MILITARY GOVERNANCE DURING THE US OCCUPATION OF JAPAN AND THE ROLE OF CIVIL AFFAIRS TROOPS

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Introduction

The United States occupation of Japan (the Occupation) was one of two major military governance given to it at the close of World War II. Japan offered its unconditional surrender on August 10, 1945, after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The US Army under the command of General Douglas MacArthur was put in charge of the day to day running of the Occupation. Japan’s political future was to differ from the military government (MG) of postwar Germany, as it was to be administered by a Japanese government under the guidance of MacArthur and his command.

The US Army was thus charged with a non-military mission of civil affairs (CA) during the Occupation of 1945-1952. The Occupation may be divided into two distinct phases: the first, from 1945 to 1949, during which there was a large presence of US troops and relatively heavy handed management of national and local governance by the occupying forces, followed from 1949-1952 by lessening involvement in day to day functions as the US Army pulled back its numbers, transferred forces to Korea and focused on devolving more authority to the Japanese government. This first phase can be split further; from 1945 to 1947 there were major reforms across most phases of Japanese life, while from 1948 onwards there was a greater focus on economic growth.

Civil affairs troops played important roles during both of these periods. The specialized forces helped to smooth the Army’s transition from combat to civil focus in Japan, serving at General Headquarters, US Army Forces in the Pacific (GHQ) in Tokyo or as part of Military Government Teams across Japan. They brought an advanced degree of understanding and professionalism to the civil affairs mandate, helping senior officers at GHQ appreciate salient
points of governance issues and translating directives from Tokyo to local action, thereby helping the Occupation succeed in its goals.

**US Strategy for the Occupation**

The US inherited a markedly different situation in postwar Japan than it faced in Europe. It was solely responsible for the reconstruction and reform of Japan. Initial planning envisioned a zonal occupation with the USSR, China and the UK taking part. However, as the Chinese Civil War raged on and relations between the US and USSR became more awkward the Occupation was put under the legal responsibility of the Far Eastern Commission (FEC) with the US as its agent. The FEC included the USSR, UK, US, China, France, the Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines India, and Canada. It had nominal oversight of the US occupiers, but in practice held minimal power and acted rarely. General Headquarters, US Army Forces in the Pacific orchestrated government activities through the Japanese government. Overall, the backdrop for US strategy was to promote US national interests while ensuring that it met its obligations under international law.

The US Army had been planning for the military occupation of Japan since 1943 and on August 16, 1945, GHQ told the Tokyo authorities to send a delegation to Manila for discussions about surrender and occupation procedures. The Occupation began on August 30, 1945, with transports landing at the Atsugi Air Base, a former training facility for kamikaze pilots, every three to four minutes.

US initial policy in post-war Japan was focused on what became known as the “4 D’s,” demilitarization, disarmament, democratization, and deconcentration of the Japanese zaibatsu. Three documents directed initial US policy: the Statement of Policy Relating to Post-War Japan, SWNCC 150/4/A and JCS 1380/15. The Truman White House’s Statement of Policy Relating to
Post-War Japan and its top secret counterpart, SWNCC 150/4/A* Politico-Military Problems in the Far East: United States Initial Post-Defeat Policy Relating to Japan, both dated September 6, 1945, were issued September 22, 1945. They share the same text, stating that US policy would be to:

- Make certain that Japan would not again become a military threat to the US or other countries; and
- To create within the terms of the UN Charter a peaceful self-determining government, with a preference for a democratic system.4

**Political Goals**

The first three D’s, demilitarization, disarmament, and democratization, had direct political implications. Demilitarization required that militarism be excluded from Japanese life in every sphere. Thus, politics, economics, and everyday social interactions were to be pacifist and any warlike ideas would not be tolerated. The Emperor was to remain as a figurehead, stripped of political and religious power. The US wanted to quickly end any remaining influence of the Japanese military, and SCAP was directed to disband all military and paramilitary forces and destroy all arms and other military equipment.5 In addition, officers and civil servants who had been direct parts of the Japanese war effort were to be immediately arrested and tried for war crimes. The secret police, political societies, and the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, which had been used by the Emperor to keep control over the lives of his subjects, were to be dissolved. Political parties immediately were put under Occupation control. Finally, the civil service structure, police, and courts were to remain intact after the offending militarists and ultranationalists were removed.6

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* SWNCC 150/4/A was issued on September 22, 1945 after President Truman approved SWNCC 150/4 dated September 6, 1945, without requiring any changes
Economic and Infrastructure Goals

Economic rehabilitation meant that the economy would be rebuilt to the degree that Japan’s peaceable needs could be met. Facilities for the production of arms and munitions were to be eliminated, while economic activities that would contribute to a democratically oriented Japan were to be encouraged. The Japanese zaibatsu, family controlled corporations closely linked to one another, had been loyal to the Emperor and provided the economic engine for Japan’s war effort. The deconcentration campaign was to include provisions to encourage policies to permit widespread ownership of means of production and trade and to reorganize Japanese business by dissolving large banking and industrial corporations. In addition, laws allowing labor unions and removing employment controls were to be adopted by the new Japanese government as soon as possible.

