

Please read the following: an excerpt from the 2008 *Japan* entry of the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern World*, and a brief look at Japanese economic growth since 1964 from the April 2014 *OECD Observer*.

On the last page are links to various sources of information on Japan for those interested.

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“Japan” entry by David L. Howell

## **Historical Overview**

The modern history of Japan is the history of modernity. From the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth, Japanese leaders and thinkers were preoccupied with fashioning a state that could compete with the Western powers. This impulse reflected their insecurity over Japan's ability to survive in a hostile international environment. They succeeded, but only at the cost of conflicts whose legacy lingers into the twenty-first century.

### **Japan in the Tokugawa Period.**

Once dismissed as a feudal dark age, the Tokugawa period (1603–1867) now shines in the popular imagination as a golden age of peace and prosperity and is celebrated as the fullest expression of native Japanese culture before the arrival of Western imperialism changed Japan's place in the world forever. No age is ever completely dark or completely golden, of course: the ups and downs of the era's reputation reflect selective emphases on its real contradictions. Formal institutions, established to support the military needs of the ruling Tokugawa house and its allies, seemingly left little room to accommodate social mobility, economic development, and intellectual freedom. If one focuses on how those institutions were supposed to work in theory, early modern Japan appears to be, as E. Herbert Norman once put it, the world's first police state. In practice, however, Tokugawa institutions proved remarkably supple, with the result that Japan enjoyed a measure of social mobility, considerable economic growth, and a vibrant public sphere (though rarely overtly political).

Tokugawa political institutions were the product of an extended period of civil war. For centuries before and after the founding of the Tokugawa Shogunate, an emperor reigned powerlessly and mostly irrelevantly in Kyoto while military men ruled. Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598) attained effective hegemony in 1590, ending 150 years of turmoil, but died before his heir reached adulthood. His rival, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616), took advantage of Hideyoshi's death to consolidate power for himself. His rise culminated in his assumption of the title of shogun, or paramount military leader, in 1603.

The Tokugawa Shogunate was not fully centralized. Ieyasu and his immediate successors built on a federalist model that Hideyoshi had imposed to maintain balance among more or less autonomous military houses. The shogunate controlled a quarter of the country's productive capacity itself, leaving the rest in the hands of about 260 domain lords, or daimyo, who were allowed to retain their autonomy in exchange for swearing

fealty to the Tokugawa house. This seemingly precarious system survived for 265 years, nearly all of them peaceful: from 1637 to 1864 there were no significant military conflicts in Japan.

The early modern period was thus a time of peace in a country permanently mobilized for war. Major institutions were informed by the need to maintain the military preparedness of the Tokugawa house. Perhaps the most important by-product of this imperative was the social-status system, which categorized social groups according to their relationship with military authority. These groups fulfilled status-specific duties in exchange for a measure of autonomy and the promise of benevolent rule. They were arranged in a hierarchy, with samurai warriors at the top and outcastes at the bottom, but the system also recognized the essential equality of each status group's function in the political order. Samurai in the service of the shogun and daimyo accounted for about 6 percent of the national population. Outcastes (mostly leather workers and licensed beggars) composed perhaps 2 or 3 percent of the population, and Buddhist and Shinto clerics accounted for a few hundred thousand more people. The remaining 90 percent of the population were commoners: peasants, fishers, merchants, and artisans.

Tokugawa Japan is sometimes characterized as isolated from the outside world. Although the shogunate certainly did closely manage contact with the outside, Japan was by no means a closed country. It maintained diplomatic and commercial relations with Korea and Ryukyu (the main island of which is Okinawa) and allowed Chinese traders to call at Nagasaki. The closing of the country was mostly to Europe: in 1639 the shogunate expelled Spanish and Portuguese traders and missionaries and forbade almost all travel abroad. As a result, officially sanctioned contact with Europe was limited to the Dutch trading post at Nagasaki, and even that was constrained by the shogunate's strict proscription of Christianity. Nonetheless, goods and information flowed into Japan at a steady trickle, with the result that by the early nineteenth century there were small communities of experts knowledgeable in Western medicine and science, and educated Japanese in general were remarkably well informed about world geography despite their own inability to travel abroad.

