

A comparison of the Westernization Movement and the Meiji Restoration and their successes and failures

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Abstract:

In the 19th century, two significant and historic reforms took place in China and Japan. Dramatically, the reform in Japan eventually succeeded and helped recover the domestic economy and the political stability, while the one in China failed, and did not manage to prevent the further invasions of foreign powers against this country. This study majorly focuses on the analysis of the impacts of the two reforms in terms of economics, politics and military. Furthermore, the comparisons of the two reforms are made from the three perspectives which have been mentioned above, in order to highlight the main differences between them and provide crucial inspiration for the development of the contemporary world by learning lessons from the historical events. The methods used in the study involve the literature analysis, historical evidence and comparative analysis.

Keywords: Westernization Movement, Meiji Restoration, national reform, historical comparison

1. Introduction

In the late 19th century, East Asia was facing the pattern of turmoil. In this background, some nations carried out a series of reforms based on both the internal and external problems they faced, among which the Westernization Movement in China and the Meiji Restoration in Japan both had significant impact.

In China, a lot of peasant uprisings had taken place in all regions of the country, especially the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Movement which had given the Qing government the heaviest blow [1]. Moreover, many Western powers had attacked China and gained new territories. For example, the United Kingdom acquired Hong Kong after the Opium Wars with Chi-

na [2]. These Western empires had also gained trade benefits by signing a treaty with China. Because of so many problems, in 1861, Yixin Aisin-Gioro, a member of the Chinese royal family, and the famous Chinese empress dowager Cixi began to support a group of politicians called the Westernization Faction. They implemented lots of measurements in order to advance the process of the Westernization Movement [3].

In Japan, there were also domestic and foreign dangers. The country was then ruled by a shogunate government called Tokugawa. This government implemented the policy of locking the nation to the outside world, while at the same time, capitalism began

to appear in some economically developed areas. This had caused deeper and deeper class contradictions in the society [3]. In addition, the United States Navy arrived Tokyo and signed the Kanagawa Treaty with Japan, agreeing to open some ports to the US and give the US the most favored-nation treatment [2]. All these decisions made by the Tokugawa Shogunate had made the conflict between the government and the people intensify. In the following several years, many Western countries had attacked Japan, which made the Japanese government to change its attitude. In 1868, the Japanese emperor Meiji started to introduce the Meiji Restoration to this nation. Meanwhile, Meiji launched wars and eventually wiped out the Tokugawa Shogunate and unified Japan [3].

China and Japan are close neighbors and they both have traditional oriental culture. Moreover, the two countries both experienced similar internal and external troubles in the late 19th century, and they even started their modernization process simultaneously. However, the result of the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) announced the failure of the Westernization Movement and the success of the Meiji Restoration [1]. Although there have been many studies about one of the two reforms, few researchers have studied both of the reforms together and made a comparison between them. Therefore, the main idea of this study is to compare the Westernization Movement in China and the Meiji Restoration in Japan in terms of economics, politics and military, and analyze which reform is more successful than the other one.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Detailed introduction of the two reforms

The Westernization Movement took place from 1861 to 1895 in China. It involved improvements in various types of aspects, including military, education, transportation and so on. During the approximately three decades of the reform, China witnessed the establishments of the country's first naval fleet, the first railway, the first modern school and even the first batch of international students. In other words, the Westernization Movement marked the beginning of the capitalization of China, and had a far-reaching impact on the future of this country [2]. According to the report of Haipeng Zhang, at the beginning of the reform, the Qing government entrusted several famous scholars and politicians to practice the all-round reform of this country, including some Chinese national heroes, like Hung-chang Li, Kuo-fan Tseng and Tsung-tang Tso. There were several major measurements of the reform, such as importing modern Western machines and technology, establishing modern military industry and training modern

army and navy in the name of "self-improvement". Additionally, in terms of the name of "gaining wealth", China introduced various policies, like creating modern civil industry about ships, railways, postal services, mining and textiles. A lot of successful examples had been produced, especially the largest civil enterprise founded in Shanghai, which was called the China Merchants Steamship Navigation Company. Moreover, the Qing government also built new modern schools and sent international students to go abroad for further study, cultivating translation talents, military talents and scientific and technological talents. For instance, the School of Combined Learning, established in Beijing in 1862, was the earliest modern official school in China [4].

