

# Factors that affected meiji restoration



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Japans economic, political and social stability developed intensely during the Meijis era. These effects were brought about by the appreciation of modern technology. This therefore contributed greatly to Japans revolution which was a transition from the feudal government.

## **Background**

Meiji period was a form of historical transition in Japan. It was a representation of a first half of the Japanese government or empire that consisted of a complete transition from the so called feudalism which was more of an isolation form of government as compared to the current modern government. There were many forms of transitions that took place (Craig 150). This change included major transition in the military, foreign relations, economy, social structure and internal politics. This involved the formation of a completely new government that had new rules and regulations. This period had been a form of generation that was more enlightened compared to the former era. Therefore, it called for the former governor or leaders to step down and give way for the new leaders. The reason for this was that; there was no way a former leader would rule an enlightened environment. Consequently, catching up with the newest forms of technology according to that era would have been a great challenge incase a former leader retained the office.

The new government was very tactical. It knew the main brainstems of the economy. Therefore, it resolved to first settle on financial matters. This resulted to the promulgation of a new charter that was accomplished in 1968. The Meiji governance was one organized group that had one main common goal of revolution. Their goal first included the formation of

deliberative assemblies; secondly was reviewing the customs and replacing the old and evil customs with new ways. One more major purpose for the formation of new government was to search for international knowledge that would be helpful in strengthening the rule of imperialism. These major transitions created a more clear foundation for exercising democracy in the Japanese government.

## **Factors that affected Meiji Restoration**

### **Effects of Tokugawa's period**

Meiji period was characterized by rapid change and modernization. This was seen in different sectors of the government. The most affected government sectors were the social, political, economic oriented institutions. The modernization resulted into Japan being rated as the most developed in the whole of Eastern Asia. One of the main contributing factors to Japan's modernization was the emulation of Tokugawa society and the Tokugawa beliefs (Craig 150). These beliefs catapulted the Meiji regime into a more organized and democratic governance. There are three factors that led to the smooth transformation of Meiji era. These included educational achievements, rapid economic development and common cultural and social background.

### **Economic development**

Major contributors to economic development were road construction networks that led to developments of central business district. These industrial towns created a need for lodging areas, food reserves and goods that could provide travelers or tourists with accommodation services. These businesses provided a lot of income that was used in purchasing most

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intensives used for development. The town area urbanized progressively during the Togokuwa era. In addition, most small towns developed in bigger urban areas. Therefore, the expansion of towns provided a good basis for innovation. Another major contribution to modernization was the agrarian revolution. This revolution was a transformation from subsistence farming to commercial crops farming.

The development of industries during the Togukawa period resulted into the subsequent growth of many industries during the Meiji era. Big family enterprises did develop during Togukawa era. These included the Simutomo, Mitsui and Konoike family lines. These enterprises developed into great banking companies and improved commercial businesses. This overlapped into the Meiji's era hence forming the big banking facilities that were seen during the Meiji's era. The development resulted into Japan becoming a powerful industrial country. To maintain the firm economic foundation, the Japanese had to form institutions that could be used to harness knowledge that would assist in continuity of knowledge gained during the Togukawa's era. Many learning institutions were built that mostly related to business management studies. This was very tactful as it was significant for a new revolution.

## **Education**

Education brought a smooth transition to the growth and transition into the Meiji's period. This acted as prerequisite for the excellent learning methods that were employed during the Meiji's period. In addition, the country had gained a higher level of literacy at the time the Meiji's era was about to begin. It was of much respect to have educated friends during the

Togukawa's period hence this education extended into Meiji's era. Education was a sure foundation for development as it had been changing from time to time. This was like an assurance to the Meiji's era because by the time the transition was taking there would be great achievements. Many merchants gained financial knowledge that would be used during Meiji's period. There was another reason why the Meiji era became successful prior to the Togukawa's era. This was in terms of business knowledge advancements. The merchants who existed in the previous era gained financial and entrepreneurial knowledge that would be used in the subsequent period which was the Meiji period.

