

## RISING JAPANESE NATIONALISM WITHIN THE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

**Ahmet Murat KADIOĞLU**

Dr., OSTIM Technical University, Common Courses Section, ahmetkadioglumurat@gmail.com,  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9786-1904>

### ABSTRACT

During the political development process, the Japanese political system has been examined from different perspectives and created areas of study. However, these areas of investigation are particularly important in two respects. The first of these covers the period between 1868 and 1945, which is attributed to the unstable period, while the second is the stable period starting from 1947 and continuing until today. Although many changes have occurred within the political systems, Japanese political systems have followed a path in general integrity. However, although the participation of social elements in these processes was limited throughout the historical processes, it gradually increased, especially in the second stage. Thus, large social masses and large masses were included in political participation and the salience of the society within the political system became possible. With this study, the situation and stages in question will be examined within historical processes. In this context, the rising Japanese nationalism within the political development system will be investigated and its current effects will be discussed.

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**Keywords:** Japan, Political Development, Mass Participation, Japanese Nationalism, Process of Change.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Japan's political development throughout the development and transformation processes constitutes a simple example of the Western system in general. In this context, the Western model was taken as an example and reduced to the Japanese system. In this context, Japan's systemic development cannot be considered as a superstructural phenomenon. The current system in the general literature and in the historical process has undergone change and transformation by being exposed to two different stages. In this context, it is possible to talk about the process between 1868 and 1945 and another process starting from 1947 and extending to the present day.

In the process referred to as the first period in this perspective, Japan's current political system was examined in general terms and took its current form, especially with the approval of the constitution prepared on the Western example. However, with the new constitution prepared and entered into force in 1947, a new political order began to be created, showing changes in different aspects. Especially after the Second World War, new regulations and differences were needed in the constitutional field. In this context, Japan, which maintains and continues to implement the current political system, has transitioned to the Western-style liberal democratic political system.

## 2. POLITICAL SYSTEMS IN THE HISTORICAL PROCESS

According to many researchers, Japan's modern history begins in 1868 (Hunter, 2002: 28). Japan has been involved in a radically changing process since that date within the modernization process. Emperor Mutsuhito, who came to the throne in 1868, included Japan in the processes of change and transformation according to the Western perspective and produced works from the same perspective. In this context, preparations for modernization were made according to the Western example. The new political system in question was adopted according to the Western type and the existing political system was abandoned. However, when looking at historical processes, Japan displayed a closed and defensive attitude towards other states in its previous periods. The main reason for the emergence of the new political system was the American War Ships in 1853, forcing them to open their lands to Western countries. With this obligation, the political authorities of Japan had to accept the American offer in order to prevent colonization. Thus, the agreements and proposals presented by America were accepted and Japan improved its relations with the West in many areas. The relationships in question have been particularly applied from a commercial perspective. However, this newly implemented decision has brought about different perspectives of change. Thus, changes began to occur not only politically, but also in social, cultural and economic perspectives.

Japan, which has undergone changes by transforming the existing political order and traditional methods, has rapidly started reform efforts for the purpose of development. Thus, the Tenno, famous for their reform efforts, who had previously been outside the balance of political power and came to power in 1868, were placed at the center of the country's politics. It was considered of primary importance to save the future of the Japanese society, which had made decisions towards Westernization and reached a population of approximately 34 million (Westney, 1987: 67).

In this context, a new council called Iwakura Mission was formed and this council was gathered around the management elite. This new parliament, which was formed in this direction, visited especially Western states and held political meetings from an economic perspective. Research was conducted regarding the preparation of the new constitution, taking into account social, cultural and economic initiatives, and the findings were reported. As a result of the prepared reports, the extent to which Western states would contribute to Japan's own development was examined.

Following the research and findings obtained, the Japanese administration began to be modernized and the country was divided into provinces in the administrative system, just like in the West. Thus, traditional administrative forms were abandoned and centralized administration was established. However, the reform movements that covered the vast majority of Japanese history did not remain only administrative and political. In this context, new regulations have emerged, especially in bureaucracy. As a result of all these regulations, Japan has been at the center of a new process based on nation and state equality.

With the new studies carried out in Japan, the first modern constitution bearing the Western example was accepted and came into force on November 29, 1890. In this perspective, one of the most important developments of reform efforts was the Meiji Constitution. The most important factor in the preparation of the constitution that was revealed and presented was the Prussian constitutional order. British examples were also examined, but the Prussian example, which was

closer in terms of centralism, was adopted for Japan. The constitution in question envisaged a monarchical political order and remained in force until 1946 (Mayer & Pohl, 1995: 245). Since 1868, various social groups began to form in Japan and these groups reached the level of party organization. These groups took part in the elections held in 1890 (Huffman, 1986: 356).

Since 1945, nationalism efforts have accelerated in Japan and especially strengthened its social base. The liberalism in question has called for Japan to return to its own past. In this context, the Global Economic Crisis that occurred in 1929 affected Japan greatly and, with the increase in economic protectionism, made it necessary for Japan to create its own commercial market. With this obligation, Japan has gained a serious growth, especially in its naval power. However, this situation has attracted the negative attention of Western countries. Sanctions from Western states caused serious nationalism in Japan. The Japanese administrative elite, on the other hand, carefully monitored the reaction of the people and welcomed a major reaction against the West among the people (Aydn, 2007: 34).

