

Employing Contemporary Political Analysis Approaches to Examine the Political Systems of Imperial Japan (I): Methodology Selection and Adaption

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Abstract

This, the first in a series of articles on this topic, aims to explore the adaptability of contemporary political system analysis methodologies to the historical case of Imperial Japan (1868 to 1945). It examines and then adapts a contemporary political system analysis methodology for future use in assessing the character of the Japanese political systems existing from 1880 to 1945. The detailed historical analysis, although introduced here, will be conducted in full in future articles. In blending both historical research and contemporary political scientific methods this article makes an original contribution to aspects of both disciplines. It prepares the ground for an analysis employing a much broader base of evidence than has been hitherto used in most studies of the political structures of Imperial Japan. The subsequent research which this paper enables will also likely generate original perspectives within the debates over ‘Taishō democracy’, ‘Shōwa fascism’, and the character and evolution of pre–1945 Japanese political structures.

Keywords: Government system analysis, Democracy, Meiji, Taishō, Shōwa, Authoritarianism, Fascism

Introduction

The promotion and protection of political systems judged to be democratic has influenced the foreign policies of states in the past and has sometimes contributed to the causes of conflict. As the world seems to be potentially drifting once more toward an era of rivalry and confrontation between democratic and authoritarian states,

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the domestic political structures of countries are becoming an increasingly influential factor within international politics. How democracy and authoritarianism are defined thus becomes central. Definitions of these concepts differ between scholars supporting ‘thicker’ or ‘thinner’ sets of criteria or conditions judged to evince them.¹ This, of course, is not a new phenomenon, with Plato and Aristotle’s ideals of *dēmokratia* differing from both each other and from contemporary conceptions of democratic governance and the structures of rights, freedoms, and civil society which underpin it.² Current methodologies for assessing the democratic characteristics of national governments also differ on issues such as the centrality of human rights and meanings of terms such as ‘liberal’ within the context of democratic government.³ The debate around the exact definition of such terms is also dependent on numerous factors including perceptions of values, institutions, and concepts. Defining democracy also presents something of a ‘moving target’ if rights and societal structures are taken into account, with some of these which were unrecognised in previous eras, and remain so in much of the rest of the world, becoming central to the identity of many Western democratic states in recent years.⁴ Also of note here are the explicit or implicit assumption of Western cultural expectations and ‘models’ of modernisation and modernity by which to judge countries, as well as the political motivations (either overt or implicit) of those producing such analyses. As such, the debate over the exact character of democratic governance is difficult to precisely define and evolves as a concept. It will arguably naturally continue to do so *ad-inifinitum* – creating scholarship, debate, press coverage for reports, and the ability for those who wish to do so to pronounce on the credibility of various governments’ membership of the ‘democratic club’.

Japan, as a country which passed through nascent moves towards a representative form of government and then into authoritarian, and some say fascist, rule during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, forms an interesting historical case study for examining the meanings of many of these concepts.

1. M. Coppedge, ‘Thickening Thin Concepts and Theories: Combining Large N and Small in Comparative Politics’, *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 31, No.4. July 1999, pp. 465–476.

2. See for example: Plato, *The Republic*, Penguin Classics: London. 1987, pp. 311–320; Aristotle, *Politics*, Oxford University Press: Oxford. 1995, pp. 231–3.

3. The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Democracy Index 2022, Frontline Democracy and the Battle for Ukraine*, London: Economist Intelligence Unit, 2023, p. 65 (Hereafter ‘DI, 2022’). See below for further detail on the differences between methodological approaches.

4. This project aims to balance the integrity of the methodology it uses with the historical context in which it surveys its target cases by using a minimally modified version of the selected contemporary method, and also applying this to counties other than Japan judged to be ‘democratic’ for the years examined.

Moreover, interpreting the character of the Japanese political system in the Imperial era (1868 to 1945) is also historiographically significant in a number of ways. For example, defining or classifying the nature of the Japanese political systems in this period as democratic, fascist, or in other ways, frames the nature of Meiji, Taishō, and pre-1946 Shōwa regimes. This has a bearing on interpretations of various events and processes, such as Japanese agency within the country's political development, the nature and path of political development in Imperial Japan, and the influence of the postwar Allied Occupation (1945 to 1952).⁵ One approach to these issues could be to sidestep the 'trap' of definitions, either in an attempt to avoid the distortion inevitable from using (likely) Western-centric definitions of these concepts in the Japanese context, or due to viewing such debates as a distraction from other important issues or analyses. Another approach could be to examine solely how concepts akin to democracy developed within Japan itself at the time. Both of these approaches have drawbacks, with the first potentially susceptible to criticism for avoiding an important way of analysing the Imperial regime, and the latter of perhaps applying too great a degree of subjectivity and particularism to concepts which did, despite much adaption, largely originate in the West. A further relevant issue here is that of the various definitions that do exist around concepts such as 'Taishō democracy' and 'Shōwa fascism' are generally based on narrow sets of criteria, in most cases.⁶

This research aims at a more broadly based approach to defining and classifying the political systems of the Imperial era through the application of a modern political analysis methodology. These methodologies, unlike the aforementioned often relatively narrow definitions, use many more detailed criteria as points of assessment, with the questions they employ numbering in their tens and sometimes hundreds, coupled with a quantitative scoring methods rather than a purely interpretive approach. Applying such a methodology to Japan, with its much broader base of fixed indicators which are not adjusted to fit a particular narrative or political position may help also minimise some of the potential shortcomings of more conventional historical definitions. As the famous engineer W. Edwards Deming put it: 'without data, you're just another person with an opinion', and here using a broad range of data will hopefully produce more solidly rooted results and

5. The term 'systems' rather than 'system' is used here to better encapsulate the development and evolution which occurred in the political structure (and political culture) during the era.

6. For examples of the latter see: Y. Katō, 'The Debate on Fascism in Japanese Historiography', in: S. Saaler and C.W.A. Szpilman, *Routledge Handbook of Modern Japanese History*, Routledge: London, 2018, pp. 225–236.

smooth over some of the influence of opinion.⁷ This approach also contributes to filling something of a hole in the application of political science methodology to the study of Japanese politics, where although much quantitative research is conducted on the postwar system, very little has been done in recent years on the Imperial era.

Thus, this article forms the first in a series with two principal aims: first, and the core focus of this article, to examine the adaptability of contemporary methods of political system analysis to a historical case (here Japan); and second, to examine the nature of Imperial Japan's political systems from 1880 to 1945 using such a model. The remainder of this article is focused on examining the first of these aims and laying the groundwork for future articles in this series to focus on the second. Following a brief summary of the various years to be initially examined, two potential methods for analysing the Japanese cases are evaluated. Following this assessment, the operationalisation of the selected methodology is discussed in detail, and the article concludes with a review of its findings and a summary of the steps to be taken in the future articles in this series.

Summary of Historical Cases

In the latter stages of this research, six different years will be initially examined: 1880, 1900, 1924, 1930, 1940, and 1945 (prior to 15 August). The rationale for selecting this range of dates is to allow for the development of the Imperial Japanese political structure to be mapped from the beginnings of its modern form through to just prior to the end of its independent existence with the acceptance of the Potsdam declaration and the beginning of the Occupation.⁸ The specific characteristics of each of these years as well as their scoring will be dealt with in greater detail in the subsequent articles, but a very brief overview is given here to indicate their relevance for examining the political systems of the Imperial era. A full examination of the historical sources to be used in each case is also beyond the scope of

7. See: 'W Edwards Deming', *British Library*, Retrieved from: <https://www.bl.uk/people/w-edwards-deming>. Accessed 27/9/2023. Deming was influential in the postwar improvement of quality control techniques in Japan, see: W. Tsutsui, 'W. Edwards Deming and the Origin of Quality Control', *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 2. 1995, p. 300; T. French, 'Fiats and Jeeps: The Occupation, Jeeps, and the Postwar Automotive Industry', in: T. French, *The Economic and Business History of Occupied Japan*, Routledge: Oxford. 2018, p. 116, ff. 8.