In Japan, the Meiji Restoration was implemented between 1868 and 1912. The Japanese emperor Meiji completed the transformation of the entire feudal shogunate system and established the brand-new regime which was led by the emperor himself shortly after Meiji defeated the Tokugawa Shogunate [5]. The rights of samurai had also been greatly reduced after the reform, and the whole of Japan had been firmly controlled by the Meiji Emperor at that time. The guidelines of the Meiji Restoration was called "leaving Asia, entering Europe", which meant that Japan decided to completely absorb Europe's advanced ideology and turn the country from a feudal to a capitalist society. One of the most important and interesting measurements in the Meiji Restoration was that Japan had always regarded unequal treaties as the prior issue to be solved by the nation. For example, as Li reported, one treaty was successfully amended with the UK, the US and France in 1894. In this treaty, Japan emphasized the relevant aspects of tariff rates, most-favored-nation treatment, and the rights and obligations of countries in trade and navigation. All this showed that Japan had begun to gradually get rid of the unequal treaties with Europe and the US in that period, and took a significant step towards achieving tariff autonomy [5]. In addition, there were some other meaningful policies as well. As Xiaojing Xiang reported, Japan enacted several laws, including criminal, civil and commercial laws, by following the example of the Western system. What's more, a conscription order was issued in 1872, and all adult men over the age of 20 must perform military service for three years. In terms of economy, the Meiji government introduced modern Western industrial technology, reformed the land system to allow land sales and established the Bank of Japan in 1882. Last but not least, Japan had also improved the local transportation system and constructed modern railways and roads. The first railway in Japan was built from Tokyo to Yokohama in 1872, and the total railway mileage of Japan had exceeded 7,000 kilometers until 1914 [2].

2.2 Reasons for the launch of the reforms

Just as Xiaojing Xiang said, the Opium Wars happened in the 19th century shattered the prestige of the Qing Empire, and the illusion of the eternal empire was fatally hit. The barbaric, self-defined state of isolation from the civilized world was broken. After the failure of the wars against foreign forces, the people in China started to study more about the Western ideology and knowledge. As a result, the Qing government decided to implement the Westernization Movement. China aimed at decreasing the number of rebellions which happened in almost everywhere of this country, such as the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom in Jiangsu, Jiangxi and Zhejiang, preventing foreign invasions, and also protecting its feudal rule [2]. Moreover, China had also sent some missionary groups abroad, but they were not there to study and learn Western history, cultures and politics, instead, they were to record the natural scenery and local customs [6].

As Peter Snow said, by 1850, Japan had endured 200 years of isolation under the Tokugawa Shogunate. At that time, this country was relatively weak compared to the western empires, so Japan could only be forced to accept all the unfavorable treaties. As a result, some samurai became unsatisfied about the decisions made by the shogunate. They began to coalesce around the imperial court in Kyoto and sought to restore imperial power and to modernize Japan by 1868. After the Boshin War happened from 1868 to 1869, Emperor Meiji unified Japan and started his further reforms. In 1871, Japan's first domestically produced warship Seiki was completed at Yokosuka Shipyards. A new imperial army and navy was successfully built, and rapid industrialization to transform Japan's economic base was promoted. There had been a dramatic change of Japan's society during the Meiji Restoration, from a feudal to a capitalist world, and it only took this country less than fifty years to achieve this. All these results were aimed at strengthening Japan's national power and making this country able to compete with other foreign powers. Besides that, Japan also hoped to reduce its domestic peasant uprisings and maintain peace by modernizing the country [7].

2.3 Similarities and differences of the two reforms

In terms of the similarities of the Westernization Movement and the Meiji Restoration was that they almost took place at the same time. The reform in China happened from 1861 to 1895, and the Japanese reform was between 1868 and 1912. China and Japan were both facing domestic and foreign threats in the 1860s too. They had fallen in to a dangerous situation of being semi-feudal and

semi-colonial nations. By 1860, both of them had signed and agreed several treaties which aimed to help the Western countries to gain more territories, harbors and profits and support their expansions in East Asia [4]. Xiaojing Xiang [2] also reported that the two reforms were both aimed at saving the nation and preventing foreign powers from invading. They absorbed the Western ideology, technology and politics and applied them to almost all aspects of national transformation and construction.

Nevertheless, there were also definitely lots of differences between the two reforms. One of the major differences between the Westernization Movement and the Meiji Restoration was that Japan aimed to completely westernize and accept all the Western ideas, but China combines the Western ones with traditional Chinese ideology, and it could be defined as a partial westernization. Some researchers like Ziyang Wei may think that the major reason for the failure of the Westernization Movement was the interference from foreign power and the relatively late time for the Western thoughts to enter China, but the author believes in addition to that, the lack of importance of the Qing government and the Chinese resistance to the Western ideology and culture could also lead to its failure to a certain extent. Although the advanced Western ideas were spread into Japan some time earlier than that into China, it cannot still become an excuse of the reform's failure. Actually, Japan started to implement its reform almost simultaneously compared to that in China, so the time can't act as one of the reasons [8]. In addition, the Japanese scholar Kika Yoda pointed out that after the Opium Wars, China went in the direction of division, while Japan went in the direction of unification. As a result, Japan succeeded in forming a unified domestic market, but China failed. During the Meiji Restoration, a highly unified centralized system was gradually formed in Japan due to the formation of a national unified market. Because of this, policies could be easily implemented. However, in China, although this country was also highly centralized, it had a large size of land and strong conservative forces, which had made it hard to make decisions to learn from the West. In Japan, the most important issue was to abolish unequal treaties, and the Meiji government also formed the basic idea of developing capitalism, from politics, economy, society and culture. Many measures had been taken as a result. But China did not think about this idea after it was invaded by the great powers in the wars and was forced to sign a series of unequal treaties [9].

