

Japan during us occupation history essay



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In any nation of the world, there come such incidents and historic events which result in changing or altering the dimensions and policies of the nation. These events or happenings sometimes work as a blessing for a nation and sometimes as a curse. When a nation faces the challenges occurring from those incidents with a great deal of courage and nerves, they prove out to be a blessing for the nation as the people of that specific nation get a new dimension which leads to the success of the nation whereas if a nation doesn't manage to face those challenges valiantly and confidently, then they may lead to the collapse of the nation.

Talking about those incidents and historic events, let's mention US occupation of Japan after the World War II which initially seemed like a catastrophe and devastation for the Japanese nation but due to the huge moral and patriotism of Japanese people, it led to such dimensions of success through which the Japanese nation moved towards the heights of success in the next decades. To be accurate, Japan changed during the US occupation due to the fact that representation of the Japanese emperor as a character with all the state powers in his hands was changed by the American General, Douglas MacArthur. This led to the way towards various political, economic and civil value changes occurred due to American government's impact on not only the public but also on all sectors during the US occupation.

American occupation of Japan

Before probing into the issue of discussing the reasons of why Japan changed to a large extent during the US occupation, let's first get to know a brief history of American occupation of Japan. When the World War II ended in

1945, it became a common mission and intent of the allied powers to demilitarize Japan. Molasky (1999) found that America wanted to demilitarize Japan for the purpose of rendering Japan incapable and powerless to come back to the field of war ever again. Molasky and Rabson (200) found that for the purpose of demilitarizing Japan and promoting democracy, United States and the allied powers moved towards the occupation of Japan.

Policy of allied forces

This policy of demilitarization was applied by the allied forces and the steps which were taken in order to achieve this objective were abolishment of Japanese armed forces, dismantling the military industry so that it can't become able to assist the forces of Japan and the next step was elimination or exclusion of the sense of patriotism and devotion from the mind of the public of Japan. Allied forces thought that in this way, they would be able to not only occupy Japan for a long duration but also it would be really workable for the mission of demilitarization of Japan. So, these steps were seen as the primary objectives for the accomplishment of that mission because they thought that if the emotion of patriotism gets excluded from the mind of the Japanese people, it would become very easy for the allied forces to occupy Japan and establish their rule in the country.

American government's view regarding policy

Apart from the decided policy of the allied forces, the government of the United States thought differently from the allied forces' perspective. United States, who was commanding the allied forces, felt that this policy would not be workable and justifiable for the people of Japan. Moore and Robinson (2002) found that General Douglas MacArthur, who was appointed as the

supreme commander of the allied forces, considered bringing Japan to a democratic state from an emperor's state. He thought that rather than having the mission of occupying Japan for a long time, it would be better if the dimension of governance is changed from the one man show to a democratic form of governance because it would not only help in maintaining peace of the world but also would be an appropriate decision for the public of Japan. General MacArthur had a view that aggression and dictatorship should be discouraged all over the world. He had a view that the United States and Great Britain are peaceful countries because they have a democratic form of government rather than the countries like Germany and Japan where dictatorship was at extreme at that time and there was just no democracy in any field of life in those countries. He thought that if democracy is prevailed throughout the world, specifically Japan, then it would be a great effort in promoting and maintaining peace in the world.

American government's view regarding democracy in Japan

McCormack (2001) found that in order to bring democracy in Japan, American government didn't think that bringing democracy in just the government would be enough. There were certain reasons for such thinking by the American government. They thought that democracy should be brought in all institutions regarding every field of life in Japan. We all know that bringing democracy in just political institutions doesn't make any sense because the right of free elections and the right to vote just don't mean democracy. Schaller (1997) found that democracy is something which should be applied in all sectors in order to strengthen the basis of the nation. No political institution can be able to survive when the economic and financial

matters are in few hands. It's necessary to promote democracy all over the nation to enjoy real peace and outcomes of democracy. That is the reason why it was assumed by the American government that democracy should be applied to all institutions including political, social, educational, economic and religious institutions of Japan.

American government believed that bringing democracy in Japan means bringing democracy in all field of life, not just in political institutions. For this purpose, General MacArthur worked in collaboration with the Japanese people and in just few years, tremendous and incredible changes took place in Japan which not only changed the dimensions of Japanese government style but also made Japan progress in all fields of life in the next decades. Schonberger (1989) found that democracy and other related changes not only enabled Japan to progress significantly but also restricted Japan from any sort of battle in the future. Now Japan is also an ally of the United States and despite of the fact that Japan is no more under occupation of the United States, It hasn't changed many policies regarding various political and economic affairs because Japanese know that it is due to those reforms and changes that Japan has gained so much success and development in the present era.