8. 'Potsdamu Sengen' (Potsdam Declaration), 27/6/1945, in: Asahi Shinbun, *Shiryō Meiji Hyakunen* (Historical Documents: A Hundred Years of Meiji), Asahi Shinbunsha: Tokyo. 1966, pp. 525–526; 'Potsdam Declaration', 27/6/1945, in: D. J. Lu, *Japan: A Documentary History: The Late Tokugawa Period to the Present*. Vol. 2, M. E. Sharp: London. 1997, pp. 453–455.

this article and an analysis of their relative strengths and weaknesses will be presented in the second article in this series.

Due to the complexities of the various early structures which followed the end of Shogunal rule, their clearly non-democratic structure, the unequal treaties in place at the time, and the major rebellions and uprisings which occurred in the first decades of the Meiji era, the first year to be analyzed in this study is 1880.⁹ This year was selected as it is illustrative of the late 'Meiji oligarchy' where a higher degree of stability and Cabinet government had been achieved, but the Imperial Diet had not yet been created.¹⁰ This year is also of note as it falls inside the era of significant popular protest for liberty and political rights.¹¹

The second year to be examined is 1900. This year is significant as it represents Japan after a decade of the existence of the Imperial Diet (the modern first elected national parliament in Asia), but at a point where the power of the military was increasing and more ideological and repressive control was being asserted over the Japanese people through measures such as the Imperial Rescript on Education and various restrictions on protests and freedom of assembly, typified by the 1900 Public Peace Police Law.¹² Also of note here is that 1900 is the final year surveyed where foreign powers had any direct influence over Japanese government policy, with some customs duty controls remaining at this point.¹³

The third year examined is 1924, which although preceding the major reforms of 1925, followed the 1918 'rice riots', the 1920 'Morito incident', and the 1923 Great

9. The influence of the Meiji Charter Oath and the operation and life of the *Kōgisho* would be relevant here and future papers in this series may examine the years from 1868 to 1879. M.R. Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism: The Unequal Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, p. 158. 'Gokajōno Goseimon' (Meiji Charter Oath), 14/3/1868, in: Asahi Shinbun, *Shiryō Meiji Hyakunen*. p. 352. For a summary of rebellions and uprisings prior to 1880, see: D. Orbach, *Curse on This Country: The Rebellious Army of Imperial Japan*. Cornell University Press: Ithaca. 2017, p. 69; R.W. Bowen, *Rebellion and Democracy in Meiji Japan*. University of California Press: Los Angeles. 1980, pp. 8, 31, 49.

10. K. Takii, *The Meiji Constitution: The Japanese Experience of the West and the Shaping of a Modern State*, International House of Japan: Tokyo. 2007, p. 92; R. Sims, *Japanese Political History since the Meiji Renovation: 1868-2000*, Hurst & Company: London. 2001, p. 62.

11. R.W. Bowen, *Rebellion and Democracy*, pp. 107-108; A. Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan*, University of California Press: Berkeley, 1991, p. 12.

12. E. J. Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army: Its Rise and Fall, 1853-1945*, University Press of Kansas: Lawrence. 2009, p. 93; 'Imperial Rescript on Education', 30/10/1890, in: Lu, *Japan: A Documentary History*, pp. 343-344. For more on the 'Chian Keisatsuhō' (Public Peace Police Law), 9/3/1900, in: Asahi Shinbun, *Shiryō Meiji Hyakunen*, p. 440.

13. D.L. Swanson, 'Gentlemanly Capitalism and the Club', 2012, in: J.E. Hoare (ed), *Culture, Power and Politics in Treaty-Port Japan, 1854-1899*, Vol. 1, Renaissance Books: Folkestone, 2018, p. 191.

Kanto Earthquake and the killings of minorities and labour activists which occurred in its aftermath.¹⁴ Although not as directly significant as the following year, 1924 is indicative of the later Taishō years immediately prior to the introduction of both universal male suffrage and the 1925 Peace Preservation Law.¹⁵

The next year examined is 1930, at which point both the 1925 Peace Preservation Law and universal male suffrage were fully in effect, with the former facilitating the mass arrests of Leftists in 1928.¹⁶ 1930 also saw some of the last attempts to limit the influence and power of the military with the London Naval Conference and was one of the final years which saw Cabinets headed by politicians.¹⁷

The penultimate year to be examined is 1940, a time where despite being engaged in what was by then a total conflict in China, Imperial Japan was arguably approaching the zenith of its power and influence.¹⁸ The preceding decade had though seen several military coup attempts and an upswing in the number of political assassinations, and 1940 itself saw the creation of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association (*Taisei Yokusankai*), an organisation often cited as signifying the consolidation of ‘fascism’ in Japan.¹⁹

The final historical case which will be examined is mid-1945. The years following 1940 saw the expansion of Japan’s aggression across Southeast Asia and the Pacific, but the country had been beaten back close to the point of collapse by this stage.²⁰ Internal political repression had also strengthened with the 1941 Peace Preservation Law reforms, and 1942 saw the last general election held by Imperial Japan, and one where almost all candidates stood under the banner of the Imperial

14. Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, p. 143; R.H. Mitchell, *Thought Control in Prewar Japan*, Cornell University Press: Ithaca. 1976. pp. 39-41; Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy*, pp. 176–177.

15. For more on the Peace Preservation Law of 1925, see: Asahi Shinbun, *Shiryō Meiji Hyakunen*, pp. 466–467.

16. Sims, *Japanese Political History*, p. 146.

17. ‘Rondon Jōyaku to Tōsuiken Mondai’ (The London Treaty and Supreme Command Authority Problem), n.d., in: Asahi Shinbun, *Shiryō Meiji Hyakunen*, pp. 480–481. ‘Political’ Cabinets ended after the 1932 murder of Prime Minister Inukai, see: Orbach, *Curse on This Country*, p. 234.

18. H. Kawano, ‘Japanese Combat Moral’, in: M. Peattie, E. Drea, and H. Van de Ven (eds), *The Battle for China: Essays on the Military History of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937–1945*, Stanford University Press: Stanford. 2011, pp. 328-353; K.J. Ruoff, *Imperial Japan at Its Zenith: The Wartime Celebration of the Empire’s 2,600th. Anniversary*, Cornell University Press: Ithaca. 2010, p.1.

19. Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pp. 174, 179–80; Sims, *Japanese Political History*, pp. 152, 160; ‘Basic Outline for Implementing the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, 1940’, 14/12/1940, in: Lu, *Japan: A Documentary History*, pp. 440–442.

20. F. Pike, *Hirohito’s War: The Pacific War*, Bloomsbury: New York. 2015, p. 1003.

Evaluating Contemporary Governmental System Analysis Models

A number of sophisticated models produced by think–tanks, business entities and research organisations exist for analysing the nature and character of contemporary governments. Some of these already cover historical periods prior to the twenty–first century, with most which do so starting at 1789, a point where the ‘modern’ era is assumed to have begun, at least in the Western European context.²² All of these models have their drawbacks when examining historical cases, both in general, and in relation to Japan, and some of these will be examined in greater detail in later articles in this series. As one of the two core aims of this series of articles is to attempt the adaptation of a contemporary political analysis model for use for historical cases from Japan, one of the contemporary methodologies which has not yet been applied to historical cases must be used. Two of the most prominent of these are Freedom House’s *Nations in Transit* and the Economist Intelligence Unit’s *Democracy Index*. This section will examine each of these methods, before considering their applicability to this research.

