonization envisioned by the leaders of the time. Students were also made aware that the vision of the people at that time led to the horrific damage caused by World War II. In the fourth phase, students learned

about the Cold War system and the contemporary situation in East Asia after World War II. Based on their previous historical studies, they were asked to envision a future in which World War III will take place. In doing so, they visualized specific international relations and their impact on people’s lives, and shared these images with other students to make diverse projections about the future, where one scenario assumed that World War III will occur, and a second scenario involved a preferable future in which World War III is avoided. Students also discussed the kind of international order that would be preferable in the future, and shared their vision of this preferable future with each other, which helped them become aware of the importance of elections and democracy in selecting leaders who will be responsible for the future.

As a whole unit (see Table 2), I first motivated students to study the factual history, and in the process of examining it, I had them focus on the future vision of the people of that time, and gradually increase their awareness of focusing on the future. Then, I had the students consider their future anticipations and futures foresights. The reason for structuring the unit this way was to smoothly link historical learning to the learning process of futures foresight. In other words, it aimed at making students aware of the relationship between historical learning and modern society in the first level, and having them consider the future-oriented choices and policy decisions of the people of the time in the second and third levels. The unit was structured so that in the fourth level, students could envision possible and preferable futures based on their historical learning.

Table 2. Unit plan for “Changes in the International Order and Popularization and Us”

	Teacher’s questions	Main materials
First “Asking a Question”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the differences between the wars we have studied so far and the wars that led to the age of popularization?</li> <li>• How did people’s lives change in the 20th century?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparison of the number of deaths in the Russo-Japanese War, World War I, and World War II</li> <li>• Photographs of modern girls</li> <li>• Nazi election poster “Hitler, our last hope”</li> <li>• Merkel’s speech to Israel</li> <li>• Russia’s invasion of Ukraine</li> </ul>
Second “World War I - International Cooperation”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• World War I - How did World War I change the international system and people’s lives?</li> <li>• How was World War I different from previous wars?</li> <li>• What kind of international order did the victorious countries create after World War I?</li> <li>• Why were there mass movements and riots after World War I?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posters used in World War I</li> <li>• What are the physical costs of war?</li> <li>• Japanese occupation of Qingdao, Shandong Province</li> <li>• Washington Conference</li> <li>• The Twenty-One Demands</li> <li>• The May Fourth Movement in China</li> <li>• The March 1 Independence Movement in Korea</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did the masses become the protagonists of society after World War I?</li> <li>• Why did the trend of political participation increase in Japan after World War I?</li> <li>• Why did the masses enjoy entertainment and culture during this period?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pictures of Koshien, Babe Ruth, and Shohei Otani in Japan</li> <li>• Pictures of the rice riots</li> <li>• Price indexes and wage indexes of the time</li> <li>• Women workers during World War I</li> <li>• Changes in industrial structure during World War I</li> </ul>

Third “Great Depression - World after the Great War”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why did the masses, who had achieved peace and affluence, choose to go to war?</li> <li>• Why did the masses support the military?</li> <li>• What kind of future did the military envision?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Industrial production in each country</li> <li>• Wages of related occupations</li> <li>• Missing children in northeastern Japan nibbling on radishes (1934)</li> <li>• Poster at a government office offering advice on peddling girls (1934)</li> <li>• A postcard from a government office offering advice on the sale of girls (1934)</li> <li>• Letters sent to newspapers at the time</li> <li>• Report by Kanji Ishihara, General Staff of the Kwantung Army</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why did World War II produce unprecedented devastation?</li> <li>• How far did Hitler’s vision of the future come true?</li> <li>• Why did Germany and the Soviet Union continue the war even though they had to make enormous sacrifices?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preventive War</li> <li>• Hitler’s view of war</li> <li>• Disparity in U.S.-Japan troop strength</li> <li>• Soviet Army human casualties in the war between Germany and the Soviet Union</li> </ul>
Fourth “Ideas for a preferable Future”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If World War III were to occur in the future, how would the international order and our lives change?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• China and the Soviet Union in the Postwar Era</li> <li>• Damages of major countries in World War II</li> <li>• International order in the post-war period</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kind of future do you think is preferable for us among the various possible international orders in 2030?</li> </ul>	

Created by the author.