The political system that Japan adopted until 1945 was shaped in a new period that emerged after the Meiji Restoration in 1868. In this period, Japan was transformed from a feudal empire into a modern national state and studies were carried out on these issues. Therefore, the current political system that lasted until 1945 only covers a past period that started with the Meiji Restoration and ended after the Second World War.

With the Meiji Restoration, a broad reform movement in many fields was initiated in 1868. During this period, under the leadership of a strong emperor, it was aimed to remove Japan from the feudal period and transform it into a modern nation state. Under the leadership of Mutsuhito, Japan's political, economic and military structure was changed sharply and to a great extent. In this context, the Meiji Constitution, which was accepted and came into force in 1889, became Japan's first written constitution. However, the constitution in question offered limited democratic features. In this context, the executive council was in a multi-cameral structure shared with ministers and nobles appointed by the emperor. However, the constitution in question generally kept political power in the hands of an oligarchic private group. In the early years of the Meiji Constitution, some restrictions were imposed on political parties and elections. However, with the new process, different political parties have emerged. After the Meiji Restoration, Japan transformed into a structure in which political parties played a more effective role (Arisaka, 1996: 99). In this perspective, Japan's political system allowed military leaders to exert influence in a political arena. Especially during World War II, Japanese military leaders played a fundamental role in determining the political decisions of their country. Since 1940, Japan has made new efforts on its expansion policies and accelerated its military actions. In this context, attacks on China and Japan's expansion efforts in Asia have increased the complexity of the political system.

As a general rule, the political system that Japan had until 1945 showed significant changes with the modernization efforts after the Meiji Restoration. The intended modernization efforts, along with the preservation of the existing imperial system and the influence of military leaders, created a complex structure (Benz, 1978: 279). However, after the Second World War, Japan's surrender and the adoption of a democratic constitution in the post-war period caused Japan's political system to undergo a radical change.

Japan's political system forms the basis of the Constitution, which was adopted and came into force in 1947. This constitution in question was forced on Japan by the United States after the Second World War. Looking at historical processes, the emperor is the head of Japan's political system and government. However, with the 1947 Constitution, the role of the emperor in question became only symbolic. In this context, it no longer has any political authority. The emperor only played a representative role such as official ceremonies and symbolic duties (Curtis, 1988: 89). In the ongoing process, the Shugiin Assembly and the Sangiin Assembly were established in the parliamentary system. The Shugiin Assembly is considered the most powerful parliament in Japan. Deputies are directly elected by the people, and the total number of deputies in the parliament is determined by the size of the population. The Sangiin Assembly represents a federative structure of Japan. These members are elected by representatives of the states and the capital, Tokyo. The parliament in question elects the prime minister, and the prime minister is the leader of the party that has the majority in the Shugiin Assembly. In this context, the prime minister is the authority of the government and is directly appointed by the emperor. In a multi-party structure, the Liberal Democratic Party and the Progressive Democratic Party of Japan stand out (Iizawa, 1949: 38). Representatives determined by elections are responsible for creating new policies and directing the current government. In this context, Japan's political system draws attention with its adoption of democratic principles and assimilation in the post-war period. Japanese politics has generally operated at a stable and democratic level in its recent period.

With the work it has done in this context, Japan has aimed to reach the current levels of Western states, especially economically, and to be involved in global politics without being connected. However, the necessary social support for this could be provided by the spread of nationalism (Najita & Harootunian, 1989: 751). However, Western states, with their protectionist policy approach, tried to narrow down the Japanese markets and the agreements they made. Along with these elements, nationalism and especially militarism activities, along with the political and economic infrastructures in Japan, have gradually gained momentum and become stronger. A new turning point emerged for the Japanese political system, especially after the atomic bomb attack and its failure in the Second World War. In this context, the Japanese political system in question began to be reshaped differently according to the Western template.

The New Constitution, which came into force in 1947 and formed the nature of the political system, was accepted by the majority vote in the parliament. The constitution in question, consisting of 103 articles, emphasizes that a new political system will be created as Constitutional Democracy and that the right of sovereignty belongs to the people. In this context, with the New Constitution, the state form lost its authoritarian character and became an order dominated by democratic elements (Baerwald, 1974: 87). Therefore, with the New Constitution adopted in 1947, the basic features of today's Japanese political system were determined and defined as the Peace Constitution. Thus, it lost its expansionist and aggressive function in historical processes and turned into a nation state based on peace.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Japan provided important decision-making mechanisms in its political system and especially in its foreign policies in the period until 1945. In this context, political characters and authoritarian

personalities have played important roles. However, since 1947, especially after the Second World War, decision makers have been state institutions and bureaucratic elements. Thus, a new structure was created that was completely independent of the people who played a decisive role. Identities that existed symbolically have been replaced by an institutional integrity. However, in general, the political system of Japan is based on the newly issued constitution, also called the Peace Constitution. With this constitution, the separation of powers has been made possible and the rights and obligations of the people have been determined to a significant extent. With the new studies, reform movements and transformation elements revealed, Japan has been subjected to significant changes, especially in its political order and also in its economic, military, cultural and social structures. Thus, its closed attitude changed over time and it was able to follow a participatory structure by giving importance to its external relations. This situation has made Japan a potential state that is still an effective political and economic power today.

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