Affect of occupation

The occupation of Japan by the United States of America and the allied forced totally changed the future of Japan. Japan not only got demilitarized but also various reforms took place which enabled the Japanese nation in getting visible success in all fields of life. The occupation altered the face and also the fate of Japan completely. A peaceful and very responsible

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government was formed by the United States during occupation. It was also like an opportunity for the government of America to form a new government because the existing political government was totally defeated both physically and psychologically. All those industries like military industry were closed for the purpose of promoting peace. The general policies regarding Japan were the far eastern commission and an allied council in Tokyo. But due to the tensions between the USSR and some of the western countries, this commission could work up to the level of expectations. That was the reason which brought in the forces of the United States for the purpose of controlling Japan.

But it was not an easy task for the United States to control such a state which is totally different in all aspects of life from the other countries. This was also the first time in history of Japan that a foreign government was ready to take control as Japan had never lost any war before that. Judging all these circumstances, General MacArthur went on to control the complexities of Japanese form of government and with his wise and astute mindset, he was able to not only control Japan but also enabled it to change the current style of government.

General rationale of MacArthur's mission

While talking about US occupation of Japan and changes that were made on Japan due to that occupation, let's also get to know the actual purposes of the General MacArthur's mission in Japan. As we have discussed earlier that one of the main purposes of that occupation was to establish such type of government with such people given the charge who want democracy in their country. To establish a democratic government was one of the major tasks of

the United States government. Next purpose was to make sure that Japan would not ever again become a threat for the peace of the world. Not only this, it was also to be made sure that Japan would not be able to become a threat for the United States and the allied countries again in the future. For that reason, demilitarization of Japan was carried out as the main task by the General MacArthur's mission.

Next purpose was to create individual liberty among the Japanese people and to develop a sense related to the rights of the humans. This was of crucial importance for the Japanese people because the American government thought that once that sense is injected in the minds and hearts of the Japanese people, they would never want to become a trouble for the peace of the world and would like harmony everywhere. The next purpose was to create such a legal or judicial system in Japan which would be able to protect the individual's rights and be able to maintain peace and security regarding every single individual living in Japan. It was a great purpose because we all know that when there is not justice, crimes prevail and security of individuals vanishes away from the country. So, it was a real challenge for the American government to develop a proper legal system in Japan for the protection of rights of the civilians. The most important step which the American government took during US occupation of Japan was that they formed the government in Japan according to the will of the Japanese people. They didn't want to impose any government on the people of Japan and wanted to work according to the will of the civilians.

We can say that General MacArthur was a very responsible person. He didn't take this occasion as an opportunity to occupy Japan forever by establishing

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his own government. Rather he went on to develop such policy which was really beneficial not only for the peace of the world but also for the people of Japan.

Political balance in Japan

If we talk about those measures which were taken by General MacArthur for the purpose of establishing political balance in Japan, we can say that his strategy regarding political balance was exceptionally remarkable. The main steps regarding his strategy were:

To establish and give confidence to left wing movement in Japan which could be led by labor unionists and social coalitions.

Educational reform also took place according to the strategy

To introduce industrial and land reforms in Japan, and

Representation of all sectors in the newly formed government of Japan

This strategy of the American government worked exceptionally for the people of Japan because communist movements were discouraged through the strategy. In educational reforms, all text books which were being taught in the schools were rewritten and whole educational system was reformed from the level of schools to the university level for the betterment of the education sector of Japan. And also the phenomenon of land lordism was discouraged and free working rights were given to the farmers for the purpose of developing a new rural world for the farmers of Japan. This strategy not only influenced major pillars of power of Japan but also had a very positive impact on the rights of civilians of Japan.

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Changes which occurred due to occupation

If we talk about the changes and developments which took place during the United States occupation of Japan, we can say that a lot of significant changes occurred which resulted in a heavy influence on all sectors of Japanese life. Pyle (1996) found that the effects of changes ranged from a single civilian to whole political scenario of Japan. But here it should also be mentioned that these effects were not at all negative for the people of Japan. Rather they had a very positive and beneficial impact on the future of Japan as it resulted in huge level of progress and development in all sectors including technological, educational, political, and economic and human rights sectors. Let's now discuss all those changes which occurred during the United States occupation of Japan.