Societal Goals

The US did not expressly state that the new Japanese government must be democratic, but it did require that it be self-determining and that it would encourage the development of personal liberties such as the right to assembly and freedom of the press. In practice, however, the two came to mean the same thing. As part of the effort to combat the nationalist cult perpetuated by the wartime government, JCS 1380/15 also specified that support for the State Shinto establishment was to be ended immediately and religious freedom guaranteed.
The Role of the US Military

Legal Structure

The Commander in Chief, Army Forces, Pacific was given overall responsibility for the US Occupation. The Allied Powers had decided during the July 1945 Potsdam Conference to allow the Japanese government to maintain its legal status at the end of the war. A directive dated August 28, 1945, limited the activities of the US Army to a few specified functions, making the US occupying force one focused on military governance. The occupiers would not govern directly but rather work through a Japanese civilian government. US government as it was to take place in postwar Germany was not to be repeated in East Asia. The following policies were set forth:

- The Supreme Commander Allied Powers (SCAP) will issue all necessary instructions directly to the Japanese Government;
- Every opportunity will be given the Government and people of Japan to carry out such instructions without further compulsion; and
- The Occupation Forces will act principally as an agency upon which SCAP can call, if necessary, to secure compliance with instructions issued to the Japanese Government and will observe and report on compliance.11

JCS 1380/15 further clarified the required actions of GHQ/SCAP, giving General MacArthur the right to occupy the cities and parts of Japan he saw fit and to institute policies as he thought necessary to assure the overall goals.

Operational Structure

The formal surrender of the Japanese government occurred aboard the USS Missouri on September 2, 1945. The Japanese had a hard time finding delegates to accept the shameful duty of surrender. There were still large numbers of soldiers and officers who refused to accept defeat; the intransigent military men went so far as to kill the commanding general of an Imperial Guard Division and to fire on the house of then Prime Minister Kantaro Suzuki.12
MacArthur established GHQ on the sixth floor of the Dai-Ichi Life Insurance Building in Tokyo after a brief time being based in Yokohama. Military Government Teams assigned to the Sixth and Eighth U.S. Armies were used in the major cities to assure compliance with SCAP’s policy directives. The Occupation forces hit a high of 386,000 troops in November 1945, but as it became apparent that security concerns were minimal, the troop levels dropped to approximately 150,000 troops by the middle of 1946. Force strength stayed in this level until 1949, when the occupation was reorganized and Military Government Teams were replaced by a smaller number of Civil Affairs Regional Teams. The trend accelerated in 1950 with the outbreak of the Korean War, as US Army tactical troops were by and large transferred out of Japan to take part in the conflict across the Korea Straight.

The Ryukyu Islands and the Kurile Islands were exceptions to the organizational structure on the main four islands of Japan. The Ryukyus, including Okinawa, were governed
directly by the Army throughout the Occupation while the Kuriles became part of the Soviet Union.

Policy Implementation

This section deals with the major initiatives at GHQ and how they played out at the national level. We will examine in detail how these programs worked on the local level, as well as additional Occupation issues that were primarily local in nature, when we examine the activities of the Military Government and Civil Affairs Teams.

The tenor of relations between GHQ and the Japanese authorities generally was good. In spite of occasionally misunderstanding the consensus based approach of Japanese cultural (as shown by the diagram above right from what became known as the “Jeep Way” letter where “Your Way” is GHQ and “Their Way” is the Japanese government), MacArthur and his staff were able to push the government to adopt necessary directives and laws while allowing it an increasing amount of autonomy. When the Japanese government was not obeying what GHQ considered “must” policy reforms, the GHQ Special Staff Sections intervened to ensure compliance. Japan was fortunate to have some strong leaders during the Occupation period, particularly Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida. Yoshida served as Prime Minister five times between 1946 and 1954\(^4\) and was a progressive reformist who had a good working relationship with MacArthur. Overall, the relationship between occupier and occupied government was positive and productive.
General MacArthur remained SCAP until April 11, 1951, when he was relieved of command by President Truman. MacArthur had been increasingly acting of his own accord, and the President removed the General after he issued a thinly veiled threat to expand the Korean War to the People’s Republic of China (PRC) if the PRC did not stop supporting the Communists in Korea. General Matthew Ridgway took over as SCAP, and served in this role until the Treaty of San Francisco came into effect on April 28, 1952, ending the Occupation.

**THE PURGE**

SCAPIN 550, dated January 4, 1946, codified the purge of the ultranationalist and militaristic element in Japan. In October 1945 purges had already been initiated in education and policing. SCAPIN 550 barred “active exponents of militaristic nationalism and aggression” and important members of nationalist societies and the wartime government sponsored associations from public office. The directive’s meaning also extended to members of private organizations that had financed Japanese aggression, including managers of local branches of foreign owned banks such as Deutsche Bank and the Korean Trust Company.

The goal of the purges was to discontinue the influence of those associated with the wartime imperium. 201,845 persons were purged between 1945 and 1948. In addition, almost 500 war criminals were found guilty during the same period. The purge orders remained in place until the middle of 1951, at which point a majority of those who had been excluded again became eligible for public office.

**CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM**

As part of the political reform process, the redrafting of the Japanese constitution was a high priority. This activity was undertaken directly by SCAP as guided by Washington, although in reality General MacArthur had a great amount of leeway.
MacArthur had several basic ideas for constitutional reform. Politically, he wanted to retain the Emperor as head of state, while ensuring he would be governed by the Constitution and accountable to the people. On military matters, he believed war should be renounced, including the right of Japan to ever project offensive power. He held that the Japanese Army, Navy and Air Force should be forever disbanded. In the economic sphere MacArthur favored an end to the Japanese feudal system and to instead put in place a government with a tax-based budget along the lines of the British system. In addition, hailing from the aristocracy was no longer to mean one had governmental authority.\(^{19}\)

After numerous redrafts and debate between the Japanese government and SCAP, these policies were some of the major points enshrined in the November 3, 1946 Constitution. Other central changes included the codification of freedoms of speech, the press and assembly and the banning of any form of government censorship. The Diet was made the highest state authority, governing over a country of equal individuals. Moreover, the Prime Minister was to be elected by the Diet and governed as executive at their discretion. The Constitution also covers taxation, rights of labor, marriage rights, the legal system, and the establishment of autonomous local government.\(^{20}\)

