

BODY POLITICS OF THE JAPANESE BODY POLITIC  
DURING THE AMERICAN OCCUPATION OF JAPAN, 1945-1952

by

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## ABSTRACT

BETHANY MACE. *Body Politics of the Japanese Body Politic during the American Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952*  
(Under the direction of Dr. MAREN EHLERS)

This thesis examines why the United States interfered in and controlled Japan's population during the American occupation of Japan from 1945 to 1952. Focusing on population control policies during three distinct phases of the occupation, it analyzes how migration, reproduction, and disease prevention intertwined to become a highly contested and important part of the United States' combatant of resource scarcity and warmongering during the early years of the Cold War. Drawing on Aiko Takeuchi-Demirci's study of American reproductive policies in occupied Japan, this thesis shows how the United States directly interfered in Japanese population control through the promotion of eugenics and birth control, and the manipulation of migration patterns. This work draws on SCAP directives, newspaper articles and Japanese laws to argue that the United States directly interfered and controlled Japan's population to maintain democratic control over the defeated nation.

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my sister, Ally, my mother, Tammy and father, Neil,  
for always believing in me.

To all of the women who came before me and  
the women who will come after me, this is for you.

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## INTRODUCTION

Against the backdrop of Japan's heightened territorial expansion and a burgeoning population, the United States assumed authority over a defeated Japan with goals of controlling their military and controlling their population. Between 1945 and 1950, Japan's population increased by eleven million people due to mass repatriation and a postwar baby boom. During the occupation of Japan from 1945 to 1952, the United States fought an ideological and economic war against the Soviet Union and its allies, causing the U.S. to further control Japan's population growth due to American fear of Japanese warmongering for resources and territory. The United States assumed that Japan, as a country neighboring both China and the Soviet Union, would transition to a communist state based upon their expanding population and lack of resources. As the United States entered the Korean War in 1950, Japan became a supply outpost for the United Nations, giving Japan some respite during their economic crisis which kickstarted their postwar economic growth. With Japan as an ally, potential attacks from the Soviet Union would be dissuaded. To contain communism, the U.S. sought to curb Japanese population growth and provide aid to build Japan's infrastructure and economy.

The interference of the United States in Japan's population control was not neutral, unlike American demographers who were present in Japan during the occupation believed. Officially, SCAP (Supreme Command of Allied Powers) remained neutral on family limitation in Japan, yet promoted statistical studies by demographers to study the population problem.<sup>1</sup> During the American occupation of Japan, the United States controlled Japan's population through the passage of laws and memorandums, including the Eugenic Protection Law of 1948, to prevent a

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<sup>1</sup> "Birth Control and the Population Problem," *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, June 11, 1946, 1.

resurgence of Japan's imperial expansion and maintain democratic control during the early stages of the Cold War.

With Japan under the jurisdiction of the United States, General Douglas MacArthur was appointed Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, which granted him the power to implement policies through SCAP and Japanese governmental agencies; the latter which had been left in place after surrender. Acting on behalf of the Far Eastern Commission, a thirteen-country organization tasked with prescribing policies, principles and standards for Japan, SCAP produced directives and handled military operations.<sup>2</sup> A CIA report from the mid-forties, entitled "The Chain of Command (SCAP)," noted the hierarchical structure of the occupation government, with the Far Eastern Commission given ultimate authority over the surrender and the United States given authority over the occupation.<sup>3</sup> The chain of command for the Japanese occupation was as follows: the Far Eastern Commission, the United States, the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, SCAP (alongside its advisory board, the Allied Council for Japan) and the Japanese government. With directives, or SCAPINs (Supreme Command for the Allied Powers Instructions), being directly transmitted to the Japanese government through SCAP, General MacArthur and General Headquarters (GHQ) had direct control over the issuance and surveillance of government policies and procedures.<sup>4</sup>

The goals for the Allied occupation included the demobilization of the Japanese military, democratization of the imperial government and society, and economic reconstruction. The first phase from 1945 to 1947 focused on demilitarization and government reform. Phase II, from late

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<sup>2</sup> Samuel S. Stratton, "The Far Eastern Commission," *International Organization* 2, no. 1 (1948): 1.

<sup>3</sup> Far Eastern Commission, General Headquarters, and Supreme Command of Allied Powers, "Chain of Command (SCAP)," n.d., accessed January 20, 2026. The document, released from the CIA in 2004 was dated in the mid-forties as an estimate for the creation of the functioning of SCAP and occupation operations. The best guess would be 1945, for that was the year Japan surrendered and the American occupation started.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

1947 to 1950, was called the “reverse course” where the United States began rearming Japan “as a subordinate Cold War partner.” Phase III, from 1950 to 1952 stabilized Japan’s economy and resulted in the formation of a formal peace treaty to end the occupation.<sup>5</sup>

While this thesis acknowledges this division with regard to general US occupation policy, it divides the occupation period into three different phases that are defined by population control policies. During the seven-year occupation, the United States influenced Japan’s population growth by managing the return of people to the country, controlling diseases, and dealing with rising birth rates. Chapter One of my thesis is entitled “Disease Prevention and Migration Control” and focuses on Phase I from 1945 to 1947, when occupation officials manipulated population movements of American troops and the distribution of Japanese repatriates, and displaced individuals throughout Japan. Chapter One also focuses on Phase II, entitled “American and Japanese Eugenics,” from 1948 to 1949, when SCAP shifted their attention from disease and migration control to eugenic practices as highlighted in the passage of the Eugenic Protection Law. The period from 1949 to 1952 can be defined as Phase III and will be discussed in Chapter Two, entitled “Cold War Population Control.” During this period, the Cold War crisis increasingly impacted population control policies of the US occupation.

United States population control was not a new practice. In both the United States and Japan, formal and informal policies on population movement and reproduction were established prior to World War II. The global eugenics movement during the twentieth century impacted every corner of the world. In the United States, eugenic arguments were a common part of public discourse during the early twentieth century regarding immigration and selective sterilization. Backed by philanthropic foundations such as the Rockefeller Foundation, American eugenicists

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<sup>5</sup> John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 23.

advocated for tighter immigration laws and sterilization of women in hopes of controlling a "degenerate" population.<sup>6</sup> In Japan, prior and during the occupation, family planning was considered to include abortion and infanticide, where Japanese individuals and families would kill their infant to relieve economic burdens to do right by their "chosen children."<sup>7</sup>

### **Historiography**

Reforms introduced during the seven-year occupation period shaped Japan's politics, economy, society, and historical inquiry. They were not only dictated by the American government, but also influenced by Japanese politicians and activists, who held a variety of views on democratic reforms. Scholarship on population control during the American occupation of Japan started during the period of occupation itself, in the form of the writings of demographers. American demographers, including Marshall Balfour, Irene Taeuber, Warren Thompson, and P.K. Whelpton were sent to Japan between 1945 and 1952 through the Scripps Foundation for Research in Population Problems, the Rockefeller Foundation, and SCAP. American demographers were hired during the occupation period by these organizations to research and record Japan's demographic changes and population history. By utilizing SCAP and organization resources, demographers created statistical data, reports, and published works to identify regional needs for government interference. Their scholarship during and immediately after the occupation influenced scholarly narratives about the United States' population reform.

One such demographer was Warren Thompson, author of the article "The Need for a Population Policy in Japan" and the book *Population and Peace in the Pacific*, who advised SCAP on census and population policy under General MacArthur during the occupation. "The

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<sup>6</sup> Garland E. Allen, "The Social and Economic Origins of Genetic Determinism: a Case History of the American Eugenics Movement, 1900-1940 and its Lessons for Today," *Genetica* 99 (1997): 83-84,

<sup>7</sup> Fabian Drixler, *Mabiki: Infanticide and Population Growth in Eastern Japan, 1660-1950* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), 1.

Need for a Population Policy in Japan” (1950) laid a foundation for occupation demographic research through the analysis of Japan’s population, economy, and industry, with the goal of developing effective population control. The article first described the growth of Japan’s population after World War II and the crumbling of Japan’s economy and infrastructure due to heavy bombing and the loss of colonial holdings. With the nation now confined to the four islands of Japan, their population problem became critical. Warren Thompson suggested ways for Japan to become self-sufficient and stabilize its population growth, which included increasing productivity and foreign trade, the seizure of raw materials and food from Asian nations, and emigration. While he argued that these policies would stabilize Japan’s population, he also suggested that they would encourage population growth as well, due to high immigration from the former empire, and economic growth.<sup>8</sup> Thompson proposed planning for a reduction of the birth rate through education in the practice of family limitation.

Two other demographers, Marshall Balfour and Irene Taeuber, traveled to occupied Japan in 1948 specifically to collect demographic data for the Rockefeller Foundation.<sup>9</sup> In 1950 they co-edited and published the book, *Public Health and Demography in the Far East* based on their research from September to December 1948, which spanned six countries including Japan, Taiwan, Korea, China, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Their book gave a short history of Japan’s population problem, and also described postwar public health and demography based on SCAP demographic records and survey reports. The report contained observations, assessments, and analyses of each of the contributing demographers. The introduction suggested that the goal of

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<sup>8</sup> Warren S. Thompson, “The Need for a Population Policy in Japan,” *American Sociological Review* 15, no. 1 (1950): 31.

<sup>9</sup> Along with Marshall Balfour and Irene Taeuber, Roger Evans and Frank Notestein were also sent by the Rockefeller Foundation to collect demographic data, in what was later called the 1948 Rockefeller Mission on Public Health in the Far East.

the Far East, when combatting high population density, would be to emulate Western health and welfare standards. To combat Japan's population problem, the demographers suggested cooperation between Japan and SCAP's population policy councils and organizations.<sup>10</sup>

In 1950, demographer P.K. Whelpton published his article, "The Outlook for Control of Human Fertility in Japan", in which he described Japan's population problem and American policies and proposed the limitation of Japan's population through contraception. Similar to Thompson's "The Need for a Population Policy in Japan", Whelpton utilized SCAP and the Japanese government's data and statistics to determine how to control fertility. While Thompson argued that economic security and migration could either expand or contract Japan's population, Whelpton argued that contraception and fertility education could limit population growth. By integrating statistics, legislation, and opinion pieces, Whelpton predicted that through marriage counseling, family planning, and contraception, the Japanese birth rate would drop substantially.<sup>11</sup> It is also important to note that according to Whelpton, the Supreme Commander General MacArthur believed that population control and the study of it should rest in the hands of the Japanese.<sup>12</sup> This comment suggests that General MacArthur decisively placed population control on the Japanese government and individual families. However, occupation documentation contradicts Whelpton's portrayal of General MacArthur's opinion. Whelpton and Taeuber both attest that SCAP remained neutral throughout the occupation period, but I challenge this assertion.

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<sup>10</sup> Marshall Balfour, Roger Evans, Frank Notestein and Irene Taeuber, eds, *Public Health and Demography in the Far East* (New York: The Rockefeller Foundation, 1950), 36.

<sup>11</sup> P.K. Whelpton, "The Outlook for the Control of Human Fertility in Japan," *American Sociological Review* 15, no. 1 (1950): 42.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

Irene Taeuber, a prominent demographer who worked on the 1948 Rockefeller Mission on Public Health, published her book, *The Population of Japan* in 1958, after the end of the US occupation. *The Population of Japan* is a comprehensive study of Japan's demography from the 19th century to the mid-twentieth century. While this study is broad, Taeuber's statistical work and narrative prove useful to the study of twentieth-century population issues within the Japanese empire and the country after surrender. Following decades of demographic research, Taeuber analyzed Japan's population, society, culture and economy. Like Whelpton, Taeuber claimed that the United States remained neutral on population policy during the occupation. In the section, "SCAP: Policies, Actions, and Evaluations", Taeuber rarely mentions direct government interference regarding population control and only mentions the impact of the occupation population on the economy.<sup>13</sup>

Early scholarship about the occupation period was not limited to demographic studies. Scholars were curious about the conditions and future of Japan and published works that addressed social and political issues in the period from 1945 to 1952. In 1948, Nobutaka Ike, a second-generation Japanese-American and a Ph.D. candidate at Johns Hopkins University, wrote "Birth Control in Japan," in which he proposed ways for Japan to establish responsible government through the passage of birth control policies and education. Ike examined political and social factors that shaped birth control conversations in occupied Japan. He argued that while birth control was not a novelty in Japan, it would prove useful for economic survival because of Japan's defeat in World War II due to poor standards of living. Birth control and family planning, according to Ike, could be used as a political tool to positively impact "social welfare, living standards, economic growth, and military power."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Irene B. Taeuber, *The Population of Japan* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958), 126.

<sup>14</sup> Nobutaka Ike, "Birth Control in Japan," *Far Eastern Survey* 17, no. 23 (1948): 274.

