

UNIT 9 POLITICS: STRUCTURE AND PROCESSES

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9.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with Japanese political structure and process. After you go through them, you should be in a position to:

- **explain** the nature and importance of Japanese Constitution, and distinguish between Meiji and Contemporary Constitutions, changed status of Emperor and functions of National Diet as well as local government
- **describe** Japanese electoral system and various political parties, their strength and programs
- **define** how and where from the Japanese parties draw political, voting and financial support
- **explain** the roles of Japanese bureaucracy and interest groups as well as
- **conclude** achievements of the Japanese government.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

A political system is a mechanism for the identification and formulation of problems, and for making and administering of decisions in the realms of public affairs. The official machinery by which these are administered is called government. The net outcome of this process are formalized and legitimized as achievements of government. Government is only a part of the whole political system that includes: (a) the society's historical heritage, (b) geographic and resource endowments, (c) its social and economic organization, (d) its ideology and value systems, (e) its political culture and style and (f) its party, interest and leadership structure. These two categories together with government structure constitute the

Japanese political system. Politically, Japan was an empire ruled by an emperor who claimed direct descent from the Sun goddess.

Just over a century from the Meiji Restoration of 1868, there is an almost different Japan today which is urban, industrial, commercial and technologically advanced. During this period i.e. after 1868, the isolated Japanese kingdom had become a great empire, dominating the entire Eastern Asia, but all these territorial gains were lost with Japanese defeat in Second World War. Thus, from small beginnings there emerged a modern, industrial, commercial and a very successful Japanese economy.

Great changes in social organization had also taken place from late 19th century onwards. Class stratification had been abolished; free, public and universal education had been introduced. Social and economic opportunities and mobility had greatly increased. Equality before law had been established. National standards of living and public welfare as well as security increased to levels unknown in Asia so far. Politically Emperor remained in Tokyo, as a symbol but not as ruler. Old mobility had disappeared and been replaced by a popularly elected national parliament called Diet. Universal adult suffrage had become the rule. National as well as local government are both elective and representative. Public affairs are being administered by a large professional bureaucracy.

From a defeated and occupied enemy, Japan became the most valued and important ally of the United States in Asia. Now, Japan's economy and productive capacity are one of the Western Alliance's greatest assets. Japan's willingness to continue as principal American military base and diplomatic associate in Asia had become important in international politics/relations. Therefore Japan occupies a very significant place both in Asian and world politics as well as economy. As the Gulf War of January 1991 demonstrated, for any war that America has to fight here after, Japanese financial support has become inevitable. Though America has won this Gulf War militarily, yet in light of declining American economic performance and increasing political and economic problems, the Japanese support to both the American economic system and international system is very crucial.

9.2 CONSTITUTION

Japan is a constitutional State. The basic principles of the present Constitution are:

- a) Sovereign power is vested in the people and the Emperor is the symbol of the State. The Preamble reads: "we, the Japanese people do proclaim that sovereign power resides with the people and do firmly establish this Constitution". Article 1 says: 'The Emperor shall be the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people, with whom resides sovereign power'.
- b) The Spirit of Peace — Article 9 has made Japan the world's first country to renounce the right of belligerency. The Preamble declares: 'we the Japanese people, desire peace for all time and are deeply conscious of the high ideals controlling human relationship, and we have determined to preserve our security and existence, trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving people of the world'. "Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people for ever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes". To realize these, "land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the State will not be recognized.

The Article 11 declares, "the people shall not be prevented from enjoying any of the fundamental human rights". Article 12 and 13 cite a broad range of human rights e.g., the right of equality and freedoms, social rights, political rights including suffrage. This Constitution also sets out such fundamental rights as freedom of thought and conscience, freedom of religion, academic freedom, freedom of assembly and association, freedom of speech and publication.

The Constitution of 1947, when compared with the Meiji Constitution of 1889, is altogether different concerning the status and power of the Emperor. Under the Meiji Constitution sovereign power resided in the Emperor.

