

The Compromises Made to Resolve the Conflicts Between the United States and Japan

By 1945, Japan was absolutely destroyed. From the bombs dropped on their cities to the lack of basic necessities such as food and water, the state that Japan was in was disastrous. Without a doubt the last remaining nation of the Axis powers, Japan, would give in to end World War 2. With no other choice, Japan surrendered unconditionally and was forced to accept its occupation by the United States. The United States put in place multiple reforms to recreate Japan into a capitalist, democratic nation. These reforms included a new constitution and a complete reworking of the government and the abolishment of the military. Many of these reforms looked to help the Japanese people, who accepted these new changes in hopes of recovering from the dreadful conditions brought on by the war. Looking at Japan today, the United States was successful in occupation. Because Japan was in a grave state, the Japanese welcomed the occupation which allowed the United States to implement successful reforms resulting in a successful occupation.

The beginning of the 20th century saw an expansion of United States territory. Japan took this a threat towards their nation, believing that Japan would soon become the next country to become part of the United States' territory. Japan reacted by expanding their empire as well. Conquering areas of China and the Philippines, Japan fought many wars with other Asian nations. Japan even had encounters with the United States, such as the bombing of the USS Panay (Sibillia). The United States condemned this behavior and placed an embargo on Japan. This had a huge economic impact on Japan, due to not being able to import and purchase goods from the United States. This furthered the incentive to conquer more land, giving Japan a greater capability of being self sufficient. Sekijiro Takagaki described the Japanese' attitude towards the situation during this time. In his book, *As Japan Views the Crisis*. Takagaki explains the great sense of nationalism within the Japanese people. They felt passionate for their country and its goals. They supported their country's territorial expansion. So, when an embargo

was placed on their country, they felt attacked. Takagaki called it an “economic war” with the United States. Already there is conflict arising between the two nations even before the war begins. Not only has there been physical violence between the two nations, but also economic violence. The tension between two nations escalated due to the intense nationalism of the Japanese people. Rather than trying to negotiate with the United States, or resolving matters peacefully, Japan stuck with its plans. The people supported these actions. Takagaki stating that “the American attitude towards Japan only had the effect of uniting its people in their purpose”. The Japanese people were united and felt it was their duty to serve their country and to work for this goal. As a result Japan continued fighting wars in Asia and expanding its borders, worsening relations with foreign nations, the United States in particular.

As relations worsened, it became clear that a war would break out if matters were not handled. Avoiding war would require a peace treaty to be signed. However the two nations struggled endlessly with the details of signing a peace treaty. Even on a topic as simple as location, the two nations could not agree. This shows the level of contempt between Japan and the United States. The conflict between the nations had begun before the war. Konoye, the prime minister willing to create a peace treaty with the United States resigned. It was at this point that a peace treaty between the two nations became impossible, and war broke out not long after that.

Countless battles were fought between the two nations. At the start of the war, Japan saw success with the victory over Guam, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Thailand. However the United States fought back to reclaim to the Philippines and other islands controlled by Japan. With the atomic bombs being dropped on the cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, Japan was forced to surrender unconditionally (World War II in the Pacific). The United States began its occupation of Japan, implementing numerous reforms to recreate Japan. The SCAP, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, was led by General Douglas MacArthur who was the overseer of the occupation. MacArthur focused his reforms into three main eras, the punishment and reform phase, the

economic rehabilitation phase, and the end of occupation(*Occupation and Reconstruction of Japan, 1945-52*).