Although lots of researchers had studied one of the two reforms, there were few scholars mentioning both of them and making a comparison between the Westernization Movement and the Meiji Restoration. So this point can become the major research gap of the project.

3. Methodology

3.1 Literature analysis

As this dissertation is strongly related to history, conducting primary research such as surveys and questionnaires are not feasible, therefore the secondary data and literature research can be the most important focus. When looking for some essential literature, the author often pays attention to the key words and themes of them. For instance, when looking for the economic impact of the Meiji Restoration, some key words like “Meiji”, “economy” and “impact” can be used to help search for further data and make a comparison with the economic influences in China. What’s more, the literature can be selected by using some criteria. Firstly, the literature completed in the recent years can be given priority, as they may contain the most accurate information. But the early literature will also be taken into account, since this project is related to history, and the early ones can also provide many essential data. Secondly, the authors of the literature are also important. The articles written by the industry experts, the international organizations and institutions, and the official websites of governments are much more reliable than those written by the public websites, such as Bing and Google, and the anonymous forums and blogs. Last but not least, the number of downloads and the scientific explanations in the research information in the literature are also important while finding the most appropriate article to use.

3.2 Historical evidence

Besides finding literature to support the views of the project, some other methods are also available, like the historical evidence. For example, the pictures about the first machines used in China can illustrate the technological results of the Westernization Movement, the newly-made warships are able to provide evidence to Japan’s Meiji Restoration in terms of military development, and the photos taken in 1895, which demonstrated the success of Japan and failure of China after the First Sino-Japanese War, can show the final results of the two reforms. In addition, information such as the factories and companies estab-

lished during the reforms can also be involved. In China, for example, there are the Jiangnan Manufacturing Bureau in Shanghai, the Hanyang Iron Works in Wuhan, and the Fuzhou Shipping Bureau in Fuzhou. Many businesses are established by the famous Chinese politicians or businessmen. For example, the China Merchants Steamship Navigation Company in Shanghai was founded by Hung-chang Li in 1872. All these companies can help to support the technology and military aspects of the impact of the Westernization Movement. Most of the pictures and the stories of businesses are found in the museums, like the Chinese Modern Industry Museum in Tangshan, Hebei Province.

3.3 . Comparative analysis

Moreover, the comparative analysis can also be one of the most useful and practical methods. There are several aspects available to help to compare the results and impact of the Westernization Movement and the Meiji Restoration and determine which one is more successful and which one is more failed, especially to compare the qualitative data and the quantitative data of the two reforms happened in China and Japan. For example, the number of peasant uprisings and unequal treaties before and after the national reforms of the two countries can be taken into account while comparing the effect of their political impact.

4. Results & Discussion

4.1 Economics

4.1.1 Economic impact of each reform

When focusing on the Westernization Movement which took place in China’s Qing Dynasty, it can be clear to discover that the major positive economic impact of this reform is the formation of capitalism in this country. During the reform, plenty of modern industrial and civil businesses had been established to help boost the economy of China. One of the most typical examples is the Jiangnan Manufacturing Bureau. The company can be defined as the most important military factory in the late Qing Dynasty and the largest modern military enterprise opened by the Westernization Faction of the Qing government.

