

Briefing Memo

Kazushige Ugaki as an Education Reformer

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Introduction

UGAKI Kazushige was one of the most prominent military personnel in the Imperial Japanese Army during the Taisho and pre-war Showa periods. While he was Minister of the Army, the highest rank in the military government, Ugaki cooperated with the policy of the party cabinet and eliminated four divisions through the so-called “Ugaki Disarmament.” Even after transferring to the military reserve force, given his political skills, he held several positions including Governor-General of Korea and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and was also considered to be a candidate for Prime Minister. Due to his career trajectory, existing studies on Ugaki have mostly focused on just one aspect of his life as a military and political leader.¹

However, Ugaki began his military career in 1908, serving as a section staff at the Inspectorate General of Military Training, which oversees army education. This was followed by stints as the Chief of the First Section of the Inspectorate General of Military Training, Principal of Infantry School, Principal of the Imperial Japanese Army War College, and Director of the Inspectorate General of Military Training, all roles in the field of education, albeit intermittently. Furthermore, while serving as Minister of the Army, he launched an educational program in which some officers were dispatched to the Departments of Literature, Economics, and Law at the Imperial University of Tokyo. This program sought to train future army leaders who could play active roles in a total war.² Such a program gives a glimpse of his capabilities as an education reformer. Nonetheless, there has been no prosopography on Ugaki that has focused on his career as an education reformer, and thus, there is little discussion on how Ugaki used his thoughts and experiences to launch the dispatch program.

This paper examines and analyzes Ugaki’s personal thoughts and experiences leading up to his establishment of the dispatch program, using the publication known as *Ugaki Kazushige Nikki* with entries beginning in 1902 as a clue, to discuss UGAKI Kazushige as a reformer of education.

1. From the focus on civil-military relations to the ideal commissioned officers

Ugaki considered civil-military relations from the standpoint of a military leader.

While studying abroad in Germany in 1903, he was surprised by the fact that German people would start “seriously” engaging in “army-like” gymnastics in primary school and stated his impression as follows. It would not be possible to train “perfect soldiers” by giving only three years of military education. Accumulation of 20 years of education would make “soldiers with strength and endurance.”³ Ugaki was already conscious about the civil-military relations during this study in Germany.

In 1914, World War I broke out. In 1915, Military Section Chief Ugaki stated the job of general school educators was to foster good citizens who could become good soldiers. He also asserted that if the army made no mistakes in instructing many young people joining the army every year, they would become “the best friends of the army.” Having such a view on civil-military relations, Ugaki took pride in the fact that he had actually made efforts in “disseminating military thoughts” and the civil-military “integration” towards the people for “many years” by the time he was appointed as the Military Section Chief in January 1915.⁴ In 1916, Ugaki, now the Principal of the Infantry School as of August 1915, made clear the matters to be conducted over the next few years and claimed the necessity for further dissemination of military thoughts and unification of the physical education of military personnel and civilians. He felt the idea that “national defense must be conducted based on national unity” widely spread to every citizen due to the “current great war,” and such an impression must be promoted further.⁵ During the third year of the war, Ugaki continued to ponder civil-military relations as the extension of his previous experiences of studying in Germany.

However, during the last year of the great war (1918) when Ugaki served as the First Division Chief at the General Staff Office, his thoughts began to change. He stated that wars of the future would be battles of organizational cohesion (civilization) of all the intelligence, financial strength, and efforts of the people, and that Germany was essentially fighting in this way in the current war.⁶ In addition, he remarked further that “common sense training” would be needed for commissioned officers not just to enhance their sociability but to gain knowledge in various fields to identify what are the qualities and qualifications that good citizens should have.⁷ In other words, with a clear perception of the great war as a so-called total war and with an eye on future similar conflicts, Ugaki had come to think that the military leaders should

know more about the ordinary people, instead of only unilaterally disseminating the thoughts of the military to the public as had been previously done.