At the start of the occupation, Japan was in total ruins. Life in Japan was terrible, so the Japanese were desperate for any assistance. My grandmother has lived her entire life in Japan, and grew up in the World War 2/Post war era. She described to me how taxing life was at that time. Food, medicine, and clothes were all very scarce. When it came time for my grandmother to start elementary school, she did not have a bag for school. Instead of buying one, she had to use materials from her father's coat to make one by herself. Just to have a chance at getting enough food for the family, my grandmother and her siblings had to work in the rice fields every morning before school, and after. But this did not suffice. My grandmother lost two of her siblings during this time due to the conditions of life being so poor (Sharyo). An interview was conducted with Marion Kanemoto, a Japanese woman who lived in Japan during World War Two. She told a similar story to my grandmother. There were no doctors to treat Marion when she got sick. The city Marion lived in was bombed so regularly, everyone became desensitized to it (Kanemoto). This all shows how poorly Japan was doing. This absolutely dreadful life is what made Japanese turn to the United States for help. Other issues affected the country as a whole. Bombings during the war caused physical damage to the nation. The country was only producing 10% of its total production before the war. Financial expenses of the war also caused Japan to lose 42% of its wealth. To add to this inflation was skyrocketing with numbers ranging from 60-130%(*From Recipient to Donor*). Once again, these issues only added to the cruel life the Japanese were living. This further encouraged them to accept the United States' aid.

There was also the issue of resolving the political landscape of Japan. Japan had been an imperialist dictatorship who denied many rights to its citizens. The Japanese government was the cause of Japan's entrance into the war. It limited the rights of the population and had power focused on a select group of people. Emperor Hirohito was at the very top of the government. The government forced its people into supporting it and Hirohito; everyone saw the emperor as a god. Therefore many Americans felt that the

emperor was to blame for the war, and should be killed. However, MacArthur feared that this would anger the Japanese people and could result in revolution and protests. Despite this, MacArthur also believed that Hirohito should be punished. The Constitution was changed so that the emperor would not have any power, in other words, Emperor Hirohito would be a figurehead of Japan(*The American Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952*). This compromise would keep the Japanese happy, while also eliminating a large obstacle of democracy which is favorable to the United States. One might expect a drastic change like this to be extremely difficult for the Japanese to accept. But there are reasons as to why the Japanese accepted such radical change. Many Japanese had similar view with Americans when it came to feeling that the emperor was to blame for the war. They had placed their trust and loyalty in the emperor, but he had thrown it away by losing the war. As previously mentioned, there were also the issues of the quality of life in Japan, which many attributed to being the Emperor's fault. This opened up the Japanese to a new government because Hirohito was proof that the current government was not working(Costly). In 1947, a picture was printed by newspapers that showed Emperor Hirohito and General MacArthur together.



Photo by Gaetano Faillace

MacArthur was much taller, more relaxed, and larger than Hirohito. The image spread the message that MacArthur was more powerful than Hirohito, and that he is the real leader of Japan. Some Japanese sent the General letters. One person said

MacArthur is “the greatest man in the world”(Kitahara 22). Once MacArthur put in place his new reforms, the Japanese people recognized his power. The Japanese became to admire MacArthur, and America was well. This not only allowed the United States to make crucial changes to the government, but it also began the start of an increasing welcoming of the United States.

Another change brought on the government was that it was forced to repeal laws limiting the political, civil, and religious liberties of the people. For example, women were given the right to vote, and free democratic elections were to be held. Labor unions were also allowed to grow, increasing the rights of workers(*The American Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952*). Perhaps a greater issue that the Japanese dealt on a day to day basis was the quality of their everyday lives. Especially during the war, the quality of living had dropped dramatically. To resolve this the Government and Relief in Occupied Areas, or GARIOA program, was created in 1947. Through GARIOA, Japan was given food, medical supplies, and other resources to assist Japan in recovering from the war. There were also other programs created at this time, such as the Civilian Supply Program and the Economic Rehabilitation in Occupied Areas. These programs gave medicine and raw materials to help the people and economy. In total, an estimated \$3 billion was given to Japan to help recover(Takagi 6). This a great sum of money coming from the United States. These reforms came as a shock to Japan as it was the exact opposite of what they expected. Many Japanese expected to be forced to feed American soldiers coming to occupy Japan despite there not being enough food for the people already living there. The Japanese accepted these reforms because it directly benefited them. These reforms helped the Japanese realized that while this occupation was part of Japan’s punishment, it was meant to help and recreate Japan. This helped open up Japan to more reforms which in turn allowed for more reforms to be made.