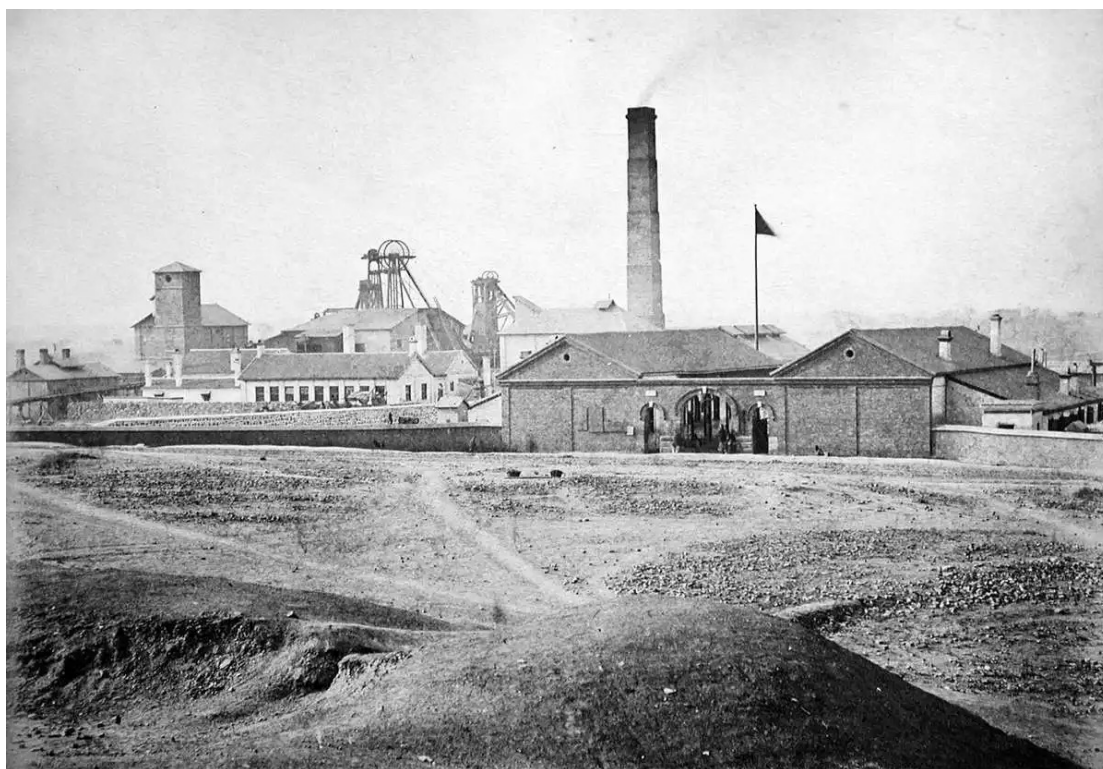


Figure 1 Picture of Kaiping Mining Bureau

Source from: bbs.voc.com.cn



Figure 2 Picture of Shanghai Mechanical Textile Bureau

Source from: shyp.gov.cn

This business is also the largest arms factory in this nation

before the foundation of the communist China. In January 2018, it was selected into the first batch of China's Indus-

trial Heritage Protection List.