The Meiji Constitution was greatly influenced by Prussian organic law, under which, despite the separation in principle of the three functions of administration, legislation and judicature, virtually everything was submitted to the Emperor for inspection.

Other Imperial prerogative under the Meiji Constitution concluded a declaration of war and the conclusion of treaties (Article 13). The proclamation of the law of seige (Article 14) and such administrative acts as issuance of urgent Imperial ordinances (Article 8 and 9).

The Imperial Diet consisted of two houses — the House of Representatives, with elective members, and the House of Peers, with a membership consisting of members of Imperial family, peers, and Imperial nominees. The opening, closing and suspension of Diet sessions and the dissolution of the House of Representatives were part of the Imperial prerogative.

Besides the ministers and privy council, as advisers and advisory organs there existed **Genro** (senior statesmen) who were not bound by Constitutional stipulations. Genro performed such functions, as for example, designation of Prime Ministers. Article 11 of the Meiji Constitution said 'The Emperor is the supreme command of the Army and Navy'. The right of the supreme command pertained to the specialized matter of military strategy and movements.

As for the judicial power, the Meiji Constitution provided that 'the judicial power shall be exercised by the Courts of Law according to law in the name of the Emperor' (Article 57). However, in the affairs of the State Emperor reigned but did not rule.

The present Constitution of Japan clearly proclaims the separation of three powers of administration, legislation and judiciary.

In regard to legislation, Article 41 stipulates "The Diet shall be the highest organ of State power, and shall be the sole law making organ of the State". The Article 65 states 'Executive power shall be vested in the Cabinet'. And on judicature Article 76 provides that 'the whole judicial power is vested in a Supreme Court and in such inferior courts as are established by law'. The Diet is recognized as the "highest organ of State power", consisting of members elected by the people with whom sovereign power rests.

Thus, Japan now is a parliamentary democratic State. Diet is the sole legislative branch under the people's sovereignty and the Cabinet is invested with executive power. And also that the judicial power is vested in the Supreme Court and such courts as established by law e.g. High Courts (8) and District Courts (47). Supreme Court is vested with highest power to determine the constitutionality of any law, order, regulation or official act.

Thus, the present form of Japanese government is based on the Constitution of 1946. In substance, this Constitution which is a total revision of 1889 Meiji Constitution, has drastically transformed the governmental structure of Japan. The foremost difference is the transfer of sovereign power from the Emperor to the people.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with the answer given at this unit.

1) Name the major islands of Japan.

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2) What was the nature of Japanese society in the 19th century?

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3) Mention the year of Meiji Restoration.

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4) Which country is Japan's military ally?

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5) Mention the spirit of Article 9 of Japan's Constitution.

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9.3 NATIONAL DIET

Before World War II, the national legislature was known as the Imperial Diet. Today it is called the National Diet (Parliament). Japan was the first Asian Country to establish a popularly elected legislature (1890). The Diet is the backbone of Japan's parliamentary democratic politics. Articles 41 and 42 of the Constitution state that the Diet is to consist of a House of Representatives and a House of Councillors and it is to be the highest organ of State power and the only organ of the State. Its power derives from the authority of the people in whom resides sovereignty.

The House of Representatives consists of 512 members elected from the nation's 130 constituencies (medium-sized electoral districts), each sending three to five members to the House. According to Article 45 of the Constitution the term of members of the House of Representatives shall be four years. However, it can be terminated before full term if the House of Representatives is dissolved.

The House of Councillors consists of 252 members — 100 members elected from the national constituencies. According to Article 46 of the Constitution, "The term of office of members of the House of Councillors shall be six years, and elections for half the members take place every three years".

The House of Councillors cannot be dissolved and nobody is allowed to be a member of both the houses simultaneously. The strength of the political parties in the two houses of the Diet as on June 1991 is as follows:

Party Strengths (as on June 1, 1991)

House of Representatives		House of Councillors	
Independence	5	Vacancy	1
Shinpo Minshu Rengo	5	Independents	4
DCP	14	San-in Club	4
JCP	16	DSP	10
Komeito	46	Rengo Sangiin	12
SDPJ	139	JCP	14
LDP	279	Komeito	20
—	—	SDJP	73
—	—	LDP	114
Total	512	Total	252

Sessions of the House of Representatives are of three kinds: ordinary sessions, extraordinary sessions and special sessions.

