

Compare the First World War and the Second World War in terms of their impact on Japan.

Japan, as a victorious power in WW1, while it is a defeated country in WW2, had significantly different impacts brought about the two wars. Generally, WW1 brought short-term benefits to Japan but no long-term benefits. On the contrary, WW2 harmed the short-term development of Japan but brought long-term positive impacts to Japan. In this essay, political, economic, military and diplomatic aspects will be compared.

In political aspect, WW1 helped the emergence of *party politics* 政黨政治 while WW2 established democracy in Japan, which was of greater significance. During WW1, as the west was fighting the war in Europe, Japan was able to dominate the market in China. Economy thus prospered. Yet, only those of the capitalist class and the zaibatsu could benefit. The livelihood of the lower class was still poor, leading to the *Rice Riot* 米騷動 in 1918. Since the Terauchi cabinet failed to settle the crisis, the cabinet fell down and replaced by *Hara Kei* 原敬, who was the first Prime Minister affiliated with political parties. Party politics emerged after WW1. Afterwards, Japan was defeated in WW2. The US, in an attempt to prevent militarism from reviving again, carried out demilitarization and democratization. In terms of democratization, the US provided Japan with democratization reforms such as the 1947 *Showa constitution* 昭和憲法, which abolished the power of the Emperor and allowed both men and women to enjoy the franchise. In terms of demilitarization, *Military Tribunal for the Far East* 遠東戰爭法庭 was convened, in which about 6000 soldiers were sentenced and over 200 thousand people supporting Japan's expansionist policy were purged. Militarism was removed and democracy was established. Comparatively speaking, though WW1 allowed party politics to emerge in Japan, it was short-lived and fluctuated, which allowed the rise of militarism. However, the SCAP occupation helped remove militarism in Japan and founded democracy in Japan. This brought a profound impact to Japan's democratic development.

In economic aspect, WW2 brought a greater positive impact on the economy of Japan than WW1. WW1 brought short-term positive influence to Japan's economy as the west was fighting the war, neglecting affairs in the Far East. Japan was thus able to dominate the market in China. Moreover, as the US had to buy ammunitions from Japan during the war, Japan economy flourished as a result. Hence, Japan's economy was prosperous at that time. But from a long-term perspective, when the west returned to the market in China after the war, Japan longer dominated the market and its expanding economy faced reduction. Its trade and exports dropped as well. Japan entered economic recession after WW1. Yet, after WW2, although its economy was wrecked initially because of the high military expenses in the war. Its military expenses even reached 99% of its national expenditure in 1944, together with the assault of the US, the economy of Japan depressed. Nonetheless, viewing from the long run, as the US hoped to use Japan as a barrier to prevent communism from expanding in Asia, it helped Japan enthusiastically. Not only did the US grant \$US 2 billion for Japan's economic recovery, but it also introduced some favorable policies like *Land Reform Act* 土地改革法 and *Anti-Monopoly Act* 禁止壟斷法. This laid a solid foundation for Japan's economic miracle afterwards. Comparatively speaking, although WW1 brought short-term positive influence to Japan's economy while WW2 posed an instant damage to Japan's economy. But from a long-term perspective, WW2 could be regarded as liberalizing Japan's economy from militarists. With the efforts made by the US, the economy of Japan underwent fast development and allowed the appearance of economic miracle. WW2 was of a greater importance in terms of economy development.

In military aspect, the WW1 prompted the military development of Japan while the WW2 limited the progress of military development. Since Japan was a victorious power in WW1, it gained huge benefits in China. The militarists thus held enormous power and enjoyed high prestige among Japan. They even proposed the 'eight-six' fleet plan 「八六艦隊」方案 in 1918, building aircraft carriers. In 1922, the world's first commissioned aircraft carrier 'Hōshō 鳳翔號' was built, which strengthened the naval power. Besides, air force was also introduced into the military so that the fighting capacity and reconnaissance could be enhanced. For instance, the *Kawasaki Army Type 88 Reconnaissance Aircraft 八八式偵察機* was invented in 1927 and this prompted the aircraft development of Japan. However, WW2 brought different impacts on Japan's military development. It is true that Japan had rapid military development during WW2 such as the invention of *Mitsubishi A6M Zero 零式戰機* in 1940. Yet, after WW2, the SCAP government, in order to weaken the military strength of Japan and prevent Japan from waging war again, launched the *Showa Constitution 昭和憲法* in 1947, which disbanded the army and only the self-defense force with a small number of soldiers was kept. Meanwhile, the military expenses of Japan was limited to 1% only. Military development was greatly suppressed. In comparison, WW1 facilitated the military development of Japan and more weapons were invented. Japan was powerful and had great strength. While WW2 strictly limited the military development of Japan and its long-term military strength was undermined. This weakened the power of Japan.

In diplomatic aspect, WW1 enhanced the international status of Japan but at the same time, made Japan be discriminated against by the west. While WW2 tarnished the international status of Japan but, helped rebuild the diplomacy of Japan, having different influence. WW1 enhanced the international status of Japan as Japan was allowed to attend the *Paris Peace Conference* 巴黎和會(1919) as a victorious power. Besides, Japan gained the interests in Shandong and even became one of the permanent members of the *League of Nations* 國聯. Japan enjoyed high status. But with the expansion of power, Japan became stronger. This aroused the suspicion of the west. The west even adopted different means to limit the power of Japan. For instance, the *Washington Conference* 華盛頓會議 was held in 1921-22 to limit the navy of Japan. Japan was even forced to return the interests it gained in Shandong. While it was enjoying a high status internationally, it was being targeted against. Regarding WW2, though the WW2 blemished the status of Japan in the short run as Japan was being occupied by the SCAP government, losing autonomy. Worse still, its diplomacy could only follow that of the US. However, Japan's defeat in the WW2 allowed her to improve relations with its neighboring countries. With the help of the US, Japan signed the *Sino-Japanese Peace Treaty* 日台和約 and *Treaty of San Francisco* 三藩市條約 with Taiwan and Southeast Asian countries respectively in 1952. These treaties not only solved the post-war problems, but they also helped Japan rebuild diplomacy with neighboring countries. Relatively speaking, although the WW1 enhanced the international status of Japan, it made Japan being targeted against by the West. WW2 lowered the international status of Japan but helped improve Japan's relations with other countries. Hence, it could be seen that the two world wars had different impacts on Japan.

To conclude, the two world wars brought different impacts to Japan in political, economic, military and diplomatic aspects. After closer examination, though WW1 brought benefits to Japan, there were a number of drawbacks as well. The WW2 brought great destructions to Japan but it helped Japan reborn. As a result, the WW2 was a loss that turned out to be a gain.

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