

AMERICAN OCCUPATION OF JAPAN 1945-1952: A POLITICO-ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

There is no denying the fact that in the world of international politics, the decisions of sovereign states are always governed by their perceived interests and off course not by the principles of humanity. This is the general perception of International Community that, present economic power Japan, who occupies a predominant position in the existing international economy, owes much for its development to the U.S occupation after world war-II

These institutions and policies would never have succeeded if the United States had not imposed revolutionary political and economic changes during its occupation of Japan (1945- 1952). First the United States pumped in \$2.2 billion of humanitarian and development aid over seven years, and then contributed tens of billions of dollars more through the procurement policies of its military forces based in Japan and the¹ region.¹ In order to analyze the real story behind this fact, it is imperative to answer different questions. Whether it was done only on pure humanitarian basis or any kind of U.S personal interest was involved in it? Or why only Japan was favoured? These are the general outlines frameworks on which the paper is organized. Though we found several research on the topic, but here some new facts and realities would be sorted out which will contribute to the readings of international relations.

According to the realist school of thought, no state maintains relations or takes interest in the affairs of other states until or unless its own interest is not involved. According to Norman J. Padelford and George A. Lincoln international politics is the interaction of individual nation states in the pursuit of their

perceived national interest and goals.² Besides Parkash Chander is of the view that nations try to safeguard their interest by trying to influence and control the behaviour of other nations.³

In the light of these statements it can be easily guessed that there must have involved the economic, strategic and political interest of the United States, behind its undertaking of Japan's occupation.

Hans Morgenthau maintained whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always the ultimate aim.⁴ Politics and power thus decide, Who gets what, why, and how.⁵

The paper points towards the secret and open intentions of USA, which she tried to achieve after acquiring control over post war Japan and Japanese response in consequence. The role of bipolar politics is of critical importance, which had indirectly contributed to the recovery of Japan. As Kenneth Waltz adds that Politics is pre-eminently the realm of unintended and unexpected consequences one is powerful to the extent that he affects others more than they affect him.⁶ During 1948, the American attitude gradually changed as cold war developed in Europe and Koumantang crumbled in China, they felt the need for a strong ally in Southeast Asia and began to encourage Japanese economic recovery. An analysis of the facts and the way occupation was conducted is also included here. An historical perspective of the politico-economic survey that provides an insight of U.S personal interest for which it had long been aspiring for, will rationalize U.S degree of involvement under the shield of Allied occupation of Japan. It will also explain that the occupation of Japan was in all respect an American Undertaking.⁷

Historical Perspective

Up to the first war 1914, USA was adhering strictly to the policy of isolation and resorted to same policy soon after the end of First World War. This state of affairs continued on the whole till the outbreak of World War-II in 1939 and even some times after that. Second World War introduced a new phase of US foreign policy when Japanese forces attacked on Pearl harbour, brought America on the forefront and become responsible in enhancing its influence in the whole world particularly in the Asia Pacific via Japan. Mean while the European war had become a truly global war.

On December-7 Japan made a surprise attack on American naval base pearl harbour and Precipitated a Pacific war. Here a new history of cold war begin which had its origin in the post war peace settlement and was marked by the rivalry of two super powers US and former USSR. This post war politics brought drastic consequences for the whole field of international relations. That period marked by the rivalry of two super powers which obviously led the United States to have an occupation of post war Japan so that she could manage the effective control of Fareast Asia, the region shares its geography with the former Soviet Union.

According to the theories of international political geography and the writers like Mackinder, geo-political location of a country determines its geo- strategic significance in the existing international system. Geo-political issues certainly make the headlines .⁸ Moreover the political actions of a country can best judge according to its economic needs and personnel intensions of the ruling parties under its historical perspective. Every day the world's 190-plus states conduct thousands of negotiations over thousands of issues The vast majority of these issues, however,

directly involve the security of influential interest group rather than the entire nation .⁹ Some secrets points of American policy towards Japan, in the post war period however, can also be dug in the light of these basic features of state- system.

The First World War catalyzed Japanese ambitions in the Asia-Pacific. Under the pressure of political parties and their economic needs for power thrust had lead Japan towards the aggressive and expansionist policies in inter-war period, thus proved the above statement related, to the indication of state policies.