Ordinary sessions of the Diet are convoked once a year, in December. The most important bill presented at an ordinary session is the next years' budget.

Extraordinary sessions are convoked when the Cabinet considers it necessary or when one-fourth or more of all the members of either house demand it. Special sessions are called within thirty days of a general election held after the dissolution of the House of Representatives. Selection of Prime Minister is generally considered an essential and urgent business. It is possible for a special session to be convened in place of an ordinary session.

The duration of the session is decided by the Diet itself. Both the houses have extensive autonomy. Diet members are not liable to be held outside the House for speeches, debates, or votes cast inside the House. The Diet members are entitled to an annual allowance equal to that of the highest ranking civil service officials. Travel, postage and other expenses are also available to the Diet members. Members also can obtain such benefits as offices, secretaries and free rail travel.

9.3.1 Functions of Diet

The Diet, as the sole law making organ of the State has powers to (i) initiate constitutional revision, (ii) set up a court of impeachment, (iii) decide on the budget, (iv) approve treaties and (v) appointment of new Prime Minister.

House of Representatives has the power to present a no-confidence or confidence motion/resolution. House of Councillors has the power to convoke emergency sessions.

Other main Diet functions include appointing members of the Central Election Management Agencies (public offices elections law), instituting removal proceedings against public officials (National Civil Service Law), approving mobilization of national defense forces, and approving the proclamation of a state of emergency.

Legislation is the key function of the Diet. The Cabinet issues ordinances while other administrative organs issue ministerial ordinances and determine regulations and guidelines.

The Constitution admits that the House of Representatives takes precedence over the House of Councillors in the law making process. When the House of Councillors makes a decision different from that of the House of Representatives on a bill passed by the latter, that bill becomes law when the House of Representatives passes the bill a second time by a majority of 2/3 or more of the members present.

The budget must be drafted by the Cabinet and submitted to the Diet for review and approval. It is the House of Representatives that has the right to prior deliberation on a budget bill. It is an established custom for the House of Representatives to deliberate on the conclusion of treaties first. The House of Representatives also has precedence over the House of Councillors in designating a new Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister has the authority to control and supervise all the various administrative branches of the government. The Prime Minister and his cabinet have important judicial and legislative powers.

9.3.2 Diet Operation

There are 16 standing committees provided for by the Diet Law, and associated special committees are also established during each Diet session. The committees thus have become the main arena for Diet business. Accordingly, as soon as party representatives have interpellated the Government on its key policy addresses, the focus of the Diet activities moves to the committee meetings.

For acceptance for deliberation of a Diet member's proposal the assent of at least 20 members in House of Representatives and 10 members in House of Councillors is required. In case of budgetary allocation involved in the measure, then assent of 50 members in House of Representatives and 20 in the House of Councillors is required. These are the reasons why smaller parties in general elections set the target to win at least 20 and 50 respectively.

Assemblies are open to the public but the committee meetings are partially open (besides Diet members, news gatherers). The Prime Minister and other Cabinet ministers may appear in either House to speak on measures. Though Diet operations are organised in line with parliamentary system, yet in actual practice, often it does not function as expected.

As Japan has adopted parliamentary system of government, the Prime Minister is selected from the Diet by its members. The Cabinet consists of the Prime Minister as its head and other ministers appointed by the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister in representing the Cabinet submits bills, reports to the Diet on general national affairs and foreign relations and exercises control and supervision over various administrative branches.

Normally a Cabinet minister heads one of the 12 ministries or one or more of the agencies coming under the Prime Minister's Office such as: Economic Planning Agency, Environmental Agency, National Public Safety Commission, Management and Coordination Agency, Hokkaido Development Agency, Defense Agency, Science and Technology Agency etc.