A reform specifically for farmers was introduced as well. Regarded as one of the most successful reforms of the occupation, the land reforms of Japan set to resolve the issue of tenant farmers in Japan. Many farmers were poor and could barely make a living, and individuals had many of their rights stripped away from them. In the past, the

majority of farmers would rent their land from landowners instead of harvesting on their own land. The issue with this was that farmers were forced to pay extremely high rent, around 50% of their crop. This resulted in many farmers in poverty who could never get out of their financial situation because high rent would cripple them. The land reforms called for the redistribution of land. Much of the land owned by landlords were given to farmers. This allowed a great percentage of the population to farm without paying rent. To add to this, farmers who did continue to work as tenant farmers had their rent regulated by the government. That being said, these changes did not sit so well with landowners as it was limiting their profits(Dore). However, this compromise had to be made to push Japan towards a capitalist society which would allow farmers and then the nation to grow financially. With these reforms a greater majority of farmers could continue their jobs and grow, ultimately benefiting Japan as a whole.

The conflict between the two nations brought upon a catastrophic war. Japan dealt losses in all different areas. Infrastructure was ruined, a dated government was failing, and an economic crisis had erupted. The United States brought upon new changes that would reform Japan. However, both nations had to make compromises. Government officials lost their lives, Emperor Hirohito lost his power, the people of Japan were forced to adapt to a new lifestyle, and the United States had to dedicate years and billions of dollars. However, as a result of this occupation, a new ally of the United States was born. In one year after the start of the occupation, Japan was able to significantly improve resource productions (Bennett). Today, Japan has the third largest economy and is an important ally to the United States. Without the occupation of Japan by the United States, the world would be very different from the one in which we live today.

Process Paper

My history fair topic is post war Japan. I chose this because Japan underwent tremendous change during this period, and also because I am half Japanese and wish to learn more about my country.

From my beginning research I learned about the general history of World War 2 in Japan, as well as the occupation of Japan. Learning about the occupation of Japan, I started to look closer into the individual reforms, such as land and government reform. What intrigued me the most was the change in Japanese society's opinion on the United States. In a matter of a couple years, public opinion became the polar opposite of what it was. I found an article titled "Douglas MacArthur as a Father Figure in Occupied Japan After World War II" which explains which events inspired this change. I believe it is this shift in public opinion that allowed for the occupation to be successful. Had the Japanese stayed loyal to the Emperor, the Japanese would not have been accepting of the United States and their changes. I realized that these reforms were extremely successful, and that it was also because of this success that the occupation was a success as well. I also learned that it was of the state that Japan was in that these reforms were successful; Japan was in such a bad condition that the Japanese accepted reforms because they knew it would improve their lives. With my final draft complete, I believe I have created a well structured essay that explains each reforms made by the United States and why it was successful.

I selected the research paper because I felt most confident in writing. Like anyone else, I have been writing essays for many years, so I believe my skills are the greatest in this category.

As World War 2 came to a close, the United States ended its conflict with Japan and called for its unconditional surrender. Japan was absolutely destroyed. From the bombs dropped on their cities to the lack of basic necessities such as food and water, the state that Japan was in was disastrous. With no other choice, Japan was forced to accept its occupation by the United States. The United States put in place multiple reforms to recreate Japan into a capitalist, democratic nation. These reforms include a new constitution and complete reworking of the government and the abolishment of the military. Many of these reforms looked to help the Japanese people, who accepted these new changes in hopes of recovering from this war. Looking at Japan today, the United States was successful in occupation. In fact, Japan now has the third largest economy is a valuable ally to the United States. Because Japan was in a grave state, the Japanese welcomed the occupation which allowed the United States to implement successful reforms creating a successful occupation.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources (6)

Faillace, Gaetano. "MacArthur and the Emperor." *Famous Pictures Collection*, WordPress and BuddyPress, 18 May 2013, www.famouspictures.org/macarthur-and-the-emperor/.