Potential Models I: Freedom House’s *Nations in Transit*

Freedom house is a U.S. based, non–partisan (in domestic U.S. political terms), non–profit organisation which promotes democracy and political freedom around the world through various advocacy initiatives, training programs, research projects, and by producing reports.²³ Amongst the latter, Freedom House (hereafter FH) produces two major annual surveys of the levels of political freedom and democratic governance around the world. The first of these is *Freedom in the World*, a global report on political rights and civil liberties covering 210 countries and territories.²⁴ The second is *Nations in Transit* (hereafter NIT) which examines the character of the government and aspects of society in twenty–nine states in the

21. ‘*Chian Ijihō no Kaisei*’ (Revision to Peace Preservation Law), 29/6/1928, in: Asahi Shinbun, *Shiryo Meiji Hyakunen*, pp. 478–479; Sims, *Japanese Political History*, pp. 226–229.

22. For a detailed examination of the various models for the analysis of democracy and their differences see: B. Herre, ‘Democracy Data: How Sources Differ and When to use Which One’. *Our World in Data*, 2022, retrieved from: ‘<https://ourworldindata.org/democracies-measurement>’

23. Freedom House, *About Us*, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://freedomhouse.org/about-us>. Accessed 27/9/2023.

24. Freedom House, *Freedom in the World: Marking 50 Years in the Struggle for Democracy*, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2023/marking-50-years>. Accessed 27/9/2023.

former Soviet bloc and former Yugoslavia.²⁵

The NIT methodology examines the countries it targets over seven areas: ‘national democratic governance’, ‘electoral process’, ‘civil society’, ‘independent media’, ‘local democratic governance’, ‘judicial framework and independence’, and ‘corruption’. These are scored on a one (lowest) to seven (highest) scale and an overall ‘democracy score’ for each country is given from the mean of the scores in these seven categories. The scoring is determined by ‘country report authors, a panel of expert advisers, and a group of regional expert reviewers’.²⁶ The final ‘democracy score’ places the assessed country into one of four forms of government: ‘consolidated authoritarian’ (scoring one to two) which are described as ‘closed societies in which dictators prevent political competition and pluralism and are responsible for widespread violations of basic political, civil, and human rights’; ‘semi-consolidated authoritarian’ (over two to three) regimes which ‘attempt to mask authoritarianism or rely on informal power structures with limited respect for the institutions and practices of democracy’ and ‘typically fail to meet even the minimum standards of electoral democracy’; ‘transitional or hybrid’ (over three to four) which are mostly ‘electoral democracies where democratic institutions are fragile, and substantial challenges to the protection of political rights and civil liberties exist’; ‘semi-consolidated democracy’ (over four to five) which exhibit weaknesses in political rights and civil liberties; and finally, ‘consolidated democracy’ (over five to seven) which typify ‘the best policies and practices of liberal democracy, but may face challenges — often associated with corruption’.²⁷

Potential Models II: The Economist Intelligence Unit’s *Democracy Index*

The Economist Intelligence Unit (hereafter EIU) is a London based commercial research agency affiliated with *The Economist* newspaper. It produces reports on various international issues, markets and industries for commercial, academic, and governmental clients.²⁸ The most relevant report produced by the EIU to the aims of this research is the *Democracy Index* (hereafter DI) which examines the political systems of 167 states and territories.²⁹ The DI is usually themed around a

25. Freedom House, *Countries and Territories*, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores>. Accessed 27/9/2023.

26. Freedom House, *Nations in Transit Methodology*, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://freedomhouse.org/reports/nations-transit/nations-transit-methodology>. Accessed 27/9/2023.

27. Ibid.

28. The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Global Themes*, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.eiu.com/n/global-themes/>. Accessed 27/9/2023.

29. *DI*, 2022, p. 3.

major crisis or trend relevant to governmental structures which featured during the year which that specific report covers, with recent examples including Covid-19 and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.³⁰

The DI's method uses five categories to assess each country or territory: 'the functioning of government', 'electoral process and pluralism', 'political participation', 'civil liberties', and 'political culture'. These are evaluated using a number of questions whose scores are then converted to a zero to ten scale (with ten being the highest). The EIU uses expert opinion to answer many of the questions but other data sources are also used, mainly the World Values Survey.³¹ Several categories contain 'critical area' related questions which modify the category's overall score.³² Each country or territory is also given an overall score which is the mean of the scores of the five categories above. These overall scores are used to classify a country's political system as one of four types: a 'full democracy', 'flawed democracy', 'hybrid regime' or 'authoritarian regime'. 'Full democracies' (scoring over eight) are defined as 'countries in which not only basic political freedoms and civil liberties are respected, but which also tend to be underpinned by a political culture conducive to the flourishing of democracy'.³³ 'Flawed democracies' (scoring over six and up to eight) are judged to be those which have free and fair elections, respect most civil liberties, but have significant weak points regarding governance, corruption, political culture or political engagement. 'Hybrid regimes' (scoring over four and up to six) are defined as those which do not have free or fair elections and suffer from: a range of serious weaknesses in governance, state interference in the media and politics, widespread corruption, and a lack of respect for individual freedoms. 'Authoritarian regimes' (scoring four or less) are judged to be heavily state controlled political systems with very low political pluralism, highly flawed or no elections, and with very limited tolerance of political opposition and civil liberties.³⁴

30. See for example: The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Democracy Index 2020, In Sickness and in Health?*, London: Economist Intelligence Unit, 2020.

31. *DI*, 2022, p. 68; C. Haerpfer, R. Inglehart, A. Moreno, C. Welzel, K. Kizilova, J. Diez-Medrano, M. Lagos, P. Norris, E. Ponarin & B. Puranen (eds), *World Values Survey: Round Seven – Country-Pooled Datafile Version 5.0. WVS-7 Master Questionnaire 2017-2020*, JD Systems Institute & WVSA Secretariat: Madrid and Vienna, 2022.

32. See below for further details of these 'critical area' questions.

33. *DI*, 2022, p. 67.

34. *Ibid.*

Differences in Approach

When directly comparing the methodologies used by the FH and the EIU (see ‘Table I: Comparison of the ‘Nations in Transit’ and ‘Democracy Index’ Methodologies’, and ‘Table II: Constituent Elements of the ‘Nations in Transit’ and ‘Democracy Index’ Scoring Systems’) a number of differences in approach can clearly be observed.

Table I: Comparison of the ‘Nations in Transit’ and ‘Democracy Index’ Methodologies ³⁵

Category, Subsection and Coverage (in Parentheses)	#	Question	In EIU Method
National Democratic Governance: 1. Is the country’s governmental system democratic? (4 of 5)	1	Does the Constitution or other national legislation enshrine the principles of democratic government?	Yes
	2	Is the government open to meaningful citizen participation in political processes and decision-making in practice?	Yes
	3	Is there an effective system of checks and balances between legislative, executive, and judicial authority?	Yes
	4	Does a freedom of information act or similar legislation ensure access to government information by citizens and the media?	Yes
	5	Is the economy free of government domination?	No
National Democratic Governance: 2. Is the country’s governmental system stable? (5 of 5)	6	Is there consensus among political groups and citizens on democracy as the basis of the country’s political system?	Yes
	7	Is stability of the governmental system achieved without coercion, violence, or other abuses of basic rights and civil liberties by state or non-state actors?	Yes
	8	Do citizens recognize the legitimacy of national authorities and the laws and policies that govern them?	Yes
	9	Does the government’s authority extend over the full territory of the country?	Yes
	10	Is the governmental system free of threats to stability such as war, insurgencies, and domination by the military, foreign powers, or other powerful groups?	Yes
National Democratic Governance: 3. Is the legislature independent, effective, and accountable to the public? (4 of 5)	11	Does the legislature have autonomy from the executive branch?	Yes
	12	Does the legislature have the resources and capacity it needs to fulfill its lawmaking and investigative responsibilities? (consider financial resources, professional staffs, democratic management structures, etc.)	No
	13	Do citizens and the media have regular access to legislators and the legislative process through public hearings, town meetings, published congressional records, etc.?	Yes – indirectly
	14	Do legislative bodies operate under effective audit and investigative rules that are free of political influence?	Yes – indirectly
	15	Does the legislature provide leadership and reflect societal preferences by providing a forum for the peaceful and democratic resolution of differences?	Yes – indirectly

35. Freedom House, *Nations in Transit Methodology*, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://freedom-house.org/reports/nations-transit/nations-transit-methodology>. Accessed 27/9/2023.

