

# Comprehension issues in japan



COMPREHENSION ISSUES: Politics and Foreign Policy On page 567, McClain asserts that the US-Japan security treaty was “slightly” revised. I

have asserted that no one familiar with the politics of the era (or with the treaty the 1960 treaty replaced) would agree with this. Explain. I would agree with the statement that no one familiar with the politics of the era would agree with the US-Japan security treaty was slightly revised. The US-Japan revised treaty was a huge shift in the power balance towards the US. This was because the security treaty was in reality a military base agreement; it did not contain any formal American obligation to act in the event Japan was attacked.

(2) Why was Kishi unpopular? Why was Tanaka eventually unpopular? Kishi was unpopular due to his promoting the US-Japan security treaty. This was unpopular because the opposition felt that the US was taking advantage of placing military bases on their territory. Tanaka was unpopular because of shady business practices, along with an alcohol problem and hypertension.

(3) Why was the presence of US forces in Okinawa and the rest of Japan viewed as a threat by many Japanese? Japan and the US had been at war a little over a decade before. The Japanese felt that the US was enforcing this peace through the military bases, instead of diplomatic channels. It made the Japanese feel that their sovereignty was being undermined.

COMPREHENSION ISSUES: The Economy

(1) Why do most economists and economic historians (as opposed to generalist or political historians) have doubts that MITI had a large-- or perhaps any-- positive impact on Japan's economic growth? The extent of MITI's control has been greatly exaggerated. Between December 1955 and February 1973, crucial years in Japan's growth, the government had six

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different National Economic Plans for economic growth. In addition, MITI tried to limit Sony's participation in developing the transistor radio. MITI also tried to limit the auto industry. All of these measures were detrimental to Japan's economy.

(2) What are keiretsu, and how are they different from the old zaibatsu?

Keiretsu are the companies formed from the dismantling of the zaibatsu reconnected through share purchases to form horizontally-integrated alliances across many industries. Keiretsu companies would also supply one another, making the alliances combined to some extent. The difference between zaibatsu and keiretsu are zaibatsu were conglomerates, whereas keiretsu operate under free trade.

(3) Describe the lifestyle and the life concerns of the New Middle Class. The New Middle Class had the lifestyle of a nuclear family. They had the propensity to spend. Westernization was also a prevalent trait. Concerns would be working hard, family, and their community.

(4) What was good about the era of high growth for farm families, and what was not? The era was good for employing farm families that wished to migrate to the urban areas. The bad thing about this era was the decline of the farming business as a whole.

(5) How and why have shitamachi families exemplified a cultural alternative to New Middle Class lifestyles and life concerns? How and why are they important politically? The shitamachi families are the blue collar families. Many families live with multi generations in one house or apartment. These people ride the train to work. Their concerns are feeding their families by any means necessary. They also care about their local community. They cannot afford the luxuries of the New Middle Class. However, this community is very

tight knit. This group is important because they vote for urban interests, not farm or rural.

(6) How did the Big Stores Law indirectly harm consumers standard of living?

The Big Stores Law indirectly harmed consumers by putting small business out of business. This made consumer prices higher, hurting the standard of living.

(7) How has farm protectionism harmed the Japanese standard of living? This measure harms the standard of living by not having competitive prices on food. Japanese end up spending more on food, and in taxes subsidizing the farm industry. This makes their standard of living lower.

#### COMPREHENSION ISSUES: Gender and Minorities

(1) What sorts of changes occurred in gender ideas and gender relations in the 1980s and 1990s? More women entered the workforce. This led to the two genders working together more. More laws for equality are being passed as a result.

(2) What are the three major generally recognized minority groups in contemporary Japanese society, and what differences are there in the problems they face? What similarities are there? The Hisabetsu Buraku, Ryukyans, and Ainu are the three minority groups in Japan. The differences between the three are the Hisabetsu Buraku have occupations such as leatherworkers, butchers, and funeral directors. They Ryukyans and Ainu speak distinct languages and have their own cultures. All are discriminate against to extent, but only the Hisabetsu Buraku have a chosen lifestyle.

#### Title: ANALYTIC ISSUES: The Economy

(1) What explains the huge growth in US-Japan trade friction in the 1980s? Why then particularly, rather than another decade? Reganomics and

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Japanese Protectionism had much to do with the US-Japan trade friction. Japanese Protectionism was hurting US trades to Japan, whereas Reganomics was regulating Japanese products that willing American consumers wanted. This happened in the 1980's because of the technology boom.

(2) In the 1980s, numerous books fueling a "trade hysteria" in the US asserted that foreigners were not allowed to own land in Japan, and that foreign businesses were required to have Japanese partners in order to operate here. These things were not, and have never (in the modern era) been true. What, besides the growing trade frictions themselves, do you suppose accounts for these ideas having gotten such circulation?

Propaganda like this is spread by big corporations to scare Americans into buying American. Big corporations do not put out ads like this, but put ads like "Buy American". Then word of mouth helps fuel rumors and gossip.

(3) In total, the average Japanese family in the 1980s spent twice as much on American goods as the average American family spent on Japanese ones. Yet "trade imbalances" were such as to "favor" Japan. (The sizes of the average family in the two countries were roughly the same.) How was this possible? Japanese products are more expensive, more technology based, than American products.

Title: ANALYTICISSUES: Gender and Minorities

(1) There have been large increases in the numbers of white-collar career women, but in fact the Equal Employment Opportunity Law has almost no teeth, and it is extremely difficult to sue anyone for discrimination in Japan (or indeed for anything else). Why, then, have things started to change? The government has finally acknowledged that there is a problem. The Equal

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Employment Opportunity Law is a beginning for further legislation.

(2) The evidence of widespread change in lifetime goals for women in Japan is still not that great, McClain's suggestions to the contrary. Reflecting on this reality, some Japanese feminists have remarked that they still expect little change in the aspirations of Japanese women because they think most women are too bright to want to work at a Japanese company. What do you suppose they are saying? The feminists think that if a man can make more than a woman working for a Japanese company, then women will go after more options that benefit themselves, like working for a foreign company or having a career at home.

(3) Third and fourth generation Koreans in Japan typically do not speak Korean, and are of course physically indistinguishable from most of the people around them. Ainu have heavily intermarried with Japanese, and few speak Ainu. Burakumin are of course linguistically and physically indistinguishable from other Japanese. How is it that problems of discrimination against these groups have persisted? (Why prejudices at all? And what permits discrimination? [In an earlier conference, I of course touched on the matter of the Burakumin.]) Burakumin are discriminated against due to the Buddhist belief of non-killing. Buddhists feel that killing is distasteful, even if it is animals. Dealing with the dead is unclean. Discrimination helps a group feel that they are more important, giving them self esteem. This makes minorities turn into themselves, feeling a pride in their culture. It divides a culture instead of uniting it.