

Political and Economic Changes during the American Occupation of Japan (1945-1952)

When the war ended, it was the common intent of all the Allied Powers to render Japan incapable of ever returning to the field of battle. "Demilitarization" was thus the first policy of the Occupation authorities and was accompanied by abolishing Japan's armed forces, dismantling its military industry, and eliminating the expression of patriotism from its schools and public life.

But the American government, which had led the Allied war effort and whose representative, General Douglas MacArthur, was named the Supreme Commander of the Occupation forces, felt that only a democratic Japan would be truly peace-loving. It was assumed that democratic countries like the United States and Great Britain were more peaceful than nondemocratic countries such as Hitler's Germany and prewar Japan under the emperor. But what makes a country "democratic"? Is a country democratic simply because of certain political institutions, like free elections and free speech? Can these political institutions survive if economic power is concentrated in just a few hands, and social structures like the educational system and the family preach unlimited obedience to authority?

The American government believed that establishing democracy in Japan involved change in all areas of Japanese life. Under MacArthur and with the cooperation of the Japanese, Japan undertook tremendous changes in just seven short years — the Occupation lasted from 1945 to 1952. The success of the Occupation can be judged by the fact that forty years later, Japan has not fought a war, is a close ally of the United States, and has not changed most of the important reforms made by the Occupation.

Political Changes

The most obvious changes were political. During the Occupation, Japan adopted a new constitution (sometimes called the MacArthur Constitution because of the major role Americans played in its drafting). This constitution was completely different from the Meiji Constitution of 1889.

- The biggest change was that it declared that sovereignty rested with the people, not the emperor. This is the political basis of democracy.
- The emperor was to continue as a symbol of Japanese unity and culture, somewhat like the Queen of England in Britain's democracy, but without any political authority whatsoever.
- The supreme political institution was now to be Japan's parliament, the Diet, which was to be made up of freely elected representatives of the people.
- Women were given equal rights under the new constitution, including the right to vote.
- Local governments were strengthened to encourage "grass-roots level" political participation.
- The constitution established many new civil liberties, such as the right of free speech, and the powers of the police were weakened and carefully regulated.
- Finally, the military forces were completely abolished and Article 9 of the new constitution forbade Japan to maintain an army or go to war ever again.

Economic Changes

To support these political changes, the Americans instituted reforms to make economic power in Japan more "democratic." In prewar Japan, two-thirds of the agricultural land was rented, not owned, by the farmers who farmed it. The farmers, who made up over 50 percent of the labor force, often rented the land from landlords who lived in distant cities and paid them as much as half of the crops they grew. Since the average "farm" was little more than an acre, many farm families lived in poverty. The land reform took land away from big landlords and redistributed it to the farmers, so that farm families could own the land they worked. Because farm families became more independent economically, they could participate more freely in the new democracy.

The Americans also tried to make workers in the industrial sector more independent by changing the laws to allow free trade unions. Before the war there were only a few small unions; by 1949, about half of all industrial workers belonged to a union.

To democratize economic power further and create competition, the Occupation intended to break up the giant business corporations, the zaibatsu, but this reform was not implemented, in part because it would have made Japan's economic recovery more difficult.

Changes in Civic Values

Besides changing Japanese institutions, the Americans wanted the Japanese people to understand better the idea of democracy. To do this, the occupation government used its control of newspapers and magazines to explain and popularize democracy.

They used American democracy as a model to be copied. The complete defeat and devastation of Japan after the war had left many Japanese shocked and disillusioned with their own military leaders, and they were open to the new ways of their American conquerors.

To ensure that Japanese children learned democratic values, the Americans insisted that the education system and the laws regulating families be revised. "Moral training" in schools was abolished, and instruction in democratic ideas was begun. Control of education and censorship of textbooks were taken from the central government and given to local administrations. The laws giving the head of the household complete control of every family member (for example, he could withhold his consent when his children wished to be married) were changed to make each family member more equal and thereby more democratic.

Support for Change Within Japan

After the Americans left, the reforms that did not find strong support within the Japanese system were discontinued. The anti-monopoly laws were weakened, and new giant businesses appeared. The central government assumed control of the schools, although the democratic school structure and curriculum remained. The ruling conservative party suggested other changes, including re-introduction of "moral training" in the schools and abolition of the "peace clause," Article 9 of the constitution, but these were not adopted. In sum, there was great popular support for most of the changes, and the changed system thus continues to the present.

