Japanese Imperialism and Regional Expansion in East Asia

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The term imperialism refers to an action that involves a specific government or an empire trying to encompass its supremacy by the acquisition of territories. It may also include other means of exploitation to acquire more areas. Japan rose from self-imposed non-violent isolation to a colonizing government.

From Isolation to Western-Inspired Expansion

This form of separation had lasted for many years. Later on, the Japanese leaders passed a policy of aggressive border expansion. Japan had learned the art of colonization from European countries like Britain, Germany, Italy, and France. The Western nations established settlements in African countries (Mangan et al., *Japanese Imperialism: p.* 9). Hence, this motivated Japan to adopt the same criteria of colonization to extend its boundaries to the borders of the surrounding nations, which was the only solution that could have helped Japan solve the problems that it had encountered. In this essay, I am going to discuss some of the factors that facilitated Japan's establishment of imperialism, the effects of Japan's imperialism, and Japan's government after World War II.

Industrial Capacity and the Search for Markets

First, Japan had a good number of private firms that dealt with the industrial sector and banking. The private companies and industries made Japan produce more profits. Japan had undergone an industrial revolution for many years, and this implies that it had gained more from such sectors. So, it had to apply imperialism to secure space for its investments. The various markets that it had were not enough for its investments. Hence, it had to look for places to invest in products from its industries.

War Debt, Chinese Investment, and Colonial Revenue

Second, Japan had the desire to obtain capital from the colonized state. This implies that the key reason why Japan conquered China was merely to increase investment in various savings in China (Morrell: p. 34). In these periods, Japan had incurred a lot of costs during persistent wars with other

countries like China and Russia. During the war, Japan borrowed a lot of money from the United States of America to cover the war. This forced it to seek cash to expand its industrialization. With the continuous borrowing of cash, Japan experienced a significant amount of debt. To meet the expenses that it had incurred, Japan was forced to colonize other countries like China to offset its deficits.

Nationalism and Territorial Ambition

Third, the issue of nationalism motivated Japan to extend its territories into countries like China. It had great concern for the security of the country, the culture, and the political philosophy, as well as its emulation of other European countries in taking the territory of other nations. This highly motivated it to conquer other areas.

Trade Tensions, Korea, and War With China

Fourth, the Japanese government had goodwill with the party of China that signalled the issue of trade between the two countries. However, the goodwill did not last for an extended period because Japan developed a desire to become economically prominent and strengthen its army. This motivated it to develop a desire to acquire territory within Asia. The problem with China started when the Japanese military organized an expedition to Taiwan. Also, the team was extended to Okinawa and the state (Kubota: p. 6). Both China and Japan had an intention of controlling Korea. When Japan captured Korea, it made China unhappy. Due to this interest, both Japan and China started a war, and the Japanese army defeated the Chinese within a short period. This resulted in the Japanese army proceeding to occupy the cities of China and hence taking its territory.

Markets, Labor, Raw Materials, and Colonial Development

Through imperialism, Japan got new markets, a labor force and a source of raw materials for its industries. It also facilitated cheap and easily available raw materials for the Japanese government. More labour played a significant role in Japan’s efforts to imperialize other countries. The effort put in by Japan to colonize China resulted in the improvement of education and sanitation in the state of China. The products manufactured by the Japanese in China were sold globally, making China richer and allowing it to expand economically.

Oppression, Taxation, and Lost Sovereignty

However, Japan’s imperialism negatively affected the colonies. For example, countries like China lost their power and authority to Japan. Secondly, the natives of China were subjected to hard labour in

Japan’s industries, and finally, the colonies were subjected to oppressive taxation policies. The residents had no role in the government, which was in place.

Postwar Economic Reconstruction

In the post-World War II period, Japan established itself as a global economic and political power. Economically, Japan used different institutions like the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, which promoted Japan’s development globally while restricting foreign business companies around the country (Morrell: p. 45). Since the practices were accepted by America, they prepared Japan‘s economy to grow exponentially during the time of the Cold War. By the year 1981, many Japanese goods and services, such as electronics, were allowed to be exported all over the world. The industrial sector increased and became the second largest globally. The progress pattern continued into the 1990s and onwards.

Restored Sovereignty and the American Alliance

In politics, Japan’s Allied occupation ended in 1952 when it signed the Treaty of San Francisco. According to the terms of the agreement, Japan regained its power, but it lost control over most of its possessions from before World War II and some small areas that were finally placed under the League of Nations. The treaty guaranteed Japan the freedom to involve itself in an international defence bloc (Mangan et al., *Japanese Imperialism* 6). The United States president and the prime minister of Japan signed an agreement that gave the United States defence forces the opportunity to continue their use of bases in Japan. The Japanese government restored its full sovereignty, rehabilitated 70,000 people who had been eliminated, and a lot of people went back to their own countries.

Japan’s Return to International Diplomacy

In foreign relations, Japan also became known as a central power in the world economy; it had a significant effect on global policies because of its post-war position. By the 1950s, Japan had re-established many different relations with a number of countries where Japan had a very critical role. For example, it joined the United Nations in 1956. It also made relations with its former enemy, Germany, creating a new basis in 1955 that was mainly focused on economic exchange. Japan established a relationship with China after World War II. The relations were maintained with the nationalist government during its exile to Taiwan, which was a policy that caused hostility between Japan and China.

Western Influence and Japanese Cultural Exports

Regarding culture, Japan continued to experience Western culture even after the post-war era. It was due to American soldiers who became widely popular in Japan (Morrell: p. 45). American music became a favourite, and Japanese artists were influenced and built on both European and Japanese inspirations. Through this age, the Japanese started to rise as exporters of values. Early on, individuals started to watch monster movies and cartoons, and the majority of Japanese authors began to develop, such as Kawabata.

From Imperial Expansion to Postwar Power

In conclusion, Japan's imperialism was motivated by both political and economic factors. Its primary concern was national security and the emulation of Western countries in their imperialist expansion. Colonialism brought both negative and positive effects to both the colonial and colonized states. But Japan came to its realization, stopped imperialism, and embarked on its activities.

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