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The political dynamics of Japan have changed various times over the years as a result of the multiple leaders that have run the country in the past and the activism of the politically inclined citizens. Nationalism is on the rise in Japan specifically the “illiberal, authoritarian turn in contemporary nationalism which was accelerated during Koizumi Jun’ichiro’s time in office, when further neoliberal reforms were simultaneously implemented.” (Contemporary Political Dynamics of Japanese Nationalism) From its inception in 1889 until after World War II, Japan contained the first parliamentary system in Asia and was a mixed constitutional- absolute monarchy, with an independent judiciary. In 1947 the Constitution of Japan was adopted in order to grant more civil liberties to citizens than they originally had under the Meiji Constitution of 1889. The Liberal Democratic Party has governed almost continuously since 1955, “they have been in opposition only twice by the Democratic Party and the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan”. (Freedom House) The government’s efforts to introduce national identity were overshadowed by the democratization movement until the late 1970s; due to the movement of education, the government’s efforts to strengthen national identity prevailed. The study of democracy in Japan is important because it is slowly moving further and further away from a democratic country; if we highlight the flaws, they can be fixed in order to keep the democratic principles in the constitution. This paper serves to explore the complexities of the governmental institutions in Japan, describe how democratic Japan truly is and provide statistics on the quality of the civil liberties given to citizens.

Japan has slowly been transforming from a multiparty parliamentary democracy back to a constitutional monarchy because according to *The Crisis of Democracy in Japan*, “they feel that education should not teach imported notions of western human rights, but should instead stress