**Additional Legal and Government Reforms**

The changes at the legislative level were quick; on April 10, 1946, the first postwar elections took place choosing a Diet with over 300 new members.\(^{21}\) A revised Diet Law followed in March 1947, spelling out the minutiae of Diet functions including terms, officers and relations between its two houses, the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors.\(^{22}\)

GHQ also sought to end religious persecution and break the government stranglehold on life within the home. The Religious Bodies Law of 1939 had strictly dictated what was
acceptable for Japanese in religious life; this was changed via the Shinto Directive of December 14, 1945. This directive prohibited government or public officials from advocating Shinto in any shape or form. Shortly after its issue, the Emperor ended remaining myths about Nationalist Shinto by stating publicly that he was not divine and that Japanese people were not better than the other peoples of the world and therefore did not deserve to rule it.23 These actions were reinforced by the freedom of religion and speech enshrined in the new Constitution.

**ECONOMICS AND LABOR**

GHQ also moved quickly to address the issue of deconcentration of the *zaibatsu*. SCAPIN 244, issued on November 6, 1945, approved the Japanese Government’s plan to dismantle four of the largest *zaibatsu*.24 Similar directives addressed trading companies, the banking system and the distribution of land formerly belonging to the dissolved companies. Moreover, GHQ pushed the Japanese government to institute land reforms so as to provide a more equitable basis for rural Japanese to pursue their livelihoods.

**SUMMARY JAPANESE ECONOMIC INDICES AND STATISTICS, 1946 - 1951**

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<td>Indust. Production 18.3</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>42.0</td>
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<td>Cost of Living 25.8</td>
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<td>Real Wages 65.9</td>
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<td>357</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>288*</td>
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<td>Occup. Costs (¥M) 39,600</td>
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<td>299</td>
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<td>% of Gov’t Budget 33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>16%</td>
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* requested

# the official exchange rate highly overvalued the yen during this period so dollar equivalents are misleading

Source: SCAP, Economic and Scientific Section, Other US Government sources, Japanese Government sources, *The Oriental Economist*, as shown in Fearley
Performance of the Japanese economy was measured during the Occupation using 1932-1936 as the baseline for production, as Japan had not yet ramped up for the war at that point, but had a strong, functioning economy. The economy struggled early on during the Occupation, as shown in the table on the previous page. Infrastructure needed to be rebuilt and the dearth of available inputs was problematic. In addition, conditions of the surrender required Japan to pay for the Occupation, effectively canceling out the value of US aid to Japan during the Occupation and putting additional strain on the economy.

Labor movements became a thorny issue for GHQ. The Communist Party was well organized in Japan and by 1947 was able to take control of some of the 25,000 newly formed labor unions. They called for a general strike, which would have been a major problem for the still struggling economy. GHQ did not want to act against labor rights, but they also wanted the economy to recover. General MacArthur solved the situation by meeting with labor leaders and convincing them not to strike. At the same time he pressured US and regional leaders to give Japan better access to raw materials so it could bring back its industrial production to needed levels.25

The economic deconcentration plan reached its end as 1947 turned into 1948. As US relations with the USSR had worsened, Japan’s stagnant economic recovery became a concern lest the local Communists gain a strong foothold. Legislation put through the Diet under pressure from GHQ in December 1947 addressed what was considered excessive concentrations of economic power. This Deconcentration Law covered insurance, industrial, and service and distribution companies, leading to 325 companies being designated for deconcentration.26 This action went far past the initial breaking of the four major zaibatsu and led politicians in Washington to create a Deconcentration Review Board. Although GHQ had cleared its support
for the Deconcentration Law with Washington’s powerful State War Navy Planning Committee, it was forced to backtrack as anti-Communist sentiment in the US meant deconcentration was becoming equated with being soft on Communism. Throughout 1948 most of the 325 companies which had been set for deconcentration were released such that ultimately only 19 companies required any changes. Japan’s economic recovery was now greatly liberalized and companies freed to conduct business within a much more open operating environment.

As the Occupation progressed, the Korean War had an overall salutary affect on Japanese economic recovery. The conflict put some pressure on commodity prices and availability, but provided an overall boost to Japan’s economic production through increased demand. The economic recovery and leveling off of inflation caused the US to stop sending aid to Japan in July 1951 and set the stage for the withdrawal of the Occupation forces.

**Civil Information**

The US Army wished to ensure freedom of speech and the press, however, it also wanted to maintain security and counterintelligence functions such that censorship and monitoring of the media were high priorities during the Occupation. This initially meant that GHQ and the Office of War Information based in Washington, DC, would be the sole source for world news and pictures.

The Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD), under the General Section’s Office of Counterintelligence, and the Civil Information and Education Section (CI&E), one of the Special Staff Sections, had dual responsibility for maintaining appropriate standards in radio, television, film, print, and other media. Censorship was relatively weak at first, as MacArthur did not want to be seen as oppressive and also was not as sure of how to balance the different constituencies he had to serve. For example, only 69 of 8,600 monitored broadcasts in 1947 were censored.
However, by 1948 there were over 350 Army officers, enlisted and civilians and over 5,000 Japanese and other nationals employed by CCD checking media for appropriate content. Officially, censorship was not acknowledged, although it became common. For the rest of the occupation censorship policy went back and forth; CCD was closed in 1949 after Washington began to question the wisdom of censorship when the Occupation was trying to promote democracy. With the outbreak of the Korean War, SCAP began censoring the media anew, which continued for the remainder of the Occupation.