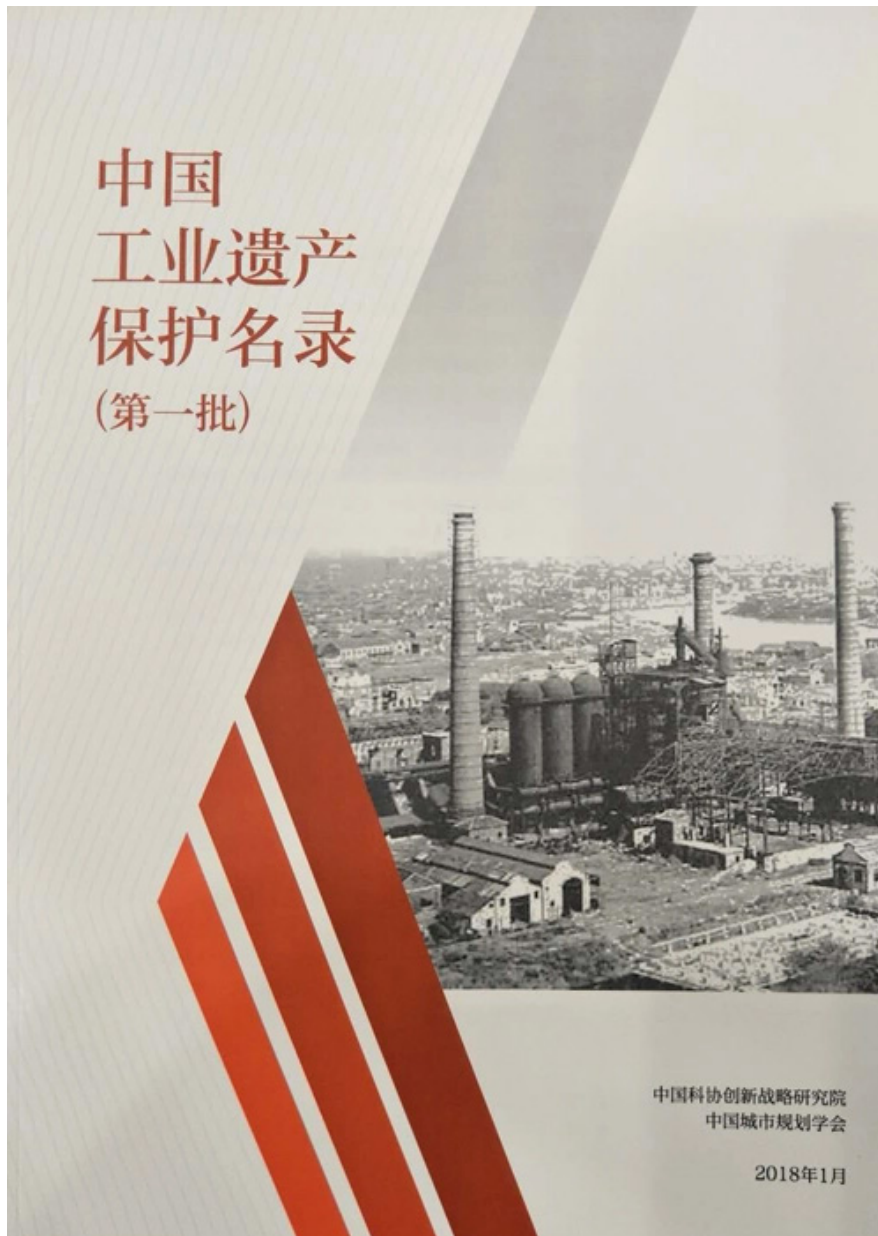


Figure 3 Cover of China's Industrial Heritage Protection List (First Batch)

Source from: China Association for Science and Technology

These evidences and descriptions above can be used to show the significance of this business and also the reform's economic impact on this country to some extent.

Another influence of the Westernization Movement is the prevention of foreign capitalism. Because China had signed lots of treaties with the Western empires, these

countries had been allowed to open their own factories and companies in China, which may cause financial crisis to the Chinese economy. In order to prevent the crisis, the Westernization Faction built many national and domestic companies and enterprise to compete with the foreign ones. Because of this, the crisis of the domestic economy had been reduced a lot. The most suitable example is the Hubei Textile Mills.



Figure 4 Hubei Textile Mills

Source from: 360doc.com

This company was established in 1888 by Chih-tung Chang in Wuhan. In 1892, the company was completed and started production. According to the report of Min Hu, about 2,500 workers were hired [10]. What's more, there was another example showing that the railway tracks of the Luhan Railway were not imported, but were manufactured by another domestic business called Hanyang Iron Works, which was also located in Wuhan. These evidences can be used to prove the contribution to the economy too [11].

Additionally, there are also several impacts on China's economy. For example, it had introduced a lot of Western technology [5].

In Japan, it is apparent to find that the most significant positive impact of the Meiji Restoration on the country's economy is that it brought Japan to the capitalist world and perfectly industrialized this country. By implementing the policy of "Shokusan Kogyo", which meant to encourage private enterprises to develop the national economy through the government. This policy aimed to promote Japan's economic modernization and industrialization through the introduction of Western technologies and industrial production methods. The number of employees in the military industry was nine times that of the civil industry, and the power was three and a half times that of the civil industry. It had become the leading department of modern Japanese industry. This data showed that Japan's industrialization process had developed rapidly during the Meiji Restoration, among which the expansion of the military industry was particularly significant, which reflected

Japan's emphasis on improving the country's military strength [4]. Moreover, creation and innovation were encouraged, and the transportation and communication were developed. The implementation of these measures had enabled Japan to achieve a leapfrog development of industrialization in a short period of time [12]. Japan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) had reached the second place of the world in 1895, second only to the United States.

4.1.2 Comparative discussion of the economic impact of the two reforms

In terms of industrial development, the Westernization Movement helped China to introduce Western technology, and the Meiji Restoration helped Japan to change from a backward agricultural state to a developed industrial state, and it also determined the capitalist system and society of this country. In terms of internationalization development, the Westernization Movement helped the country establish modern schools and develop modern talents, and the Meiji Restoration helped the country to enter the modern Western world and cultivate specific international talents. As a result, the author thinks that the Meiji Restoration is more successful than the Westernization Movement.

4.2 Politics

4.2.1 Political impact of each reform

The Westernization Movement created various impact in terms of politics. The most successful one is that it prevented the invasion of foreign powers. Unlike the defence against foreign capitalism mentioned above, the

focus here is on resisting foreign armed forces rather than economic forces. Since the beginning of the 19th century, the Qing Dynasty had lost many territories, especially the northwestern and northeastern lands occupied by the Rus-

sian Empire from the 1850s to the 1870s. Through the implementation of the Westernization Movement, China achieved to prevent the further land losses, which can be considered as one of the positive impacts of the reform.

Table 1 Land losses of Qing China

Year	Land Loss	By Which Nation
1841	Hong Kong	United Kingdom
1858	Northern Heilongjiang	Russian Empire
1860	Eastern Jilin	Russian Empire
1864	Northwestern Xinjiang	Russian Empire

However, it is clear to see that the negative influences weigh much more than the positive ones. This reform was actually organized by the Qing politicians, so its funda-

mental purpose was to maintain and consolidate the rule of Qing.