Between the end of the occupation in 1952 and the beginning of the twenty-first century, scholarship on population policies during the American occupation highlighted SCAP's modernization of Japan through the enforcement of government policies. Modern historiography suggests that the American occupation of Japan was successful in democratizing and modernizing Japan through top-down reforms. Scholarship written after the occupation underscores this claim. Positive portrayals of the American occupation during periods of classification and redaction indicate that scholarship was heavily informed by American opinion. For example, Deborah Oakley published an article in 1978, "American-Japanese Interaction in the Development of Population Policy in Japan, 1945-52," in which she claimed that SCAP remained neutral on reproductive health and birth control during the occupation, which suggests that the U.S. did not interfere often in issues of population control. Her 1977 dissertation, "The Development of Population Policy in Japan, 1945-1952, and American Participation" echoes this claim as well.<sup>15</sup> According to Oakley, SCAP took a "hands-off approach" to population policy as claimed by Rockefeller Foundation demographers, including Taeuber.<sup>16</sup> As my thesis will show, this claim conflicts with declassified government documents.

Historian John Dower's *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (1999), a comprehensive detailing of the American occupation of Japan, identified several "cultures of defeat" after the war. Dower portrays the interplay of American and Japanese actors through the analyses of state documents, letters, newspaper accounts, magazine articles, and other sources. Dower discusses educational, legal, and land reforms, as well as Japanese culture that contributed to the cultures of defeat and victory but does not directly address reproductive or

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<sup>15</sup> Deborah Oakley, "The Development of Population Policy in Japan, 1945-1952, and American Participation," (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1977), ProQuest (7718084).

<sup>16</sup> Deborah Oakley, "American-Japanese Interaction in the Development of Population Policy in Japan, 1945-52," *Population and Development Review* 4, no. 4 (1978): 632.

population policies. Yet, his research is important to every study of occupation history because he challenges American-centered perspectives on Japan's postwar culture. Chapters two, three and four directly relate to the culture of desperation after the war through the analysis of prostitution, resource scarcity, and starvation, which are relevant to my research.

Tiana Norgren, wildlife conservationist and author of *Abortion before Birth Control* (2001), focuses on birth control and abortion policies that were implemented by the United States and Japanese Diet before and during the U.S. occupation of Japan. Norgren argues that the legalization of abortion in 1948 shaped the debate on the legalization of contraceptives because abortion was seen as comparatively progressive. With the introduction of the Eugenic Protection Law in 1948, abortion was legalized for disease prevention and population control. However, conservative groups, including the Ministry of Health and Welfare, were intolerant of birth control. She argued that rather than utilizing eugenic practices for Japanese imperialism, SCAP and the Japanese government contraception and abortion to promote the economic recovery of Japan. These works expand the historiography of occupation history because instead of discussing demography statistics from a demographic point of view, both Dower and Norgren use historical and statistical data to create social and political histories of the occupation period.

Modern scholarship, with increased digitization and accessibility to international archives and declassified information, has addressed gaps in scholarship regarding Japanese population policies under Allied occupation. Sources from the National Diet Library's online database and digitized newspapers have been essential to modern work as they provide reliable and up-to-date information. Later works beginning in the early 2000s on Japanese population histories include scholarship from authors Fabian Drixler, Aya Homei, and Aiko Takeuchi-Demirci. *Mabiki*, written by Fabian Drixler in 2013, explored infanticide from 1660 to 1950, examining Japan's

population growth and decline through the examination of regional population statistics. While *Mabiki* does not fully address the occupation period, it highlights both individual and government confusions and responses to infanticide, family planning, and abortion during the occupation. He stated that abortion, with the approval of SCAP, remained the single most important form of birth control for the decade following the legalization of it under the Eugenic Protection Law of 1948. Drixler argued that infanticide, as a last resort for the poor and as a cold calculation for the affluent, was more common than historians previously recognized.<sup>17</sup> *Mabiki* provides background on how the Japanese population resorted to family planning and eventual population control under the occupation of the United States.

Literature on the occupation of Japan shifted due to the introduction of scholarship based on scientific research. Aya Homei, a historian of medicine and science in modern Japan, analyzed population control policies from a perspective informed by her background in science and medicine. Her book *Science for Governing Japan's Population* (2023) focused on population management of a nation wrought by nation-building and postwar reconstruction.<sup>18</sup> Touching on the development of demography and population science, Homei examines key actors in population science, population technologies, and modern statistics to analyze Japan's population policy from 1860 to 1960. Homei argued that during the occupation, SCAP's involvement in Japan's population problem was to support economic recovery and a self-sustaining Japan.<sup>19</sup>

Aiko Takeuchi-Demirci's book, *Contraceptive Diplomacy: Reproductive Politics and Imperial Ambitions in the United States and Japan* (2018), situates the history of pre-war,

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<sup>17</sup> Fabian Drixler, *Mabiki: Infanticide and Population Growth in Eastern Japan, 1660-1950* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), 19.

<sup>18</sup> Aya Homei, *Science for Governing Japan's Population* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 6.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

wartime, and post-war reproductive policies at the intersection of transnational feminist activism and Japanese-United States relations. Her argument rests in the conclusion that the birth control movement started as a feminist movement and later became a state endeavor through mutual interactions and influences between the U.S. and Japan. Chapters four and five of *Contraceptive Diplomacy* are dedicated to the occupation period. She argued against the opinion that SCAP remained neutral in Japan's population policies. Takeuchi-Demirci's book is an important contribution to occupation history, especially in the area of reproductive policy. Nevertheless, her work does not fully encompass the American occupation of Japan because she does not specifically address population policies that SCAP implemented during Phase III, from 1949 to 1952, which included SCAPINs. The chapter, "Between Democracy and Genocide" addressed the relationship between SCAP, Japanese government officials, and demographers to disseminate population control knowledge and implement legal reforms. She suggested that American intellectuals pushed SCAP officials and Japanese leaders to implement population policies due to American fears of international criticism of their role being no different than the Nazi's wartime eugenics programs. External and internal opposition of U.S. reproductive policies also included opposition from the Catholic Church, which Takeuchi-Demirci details. American Catholics pressured the occupation government to stay clear of Japanese population policy, which ultimately led SCAP to give in to many of their demands due to the Catholics influence over American Cold War policies. While Takeuchi-Demirci argued that the United States was not passive in population control, her analysis on legal reform is limited to the creation of government health agencies and the Rockefeller Mission without addressing SCAPINs related to population control. Takeuchi-Demirci lacks engagement with SCAP regulation of internal migration and disease prevention, as well as lacks in analyzing SCAPINs that were directly

issued by GHQ. In chapter six, “Re-producing National Bodies,” Takeuchi-Demirci discussed the Eugenic Protection Law and its impact on eugenic marriages. The Eugenic Protection Law of 1948 introduced eugenic consultation centers which promoted eugenic marriages, contraceptive education, and sterilization.

Few scholars have bridged the gap between population and political history of the occupation of Japan. Takeuchi-Demirci and Thompson are among the few who have, by addressing the relationship between political systems and public awareness and utilization of birth control. Both highlight that mutual interactions regarding population policies between the United States and Japan during the seven-year occupation would stabilize Japan’s economy. Both authors suggest that the regulation of population growth became a political tool. Building off Thompson’s Malthusian theory of Japan’s population problem, I will analyze SCAP’s population policies through a political and economic framework. The Malthusian theory of population suggests that population growth occurs in a geometric progression while subsistence increases in an arithmetic progression meaning that population growth would exceed food production if there were not measures taken to counter overpopulation. By doing so, I join Takeuchi-Demirci in challenging demographers and scholars who state that the United States remained neutral in birth control advocacy and migration issues. However, I intend my research as an intervention into the sociopolitical history of the American occupation of Japan by including migration control, disease prevention, and reproductive control under the umbrella of population control, rather than solely focusing and researching on reproductive control and health like Takeuchi-Demirci.

## Intervention

My research addresses the gap between occupation scholarship and population control scholarship on Japan by introducing state-controlled migration policies and disease control into the category of population control. I argue that SCAP and the Japanese government used population policy as a means of control to curb population growth across the Japanese islands to mitigate communism within Japan. To destroy possible avenues that could lead to a communist Japan, SCAP sought to maintain the Japanese population through eugenic practices and controlled migration. The United States consolidated and strengthened their authority as a occupier through the control of population movements and reproduction in Japan.<sup>20</sup> Controlled migration from Phase I to Phase III of the occupation changed Japan's physical landscape, causing rural-urban shifts that produced higher population density in urban areas. In Phase I, repatriation and the surge of American military personnel caused an increase in rural and urban populations due to their placement. Repatriates were unable to resettle in urban areas under SCAPIN-563 and Americans were placed in cities for urban development and mitigation of conflicts and rioting between Japanese and Americans. In Phase III, SCAP placed a stronger emphasis on developing Japan's economy, which required an increase in urban migration for industrial production and larger workforces.

My thesis explores population policies during the American occupation of Japan by examining how the United States utilized migration control, reproductive policies, and disease prevention to enhance Japanese welfare and curb population growth in the wake of the outbreak of the Cold War. Research questions that guided this thesis research include, why did the United States intervene in the body politics of Japan? With a two-tiered government structure, how

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<sup>20</sup> Mary Sarotte, in her monograph, *The Collapse: The Accidental Opening of the Berlin Wall* stated that authority rests in the ability to control the movement of its people.

much of a role did the Japanese government play in the creation of and enforcement of reproductive laws?

The primary sources I use include SCAPIN directives, newspaper articles, personal correspondence and speeches from Margaret Sanger, and published government documents. The University of Maryland Archives houses the Prange Collection, which holds censored documents from the General Headquarters and SCAP during the occupation of Japan. The collection includes directives and policies from the office of General MacArthur, Japanese newspapers and documents sent to and from the Japanese government and medical agencies, and census reports from Japanese cities. The Prange Collection gave me access to detailed first-hand accounts of the population problem in Japan.<sup>21</sup>

The National Diet Library houses censored and uncensored newspaper articles published during the occupation period. From 1945 to the end of the occupation, the United States censored newspaper companies and articles that criticized the occupation government. SCAPIN-33, passed on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1945, established a press code for Japan and stated, “news must adhere strictly to the truth. There shall be no false or destructive criticism of the Allied Powers.”<sup>22</sup> Newspapers including the *Asahi Shimbun* and the *Nippon Times* were suspended for certain periods of time and/or censored through SCAPIN-34 and SCAPIN-37. Newspaper articles and clippings found in the National Diet Library were translated versions of Japanese newspapers, due to the process of censorship. SCAP translated and examined Japanese newspapers for the purpose of suppressing criticism of the Allied Powers. The newspaper articles utilized for this research are Japanese, either local or national, and were investigated by SCAP.

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<sup>21</sup> National Diet Library, Censored Newspaper Articles, “Population Problem and Emigration,” *Tokyo Times*, 47-loc-1579.

<sup>22</sup> Harold Fair, *Memorandum for: Imperial Japanese Government: Press Code for Japan*, National Diet Library (September 19, 1945).

Digitization and declassification of occupation-era documents impacted scholarship on occupied Japan and the policies of the United States by providing researchers with more authentic insights to attitudes and motivations behind government actions. Alongside the Prange Collection, the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) Reading Room has declassified and digitized CIA documents pertaining to the occupation of Japan. Documents directly related to intelligence surveys, SCAP government organization, and SCAP interests have recently been declassified by the CIA. Government documents from the CIA and SCAP are being released after 45 and 50 years, respectively. From the 1990s to 2010s, the CIA therefore approved the release of CIA occupation documents to the public. For example, "The Chain of Command (SCAP)" was created during the late 1940s and released in 2004.<sup>23</sup> The classification period suggests that scholarship on the occupation period was limited to resources most likely found in the United States which pertained to American preparation and policies for the occupation. The bibliography of a dissertation on the American occupation of Japan, written in 1977 suggests that scholarship written during the classification period on the occupation period and its population policies were slim due to limited resources and in favor of the United States' "modernization" of Japan.<sup>24</sup>

Personal correspondence I utilized for this research include the papers of Margaret Sanger, an American birth control activist who traveled the world from the 1920s to the 1950s advocating for birth control and abortion. Currently, Smith College houses a collection of Margaret Sanger's documents including letters and diary entries that not only encompass her travels through the United States but to Japan as well. Much of Sanger's correspondence housed

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<sup>23</sup> The exact date of the creation of this document is unknown. I can assume that it was written in 1945, as it was the first year of the occupation.

<sup>24</sup> Deborah Oakley, "The Development of Population Policy in Japan, 1945-1952, and American Participation," (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1977), ProQuest (7718084).

by Smith College discusses her trips to Japan, the progress of birth control programs, and the formation of reproductive health organizations in Japan. However, Sanger was unable to enter Japan during the American occupation. Sanger's accounts provide a first-hand perspective on birth control activism in Japan, her relationship with Katō Shizue, a birth control activist and Diet member, and government reactions to Japanese birth control organizations. Accounts including her letters, diary entries, and legal documents can be accessed at Smith College either through physical or digital archives. Most of the collection is housed in a physical space within the Smith College library system.

