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Internal Assessment: Section D

Period: 5

March 4th 2015

**Section D**

***To what extent are the actions of Emperor Hirohito between the dropping of the first atomic bomb, and resignation, a signal for revolutionary change in Japan.***

Emperor Hirohito faced many struggles during the end of the war when he was trying to protect his people. As the figurehead of Japan, he took it to himself to change Japan away from it’s militaristic ways and nationalistic pride so that his country may surrender without destroying itself.

As a result of the Samurai class during the Meiji era in Japanese history, Japanese culture still remained highly nationalistic, and extremely militaristic. This is evident from the fanatic fighting of both the soldiers[[1]](#footnote-0), and the radical ideologies from the Japanese military leaders, the “Warhawks.”

The Warhawks are the term that was adopted by the standing military leaders in Japan during the time of the war, and were one of Hirohito’s main issues when trying to push the country to a more peaceful agreement with the Allies. Because of their power and stature within the Japanese political realm, Hirohito encountered a group of people who would rather see the end of their country from nationalist pride, than surrender.[[2]](#footnote-1)

The reasons for the Warhawks dominance in both politics and power can be traced back to the origins of the Japanese Ministries of War. During the end of the the Meiji period, the navy ministry had secured itself as an independent entity within Japanese military politics, breaking away from the Japanese Army. Important figure heads like Admiral Gombei Yamamoto, the dominant leader of the Pacific War, and ex Samurai, achieved this navy independance under emperor Meiji. Yamamoto, and many other remnants of the Samurai classes who joined the Navy had achieved mass political power by the time of Hirohito. When the war all but broke out against America, Yamamoto and his “Warhawks” had the most influence in planning, not the Emperor[[3]](#footnote-2).

This is important to keep in mind when looking into the state of the country after the bomb dropped, and to see how the shift that rapidly followed was such a pressing issue in Japan. By 1945 the country was split on many sides. A falling economy, malnutrition, and an ever present homefront war was leaving a strain on the population of Japan.[[4]](#footnote-3) This caused a large rift in trust of the Japanese military leaders by the end of the war, which reached it’s climax when news came back of the bomb dropping.

In normal Japanese tradition, during wartime the Emperor was rarely consulted for military and political decisions. His stature and power was considered above such lovely things. This is why when the Emperor broke tradition by stepping out of line to call for a direct response to Trumans surrender order[[5]](#footnote-4) which Hirohito knew could lead to the abdication of his throne.

Many officials were siding with the Emperor when he made the decision to give his resignation to the allies, like the Prime Minister Baron Kantaro Suzuki, and many other internal ministries. They only wished to preserve the Imperial dynasty.[[6]](#footnote-5) These siding officials caused the military leaders to act desperately in holding to their national pride, never wanting to see defeat. For the protection of their way of life, and ironically also for the protection of the Imperial Dynasty, Lieutenant General Takeshi Mori and War Minister Anami attempted a coup d’etat by holding the Emperor under house arrest. Ultimately, the directness of the emperor after the decimation of the Atomic Bombs, led little support from the less radical military leaders, and their men. In return, no one came to help Takeshi Mori, and he committed suicide in the morning of the 15th.

Word Count: 582

1. Barrie Pitt, “The War: An Overview,” *History of the Second War* Vol. 6 (1969): 2676-2681. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Alvin Coox, “Japan: facing up to defeat,” *History of the Second War* Vol. 6 (1969): 2773-2781. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Donald M. Goldstein, *The Pacific War Papers Japanese Documents of World War II.* Washington, D.C: Potomac Books, 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Alvin Coox, “Japan at the End of Her Tether,” *History of the Second War* Vol. 6 (1969): 2536-2544. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. Harry S. Truman, “Draft statement on the dropping of the bomb,” Harry S. Truman Library and Museum (1945). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. Paul Kennedy, “Japanese Strategic Decisions 1939-1945,” *History of the Second World War* Vol. 8. (1969): 3213-3216. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)