The Emperor Hirohito and General MacArthur stand side by side in this photograph taken by photographer Gaetano Faillace. MacArthur exhibits a calm relaxed demeanor, especially when compared to the Emperor. He is very upright, rigid, and smaller. This photograph had a profound impact on Japanese society when it was printed and shown to the public in newspapers in 1947. Emperor Hirohito, who had been seen as a god to the Japanese, seemed as he was being overpowered by General MacArthur. In response to seeing the photograph, many Japanese came to respecting MacArthur more than their emperor, and Hirohito lost his godlike status. This picture was pivotal in creating a more welcoming Japanese population for the occupation. With this photograph, society began to admire the United States rather than see them as their enemy.

Jenkins, Shirley. "'Uninformed' Opinion on Japan." *Far Eastern Survey*, vol. 14, no. 18, 1945, pp. 251–251. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/3021414.

Shirley Jenkins conducted this survey of the American people's perspective of Japan just one month after the surrender of Japan. The survey was written on the *Far Eastern Survey* which is a long running collection of surveys and articles starting in the 1930s. This survey helps understand the American perspective of the Japanese. This survey shows how angered the Americans were by the Japanese and that they wanted to get revenge. This is important to see how the compromise made by the US and Japan impacted views of Japan. Before and during the war, Japan was an imperialist nation which was looked down upon from the United States' point of view. The compromise forced Japan to change its ways and become a democratic nation like the United States. So, Americans could see the Japanese more as equals than evil enemies.

Kanemoto, Marion Tsutakawa. "The Hardships of Life in Japan during World War II." *DiscoverNikkei.org*, Japanese American National Museum, 3 Aug. 2003, www.discovernikkei.org/en/interviews/clips/405/.

This is an interview with Marion Kanemoto. Marion is ethnically Japanese but was born in the United States. After Pearl Harbor her family moved to Japan where Marion lived her life in World War 2 Japan. In the interview she describes life during this time as well as the conditions that Japan was in. She describes Japan to be a dystopian society that does not even have basic necessities such as food and medicine. This interview helps understand why the occupation was so successful because it explains the condition that Japan was in. By understanding how terrible Japan was doing at that time period, one can understand why the Japanese were so willing to accept reforms.

Sharyo, Toshiko. 8 Jan. 2018.

This was an interview I conducted with my own grandmother. She has lived in Japan her whole life. She lived a grueling life her whole adolescent life. I asked questions about the conditions of her life. She told me food and clothing was very different to find. Conditions like these were why Japan was so willing to accept reforms and aid from the United States. This interview gave me a chance to ask my own questions regarding the situation in Japan after World War 2. This gave me a greater insight on the topic and expanded my knowledge.

Takagaki, Sekijiro. "As Japan Views the Crisis." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 215, 1941, pp. 176–178. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1022617.

Sekijiro Takagaki wrote this journal article just 7 months before the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. He writes about Japan's perspective to the increasing tension between the two nations. Because it is from Japan's perspective, it is a very biased article. Takagaki writes how it is not Japan's fault for colonizing other territory, but rather it is something Japan must do in reaction to the trade embargo placed by the United States. He explains further by saying that the United States must conform with Japan's rules if the two nations wish to prevent any more conflict. While biased, the article is significant in understanding why the war between Japan and the United States began. Many Japanese believed they were right in what their country was doing. This combined with the intense pride for their country, the Japanese were willing to do whatever it took to get their way.

Taylor, Alan. "Japan in the 1950s." *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 12 Mar. 2014, www.theatlantic.com/photo/2014/03/japan-in-the-1950s/100697/#img22.

Alan Taylor compiled 39 images of which he found from AP images of Japan in the 1950's. AP images, otherwise known as The Associated Press is an organization whose goal is to share visual media of news to the world. This collection of photographs depict Japanese society in the 1950's, a decade after the war had ended. There are two different aspects shown in these photographs. The focus of these is show a more democratic, peaceful Japan that is very different from what it was 10 years ago. This is shown in the new technology, women in the Self-Defense Corps, hundreds of orphans receiving their meals, and other objects or events that were unheard of before. Japanese society has been largely influenced by western society, and has therefore adopted new ways of life. This never would have happened had the occupation not been successful. These photos also show another side to Japan. There are women in traditional Japanese kimono dresses, men wearing traditional geta footwear, and buddhist monks honoring the soldiers who died in the war. The people had kept what was important, Japanese society at its core. This has allowed for Japanese to still keep their identity, be united, and still feel that they are Japanese while accepting such huge changes into their lives. The result of this is a successful occupation. Had the Japanese not been united, there would have been internal conflicts which could have ruined the occupation.