Table 2 Four famous late Qing politicians

Politician	Job Attribute
Kuo-fan Tseng	Governor of Zhili
Hung-chang Li	Governor of Zhili
Tsung-tang Tso	Minister of Military Affairs
Chih-tung Chang	Minister of Military Affairs

This starting point determined the limitations of the Westernization Movement, which deepened the estrangement from the people and exacerbated the social contradictions [13].

The Meiji Restoration, however, contributed a lot to the country. Firstly, Japan abolished the vassals and set up prefectures in order to strengthen the centralization of power [12]. Before Meiji unified Japan, this country experienced hundreds years of division. At that time, the Japanese emperor was only the nominal ruler of the country, and the actual master was the shogun, so Japan could be called a shogunate nation during that period. But when the emperor Meiji finally took control of the whole nation, the continuous and bloody wars had stopped, and Japan stepped into a peaceful period. Without the painful wars and conflicts, almost all citizens were very grateful and trusted the newly born Meiji government, so its implementation was quite smooth and successful [1]. By replacing the old feudal vassal states with the brand-new prefecture system, the Meiji government successfully concentrated its power in the central government, improved administrative efficiency, and laid the foundation for the country's future modernization. Secondly, by improving the national military and economy, Japan gradually became one of the most powerful and developed empires in the world [12]. Its international status rose a lot, and it can

eventually get rid of all the unequal treaties it had signed with other empires before.

But every coin has its two sides, some drawbacks of the Meiji Restoration still existed. The most typical one was that it led to the development of Japanese militarism and even fascism, which made this country to start wars against other nations and became one of the initiators of World War II. Japan's participation in the war had caused a huge number of casualties in its neighboring countries. Moreover, there were many feudal remains during the reform, such as the land system.

4.2.2 Comparative discussion of the political impact of the two reforms

In terms of territory protection, the Westernization Movement helped China to prevent further large-scale land losses in the following decades, but there were still several cities, such as Qingdao and Zhanjiang, being colonized by other nations in the future. The Meiji Restoration also helped Japan to prevent its territories from being occupied by others. What's more, all the cities which were previously colonized had successfully returned to Japan after the Meiji Restoration. In terms of rule consolidation, the Westernization Movement helped the country to maintain the domination of the Qing government, and the Meiji Restoration helped the country to reduce domestic conflicts and set up a modern and peaceful society. In terms of

national support, the reform in China obtained little civil support but only some imperial support, but the reform in Japan received lots of support from its citizens. As a result, the author thinks that the Meiji Restoration is more successful than the Westernization Movement.

4.3 . Military

4.3.1 . Military impact of each reform

In terms of military, the Westernization Movement enabled China to establish its first modern navy called Beiyang Fleet. This Chinese national fleet was founded

on December 17, 1888 in Liugong Island, Weihai. It was the strongest and largest of the four modern navies in China. There were 25 major warships and more than 4,000 officers and soldiers. Nevertheless, during the First Sino-Japanese War from 1894 to 1895, the Beiyang Fleet was completely destroyed, which also marked the failure of the Westernization Movement. As a result, though the warships and soldiers of the Beiyang Fleet were perfect, the lack of management of the navy and the essence of the feudal system finally led to the failure and death of Qing China's best navy [14].