On the other hand when one goes through the history of US it becomes clear that from the very inception economy dominated the U.S foreign policy. In the words of Thompson and Black economic factor occupies the pre-dominant position in the foreign policy of USA. U.S, after its independence from British colonial rule since 1776 was determined to improve their political power and develop their economy under the shield of Monroe doctrine and isolation policy from European affairs. Here Hans J. Morgenthau's statement comes true that international politics is the politics of power.¹⁰ The history of U.S is full of commercial aims because most of American citizens are the dissidents of Europe who came here for the exploitation of economic gains. Even the revolt of the American colonies against the mother country was fought with the economic slogan, No taxation without representation .¹¹

Historical perspective of U.S foreign policy endeavours indicates that economic factor along with security concerns could have also remained predominant in Asia Pacific region behind the occupation of Japan. The onset of the Cold War involved U.S political interest too. At this critical juncture, it was indeed not possible for the United States of America to let Japan free with its militaristic or aggressive tendencies, since American experience of

Japan in pre-war world was not good. Throughout the Inter-War period, after extending its interest into Asia, Japan was interested to have complete hold of Asia. Asia for the Asians was the popular slogan of Japanese, specially, in the Inter- War period. This is also termed as the, Asian Moonroo doctrine.¹² Eventually this expansionist policy of Japanese then government led Japan to intervene into the World War-11 and clashed with the economic interest of Europe and U.S.A. In the light of such harsh experiences made occupation of Japan indispensable for the United States of America.

Geo- strategic importance of the Asia pacific region can rather better explain the political economic interest of U.S.A behind Japan s occupation, which she is still availing.

Geo-Strategic Importance of Asia Generally & Pacific Particularly

Southeast Asia may be defined roughly as the area of continental Asia and the offshore Philippine and Indonesian archipelagos lies south of China and east of India. ¹³

Before European colonial rule of Asia, it was famous for its backwardness, myths, and completely diversified culture. For Europeans and especially for Americans, East Asia has remained a world apart until very recently. The distant land of Far East was called by American as strange and outlandish, inhibited by the oriental despots and heathen uncivilized society. In fact there are many historical factors that explain the American neglect of this larger world. For convenience American interest in the region can be divided into two basic and historical periods.

1. Pre- War and historical era of isolation.
2. Post-war period.

Since the emergence of a new society in the U.S.A, it desired separation from Europe, which she achieved through Atlantic Ocean. Later they saw an opportunity of great commerce through the Pacific Ocean in Asia. They even pictured Pacific as an American Lack . They were satisfied with wide range of Pacific, which kept far away Asian domestically hence, could best fulfil isolationist aims. In fact the internal pressure groups in the United States were more active in Pacific. In the reawakening of American interest in the foreign affair more particularly in Far Eastern affairs, domestic forces were important .¹⁴

There were American traders, businessman, sea captains, missionaries, and historians who were not strangers to Asia s lands and people. Particularly since the last years of the 19th century, U.S interest in foreign affairs re-awakened and the point of high interest lay in the Pacific and Far East. When U.S based to be an explorer of primary products and entering into competition for world markets in goods, railroads had been built, the mines and other deposits of natural resources opened or claims to them stacked out. The giant corporations were in the process of formation. The U.S. therefore, had been most active economically in the Pacific, throughout the first half of the 19th century.

The 1st centres of the interest were Samarai in the South Pacific and Hawaii in the mid Pacific. Here American concern was mainly naval since possession of the base in Soma would provide a screen for the protection of an Isthmaraman canal, a project that had figured in American Political and military thinking since the middle of the century. Hawaii was of greater and moral lasting importance too.¹⁵ In fact U.S interest in the islands goes back to the early part of the 19th century, while vessels began to put into there for water and supplies mostly latter. Traders and missionaries also followed these passages. To further these

interests, reciprocity treaty was negotiated between United States and Hawaii in 1875 by which Hawaiian Sugar (nearly all American owned) came into the United States duty-free. Subsequently United States obtained the right to establish a fortified naval base in sheltered waters near Honolulu, known as Pearl Harbour. Reciprocity on sugar served the States especial interest in Hawaii. In 1893 Americans headed Hawaii. Eventually in 1898, through an incidental accompaniment to the Spanish-American war, Hawaii was annexed. Thus the United States obtained its first territorial possession outside the continental boundaries.

Region During and after World War-II

A Series of events which began after the Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia during World War-II, then the People's Republic of China's emergence, Korean War of 1950, long drawn out conflict and eventual unification of Vietnam with the surrender and U.S occupation of Japan (1945-1952) has transformed the entire region into one of the most strategic and sensitive areas of the world. For several breathless days in April 1954, as the eyes of the world watched the merciless drama of Dienbienphu unfold, the United States verged on war in Indochina. For a moment in time, direct American participation in another Asian war was averted; but, immediately afterward, the United States became committed as never before to be involved in Southeast Asian Affairs .¹⁶

To use Mackinder's geo-political term it is the heartland of those times. In terms of bipolar politics, cold war had provided the impetus to the validity of region as strategically most important era of the world.

Both the super powers, the United States and Soviet Union along with China and Japan were vitally interested in the politics and economic potential of the region . In terms of bipolar politics U.S was apprehended of U.S.S.R while U.S.S.R of the United States and both could not permit Beijing to bring the states of Far East and Southeast Asia into a subservient relationship as China had done previously. Since this victory would have enlarge the parameters of communist power generally and China's power particularly. In fact the whole Asia was full of potential and energetic resources. Particularly United States could not permit communists to gain influence in Southeast Asia, besides this security concern, a communist dominance might have deprived the rest of the world, largely unexploited, immense and precious minerals and oil deposits of the area, in addition to denying as easy access from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean.