2. In front of the critical eyes of the people

In November 1918, Germany surrendered. Ugaki, Chief of the First Division at the General Staff Office, described the fact of Germany's defeat as caused by the betrayal of certain citizens, calling this a "crucial matter" that should serve as a warning for Japan.⁸ Nations in post-war Europe strongly sought democratization and international peace. Meanwhile, in Japan, democracy and pacifist enlightenment movements against despotism and militarism were developed by scholars, and after 1919, socialism, particularly Marxism, became popular in discussion forums.⁹ Against the background of these developing social situations both in and outside of Japan, the ways in which the people saw military forces and personnel began to change.

In April 1919, Ugaki was appointed Principal of the Imperial Japanese Army War College. Describing the changes in the ways that the people saw the military forces and personnel, he mentioned that the idea of blaming German "militarism" had come back as a boomerang, causing a slight tendency to "curse" even the "loyal and courageous" Japanese ground and naval force personnel. He also said that while most people in Japan naturally recognized the "need for healthy military presence," such a need seemed to be almost forgotten in "a certain group of people."¹⁰ Furthermore, towards the end of 1919, Ugaki described as a "general reflection" that "modulation of the ideological world" and "pressure on life" due to soaring prices were "greater" than his prediction. He then showed his concern that even if it did not appear significantly on the "outside" at that time, it seemed "internally" quite "deeply rooted."¹¹

In this way, it is assumed that the people began to criticize instead of praise military forces and personnel, especially as the memory of military glory in the Shino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War began to fade away during the Taisho period (1912-1926), and against the backdrop of the democracy and pacifist enlightenment movements against despotism and militarism. Ugaki was concerned about these changes with the factors and causes of German defeat in mind.

Meanwhile, Ugaki was pondering how civil-military relations could be strengthened in those situations. As the Principal of the Imperial Japanese Army War College, Ugaki remarked in 1919 that most of the members of the military forces were "young people." Unless leaders understood the "psychological condition of those young people," both "teaching and guiding

them to good” and “using them,” let alone sending them into tough and dangerous situations to play active roles, were not possible. Therefore, Ugaki stated that maintaining both physical and mental youthfulness is important for military leaders, while at the same time these leaders must improve their leadership by “having contact with new persons and academic knowledge.”¹² Moreover, in 1920, he stated that the “national spirit is the basis of armed forces” and it is the “source of morale.” He saw “the people and the military forces are united as one,” and thus, the people and the military forces should not be separated and must “cooperate in unison to carry out the purpose of the war.” To this end, it is “essential” that “great” leaders successfully “teach and unify” people’s feelings and thoughts,¹³ and Ugaki emphasized the necessity of having strong leadership for civil-military unity. In this way, considering that the German defeat was caused by the German people turning themselves away from the military forces, Ugaki tried to bring about civil-military unity not just by understanding the public well but also through strong leadership.

During the same period, in May 1919, *Kokka Sodo in ni Kansuru Iken* (Opinions on National Mobilization), which should be described as the final and concluding account of war studies conducted in the Imperial Japanese Army and was likely written by Army Major NAGATA Tetsuzan,¹⁴ was published. The author described many important views in the book. “Fusion and unison” among the three parties of “civil/military officials and private sectors” (civilian officials, military personnel, and the private sector) would be required for a total war, and the professions of all the actors involved must be understood by all. For example, military personnel are required not only to be “accomplished in pure military matters” but also to “possess” legal and economic “knowledge” with a reasonable understanding of the “industrial situations” and “social circumstances.” In the same way, the non-military public must not be complacent about the “superficial military knowledge that they previously had.” If there is no “mutual” understanding of the profession among the “academia, the military sector, and the public and private sectors” and it remains unchanged in the future, there would be little hope in realizing “inseparable” cooperation in situations.¹⁵ For this reason, the book asserted the necessity for education reforms for commanding officers in the army and for the general public.¹⁶