<p>National Democratic Governance:</p> <p>4. Is the executive branch independent, effective, and accountable to the public?</p> <p>(4 of 6)</p>	16	Is the executive branch's role in policy making clearly defined vis-à-vis other branches of government?	Yes
	17	Does the executive branch have the resources and capacity it needs to formulate and implement policies?	No
	18	Do citizens and the media have regular access to the executive branch to comment on the formulation and implementation of policies?	Yes
	19	Does a competent and professional civil service function according to democratic standards and practices?	Yes
	20	Do executive bodies operate under effective audit and investigative rules that are free of political influence?	Yes
	21	Does the executive branch provide leadership and reflect societal preferences in resolving conflicts and supporting democratic development?	No
<p>National Democratic Governance:</p> <p>5. Are the military and security services subject to democratic oversight?</p> <p>(2 of 5)</p>	22	Does the Constitution or other legislation provide for democratic oversight and civilian authority over the military and security services?	Yes – indirectly
	23	Is there sufficient judicial oversight of the military and security services to prevent impunity?	No
	24	Does the legislature have transparent oversight of military and security budgets and spending?	No
	25	Do legislators, the media, and civil society groups have sufficient information on military and security matters to provide oversight of the military and security services?	No
	26	Does the government provide the public with accurate and timely information about the military, the security services, and their roles?	Yes – indirectly
<p>Electoral Process</p> <p>(8 of 8, 8 of 10 if N/A included)</p>	27	Is the authority of government based upon universal and equal suffrage and the will of the people as expressed by regular, free, and fair elections conducted by secret ballot?	Yes
	28	Are there fair electoral laws, equal campaigning opportunities, fair polling, and honest tabulation of ballots?	Yes
	29	Is the electoral system free of significant barriers to political organization and registration?	Yes
	30	Is the electoral system multiparty based, with viable political parties, including an opposition party, functioning at all levels of government?	Yes
	31	Is the public engaged in the political life of the country, as evidenced by membership in political parties, voter turnout for elections, or other factors?	Yes
	32	Do ethnic and other minority groups have sufficient openings to participate in the political process?	Yes
	33	Is there opportunity for the effective rotation of power among a range of different political parties representing competing interests and policy options?	Yes
	34	Are the people's choices free from domination by the specific interests of power groups (the military, foreign powers, totalitarian parties, regional hierarchies, and/or economic oligarchies)?	Yes
	35	Were the most recent national legislative elections judged free and fair by domestic and international election-monitoring organizations?	N/A
	36	Were the most recent presidential elections judged free and fair by domestic and international election-monitoring organizations?	N/A

Thomas FRENCH

Civil Society (4 of 10)	37	Does the state protect the rights of the independent civic sector?	Yes
	38	Is the civil society vibrant?*	No
	39	Is society free of excessive influence from extremist and intolerant nongovernmental institutions and organizations?*	No
	40	Is the legal and regulatory environment for civil society groups free of excessive state pressures and bureaucracy?*	Yes
	41	Do civil society groups have sufficient organizational capacity to sustain their work?*	No
	42	Are civil society groups financially viable, with adequate conditions and opportunities for raising funds that sustain their work?*	No
	43	Is the government receptive to policy advocacy by interest groups, public policy research groups, and other nonprofit organizations? Do government officials engage civil society groups by inviting them to testify, comment on, and influence pending policies or legislation?	Yes
	44	Are the media receptive to civil society groups as independent and reliable sources of information and commentary? Are they positive contributors to the country's civic life?	No
	45	Does the state respect the right to form and join free trade unions?	Yes
	46	Is the education system free of political influence and propaganda?	No
Independent Media (6 of 9, 6 of 10 if N/A included)	47	Are there legal protections for press freedom?	Yes
	48	Are journalists, especially investigative reporters, protected from victimization by powerful state or non-state actors?	Yes – indirectly
	49	Does the state oppose onerous libel laws and other excessive legal penalties for “irresponsible” journalism?	No
	50	Are the media's editorial independence and news-gathering functions free of interference from the government or private owners?	Yes
	51	Does the public enjoy a diverse selection of print and electronic sources of information, at both the national and local level, that represent a range of political viewpoints?	Yes
	52	Are the majority of print and electronic media privately owned and free of excessive ownership concentration?	Yes
	53	Is the private media's financial viability subject only to market forces (that is, is it free of political or other influences)?	No
	54	Is the distribution of newspapers privately controlled?	No
	55	Are journalists and media outlets able to form their own viable professional associations?	Yes
	56	Does society enjoy free access to and use of the Internet, is diversity of opinion available through online sources, and does government make no attempt to control the Internet?	N/A
Local Democratic Governance: 1. Are the principles of local democratic government enshrined in law and respected in practice? (0 of 4)	57	Does the Constitution or other national legislation provide a framework for democratic local self-government?	No
	58	Have substantial government powers and responsibilities been decentralized in practice?	No
	59	Are local authorities free to design and adopt institutions and processes of governance that reflect local needs and conditions?	No
	60	Do central authorities consult local governments in planning and decision-making processes that directly affect the local level?	No

<p>Local Democratic Governance:</p> <p>2. Are citizens able to choose their local leaders in free and fair elections?</p> <p>(0 of 6)</p>	61	Does the Constitution or other national legislation provide for local elections held on the basis of universal, equal, and direct suffrage by secret ballot?	No
	62	Do local governments derive their power on the basis of regular, free, and fair local elections (either through direct election or through election by local assemblies or councils)?	No
	63	Are free and fair local elections held at regular intervals and subject to independent monitoring and oversight?	No
	64	Do multiple candidates representing a range of views participate in local elections and in local government bodies?	No
	65	Are voters' choices in local elections free from domination by power groups such as national political parties, central authorities, economic oligarchies, etc?	No
	66	Are citizens engaged in local electoral processes, as evidenced by party membership, voter turnout, or other factors?	No
<p>Local Democratic Governance:</p> <p>3. Are citizens ensured meaningful participation in local government decision-making?</p> <p>(0 of 5)</p>	67	Do local governments invite input from civil society, business, trade unions, and other groups on important policy issues before decisions are made and implemented?	No
	68	Do local governments initiate committees, focus groups, or other partnerships with civil society to address common concerns and needs?	No
	69	Are individuals and civil society groups free to submit petitions, organize demonstrations, or initiate other activities that influence local decision-making?	No
	70	Do women, ethnic groups, and other minorities participate in local government?	No
	71	Do the media regularly report the views of local civic groups, the private business sector, and other nongovernmental entities about local government policy and performance?	No
<p>Local Democratic Governance:</p> <p>4. Do democratically elected local authorities exercise their powers freely and autonomously?</p> <p>(0 of 4)</p>	72	Do central authorities respect local decision-making authority and independence?	No
	73	Are local governments free to pass and enforce laws needed to fulfill their responsibilities?	No
	74	Do local authorities have the right to judicial remedy to protect their powers?	No
	75	Do local governments have the right to form associations at the domestic and international level for protecting and promoting their interests?	No
<p>Local Democratic Governance:</p> <p>5. Do democratically elected local authorities have the resources and capacity needed to fulfill their responsibilities?</p> <p>(0 of 5)</p>	76	Are local governments free to collect taxes, fees, and other revenues commensurate with their responsibilities?	No
	77	Do local governments automatically and regularly receive resources that are due from central authorities?	No
	78	Do local governments set budgets and allocate resources free of excessive political influences and central controls?	No
	79	Are local authorities empowered to set staff salaries, staff size and staffing patterns, and is recruitment based on merit and experience?	No
	80	Do local governments have the resources (material, financial, and human) to provide quality services, ensure a safe local environment, and implement sound policies in practice?	No