Secondary Sources (10)

"The American Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952." *Asia For Educators*, Columbia University, 2009, afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1900_occupation.htm.

Asia for Educators, Columbia University, published the following reading explaining the new constitution of Japan in greater detail, as well as economic reforms. Asia for Educators has created many resources for teachers and students to learn about this continent. The reading explains what the United States did during their occupation of Japan. The United States used a variety of reforms in all different categories in order to shape Japan. This is significant because it shows how modern Japan came to be. The occupation of Japan is also important because it is the compromise made to end the conflict.

Bennett, Martin T. "Postwar Treatment of Japan." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 246, 1946, pp. 117–124. JSTOR, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1025140.

Not even 1 year after the occupation of Japan began, Martin Bennett wrote the following article talking about different aspects of Japan. He explains what Japan is successful in doing, and what they are not. The first reforms such as industrial disarmament are explained. Learning about the individual reforms is vital in understanding why the occupation was successful because the reforms are a major part in defining the occupation itself. Bennett also says what he believes the United States should do going forward. For example, several ideas for what the United States should do with the Zaibatsu are given. This is important because it teaches what was the thought process of those working to reconstruct Japan were. By understanding their thought process, one can also understand what about it contributed to the success of the occupation.

Brown, Delmer M. "The Social Sciences in Japan." *Far Eastern Survey*, vol. 18, no. 5, 1949, pp. 53–55. JSTOR, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/3022614.

Delmer Brown wrote this article for the *Far Eastern Survey* in 1949. The *Far Eastern Survey* which is a long running collection of surveys and articles starting in the 1930s. In the article, Brown explains several educational branches in Japan and how they were impacted by the occupation. Some of these branches have supported the occupation through financial grants for studies. Brown also explains that some of these branches, such as the military which used to support imperialist programs, have ceased to exist. This is important in understanding why the occupation of Japan was successful because of the actions taken by the Japanese to help the occupation effort. The push for educational studies allowed for the promotion of the new education system created by the United States as well as spreading democracy. This spread of democracy is part of why the occupation was so successful.

Costly, Andrew. "Election Central ." *Bringing Democracy to Japan*, Constitutional Right Foundation, www.crf-usa.org/election-central/bringing-democracy-to-japan.html.

The Constitutional Right Foundation published this reading on the occupation of Japan and how General Douglas MacArthur introduced democracy to the nation. The Constitutional Right Foundation is an organization whose goal is to educate

the people about citizenship. This article goes in depth about how Douglas MacArthur brought democracy to Japan through reforms and creating a new constitution. This article is important because it explains why these political reforms were so successful. Japanese people realized that their old system had failed, and so they were willing to accept the US system. It also explains how MacArthur was able to use his power to pressure the Japanese government into accepting a new constitution. Another reason the reform was so successful was because the emperor of Japan supported it. Using all of this information allows for a better understanding of why the reforms were successful, thus resulting in the occupation becoming a success as a whole.

Dore, R. P. "The Japanese Land Reform in Retrospect." *Far Eastern Survey*, vol. 27, no. 12, 1958, pp. 183–188. JSTOR, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/3023953.

R. P. Dore is a well known author who has published numerous educational readings on Japan. This reading explains the land reforms laws put in place in Japan after World War 2. General MacArthur used the reforms to create a more equal agricultural society, limiting tenants and promoting private farmers. This reform was very successful because most farmers were tenant farmers. The reform gave them more rights and freedom, as well as more wealth. This meant the reformed gained a lot of support, allowing the changes to be made with little resistance. Japanese seeing that the United States was making positive change made more Japanese like the Americans. This is significant because it illustrates why the occupation was successful. The reforms brought change the Japanese desperately needed, so the Japanese accepted these changes with open arms.