In the event of a vote of no confidence by the House of Representatives, the following courses of action may be taken:

The Prime Minister and his Cabinet may resign at once, in case the Diet designates a new Prime Minister; the Prime Minister may dissolve the House of Representatives and call for a general election, in which case the Prime Minister and his Cabinet must resign as soon as a new House is elected.

The Diet is the highest organ of the State and the only law making body. It consists of two Houses — House of Representatives (512)/House of Councillors (252). Each of the two Houses establishes standing and special committees.

9.4 LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Before World War II, Japan had an extremely centralized form of government. The American authorities who were in charge of the Allied Occupation of Japan (1945-52) had democratization of Japan as one of the goals. Then, the Japanese government required decentralization through the granting of extensive rights of

this process, local government was made directly responsive to local desires and conditions and its democratic potential was greatly enhanced.

Local government is organized into forty-seven prefectures that are further divided into cities, towns and villages. Public elections for heads of local government: prefectures, governors and city, town and village Mayors, as well as local assembly members are provided for by Article 92 and 93 of the Constitution. Elected directly by the popular vote, the chief executive officers of local government (a) represent and supervise their government, (b) direct and control their personnel in administrative matters. Governors and Mayors are also responsible for the presentation of the budget and other bills to their assemblies.

Besides, there are unicameral legislative assemblies on a prefectural and municipal basis. These assemblies (a) deliberate on the enactment and abolition of ordinances, (b) approve the annual budget and (c) authorize the final accounts of revenues and expenditures.

The local self-government in Japan bestows on the local populace the right to demand through set procedures (a) the establishment or abolition of ordinances, (b) auditing of revenues and expenditures, dissolution of the assembly, (c) recall of assembly members or chief executive officers.

The increased activity and success of the opposition political parties is an important development in Japanese local politics. However, local autonomy in the true sense does not exist because of the dependence of local governments on the central government.

Growth of Japanese industry, socio-cultural activities, transportation and communication means together have enlarged people's daily movements. There is a need for better coordination of regional and local administrative programs. In addressing new problems and challenges in Japan, local autonomy may create more demands for changes in structure and processes of political administration.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of this unit.

1) What is National Diet?

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2) Mention the strength of House of Representatives.

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3) Mention whether House of Councillors or House of Representatives is most powerful.

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4) Name 2 or 3 Diet standing Committees.

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5) What is the nature of Japanese local politics?

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9.5 ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Japan's electoral system continues to evolve through the experience of its actual application even today. The Constitution and related laws guarantee a democratic system of elections in Japan based on the fundamental principles of universal and equal suffrage and direct and secret balloting. The right to vote is guaranteed to every Japanese person aged 25 or above, and eligibility to run for office is qualified by a minimum age of 25 years for House of Representatives and 30 for House of Councillors.

Though Japanese electoral system is sound in terms of its basic principle, yet there exists a good scope for improvement in such matters as for example: (a) electoral district constituency system, (b) number of Diet members and the management of free and fair election campaigns.

Views about the present medium sized constituency system and call for revision are due to frequent infighting between members of the same party. These constituencies have become breeding ground for factions within the parties and require a lot of money to win an election. Related to these are instances of political corruption etc.

As to the question of direction of desirable reform, the opposition parties favour large constituencies with representation proportionate to the number of voters which is favourable to small and medium parties, whereas, the ruling party favours small constituency proposals.

The political funds control law was designed to provide for the public disclosure of political funding and to set limits on political donations with a view to assuring corruption-free political activities and fair elections.

According to law an individual is allowed to make a maximum political contribution of Yen 20 million in a year to political parties or their fund raising organs and Yen 10 million to a political association/factions/supporter organizations etc. Business corporations, labour unions and other agencies also can make political donations; the maximum amount is decided according to the size of the company or group.

9.6 JAPANESE POLITICAL PARTIES

Democratic parliamentary politics operates through political parties. There are three types of parties. One is the conservative block, the largest of which is the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the second block is the Socialist block and its centre is Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ). From time to time factions and groups have come out of this block to form minor groups; even

with some electoral success they remain insignificant in very influential Japanese political world. The third group consists of two distinct minor parties: Japan Communist Party and Komeito. Though it has some factions, throughout the postwar period there is only one Communist Party in Japan. Komeito is considerably successful in all elections since its founding in 1960s.