Thomas FRENCH

<p>Local Democratic Governance:</p> <p>6. Do democratically elected local authorities operate with transparency and accountability to citizens?</p> <p>(0 of 5)</p>	81	Are local authorities subject to clear and consistent standards of disclosure, oversight, and accountability?	No
	82	Are local authorities free from domination by power groups (economic oligarchies, organized crime, etc) that prevent them from representing the views and needs of the citizens who elected them?	No
	83	Are public meetings mandated by law and held at regular intervals?	No
	84	Do citizens and the media have regular access to public records and information?	No
	85	Are media free to investigate and report on local politics and government without fear of victimization?	No
<p>Judicial Framework and Independence</p> <p>(8 of 9)</p>	86	Does the constitutional or other national legislation provide protections for fundamental political, civil, and human rights?*	Yes – indirectly (property rights not covered)
	87	Do the state and nongovernmental actors respect fundamental political, civil, and human rights in practice?	Yes
	88	Is there independence and impartiality in the interpretation and enforcement of the constitution?	No
	89	Is there equality before the law?	Yes
	90	Has there been effective reform of the criminal code/criminal law?*	Yes – indirectly
	91	Are suspects and prisoners protected in practice against arbitrary arrest, detention without trial, searches without warrants, torture and abuse, and excessive delays in the criminal justice system?	Yes – indirectly
	92	Are judges appointed in a fair and unbiased manner, and do they have adequate legal training before assuming the bench?	Yes – indirectly
	93	Do judges rule fairly and impartially, and are courts free of political control and influence?	Yes – indirectly
<p>Corruption</p> <p>(0 of 10)</p>	94	Do legislative, executive, and other governmental authorities comply with judicial decisions, and are judicial decisions effectively enforced?	Yes – indirectly
	95	Has the government implemented effective anticorruption initiatives?	No
	96	Is the country's economy free of excessive state involvement?	No
	97	Is the government free from excessive bureaucratic regulations, registration requirements, and other controls that increase opportunities for corruption?	No
	98	Are there significant limitations on the participation of government officials in economic life?	No
	99	Are there adequate laws requiring financial disclosure and disallowing conflict of interest?	No
	100	Does the government advertise jobs and contracts?	No
	101	Does the state enforce an effective legislative or administrative process—particularly one that is free of prejudice against one's political opponents—to prevent, investigate, and prosecute the corruption of government officials and civil servants?	No
	102	Do whistleblowers, anticorruption activists, investigators, and journalists enjoy legal protections that make them feel secure about reporting cases of bribery and corruption?	No
	103	Are allegations of corruption given wide and extensive airing in the media?	No
104	Does the public display a high intolerance for official corruption?	No	

* Explanatory note removed.

Note: Punctuation and U.S. spelling used as in original. Original numbering removed and numbering in '#' column added.

As shown in Table I above, the range of included characteristics and focus of the two approaches have some quite significant differences. However, there is a degree of alignment in some areas and within ‘national democratic governance’ nineteen of the twenty–six questions in the NIT methodology are covered by the DI. On ‘electoral processes’ the two approaches perhaps most closely overlap with eight of the ten NIT questions being covered in the DI, with this rising to all eight when those not applicable to historical cases are removed. ‘Judicial framework and independence’ also shows a high level of alignment with eight of nine questions being covered, albeit with questions eighty–six and ninety only partially so. The questions in the NIT category ‘independent media’ are also relatively well covered in the DI, with six of ten of the questions answered (one indirectly) with this coverage rising to six out of nine when non–applicable questions are eliminated.

The divergence of the two approaches starts to become much more obvious within the NIT questions on ‘civil society’. Only four of the ten questions here are covered by the DI, including most of the questions on civil society itself.³⁶ The most marked gaps between the two methods are evident in the two later categories on ‘local democratic governance’ and ‘corruption’. None of the questions in either of these two categories (thirty–nine of the total of 104 questions in NIT) are addressed in the DI approach, with only a single general question in the latter (twenty–two) being focused on corruption. The imbalance in approach becomes even more apparent when the relative weighting of the various categories and questions within them are considered, as is detailed in Table II.

36. Question forty–six also has significance for Imperial Japan due to the increasing influence of propaganda on education throughout the periods to be examined see: Mitchell, *Thought Control*, pp. 92–93; H. W. Wong and H. Y Yau, *Censorship in Japan*, Routledge: London. 2021, p. 28.

Table II: Constituent Elements of the ‘Nations in Transit’ and ‘Democracy Index’ Scoring Systems

Category	Questions	Scoring Scale	Value per Question on Scale ³⁷	Value of Category for Final Scoring
Nations in Transit				
National Democratic Governance	26	6 (1–7)	0.231	1/7
Electoral Process	10	6	0.600	1/7
Civil Society	10	6	0.600	1/7
Independent Media	10	6	0.600	1/7
Local Democratic Governance	29	6	0.207	1/7
Judicial Framework and Independence	9	6	0.667	1/7
Corruption	10	6	0.600	1/7
Democracy Index				
Electoral Process and Pluralism	12	10 (0–10)	0.833	1/5
Functioning of Government	14	10	0.714	1/5
Political Participation	9	10	1.111	1/5
Democratic Political Culture	8	10	1.250	1/5
Civil Liberties	17	10	0.588	1/5

Looking specifically at corruption, the DI method dedicates a single question (of sixty) to this issue whereas one seventh of the entire NIT survey’s scoring is related to corruption. An even broader gap between the two methods can be observed when looking at local government, where again a seventh of the NIT scoring is dependent on the accountability, independence, and representative nature of local government, whereas no questions at all deal with local government in the DI methodology. Looking more broadly at what could be considered the structure of central government, the DI method devotes over 40% of its final scoring (‘electoral process and pluralism’ and ‘functioning of government’) to this, versus only 28.6% in the NIT system (‘national democratic governance’ and ‘electoral process’).³⁸ These gaps make clear the differing approach and conception of democracy between the two methods. NIT clearly places much greater weight on norms, structures, and organisations outside of the formal central government structure, such as local government, the media, civil society and corruption. These together make up 57.1% of the final in the NIT method score versus the aforementioned 28.6% for the functions

37. The assumption is made here that all the NIT questions are weighted equally within categories.

38. The DI score is inexact due to the modifications in these categories related to the presence of a number of ‘critical area’ questions. See Table III for a summary of these.

and structures of the central government. In contrast the DI approach is much more tightly focused on the central government and its structures, with other aspects such as political participation, political culture, and civil liberties also being examined but not given the same emphasis as in the NIT method.

The DI method clearly focuses much more closely on the political structures and processes of the countries and territories being examined as opposed to the broader look at other issues such societal factors, personal freedoms, corruption, and sub-state structures central to the NIT method. A possible reason behind the difference in approach here may lie in the outlooks and motivations of the producers of the two reports. Freedom House, as mentioned above, is a non-profit organisation which seeks to promote democracy, human rights and political freedom, while the EIU is a commercial research agency which creates and sells research on governments, markets, and industries. Freedom House's mission and *raison d'être* necessitates the inclusion of a broader range of factors within its consideration of democracy, especially those relating to personal freedoms and human rights. The EIU, as noted above, also produces a range of reports on many aspects of the contemporary world, including several on different aspects of governance, but it does not advocate or support any particular agenda regarding structures of government or democracy promotion.³⁹ This difference in purpose and framing indicates one of the points which recommend the DI as a more appropriate model to examine the historical cases as studied here. This is especially the case as the nature of the political system and its operation are the central areas of debate for most studies seeking to classify or comment on the Imperial systems' democratic and/or authoritarian credentials.⁴⁰ As well as the range of countries and territories examined being much broader in terms of numbers (167 versus twenty-nine), historical background, and region, the DI also features many more counties within each of its different regime types. This bigger sample size provides a broader base of comparison to contemporary regimes for the historical case studies examined here, as will be done in the later stages of this research. A notable point further supporting the

39. The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Global Themes*, 2023. retrieved from: <https://www.eiu.com/n/global-themes/>. Accessed 27/9/2023.