***Specific Flow of the Class: (1) Asking the Question - (3) World War II***

The first stage, asking questions, was meant to motivate students to learn by presenting an overview of the international order from World War I to the present day, and having them ask questions.

Students were asked to read “comparison of the scale of World Wars” and “changes in the ratio of voters to the total population” from tables and graphs to understand the scale of world wars, the development of mass society, the Great Depression, World War II, and the general outline of the current situation in Ukraine and East Asia.

After this, based on the relevance of history and contemporary issues, students asked questions based on their own simple doubts and surprises. Then, through pair work and group activities in which students shared their own questions and asked each other questions, they further refined their questions and finally determined the ones they wished to pursue in the “Transformation of the International Order, Popularization, and Us” unit.

In the first phase, students asked the following questions:

- What were the German people thinking when they supported Hitler?
- Why did the centre of the world economy shift from England to the United States?
- Why was Russia’s invasion of Ukraine unexpected?

The second phase covered the contents of international cooperation from World War I. In this stage, the students learned that World War I led to total war, that entire nations were involved in the war, and that women also had to work as factory laborers to conduct it. Students were also made aware that the war was prolonged

and involved the entire world, including the colonies. They further learned that the movement for national independence gained prominence in the inter-war period, with the goal of stabilizing world peace and creating an international order that did not use war as a means of settling disputes.

To examine the kind of order sought by the international community and how the lives of the masses changed, the lesson proceeded through shared interpretations and interactive activities among students based on questions such as “How did the first world war change the international system and people’s lives? Students had difficulty deciding what to focus on and how the materials were related to the questions, so I gave them advice while observing them during the expert activities. Some students noticed that, after World War II there was a need for a peaceful international order and that the lives of the masses were approaching that of contemporary life.

For example, by linking Koshien, Babe Ruth, and Shohei Otani from the perspective of watching baseball games, the students increased their interest in the roots and development of popular culture. Students who had struggled with the expert activities grasped the historical process of approaching modern popular society through the jigsaw activities and cross-talk sessions, and by resolving their questions as the lesson progressed.

The main question in the third session was “Why did the masses, who had achieved peace and affluence, choose the path of war?” and the jigsaw method was used to continue the lesson. Students learned that the Great Depression caused Britain and France to adopt a block policy, and countries without colonies, such as Japan and Germany, suffered. The Soviet Union was almost unaffected by the Great Depression because of its socialist system, and expanded its industrial production. They also learned that the economic crisis in Germany and Japan made life difficult, and people hoped that a political rise of the military would overcome the economic crisis. This led to political assassinations and approval for the invasion of China.

The main question was: “Why did the second world war produce unprecedented devastation?” Students learned that Nazi Germany launched a war of extermination against communism, which Stalin thoroughly opposed to defend the homeland, and that it became a war with no regard for the human cost incurred. In addition, students were asked to consider how historical documents indicated that Hitler had a plan to colonize Russia and deport the local population to Siberia to engage in slave labor.

The third lesson focused on what kind of future the politicians and military of the time envisioned and tried to realize. For example, based on reading materials that covered the outbreak of the war between Germany and the Soviet Union and the Japanese invasion of Singapore in 1941, I asked students, “From whose perspective does the outbreak of the world war seem so sudden?” and “Did Hitler and his military start the war without preparing for the war in the future?” By repeating these questions about the future from the perspective of that time, the students became aware that the politicians and military of that time envisioned a preferable future for them. I then asked, “What kind of future did Hitler and his military envision?”; and “Who supported these forces that envisioned invasion and oppression of other countries? And why did they support it?” Students were asked to see the connection between the world wars and the world economy, and to focus on the aspect of sovereign responsibility, because the masses were responsible for electing leaders of the future international order.