**Civil Affairs Troops and the Military Government Teams**

Civil affairs troops have a unique role. Unlike their regular Army brethren, they have specialized roles that are non-military in focus. Their primary goals are administration and rebuilding of destroyed physical and government infrastructure. These activities normally take place against a backdrop of war or in the period shortly after the ending of conflict. The skillsets required are more in line with the civilian sector, thus the appellation civil affairs. Knowledge of e.g., economics or law, is more important than the ability to project force and/or defend a position. Civil affairs troops infrequently make policy at the highest levels, but can have a significant impact in the interpretation and execution of policies. Thus, there is a strong need to understand what may be fast changing situations and come up with diplomatic solutions at the local and regional levels. They are in a sense, local ambassadors for the occupying power, subject to an important test that judges whether intentions are being made into realities or if the occupiers are being disingenuous.
Civil Affairs Preparation and Lessons before the Occupation

**Prewar History**

Civil affairs and military government played a role in many US conflicts prior to World War II. As the Second World War drew nearer its end there appears to have been a feeling that military government had given way to local civilian control too quickly the Spanish-American War and after World War I.\(^3^1\) This was due in part to political pressures that civilians should be charged with rehabilitating defeated powers and to the lack of properly trained civil affairs troops. In 1918 occupied Germany for example, the Third Army, in charge of almost a million German people, had little idea of how the German government functioned or how to communicate new policy to the citizenry.\(^3^2\)

As the US prepared for the Second World War, the Army’s Judge Advocate General published FM 27-5, *Military Government*, on July 30, 1940. Heretofore there was no manual for civil affairs. The issuance of 27-5 sought to avoid the pitfalls of previous CA efforts by codifying the goals of Army civil affairs troops: the welfare of the people governed was critical and an occupation needed to be “just, humane and as mild as possible.”\(^3^3\)

**Schools**

The US Army School of Military Government was opened in Charlottesville, Virginia on May 11, 1942.\(^3^4\) The school was organized to provide an initial class of thirty with a six to eight week period of basic instruction followed by four weeks of military and political instruction. It was run by a Commandant taken from the Army and a Director drawn from the private sector.\(^3^5\) The curriculum, as shown on the following page, did not stress foreign languages but rather focused on theories about how to best govern. It addressed issues including public health, economics, supply issues, and public administration.
Charlottesville was bolstered by Civil Affairs Training Schools (CATS) created at civilian universities across the US in March 1943. These included programs at Northwestern University, Yale University, the University of Chicago, Harvard University, Stanford University, and the University of Michigan. CATS students were trained to be specialists and CATS instructors emphasized political, educational, and economic knowledge, as well as foreign language proficiency. In addition, role playing and practice sessions were utilized to make students put theory into practice. Normally, graduates from Charlottesville went on to one of the CATS, however not all CATS students had been through the School of Military Government.
From CATS, students finished their training at the Civil Affairs Staging Area at the Presidio in California. Approximately 2,500 soldiers went through the Civil Affairs Training Schools, with graduates trained to go primarily to Japan and Germany. Nevertheless, a large number of the CA troops trained for Japan were actually diverted to Korea, causing shortfalls in targets for CA troops in Japan.38

**Handbooks**

FM 27-5 was revised in 1943. The new manual served as the basis for civil affairs functions in Japan at the beginning of the Occupation. Administrative in focus, the handbook addressed substantive areas including treatment of local populations, liaising with local governments, treatment of political prisoners, annulment of discriminatory laws, respecting religious customs, and instituting general economic policies.39 In addition, it attempted to lay ground rules for organizational issues such as the division of responsibility between the Army and Navy and format for proper orders.40 Although useful, FM 27-5 was meant to be a military government manual, and therefore proved vague for many of the realities of civil affairs in Japan.

**The Civil Affairs Division, War Department**

The War Department created the Civil Affairs Division in March 1943 to help plan for postwar occupation of defeated areas. General John F. Hildring, who was to draft JCS-1380/15, was the first head of CAD.41 After the Occupation began, CAD had little direct impact on events as they unfolded. CAD did have a helpful role early on by bolstering the number of qualified civil affairs troops through the direct recruitment of professional civilians to be CA officers. These officers did not attend CATS or the US Army School of Military Government, but by way of their strong professional backgrounds were given direct commissions to be staff officers in GHQ or to be on the ground in locations across Japan. This helped provide more qualified
personnel to get the Occupation up and running than would have otherwise been available. Overall, the Civil Affairs Division played a minor role during the Occupation. GHQ sometimes consulted them on particular issues of relevance, but there was no explicit need to do so, which meant that more often than not CAD focused on activities in Europe rather than in Japan.

Civil Affairs Troops in Occupied Japan

“The governing of occupied territories may be of many kinds but in most instances it is a civilian task and requires absolutely first-class men and not second-string men.”42 – President Franklin D. Roosevelt voicing his support for training civilians to become Civil Affairs officers at the US Army School of Military Government.

Organization and Roles

The Government Section of GHQ had a strong influence on civil affairs the outset of the Occupation, as the primary focus of the Army was to purge those who had been active in or associated with the wartime government so as to ensure that Japan moved toward a representative government. CA troops from the schools or who had been hired by the CAD were placed within GS, one of the other Special Sections of General Headquarters, or in Military Government Teams in regions, districts or prefectures. The Special Sections were headed at the beginning of the Occupation by military men unfamiliar with CA issues.