9.6.1 Liberal Democratic Party

The Liberal Democratic Party emerged in its present form in 1955 as a result of merger of Liberal and Democratic Parties. Despite its continuous good performance at the polls, it is not a truly mass membership organization. Its membership is far lesser compared to Japan Communist Party or even Komeito. The party's central organization is complex. The power or authority is exercised by a party Congress composed of professional political leaders. Usually LDP's president becomes the Prime Minister of Japan. Other influential offices are those of Vice-President and Secretary-General. Through its organizational apparatus and committees, the party decides its policies and attempts to realize them through parliamentary means.

Election campaign being expensive, the ruling party is involved in political corruption and various financial scandals in the last few years. Such scandals even cost offices to the concerned politicians. The recent popular scandal is Recruit Cosmos Scandal, and Sagawa Kyubin Scandal which have negative impact on LDP. Because of involvement, Cabinet ministers and Prime Minister had to resign.

The program of LDP changes with the issues that are important at any given time. Ex.: in 1991 whether or not to send Japanese troops to participate in the peace-keeping operations during the Gulf War, was very important issue for the LDP. However, its regular business is how to maintain majority party status and continue to rule Japan.

9.6.2 Social Democratic Party of Japan

Though socialist and left wing parties existed in Japan before the Second World War, they were of little significance. For a brief nine month period, they were able to form a weak coalition Cabinet in 1947-48. However, all its factions were united in 1955.

SDPJ's program is decided by the issues of the union movement and other national and international debates. As things stand, SDPJ is somewhat farther from the possibility of forming its own government. Its major worry is how to save further losses of seats to the JCP and Komeito.

9.6.3 Japan Communist Party

Japan Communist Party has been a legal political party in Japan since 1945. It has fielded candidates in all general elections since 1946. About 60% of support for Communist candidates usually come from metropolitan areas and remaining from urban areas. No national federation of union backs JCP. Left oriented trade unions, Democratic Women's Organization, Retailers' Associations, and Students support Communist candidates. The real success of the candidates is due to the quality of JCP organization and leadership. The formal power of the party is vested in a Central Committee. Above this stands a presidium elected by the Central Committee. At the top a standing committee of the presidium actually controls the party. At present JCP claims a strong base of 3,50,000 registered members. The party's official daily newspaper called AKAHATA (Red Flag), has a daily circulation of 5,50,000 and 1,95,000 for the Sunday edition. The party publications are a lucrative annual income for the JCP.

Democratic youth organization is most important among the JCP-led popular fronts. It has branches in all Japanese prefectures. The youth organization also serves as a recruiting device for the party and influencing student activities on college and university campuses.

JCP favours abrogation of US-Japan Security Treaty; reduction in defense expenditure. In domestic policy, JCP advocates nationalization of energy industries, higher prices for farm produce, a new land reform program, large increase in

welfare and social security measures and a halt to inflationary government spending. Presently, JCP proclaims that it is free from Russian or Chinese influence. Because of widespread suspicion and mistrust with Japanese, JCP is not likely to be invited to participate in any coalition government in the immediate future.

9.6.4 Komeito

Generally speaking Japanese religious groups have not organized their own political parties in Japan. Therefore, Komeito is very interesting party. Komeito means clean Government party. Till recently Komeito explicitly represented Soka Gakkai, one of the new religions of Japan, which claims a membership of 10 million.

In 1971 Komeito severed its official connection with Soka Gakkai to maintain its status as a secular political party. Though for a long time many leaders continued to hold offices in both the organizations, subsequently the two organizations have been separated. But still Komeito's voting support mainly comes from Soka Gakkai.

Since it is a mass-based organization, Komeito has similarities with JCP in structure and character. Komeito has been closely identified with a variety of issues: to improve quality of life, cost of living, social security, tax reduction to small businesses, income tax reduction and pension for the aged etc. Komeito opposes the government control of education and advocates free medical care for the aged and increased subsidy for the farmers.