Kitahara, Michio. "Douglas MacArthur as a Father Figure in Occupied Japan After World War II." *International Social Science Review*, vol. 64, no. 1, 1989, pp. 20–28. JSTOR, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/41881853.

Dr. Michio Kitahara is director of Nordenfeldt Institute in Gothenburg, Sweden. This is a journal published by Dr. Kitahara to describe the relationship between the Japanese and the US during the reconstruction of Japan after World War Two. It goes into great detail to describe the actions of General Douglas MacArthur and the reaction of the Japanese. It shows the change in Japanese mood from disliking the United States, to favoring American generals over their own emperor. This is significant because this is part of why the occupation of Japan was so successful. It was because the Japanese learned to love and be grateful of what the United States was doing for them, that they were more open

to reforms. As a result, there was less conflict and so the needed changes could be made.

“Occupation and Reconstruction of Japan, 1945-52.” *Office of the Historian*, U.S. Department of State, history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/japan-reconstruction.

In the reading “Occupation and Reconstruction of Japan, 1945-52”, the phases of how the US rebuilt Japan following World War 2 is described. The reading was published by the United States Department of State website. The reading divides the reconstruction into three parts. The first is punishment and reforms, followed by economic rehabilitation, and ending with the end of occupation. It is useful as it gives a general summary of the reconstruction of Japan. From pre war plans made by the Allies to defeat Japan, to General MacArthur creating reforms and the San Francisco Treaty, the reading gives historical context about the occupation of Japan. It shows what happened after the compromised made by the United States and Japan to end the conflict of World War 2.

Sibilla, Chris. “The Failed Attempt to Avert War with Japan, 1941.” *Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training*, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, 3 Dec. 2014, adst.org/2013/11/the-failed-attempts-to-avert-war-with-japan-1941/.

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training is a group created with the purpose of spreading the experiences of American diplomats. This article published by the ADST explains how the US and Japan attempted to prevent a war between the two nations but failed. This article shows how a failed compromise to escalating tensions can have tremendous consequences. This is important because it allows for a comparison between two different compromises, the end of World War 2 and the occupation of Japan, versus this failed attempt at resolving conflict. The circumstances in each situation are very different. On one end the Japanese have been utterly destroyed and have nothing to lose. The Japanese had no option but to do what the United States says. On the other, both nations are prospering and have much to lose. In the case before World War 2, both nations were not willing to take the risks required to come to a conclusion because the consequences could be catastrophic. As a result, neither countries could prevent the war between Japan and the United States.

Takagi, Shinji. "Japan as an Aid Recipient." *From Recipient to Donor: Japan's Official Aid Flows, 1945 to 1990 and Beyond*, International Finance Section, 1995, pp. 5–10. https://www.princeton.edu/~ies/IES_Essays/E196.pdf

The following is a book published by Shinji Takagi explaining the aid and finances of Japan. The book is published by the Department of Economics of Prince University which is regarded as the highest ranking college according to U.S. News & World Report. A specific section was used for this research. The chapter "Japan as an Aid Recipient" dives into the financial and economic aid that Japan received after World War 2. Many of these reforms provided key resources such as petroleum, medical supplies, and food to Japan. This allowed for a major economic recovery of Japan. In total it is estimated Japan received 3 billion dollars. This knowledge is key in understanding why the occupation was successful because money is the backbone for future success. With little demand for Japanese goods, businesses cannot make money resulting in a poor economy. Businesses cannot use their profits to grow and expand because they have no money. By creating a demand for Japanese products, the United States helped breathe new life into the Japanese economy. With an improved economy Japan had the funds to carry out other projects and make more reforms on their part. In essence, a stronger economy is what allowed for a prosperous Japan.

"World War II in the Pacific." *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005155.

This is an article published by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC. This source is reputable because it comes from a professional museum. The article explains the conflict between the United States and Japan during World War Two. It teaches about how the war between the two nations began followed by important events during the war as well as the end of the war. This article is important to explain how the United States and Japan were bitter enemies at one point.