40. Also, adding such weight to these issues (for example local government) would likely skew the scores against more democratic results in the Imperial Japanese cases due to the absence of any meaningfully accountable local government throughout the period. See: Government Section, *Political Reorientation of Japan, September, 1945 to September, 1948*, Vol. I, US Government Printing Office: Washington DC, 1949, pp. 260–268. Moreover, as FH has the mission of promoting democracy this could possibly lead to underscoring due to an overly critical attitude, potentially pushing its results downward and again making it less suitable for this research.

applicability of the DI over the NIT methodology in this case concerns the data used to answer questions. As mentioned above, the NIT method exclusively employs expert opinions to answer its questions whereas the DI employs other information including surveys. This clear ability to apply other data sources is a further strength for the DI as this research will also employ alternate forms of data to answer some questions, where necessary. A final and crucial point in deciding between the DI and NIT methods is the availability of the methodologies.⁴¹ As well as being open and accessible, the almost complete transparency of the DI methodology enables more detailed adjustments to be made to render it employable for the analysis of the historical cases. Due to the various advantages it has, as demonstrated here, the DI methodology will be employed for the purposes of this research, with various modifications applied to adjust it for use in the historical cases which will be explored.

Operationalization of the DI Model for Historical Cases

This section reviews the various questions in the DI methodology and how they will be approached in the next phases of this study, with commentary given on the sources which will be employed, and the strategies used to deal with those questions which are unanswerable or not applicable. The various questions will be examined in their original order and retaining their original numbering.⁴² A summary of the various modifications and adjustment made to the methodology is presented in Table III.

41. *DI*, 2022, pp. 64–78

42. *Ibid*, pp. 59–68.

Table III. Summary of Scoring Methods and Adjustments to the DI Methodology

Category	Electoral Process and Pluralism	Functioning of Government	Political Participation	Democratic Political Culture	Civil Liberties
Modifications / Considerations to Suit Historical Cases	None (0.5 score for Q4 to be discussed)	No World Values Survey (WVS) data for Q24–26	No WVS data for Q31,32, 34	No WVS data for Q37–42	Q44 and 48 removed and category average calculation adjusted No WVS data for Q58
Conversion of Category Score to 0 to 10 Scale	0.83	0.71	1.11	1.25	0.67 (original is 0.59)
'Critical Area' Modifications to Category Score	a) If Q1 and Q2 = 0.5 or 0, deduct 0.5 or 1 respectively	c) If Q17 = 0.5 or 0, deduct 0.5 or 1 respectively	n/a	n/a	n/a
	b) If Q5 = 0, deduct 1	d) If Q23 = 0, deduct 1			

Category I: The Electoral Process and Pluralism

This category consists of twelve questions. Scoring tiers for each question are shown in parentheses:

1. Are elections for the national legislature and head of government free? (3)
2. Are elections for the national legislature and head of government fair? (3)
3. Are municipal elections both free and fair? (3)
4. Is there universal suffrage for all adults? (2)
5. Can citizens cast their vote free of significant threats to their security from state or non-state bodies? (2)
6. Do laws provide for broadly equal campaigning opportunities? (3)
7. Is the process of financing political parties transparent and generally accepted? (3)
8. Following elections, are the constitutional mechanisms for the orderly transfer of power from one government to another clear, established and accepted? (3)
9. Are citizens free to form political parties that are independent of the government? (3)
10. Do opposition parties have a realistic prospect of achieving government? (3)
11. Is potential access to public office open to all citizens? (3)

12. Are citizens allowed to form political and civic organisations, free of state interference and surveillance? (3)⁴³

In common with the rest of questions in the DI, most of those present here are answered using a three tier scoring system, with an affirmative answer scoring one point, a partial affirmative answer scoring half a point, and a negative response scoring no points. This category also includes two questions (four and five) which have only yes/no answers (dichotomous scoring) with the affirmative scoring one point and the negative scoring zero. As mentioned above, the scoring is converted to a zero to ten scale for all categories and as this category contains of twelve questions the final score is multiplied by 0.83 to adjust for this.

This category also contains two of the category score modifying ‘critical areas’ featured in the methodology.⁴⁴ These are: ‘whether national elections are free and fair’ and ‘the security of voters’, with the latter specifically concerning the ability of voters to cast their ballot without fear of reprisals or actions being taken against them. The first of these areas, ‘whether national elections are free and fair’, is addressed in questions one and two. Modifiers of minus one or minus 0.5, respectively, apply to the overall category score (after conversion to the zero to ten scale) here if zero or 0.5 are scored in response to ‘whether national elections are free and fair’. As the freeness (question one) and fairness (question two) are dealt with separately here the scores of the two questions will be assessed and a judgement will be made as to whether to apply the ‘critical area’ modifier in each historical case. The second ‘critical area’ question on the security of voters is clearly answered in question five, one of the aforementioned dichotomous questions. A negative response here would result in zero points scored for this specific question and also an overall modifier to the category’s score (on the zero to ten scale) of minus one.

Regarding the expected scoring of this category within the historical cases, this is likely to be low across all the questions here. Scoring is likely to be especially low in the years after the enactment of the 1925 Peace Preservation Law, with that law heavily influencing questions one, five, nine and twelve.⁴⁵ With the direct nature of

43. Ibid, pp. 69–70.

44. Ibid, p. 66.

45. ‘*Goshomei Gempon Taisho Jūyon Nen Hōritsu Dai Yon Roku Gō Chian Ijihō*’ (Maintenance of the Public Order Act in an Original script signed by the Emperor, 1925 Law No. 46), 21/4/1925, Japan Center for Asian Historical Records (JACAR) A03021545100; See also: ‘*Chianijihō Kakugikettesho*’ (Decision of Cabinet on Peace Preservation Law), *Kokuritsu Kōbunshokan* (National Archives of Japan), 1925. Retrieved from: https://www.ndl.go.jp/modern/img_r/K001/K001-001r.html. Accessed 27/9/2023.

most of the questions in this category it should be relatively straightforward to answer them using the various relevant laws and policies, supplemented by historical accounts of the political.

One question which does present a certain challenge here is question four: ‘is there universal suffrage for all adults?’. The definition of ‘all adults’ includes, of course, women, none of whom had the right to vote in Japan until after the promulgation of the 1947 Constitution, and hence the score across all years examined would be zero.⁴⁶ As universal male suffrage, granted in 1925, is totemic of moves towards democratisation for many scholars, it being effectively discounted here due to a score of zero being awarded if ‘all’ adults do not have the vote is significant.⁴⁷ It is also of interest to note here that having full adult suffrage is seemingly not considered a ‘critical area’ in the DI methodology. A potential modification here would be to allow a score of 0.5 for years from 1925 onwards to reflect half of the Japanese population (with some minor exceptions) having the right to vote. However, adopting this modification would distort the scoring and hence potentially lead to issues when comparing the historic Japanese cases to the contemporary cases presented in *Democracy Index 2022*. As such, the original methodology will be maintained but the potential influence of the 0.5 score will be examined in the analysis categories of the later parts of this study.