GHQ established Military Government Groups within Sixth and Eighth Armies and deployed these troops in October 1945. Eighth Army relieved Sixth Army of all military governance tasks in December 1945.43 The majority of civil affairs troops were assigned to the Military Government Teams across Japan. The Teams aced through the local Japanese authorities, paralleling the relationship between GHQ and the Tokyo government. The MG
Teams were normally made up of 84 persons in total, of which 34 were Army (7 officers, 20 enlisted, and 7 Department of the Army civilians) and 50 were Japanese with specialized skills. The troops were organized along the lines of the Special Staff Sections and included Administration, Civil Education, Civil Information, Economics, Legal and Government, and Public Health functions. Overall, there were approximately 2,000 Military Government officers, of which roughly half had either been through one of the civil affairs schools or had been hired from the civilian sector by the Civil Affairs Division as CA officers.

Initially, the number of available CA personnel was extremely low, causing GHQ to scramble to fill its Special Section slots and the MG teams with soldiers who were qualified to do the necessary duties. Apart from CA troops, the only other MG troops with advanced training were Japanese Language Officers, who were sometimes assigned to the MG teams. The majority of the early MG Team members had no specialized training and had not received college degrees.

**Civil Affairs at the Top**

As described above, civil affairs troops initially held few senior positions within GHQ. However, there were a number of significant posts held by CA officers. From late 1946 through the end of the Occupation, the Law Division at GHQ was headed by Jules Bassin, a graduate of the US Army School of Military Government and the Harvard CATS. He covered issues including treatment of Koreans, taxation, and jurisdiction.

Civil affairs troops also played a role in the political reorientation of Japan. Justin Williams, who had gone through the Yale CATS, headed up the Government Section’s Parliamentary and Political Division. A CATS alumnus also served as the Chief of the Local Government Division.
Special Staff Section for Civil Affairs

SCAP changed the military governance and civil affairs functions on July 28, 1949, in an attempt to give the Japanese government more power. The administration of Japan was reorganized into eight Civil Affairs Regions that reported directly to SCAP, bypassing the Eighth Army. The Civil Affairs Section (CAS) was created in July 1949 to bring civilian personnel into the MG teams in lieu of Army officers. In January 1950, CAS became part of GHQ and became responsible for the CA Regional Team.48

Military Government and Civil Affairs Regional Teams

The military governance function mirrored GHQ in its policies, translating the high level directives and initiatives into regional and local level action. Functionally, they were under the command of the Eighth Army, who then reported on to GHQ. At the outset their mandate was to save Japanese lives by getting the country back in working order as soon as possible. The first order of business at the prefectural level and below was to ration food and attempt to begin tax collection as quickly as possible to create a basis for a functioning local government.

The MG Teams faced uncertainty due to the vagueness of the directives coming from SCAP and the multiple layers of military bureaucracy, which included Staff Section/Corps Headquarters, Regional Headquarters, Prefectural Teams, and District Headquarters, as shown on the following page. The problem worked the other way too, as feedback from the local Military Government Teams was screened by the Eighth Army and relatively little was passed on to GHQ. The MG Teams were guided by their orders from Eighth Army and were also kept up to date though copies of the Official Gazette, an approximately 70 page listing of all the laws, treaties, ordinances, regulations, and notifications that had been passed during the previous week by the Japanese government.49
There were initial problems in working with local Japanese leaders because suggestions from MG teams were carried out as direct orders. However, as time moved on the MG Teams and CA Regional Teams became less and less involved in the day to day running of government. The system began to function better and the Japanese local administration became more adept at governing on its own and at playing by the rules that GHQ had pushed into place. Overall, the role of CA troops in Japan although important during the early and middle years of the Occupation, became dominant after the 1949 reorganization that put CA troops directly in charge of most of the day to day running of the Occupation at headquarters, regional and local levels.

**Military Government Geographic Structure**

*Source: Reports of General MacArthur, 1966, as shown in Takemae*

**Legal and Government**

The purge affected almost all areas of civil affairs activity at the local level. Military Government Teams faced an uphill battle in ensuring that the purges were properly conducted.
There were several instances when local screening committees set up to decide who had been improperly associated with the wartime government or who was ultranationalist or militaristic turned out to have members who could be placed in one of these classes. However, in spite of these difficulties, local government began to function better over the course of time.

By 1950, the prefectural assemblies and governors were fairly autonomous, with the Civil Affairs Regional Teams monitoring the different political parties and trade federations. CA paid particularly close attention to the Communists, who had been reinvigorated during the Occupation by repatriates from the Kurile Islands and Soviet prisoner of war camps. They had received Communist indoctrination while under Soviet control and when they returned to Japan spread that worldview in towns across Japan. The Japanese government, with the urging of the US troops, had attempted to minimize the Communist impact, making them a major target of purges and thereby minimizing their electability in local and regional elections. Nevertheless, as the Occupation reached its final years, a regional CA officer held that the Communist Party still had “their finger in every movement that can cause unrest and embarrassment to the public officials.”

In addition to the Communist threat, CA officers were concerned with increasing voter turnout so as to ensure that the Japanese people continued to become accustomed to democracy. Less than two thirds of eligible voters participated in most elections. For example, just 55% of possible voters came out after strong media exposure for a Diet election in the Tohoku Region in December 1949.

The court system functioned well by the latter part of the Occupation, with an efficient system that addressed almost equal numbers of civil and criminal cases. Overall, the Civil Affairs Regional Teams continued to observe and track most aspects of legal and government
issues including city, town, and ken (community) governments, city assemblies, judicial affairs, and alien registration, looking at issues such as budgets, local corruption, voting methods within assemblies, financing systems for local government, and alien registration laws.\textsuperscript{54}

\textbf{Food, Agriculture and Fisheries}

Military Government and Civil Affairs Regional Teams were heavily involved in agriculture, fisheries and overall provision of food supply throughout the Occupation. At the outset of the Occupation Japan was in poor shape, as poor weather had caused a decline in rice production in 1945-46 and fishery production also was lower than normal. Importing of food by the Army and quick action to ensure sowable land was utilized helped avoid what would likely otherwise have been mass starvations in the first year of the Occupation.