### **Thesis Organization**

My thesis consists of two chapters, one following the first two phases of the occupation and the second chapter examining the third phase. The first chapter, titled "Intervention: Implementing Population Control in U.S. Occupied Japan," examines American-made population control policies that impacted American and Japanese population movements, disease control, reproductive control, and prostitution during the first two phases of the occupation. With the movement of American agencies and soldiers into Japan during the early years of the occupation, SCAP implemented directives that dealt with how and when migration happened and what repatriates and Americans needed upon entering Japan. One of the earliest directives from 1945 aimed to eliminate venereal diseases and abolish state-mandated prostitution due to negative consequences found within that system. The second phase, albeit the shortest, indicates the transition toward eugenic practices that is highlighted in the passage of the Eugenic Protection Law of 1948. By creating and controlling reproduction policies in Japan, the United States and the Japanese government could limit the Japanese population while working towards building a stronger Japan.

The second chapter, titled “Ideology: Population Control During the Early Cold War,” focuses on the third phase through the lens of the Cold War. Scared that Japan would fall to communism or wage war, the United States pushed to control Japan’s population through abortion, contraceptives, sterilization, and other population policies. The United States linked Japan’s recovery to its own political and economic interests by encouraging industrialization, urban migration, and the creation of a “fit” workforce. SCAP efforts for population control during Phase III reveal how population policies were used not just for public welfare but as tools of ideological control and economic planning.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTERVENTION: IMPLEMENTING POPULATION CONTROL IN U.S. OCCUPIED JAPAN

At midnight on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1945, Emperor Hirohito of Japan surrendered himself and the Japanese people to the United States of America and the Allied Council. Utterly defeated, Japan surrendered with a starving population of 72,000,000 people and a failing economy. Since the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japan's population had grown by thirty-nine million.<sup>25</sup> As a result, Japan's food production could not match their rate of population growth, causing a "population problem" prior to World War II.<sup>26</sup> The population problem reemerged after World War II due to continued food shortages, the repatriation of Japanese nationals, and unemployment.<sup>27</sup> On account of Japan's population problem, the United States came into the occupation with the knowledge of a high population and low food supplies. Knowing the population problem was critical, the United States utilized migration control, abortion, and eugenic practices to reduce the population.

This chapter demonstrates how the United States intervened in Japanese population control to combat large-scale migration into urban areas and to limit natural population growth. Global interventions such as the eugenics movement and the Cold War influenced both Japan and the United States before and after World War II. Both the Supreme Command for the Allied Powers (SCAP) and the Japanese government worked to reduce Japan's population through the passage of SCAPINs and laws. The United States, with knowledge of the global eugenics' movement and Japan's socioeconomic decline, sought to curb population growth and movement

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<sup>25</sup> Marshall Balfour, Roger Evans, Frank Notestein and Irene Taeuber, eds., *Public Health and Demography in the Far East* (New York: The Rockefeller Foundation, 1950), 14.

<sup>26</sup> Aiko Takeuchi-Demirci, *Contraceptive Diplomacy: Reproductive Politics and Imperial Ambitions in the United States and Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), 41.

<sup>27</sup> Nobutaka Ike, "Birth Control in Japan," *Far Eastern Survey* 17, no. 23 (1948): 271.

through the direct regulation of migration, disease prevention, and reproductive control. During the first two phases of the occupation, migration control and disease prevention were successful, but the population of Japan continued to naturally increase. This chapter will follow Phase I and Phase II of the American occupation of Japan through the lens of population control policies. Sections, “Postwar Hunger Crisis” and “Eugenics and Population Control in Japan” provide background information prior to the occupation period.

### **Postwar Hunger Crisis**

Japan’s postwar hunger crisis caused catastrophic problems across the four islands. Prior to the U.S. occupation, food shortages causing malnutrition and starvation plagued civilians and soldiers. With inflation on the rise and food becoming expensive and scarce, the occupation government had to address the issue of food scarcity and starvation. By briefly examining the hunger crisis in occupied Japan, we can trace the interconnectedness of resource scarcity, economic restoration, and occupation government policies.

With hopes of building a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (GEACPS) through the occupation of Asian nations, Japan’s wartime regime sought to sustain themselves through the acquisition of raw materials and Japanese emigration into newly occupied territories. Prior to the conclusion of World War II, the Japanese Empire spanned Manchukuo, the Kwantung region, East China, French Indo-China, Korea, Burma, the Philippines, the Celebes, South Sea Islands, and Thailand.<sup>28</sup> Due to the access of new territories, Japanese citizens emigrated to GEACPS occupied areas. Met with abundant food supplies, Japanese emigrants could sustain themselves and transport food to mainland Japan to alleviate mass starvation.<sup>29</sup> During World War II, the

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<sup>28</sup> U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Strategic Services Research and Analysis Branch, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere* (August 10, 1945), 2-3.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Wright, “In Search of “Silver Rice”: Starvation and Deprivation in World War II-era Japan,” *Studies on Asia* 1, no. 1 (2010): 72.

United States successfully blockaded Japanese ship traffic, resulting in scarcity of raw materials. Food imports were blocked from reaching Japan as well, causing a hunger crisis that lasted through the occupation.<sup>30</sup> For the time after surrender, the Potsdam Declaration limited Japan's territory to the four islands, which cut off their population-sustaining resources. The once idealized empire now ended in death and destruction. From 1937 to 1945, Japan was at war with Asian, European and North American nations. While they were acquiring territory and agricultural resources, they were increasingly unable to ship these resources to Japan and wartime rationing caused widespread malnutrition. Both soldiers and civilians alike struggled with maintaining everyday caloric intakes, though rations for soldiers were higher.<sup>31</sup>

During the early stages of the American occupation, starvation was still an issue, pressing the United States government to act. Between 1945 and 1947, food shipments delivered from SCAP helped to alleviate hunger, but only temporarily. Dower states that by 1946, shipments of food were delayed or delivered poorly resulting in malnourishment. Throughout 1946 and 1947, food deliveries only provided one-quarter or one-third of the entire daily caloric intake required. To avoid malnutrition even after receiving rations, people turned to the black market to buy food.<sup>32</sup> Widespread starvation persisted during the early years of the occupation, in part due to governmental failures. During the Phase I of the occupation, citizens continued to starve. With a failing economy and a starving population, the U.S. had to directly intervene in Japanese population control during the occupation. With the hunger crisis and population control defining Phase I, Phase II adjusted to socioeconomic shifts, such as starvation, creating a population policy that aggressively targeted increased population growth.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>32</sup> John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 97.

### **Phase I: Disease Prevention, Migration Control, and Reproduction, 1945-1947**

During Phase I, from 1945 to 1947, the United States wanted to demilitarize and democratize Japan. Part of their demobilization agenda was the issuing of population control memorandums that controlled migration patterns and the reproduction of Japanese people, especially people with hereditary diseases. General Headquarters sought to reform Japan from the top-down, enforcing interventions that impacted the economy, culture, and relationships of Japanese individuals. Early Supreme Command for the Allied Powers Instruction directives focused heavily on demilitarization and demobilization through reducing the size of the Japanese army, navy, and air force. For example, SCAPIN-17, dictated to the former offices of imperial Japan on September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1945, ordered the immediate abolition of the Imperial Japanese General Headquarters, the Ministry of War, and the Ministry of the Navy.<sup>33</sup> Starting in September 1945, SCAPIN memorandums regarding population movements from inside and outside the country, disease prevention, population surveys, and nutrition surveys were ordered by the United States to regulate the population of Japan after the war. With the arrival of American personnel and Japanese repatriates into Japan, SCAP first dealt with repatriation and government-sanctioned prostitution.

#### **Prostitution and Disease Prevention**

Starting in August 1945 Japanese government entities and private investors established comfort facilities through government funding for the regulation of relations between American soldiers and Japanese prostitutes, creating the Recreation and Amusement Association. By August 27<sup>th</sup>, 1945, 1,360 women in Tokyo enlisted in the R.A.A. to promote “mutual

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<sup>33</sup> R.K. Sutherland, *Memorandum to: Imperial Japanese General Headquarters, Imperial Japanese Ministry of War, Imperial Japanese Ministry of the Navy*, National Diet Library (September 10, 1945).

understanding” between the U.S. and Japan.<sup>34</sup> Prostitution as a governmental response to the American forces functioned as a service to the defense of Japan according to R.A.A. leaders.<sup>35</sup> The R.A.A. hired former prostitutes, legal or illegal, from the prewar times to legitimize the institution and avoid public opposition.<sup>36</sup> In response to the rise of venereal diseases among American troops and R.A.A. women, General Headquarters ordered the abolition of prostitution, claiming it was undemocratic for violating women’s rights. The R.A.A. was abolished on January 21<sup>st</sup>, 1946, under SCAPIN-642. SCAP directed the Japanese government to annul all laws and ordinances that authorized and permitted licensed prostitution in Japan.<sup>37</sup> By March 1946, the R.A.A. was dissolved, but its abolition did not result in a decline of prostitution, as many R.A.A. prostitutes turned to illegal, privatized prostitution.

Confronted with a high impoverished population along with the influx of American military personnel, the United States passed SCAPIN directives that controlled the spread of diseases. On October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1945, forty-four days after the official surrender, SCAP enforced SCAPIN-153 to prevent venereal diseases in Japan’s population. Under the military occupation, United States soldiers entered Japan in 1945 to urban centers, eventually surpassing a quarter of a million.<sup>38</sup> As G.I.s entered Japan, prostitutes catered to the population of soldiers that were stationed there.<sup>39</sup> By mid-October, SCAP found the existing measures to control venereal diseases inadequate and enforced SCAPIN-153, directing the Imperial Japanese Government to

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<sup>34</sup> John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 126-127.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 128.

<sup>36</sup> Mariko Maeda, “G.I. Joe Meets Geisha Girls: Japan’s Postwar Policies of Legalized Prostitution for U.S. Occupation Forces,” *Hitotsubashi Journal of Law and Politics* 29, (2001): 43.

<sup>37</sup> H.W. Allen, *Memorandum for: Imperial Japanese Government: Abolition of Licensed Prostitution in Japan*, National Diet Library (January 21, 1946).

<sup>38</sup> John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 43.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 124.

create reports of diseases, treatments, and prevention laws.<sup>40</sup> Due to the presence of American troops, the R.A.A., and other forms of prostitution, sexually transmitted diseases were rampant. SCAPIN-153 ordered the Japanese government to examine and treat “individuals whose occupations or activities subject them to serious hazard of venereal disease transmission,” which included R.A.A. prostitutes.<sup>41</sup> The orders of SCAPIN-153 and SCAPIN-642 involved the United States in the manipulation of intimate relationships and diseases in Japan under SCAP jurisdiction.

### **Conducting Censuses and Manipulating Population Movements**

Alongside the prevention of venereal diseases among American troops and the Japanese population throughout the occupation, SCAP also ordered data collections in 1945, requesting yearly censuses and data on population movements for the four islands of Japan. Every year during Phase I, SCAP and Japanese government officials took censuses, encompassing both residents and repatriates of Japan. My analysis of these census records will focus primarily on the prefecture of Aichi and the city of Nagoya within its boundary because Nagoya data records have been preserved in the National Diet Library, but I will also consider other cities within and outside Aichi prefecture.

As Japan’s third-largest city prior to World War II, Nagoya was heavily bombed during the last nine months of World War II which resulted in a loss of a functioning economy and a heavy decline in the number of residents. The number of Nagoya residents killed, injured, or dehoused during the air raids totaled 537,452 out of a population of 1,230,000 in 1945.<sup>42</sup> As a

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<sup>40</sup> H.W. Allen, *Memorandum for: Imperial Japanese Government: Control of Venereal Diseases*, National Diet Library (October 16, 1945).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Effects of Air Attack on the City of Nagoya* (Urban Areas Division, June 1947), 8.

result of the bombings, 8,152 people were killed and 519,205 people lost their homes.<sup>43</sup> A U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey report from 1947 entitled *The Effects of Air Attack on the City of Nagoya* stated that, “approximately 85 percent of the people dehousing were forced to evacuate the city” and explains that both before and after the air raids, women, children, and the elderly were evacuated and settled outside of the city.<sup>44</sup> According to the *Administrative Subdivisions of Japan*, a study published by the Division of Research for Far East, Nagoya’s population in November 1945 totaled 597, 941.<sup>45</sup> With the movement of urban residents to suburban or rural areas, along with the small total of deaths, Nagoya’s culture, economy, and industries were shattered. Based on a 1945 population questionnaire enacted by the United States Strategic Bombing Survey,<sup>46</sup> Nagoya evacuees living outside of the city commuted to Nagoya after the air raids to retrieve their allotment of foodstuffs from city-managed food distribution centers due to rationing rules.<sup>47</sup> The survey document stated that rural districts rationed staple foods such as rice, barley and salt, so Nagoya evacuees commuted back into the city for hearty foodstuffs that were not given out in rural areas.<sup>48</sup> With the lack of life-sustaining resources such as housing and food, Nagoya residents settled outside of the city, but starvation during and post-war called for the movement of people back into the destroyed city.