Economic growth was a fortuitous by-product of the Tokugawa institutional structure. As a security measure, the shogunate required daimyo to spend about half their time in Edo (modern-day Tokyo) in a practice known as alternate attendance. The daimyo in turn required their own retainers to congregate in castle towns and posted many men permanently in Edo. As a result, in the early eighteenth century more than 10 percent of the Tokugawa population lived in cities, including some very large ones, such as Edo, with 1 million people, and Kyoto and Osaka, with around 400,000 each. The samurai became an almost exclusively urban class, with few ties to the land and little involvement in the day-to-day governance of peasant villages. Consequently, peasant village headmen and other rural elites emerged as the literate agents of an engaged but mostly apolitical public sphere. Urbanization and attendance at Edo encouraged consumption and the growth of transport networks and markets, with the result that information and goods circulated widely and mostly freely throughout the country.

Peace and stability spurred population growth as well, particularly during the first half of the Tokugawa period, when the population grew from about 18 million in 1600 to about 30 million in 1720. Thereafter the population remained virtually unchanged. The stagnation of the population had many causes, but deliberate choices among the

peasantry—including abortion, infanticide, and delayed marriage—were a major factor. The economy continued to grow after 1720, albeit at a slower pace than previously, with the result that Tokugawa Japan was a rare premodern example of intensive economic growth. The economy grew unevenly: central Honshu enjoyed far greater prosperity than the northeastern and southwestern peripheries of the country, and famines occasionally took a devastating toll on the rural population. Still, overall the Tokugawa period was, by the standards of the preindustrial world, a time of prosperity, stability, and growth.

### **Japan's Embrace of Modernity.**

Nothing about the character of the Tokugawa period foretold Japan's self-conscious and generally successful embrace of Western-style modernity in the decades following the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Even the hints of capitalist development to come, such as the spread of protoindustrial manufacturing in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, were embedded in an institutional framework utterly alien to the one that would succeed it.

Moreover, Japan in the years immediately preceding the restoration hardly appeared to be a regime on the verge of collapse. To be sure, there were signs of stress. The increasingly frequent appearance of foreign ships off the coast, many of them bringing unwanted overtures for trade, stoked anxieties about Western imperialism, particularly after news from China of the First Opium War (1840–1842) reached Japan. The shogunate and many domains experienced fiscal crises in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, and their efforts at retrenchment and reform often did more economic harm than good. Finally, large parts of the archipelago were decimated by famine in the 1830s. Still, the problems were similar to others the regime had weathered in the past. No one could have guessed in 1850 that the Tokugawa Shogunate would fall in less than two decades.

But fall it did, and quickly too, once its legitimacy was undermined when shogunal leaders proved incapable of coping with the diplomatic and political crises that followed the Western intrusion. Commodore Matthew Perry's veiled threats of war forced the shogunate to negotiate a treaty with the United States in 1854. The major European powers soon secured treaties of their own. In 1859 Yokohama and other treaty ports opened to the West, and Japan entered the world economy. The opening brought disruptions—inflation and cholera for starters—but Japan never fell victim to predatory incursions of the sort that weakened China and so many other non-Western regions. Nevertheless, Perry's arrival marks a decisive turning point in Japanese history. The inadequacy of the shogunate's response to the West radicalized young samurai from large, peripheral domains, who began to look for an alternative model of politics. Mixing terrorism and power politics, they steadily chipped away at the shogunate's base of support.

Japan was fortunate that the Tokugawa regime lost legitimacy so quickly and thoroughly. After 1868 even those dissatisfied with the new Meiji government had no thought of going back. The contrast with Korea and China is instructive: the Chosŏn and Qing dynasties survived decades of turmoil before finally succumbing in 1910 and 1911, respectively, too late for viable alternatives to succeed them, with colonization and warlordism the result. In Japan, however, the imperial institution was a ready-made alternate source of legitimacy to the shogunate. Ancient and revered, yet powerless, the court was an empty vessel ready to be filled as the new rulers chose.