#### ***Student Descriptions of Future Anticipation and Futures Foresight in Class Situations***

In the fourth section, students learned that the United Nations was established at the end of World War II, the Security Council and NATO were formed, and the Bretton Woods system was established, which aimed to form an international order to maintain peace, with the United States at its centre. In addition, they learned about the

Cold War structure in which China became a communist regime after World War II, and that the Eastern camp was centred on the Soviet Union (who had supported the Allies in the Russo-German War), the Western camp was centred on the United States, and that the two camps were in conflict with one other.

Students further learned that in the modern era, China's remarkable economic growth made us realize that dissatisfaction with U.S.-centred international order and Russia's restorationist rise had the potential to shake up the peaceful international order. For example, in the event of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan, it is conceivable that a world war could break out with the United States and Japan on Taiwan's side and Russia and North Korea on China's side.

Based on their pre-war studies and the postwar process of shaping the international order, students were asked to envision a third World War and to anticipate its specific effects in Japan, the world, and our own lives. In order to have students envision the future from the perspective of the contemporary international order, I had them consider the materials related to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the confrontation between the United States and China that has recently become prominent, and asked them to think about the following questions in group activities:-

- How would the international order and our lives change if World War III were to occur in the future?
- Which cities will be bombed and occupied?
- Would Japan's territory (borders) change?
- Would nuclear weapons be used? Yes/No
- What would be the impact on the world economy?
- Which country will be the centre of the world after World War III, and how will it be affected?
- How will our lives change?
- If World War III were to happen, where would you be living in 2030?

Through the discussion, students realized that the postwar international order is similar to the current situation in Ukraine and East Asia. They also shared that the historical confrontation between the Soviet Union and NATO was the basis for the current situation in Ukraine, and that Japan's peaceful situation in East Asia has become less secure. They envisioned how the rise of China would affect the international situation in East Asia, and discussed the specific impact of a world war in the present day, based on what they had learned so far.

The students had never engaged in an activity that asked them to envision the future, and they initially struggled with it. However, they gradually developed their own vision of World War III by sharing their opinions with each other, and applying the dialogue-based learning they had developed through the jigsaw method.

The students concluded that World War III would be caused by China, Russia, the U.S., and other nations, that the scale of the war would exceed that of World War II, and most students believed that the use of nuclear weapons was a possibility. They also concluded that Japan would be involved in the war, and that Tokyo, Osaka, Aichi, Hong Kong, and Beijing were among the major cities that would be bombed. In response to the question "Where will you be living in 2030?" some responded that they would live underground or in enclosed spaces to escape nuclear weapons, on remote islands in Japan, or in other countries. They named the U.S., China, Russia, and others as the central postwar countries. Figure 1 illustrates the students' conception of World War III.

Students' conceptualizations suggested that they had made future anticipations based on their study of historical factors, including the world economy, political leaders, and World War II's devastating consequences.