This was and really is a matter Japanese vital interest. Since Japan's power was and is based on economy, industrial and technological power's survival depends on her trade and transport of oil and raw materials from the Middle East, Africa, India, and Southeast Asia as well. In addition Japan dispatch her finished goods to the markets of all these areas and in European markets through Southeast Asian sea lanes, obviously involving American interest as well, since is Japan is the strategic partner and ally of America since 1952. It is also worth noting that at any time have is a Japanese tanker or fighter almost every one hundreds nautical miles in the Indian Ocean area.

United States of America during its occupation of Japan totally transformed the aggressive society of Japan and brought her under its defence parameters. The U.S itself had a wide national interest in the region. It has economic and political interest to maintain the status quo and her hegemony in the region. Americans had infect, trade, investment, technological and other interest too, in

the period after the occupation was terminated. Besides, being a super power, especially in Post Cold War, America wanted to play a hegemonic role in the region. Therefore, it was imperative for its interest, to maintain stability in the region and in Japan after occupation, which in the long run, would provide her an opportunity to keep her forces continually here and use Japanese territory as her military base.

In contrast, before 1945, American foreign policy towards the Far East was frankly imperialistic. Its objective was to check the growing power of Japan. The open door policy in China was merely an indirect way of containing Japanese expansion.

Conclusion

The occupation of Japan can easily divided into three phases, each was essential for Japanese development and fulfilment of American interest in the Pacific. During the first phase (1945-1947) Supreme Commander of Allied Powers (ACAP) attempted to demilitarized and democratize Japan. The Second phase is called, as an economic revitalization phase (1947-50) in which Japan was developed as the workshop of Asia and all efforts were made to promote Japan's product in world markets, in order to boost its economy. The third phase was pushed by the extension of Cold War in Asia.

When in 1950, the war in Korea was started and America felt essential to remilitarize Japan. Therefore remilitarization phase started from (1950- 1952). Since then, Japan is continuously under the pressure of America to share American responsibilities in the region. However whatever the interest of America behind its undertaking of Japanese undertaking, may be, the fact is that it resulted in rapid modernization, great power status for Japan and international recognition of these accomplishments. Soon after

her rearmament began, Japan had also regained her formal independence. Logic suggested that a free Japan under a friendly and conservative government would make America a better ally than one condemned to continuing foreign rule.¹⁷

Imperialism, however, now remain a tool to these ends, though strongly discredited. Although it was ruled by a foreign military government, Tokyo brilliantly maximized its foreign policy goals during the American occupation (1945-52) while maximizing the effect of any Washington pressure for significant Japanese rearmament of reforms that would, have underwent Japan's economic power. Nowadays members of international community are becoming very sensitive of the Japanese security role. There is a common demand that in commensurate to its economic power, Japan should be given political role, necessarily needs strong military, and privileges in the international community of states.

In 1952, Japan signed a defence treaty with America. The vital interest of Japan to have signed defence pact with USA was to achieve two fold objectives: the first is to get American aid and second is securing for her the security umbrella. Infact the interest of both the United States and Japan was presented under security alignment.

The Japanese alliance with USA meant that Japan felt well protected and was therefore able to invest in industry that would otherwise have gone on armaments. For American interest, an economically healthy Japan was vital for providing strong bulwark against communist in Southeast Asia. Therefore Japanese goods were allowed into American markets on favourable terms and the USA supplied aid and new equipment. Profits from export were fully utilized, as a result Japanese goods (motorcycles, cars, televisions and hi-fi equipments and ships were therefore highly

competitive on world markets. Recovery was helped by a series of stable governments, mostly conservative in character, which had the soil support of the farmers who was benefited from the land reforms carried out through the Americans. Thus Japanese recovery was an internal and external contribution and was reformed thoroughly by American administration. The defence pact of 1952, also imported a good deal of anti- American feelings inside and outside Japan particularly in Southeast and Far East Asian countries.

Nowadays Japan's future security role in Asia Pacific has become burning issue in Japan's politics. Besides Southeast Asian countries are very sensitive to the Japanese security role. Japanese masses considered the security pact as shameful, dishonourable and tantamount to in reducing the country to a colonial status.

It is probably true that the United States could not have agreed to a peace treaty of such a generous nature if it had not also received military bases. The containment of communist influence in East Asia and Southeast Asia was the major driving force for US interest. The start of Korean War on June 25, 1950 further enhanced the geo- strategic significance of Japan and accelerated mutual security arrangement between Japan and the United States. The American bases in Japan were also to be used for protecting South Korea and Taiwan. Under Article -111 of peace many Japanese islands i.e. Benin, Ryakyu and Okinawa were put under the American Jurisdiction.

Afterwards many other developments emerged in U.S. Japan alliance, which had accelerated Japanese involvement in World affairs in collaboration with United States of America.

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