The Meiji regime, dominated by men from the former Chōshū and Satsuma domains, undertook policies seeking to persuade the West of Japan's modernity. Only by doing so could Japan hope to revise the unequal treaties that the shogunate had signed and thereby restore full sovereignty to Japan. In 1871 a group of top officials, led by the court noble Iwakura Tomomi (1825–1883), toured the United States and Europe to see the modern West for themselves. They and others of their ilk resolved to remake all Japanese institutions on the Western model. By 1900 the treaties had been revised and Japan was a highly centralized, Prussian-style constitutional monarchy, with a conscript military, universal education, a capitalist economy, and the beginnings of a colonial empire. The domains, the samurai, and all the other trappings of the Tokugawa era were long gone.

Domestically, the first decade of the Meiji period was a quest for “civilization and enlightenment” (*bunmei kaika*). Although the phrase is often associated with men like the educator and journalist Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901), who enthusiastically championed Western values and institutions, in fact advocates for reform all across the ideological spectrum rationalized their ideas in terms of enlightenment. Thus, for example, the campaign to abandon men's topknots in favor of Western haircuts featured the language of both Western scientific rationality and nativist nostalgia for the supposed coiffures of antiquity. As a slogan for rallying diverse forces around the banner of change, “civilization and enlightenment” was a powerful tool.

The Meiji regime did have to contend with dissent. The most serious challenges it faced came from samurai disgruntled by the dismantling of the Tokugawa status system and its privileges, such as the right to bear two swords. In 1877 a former leader of the Meiji government, Saigō Takamori (1827–1877), led a rebellion against the state in his home domain of Satsuma. The central government's conscript army prevailed after a costly and bloody series of battles.

Once the Satsuma crisis passed, the regime's control over Japan was secure: later dissenters fought to reform the system, not overturn it. In the late 1870s the government faced an increasing clamor for parliamentary democracy. The Popular Rights Movement, as it is called, gathered well-to-do peasants, journalists, and former samurai in mostly (but not always) peaceful campaigns of oratory and protest. Over time the state succeeded in co-opting the movement with a series of strategic concessions, notably the promise of a constitution, a promise made in 1881 and duly fulfilled in 1889.

### **Empire and Industry.**

Victory in the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 ushered Japan into the ranks of East Asian powers. The war was fought over and in Korea, a tributary of the Qing and the most enduring object of Japanese imperialist longing. Japanese interest in Korea had several sources. To politicians like the oligarch Yamagata Aritomo (1838–1922), who saw regional geopolitics as a zero-sum game, gaining influence over Korea was an urgent matter of national security: he liked to describe the peninsula as “a dagger pointed at the heart of Japan.” Japanese sojourners in Korea wanted their government's help in furthering their economic interests in the peninsula. Most critically, veterans of the Popular Rights Movement intervened in Korean politics, encouraging reformers who hoped to emulate Japan's successful embrace of Western-style modernity. Their activities had the effect of nudging a sometimes eager, sometimes reluctant government in Tokyo into action, even war, in support of their cause.

The Treaty of Shimonoseki (1895) gave Japan its first overseas colonies. It also inaugurated a new era in Japan's relations with the Western powers. Russia, with designs of its own on Manchuria and Korea, led France and Germany in the Triple Intervention (1895), which forced Japan to retrocede the Liaodong Peninsula to China. Japan kept Taiwan and the Pescadores (in the Taiwan Strait), but the shock of the Triple Intervention turned many Japanese into cynical foreign-policy realists. As the journalist Tokutomi Sohō put it, “Sincerity and justice did not amount to a thing if you were not strong enough.” Tension with Russia led eventually to the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), yet another war fought over and in Korea. This war led to Japan's annexation of Korea in 1910. The same tensions also led to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902, which signaled Japan's acceptance as a bona fide player in the game of empire and later provided the impetus for Japan to enter World War I with the Allies.

The First Sino-Japanese War and the humiliation of the Triple Intervention created a reliable outlet for Japanese nationalism. The Popular Rights Movement had always had significant nationalist undertones, and the prospect of empire, particularly in Korea, helped to rally many activists around the state. This support for empire building spread to the working class in the period after the Russo-Japanese War, during the flowering of what Andrew Gordon has termed the movement for “imperial democracy.” Workers supported capitalist development and agitated for a political system that was democratic but also imperial—that is, they supported both a sovereign emperor and Japan's maintenance of a colonial empire.