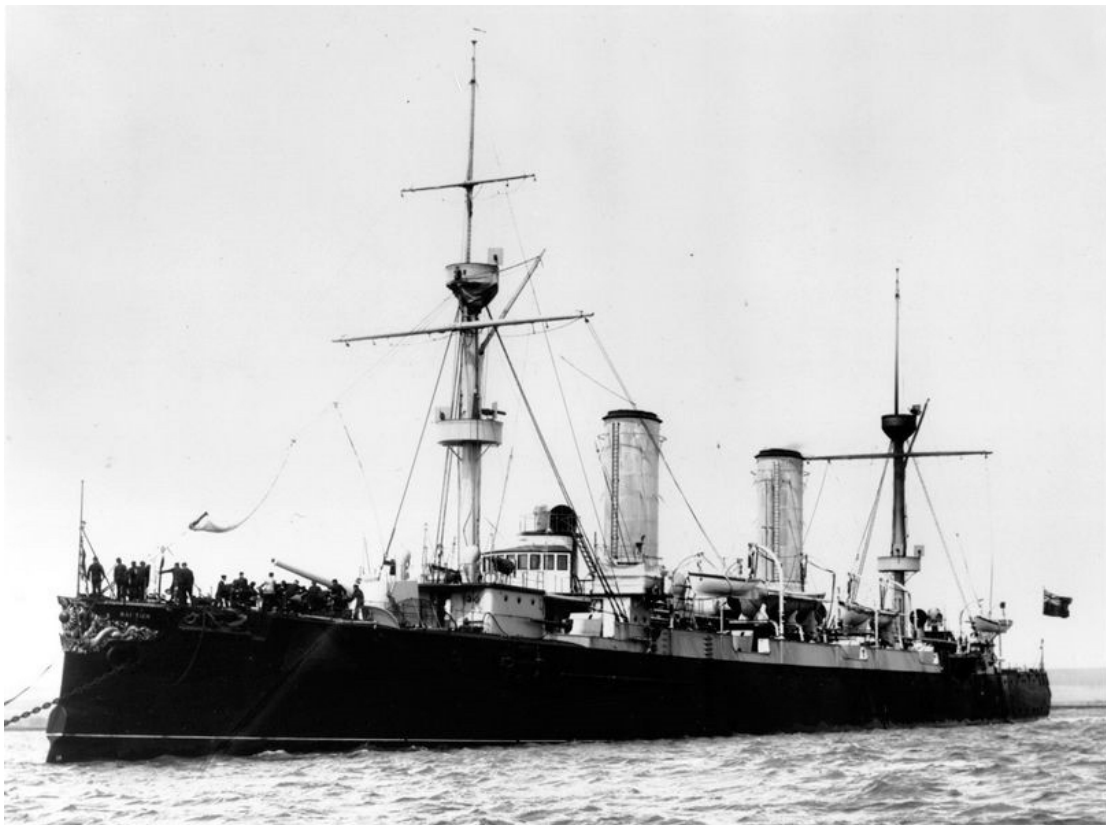


Figure 5 Beiyang Fleet

Source from: ilishi.com.cn

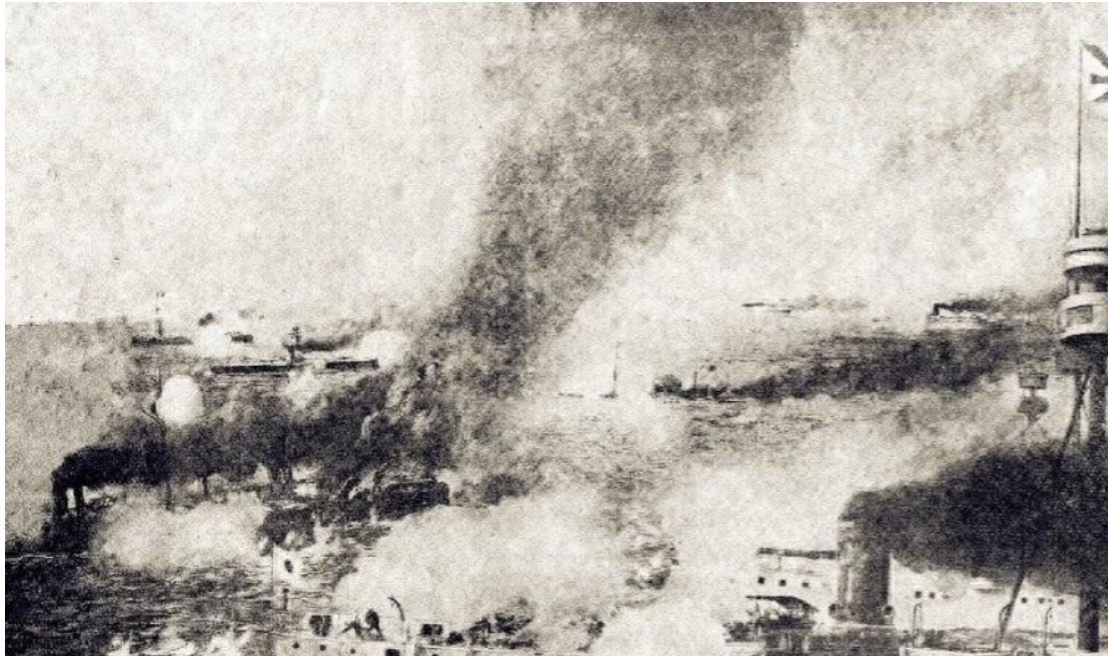


Figure 6 Destroyed Beiyang Fleet

Source from: ilishi.com.cn

During the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese government took a number of important military measures, one of which was the implementation of the conscription system, which ensured that Japan could quickly form a large-scale and well-trained new military. The system said that all adult men who met the requirements must serve for 3 years and reserve for 9 years, for a total of 12 years. In 1873, the combat troops could mobilize up to 400,000 people. This system not only strengthened Japan's military power, but also improved the combat effectiveness of the military, enabling Japan to gather a strong military force in a short time, which was of great significance to Japan's national defence construction and external expansion [15].