Shortly after *Kokka Sodo in ni Kansuru Iken* was published, Ugaki, as the Principal of the Imperial Japanese Army War College, remarked that of course “research focusing on technology” would be “urgently needed” in future military studies, but “research focusing on humans” would also be equally or even more “urgently required.” In the military studies, “research focusing on humans” had been undervalued. He mentioned that “research focusing

on humans” with “a close relationship with military affairs” would include psychology, sociology, pedagogy, fiscal economics, and history, and further pointed out the necessity for the Army War College to become much more “nationalized” and “socialized” in the future. Although it was sufficient that military personnel received a “military education” in the past wars and became a “military personnel to be outside and detached from society,” in a total war where forces would fight “with all the wisdom and omnipotence of the country,” military personnel, particularly those in leadership positions, must understand “the general social circumstances as a whole.” In other words, Ugaki claims that “it is not ideal if military personnel are isolated from the real world.”¹⁷

As shown above, in the post-war period, against a background of ever-changing social situations in Japan and overseas, the Japanese people were beginning to become critical of military forces and personnel. With the cause of German defeat in mind, Ugaki was concerned about these changes in public perception of the military forces and personnel, and asserted the need for strong leadership, in addition to the military understanding the public well, to achieve civil-military unity. At the same time, *Kokka Sodojin ni Kansuru Iken* was published. Ugaki agreed with the views expressed in this book and stated that future army leaders in a total war must learn military-related psychology, pedagogy, and other similar areas, in addition to specialized fields in military affairs, to become familiar with social circumstances and not be isolated from the general public. In addition, Ugaki was inspired by this book to further expand and deepen his thoughts and perspectives on the ideals of army leaders who would be able to play active roles in a total war, taking comprehensive views on this topic.

3. Inauguration as the Director of the Inspectorate General of Military Training and the Minister of the Imperial Japanese Army

In May 1922, Ugaki was appointed Director of the Inspectorate General of Military Training, substantially supervising the entirety of the organization, and submitted a proposal with the following purposes drafted by his subordinates to the Military Section of the Military Affairs Bureau, Ministry of the Army.¹⁸ According to Ugaki, young people had become quite skeptical and critical, and would not approve “blind acceptance” but would ask for explanations for every traditional “custom” and “traditional moral.” He stated that due to the “invasion” of “unhealthy” “principles and theories” such as socialist thought, Japanese “national thought” tended to be disturbed, and today, commissioned officers without backgrounds in the “sciences of the mind” such as psychology and pedagogy would never be able to become leaders of military education in today’s society in which there are many matters to deal with including

social trends and youth preferences. Ugaki continued and further asserted that some commissioned officers should be sent to the College of Literature at the Tokyo Imperial University to study “sciences of the mind” in order to contribute to the teaching of “general commissioned officers” and the improvement of other aspects of military education. His plan was to let commissioned officers, leaders of military education, study “sciences of the mind” and improve educational effects of military education using knowledge from sciences of the mind. In fact, this proposal had actually been submitted to the Military Section even before Ugaki took the office of the Director; however, a new budget for dispatch personnel had been rejected, and thus, the plan was being implemented within the existing budget of the Inspectorate General of Military Training.

It is surmised that the dispatch plan of 1923 that Ugaki submitted as the Director of the Inspectorate General of Military Training was also rejected by the Military Section, and in the end, the dispatch was carried out within the existing budget of the organization.¹⁹ Facing the public opinion that was calling for the disarmament of the Army following the Navy, Minister of the Army YAMANASHI Hanzo carried out disarmament of the Army twice, in 1922 and 1923. This was the so-called “Yamanashi Disarmament.” In such an environment, it was extremely unlikely for the proposal by the Inspectorate General of Military Training, which required new budgetary measures, to be approved.