Imperial democracy was made possible by the rise of an industrial working class and a salaried urban bourgeoisie. Japan's first modern factory, the government-operated Tomioka filature, opened in 1872. Silk and cotton textiles remained Japan's leading manufacturing industries well into the twentieth century. Textile mills employed girls and young women almost exclusively, with the result that Japan's first industrial proletariat was overwhelmingly female. It was only in the twentieth century—with the emergence of industries like shipbuilding, chemicals, munitions, and steel—that men became a significant part of the industrial workforce.

The Tomioka filature, sold to the Mitsui conglomerate at a significant loss in 1893, was typical of the pattern of Meiji industrialization. Because private entrepreneurs were reluctant to invest in risky capital-intensive new ventures, the government built industrial enterprises and operated them until they were firmly established. At that point, the state sold the ventures to politically favored commercial interests at fire-sale prices. The policy was corrupt, but it did serve to jumpstart key industries through direct government investment.

The steady development of the capitalist economy in the early twentieth century supported an expanding population of politically engaged subjects. A public sphere of newspapers and magazines, trade unions and political parties, operated under the constant threat of government repression, but succeeded nonetheless in broadening the realm of public discourse. The main architect of the Meiji constitutional order, Itō Hirobumi (1841–1909), envisioned a parliament that would give the people a voice without imperiling the authority he and his fellow oligarchs exercised in the name of the emperor. Japan remained fundamentally undemocratic—the constitution subordinated civil rights to the needs of the state, and the franchise was limited initially to a small number of

propertied men (about 1 percent of the population)—yet the Diet (parliament) quickly turned into a lively arena of politicking.

Owing largely to popular pressure, Japan overcame many of the structural barriers to democracy and for a time came to resemble other liberal parliamentary regimes, particularly during the decade or so following Hara Takashi's (1856–1921) appointment as prime minister in 1918. During this period, known as the age of Taishō Democracy, the electorate in 1925 expanded to include all adult men, and politics was dominated by two major parties, the center-right Minseitō and the more conservative Seiyūkai, whose leaders took turns as premier.

Taishō Democracy was flawed, however. Aside from the structural problems built into the constitution, which endowed sovereignty in an emperor who was not actually expected to rule, critics of parliamentary democracy and capitalism on the far right and left inhibited the maturation of democratic institutions, often through terror. By 1932 assassinations and other assaults on public figures had destabilized politics so much that national unity cabinets headed by military men or others outside the party system became the rule. Moreover, even as the franchise was expanded, other measures to limit open discourse were enacted, most notably the Peace Preservation Law (1925), which made it a crime to advocate a change to the “national polity” (*kokutai*), that is, the emperor system and its supporting edifice of State Shintō. Although the Peace Preservation Law was aimed mostly at Communists and others on the far left, the spectrum of acceptable discourse got so narrow by the 1940s that even academic historians had to proclaim Japan's founding myths to be literally true or risk charges of *lèse-majesté*.

### **War and Defeat.**

Japan's descent into aggression abroad and repression at home in the 1930s and 1940s had several sources. The Meiji constitution limited the cabinet's power, which made it difficult to rein in the military in times of crisis. Boom and bust during and immediately after World War I left Japan in the economic doldrums for much of the 1920s. The Great Depression hit Japan as it did the rest of the world, and although recovery was relatively quick, it and a series of poor harvests in the northeast caused great distress to many in the early 1930s. All these difficulties fed suspicion toward free-market capitalism and the adversarial party politics of the parliamentary system—in Japan as in much of the industrialized world. By the early 1930s most influential Japanese politicians, bureaucrats, and intellectuals had come to feel that the world was moving inexorably toward a system of autarkic regional blocs. To such observers, it stood to reason that Japan needed to dominate East Asia if it was to survive in a hostile world.