On January 8<sup>th</sup>, 1946, SCAP passed SCAPIN-563, which restricted unnecessary population movements from rural to urban centers. Evacuees could only return to cities if they

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<sup>43</sup> United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Effects of Air Attack on the City of Nagoya* (Urban Areas Division, June 1947), 9.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 9, 13.

<sup>45</sup> Division of Research for Far East, *Administrative Subdivisions of Japan* (Washington D.C.: Department of State, 1946), 292.

<sup>46</sup> United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *Questions Concerning Population-Nagoya* (Urban Areas Division, November 1945).

<sup>47</sup> Statistic Section of the General Affairs Bureau, *Answer for the Questionnaire on Population*, Nagoya City Hall (1945), 2.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

were considered essential to the reestablishment of the civilian economy. Due to repatriation and the prior destruction of major cities, urban centers would become overcrowded if civilians tried to reenter cities after displacement. Due to the lack of housing and adequate food distribution, poor sanitation, and lack of employment opportunities, Japanese citizens were restricted from entering cities containing 100,000 or more people.<sup>49</sup> For the citizens of Nagoya, their immediate displacement and lack of food forced them back into the city for food. With the passage of SCAPIN-563 in 1946 after Nagoya residents reentered the city in 1945, SCAP was unable to restrict their movements. However, SCAPIN-563 restricted population movements in urban areas until its rescission in 1949 with the passage of SCAPIN-944. As an addendum to SCAPIN-563, SCAPIN-944 outlined population groups who would be considered in service to the national economy. The groups included “persons engaged in work necessary for the rehabilitation of National Economy,” officials and family members of government or municipal offices, teachers and students, and people returning from foreign countries or overseas territories.<sup>50</sup> By 1950, the return of civilians and repatriates to the six great cities, including Tokyo and Nagoya, occurred rapidly due to urbanization.<sup>51</sup>

On January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1946, SCAP imposed SCAPIN-683 which called upon the Japanese Cabinet Bureau of Statistics to conduct a 1946 census in April of that year. This was the second census conducted under SCAP to assess postwar population shifts. GHQ wanted “current information on the distribution of population in Japan,” from industry and labor populations to the number of births and deaths in municipalities.<sup>52</sup> During the primary phase, the distribution of

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<sup>49</sup> H.W. Allen, *Memorandum for: Japanese Government: Control of Population Movements*, National Diet Library, January 8, 1946.

<sup>50</sup> J.W. Mann, *Memorandum for: Japanese Government: Control of Population Movements: Information of General Application Pertaining to Directive Number (SCAPIN 944)*, National Diet Library, May 11, 1946.

<sup>51</sup> Irene Taeuber, *The Population of Japan* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958), 167.

<sup>52</sup> H.W. Allen, *Memorandum for: Imperial Japanese Government: Census of Japan, April 1946*, National Diet Library (January 31, 1946).

population fluctuated considerably due to regional migrations either from bombings or economic downturns, mass repatriations of civilians, and the demobilization of the armed forces.<sup>53</sup> The 1946 census measured migration and population changes for the year following the official occupation of Japan, which noted military and civilian migration into Japan to obtain population estimates of Japanese and non-Japanese repatriates.<sup>54</sup> From 1945 to 1950, SCAP conducted censuses, under the Economic and Scientific Section, for population data collection, rationing purposes, and migration patterns.

Along with a steady incline of births in 1946, a drastic rise in internal migration occurred as a result of repatriation and migration to Japan. A population and migration graph in the SCAP report *Annual Changes in Population of Japan Proper* from 1948 highlights the sharp increase of migration changes from 1945 to 1946 (Figure 1). During the month of July 1946, migration peaked at roughly 650,000 entering Japan.

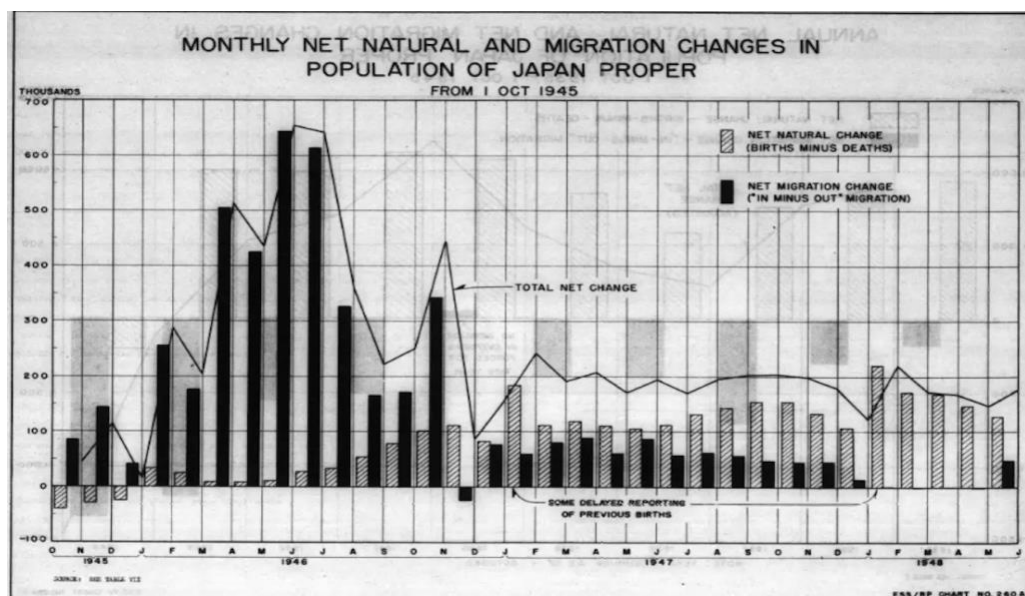


Figure 1. General Headquarters, “Monthly Net Natural and Migration Changes in Population of Japan Proper,” in *Annual Changes in Population of Japan Proper: 1 October 1920-1 October 1947*, July 1948.

<sup>53</sup> Irene B. Taeuber, *The Population of Japan* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958), 126.

<sup>54</sup> General Headquarters, “Monthly Net Natural and Migration Changes in Population of Japan Proper,” in *Annual Changes in Population of Japan Proper: 1 October 1920-1 October 1947*, July 1948.

Figures on migration patterns provided from General Headquarters allowed American demographers stationed in Japan to properly develop demographic statistics, as seen in *Annual Changes in Population of Japan Proper* published by SCAP. The migration in 1946 was likely due to repatriation. According to Irene Taeuber, in 1945 and 1946, seven million Japanese repatriates, which included three and a half million military personnel, returned to Japan. By 1947, even with continued immigration, net migration decreased, as the graph suggests highlighting SCAP's tighter migration policies and Japanese emigration restrictions. With migration patterns shifting to fit the needs of the population, SCAP passed SCAPINs that dealt with urban and rural movement since evacuees, refugees, and repatriates primarily settled back in rural areas.<sup>55</sup>

### **Reproductive Control**

For both the United States and Japan, population growth and nation-building were intertwined especially through American and Japanese imperialism in the twentieth century. Both the US and Japan had Pacific colonies that became contested during World War II. During the war, Japan continued to expand their empire. In the late nineteenth century and twentieth century, Japan grew territorially through the imposition of strategic military imperialism. According to the Japanese government, by creating the Co-Prosperity Sphere, Japan provided stability and modern developments for the Japanese people. A study conducted in 1945 by the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) argued that Japan was continually conquering Asian and/or European landmasses for economic growth and Japanese expansion.<sup>56</sup> The report stated that Japan's plan for a "New Order in Greater East Asia" was enacted due to the fall of the

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<sup>55</sup> Irene B. Taeuber, *The Population of Japan* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958), 369-370.

<sup>56</sup> U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Strategic Services Research and Analysis Branch, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere* (August 10, 1945), 1.

Netherlands and France in 1940, opening up Europe and Southeast Asia to the Japanese for “easy expansion.”<sup>57</sup> In 1940, Japan’s policy of economic cooperation in Asia was named the “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” by the Greater East Asia Ministry, which laid the foundation for Japan to conquer and set up political and cultural frameworks in Asian, and potentially European, countries.<sup>58</sup> Taeuber echoed this claim of nationalistic expansion, stating that the Allied Powers “knew the role that population had played as a rationalization for expansion over the decades when the Empire and the Co-Prosperity Sphere were being forged.”<sup>59</sup> By the mid-1940s, the Japanese Empire included the Kwantung region, eastern China, the South Sea Islands, French Indo-China, Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaya, Burma, Sakhalin, and the Philippines.<sup>60</sup> Both the United States and Japan viewed the GEACPS as an idealization of Japan’s growing empire, and also as a way of economic expansion and a potential threat to the United States. With the loss of territory after the total surrender, Japan’s idealized vision of Asia without Western interference ended and so did their hope for opening up new settler territories for an expanded population.

In *The Population of Japan*, Taeuber states that the United States had knowledge of the population problem but did no advance planning for the introduction and implementation of policies to suppress population growth. She reports that abortions during the war period had been subject to severe punishment and contraceptives were not available to control population growth.<sup>61</sup> During the early years of occupation, the United States was faced with industrial and

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<sup>57</sup> U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Strategic Services Research and Analysis Branch, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere* (August 10, 1945), 2.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>59</sup> Irene B. Taeuber, *The Population of Japan* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958), 369. Taeuber used the term “Co-Prosperity Sphere” in reference to Japan’s wartime empire, the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

<sup>60</sup> Proceedings of the Privy Council Investigation Committee, *Organization of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere* (Privy Council Office, October 12, 1942), 2.

<sup>61</sup> Irene B. Taeuber, *The Population of Japan* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958), 369.

economic collapse, an influx of repatriates and U.S. soldiers, and mass starvation in Japan. Although Taeuber denied that MacArthur played a pivotal role in Japanese population policy, she stressed that the United States indirectly influenced policies that lowered fertility and controlled the population through census collection by the Economic and Scientific Section, the approval of demographic analyses, and by encouraging increases in urban labor forces to promote economic restoration.<sup>62</sup> Documents and directives from GHQ and the Public Health and Welfare Division suggest that the United States entered Japan aware of the population problem and resource scarcity, leading to early interventions that validate Taeuber's claim. To illustrate, GHQ created government agencies such as the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the Natural Resources Section within GHQ, and demography organizations, and utilized demographers to facilitate population control.<sup>63</sup>

Up into Phase I of the occupation, birth control came in the form of infanticide or abortion. Infanticide, in the late twentieth century, was deemed murder and the number of infanticides thus declined compared to infanticide numbers during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, before the legalization of abortion in 1948, people still practiced infanticide during the occupation period. Historian Fabian Drixler suggested that in the late 1940s, there were more than a thousand missing girls per year.<sup>64</sup> Takeuchi-Demirci suggested that American intellectuals pushed SCAP officials and Japanese leaders to implement population policies "that would have lasting effects on the country's fertility patterns."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 370.

<sup>63</sup> Irene B. Taeuber, *The Population of Japan* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958), 370.

<sup>64</sup> Fabian Drixler, *Mabiki: Infanticide and Population Growth in Eastern Japan, 1660-1950* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), 230.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 123.

## The Question of Birth Control

During the interwar period, contraception policy and the debates surrounding it were shaped by pronatalism and eugenics. Due to Japanese imperialism in the twentieth century, heightened nationalism and militarism permeated into the practice and discourse surrounding reproductive control. Through the manipulation of reproduction and eugenic practices, Japan's military could grow larger and stronger. A relationship between population size and national security formed, defining future endeavors of population control, especially during the American occupation.

Individual or group initiatives to introduce birth control to Japan occurred throughout the twentieth century. One important example were the visits of birth control activist Margaret Sanger. Between 1922 and 1959, Sanger traveled to Japan seven times to cultivate a birth control movement.<sup>66</sup> Along with Sanger, her Japanese counterpart, Katō Shizue, strove to promote transnational birth control activism. Takeuchi-Demirci has written in detail about Sanger and Katō's relationship and activism from the 1920s to the 1950s; this study will only focus on Sanger's activism in Japan during the occupation period from 1945 to 1952. The timeline of her trips to Japan is relatively obscure, with a failed attempt to enter Japan during Phase III of the occupation.