In 1922, Director Ugaki commented on the Yamanashi Disarmament as follows. He stated that the disarmament would involve only a small number of adoptions of new weapons but it is better than doing nothing. Similarly, no sophisticated means were found in the personnel administration, which started to take shape but was still a “half-way job.” In particular, leaving education “reform” untouched should be described literally as an act of shrinking the army, rather than “reorganization,” no matter how it was excused. He continued that to prevent a decline in the ability of the army, placing energy into education would be an urgent matter to be addressed before anything else. The lack of reform would never bring “true reorganization.” Even with the Inspectorate General of Military Training, which supervises and manages the education systems, the state was not satisfactory as it stood. Ugaki sighed this way.²⁰ In March 1923, after the FY1923 dispatch plan was rejected by the Military Section, Ugaki also remarked that despite the education-related problems occurring within the ordinary Japanese society, within the army only those other than “a few intellectuals” were aware of the situation. Education itself after all tends to be treated as a “secondary matter.” While Ugaki described the army authority’s reluctant attitude towards education as regrettable, he also displayed a

positive attitude towards the reform effort, saying “Soon the time will come when the army will follow the masses of society. I am doing my best in this regard.”²¹

In October 1923, Ugaki was appointed Under Secretary of the Imperial Japanese Army and worked to respond to the Great Kanto Earthquake that had occurred in September of that year. In January 1924, KIYOURA Keigo’s cabinet was inaugurated and Ugaki assumed the post of the Minister of the Army.

In February 1924, Minister of the Army Ugaki received a written notice from the Inspectorate General of Military Training that allowed him to dispatch the first four personnel to the College of Literature at the Tokyo Imperial University beginning in April with the purpose of contributing to “military education and commissioned officer education.” Ugaki later began to dispatch more officers to the Colleges of Law and Economics at the same university. The integration of these dispatch projects was undertaken at his initiative, which later also included the dispatch project to the College of Literature.²² In explaining the purpose of the dispatch program, Ugaki stated that the future wars would mostly be of a form called “a total war,” except for special and unusual cases, and that they would be an “almighty and all-powerful confrontation conflict,” which can be classified as “armed warfare, ideological warfare, and economic warfare.” He continued that although military personnel including himself should be primarily responsible for matters belonging to the range of “armed warfare,” sufficient effects would not be achieved by working “individually” and being separated from the other two classifications. It would only be possible to demonstrate the country’s “true power” if the actors from the three classifications worked together in cooperation. He mentions that “I let young, commissioned officers audit and study philosophy, education, and politics under my initiative in preparation for responding to this ‘total war,’”²³ and he launched the dispatch program specifically to train future army leaders who would take active roles in a total war.

Conclusion

Since before the outbreak of the war, Ugaki placed an emphasis on civil-military relations and strived to realize the “integration” of the two sectors. Having recognized great wars as a total war, he began considering that commissioned officers, who were the military leaders, should also know more about the ordinary people, instead of only unilaterally disseminating the thoughts of the military to the public.

After the war, against a background of ever-changing social situations in Japan and overseas, the Japanese people were beginning to become critical of military forces and personnel. With

the cause of German defeat in mind, Ugaki was concerned about these changes in public perception of the military forces and personnel, and asserted the need for strong leadership, in addition to the military understanding the public well, to achieve civil-military unity.

Afterwards, *Kokka Sodojin ni Kansuru Iken* (Opinions on National Mobilization), written by NAGATA Tetsuzan (Army Major) who was in a lower rank than Ugaki (Army Major General), was published. Ugaki agreed with the views expressed in this book and stated that future army leaders in a total war must learn military-related psychology, pedagogy, and other similar areas, in addition to specialized fields in military affairs, to become familiar with social circumstances and not be isolated from the general public. In addition, Ugaki was inspired by this book to further expand and deepen his thoughts and perspectives on the ideals of army leaders who would be able to play active roles in a total war, taking comprehensive views on this topic.