A further, more historically appropriate, form of comparison would be a juxtaposition of the Japanese scores to those of the United States, United Kingdom or other ‘democratic’ states over the same historical period. This is something which will also be done in the latter stages of this research and will employ the same scoring modifications as the Japanese cases. Not modifying the methodology to suit shifting trends or the prevailing political structures of different eras here both results in scoring of greater integrity and comparability, and fits with the approach of other analyses with longer historical ranges, such as the *Varieties of Democracy Project* (V–Dem) and the Centre for Systemic Peace’s *Polity Project*, which retain

46. ‘The Constitution of Japan, 1947’, Chapter 3, Article 15, Clause 3, 3/5/1947, in: G. D. Hook and G. McCormack (eds), *Japan’s Contested Constitution: Documents and Analysis*. Routledge: London, 2001, p. 192.

47. See also: ‘Law Governing Election to the House of Representatives, as Amended, Extending Suffrage’, 5/5/1925, in: Lu, *Japan: A Documentary History*, p. 395; ‘*Shūgiingiinsenkyō-hō Kaisei Hōritsu*’ (House of Representatives Election Law Amendment Act), 5/5/1924, in: Asahi Shinbun, *Shiryō Meiji Hyakunen*, p. 466. See also: ‘*Sanha Fūsen Inkai Ketteian*’ (Draft of the Three Factions’ Committee’s Decision on Universal Manhood Suffrage), 1924, *Ogawa Heikichi Kankei Bunsho 792* (Papers of OGAWA Heikichi, #792), National Diet Library. Retrieved from: https://www.ndl.go.jp/modern/img_r/063/063-001r.html. Accessed 27/9/2023.

the same scoring and methodology across all the eras they examine.⁴⁸

Category II: The Functioning of Government

This category consists of fourteen questions (again with scoring tiers shown in parentheses). Two have dichotomous scoring and the rest are scored on a three tier scale:

13. Do freely elected representatives determine government policy? (3)
14. Is the legislature the supreme political body, with a clear supremacy over other branches of government? (2)
15. Is there an effective system of checks and balances on the exercise of government authority? (3)
16. Government is free of undue influence by the military or the security services (3)
17. Foreign powers and organisations do not determine important government functions or policies (3)
18. Do special economic, religious or other powerful domestic groups exercise significant political power, parallel to democratic institutions? (3)
19. Are sufficient mechanisms and institutions in place for ensuring government accountability to the electorate in between elections? (3)
20. Does the government's authority extend over the full territory of the country? (2)
21. Is the functioning of government open and transparent, with sufficient public access to information? (3)
22. How pervasive is corruption? (3)
23. Is the civil service willing to and capable of implementing government policy? (3)
24. Popular perceptions of the extent to which citizens have free choice and control over their lives (3)
25. Public confidence in government (3)
26. Public confidence in political parties (3)⁴⁹

As there are fourteen questions in this category a modifier of 0.71 will be applied to

48. V-Dem Institute, *The V-Dem Project*, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.v-dem.net/about/v-dem-project/>. Accessed 27/9/2023; Center for Systemic Peace, *About Polity*, Retrieved from: <https://www.systemicpeace.org/polityproject.html>. Accessed 27/9/2023.

49. *DI*, 2022, pp. 70–72.

convert the overall score to the common zero to ten scale. This category also includes questions connected to the two final ‘critical areas’, number three (‘the influence of foreign powers on government’ [sic]), and number four (‘the capability of the civil service to implement policies’).⁵⁰ The former of these is directly addressed in question seventeen, and the latter in question twenty–three.⁵¹ The category score modifier for ‘the influence of foreign powers on government’ is minus 0.5 points from the category total for a score of 0.5, and minus one point from the category total for a score of zero. This modifier will be applied to the response for question seventeen. Scoring zero for ‘the capability of the civil service to implement policies’ results in a category score modifier of minus one being applied. As this ‘critical area’ is judged to be addressed by question twenty–three, a score of zero for this question will result in this modifier being applied.⁵² A further point to note regarding scoring in this category and those that follow is the employment, where available, of World Values Survey (hereafter WVS) data to provide answers to some questions, (namely twenty–four, twenty–five and twenty–six). As such data is obviously unavailable for the years examined here other data, including historians’ opinions and interpretations will be employed. As these questions largely relate to public perceptions of the government, finding directly applicable data may be challenging as such opinions were rarely expressed publicly, recorded in academic studies or newspaper polls, or arguably even sought by the government in an era of repression and censorship. Nevertheless, as the original survey only employs WVS data ‘if available’ using other data sources here is similar to the process employed in the scoring of the original report for those countries and territories which do not feature, or participate in, the WVS.

The expected scoring in this category is again relatively low due the character of the Imperial political systems. One question where some interpretation may be required is the ‘critical area’ related question on whether: ‘foreign powers and organisations do not determine important government functions or policies’. As

50. Ibid, p. 66.

51. The answer for question twenty could also be factored in here but the depth and reach of what constitutes ‘control’ could be make inclusion of this problematic. Due to this, and as Japan was in full control of its main islands in all the years examined here, only question twenty–three will be employed. If this model were applied to Japan in the postwar years the occupation of the main islands until 1952 and the later end of the occupations of the Amami, Okinawa, and Ogasawara Islands, as well as the presence of US bases, would influence this category, further complicating the overall scoring. The recognition, or not, of Japan’s territorial claims to the Kurile Islands and Takeshima/Dokdo would also be significant here for post 1952 analyses.

52. *DI*, 2022, p. 66.

Japan was not entirely free from ‘unequal treaties’ and foreign influence on its customs duties until 1911 a case could be made for a score of 0.5 for 1880 and 1900.⁵³

Category III: Political Participation

This category is shorter than the previous two and is made up of nine questions (scoring tiers shown in parentheses), all scored on a three tier scale:

27. Voter participation/turn-out for national elections (3)
28. Do ethnic, religious and other minorities have a reasonable degree of autonomy and voice in the political process? (3)
29. Women in parliament (3)
30. Extent of political participation. Membership of political parties and political non-governmental organisations (3)
31. Citizens’ engagement with politics (3)
32. The preparedness of population to take part in lawful demonstrations (3)
33. Adult literacy (3)
34. Extent to which adult population shows an interest in and follows politics in the news (3)
35. The authorities make a serious effort to promote political participation (3)⁵⁴

Having fewer than ten questions in this category results in a scoring modification of 1.11 being applied to convert the answers to a ten-point scale. Akin to the previous category, this one also includes questions which use WVS data where available, specifically: questions thirty-one, thirty-two and thirty-four. As in the previous category the responses to these questions will be provided using other data sources and historian’s interpretations, as WVS data is clearly unavailable.

This category is likely to have a mix of positive and negative responses due to, for example, the high and increasing literacy rate in the periods examined, being counterbalanced by no women in the Diet.⁵⁵ Question thirty-five may require some

53. ‘Treaty of Amity and Commerce’, 22/5/1860, in: Hoare, *Culture, Power and Politics*, pp. 5–12; Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism*, p. 119; Swanson, ‘Gentlemanly Capitalism’, p. 191. A result of 0.5 may also be excessive as this equates to ‘having some features of a protectorate’ in the scoring section of this question. This seems an inaccurate description of Japan’s status in either 1880 or 1900. Moreover, due to the magnifying effect such a score would have due to the ‘critical area’ modifier, such a score would arguably excessively distort down the scoring in this category.

54. *DI*, 2022, pp. 72–74.

55. Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy*, pp. 18–19

interpretation in relation to the creation of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association and whether this represented either an attempt to increase political participation or paradoxically, and as seems more accurate, an attempt to stifle it.⁵⁶

Category IV: Democratic Political Culture

This category is the shortest in with eight questions, all scored on a three tier scale:

36. Is there a sufficient degree of societal consensus and cohesion to underpin a stable, functioning democracy? (3)
37. Perceptions of leadership; proportion of the population that desires a strong leader who bypasses parliament and elections (3)
38. Perceptions of military rule; proportion of the population that would prefer military rule (3)
39. Perceptions of rule by experts or technocratic government; proportion of the population that would prefer rule by experts or technocrats (3)
40. Perception of democracy and public order; proportion of the population that believes that democracies are not good at maintaining public order (3)
41. Perception of democracy and the economic system; proportion of the population that believes that democracy benefits economic performance (3)
42. Degree of popular support for democracy (3)
43. There is a strong tradition of the separation of Church and State (3)⁵⁷

Having the fewest questions results in the scoring multiplier to convert the final score to a ten–point scale for this category being the largest at 1.25. This category also has the highest number of questions which, in the original, employ WVS data where available, namely: questions thirty–seven through forty–two. As above, alternate sources of data will be employed for these.