Similarly to Sanger, Japanese journalists worked with the public to propagate opinions on birth control. Newspaper articles were vocal about pro- or anti-contraception claims, highlighting local journalism's role as a means of spreading biopolitical and social claims that impacted women and families. Translated Newspaper clippings microfilmed by the National Diet Library

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<sup>66</sup> "The Margaret Sangers Paper Project," Newsletter #12 (Spring 1996), New York University, accessed March 26, 2026.

suggest that birth control was both a grassroots movement and political issue.<sup>67</sup> Journalists in Phase I of the occupation wrote about the benefits of birth control in Japan. On November 11th, 1945, the *Tokyo Shimbun* published an article by Katō Shizue.<sup>68</sup> She argued that birth control was an absolute necessity for postwar Japan, due to rising unemployment, food shortages, and the shortage of medical facilities that could administer proper care. With widespread complications such as high infant mortality rates, birth control would need to be regulated and made accessible on the national level. Many newspapers published opinions similar to Katō's, mainly regarding the usage of birth control as a means of population reduction due to sociopolitical conditions. An article from *Yomiuri* published in January 1946 promoted birth control for the alleviation of over-fertility and economic suffering. The article stated that contraception should be studied scientifically through gradual stages, to make it popular amongst the Japanese population so that socioeconomic relief would be provided.<sup>69</sup>

With abortions increasing, birth control offered the opportunity to protect women's health and introduce education about reproduction. An article on birth control, published on December 23rd, 1945, in *Chubu Nippon Shimbun* in Nagoya, stated that the Daiichi Marriage Consulting Room at Higashi-Machi received many inquiries from husbands and wives about birth control. The article shared anecdotal evidence that women wanted to practice birth control due to food insecurity, inflation, and health concerns.<sup>70</sup> Birth control would be the best option for hunger-ridden and economically disadvantaged families and women. Abortion rates increased into Phase II of the occupation due to the passage of the Eugenic Protection Law and economic degradation,

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<sup>67</sup> Newspaper articles and clippings were translated and printed in English from Japanese newspapers. The clippings came from censored and uncensored newspapers such as *The Nippon Times*, *Mainichi Shimbun*, and the *Chubu Nippon Shimbun*.

<sup>68</sup> Shizue Katō, "Birth Control," *Tokyo Shimbun*, November 11, 1945.

<sup>69</sup> "Japan's Birth Control," *Yomiuri*, January 3, 1946.

<sup>70</sup> "Birth Control," *Chubu Nippon Shimbun*, December 23, 1945.

causing increased dialogue around practices of birth control through oral or intrauterine contraception.

Japanese newspapers critically analyzed the birth control movement both locally and on a national scale. During the occupation, birth control evaluations persisted due to Japan's growing population. In 1947, net natural growth (births minus deaths) amounted to over 100,000 each month.<sup>71</sup> In Phase I, abortion and infanticide were utilized to decrease the population for the stability of family units and communities in critical conditions. The practice of eugenics and the international birth control movement intensified discussions surrounding birth control and the call for federal action. In a *Mainichi Shimbun* article published on January 18th, 1946, a debate between six Japanese individuals of unknown status about birth control and women's suffrage emphasized tensions around birth control, the population problem, and democratization.<sup>72</sup> One individual, Tanaka, argued against birth control as a means of population control, believing that the Ministry of Welfare and government should instead focus on emigration as a means to reduce the population. Tanaka proposed that Australia, Argentina, and Brazil accept Japanese immigrants, stating that, "there is ample room all over the world" to accommodate Japan's surplus population.<sup>73</sup> Another individual, Katayama, supported birth control and government involvement in the process of regulating it. He argued against Tanaka, stating that even if emigration was to become an option, birth control would still be an easier solution for population reduction. With the continuance of the international birth control movement through Margaret Sanger and the democratization of mass media through newspapers, Japanese citizens could

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<sup>71</sup> General Headquarters, "Monthly Net Natural and Migration Changes in Population of Japan Proper," in *Annual Changes in Population of Japan Proper: 1 October 1920-1 October 1947*, July 1948.

<sup>72</sup> "Opinion on Birth Control and Women's Suffrage," *Mainichi Shimbun*, January 18, 1946, 1.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

facilitate discussions, shape public knowledge, and promote policy changes surrounding birth control even under SCAP censorship.

The United States occupation government expressed concern over a high population for economic reasons. However, even with knowledge of birth control and its ability to combat population growth, alongside public positive opinion towards it, the occupation government rejected the adoption of birth control. The December 1945, *Chubu Nippon Shimbun* article from Nagoya expressed the openness of Japanese women and families to practice birth control. The women, mainly worried about low food supplies, conveyed that birth control was a necessity.<sup>74</sup> Between popular and elite opinions on birth control, a lack of consensus occurred within SCAP and the Japanese government, which resulted in the delay of utilizing birth control for the health and welfare of Japan.<sup>75</sup> Officially, SCAP remained neutral on family limitation in Japan, yet promoted statistical studies and surveys by demographers and government agencies to study the population problem.<sup>76</sup> A 1946 press translation from GHQ in *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* stated that while SCAP understood the severity of Japan's growing population due to dire socioeconomic conditions, SCAP would "consider the future" of birth control and its ability to restore Japan.<sup>77</sup> SCAP delayed the implementation of birth control into Japanese family planning due to fears of being tied to Nazi German eugenics. However, by Phase III, birth control was deemed a necessity by SCAP to reduce Japan's birth rate. SCAP utilized research institutions to remain aware of Japan's positive natural change and its impact on Japan's economy. Attitudes toward reproduction and national interest intersected and progressed, similarly to nationalist views

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<sup>74</sup> "Birth Control," *Chubu Nippon Shimbun*, December 23, 1945.

<sup>75</sup> Tiana Norgren, *Abortion Before Birth Control: The Politics of Reproduction in Postwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 84.

<sup>76</sup> "Birth Control and the Population Problem," *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, June 11, 1946, 1.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

during the prewar and war period. Rather than utilizing eugenic practices for Japanese imperialism, the Japanese government promoted contraception and abortion to promote economic recovery.<sup>78</sup> While abortion was more widely utilized during Phase I due to the lack of an official birth control policy, family planning persisted to manage recession and food scarcity. The question of birth control and its regulation remained throughout the occupation, challenging the occupation government to support birth control as a way to democratize Japan and support its economic restoration.

During Phase I, the U.S. occupation government focused primarily on disease prevention and migration control that resulted from the mass influx of American troops and officials, Japanese repatriates, the movement of displaced citizens, and prostitution. With a growing population due to a postwar baby boom, both the occupation and Japanese government wrestled with the utilization of birth control to combat socioeconomic disadvantages and health risks. In Phase II, the United States and even more so the Japanese government utilized eugenic practices and abortion to curb Japan's growing population.

### **Eugenics and Population Control in Japan**

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the concept of eugenics and its practices grew across the world, becoming a “shared language and ambition in cultures and locations that were otherwise radically different.”<sup>79</sup> Eugenics, as a form of rational planning for human breeding in a universal context, suggested intervention either at an individual or society-wide level.<sup>80</sup> In the western and eastern world, eugenic practices were being utilized for the betterment of nation-states. Japanese eugenics, family planning techniques, and population

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<sup>78</sup> Tiana Norgren, 84.

<sup>79</sup> Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 4.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

control in the early twentieth century directly influenced postwar policies that were created and enforced by the U.S. and Japanese governments during the occupation. Prior to the 20th century, however, abortion and infanticide were the most common means of birth control amongst the upper classes, urban dwellers, and rural people.<sup>81</sup> Norgren's analysis of prewar abortion and contraception policies in *Abortion Before Birth Control* (2001) provides a detailed description of how Japanese families and individuals practiced population control during both pronatalist and antinatalist periods. She shows that during the Meiji period from 1868 to 1912, abortion and infanticide went through cycles of permission and restriction due to changing ideologies. Both abortion and infanticide were practiced widely across class lines, resulting in government intervention.<sup>82</sup> P.K. Whelpton stated in his 1950 article, "The Outlook for the Control of Human Fertility in Japan," that both abortion and infanticide were widely utilized to keep the population relatively stationary during the Tokugawa period.<sup>83</sup> In the early Meiji period, due to prefectural politics, countermeasures against infanticide and abortion increased, resulting in full or partial bans of the practices. In Eastern Japan, from 1868 to 1874, 27 domains and/or prefectures banned infanticide and abortion.<sup>84</sup> The prohibition of infanticide in the Meiji period facilitated population growth during the time of Japan's early colonial expansion.

From the 1920s to the 1940s, Japan's colonization of Southeast Asia was encouraged by their increasing population growth. Between 1920 and 1940, the Japanese population grew by 17 million people.<sup>85</sup> As a direct result from expansionism, the empire in 1940 exceeded 100 million

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<sup>81</sup> Tiana Norgren, *Abortion Before Birth Control: The Politics of Reproduction in Postwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 23.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> P.K. Whelpton, "The Outlook for the Control of Human Fertility in Japan," *American Sociological Review* 15, no. 1 (1950): 35.

<sup>84</sup> "Infanticide countermeasures, 1868-1874," in *Mabiki: Infanticide and Population Growth in Eastern Japan, 1660-1950* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), 201.

<sup>85</sup> Irene B. Taeuber, *The Population of Japan* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958), 60.

people, which included non-Japanese colonial subjects, due to growth in Japan Proper and the colonies of Taiwan, Korea, Sakhalin, the Kwantung region, and the South Sea Islands. By this time, Japanese people had the opportunity to migrate to colonial areas, in turn, creating settlement space for the Japanese population.<sup>86</sup> Eugenics was highly popularized at the beginning of the twentieth century due to high rates of literacy. Mass media fostered the appreciation of race betterment through selective and self-conscious procreation.<sup>87</sup> Eugenic marriages were increasing after the decline of consanguineous marriages in the 1940s, as a result of the creation of eugenic marriage counseling centers in 1948, which provided eugenic education to the masses.<sup>88</sup> Eugenics in this period shaped population growth and went hand in hand with the ideology of “improving” the nation.

The practice of eugenics developed simultaneously with the rise of Japanese colonialism and expansion during the 20th century. Nationalism, and in some cases ultranationalism, propelled Japanese eugenics in pursuit of a future vision of a racially pure nation-state. Influenced by eugenicists from Japan and around the world, Japan’s eugenic ideas of pure-bloodedness affected social, national, and colonial policies during Japan’s period of imperialism.<sup>89</sup> During expansion under the label of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, there was a perceived need to multiply “taller and heavier Japanese bodies” for the achievement of global expansion.<sup>90</sup> The American demographers who wrote *Public Health and Demography in the Far East* (1950) stated that “in demographic terms, she [Japan] selected Western cultural elements that would increase the carrying capacity of the economy and enhance the health and

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<sup>86</sup> Irene B. Taeuber, *The Population of Japan* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958), 60.

<sup>87</sup> Jennifer Robertson, “Eugenics in Japan: Sanguinous Repair,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, ed. Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine (Oxford University Press, 2010), 436.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 439.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 432.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 433.

longevity of her citizens.”<sup>91</sup> From 1940 to 1943, the annual increase in population was over one million each year due to the promotion of race betterment and Japanese expansion during World War II.<sup>92</sup> Eugenic marriages were still widely practiced in 1940s Japan, which reinforced the concept of Japanese race improvement.<sup>93</sup>

In 1940, the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare passed the National Eugenic Law. The purpose of the law was “to ensure the improvement of the national character by means of preventing an increase in the [number of] persons with a predisposition toward malignant hereditary disease, and promoting an increase in [the number] of persons who have sound constitutions.”<sup>94</sup> The law allowed both voluntary and involuntary sterilization in cases of hereditary mental illness and hereditary physical deformity. A provision for eugenic abortions was not included in the initial draft of the National Eugenic Law; however, the final draft included a provision which stated that abortions had to follow certain procedures, including stating whether or not it was necessary. Japan’s eugenic and pronatalist policies continued into World War II and the postwar era through the creation and enactment of the Eugenic Protection Law of 1948. The Japanese government’s pronatalist and eugenic population policies from the mid-twentieth century influenced occupation legislation passed by SCAP and the Japanese government which encouraged eugenic procedures for the purpose of controlling Japan’s population.

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<sup>91</sup> Marshall Balfour, Roger Evans, Frank Notestein and Irene Taeuber, eds., *Public Health and Demography in the Far East* (New York: The Rockefeller Foundation, 1950), 14.

<sup>92</sup> General Headquarters, “Monthly Net Natural and Migration Changes in Population of Japan Proper,” in *Annual Changes in Population of Japan Proper: 1 October 1920-1 October 1947*, July 1948.

<sup>93</sup> Aiko Takeuchi-Demirci, *Contraceptive Diplomacy: Reproductive Politics and Imperial Ambitions in the United States and Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), 152.

<sup>94</sup> Tiana Norgren, *Abortion Before Birth Control: The Politics of Reproduction in Postwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 30.