In foreign policy, the party desires abolition in phases of US-Japan security treaty, conclusion of non-aggression pact with Soviet Union, People's Republic of China, establishment of nuclear-free-zone in Asia and Pacific, conclusion of peace treaty with the Soviet Union (now Russia) upon return of disputed islands.

Komeito's continued reliance on Soka Gakkai makes it unacceptable to general public and floating voters. Komeito's further progress depends on its participation in a coalition government. Its ability to come to power and govern on its own is difficult under the present circumstances.

9.7 PARTY SUPPORT

Supporting Japanese parties are personal support organizations called Koenkai. There are also financial support organizations. Important leaders have their own entities of this kind. In case of SDPJ, national labour unions function like Koenkai.

Intra-party relationship is primarily personal and direct, centred on allegiance to the individual leader and not usually to the party as a whole. A faction functions very much like an independent party elsewhere. It recruits candidates, provides campaign funds, helps its members to advance in government and in the party. In case of LDP, always it is the faction strength that decides who is to be the Prime Minister.

The interest groups that support Japanese political parties constitute another segment of the political process. While it is not unmindful of farm interest, the LDP essentially represents the interests of big business. LDP's support primarily comes from big business and the higher civil services. Business leaders do not become members of the Diet, but the LDP quite often still recruit former higher civil servants who go into politics. In recent years one out of every four members of the LDP in House of Representatives and perhaps one out of three members in House of Councillors comes from the bureaucracy. This is because higher civil service people have expertise in public policy and good connection in financial circles and also with incumbent bureaucrats. Therefore, they climb rapidly in the LDP hierarchy and also influence the formation of public policies.

The Sohyo — the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan — is a leftist labour federation comprising the Japan Teachers' Union, the National Railway Workers' Union and so on. More than one-half of the Socialist members are former labour union officials.

The growth and success of Komeito in the last twenty-five years have been attributed to its strong grass-roots base. Things are so managed to provide a

pre-arranged number of votes per block for their candidates. Its support comes from the lower-middle and middle-class urban votes.

9.8 NEXUS

The close cooperation among political leaders, top bureaucracy and big business grew out of Japan's need to answer the challenges by the superior western countries.

'Japan Incorporated' is generally used to refer to the close relationship which government and business developed after the Second World War for the purpose of national reconstruction and economic growth. This combined effort by the public and private sectors enabled Japan to catch up with, and in some areas even to surpass, the advanced industrial nations of the West.

Defeat in war spelled the end of protective competition and in the place the new leadership structure emerged, in which business leaders, bureaucrats and politicians remained pivotal in determining the nation's future.

Business enjoys access to the top administrative and political leadership and it would be fair to characterize the general political climate as one favourable to business enterprise. Thus, in Japan, business has won a greater right to be consulted but has avoided any confrontation with the politicians.

Government in seeking to enhance Japan's international competitiveness intervene in such matters as mergers, import restrictions, limitations on foreign investments, and so on. Business firms appear to be willing to subordinate their concern for profit to the larger national interest.

9.9 INTEREST GROUPS

As Japan grew more complex, more and more individual and group actions are significantly affected by the decisions and actions of legislators and bureaucrats. As a result, sectional interests and their involvement with the government increased.

In post-war period the nature of Japanese interest groups has changed as rapidly as Japan's economic structure. One of the very important Japanese interest groups is Agricultural Cooperative Association, (associated with this are: National Federation of Agricultural Cooperative Purchasing Associations, National Federation of Agricultural Marketing Associations, Japanese Forestry Association etc.). All these support political causes and provide financial support to candidates.

The major operators are, however, the representatives of organised business and organised labour. The Japanese call business interests collectively as **Zaikai** in a political context. The Federation of Economic Organizations is the most important and powerful of these groups. Its membership comprises to about seven hundred largest corporations and more than hundred industrial, financial and commercial associations of business interests. Its function is to provide a mechanism for big business to discuss its common concerns, seek a consensus and represent its views to the government, political parties, bureaucracy and general public. It also speaks for Japanese trade overseas. It has regular meetings with the Japanese government and ministries, particularly with the Ministry of International Trade and Industry. Systematically the FEO attempts to influence governmental, industrial and trade policies. Politically the FEO is a strong but not a very satisfied supporter of the ruling LDP. The FEO supply LDP's major campaign and operating funds.