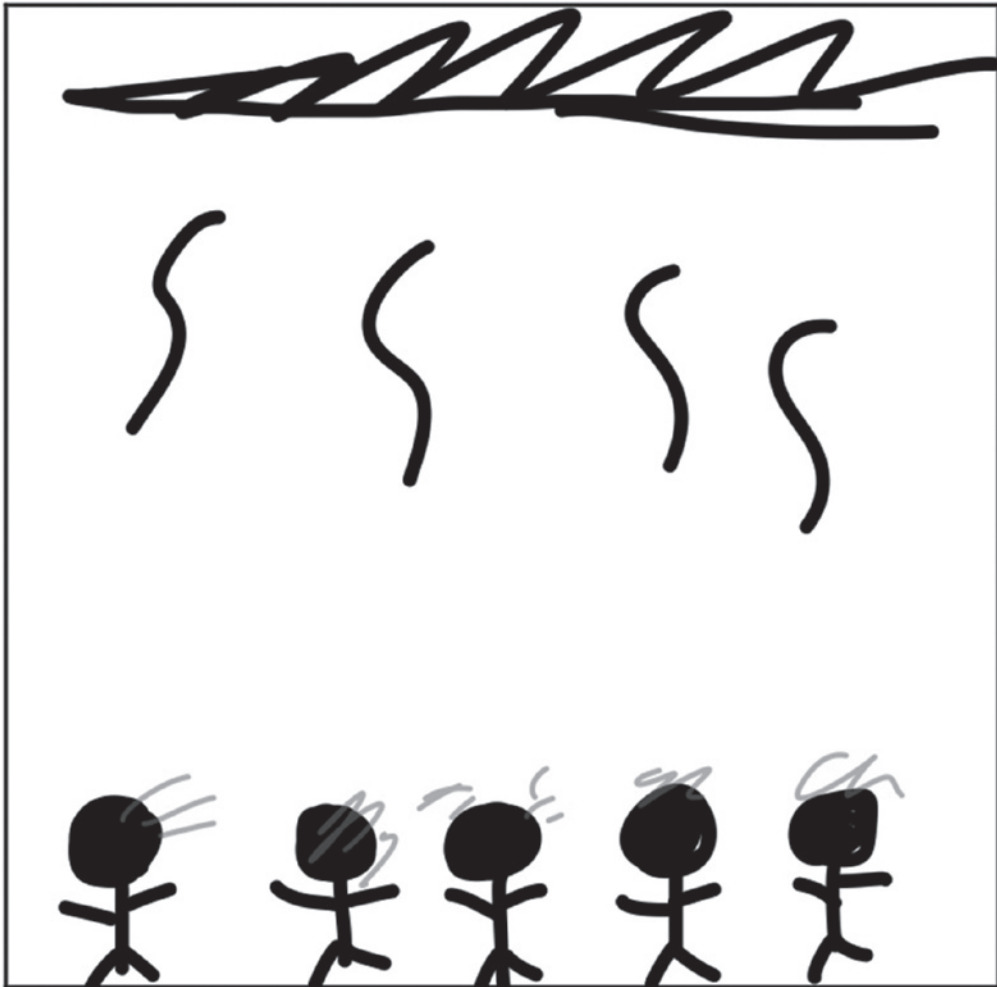


Figure 1. Image of World War III (Created by student)

In the final stage, futures foresight, students first shared their own vision of the future World War III, and then developed expert and jigsaw activities based on the three questions related to futures foresight to envision a future in which World War III was avoided. This required that they understood the specific future in which World War III would occur from multiple perspectives, and that the foundation for futures foresight was first solidified through sharing within the group. The futures envisioned by such foresight was shared among the group as a whole, and a discussion was organized to summarize the unit.

Table 3 shows students' responses to the expert activities. Many responses indicated that, even if a world war was avoided, concerns about war would not be allayed, and an international order that realized long-term peace had not yet been formed. In this respect, students were unable to envision an ideal, preferable future, but they were actively considering the complexity of the contemporary situation.

Table 3. Student Answers to the Futures Foresight Expert Activity

Question	Student's Answer
What kind of future is the year 2030 in which World War III is averted?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• War will happen again after 2030.</li> <li>• The U.S. or Russia will be the hegemonic power.</li> <li>• The world will be in a state of cold war and people will be frightened.</li> <li>• The world powers will become weak.</li> <li>• The relationship between countries will deteriorate, but there will be no war.</li> <li>• The draft will be issued, and war will be possible at any time.</li> </ul>
Why was a world war averted? What kind of international order did the world aim for?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solve problems through discussion.</li> <li>• Japan, the U.S., etc. appeal the disadvantages of war</li> <li>• Leaders of countries changed, and the idea of helping each other spread.</li> <li>• International relations to help each other.</li> <li>• Leaders of countries that tried to go to war were assassinated.</li> </ul>
What would be different in our lives in a future that avoids World War III, compared to our lives in 2030, the year of World War III?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Japanese and English are spoken.</li> <li>• Globalization will progress.</li> <li>• Cultures of other countries will be introduced.</li> <li>• Prices will return to normal.</li> <li>• No domination by other countries, no change in currency, language, or culture</li> <li>• Not so different from now</li> </ul>

Created by the author.