### **Consolidation of power during the Meiji Period**

Following world war two, the emperors in Japan resolved to form a new rule that was democratic in stature. The new governance was formed after the abolition of feudalism. The new change of democracy and governance resulted to the signing of a charter oath by Emperor Hiroto which was done with the Humanity Declaration Committee. This oath was to act as a sign of treaty for change to more democratic governance. This gave the emperor more powers as he would preside over all state business proceedings in the entire area of Japan (Shimposha 289). During this time the city Edo was named Tokyo and the capital city was transferred to Tokyo. The population in the city of Tokyo was distributed evenly. Moreover, it is during this capital transformation that the emperor established for a more strengthened navy. The emperor was mostly involved in governance issues such as administration and organization of the cabinet.

## **Political Reforms**

The Meiji regime had a well established administration that included a prime minister. This emulated the western form of governance hence a modernized government. The new leaders in Japan resorted to reform the work system of the major territories by daimyo (Shimposha 289). Moreover, some members who were supporters of daimyo were accepted in the new government and were reappointed as leaders. The daimyo rule was later abolished by 1871. In addition, the privileges of the Samurai were declined as other groups such as burakumin had legalized discrimination imposed against them.

Meiji's era had a nonfunctional parliament at its inception. It is at this time that Japan was controlled by the Samurai and daimyo who had received power transition from Tokugawa era. This meant that Japan was controlled by the Genro a part of the Oligarchy. This group was highly equipped in terms of security. This therefore meant that the Japanese had the most powerful transformation which occurred within a single generation. They gained fame for this all over the Pacific area.

## **Rapid changes in the Meiji Era**

There were radical changes that took place during the Meiji transformation. First, the army became more refurbished (Tipton 400). The change occurred in their dressing style which became more western in style. In addition, the military adopted more westernized weapons and guarding tactics. To add to these, there was education for both boys and girls in the society. The industrial sector was also transformed to modern manufacturing industry like those that only appeared in the West. This led to production and manufacturing of more sophisticated goods that fitted in the modern

revolution. The kind of education the Japanese acquired enabled them to manufacture powerful weapons that were used for the territory security. The result of these changes was a drafted constitution in 1889 that transformed Japan to be turned into a constitutional monarchy. Japan utilized the weapons in war times that enabled them to secure their territory. Japan was so powerful that it ended up being transformed from a mere island nation to an imperial power by its own right and might. Therefore, Japan overstepped many countries in East Asia to top the ranks of the most powerful countries.

### **Challenges during the Meiji's transformation**

The major challenges that affected the Meiji's rule were born by the negative effects of the Shogunate. His downfall led to so many positive dramatic changes.

### **Reasons for Modernization**

Japan thought that they had been left behind in terms of modernization. In the event to counteract the issue, there arose a very powerful regime that resulted into a more of enlightened governance. This modernization was spread to almost all economic sectors in the country. In addition, advancement in technology impacted the following areas; the military, political system and lastly the social aspect. This rule was termed as "the enlightened rule" because it was to transform Japan from its "naïve" nature to a more modernized society. This aspect was going to be very crucial but the leaders were dedicated to bring change in Japan. Also, Japan was preparing itself for future incapacities that could arise due to lack of better preparation. The Japanese emperors in that time knew well that for them to make it through the wars that were foreseen, they were to be well

armed as the imperial superpowers. The rule that existed in the Meiji's period wanted a collaboration of views that would integrate both western ways to traditional values. Therefore, they resorted to make a complete “enlightenment” to every aspect of governance that existed. This involved the people and the physical objects.

## **Effects of the Meiji Era**

Japan accelerated industrial revolution was as a result of Meiji's era. This led to a powerful military rise in the year 1905. Their main slogan during the regime was “ Strengthen the military as a result of enriching the power”. This strong nature led to the rule and discrimination of traditional monarchies that surrendered at the end. The difference between the new governance and the former Samurai one was that, every male was allowed to serve in the armed forces and the right to the bear arms. Moreover, new government did not allow the Samurai males to carry along with them weapons that would act as a form of identification for them. On the other hand, the samurai still held their heads high since they still remained the most educated of all in the society (More 55). They comprised part of the military, teaching staff, makers of guns and government officials.