The Federation of Employers' Organizations concentrates almost exclusively on problems of labour relations viewed from management side, and includes over sixty thousand member firms. The Japan Chamber of Commerce is the overall representative of both large and small business in Japan and has a membership of about 2,50,000 firms.

The Japanese labour is well organized. The size of the Japanese labour force is about 55 million. They are not organised on industrial line but on the basis of enterprises, i.e., a given union consists of workers in a particular plant, mine or factory, except for higher management.

The largest, most important and politically active of federations, is the General Council of Japanese Trade Unions called Sohyo. About 22,000 unions and 4.5 million members are affiliated to Sohyo. Sohyo is very active in Japanese politics. It is the principal source of organized popular support for SDPJ.

The second largest national federation of Japanese Labour Unions is Japan Confederation of Labour called Domei.

Others are: Japan Doctors' Association, Housewives' Association, Japan Mothers' Conference, All Japan Federation of Local Women's Organizations etc. Major political parties maintain women's division, local residents' association etc.

Local government interests in Japan have also found it beneficial to organize nationally to represent collective interest effectively. Ex.: National Association of Prefectural Governors, National Association of Chairman of Prefectural Assemblies, National Association of City Mayors and so on.

Some of the recent popular citizen's movement include anti-pollution movement, consumers' movement, environmental lobby. Together they are successful to some extent as they lobby not to generally allow new polluting industries to set up on the ground of protecting clean environment.

Thus, Japan has a large and increasing number of interest groups. A majority of them are involved in both national and local politics. These groups supply votes and funds to parties and candidates in exchange for favourable policies, concessions and benefits. Political interest groups have established a firm and expanding role for themselves in Japanese political system.

9.10 BUREAUCRACY

Bureaucracy forms the core of modern government. It performs a multitude of functions. Bureaucracies enforce laws, policies or decisions.

Japanese bureaucracy played a particularly important role in national development from the last quarter of 19th century. Japan is the first historical example of developmental nationalism, a value system for which the bureaucracy helped to mobilize commitment. Even today the bureaucrats represent the major ruling force in Japanese politics.

Hundreds of commissions with a total membership of thousands have been set up to advise the government. They consist of officials from concerned ministry or agencies, retired bureaucrats, Diet members, businessmen, scholars and labour union officials. They represent both the public and the economic interest involved.

Japan's first bureaucrats during the Meiji period were drawn from lower Samurai and some Court nobles. Gradually, as the need for a new system of recruitment became apparent, a civil service system based on competitive examination was introduced. Till today, the government supported institutions, particularly To University graduates have been disproportionately numerous in Japanese bureaucracy.

Corporations often seek to put retired bureaucrats on their payroll. Interest groups serve as stepping stones to elective office for the bureaucrats. When a bureaucrat decides to resign from the civil service and runs for elective office, he often seeks support these organizations with which he had close contact while serving as an administrator.

Before the war, when political parties were weak and could not control government, career civil servants were often named to Cabinet positions. But after the war, the ambitious bureaucrats who wish to get to the top must leave the bureaucracy, run for elective office and attain the leadership within the party. While in bureaucracy, the civil servants take advantage of their office to cultivate contacts with corporations, interest groups, local political leaders and others who help them when they enter new political career. Once elected, they rise fairly faster

to positions of leadership within the LDP because of their knowledge and administrative skills and their connections with government agencies. As Japan has a one party dominant political system, until political reforms are effected, this practice is likely to continue.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Use the space below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of this unit.

1) Name three types of Japanese political parties.

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2) Name the ruling Party of Japan.

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3) Name 2 Cadre-based parties of Japan.