At this stage, through the sharing of opinions, students could envision futures in which difficult situations are overcome. Given that the causes of conflicts among nations have been historically formed, the students proposed futures in which humanity, as a whole, aims for peaceful coexistence through an attitude of continually searching for a point of agreement through dialogue. The United Nations' sustainable development goals (SDGs) had never been discussed in previous lessons, but the students unexpectedly proposed a future in 2030 in which all of the SDGs had been achieved.

- A world without war, colonies, or starvation.
- All the SDGs will be achieved.
- A world without fear of nuclear weapons.
- Globalization is progressing and technology is advancing throughout the world.
- Nuclear power will not be used as weapons, but will lead us in the right direction for the future and the environment.
- When countries are in an emergency situation, each country will help the others to reduce economic disparity.
- A future in which each country values its own culture and builds relationships of mutual support.

Figure 2 shows the students drawing a scenario where World War III is avoided; Figure 3 shows them drawing a world that avoided World War III. The students' vision of the future included a proposal for equal relations among nations, which was not bound by their individual interests. This was an opinion that critically

re-examined a world that was centred on the hegemonic states that they had studied up to this point.

In the general sharing session, opinions converged toward an international relationship that aims for peace. This was peace based on correcting disparities and relationships of mutual support, and aimed toward a world beyond the framework of nations. Finally, the author explained that the future visions they had proposed could be organized into two opposing axes: “World War III” and “peace,” and “anti-globalization” and “globalization.” (Figure 4)



Figure 2. Images of a Future in which World War III Is Avoided (Created by student)



Figure 3. Worlds that Avoided World War III (Created by student)

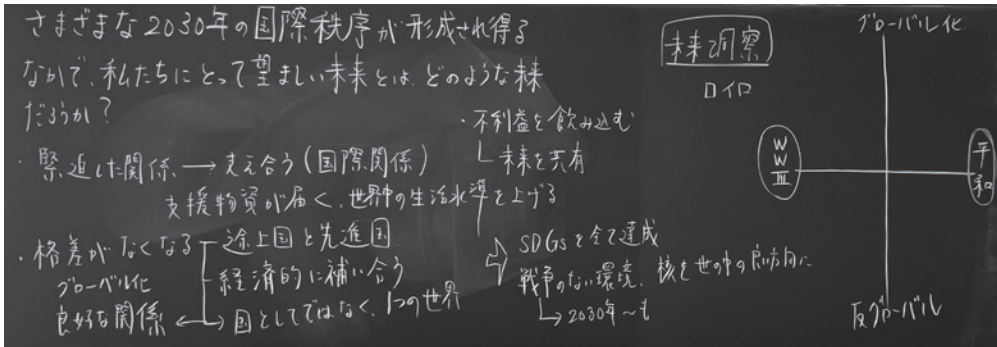


Figure 4. Preferable Future Envisioned by Students (Taken by the author.)

## Discussion

This section presents some considerations based on classroom practice. The lesson questionnaire was designed to answer the question, “How does history study contribute to the development of the qualities and abilities to envision a preferable future?”

The questionnaire comprised questions and impressions of the lesson. The questions were meant to confirm the effectiveness of the lesson and changes in the students’ perception of the future. Lesson effectiveness indicates that students understood the connection between history and modern society, and learned how to envision the future through historical learning. The first question was: “Did you gain a deep understanding of the relationship between history and modern society from the lesson?” The purpose of this question was to analyse whether students were motivated to learn history by confirming their understanding of the connection between history and modern society. The second question asked, “Do you think you have learned how to think about the future from your study of history?” This intended verify whether students were able to understand how to think about the future from history and acquire this as a skill. The third question: “Are you interested in thinking about the future?” intends to see how students’ interest in the future changed through the class, and whether they were able to realize the significance of futures foresight.