Evidence that shows that Japan's military team was strengthened was the victory which was seen in two wars. These were the Russo-Japanese war and Sino-Japanese war. In addition, the Japanese went to an extent of winning a war against Russia a super powerful country. Japan's fame could also be compared to how both China and Japan responded to external invasions. China had a more reluctant response which led to their defeat. The Chinese branded themselves with the notion of self superiority. Chinese military



group were not prepared to the great modernization that had taken place. The attacks by the made the country remained complacent hence its tactics were futile. On the other hand, Japan had a different mindset that had been impacted by the revolution in the Meiji's era. The foresight by the Japanese to embrace modernizing was a great stepping stone into their winning strategies. Therefore, between 1894 and 1895, Japan was in a great position to defend itself against any external attacks by any external military forces.

## **Industrial Growth**

The Meiji's restoration brought about a fundamental aspect of the society which was industrial growth. This was seen in the massive doubling in the infrastructure and production industry. The forms of productions were iron smelting, shipyards and spinning mills that were sold to connected consumers of the products. Consequently, western technology was greatly employed by domestic companies to produce highly sophisticated products. These were finally sold to international markets and enhanced trade across borders. The growth in trade consequently led to the creation of modern communication lines and railway line.

## **International Trade**

The Meiji's rule or era had a lot of trade relations with the international countries. It was at the time of the era that Japan started emerging as a big international trade country. However, this trade was nonexistent in the past or it only existed in a limited form (Ebrey 405). Initially, Japan was also biased in choosing the country to trade with. There were countries which were segregated and repelled to an extent that they could not form partnerships with Japan. Secondly, there were countries that were grouped

for trading. The grouped countries were Netherlands and China. They were collectively known as “ Tsusho-no-kuni”. Lastly, there were those countries that acted in partnership with Japan in terms of trade. These also had a collective name which was “ Tsushin-no-kuni”. Countries that acted as partners were like the Great Britain. This last group of countries was invited to major Japanese events like celebrations and in big festivals.

This biasness was cut off by the Meiji's rule. The era resulted into the introduction of boarder line trading. Japan had a transition that was nicknamed “ the enlightened era” hence it was very prudent that members of the state act in a more intelligent way to allow modernization. First, they had to expand the boarders to allow other traders to interchange their goods with them. This eventually led to their expansion. Being a very clever lot, they embraced the issue of trade with other countries hence, they greatly improved.

Consequently, Japan expanded the trade to even powerful countries. It signed treaties with America, Russia, Canada and many countries in Europe. In addition, Japan made revisions of treaties within the Asian boarders hence having a more strengthened bond. The result for these radical steps was the rise of a very powerful Asian country from a very humble beginning. Japan went as far as being accepted as a member in the Ruling Directorate of International Society. Moreover, Japan started to import raw materials which were manufactured into finished products and then were sold to other countries.

## **Entrepreneurships**

The entrepreneurs in Japan became more enlightened and powerful. This effort alternatively was reflected in the economy of the country. Great collaboration with the government and passion for development were the main contributors of the improved economy (Tipton 456). Furthermore, their genuine interest in progress economically also boosted the country in terms of economic development. The origin of the entrepreneurs was the Sumarai's. These people were better placed in the economic grounds than any other group because of their rich cultural heritage. They employed a sense of honor in their duties hence accomplished their work with diligence.

## **Labor Force**

The labor force in Japan was mainly unskilled and did not recognize the new technologies. This called for a more technical force that would deal with the different forms of technology (Ebrey 550). Therefore, the Meiji's era opted to create a solution for the need at hand. This issue eventually led to the creation of an opportunity for revolution in the labor force. Therefore, a revolution was started that was geared to more of advancement and revolution. This included education and learning which resulted into a stronger generation in the time of the Meiji's era. This was commendable because it brought a lot of advancement not only in labor force but also in areas of research and creation of educational institutions. The basis for education was to make the citizens learned and also to counter the rapid changes that occurred in the modern world.

## **Conclusion**

The Meiji's reign was a far-reaching era that was constituted majorly with change. This reign opened a new era for Japan as a country in its social, political and economic aspects. These aspects were key elements in the characterization of a developed nation. The era involved a complete change to that which had never existed before. In addition, the era explained the major aspects of modernism which was more of a transition rather than a restoration era. The factors that show that the Meiji era was a transformation to a new era points out the issue of constitutional promulgation, a highly developed communication and transport system, a well established industrial system that employed modern technology with a refurbished military system and lastly an established democratic government. These advancements could only apply to a country that has improved. On the other hand, restoration would mean that these things existed before which is not the case for the Meiji's era. Therefore, Meiji's era was a revolution rather than a restoration.