Whether or not Japan was fascist during this period is a matter of ongoing debate. On the one hand, politics was undeniably authoritarian, especially after about 1936. A mixture of self-censorship and brutal repression helped to contain serious dissent. The imperial institution, already widely revered, was elevated to such new heights that the emperor was treated as a demigod and the myths of State Shintō were portrayed as literal truth. Figures on the far right espoused a bellicose nationalism. On the other hand, the constitutional order proved surprisingly resilient, and all attempts to form a mass party along Italian or German lines failed. Moreover, Japan lacked the sort of charismatic leader usually associated with fascist regimes: General Tōjō Hideki (1884–1948), the

prime minister from October 1941 to July 1944, was no Mussolini or Hitler, and the emperor was a remote and strictly symbolic presence.

In any case, to those disillusioned with capitalism, corporatism—a society and economy under the central control and direction of the state—appeared to offer the country better prospects, particularly as it mobilized for total war in World War II. Many of the political and economic structures put into place in the corporatist 1930s by officials such as Kishi Nobusuke (1896–1987) persisted into the postwar period and contributed importantly to the rapid economic growth of the 1960s. It is no coincidence that the wartime Ministry of Munitions was reincarnated after defeat as the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, which guided what Chalmers Johnson has called the postwar “developmental state.”

Japan's Greater East Asia War—also known as the Second Sino-Japanese War and World War II—began in 1931 when Japanese forces in Manchuria provoked sporadic fighting in northeast China. The Japanese established the puppet state of Manchukuo in 1932, thereby laying the groundwork for Japanese autarky in East Asia. Conflict with China continued, with full-scale war breaking out in July 1937. The government of Prince Konoe Fumimaro (1891–1945) missed opportunities to end the conflict and instead found itself in a hopeless quagmire. Atrocities such as the Nanjing Massacre (December 1937) continue to haunt Sino-Japanese relations even at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Thus, by the time that Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, it had already been at war for a decade. Dreams of autarky soured into paranoia over maintaining an expanding empire starved of resources. Attacking the United States and Britain in an attempt to secure Southeast Asian oil seemed to be Japan's only hope. Military leaders, knowing that Japan had no chance of victory in a protracted conflict, hoped that a few quick victories would persuade the Americans to sue for peace. Other observers expected Japanese spiritual power to prevail over a materially strong but decadent West. By the time of Japan's defeat in the Battle of Midway in June 1942, it was evident that a quick victory was not to be had. As conditions deteriorated, hardliners quashed all talk of surrender for fear of the consequences to the imperial institution. Only the devastation of two atomic bombs—in Hiroshima on 6 August 1945 and in Nagasaki on 9 August 1945—and the entry of the Soviet Union into the war against Japan on 8 August finally persuaded the leadership to face surrender.

The United States led an occupation of Japan from 1945 to 1952 (Okinawa remained under American administration until 1972). The occupation is credited with expunging most institutional manifestations of Japanese militarism other than the powerful central bureaucracy. Its centerpiece was the promulgation of a new, democratic constitution in 1947, which stripped the emperor of his sovereignty but kept the imperial institution as a symbol of the Japanese state and the people. Scholars acknowledge the transformative impact of the occupation-era reforms, but they also increasingly view the transwar period—from mobilization in the early 1930s to the postwar recovery in the 1950s—as a single unit. Although postwar Japan is a far more robust democracy than it ever was before 1945, the structures of the developmental state have remained fundamentally intact.

Postwar Japan has been a stable and staunch ally of the United States. For nearly the entire period since 1955, the country has been governed by the conservative Liberal

Democratic Party, which has mostly delivered on its promises of economic growth and social stability. The only genuine crisis in the relationship occurred in 1960, when the government of Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke rammed through the Diet the renewal of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. This debacle forced Kishi's resignation and prompted his successor, Ikeda Hayato (1899–1965), to focus on promoting rapid economic growth. Incomes more than doubled in the 1960s—a fact that led many to tout the Japanese “economic miracle.” However, the economy has looked much less miraculous since the early 1990s, when a long speculative bubble, fed largely by an overheated real estate market, finally burst and Japan went on to experience more than a decade of stagnation.