The impressions of the lesson examined factors that increased the lesson’s effectiveness, and analysed how students who responded with “I have learned how to envision the futures.” It viewed the contribution of history learning to their envisioning of the future. Although the lesson itself used learning history as a method to envision a preferable future, it is possible that the students saw a different role for the history syllabus than what was depicted in the lessons. The role of history learning in futures foresight was clarified by categorizing and organizing various student perceptions.

The questionnaire results are shown in Figure 5. For the first question, “Did you gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between history and modern society from the lesson?”, the percentage of students who answered “yes” increased from 81.1% before the lesson to 91% after the lesson, an increase of 10 percentage points. For the second question, “Do you think you have learned how to think about the future from your study of history?” the percentage who answered “Yes” increased from 46.8% before the lesson to 83.8% after the lesson, an increase of 37 percentage points. Finally, for the third question, “Are you interested in thinking about the future?” the percentage of students who answered “yes” increased from 62.2% before the

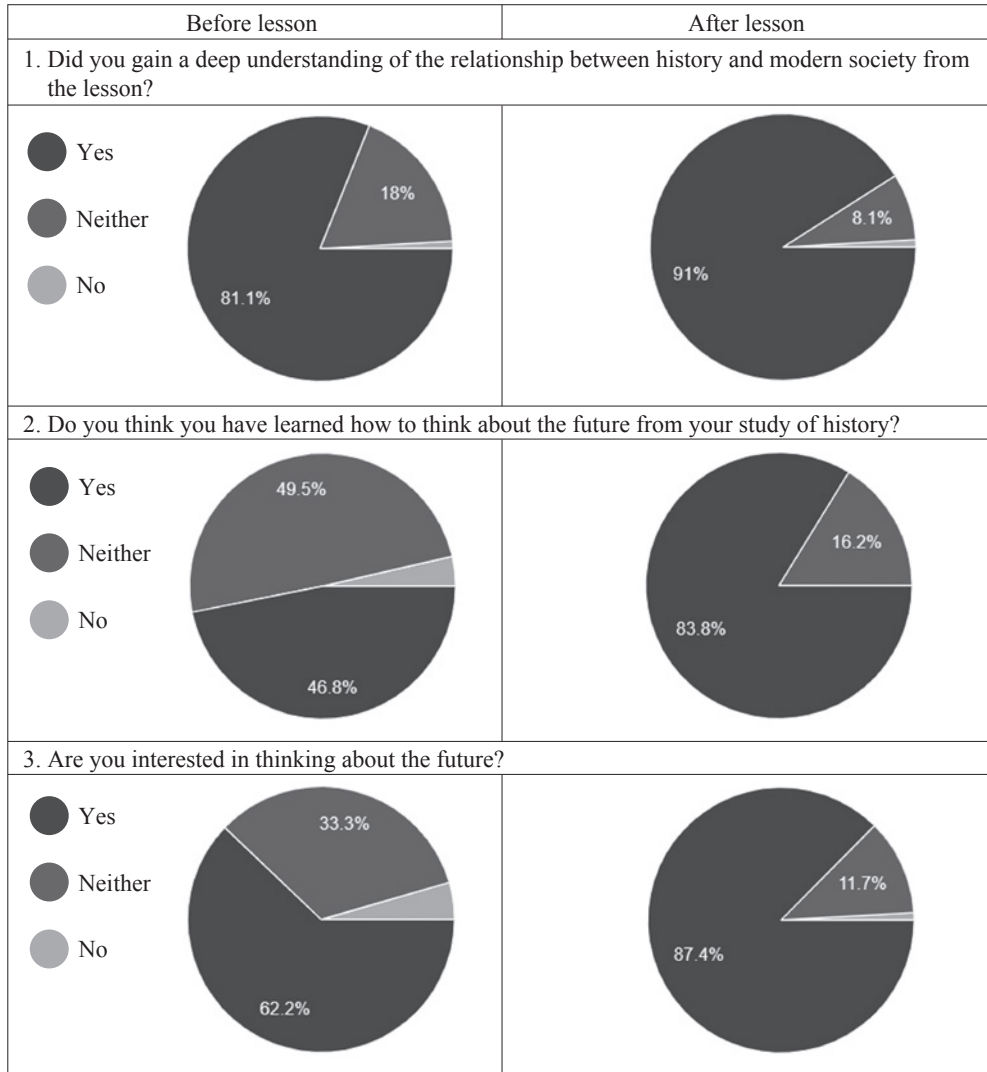


Figure 5. Lesson Questionnaire Results (Created by the author)

lesson to 87.4% after the lesson, an increase of 24 percentage points. These results indicate that most students felt that they had gained a deeper understanding of the relationship between history and modern society, acquired a way to think about the future, and found an increased interest in the future through the study of history.

The reasons underlying these results are apparent in the students' impressions, which showed how they perceive history learning in relation to the present and the future. The students' impressions were: "I have a deeper understanding of the relationship between history and modern society by looking at the documents and other materials"; "I am glad that I could understand the linkage by looking at the materials." These can be interpreted as how the participants were able to recognize the connection between the past and the present through the materials that link history and the present and through the opinions of others in the group work.

The impressions indicating that students learned how to think about the future from their history study included: “I now understand that the past is now connected to the futures”; and “In envisioning the worst possible futures in which World War III would occur, or in thinking about an ideal future, history has lessons and failures from the past, so I was able to learn history and have a better understanding from it.” These responses show that students recognized the connection between the past, present, and future, and learned how to gain foresight into the futures by viewing history learning as a lesson.