This category presents perhaps the most significant challenge regarding application of the DI methodology to historical cases. Accurately determining public opinion on almost any subject in the Imperial era is likely to be challenging. While it can clearly be argued that there was never enough ‘societal consensus and cohesion to underpin a stable, functioning democracy’ (question thirty–six), the

56. ‘Basic Outline for Implementing the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, 1940’, 14/12/1940, in: Lu, *Japan: A Documentary History*, pp. 440–442. Perhaps a fitting encapsulation of the aim here might be of increasing participation while attempting to eliminate any political opposition or dissent. This action itself being political further complicates matters here.

57. *DI*, 2022, pp. 74–76.

level of the public's support for military rule and their perceptions of democracy are highly debatable.⁵⁸ As noted above, reliable surveys or data on such matters are likely to prove difficult, if not impossible, to obtain. Hence other sources must be employed to infer support and opposition for various causes. For some scholars, such as Gordon, the existence of movements such as the 'People's Rights Movement' and the later major public disturbances of 1905 to 1918 are partially indicative of support for a more representative form of government.⁵⁹ For others the widespread support of Japan's military and elements of its authoritarian rule indicate another tendency in parts of the population.⁶⁰ For some scholars the mere presence of movements espousing a position (however marginal) is enough to indicate a latent level of support for it, no matter how minuscule the movement's actual membership was. These indistinct positions and the level of public support they are judged to represent are further muddied through the increasingly pervasive influence of propaganda, government repression, and nationalistic education throughout the eras to be examined here. These all led to a narrowing of acceptable (and legal) political discourse and activity, making public support for certain causes or beliefs highly risky. Also significant here are the images held by Japanese public of life under democratic government (questions forty to forty-two). If the frame of reference here is the U.S. and U.K. the influence of propaganda particularly after 1941 is highly significant.⁶¹ These points indicate the complexities of approaching some of the questions in this category and the importance of conducting appropriate levels of research into the primary and secondary literature to answer them as accurately as possible for each of the years examined.

Category V: Civil Liberties

The final category is the longest with seventeen questions. Only question fifty-one

58. These questions also have bearing on other historical debates such as the level of support for Japan's wars and empire and hence the degree of 'responsibility' held by the Japanese people regarding these.

59. See: Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy*, pp. 26–62.

60. P. Brendon, *The Dark Valley: A Panorama of the 1930s*. Jonathan Cape. London. 2000. p. 192. See also: Orbach, *Curse on This Country*, 2017, pp. 234–235.

61. A question could be raised here as to what sort of democracy those surveyed are meant to be considering, with a comparison with contemporary democratic systems, of course, being an impossibility for the historical populations covered in this study. A similar question could be raised here regarding a potential flaw in the original study itself – are only 'full democracies' (as defined by the EIU) and their operations being considered here by the respondents? This seems unlikely as the WVS itself does not define what democracy is and relies on the subjective views of the surveyed individuals. See: C. Haerpfer et al, *World Values Survey*, p. 17. These issues again highlight some of the definitional problems surrounding the term 'democracy'.

has dichotomous scoring, with the remainder having three tier scoring:

44. Is there a free electronic media? (3)
45. Is there a free print media? (3)
46. Is there freedom of expression and protest (bar only generally accepted restrictions, such as banning advocacy of violence)? (3)
47. Is media coverage robust? Is there open and free discussion of public issues, with a reasonable diversity of opinions? (3)
48. Are there political restrictions on access to the Internet? (3)
49. Are citizens free to form professional organisations and trade unions? (3)
50. Do institutions provide citizens with the opportunity to petition government to redress grievances? (3)
51. The use of torture by the state (2)
52. The degree to which the judiciary is independent of government influence. Consider the views of international legal and judicial watchdogs. Have the courts ever issued an important judgement against the government, or a senior government official? (3)
53. The degree of religious tolerance and freedom of religious expression. Are all religions permitted to operate freely, or are some restricted? Is the right to worship permitted both publicly and privately? Do some religious groups feel intimidated by others, even if the law requires equality and protection? (3)
54. The degree to which citizens are treated equally under the law. Consider whether favoured groups or individuals are spared prosecution under the law (3)
55. Do citizens enjoy basic security? (3)
56. Extent to which private property rights are protected and private business is free from undue government influence (3)
57. Extent to which citizens enjoy personal freedoms. Consider gender equality, right to travel, choice of work and study (3)
58. Popular perceptions on protection of human rights; proportion of the population that think that basic human rights are well-protected (3)
59. There is no significant discrimination on the basis of people's race, colour or religious beliefs (3)
60. Extent to which the government invokes new risks and threats as an excuse for curbing civil liberties (3)⁶²

The original ten–point scale conversion scoring modifier for this category is 0.59, but after the removal of the two non–applicable questions, as detailed below, the modifier increases to 0.67. This category also includes a single question (fifty–eight) which ideally employs WVS data. As in the previous categories other data and/or interpretations will be employed in place of this. The largest modification in this category, and perhaps the most significant overall in this adaption of the DI model for use in historical cases is the deletion of the two non–applicable questions relating to the internet and electronic media (forty–four and forty–eight). These are simply removed, and the category’s ten–point scale modifier adjusted to reflect the reduced number of questions (seventeen reduced to fifteen). Making this adjustment decreases the overall number of press freedom related questions from four to two. Although omitting these questions does slightly diminish the weighting of a free media in this category, other potential solutions such as doubling the value of the remaining media questions would potentially have an even greater distorting influence on the scoring. Also as the expected scores for each of the media questions are expected to be zero, or 0.5 at best, due to the extensive censorship during all the years examined here, the overall influence of omitting these two questions is judged to be negligible.

This is once more expected to be a low scoring category for most of the periods examined here, especially after the further erosion of civil liberties from the mid–1920s onwards, and the later influence of wartime restrictions. The single WVS related question here (fifty–eight: ‘popular perceptions on protection of human rights; proportion of the population that think that basic human rights are well–protected’) will also require further research to explore the level of knowledge of such abuses in Imperial Japan.

Conclusion

This article has presented the two core aims of this series, namely of examining and adapting a contemporary method of political system analysis for use in historical cases, and second, to examine the nature of Imperial Japan’s political systems from 1880 to 1945 using such a method. The former of these two aims has been the focus of this paper. Alongside an initial overview of the historical cases to be examined in future articles and some later commentary on their likely scoring, the article centred on examining the applicability and adaptability of the methodologies

62. *DI*, 2022, pp. 76–78.

presented to historical governmental system analysis. Two major methodologies were reviewed: Freedom House's *Nations in Transit* and the Economist Intelligence Unit's *Democracy Index*. The latter of these was selected for a number of reasons, including its greater focus on central government structure and more open and flexible methodology. The paper also examined the adjustment necessary to employ the *Democracy Index* methodology to the historical cases to be analysed in the later stages of this project. The various challenges and adaptations detailed ranged from the removal of questions not applicable to the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries, through context specific issues relating to individual questions, to the difficulties in appraising public opinion in Imperial Japan. The need for historical contextualisation was also highlighted and the application of the same methodology to countries judged to be 'democratic' during the years covered will be conducted in one of the later articles in this series. In sum, the article laid the methodological groundwork for the future parts of this series as well as raising a number of specific historical issues and debates they will address.

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