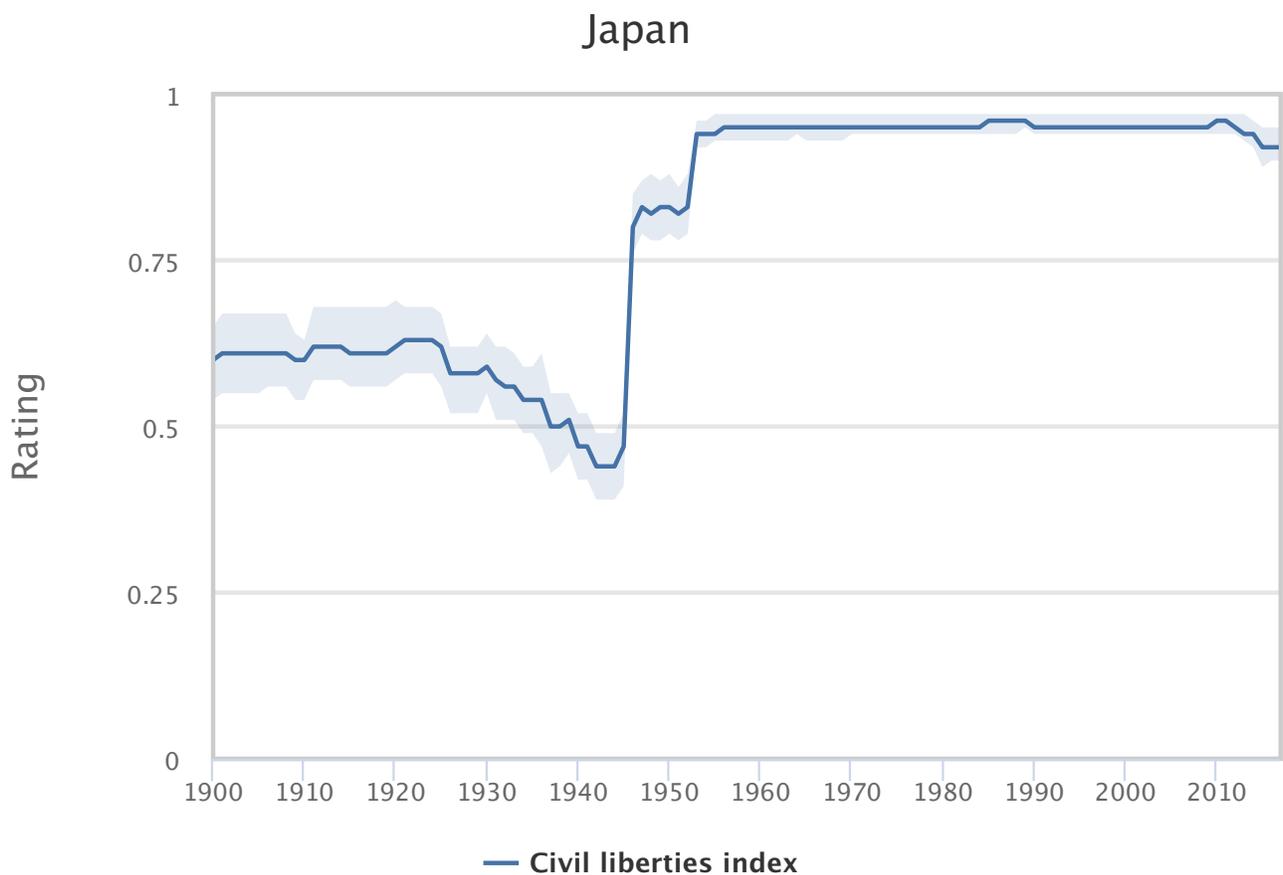
the Japanese people's duties to the state and to the emperor." There have been some major shifts in the United States national rule in Japan and they are doing everything in their power to strengthen ties with the Japanese in order to prevent this from happening. This would prove bad for the United States since they have been trying to spread democracy to other countries since it established itself as one. In Schmitter and Karl's paper, *What Democracy Is...and Is Not*, they attempt to prove the complexities of democracy while listing the bare necessities for a democracy to thrive. They list the nine conditions that define a democracy according to Robert Dahl. Based on these conditions and other factors, Japan is regarded as a "strong democracy with rule of law and an active civil society." (World Report 2017) Whereas this seems to be true, Japan has various mishaps because human rights and civil liberties are being limited or stripped away from citizens. There is a myriad of examples of civil liberties being stripped away from citizens but the most prominent ones are: detaining suspects for up to 23 days prior to prosecution without the possibility of release on bail, prohibiting lawyers from being present during interrogations, and silencing broadcasters who air programs that run counter to political impartiality. (World Report 2017) These limits on civil liberties put a strain on the type of democracy Japan possesses and makes it harder for Japanese citizens to live without fearing the government.

Without civil liberties, there is no democracy because the ability to protest, petition, vote and have free speech are the foundations for a successful democracy. Civil liberties and civil participation are interchangeable terms and Japanese citizens exercise their rights and freedoms on a daily basis. They are constantly exercising their right to assemble and petition; "Japan recently experienced the greatest mass movement in her political history. Thirteen million people signed petitions requesting the dissolution of the House of Representatives and the holding of

new elections.” (Parties and Politics in Contemporary Japan) This movement was in response to the revised United States– Japan Security Treaty and the methods used by the government in obtaining the passage of the treaty.

Overall Japan has free press freedom and net freedom status and their aggregated score is a 96/100 (0= least free and 100= most free). The score was calculated based on seven factors: electoral processes, political pluralism and participation, the functioning of government, freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy and individual rights. The electoral process was rated a 12/12 because the freely elected House of Representatives chooses the prime minister. Also, Japan’s electoral laws are generally fair and well enforced. Political pluralism and participation received a 16/16 because parties generally do not face undue restrictions on registration or operation and are usually free from domination by powerful interests that are not democratically accountable. The functioning of the government received a 12/12 because elected officials are free to govern without interference, though Japanese bureaucrats have some influence over policy. Civil liberties received a 15/16 because press freedom is guaranteed in the constitution, but the Specially Designed Secrets Acts allows journalists to be prosecuted for revealing state secrets even if that information was unknowingly obtained which is concerning. The media is not completely free and that is why they did not receive a perfect score in this section. Associational and organizational rights received a 12/12 because freedom of assembly is also protected under the constitution and peaceful demonstration takes place often. Labor unions are active and exert political influence through the Japanese Trade Union Confederation. Rule of law received a 15/16 because although Japan’s judiciary is independent, societal discrimination affects about 3 million minorities in Japan. “Very few refugees are granted asylum in Japan, with only 20