The scarcity of food after the war resulted in a thriving black market, which was to remain a problem even during the later stages of the Occupation. Although Military Government and Civil Affairs Regional Teams helped the Japanese authorities organize periodic crackdowns and revise policies to minimize stealing and shrinkage, the level of arrests for possessing large quantities of staple foods or for attempting to sell such food remained high throughout the Occupation.

The MG and CA Regional Teams helped local leaders get food production back on track while promoting democratic ownership. They addressed issues such as land reform, mine safety, reforestation, sustainability of fisheries, and proper methods of land reform. US troops were involved at the management level observing and when necessary getting directly involved, e.g., to expedite rice delivery or to help efforts at land reclamation move faster.\textsuperscript{55}
Economics and Labor

Local economic issues paralleled the national level with deconcentration and then a reverse course and complex labor issues. MG Teams faced an uphill battle as they sought to combat the loss of 30% of Japan’s industrial capacity, 25% of its wealth and 20% of its housing during the war.\(^{56}\) The Teams struggled in during the early on as they attempted to get local Japanese to be entrepreneurial and start and grow new businesses at a time when supplies and raw materials were difficult to come by.

Standards of living at the local level were very low initially, as inflation far outpaced the increases in industrial production and real wages. The lack of housing and short supply of staple foods exacerbated an already bleak situation. Military Government Teams were forbidden in November 1945 to become embroiled in labor disputes; however they often could not avoid becoming involved as they sought to ensure worker rights while attempting to diminish Communist influence.\(^{57}\) As the Occupation wore on, the availability of supplies increased somewhat, helping the local economies recover. In addition, the reverse course on deconcentration and start of the Korean conflict provided major boosts to industrial production and capability, helping raise living standards for most Japanese as economic stability increased and inflation slowed to reasonable levels.

Education

The MG Teams focused on structural and curricula reforms, as well as ensuring that teachers were not tainted by close association with the wartime regime. Democratizing the educational system was critical; Japanese students had been taught that their country had discovered almost every major modern advance of humankind. The loss of the war and the arrival of relatively well off American troops and civilians made the mistruth of the teachings
plain, however at high and low levels the troops concentrating on civil education sought to put into place a modern curriculum. The curriculum was reformed to be historically accurate and avoid reference to the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education, which had required the Emperor’s subjects put the state front and center and be loyal to the actions of their forefathers.58

Military Government Teams played a significant role in implementing the purge within education. They pushed the Japanese Ministry of Education to reorganize the committees that were revising the curriculum as appointees were deemed to be too conservative. The revised committees were also required to screen all principals, inspectors, school founders, and head teachers to make certain they were not nationalist or militaristic.59

Women’s issues were also put under the Civil Education area. The effectiveness of MG/CA Regional Teams for women’s issues was hampered by the fact that an overwhelming majority of team members were male. A lack of *de facto* equality remained a major problem for women even at the end of the Occupation. Nevertheless, the Occupation was a vital moment for women’s rights in Japan as it legally ended their centuries old status as second class citizens.

During the latter part of the Occupation, Civil Education CA Regional troops began to address second tier issues such as the quality of teachers, ensuring that school lunches provided healthy sustenance for students, improving the quality of courses for adult education, and lecturing Japanese civil servants and teachers on how to teach social sciences.60

**Public Health**

At the beginning of the Occupation, structural reforms were critical to the healthcare system. Like the rest of the government, Japanese public health had been administered on a national scale from Tokyo, such that appropriate care did not reach a large part of the population in the prefectures. Health Departments were established during the Occupation at the regional
and prefectural levels to provide better care that could be more responsive to local conditions. In addition, there was a major effort to improve sanitation across Japan. Prewar standards for sewage treatment and garbage collection were relatively low compared to those in the United States, leading to an elevated incidence of dysentery, malaria and skin diseases. This situation was exacerbated by water and fuel shortages, as well as overcrowding. MG Teams helped counteract these problems by administering inoculation and counter-disease programs, including using DDT for delousing (the carcinogenic properties of DDT were unknown then) and vaccinating against typhus.  

As the Occupation matured, the Civil Affairs Regional Teams continued their oversight of public health. Japanese politicians and civil servants became more independent. For example they decided against the doctor who was the CA Regional Team recommendation for the position of Head of the Tokyo-to Health Department (covering the Tokyo region), instead choosing a career civil servant.  

However, there were still many issues to be resolved and CA Regional Teams continued to monitor areas such as nursing affairs, sanitary engineering, veterinary affairs, and the immunization programs.

Tuberculosis remained a large problem, with hundreds of thousands of people infected. Local US forces pushed health officials to institute better policies, but appeared to make less progress here than in many other administrative areas. For example, it was still normal to allow families to visit their relatives in the tuberculosis wards, which allowed the disease to spread even further. Such policies did not change because there was no directive specifying such change. This lack of independent thinking prompted one CA Regional Team member to write that “from recent field trips and surveys … it is evident that a great deal of further encouragement and stimulation must be given to the Japanese health and government officials
before they have an adequate conception of what is a good health program according to standards of modern nations.”

Public Safety and Policing

One of the few high level tasks assigned directly to civil affairs functions was the creation of the National Police Reserve (NPR). In July 1950 the Civil Affairs Section of GHQ began planning for this group, which was targeted to comprise 75,000 men organized at the infantry level. The NPR was meant to replace the roles performed by the US Army tactical troops from the Eighth Division, all of whom had been deployed in the Korean Peninsula after the start of the Korean War.