After having been appointed Director of the Inspectorate General of Military Training, Ugaki as the Director instructed to implement a proposal drafted by his subordinates for dispatching some officers to the College of Literature at the Imperial University of Tokyo as auditors to study, with the aim of improving educational effects of military education. At the same time, he described the army authority's reluctant attitude towards education as regrettable, and also displayed his positive attitude towards the reform efforts for the situation. When Ugaki assumed the post of Minister of the Army, he began pushing through various measures based on the thoughts and experiences that he had accumulated. While using the proposal on dispatching commissioned officers to the Imperial University of Tokyo drafted by his subordinates when he was at the Inspectorate General of Military Training as a prototype, Ugaki promoted the dispatch program under the initiative of the Minister of the Army and included the Colleges of Law and Economics in the dispatch destinations to train the leaders of the army who would play active roles in a total war.

As has been discussed in this paper, UGAKI Kazushige as an education reformer did not satisfy the situation that he was in even after he had become a senior officer, always actively considered the situation, capturing the ever-changing trends of the era, and had a positive and flexible attitude towards making efforts to absorb and execute the opinions and ideas that he heard from others even though they were lower-ranked officers than himself. He maintained such a positive attitude while he was Minister of the Army, never became an idle of authority,²⁴ and put into practice his long-term conviction.

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¹ For example, relevant publications include: TAKASUGI Yohei, *Ugai Kazushige to Senkanki no Nihon Seiji* (UGAKI Kazushige and Japanese Politics in the Interwar Period), (Yoshida Shoten, 2015); KITAOKA Shinichi, *Kanryosei to shite no Nihon Rikugun* (The Imperial Japanese Army as Bureaucracy), (Chikumashobo, 2012), “Dai 4-sho, Ugaki Kazushige no 15 nen senso hihan” (Chapter 4. UGAKI Kazushige’s criticism against the fifteen years’ war); TOBE Ryoichi, *Showa no Shidosha* (Political Leaders in the Showa era) (Chuokoron-Shinsha, 2019), “Horon: Ugaki Kazushige taibo ron” (Supplement: long-awaited UGAKI Kazushige”; TSUNOTA Jun, *Seiji to Gunji – Meiji, Taisho, Showa-shoki no Nihon* (Politics and Military – Japan in the Meiji, Taisho, and early Showa eras), (Kofusha Shuppan, 1987) “4. Taisho demokurashi no hokai to Kazushige Ugaki” (Collapse of Taisho democracy and UGAKI Kazushige) and “5. Shoron Kazushige Ugaki” (An essay on UGAKI Kazushige).

² YAMAGUCHI Masaya, “Inauguration of Institution of Japanese Military Dispatch Student in Tokyo Imperial University,” *The Journal of historical Studies: The Politico-Economic History*, Vol. 601 (January 2017).

Hereinafter, in this paper, “Commissioned officer” is used to refer to military personnel with the rank higher than second lieutenant.

³ UGAKI Kazushige (proofread by TSUNODA Jun), *Ugaki Kazushige Nikki* (The Diary of UGAKI Kazushige), I, (Misuzu Shobo, 1968), p. 17.

⁴ The description about Ugaki during the period of the Military Section Chief in 1915 is based on *ibid.*, p.101.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁹ OKA Yoshitake, *Tenkanki no Taisho* (Taisho era, the Turning Point), (Iwanami Bunko, 2019), p. 182-188.

¹⁰ *Ugaki Kazushige Nikki* (The Diary of UGAKI Kazushige), I, p. 208 and 236

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 237-238.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 211.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 266-267.

¹⁴ SHIDO Yasuaki (ed.), *Tetsuzan Nagata Chujo* (Lieutenant General NAGATA Tetsuzan), (Kobayashi Matashichi Honten, 1938), p. 151.

¹⁵ Temporary Military Affairs Investigation Commission, *Kokka Sodojin ni Kansuru Iken* (Opinions on National Mobilization), (The Ministry of the Army, 1920), p. 77.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 111-117.