Regarding their increased interest in thinking about the future, the students said, “I was able to connect past events with my present life and think about the future beyond this point in time”; “I thought it was very important to study history so that we can think about the futures five or ten years from now”; and “I now understand the importance of studying history with an eye toward the futures.” These responses indicate that students realized the importance of thinking about the future as a result of learning to think about the futures from the history study.

Analysing students’ responses regarding the lessons allowed me to classify their impressions about the future into six categories: interest, keenness, lessons learned, relevance, temporal connection, and rarity. The explanations for each category are shown in Table 4.

Students’ interest in the future was enhanced by how they thought about the future through their study of history; keenness indicates that students could consider contemporary issues as their own; lessons learned means that they felt that it was important to apply past mistakes to the futures; relevance means that they felt that it was important to think about the futures through history; temporal continuity means that they saw the connection between the past, present, and future; and rarity refers to the value of the learning opportunity to learn about the future itself. The largest number of students in this category saw the future as a lesson, and some elements, such as keenness and relevance, which are important to understanding contemporary issues, were also observed. Some comments could be classified as reflecting rarity, indicating that students did not have many opportunities to think about the future.

The question “How does history study contribute to the development of the qualities and abilities to envision a preferable future?” indicates that history learning contributes to envisioning a preferable future by raising students’ interest in the future and raising their keenness for various contemporary issues. It helped them realize the temporal connection between the past, present, and future, using history learning as a lesson learned. In addition, the findings showed that opportunities for learning activities that facilitate envisioning the futures from history learning are rare in Japan.

What does futures foresight in history education look like? At the end of the lesson that envisioned a future in which World War III was avoided, the students were asked, “What attitudes and actions are required of us, the masses, in order to realize a preferable future?” Student responses are shown in Table 5, and included, “To be interested in the problems of the international community and to think about the future proactively as the masses of the people.” This indicates that by studying modern and contemporary history, students developed an attitude of perceiving contemporary issues as their own and attempting to solve them. The responsible action that each student should take is more appropriate to civic studies than history studies. It is also possible to connect this to geography.