The NPR was ostensibly a police force, but this name was more to avoid the Constitutional difficulties that an “army” would bring up. The new force was in fact alike an armed force and was the progenitor of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces. Recruits received similar training to that of US Army personnel, with US Army manuals providing the basis for the training regimen. The old Imperial Army attempted to become part of the new organization at the high and low levels, with over fifty percent of the 400,000 applicants for the NPR from those who had served in the wartime Japanese Army. However, MacArthur overruled any attempt to install these tainted troops in leadership positions.

Creation of the NPR proved fruitful. It coordinated with the US war plans in Korea, helping to provide some offshore support functions. More importantly, as mentioned above, it became the basis for the Self Defense Forces, which were founded in 1954 after the Occupation had ended.

In addition to the high level creation of the NPR, Military Government and Civil Affairs Regional Teams helped Japanese authorities build up local police forces and later monitored
their progress for fairness and equality. As in other areas, when large problems surfaced, the local US teams were quick to work with their Japanese counterparts to attempt to find solutions. For example, the headquarters of the Chugoku Civil Affairs Region became directly involved in early 1950 with working with local government to shake up the local police forces, which were still plagued by corruption.66

**Public Welfare and Repatriation**

Repatriation proved to be a difficult task given the large numbers of Japanese flowing back into destroyed communities. In late 1948, for example, the Iwate Prefectural Military Government Team’s Monthly Report highlights the problem of the more than 26,000 families that were still without permanent housing versus the 450 or so units that had been built in the previous month.67 In addition, the repatriates put strains on public assistance and other services, while requiring the government and MG/CA Teams to create ever more numbers of jobs.

Civil affairs functions at the local level sometimes ran counter to the activities at GHQ. Although MacArthur is alleged to have pushed for denying non-Japanese the same legal standing as natives, there are at least several instances of local CA Regional Teams being particularly concerned about the status of the Korean minority. By 1949 the Koreans were organizing themselves better and approaching local authorities for public welfare assistance (to which they were rarely entitled under law). Local Japanese officials turned down these applicants as they

### **Japanese Needing to be Repatriated, August 1945**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>1,501,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchuria</td>
<td>1,105,800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southeast Asia</td>
<td>710,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siberia</td>
<td>700,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formosa</td>
<td>479,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karafuto/Kurile</td>
<td>372,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Korea</td>
<td>322,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairen/Port Arthur</td>
<td>223,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia/New Guinea</td>
<td>138,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Philippines</td>
<td>132,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryukyu Islands</td>
<td>69,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islands near Japan</td>
<td>62,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Indochina</td>
<td>32,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands East Indies</td>
<td>15,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>3,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Pacific Islands</td>
<td>130,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,999,550</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Reports of General MacArthur: The Occupation, Military Phase, as shown in Meyer
should have done. However, local CA troops sat down with their government counterparts to attempt to improve the review process so as to lessen the negative public relations view of the administration in the future from the Korean groups.\(^{68}\)

**Intelligence**

The Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) was part of the Civil Intelligence Section of GHQ. CIC kept tabs on the local MG Teams, particularly concerning spreading of Communist ideology. As the local Army worked with their Japanese counterparts, they often were required to have a CIC member ride around with them as they gave speeches, attended meetings and conducted their observation and surveillance of local Japanese government progress.\(^{69}\)

**Role of the Japanese**

The MG Teams and CA Regional Teams often relied heavily on local Japanese staff to help accomplish their work. Japanese workers were particularly helpful in translating documents, but also worked as typists and in other administrative positions.

**Relationship between Civil Affairs and Regular Army Troops**

As discussed above, commanding officers at GHQ were overwhelmingly regular Army officers. GHQ staff and commanding officers at regional and prefectural levels were a mix of civil affairs officers and regular Army officers. Thus, regular Army officers ultimately were in charge of the civil affairs troops. The focus of the latter on the administrative tasks in rebuilding Japan versus the regular officers’ core military background appears to have sometimes created a disconnect between staff and field.

There was also strong tension initially between the Military General Staff Sections in GHQ and the Special Staff Sections, particularly the Government Section because of its highly visible role in the early Occupation. This led to the creation in April 1946 of a Deputy Chief of
Staff at GHQ, who directly reported to General MacArthur. The Special Staff Sections, who previously reported to the Military General Staff, increased their voice as they avoided having their viewpoints watered down by the Military General Staff.70

At the local level, MG Teams were made up of specialized soldiers such as CA troops and language officers trained by the Military Intelligence Section and regular Army troops. CA troops were paid more than their regular Army counterparts, causing some resentment. However, anecdotal evidence appears to show that MG Teams functioned well together, as they learned to focus on tackling the local issues, with most friction between the specialized civil affairs troops and regular Army officers at GHQ.

**Lessons Learned**

The US Occupation of Japan was a unique chapter in US military history. GHQ and the local Military Government and Civil Affairs Regional Teams faced a defeated country that offered no resistance and which was to be governed using derivatives of the same institutions as had existed during the recently concluded war.

**The Best Laid Plans...**

Planning for the US occupation began as early as 1943, however the realities of the Occupation were different than the scenarios. Force planners believed that there could be large scale resistance of the Japanese military to the surrender, with pockets of organized resistance at a minimum. There were some incidents within the first few months of the Occupation, but by and large the Japanese offered little opposition, preferring to put what had become a shameful chapter in the country’s history behind it. Thus, troop numbers were able to be halved during the first six months of 1946. Lessons from Germany and Italy had taught military planners to act quickly to root out anti-occupation elements. This proved helpful in Japan, but the US learned
that every military governance assignment is different. The Occupation of Japan wound up being a much greater responsibility than the US had in Germany as the plans for a zonal occupation fell apart due to the souring of relations with China and the Soviet Union.