### **Women and Gender**

During the Tokugawa period, the lower a woman's status, the more freedom she was likely to enjoy in determining the general course and everyday routines of her life. Although popular Confucian literature called on women to submit themselves wholly to their husbands and parents-in-law and frowned on their working outside the home, few outside the ranks of the samurai and the wealthy commoners who emulated them could afford to live up to such an ideal. However ironic it seems today, the situation in Japan was typical of many preindustrial societies, for women at the bottom of the social and economic ladder were indispensable to the economic lives of their households in ways that high-status women often were not. Moreover, the household as a self-sustaining corporate unit did not have the same hold over people at the bottom of society that it did over those with money and social standing at stake, such as well-to-do merchants, elite peasants, and samurai of all ranks.

After the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese state emulated Western legal institutions and, to some extent, notions of family and gender. The civil code of 1898 institutionalized the patriarchal samurai household as the legal norm for the entire population. This had the effect of reducing women to powerless dependents vis-à-vis invariably male household heads. Divorce rates, which had been very high in Tokugawa peasant villages, dropped precipitously. The legal subjugation of women occurred along with the spread of the bourgeois notion of a women's sphere within the household and the ideal of the “good wife and wise mother.”

The embrace of Western-style modernity transformed ideas about sexuality as well. Before the Meiji period, the Japanese did not demarcate sexual relations as heterosexual and homosexual. Same-sex relations between men were socially acceptable under some clearly defined circumstances. The same was not true of relations between women, but women's sexuality was acknowledged and even celebrated. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, sex had been medicalized, and same-sex relations cordoned off as deviant.

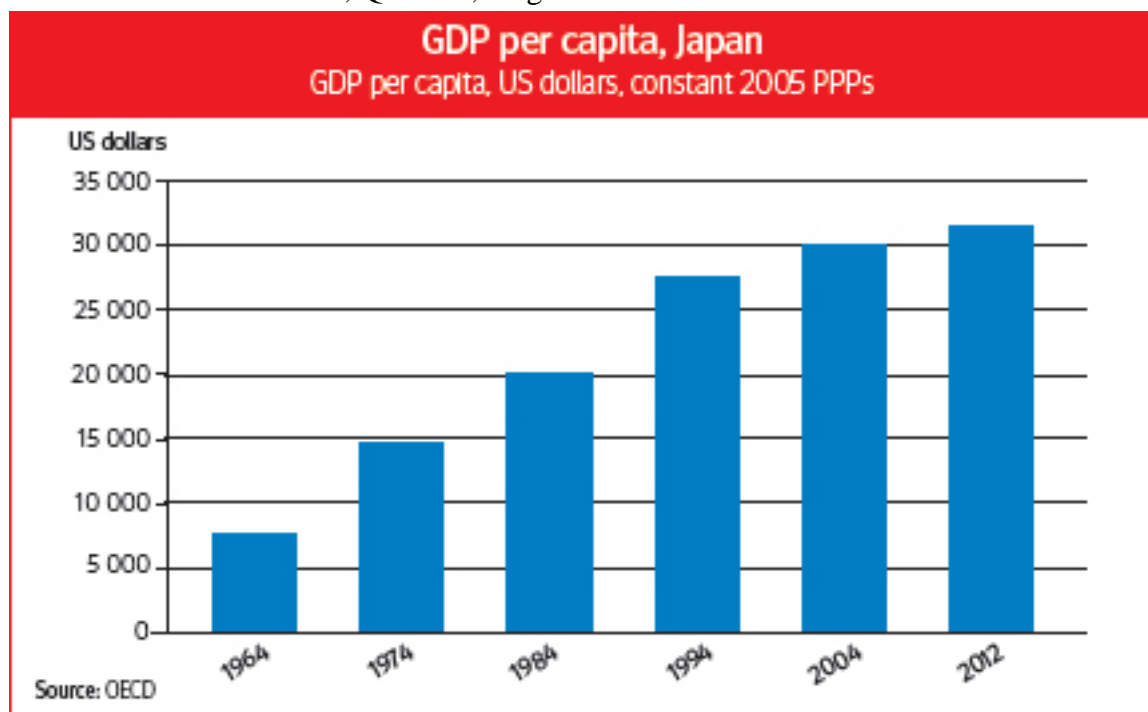
A modest women's rights movement emerged in the 1910s and 1920s. It was represented most visibly by the writer Hiratsuka Raichō (1886–1971) and her *Bluestocking*, a journal for educated urban women. In the late 1920s the first “modern girls,” wearing dresses and bobbed hair, brought new notions of modern femininity to Japan's cities. However, the activities of feminists and fashion plates alike had little connection with the workaday worlds of peasants and the urban poor. For most women, significant change in their status did not occur until after World War II, when the 1947 constitution finally gave them the right to vote and the restrictive features of the Meiji civil code were abolished.