In other words, understanding contemporary issues with a view to solving them and envisioning a preferable future through history study will motivate students to take action to solve these civic and geographical

Table 4. Student Comments and Classification in Class Questionnaire (Created by the author)

Classification	Impression
Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was interesting to see the future by studying history in depth.</li> <li>• I thought it was interesting to study history not only by learning about the past, but also by imagining the future.</li> </ul>
Keenness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I thought that history led me to think about the future in unexpected ways.</li> <li>• I was able to think about how the world would change due to wars and it seemed familiar to me when I thought about the story assuming that World War III might happen, and I was able to think about it carefully. I was also able to think about the impact of war on each country.</li> <li>• I could understand how dangerous Japan is now. I sometimes thought that I was exaggerating a little when I thought about the future, but if I thought about the loss of peace like we have now, I would not be able to say such a thing.</li> </ul>
Lessons learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I used to think that history was just something to look back on, but through this lesson, I felt that history is something to learn in order to look back on what has happened in the past and think about what we should do for the future.</li> <li>• I learned that we can gain foresight into the future by studying past history.</li> <li>• I also felt that past failures and present failures are similar.</li> <li>• I thought that we must not make the same mistakes in the future and bring ruin.</li> <li>• I learned that in order to prevent wars from happening in the future, we need to think about the future from the perspective of history.</li> <li>• I thought that the key to preventing world wars is how we can apply the lessons from the past to the future.</li> </ul>
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have mainly learned about past events in history, but I felt that it is also important to think about the future.</li> <li>• It makes me feel more uneasy that 2030 is so close to the future. It is difficult to anticipate the future when I am 24 years old.</li> </ul>
Temporal connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I was able to connect past events with my present life and think about what the future holds.</li> </ul>
Rarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was a new experience for me because I have never thought about future events from the perspective of history.</li> <li>• It was very good because it was a good opportunity to think about the future.</li> </ul>

Table 5. Student Answers on Worksheet (Created by the author)

Question	Student's Answers
What attitudes and actions are required of the masses in order to realize a preferable future?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The masses, who have great power, should think about peace and keep their individual opinions, for and against, etc.</li> <li>• To be interested in the politics of the country.</li> <li>• To make international problems accessible to the people.</li> <li>• The whole nation should think and act proactively for the future.</li> <li>• To be aware that the problems happening in the world are not someone else's business but our own, and to be more motivated to think about politics.</li> <li>• Even though we cannot forget the past and the unforgettable history of discrimination in the past, I think it is necessary for society as a whole to come to terms with each other's problems and work together to solve them.</li> </ul>

issues. Therefore, it is important to bridge this concept of history learning to civics and geography studies. It is necessary to clearly position history, geography, and civics studies in responsible action, and futures foresight type learning, and to view it from the perspective of social studies education.

## Conclusion

In a VUCA age, school education play an important role in helping students to develop qualities and abilities that facilitate envisioning a preferable future.

This study conducted a lesson practice that focused on futures foresight through history study. The lesson comprised of learning activities that used materials and dialogues to look at the future from the past. This helped students become aware of multiple perspectives and the temporal connections between the past, present, and future. It also allowed them to build a community through communication with their peers.

In this study, the following two things were found.

1. Increasing students' interest in the future and keenness toward contemporary issues, and helping them realize the temporal connection between the past, present, and future, contributes to envisioning a preferable future by using history learning as a lesson.
2. Futures foresight type learning needs to be clearly positioned in history, geography, and civics learning, and to be viewed from the perspective of social studies education.

Futures studies that build on this should propose futures foresight learning for civics and geography studies. In futures foresight learning, it is necessary to clarify the roles of history, geography, and civics learning, and to accumulate class practice research. By doing so, it is possible to relate each of these studies, and construct a research system for futures foresight learning from the perspective of social studies education as a whole.

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