## Phase II: American and Japanese Eugenics, 1948-1949

As a condition of total surrender, Japan was ordered to limit Japanese sovereignty to the four islands of Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu and Shikoku which constrained their imperial power and territory.<sup>95</sup> With this loss, the movement of Japanese citizens back to mainland Japan and the steady increase in post-war population called for the regeneration of eugenic practices found in the United States and Japan because of the postwar baby boom that occurred after repatriation. In 1948 and 1949, the occupation government transitioned from migration and basic reproductive control to the reinvigoration of eugenics for the management of Japan's population. Under the influence of American and prewar Japanese eugenic practices, the Japanese Diet issued the Eugenic Protection Law and SCAP supported it.

SCAP actively shaped Japan's population policies, using its authority to promote population control despite officially claiming neutrality. By June 1948, the population of Japan reached 80 million people.<sup>96</sup> Motivated by evidence of rising fertility, urban migration, and a still recovering economy, SCAP implemented state-sponsored birth control programs which included SCAPIN directives and reproductive control laws. With SCAP exercising complete authority over the Japanese government, it oversaw the population policies that were enacted by the Japanese government at the time.<sup>97</sup> With knowledge of both Nazi atrocities and American eugenic practices, SCAP and the Japanese Diet formulated and passed laws that would curb Japan's population. Calls for sterilization, the legalization of abortion, and introductions to birth control spread across Japan and the United States due the knowledge of former eugenic

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<sup>95</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Proclamation by the Heads of Governments, United States, China and the United Kingdom, Volume II, The Conference of Berlin (The Potsdam Conference), Document 1382.

<sup>96</sup> General Headquarters, "Monthly Net Natural and Migration Changes in Population of Japan Proper," in *Annual Changes in Population of Japan Proper: 1 October 1920-1 October 1947*, July 1948.

<sup>97</sup> R.K. Sutherland, *Directive No. 2*, National Diet Library (September 3, 1945), 1.

practices. Norgren, and Takeuchi-Demirci stated that interest groups, which included religious organizations, government agencies, and private foundations, all had a say regarding Japanese population policy. The Catholic population in Japan prolonged the implementation and legalization of birth control and abortion in Japan due to religious and moral beliefs.<sup>98</sup> While these groups were able to convey their opinions through newspaper articles and Diet addresses, the occupation government and the Japanese Diet implemented top-down policies that benefited population policy goals.

### **The Eugenic Protection Law**

With the reintroduction of eugenics into reproductive control, SCAP and the Japanese government could reduce Japan's population while promoting race betterment through sterilization. In 1947, Diet members, Fukuda Masako, Katō Shizue, and Ōta Tenrei introduced a Eugenic Protection Bill to the Japanese Diet with the intention of legalizing contraception, eugenic sterilization, and abortion. The bill both restricted and liberated reproductive control for women and families through the utilization of eugenic sterilization and abortion. Under the bill, voluntary and compulsory sterilization could be recommended and conducted by medical professionals. Both abortion and sterilization were supported through this bill, however, the inclusion of birth control was denied due to negative opinions on birth control by General MacArthur and Diet members.<sup>99</sup> This bill, after revisions that mainly dealt with birth control, became the Eugenic Protection Law in 1948.

On July 13th, 1948, the Eugenic Protection Law was passed by the National Diet of Japan. Article 1 stated: "This act aims to prevent the birth of offspring that are inferior from a

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<sup>98</sup> Tiana Norgren, *Abortion Before Birth Control: The Politics of Reproduction in Postwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 46-47.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-38.

eugenic standpoint, and to protect the life and health of mothers.”<sup>100</sup> Abortion and eugenic procedures were now legalized and to be conducted by designated physicians for the health and welfare of Japan. Abortions were now deemed necessary by physicians for the health of the mother, if a woman had been raped, or if certain diseases were prevalent. Eugenic surgery or sterilization could either be performed voluntarily or forced, in order to prevent hereditary diseases and mental illnesses. Forced sterilizations could also be performed without the consent of a spouse or the person concerned.<sup>101</sup> A newspaper article from the *Tokyo Times* three months prior to the promulgation of the Eugenic Protection Law supported eugenics in Japan to “better living conditions.”<sup>102</sup> It stated that the law would ease the limitations of sterilization and the legalization of abortion would aid “repatriates from a certain district.”<sup>103</sup> While this is just one of many newspaper articles about the Eugenic Protection Law of 1948 and its positive impact, the article highlights the public’s knowledge of and opinion of eugenic procedures and abortion for the betterment of society and families.

Aligning with the national interest of Japan and the United States, the law made sure that Japan’s population would decrease. While the public purpose of the law was for the protection of mothers, the official purpose of the law was for the prevention of inferior offspring and population control. SCAP’s role in the passage of the law seems passive, but SCAP was becoming fearful of high resource scarcity and Japan’s potential move to communism if the population continued to grow. Unable to fully separate themselves from past negative eugenic practices, such as Nazi Germany eugenics, the United States willingly facilitated and approved the promulgation of the 1948 Eugenic Protection Law to forcefully restrict Japan’s population

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<sup>100</sup> “Eugenic Protection Law,” House of Representatives, Japan, accessed March 30, 2026.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> “The Problem of Eugenics,” *Tokyo Times*, April 14, 1948.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. The “repatriates from a certain district” are unknown.

for their own advantage. Their role in the passage of the Eugenic Protection Law was not passive or neutral, but covertly intentional.

### Reproductive Control

In May 1948, two months prior to the passage of the Eugenic Protection Law, which legalized abortions under certain restrictions, an article in the newspaper *Jiji* attributed the rise of monthly abortions to the recent increase in population, the decline of people's physical condition, and poor health. The Metropolitan Sanitation Bureau of Tokyo conducted a survey that *Jiji* reported on, noting that in April 1948 there were 652 abortion cases in Tokyo, which was 7.5 times the number of cases in April 1946. According to the report, patients had abortions due to tuberculosis, nephritis, heart trouble, beriberi, and difficult livelihoods.<sup>104</sup> The article highlighted the urgency of performing abortions and argued that the Japanese population chose to prevent population growth as a result of ill health and socioeconomic decline. The upturn of legal and criminal abortions aligned with the national interest of promoting economic recovery. Norgren states that "after the war, however, the duty of patriotic citizens—especially poor, unhealthy ones—was to contracept and even abort for the sake of Japan's economic and racial improvement."<sup>105</sup> By utilizing birth control and abortion practices as a means of population control, both the United States and Japan could promote Japan's economic recovery in pursuit of becoming a respectful and democratic nation.

After the passage of the 1948 law, abortion rates increased due to accessibility, physician support, and consent provisions, amounting to 250,000 "official" abortions in 1949 countrywide. The estimated number of abortions in 1949 was two or three times higher than the official

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<sup>104</sup> "Abortions Increase Markedly, Survey Reveals," *Jiji*, May 28, 1948.

<sup>105</sup> Tiana Norgren, *Abortion Before Birth Control: The Politics of Reproduction in Postwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 84.

number.<sup>106</sup> Article 12 stated that if a spouse was unaware or unable to express their will, then the consent of the person concerned would be sufficient.<sup>107</sup> In 1949, the Diet revised the Eugenic Protection Law to include “economic reasons” as a means of receiving an abortion. This clause reinforces the notion that the United States, under the guise of public assistance, sought to curb overpopulation to avoid the continuation of Japan’s economic degradation which is seen in Phase III of population control.

During Phase II of the occupation, the question of birth control remained open and continued to confront both the occupation government and Japanese citizens. With the legalization of abortion through the 1948 Eugenic Protection Law, conversations surrounding birth control increased. Birth control utilized by Japanese citizens included condoms, intrauterine devices, and diaphragms. During the early twentieth century, Japan’s pronatalist policies hampered state support of birth control but promoted eugenic services. However, with the increase in population and food scarcity, Japanese citizens continued using birth control even without contraceptive education. By Phase II, medical professionals began to disseminate birth control educational resources. Multiple newspaper articles from 1947 suggest that the public wanted birth control and sex education directly from physicians to better protect themselves because the lack of knowledge and illicit birth control and abortion practices harmed women. Even with the passage of the Eugenic Protection Law, contraceptives were still seen as taboo due to prior pronatalism.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Tiana Norgren, *Abortion Before Birth Control: The Politics of Reproduction in Postwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 7, 94.

<sup>107</sup> “Eugenic Protection Law,” House of Representatives, Japan, accessed March 30, 2026.

<sup>108</sup> General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, *GHQ/SCAP Records: Library and Publications Division*, National Diet Library, 38-40.

## Conclusion

Between 1945 and 1950, Japan's population increased by eleven million people. According to the *Population Census of 1950* (1951), the population of *shi* (cities), *machi* (large rural townships), and *mura* (small rural townships) state that by 1950, 83,199, 637 people lived in Japan.<sup>109</sup> Faced with the problems of migration, disease, and poverty, SCAP manipulated Japan's population for the democratization of Japan. During Phase I, from 1945 to 1947, SCAP focused on internal and external migration, disease prevention, and early reproductive health measures to combat these problems. In Phase II, from 1948 to 1949, the United States dealt with overpopulation and birth control controversy, ultimately approving the passage of the Eugenic Protection Law of 1948, which legalized abortion and legitimized sterilization for the betterment of Japan. By Phase III, however, the fears that ensued from the rise of the Cold War placed population control firmly in the hands of the United States, ensuring that Japan could recover economically and democratize for East Asian stability.

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<sup>109</sup> Bureau of Statistics, *Population Census of 1950: Volume 1, Total Population* (1951), 25. Translations of *shi*, *machi*, and *mura*, *Ibid.*, 20.

## CHAPTER TWO IDEOLOGY: POPULATION CONTROL DURING THE EARLY COLD WAR

In 1950, General Douglas MacArthur in private correspondence, stated that the United States remained neutral on the use of birth control in Japan, writing,

I have yielded to pressure from neither the group in advocacy nor that in opposition to birth control, but have consistently and publicly taken the position that the subject matter is a social problem for solution by the Japanese people themselves without interference, directly or indirectly, by the Allied Powers.<sup>110</sup>

However, evidence including SCAP directives, the Eugenic Protection Law, CIA declassified documents, and Japanese newspapers show that the United States government's attitude toward Japan's population policy was a lot more contradictory. Facing pressures of overpopulation, scarce resources, and political hostility, the occupation government curbed Japan's population growth to reduce the risk of war. By January 1949, Japan's population reached 81 million people in Japan Proper compared to 72.4 million in 1945.<sup>111</sup> In the same year, the United States "lost" China to communism and hostilities between the Soviet Union and the United States intensified. With heightened political and socioeconomic tension looming over Japan, occupation officials took a more urgent view of Japan's population problem. The *Population Census of 1950* by the SCAP Bureau of Statistics denoted that between 1947 and 1950, net natural increase and repatriation added eleven million people to Japan's population with repatriation accounting for five million.<sup>112</sup> From 1945 to 1950, the population of Japan continued to rise.

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<sup>110</sup> Douglas MacArthur to LeRoy J. Hess, June 17, 1950, GS(B) 01272-01276, GHQ/SCAP Records, National Diet Library, Tokyo, Japan.

<sup>111</sup> Marshall Balfour, Roger Evans, Frank Notestein and Irene Taeuber, eds., *Public Health and Demography in the Far East* (New York: The Rockefeller Foundation, 1950), 26-27.

<sup>112</sup> Bureau of Statistics, *Population Census of 1950: Volume 1, Total Population* (1951), 21.

Japan, now caught in the struggle between democracy and communism, found its postwar recovery linked to American interests. To maintain democratic control, the United States pushed the development and democratization of Japan's economy. Considered the most successful reform during the American occupation, SCAP's land reform redistributed farmland from landlords to tenants, which shaped Japan's land tenure system into one more suitable for a more democratic society. On December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1945, SCAP passed the memorandum SCAPIN-411 which outlined the elements of a broad agricultural reform.<sup>113</sup> The memorandum stated that the land reform would "destroy the economic bondage which has enslaved the Japanese farmer to centuries of feudal oppression."<sup>114</sup> SCAP's land reform and economic restoration supported the democratization of Japan. To support the development of an industrial economy, the U.S. also tried to regulate domestic migration between villages and cities, and facilitated accessibility of birth control and abortion. SCAP intended to promote urbanization and industrialization by encouraging rural citizens to migrate to urban centers and by building a strong, fit population. The Japanese government the U.S. occupation authorities utilized the Eugenic Protection Law to encourage abortions and eugenic sterilizations of those they deemed unfit in order to promote Japan's racial and economic betterment.

By taking control of the nation, the United States hoped to turn it into a safeguard for democracy in the East and a tool for securing world peace through the democratization of East Asia. To promote economic growth outside of transitioning power back to the Japanese government, the United States strategically manipulated

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<sup>113</sup> Mark B. Williamson, "Land Reform in Japan," *Journal of Farm Economics* 33, no. 2 (1951): 170.

<sup>114</sup> H.W. Allen, *Memorandum for: Imperial Japanese Government: Rural Land Reform*, National Diet Library (December 9, 1945).