In Japan at the beginning of the twenty-first century, though an increasing number of professional women remain in the workforce after marriage and childbirth, becoming a full-time mother and homemaker nonetheless remains a socially validated and attractive goal for many women. The biggest family issue of this period is the looming social crisis wrought by the aging of Japanese society and the steep decline in the birthrate to below the natural replacement level.

## An impressive comeback

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While today Japan is one of the world's largest and most advanced economies, a member of the G7 and the most developed country in Asia, in 1964 the picture was quite different.

That was the year Japan became a member of the OECD. It was also the year of the Tokyo Olympics and the inauguration of the bullet train. At the time, the country's GDP per capita was down around US\$8,000 in 2005 prices, considerably less than half that of the US.

In the 19th century, Japan was one of the world's largest economies, but the Second World War weakened the country's productive capacity. Major investments in human and physical capital in the 1950s and 1960s would spark a comeback.

In fact, despite suffering the 1973 oil crisis, GDP per capita had increased to some \$15,000 a decade after joining the OECD. The 1980s then marked a shift in Japan's economy away from manufactured goods and agriculture towards a highly knowledge-based economy that made it a world leader in high technology. By 1990 GDP per capita was climbing towards \$27,000, nearly three-quarters that of the US. But large stock and property market bubbles eventually formed, and Japan has virtually stagnated since the 1990s.

Nevertheless, the country remains the OECD's second largest country and the world's third largest economy. Its GDP/capita in 2012 was some \$31,400, in constant 2005 dollars. That's an impressive leap since 1964, and a good reason to celebrate Japan's first 50 years at the OECD.

See [www.oecd.org/japan/](http://www.oecd.org/japan/) and [stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?datasetcode=SNA\\_TABLE1](http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?datasetcode=SNA_TABLE1)

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[http://www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/4318/An\\_impressive\\_comeback.html#sthash.G9nB679E.dpuf](http://www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/4318/An_impressive_comeback.html#sthash.G9nB679E.dpuf)

For those interested, here are other good sources of information on contemporary Japan:

The Statistics Bureau of Japan:

<http://www.stat.go.jp/english/>

The CIA *World Factbook* provides a current survey and maps:

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ja.html>

Although the recent edition dates from 1992, the Federal Research Division, Library of Congress' *Japan: a country study*, edited by Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden is free and has an extensive historical survey.

Library of Congress Call Number DS806 .J223 1992

<http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/jptoc.html>

Many Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) publications on Japan are freely available:

<http://www.oecd.org/japan/>

<http://www.oecd.org/eco/surveys/economic-survey-japan.htm>

The OECD Better Life Index provides measures in several categories:

<http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/countries/japan/>

The OECD *Education at a Glance* on Japan is an overview of education in Japan in comparison with other OECD countries:

[http://www.oecd.org/edu/Japan\\_EAG2013%20Country%20Note.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/edu/Japan_EAG2013%20Country%20Note.pdf)

The Japanese Foreign Ministry collects many publications at its Japan Foreign Policy Forum:

<http://www.japanpolicyforum.jp/en/>

The United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division

<http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Documentation/publications.htm>

Life in Edo (before it was renamed Tokyo):

[http://www.library.metro.tokyo.jp/Portals/0/edo/tokyo\\_library/english/index.html](http://www.library.metro.tokyo.jp/Portals/0/edo/tokyo_library/english/index.html)

The Tokyo metropolitan government's site:

<http://www.metro.tokyo.jp/ENGLISH/index.htm>