**Civil Affairs Troops Are Crucial at the Local Level**

During the early years of the occupation, the Military Government Teams helped translate what were often vague directives from GHQ to the local level, with civil affairs troops a critical part of this process. The presence of specialized civil affairs troops, some of whom had been lawyers, doctors or teachers, arguably helped accelerate e.g., reform of local government and the purge of ultranationalist and militaristic local leaders, speed up progress in reforming medical treatment and sanitation policies, and quicken the removal of improper subject material from curricula and the reorganization of the educational system.

Civil affairs troops were a small fraction of total troop strength and these reforms no doubt would have occurred even without their presence. However, CA troops appear to have been relatively successful at reconciling the still present security concerns during the Occupation with the overriding local needs to rebuild and reform most facets of Japanese daily life. Military Governance Teams were adept at getting to know the lay of the land, helping accelerate achievement of GHQ’s goals.

**Civil Affairs Training Provides an Important Resource**

Civil affairs troops, whether trained at CATS or Charlottesville, or drawn from civilian life, also made strong contributions to GHQ during the early years of the Occupation. Military bias may have meant that CA officers rarely took leadership positions, however CA presence in the middle echelons of the Tokyo bureaucracy helped give top military brass specialist resource knowledge that was outside of their military training.
Military doctrine changed as a result of the German and Japanese occupations. The Army recognized the importance of the civil affairs function and the difficulty it had faced after World War II, when it did not have enough CA officers to send to Germany and Japan. Three active Civil Affairs Military Units were formed during 1948 and 1949 (the 21st and 42nd Companies and the 95th Group) as well as 70 reserve Units. Doctrine was updated through the publication of additional manuals, and ongoing training of civil affairs officers began at the Military Government Department of the Provost Marshall General School at Camp Gordon, Georgia.71

**Tactical Troops Matter Too**

Civil affairs troops are a significant resource for any military governance assignment, but the Japanese Occupation showed that tactical troops were important as well. Of the 150,000 or so troops in Japan from mid 1946 to mid 1949, less than two percent had come through the civil affairs channels. Thus, tactical troops formed the majority of the Occupation force. Although civil affairs troops punched above their weight as could be expected, tactical troops served on Military Government Teams and as members of the Military General and Special Staff Sections, making important contributions to the Occupation.

**The Role of the Local Government is Critical**

Civil affairs troops and the overall US Army were able to be more effective than they otherwise could have been because they had the organization of the Japanese government to rely on to carry out initiatives. Through the myriad reforms of national and local government, the overall structures, including the Diet, remained the same even if the faces in them changed. This continuity, versus for example the replacement of institutions that was required as part of the de-
Nazification program in postwar Germany, meant that reforms were normally drawn up and put into practice in a timely manner.

**Civil Affairs and Military Governance are Long Processes**

The Occupation is widely considered to have been a success. Japan was able to get back on its feet and become a functioning democracy. However, even with the benefits of a government architecture that allowed reforms to be put into place relatively quickly, a population that offered no real resistance, and a carte blanche mandate from the international community, the Occupation lasted seven years versus the three to four years that was anticipated at its outset.

**Conclusion**

The US Army Forces of the Pacific, under command of Generals Douglas MacArthur and Matthew Ridgway were assigned a large task in rehabilitating Japan. The three D’s of demilitarization, disarmament, and democracy that were goals of the Occupation were large tasks for a country that recently had been focused on military matters and dominated by an Emperor who controlled virtually every part of individuals’ lives.

By most measures the Occupation was a strong success. After a somewhat rocky beginning GHQ began to function well as did the Military Government Teams, working with the reformed Japanese government to avoid mass starvation of the Japanese people and put the country on the road to economic, political and social recovery. Japan has never again threatened its neighbors militarily, while its economic recovery served as an example for modernization and economic reform for the rest of East and Southeast Asia. The success of the Occupation is also evident in the strength of the institutions and legal environment which were put into place, including the reformed Diet, the Constitution and the National Police Reserve that was to
become the Self-Defense Forces. Overall, Japan became a strong, democratic member of the world community and a staunch ally of the United States.

Civil affairs troops and Military Government Teams played a significant role in the Occupation, providing insights into the tasks to which tactical officers were not used to paying attention. Although small in number, the civil affairs troops served US goals well, helping to institute reforms and smooth Japan’s transitions to the new governing paradigm and economic realities of the postwar environment. The importance of civil affairs troops and the changing mandate for the United States as a global power meant that civil affairs became part of general US Army doctrine after the war, helping to better prepare the US military for the numerous civil affairs assignments it has had to fulfill during the almost half century since the Occupation of Japan.
Appendices

Appendix A – Eighth Army Organizational Structure, January 1946

![Organizational Structure Diagram]

Source: Reports of General MacArthur, 1966, as shown in Takemae

Appendix B – Japanese Prime Ministers during the Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administration Start Date</th>
<th>Prime Minister</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945.8.17</td>
<td>Higashikuni, Naruhiko</td>
<td>(Imperial Prince)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945.10.9</td>
<td>Shidehara, Kijuro</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946.5.22</td>
<td>Yoshida, Shigeru (1st)</td>
<td>Japan Liberal Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947.5.24</td>
<td>Katayama, Tetsu</td>
<td>Japan Socialist Party (coalition with Democratic and National Cooperative parties)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948.3.10</td>
<td>Ashida, Hitoshi</td>
<td>Democratic Party (coalition with Socialist and National Cooperative parties)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948.10.15</td>
<td>Yoshida, Shigeru (2nd)</td>
<td>Democratic Liberal Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949.2.16</td>
<td>Yoshida, Shigeru (3rd)</td>
<td>DLP (transformed to Liberal Party on March 1, 1950)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Foreign Press Center/Japan
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