Concept of sovereignty

We can say that the biggest and the most valuable changes that occurred during the United States occupation of Japan was related to concept of sovereignty. America became able to make such improvements in this regard, the effects of which were seen in all other sectors. The concept of power was shifted from just one person's government to the people of Japan. Emperor was only left to the indirect influence and he had no much to do with the government activities. The older generation of Japanese people earlier rejected this proposal that powers will be shifted to the people instead of the emperor. But after all they recognized that this would be in their own favor when they will be able to make decisions for themselves rather than giving this right to just one person who would then be the king of all peoples' fates. So when they recognized this, shift of powers took place

and emperor was just left as a symbol of the state instead of being head of the state.

Assembly consisting of the representatives of Japanese people from all fields of life was formed in order to run the government activities. This form of government consisting of peoples' representatives replaced the military government which had been the block of power during the past.

Formation of constitution

Another major change was that of formation of a constitution for the government of Japan. Before that, there was no such clear constitution because all powers were restricted to just an emperor whose words were taken as the last words by everyone and whatever he said was the constitution for the public of Japan. Inoue (1991) found that in order to regularize the governing activities, a proper constitution was developed by the United States in collaboration with the Japanese people. And the main objective was to clearly show the dimensions and regularities regarding each and every branch of the government. This was a continuation of democratic process in Japan because when the government was being formed, it was essential for the United States to give them a way to operate all activities regarding the government. Hook and McCormack (2001) found that roles of each branch and the responsibilities were set to make it sure that none of the government branches could do anything other than the defined roles and responsibilities.

Foreign policy

Hook (2001) found that setting a suitable foreign policy was also one of the main tasks of the American government in the reformation of Japan. For this purpose, American government worked with full collaboration with the Japanese people in order to create such a foreign policy which should not only be beneficial for the relationships between Japan and the American government but also should prove to be helpful in strengthening relations of Japan with all other countries. Almost all issues had similar American and Japanese viewpoints and even in the present era, American and Japanese foreign policies go side by side.

Land reforms

Another major issue which was given much importance during the United States occupation was regarding setting up the land reforms. It was also one of the main steps in democratization of Japan because land was distributed to all people of Japan from just a few land lords. Farmers were subjected to pay the rent to the land lords before the land reforms but after that, they were given equal rights to cultivate their own land and earn for themselves. The credit of reallocation of lands goes to the American government because it was the American government who took initiatives to allocate the land to the deserving people of Japan and not restricting it to just a few hands.

Social liberalization

Social liberalization was also a very important task which was done by the American government during Japan's occupation. Politics of Japan and other social ideas were influenced by the social liberalization because the American government made efforts to inject social values, human rights

sense and social liberties in to the mind of the people of Japan. American government was able to inject the right of self freedom and speech in people from all fields of the Japanese life. Americans took over the control of radio and the newspapers inn order to educate Japanese people regarding civil rights and political freedom rights.

Educational reforms

One of the major changes was regarding educational reforms in Japan which produced long lasting affects on the mindset of the Japanese people. The main objective of educational reforms was to deconstruct the value of an emperor in the minds of people. Giving social and economic opportunities to the average class of the Japanese people was also an objective of the educational reforms. The concept of nationalist mythology was eliminated from the syllabus of the Japanese schools and universities. This concept was also eliminated from the books that emperor is the only source of power in a nation. This was done in order to educate people regarding their rights. The new educational system was a remarkable one and in that equal rights to study were given to all Japanese people regardless of financial or social stability of any family.

Reconstruction of power relationships

Both politically and economically, reconstruction of power relationships took place during the United States occupation of Japan. Bureaucracy was tried to be broken and labor movements were established in order to distribute the powers to all sectors of Japan. Local politics were promoted which worked as the roots for the development of a perfect democracy. It was thought that when the democracy would be at the grass root level, only then the people

of Japan would become able to enjoy the real outcomes of a democratic state.

Conclusion

Summing it up, it can be said that American government, during the occupation of Japan, really tried to promote democracy in all fields of the Japanese life. It was the American occupation which resulted in a progressive Japan. A perfect relationship was developed between the United States and Japan during and after the occupation which reveals the success of the American occupation. Enabling Japan in becoming a real democratic state, the American occupation should be given credit in this regard.