Japan's birth rate and internal migration during the final years of the occupation. From 1949 to 1952, SCAP promoted urban migration through the rescension of SCAPIN-563 and curbed population growth through abortion, sterilization, and birth control. During Phase III, from 1949 to 1952, Japan's birth rate decreased as a result of reproductive control policies. This chapter explores Phase III of the American occupation of Japan by examining how high population growth interacted with Japan's democratization and economic development and how the United States supported reproductive policies to decrease Japan's population. To understand American motivations, it is necessary to review the geopolitical importance of Japan during the Cold War.

The onset of the Cold War intensified ideological dissonance between the United States and the Soviet Union, which impacted how the United States viewed and manipulated Japan as a geopolitical player. Japan's natural increase in population drove the occupation government to update their population control policies. SCAP's present and evolving population policies would support economic growth through the internal migration of rural citizens to urban centers and through direct control over reproduction. SCAPIN-563 and SCAPIN-944 changed Japanese migration patterns for economic recovery during each phase of the occupation. By lifting restrictions from SCAPIN-563 in 1949, SCAP promoted the movement of workers and families to permanently settle into urban centers for industrial growth. The United States wanted to keep Japan within the Western bloc, ensuring that economic growth and population limitation would do just that. With increased concerns from the United States over East Asian communism and its potential infiltration into Japan, population control would safeguard American interests.

## Geopolitical Importance of Japan

The United States viewed postwar Japan as a vital asset whose geographic position, economic potential, and military potential made it central to American efforts to contain communism and maintain influence in East Asia. In 1948, the CIA created a report, “Strategic Importance of Japan”, which detailed Japan’s geopolitical and economic importance to the United States and global peace. The document summary stated that maintaining control of Japan was important because of their geographic location and their future military that could easily be utilized.<sup>115</sup> The report further stated:

Any power controlling Japan holds a vital position across the trade routes of the North Pacific and is in a position to dominate the exits and entrances of the Sea of Japan and the East China and Yellow Seas, and control the ports of Asia from Shanghai north to include Vladivostok.<sup>116</sup>

With military control over Japan, the United States had the ability to dominate trade in East Asia and use Japan as a defense during the Cold War against the Soviet Union. The U.S., worried that the Soviet Union would interfere with the occupation or influence Japan to join the Soviet bloc, continued the occupation with intentions of developing Japan’s economic recovery.<sup>117</sup> While SCAP maintained the military occupation of Japan due to the international situation, its leaders also believed that by producing a stronger internal economy, communism would be less of a threat in Japan.<sup>118</sup> U.S. security, the containment of communism, and Western control over Northeast Asia was the United States’ highest priority.

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<sup>115</sup> U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *Strategic Importance of Japan* (May 24, 1948), 1.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>118</sup> TNA: FO 371/99481, 75.

General MacArthur's 1949 statements reveal how the United States strategically redefined Japan from a former enemy into a key defensive and economic ally in the early Cold War effort to contain communism in East Asia. In a March 1949 newspaper interview with the British newspaper *Daily Mail*, General MacArthur outlined Japan's role in the new Anglo-U.S. strategy in the Pacific. MacArthur stated that in the wake of Asiatic aggression during World War II, Japan would now become a part of the United States and the Western bloc instead of being looked upon as an enemy. In the interview, General MacArthur was asked, "What is the function of Japan in the American strategy of defence?" He replied, "We never intended to use Japan as an ally... We are helping her to become self-supporting because that will relieve us of the burden of supplying her."<sup>119</sup> By 1949, Cold War tensions heightened, which pushed the United States to continue the occupation and support Japan as an ally, even if MacArthur did not see Japan as one until 1949. As seen in the earlier document from 1949 as well, the United States understood the gravity of continuing the occupation of Japan for East Asian and global security against the Eastern bloc. MacArthur discussed further the occupation further and stated,

the Army of Occupation will remain here...because owing to the unfortunate split between the Powers that were Allies during the war Japan has become an outpost which we are entitled to occupy in defence of Anglo-Saxon interests.<sup>120</sup>

MacArthur claimed that communism was not a danger in Japan, even with the increase in communist members in the House of Representatives, because "48 per cent of the people are small farmers."<sup>121</sup> In early 1949, even with the communist uprising and transition of power in China, MacArthur predicted that communism would not overcome democracy

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<sup>119</sup> TNA: "Anglo-U.S. Frontier is Japan' MacArthur Speaks," *Daily Mail*, March 2, 1949.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

in Japan due to land reform, economic reform, and greater personal freedoms. Even if MacArthur publicly announced that the Soviet Union and communism in Japan did not pose an urgent threat to the American occupation, with proximity to the Soviet Union and China, the United States worried that Japanese communists would gain ground and start to ally with Soviets and Chinese. Emphasizing Japan's growing role in the burgeoning Cold War, the United States encouraged economic reform and industrialization as the key to overcoming communism in East Asia.

### **Phase III: Cold War Population Control, 1949-1952**

#### **Migration and Mobilization**

Similar to Phase I, SCAP regulated internal migration of Japanese citizens to control the population. However, by Phase III, many Japanese repatriates and civilians lived in rural Japan. Unlike in Phase I, Phase III migration control encouraged internal migration into cities and urban centers for the benefit of Japanese economic restoration. Due to heightened migration within Japan, SCAP gathered census information to measure migration changes. In 1950, SCAP conducted another occupation census, which provided demographic information by region and prefecture. The *Population Census of 1950* stated that in 1950, the *shi* (urban) population numbered 31,203,191 and the *gun* (rural) population numbered 51,996,446.<sup>122</sup> During and immediately after World War II, citizens and repatriates had moved into rural areas due to heavy bomb damage and by 1950, 62.5% of Japan's total population lived in rural Japan.<sup>123</sup> The United States believed that increasing urbanization and rural-urban migration would bolster Japan's economic recovery, reinstating Japan as a global power and Western partner. In 1950, Osaka,

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<sup>122</sup> Bureau of Statistics, *Population Census of 1950: Volume 1, Total Population* (1951), 23.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

Kyoto, and Nagoya had over one million inhabitants and Tokyo had over five million. Compared to 1945, Nagoya had 597,941 inhabitants, Osaka had a little over one million inhabitants, and Kyoto had 866,153 inhabitants. In 1945, Tokyo had 2,777,010 inhabitants compared to their 5,385,071 in 1949.<sup>124</sup> Taeuber noted that urbanward movement in Japan in the 1940s was primarily intercommunal (from one *mura*, *machi*, or *shi*) within a prefecture from one another.<sup>125</sup>

In the wake of widespread urban destruction during World War II, occupation-led population policies during Phase III accelerated rural-to-urban migration, channeling workers into cities to drive reconstruction and economic recovery. Rural-urban migration occurred for industrial and occupational opportunities in metropolitan areas. Through labor reconstruction, SCAP encouraged the migration and use of skilled Japanese workers for postwar economic recovery. From 1947 on, SCAP imposed SCAPIN-1832, which called for the increase of Japanese laborers for government-sanctioned construction. SCAP directed the Japanese government to provide sufficient wages, food and clothing rations, and transportation for the workers. SCAPIN-1832 stated that labor shortages were most acute in Tokyo, specifically addressing the Grant Heights project, which served as American military family housing.<sup>126</sup> SCAPIN-1832 required temporary or permanent migration to urban centers, specifically Tokyo, for the purpose of constructing government buildings and military housing. With required support from the Japanese government, Japanese government workers employed by the Occupation Forces would be fed, clothed and given transportation because of their employment. An

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<sup>124</sup> Bureau of Statistics, *Population Census of 1950: Volume 1, Total Population* (1951), 60.

<sup>125</sup> Irene Taeuber, *The Population of Japan* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958), 127.

<sup>126</sup> R.M. Levy, *Memorandum for: Japanese Government: Shortage of Japanese Laborers*, National Diet Library (December 19, 1947).; entitled SCAPIN-1832

increased labor force, which required the distribution of more food and clothing, would expand Japan's industrial economy. Alongside improved working conditions, SCAP also charged the Japanese government to regularly care for the physical wellbeing of Japanese laborers. In March 1949, SCAPIN-1832/4 was imposed, stating that Japanese government reports on worker welfare, issued by SCAPIN-1832/3, were no longer required due to better working conditions.<sup>127</sup> But under SCAPIN-1949, issued on December 8th, 1949, the Japanese government was still required to regularly immunize, provide medical care, and ensure hospitalization to Japanese nationals, and later, foreign nationals who were employed by the Occupation Forces.<sup>128</sup>

Due to the rescission of SCAPIN-563, rural residents were able to permanently reside in medium and large cities, which resulted in the mass migration of families and workers. In 1949, SCAP lifted SCAPIN-563, which removed barriers of travel and permanent residence to urban centers with populations over 100,000. By 1950, the greatest increase in population due to internal migration occurred in the medium-sized *shi* (cities) which had populations of 100,000 to 500,000.<sup>129</sup> The capital of Tokyo opened for reentry permitting permanent movements and domicile transfers.<sup>130</sup> By January 20th, 1949, sixteen days after the restriction was lifted, 62,000 people transferred their residence from outside Tokyo to inside the metropolitan center.<sup>131</sup> By January 29th, 1949, 11,893 people entered Osaka after the ban was lifted.<sup>132</sup> The movement of households and workers into major cities, in droves, highlights the urgency of finding

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<sup>127</sup> R.M. Levy, *Memorandum for: Japanese Government: Shortage of Japanese Laborers*, National Diet Library (March 10, 1949).; entitled SCAPIN-1832/4.

<sup>128</sup> K.B. Bush, *Memorandum for: Japanese Government: Responsibilities of Japanese Government Relative to Physical Examination, Immunization, Medical Care, Hospitalization, and Other Benefits for Japanese Nationals Employed for the Occupation Forces*, National Diet Library (December 8, 1949).

<sup>129</sup> Bureau of Statistics, *Population Census of 1950: Volume 1, Total Population* (1951), 26.

<sup>130</sup> "Tokyo Entry is Now Free," *Nippon Times*, January 5, 1949. National Diet Library.

<sup>131</sup> "62,000 Persons Move Domiciles to Tokyo," *Nippon Times*, January 20, 1949. National Diet Library.

<sup>132</sup> "Over 10,000 Enter Osaka," *Mainichi*, January 29, 1949. National Diet Library.

employment to sustain Japanese families. The rescission of SCAPIN-563 also allowed people to receive food rations in large cities through permanent settlement.<sup>133</sup> By lifting the migration ban to large cities, the United States manipulated internal migration for the purpose of bringing in skilled workers for industry and reconstruction. Along with Occupation Force laborers, rural migrants were drawn to cities for better economic opportunities under SCAP's economic restoration of Japan. By Phase III, economic restoration was pivotal to the security of Japan as a Western ally, which motivated SCAP to encourage internal migration to urban centers. Alongside SCAP's intervention in Japan's internal migration during Phase III, the United States also continued to regulate reproductive control through the promotion of sterilization, abortion, and birth control.

### **Reproductive Control**

After the passage of the 1948 Eugenic Protection Law, the population of Japan, during year of 1948, increased by 1.7 million and in 1949, the population increased by 1.8 million.<sup>134</sup> The Eugenic Protection Law, on the other hand, increased the number of abortions and sterilizations, even within a growing population. In 1949, the Japanese Diet revised the Eugenic Protection Law to include "economic reasons" under the reasons for getting an abortion. After "economic reasons" were added as a criteria for being eligible for abortion services, women who did not qualify for abortion because they did not have hereditary diseases, mental illnesses, or were not raped had a reason to get an abortion. The "economic reason" clause applied to women who qualified for public assistance or had been reduced to "hard living." By 1949, 99 to 100 percent of Japanese women who got an abortion cited "economic reasons" as their reason for

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<sup>133</sup> 62,000 Persons Move Domiciles to Tokyo," *Nippon Times*, January 20, 1949. National Diet Library.

<sup>134</sup> Irene Taeuber, *The Population of Japan* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958), 311.

getting an abortion.<sup>135</sup> Due to the Japanese Diet revising the law, more women, either married or unmarried, had access to abortion.<sup>136</sup>

### Abortion

By Phase III, abortion rates were increased rapidly due the promulgation of the Eugenic Protection Law and the introduction of eugenic consultation centers. Eugenic consultation centers emerged formally as spaces for eugenic marriage, abortion, and later birth control consultation through the passage of the Eugenic Protection Law. Article 20 of the Eugenic Protection Law established Eugenic Protection Consultation Offices (EPCOs) “to offer advice about eugenic marriage, to promote the dissemination and improvement of necessary knowledge about heredity and eugenic protection, and to disseminate knowledge and give guidance concerning proper methods of contraception.”<sup>137</sup> EPCOs promoted eugenic marriages and pregnancy prevention for the racial and economic betterment of Japan. As agents of state policy, EPCOs supported SCAP and Japanese population policies. The dissemination of reproductive knowledge and the distribution of birth control placed EPCOs as centers of national population control. Japanese obstetrician-gynecologists supported and performed abortions at EPCOs for self-serving purposes as they could monopolize abortion services for monetary gain under the Eugenic Protection Law.<sup>138</sup> When abortion rates decreased as a result of the Pharmaceutical Affairs Law and public support of birth control, EPCOs moved to disseminate knowledge and distribute birth control.