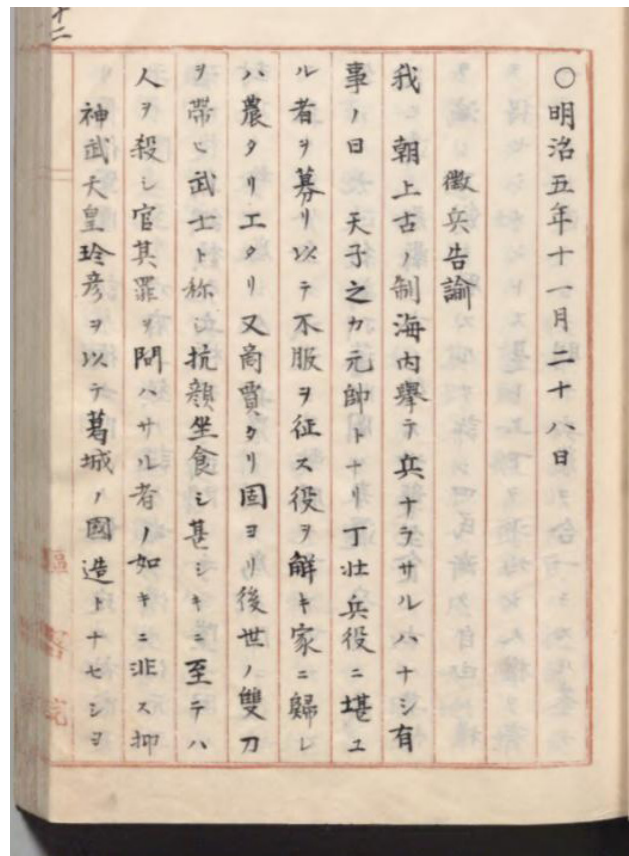


Figure 7 Conscription order during the Meiji period

Source from: 360doc.com



Figure 8 Military force after the conscription

Source from: 360doc.com

Table 3 Japan's military size in 1894

Content	Quantity
Active force	75,000
Reserve force	230,000
Warship	31
Torpedo boat	37
Total tonnage	60,000

In addition, the establishment of a new army was also a major military measure of the Meiji Restoration. Through the introduction of advanced Western military technology and tactics, Japan began to phase out the traditional military system and establish a modern army. These positive effects had played a key role in Japan's transformation from a closed and backward country to a modern country with strong military power.

But during the Meiji Restoration, Japan embarked on the path of militarism of external expansion. This expansion had brought a profound disaster to Asian countries.

4.3.2 Comparative discussion of the military impact of the two reforms

In terms of military power, the Westernization Movement helped China to build a strong and powerful navy called Beiyang Fleet, and the Meiji Restoration helped Japan

to improve its military power and gain enough soldiers ready for any fights against other countries. In terms of long-term military impact, the Westernization Movement helped the country to have sufficient warships and people to participate in the future Sino-Japanese War, and the Meiji Restoration helped the country to beat China's navy force and eventually won the war. As a result, the author thinks that the Meiji Restoration is more successful than the Westernization Movement.

When talking about the negative aspects that the Westernization Movement brought to China's military development, the most significant point was always the contradictions between the Western capitalism and the feudal rule of the Qing government. The Qing government simply wanted to keep its domination over the entire country, but not to construct a modernized and powerful nation in

the world. Therefore, the Westernization Movement was doomed to fail.

5. Evaluation

During the research of this project, the author thinks that the good time management and the diversity of data sources can be taken into account as the strengths, as various types of sources are used, including literature, historical pictures and professional books.

But the initial lack of sufficient literature and the lack of experience in completing an article cannot be ignored as the weaknesses of the project.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this study is to analyze the results of the Westernization Movement and the Meiji Restoration and determine whether they are successful or failed by making a comparison between the two reforms. Through the detailed research of the reforms, the author believes that the Meiji Restoration is a success, while the Westernization Movement is a failure.

Generally speaking, the Westernization Movement marked the introduction of capitalism in China, the prevention of foreign capitalism, the introduction of Western technology, the prevention of invasion of foreign powers and further land losses and the establishment of the first modern navy. All the impacts above are positive and contribute to the Chinese society at that time. Nevertheless, the reform also aims to maintain and consolidate the rule of Qing dynasty, does not learn from the modern ideology of the West and remains the feudal system of the country.

The Meiji Restoration, however, helps Japan to achieve the capitalization, industrialization and the unification of national finance, strengthens the centralization of power, implements the conscription system and establishes a new army. But it also has several negative influences to both Japan and the world. For instance, the reform makes the country to develop militarism and fascism, and start the external expansion.

In conclusion, although both of the reforms have their own pros and cons, it could be clear to find that the Meiji Restoration in Japan weighs much more than the Westernization Movement in terms of economy, politics and military. The key reason for the success of the reform is that the Meiji government really pays attention to the

fundamental requirements of people, and also follows the trend of the times.

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