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Explain SDPJ

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5) What is Sohyo

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9.11 ACHIEVEMENTS OF JAPANESE GOVERNMENT

It is important to examine and evaluate how the Japanese political system performs as a whole entity. Contemporary Japanese support for their political system emanates from their belief that democracy is the best form of government and elections are essential to popular government and political parties are an important

guardian of democratic rights. Thus, voting levels are high Truly massive organised political demonstrations are common in Japan. Such issue as US- Japan security treaty , Vietnam war, anti-war and anti- nuclear protests are very significant underlying this important aspect of Japanese political life is an overall tendency towards enhanced social control. Japan supports general acceptance of contemporary political forms and solutions.

Japanese government has demonstrated fairly high levels of capability. Decision to limit expenditures on defense and social programs and rapidly expanding revenue base have all contributed to Japan's fiscal viability and economic growth. Japanese government also has played a key role in economic development and foreign trade. These efforts induced particular industries to develop and protect them from foreign competition. Thus, Japanese government played a dominant political role in national economic development. Many therefore think that Japan continues to be 'Super Capable' at economic policy making.

It is difficult to predict whether Japanese politics in the future also will remain reasonably stable and successful. The transition in Japanese society and economy as well as in the international system is likely to significantly affect Japanese political and economic system.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Use the space below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of this unit.

1) Were American Reforms in Japan successful?

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2) How effective are Japanese opposition parties?

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3) Can LDP continue to rule Japan?

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4) Mention important achievement of Japanese political system.

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9.12 LET US SUM UP

In the second world war Japan was totally defeated and after the war it had been under occupation—of the United States of America for several years. Japan's old political structures were destroyed and its economy was completely shattered. The country indeed had fallen into ruins. Japan had to rebuild on the ruins. As its modernization in the pre-war period was swift, its rebuilding has also been swift in the post-war period. Difference between the two periods, however, are both qualitative and quantitative. While in the pre-war eras Japan had been a Kingdom wedded to militant ultra-nationalism and a power to be reckoned with in East Asia, in the present decades the country is a republic wedded to nationalism distrustful of military adventures and an economic power to be reckoned with throughout the World. Preceding pages have been devoted to study the story of Japan's re-emergence as a world power after it was devastated by the Second World War.

9.13 KEY WORDS

Meiji Restoration	: Central political authority was restored to Emperor Meiji.
Genro	: Elder Statesmen.
Diet	: Japanese Parliament
LDP	: Liberal Democratic Party
SDPJ	: Social Democratic Party of Japan
JCP	: Japan Communist Party
Comeito	: Clean Government Party
Sohyo	: Largest Federation of Japanese Labour Unions
Somei	: Second Largest Federation of Labour Unions
Poenkai	: Personal Support Organizations
Zaikai	: Refers to Organized Business and Labour in a political context
Anunto	: Annual Demonstration to demand rise in wages through pressure on private and government enterprises.

9.14 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

- Charles Birgman, 1989, *Japanese Government, Leadership and Management*, Macmillan Press, London, 1989.
- Warren M. Tsuneishi, 1966, *Japanese Political Style*, Harper and Row, London, 1966.

9.15 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu and Shikoku
- 2) Japanese society was rural, agrarian, immobile, feudal, stratified and authoritarian
- 3) 1868
- 4) United States of America
- 5) By Article 9 Japan renounced the right of belligerency. It said, sea and air as well as other war potential will not be maintained.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Japanese parliament is called National Diet
- 2) 511 Seats
- 3) House of Representative is most powerful
- 4) Economic Planning Agency, Environmental Agency, Hokkaido Development Agency, Defense Agency, Science and Technology Agency.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Conservatives, Socialists and minor parties
- 2) Liberal Democratic Party
- 3) Japan Communist Party and Komeito
- 4) Social Democratic Party of Japan
- 5) Sohyo is the Federation/General Council of Trade Unions of Japan.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Yes, they were successful. Reforms provided basis for continued political and social order
- 2) Japanese opposition parties are very ineffective
- 3) It is doubtful. Because its traditional rural support is declining
- 4) It played an important role in economic development and foreign trade. Also successfully responded to challenges like postwar reconstruction, resource and energy dependency, foreign trade competitions.