Your task: Using this article and the video, explain what were the changes brought by the American Occupation and their potential efficiency. Then, detail what changed about the US vision on the Japanese way of life during the occupation.

http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1900_occupation.htm

The US military power through a fictional superhero: Captain America

Captain America is a fictional character, a superhero, created by American cartoonists Joe Simon and Jack Kirby. The character first appeared in *Captain America Comics* #1 (cover dated March 1941) from *Timely Comics*, a predecessor of *Marvel Comics*. Designed as a patriotic superhero who often fought the Axis powers of World War II, Captain America was *Timely Comics*' most popular character during the wartime period. The popularity of superheroes waned following the war and the *Captain America* comic book was discontinued in 1950, with a short-lived revival in 1953. Since *Marvel Comics* revived the character in 1964, Captain America has remained in publication.

Captain America wears a costume that bears an American flag motif, and is armed with a nearly indestructible shield that he throws at foes. The character is usually depicted as the alter ego of **Steve Rogers**, a frail young man enhanced to the peak of human perfection by an experimental serum to aid the United States government's imminent efforts in World War II. Near the end of the war, he was trapped in ice and survived in suspended animation until he was revived in the present day.

Captain America was the first Marvel Comics to have appeared in media outside comics with the release of the 1944 movie serial *Captain America*. Since then, the character has been featured in such other films and television series as *Captain America: The First Avenger*, *The Avengers*, and *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*.

Your task: Using the following covers which will be described in details, explain how the character of Captain America symbolizes the American military power.

Nº1 March 1941 (9 months before the attack of Pearl Harbor)





N° 47, June 1945





Complete Home Entertainment all in One



FM-AM Radio and Automatic Phonograph
 Costs little more than an FM-AM radio alone! Plays up to 12 records automatically with Miracle tone arm. Mahogany, \$99.95



3-Way Portable
 Plays instantly on AC or DC, as well as batteries. Beautiful emperor red and french gold case. \$34.95

Prices slightly higher in far south.

Luxurious Console

\$499.95
walnut

From Admiral comes *complete* home entertainment to charm your family and guests. Magic Mirror Television brings you bright, steady, mirror-like pictures on a big 10" direct view screen . . . the clearest pictures of them all! Super-powered by 29 tubes to assure dependable performance even in outlying areas.

Receives on *all* channels. New two-speed automatic phonograph plays standard as well as new LP (long play) 45 minute microgroove records. Here, too, is a powerful radio with the finest features in FM-AM as developed by Admiral. Truly a triple thrill . . . all combined in a breathtakingly beautiful cabinet that measures only 48 inches wide! See it! Hear it! Today!





“Hospitality-So Easy and Welcome with Coke” ; Coca Cola Ad – 1948

Now - choose the cleaner you want
in the name you trust -
HOOVER

Which Hoover Cleaner is number one for you and for your home? The famous Hoover Triple-Action Cleaner, or the new Hoover Cylinder Cleaner? They are different basic types, but they're both Hoovers—the name women prefer 2 to 1 over any other make of cleaner. See both at your Hoover dealer's store. Then decide.

THE HOOVER COMPANY • South Canton, Ohio • Hamilton, Ontario, Canada



TRIPLE-ACTION
MODEL 28

New Triple-Action Hoover Cleaner. It beats... as it sweeps... as it cleans.® Prolongs rug life. Model 28, cleaner alone... **\$49.95**
Cleaning tools in handy kit, **\$22.45**

New Hoover Cylinder Cleaner, most convenient cleaner of its type. Cleans by powerful suction. Stores in small space. Tools in neat, lightweight kit. Multi-plier and sprayer. **\$79.50**



CYLINDER
MODEL 30

Bare floors and rugs come clean quickly. Slides easily under heavy furniture, too.



Powerful suction speeds along the floor cleaning.



No stopping to attach, detach hose. Tucks the rollers.



The Dirt Eater—so long to remove. Just flip the rollers and dirt shakes out. Means they clean.



Special feature Hoover beating carpeting cleaning principle. Right! A tool for every purpose. Duvet, gentle cleaning.



(Move!) Just a "kick" and you're all ready for above-the-floor cleaning. (Kick!) No stretching for high-up places. Tools in handy, lightweight kit.





Ad for Kroehler furniture, 1947

Ad for Pontiac cars – 1948



Ad for a variety of red lipsticks – March 1948