¹⁷ *Ugaki Kazushige Nikki* (The Diary of UGAKI Kazushige), I, p. 296 and p. 298-299. Since the description on page 285 includes “May 1920,” clearly it is a description written after *Kokka Sodojin ni Kansuru Iken* (Opinions on National Mobilization). There is no assertion that areas other than military-related specialized area should also be seen prior to the publication of *Kokka Sodojin ni Kansuru Iken*, but it suddenly becomes apparent after May 1920, which the author of this paper understood as the result of Ugaki having become agreed to and inspired by this publication.

¹⁸ Collection of the National Institute for Defense Studies, *Kyoiku Sokan Bu Dainika Rekishi 1/2 1921 • 1-11 • 10 • 19* (History of the Second Section of the Inspectorate General of Military Training, 1/2, 1921/1-11/10/19) (Historical material: Central, Guntai kyoiku kyoiku-shiryō (Educational historical material for military education), 109), “14.” While this proposal had been created before Ugaki assumed the office of the Director of the Inspectorate General of Military Training, it was submitted twice for the same purpose to the Military Section. According to a tag put at the end of *Kokka Sodojin ni Kansuru Iken* (footnote 16), *Tetsuzan Nagata Chujo* (footnote 14) was attached to the request for the second FY1922 dispatch. In addition, at the beginning of footnote “16,” a tag showing an intention within the Inspectorate General of Military Training to request for the dispatch in FY1923, which was expressed after the FY1922 request had been rejected. From these backgrounds, although historical materials regarding the FY1923 request does not remain, it is assumed that requests with the same purpose as footnote “14” was made even after Ugaki had become the Director.

¹⁹ Collection of the National Institute for Defense Studies, *Kyoiku Sokan Bu Dainika Rekishi 2/2 1923 • 1-14 • 5 • 20* (History of the Second Section of the Inspectorate General of Military Training, 1/2, 1921/1-11/10/19) (Historical material: Central, Guntai kyoiku kyoiku-shiryō (Educational historical material for military education), 110), “51.” In the tag mentioned in the previous footnote “16,” it is written, along with the intention to request for FY1923, at least one officer would be dispatched to study psychology using the existing budget of the Inspectorate General of Military Training if the request was going to be rejected again. “51” is Director Ugaki’s Instruction concerning the FY1923 dispatch, and this instruction shows that a total of two officers were dispatched to study psychology and pedagogy. This means that one officer was actually added to learn pedagogy, but it must be described as an extremely small number, in contrast to the size of dispatch plan officers in footnote “16.” For this reason, it is assumed that FY1923 request was rejected again by the Military Section.

²⁰ *Ugaki Kazushige Nikki* (The Diary of UGAKI Kazushige), I, p. 378.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 411. The FY1923 Dispatch Instruction was issued in March 1923. Considering the timing of the issuance of the Instruction, it is deemed adequate to identify that the remarks in the text was made after the rejection by the Military Section. See “51” in *Kyoiku Sokan Bu Dainika Rekishi 2/2 1923 • 1-14 • 5 • 20* (History of the Second Section of the Inspectorate General of Military Training, 2/2, 1923/1-14/5/20.)

²² YAMAGUCHI Masaya, “Inauguration of Institution of Japanese Military Dispatch Student in Tokyo Imperial University.”

²³ *Ugaki Kazushige Nikki* (The Diary of UGAKI Kazushige), I, p. 473. Similar remarks are also found in post-war recollections. See p. 94 of UGAKI Kazushige and KAMADA Sawaichiro, *Shorai Seidan*, (Bungei Shunju Shinsha, 1951).

²⁴ “Introduction” in TAKAGI Sokichi, *Taiheiyo Senso Kaisen Shi* (History of the Naval Battle in the Pacific War), Revised version, (Iwanami Shoten, 2013). Takagi describes the leaders of the army and the navy during the Showa era that, “They do not think, do not read books, have few people to refute as they become higher-ranked officers, do not have opportunities to be criticized, have become an object in which the god lives at ceremonies, have become an idle of authority and become protected in a greenhouse.”