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<sup>135</sup> Tiana Norgren, *Abortion Before Birth Control: The Politics of Reproduction in Postwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 46.

<sup>136</sup> Tama Yasuko and Scott O’Byran, “The Logic of Abortion: Japanese Debates on the Legitimacy of Abortion as Seen in Post–World War II Newspapers,” *U.S.-Japan Women’s Journal. English Supplement*, no. 7 (1994): 14.

<sup>137</sup> Tiana Norgren, 151.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

During Phases II and III, United States and Japanese interest groups influenced SCAP's use of abortion for population control by opposing it. During Phase III, religious groups and individuals who saw abortion as morally wrong opposed state acceptance of abortion. In *The Mainichi*, a clergyman<sup>139</sup> of the Catholic church wrote to the editor in 1950 and stated that abortion and artificial prevention of birth were wrong in the eyes of God and the church.<sup>140</sup> Another *Mainichi* article written in 1950 stressed that birth control and abortion were unnatural and unjustifiable since the "only ones who seem to get wealthier are the manufacturers and distributors of contraceptives."<sup>141</sup> However, even with disapproval from certain interest groups and the development of eugenic consultation centers, abortion rates increased. The authorization of certain contraceptives under the Pharmaceutical Affairs Law opened the door for the expansion of family planning practices across Japan. Both the Japanese government and SCAP pursued birth control as the foremost form of pregnancy prevention, which increased awareness and the usage of birth control. With the passage of the Pharmaceutical Affairs Law in 1949, the United States and Japan formally encouraged the usage of barrier methods of birth control as a means of population control rather than abortion. From 1949 to 1952, aggregate birth rates decreased from 4.32 in 1949 to 2.98 in 1952 due to state-supported birth control policies and family planning practices.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> It is unknown whether the clergyman is American or Japanese. The article does not explicitly state it.

<sup>140</sup> Monsignor Fraser, "Readers' Forum: The Unborn Child," *The Mainichi*, December 22, 1950. National Diet Library.

<sup>141</sup> Mitsuo Yamagishi, "Readers' Forum: Against Birth Control," *The Mainichi*, December 12, 1950. National Diet Library.

<sup>142</sup> Tama Yasuko and Scott O'Bryan, "The Logic of Abortion: Japanese Debates on the Legitimacy of Abortion as Seen in Post-World War II Newspapers," *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal. English Supplement*, no. 7 (1994): 15.

## Birth Control

Birth control, which included barrier methods of contraception, were still highly contested as a means of family planning but was becoming more necessary for the control of Japan's population.<sup>143</sup> A 1949 *Nippon Times* article informed the public on what it thought would be the result of overpopulation: infanticide. However, with the legalization and promotion of abortion as a means of pregnancy termination, infanticide rates decreased in the 1950s.<sup>144</sup> Infanticide was still utilized alongside birth control and abortion but in smaller numbers. The *Nippon Times* journalist hoped that instead of resorting to infanticide, a “scientific and moral method” i.e. birth control, would be adopted.<sup>145</sup> Government-supported demography and data collection continued, and researchers conducted birth control studies to determine whether Japanese families were willing to use birth control. Japanese newspapers, censored and uncensored, written during Phase III argued in remarkable detail how urgent birth control was for controlling the population. A May 18, 1949, article published by the *Nippon Times* reported on Asahi public opinion polls taken concerning overpopulation and birth control. While the article does not explicitly state a sample size for the opinion poll, the poll stated that 80 percent of those questioned believed that the present population of Japan was too large and 39 percent advocated for birth control.<sup>146</sup> Thirty-five percent of the questioned, however, noted that emigration was the most desirable solution for overpopulation instead of advocating for birth control. The journalist disagreed with the notion that emigration would be the best option, and stated that other nations were either dealing with their own population problems or would not

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<sup>143</sup> Barrier methods of contraception included condoms, diaphragms, spermicide, sponges, and cervical caps. During the occupation period, condoms were the main method of contraception.

<sup>144</sup> Fabian Drixler, *Mabiki: Infanticide and Population Growth in Eastern Japan, 1660-1950* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), 19.

<sup>145</sup> Toshiaki Kaikane, “Population Control Policy Urgently Needed for Japan,” *Nippon Times*, May 11, 1949. National Diet Library.

<sup>146</sup> “Public Views of the Population Problem,” *Nippon Times*, May 18, 1949. National Diet Library.

allow Japanese migrants into their countries.<sup>147</sup> With some degree of public support of birth control and support from Diet politicians, SCAP promoted birth control for the health of the national economy and Japanese democracy by promoting birth control which would limit population growth.

In 1949, the Japanese Diet passed the Pharmaceutical Affairs Law, which ensured the manufacturing, marketing, and distribution of certain forms of birth control including diaphragms, vaginal tablets, creams, and jellies. Prior to the Pharmaceutical Affairs Law, SCAP's Narcotic Control Division attempted to block contraceptive access by instructing the Ministry of Health and Welfare to declare Japan's prewar contraceptive ordinance null and void. Instead, SCAP directed that contraceptives instead be brought under the authority of the Pharmaceutical Affairs Law and approved.<sup>148</sup> As a result, contraceptives were now treated like any other drug that could be advertised and sold under the approval of the Ministry of Health and Welfare. Prior to the passage of the Pharmaceutical Affairs Law, the above forms of birth control were not marketed as contraceptives. IUDs were still forbidden for use in Japan, but the Pharmaceutical Affairs Law established contraceptives as a nonharmful means of birth control.<sup>149</sup> The Pharmaceutical Affairs Law, again, established SCAP's interference in population control in pursuance of population decline.

#### Sterilization

The 1948 Eugenic Protection Law (EPL) revitalized government-sponsored eugenic practices including abortion and sterilization for individuals with mental illnesses, disabilities,

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<sup>147</sup> "Public Views of the Population Problem," *Nippon Times*, May 18, 1949. National Diet Library.

<sup>148</sup> Tiana Norgren, *Abortion Before Birth Control: The Politics of Reproduction in Postwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 90.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

and hereditary diseases.<sup>150</sup> Sterilization during Phase III happened both voluntarily and involuntarily, as outlined in the Eugenic Protection Law. Utilized as a socioeconomic relief law, the EPL promoted eugenic operations to reduce population growth of both “fit” and “unfit” individuals. Sterilization ensured that Japanese citizens with hereditary or mental illnesses would not be able to reproduce.

Along with birth control and abortion, sterilization became a means of controlling Japan’s population. With the passage of the Eugenic Protection Law and rise in contraceptive education due to eugenic consultation centers, widespread sterilization and eugenic marriages occurred. By the end of 1952, the rate of contraceptive use was only 26.3%.<sup>151</sup> According to Takeuchi-Demirci, it was not until well into the 1950s that high percentages of married couples regularly practiced contraception.<sup>152</sup> The diffusion of eugenic and birth control education was a slow process across the islands of Japan, resulting in higher rates of contraceptive use after the occupation. Nonetheless, the United States pushed abortion, birth control, and sterilization during the occupation period for their benefit.

### **The Will to War**

Built on earlier efforts to regulate reproduction, postwar policymakers reframed population control as a tool of international stability, linking reproductive governance directly to the prevention of economic instability and war. In her speech on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1922, in Tokyo, Margaret Sanger stated that, “each nation must control her population to the point where it will not be necessary to make aggression upon their neighbors.”<sup>153</sup> Sanger, unaware of the creation of

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<sup>150</sup> “Eugenic Protection Law,” House of Representatives, Japan, accessed April 6, 2026.

<sup>151</sup> Aiko Takeuchi-Demirci, *Contraceptive Diplomacy: Reproductive Politics and Imperial Ambitions in the United States and Japan* (United States: Stanford University Press, 2018), 175.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> Margaret Sanger, “War and Population,” (speech, Tokyo, Japan, March 14, 1922).

the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere twenty years later, linked overpopulation to the will to war because she assumed it would increase the need for food and decrease the standard of living. According to the CIA Office of Strategic Services, in the year 1945, Japan's imperial expansion throughout Asia was not only for the creation of "an international order based upon common prosperity" but for the stability of Japan as a self-sustaining global power.<sup>154</sup> To limit economic instability that could lead to military aggression, SCAP pursued population control. In Phase III, economic rehabilitation became the highest priority for SCAP, ensuring that Japan's standard of living would be equal to or higher than the standard of living during the period of 1930 to 1934.<sup>155</sup> With hopes of securing Japan's role in the global economy, the United States also feared communist expansion and Japanese military aggression for the procurement of sustaining resources. Unsure of the stability of Japan's future, SCAP promoted population control to curb Japan's will to war.

A *Nippon Times* article from May 5th, 1949, stated that Japan's surplus population, "was a steppingstone in the development of militarism, and finally caused the nation to plunge into the recent war."<sup>156</sup> The Japanese public was equally worried about a potential rise in militarism due to overpopulation. A resurgence of Japanese militarism was a long-term concern, nonetheless, with continued food shortages and low standards of living, expansionism and potential warmongering was possible. On the other side of the birth control debate, many citizens advocated for Japanese emigration to other countries to curb population growth on the four islands.<sup>157</sup> With present bans on Japanese oversea emigration, the only option was population

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<sup>154</sup> U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Strategic Services Research and Analysis Branch, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere* (August 10, 1945), 1.

<sup>155</sup> U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *Strategic Importance of Japan* (May 24, 1948), 4.

<sup>156</sup> "Gov't Step Too Late," *Nippon Times*, May 5, 1949. National Diet Library.

<sup>157</sup> "Public Views of the Population Problem," *Nippon Times*, May 18, 1949. National Diet Library.

control through contraceptives.<sup>158</sup> Worried emigration would lead to heightened militarism or war due to prior emigration aggression and imperialism, SCAP started advocating birth control as a means of improving national health. An increase in the population would continue to destabilize Japan's economy and democratic recovery. For Japan to become a stable, peaceful nation, their population would have to decrease.

Phase III of the American occupation saw international upheaval surrounding the rise of communism, which pulled the United States and Japan into an ideological war. To occupation leaders, Japan, situated between capitalist America and communist China and the Soviet Union, was likely to either fall to communism or wage war over the population crisis. The occupation forced Japan to be reliant on the United States for socioeconomic relief and security, especially for food and raw materials. With the growth of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) and continued economic downturns, a communist takeover or war was plausible. In October 1951, the JCP had around 90,000 to 100,000 registered, non-registered, and secret members with twenty-three members in the House of Representatives.<sup>159</sup> The "Summary of Subversive Activities, October 1951," drafted by the Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC), stated that the JCP had little potential for violence, but had noticeable relations with the European Cominform through publications and propaganda.<sup>160</sup> In late 1951, the JCP criticized the American occupation, and stated that the United States exploited Japan and its workers, deprived them of developing trade and foreign relations, while involving them in their aggressive war against communism.<sup>161</sup> The report argued that the U.S. needed Japan as an industrialized and remilitarized base in Asia. The JCP advocated for peace and cooperation with "peace-loving

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<sup>158</sup> "Problem of Overpopulation," *Mainichi*, May 17, 1949. National Diet Library.

<sup>159</sup> TNA: FO 371/99392, pp 3, 8.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

<sup>161</sup> TNA: FO 371/99392, pp 24-26.

countries” which included China and the Soviet Union.<sup>162</sup> Aware of the growth of the Japanese Communist Party, their national influence, and East Asian relations, the United States continued to monitor the party.

### **Conclusion**

The Cold War brought many uncertainties into the American occupation of Japan due to fear over aggression and communist control. Population control policies were partially successful in the curtailment of Japan’s population due to the increased education and usage of birth control, abortion, and sterilization. During Phase I and Phase III, the United States manipulated Japanese migration and repatriation patterns to control high population densities and/or promote industrial growth for the restoration of Japan’s economy. The immediate postwar population crisis, however, did not just end with dramatic decreases in births. Faced with severe food shortages, and economic instability, these policies helped slow rapid population growth and improve the standard of living for urban and rural communities. Population control policies, mainly reproductive control policies, sought to maintain government control over Japan, by regulating what could be used for contraception and by promoting eugenic sterilization. SCAP manipulated migration patterns for economic security, which caused more people to settle in major cities for employment, food security and industrial growth. With hopes of curtailing Japanese aggression against Asia for resources, SCAP continued to limit population growth and provided goods and monetary support throughout the final years of the occupation. SCAP and the Japanese government pursued population control as a means of restoring Japan’s economy to limit military aggression and create a “peacefully inclined and responsible government.”

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<sup>162</sup> TNA: FO 371/99392, p 26.

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