refugees accepted out of almost 20,000 asylum applications in 2017.” (Freedom House) These statistics are astounding coming from a country that prides itself on teaching morals and values. Finally, personal autonomy and individual rights received a 14/16 because citizens get to enjoy broad personal autonomy in their choices of residence, profession, and education but there are limits on social freedoms. For example, same– sex marriage is still illegal in Japan, and violence against women usually goes unreported. In addition, long workdays are very common even



Highcharts.com | V-Dem data version 8.0

though they are harmful to workers’ health, and human trafficking is an ongoing issue in Japan. The seven aforementioned factors serve to explain the line shown in the graph above. The line was slowly decreasing until the large increase around 1945 which is around the same time the democratic constitution was drafted; the line continues increasing incrementally until it reaches a plateau and towards the end near 2016/2017 there is a slight dip. This slight dip can be due to the

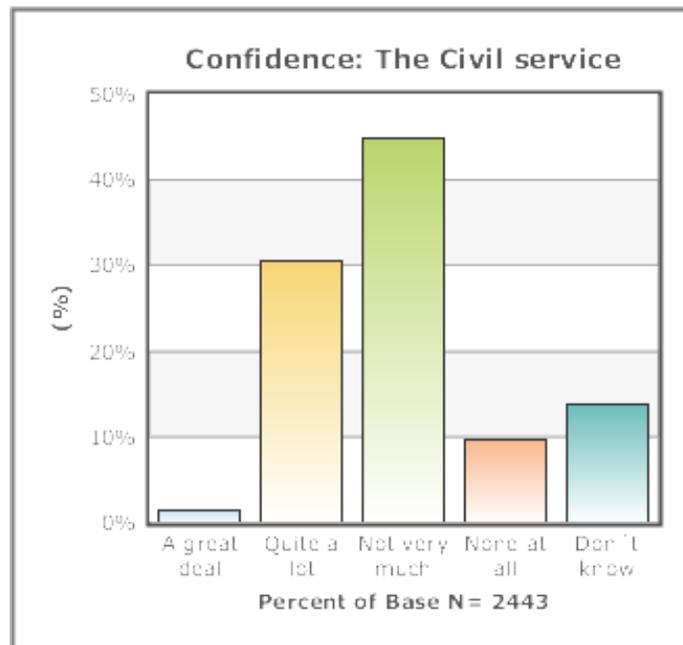
restrictions the government has been putting on freedom of the press, and many other things. The chart below demonstrates the confidence citizens have in the Civil Service, which directly relates to trust in their government.



World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014

Confidence: The Civil service

A great deal	1.3
Quite a lot	30.5
Not very much	44.7
None at all	9.7
Don't know	13.8
(N)	(2,443)



More people did not have very much confidence in the Civil Service and it is maybe because they do not try hard enough to be liked. These charts tie the entire argument together because they both show a decline in democratic principles and movement toward other types of more oppressive governments.

In conclusion, Japan is nowhere near the westernized version of democracy but they definitely have many democratic principles in their constitution that give their citizens many rights that other countries do not. They refused to be changed by the Americans and have their culture and beliefs minimized in order to fit the “perfect democratic mold” Americans try so hard to achieve. Japan has a very convoluted style of government but has a high civil liberties rate and can technically be considered as a low-grade form of democracy. The future of politics in Japan remains uncertain regarding whether or not it will a mixed constitutional- absolute monarchy, with an independent judiciary or if it will get rid of the democratic principles.

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