

Government Reform in Japan

By

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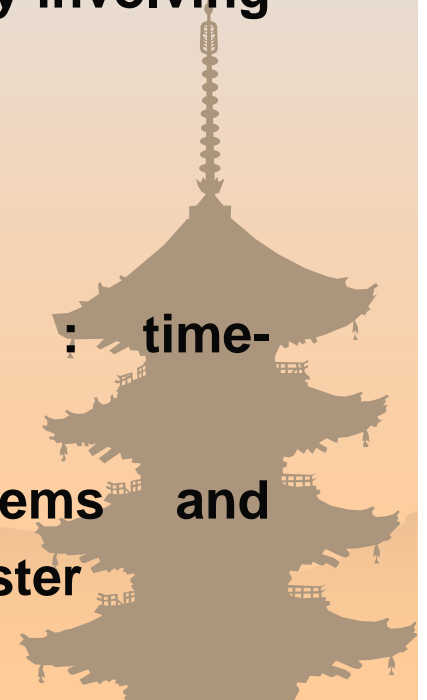
Management & Coordination Agency

Government of Japan



Background of the Reform

- 😊 A success story of the Japanese Public Administration up to the 1980s
- 😊 Social and economic changes : lower economic growth
- 😊 mutual relationship with the world
- 😊 achievement of the goal : no national consensus
- 😊 A close-knit community formed around a ministry involving its clienteles and other parties concerned
- 😊 Tendency to protect existing interests
- 😊 A Ministerial territory and wall
- 😊 Decision-making involving many ministries : time-consuming procedure
- 😊 Insufficient assistance and support systems and organizations for the Cabinet and the Prime Minister



Background of the Reform - Continued

♥ Drastic changes are needed for organizations, systems and practices

→ Widely recognized

♥ Breaking ministerial walls

→ Abolition of the laws and/or enactment of new laws are indispensable

→ Needed enormous political energies

♥ Inter-ministerial reorganization

→ Political taboo or untouchable



Process of the Reform

- 🕒 **November 1996**
 - ♥ Establishment of the Administrative Reform Council
- 🕒 **December 1997**
 - ♥ Submission of the Final report of the Administrative Reform Council
- 🕒 **June 1998**
 - ♥ Enactment of the Basic Law for the Reform of Ministries and Agencies
- 🕒 **July 1998**
 - ♥ Establishment of the Headquarters for the Central Government Reform
- 🕒 **April 1999**
 - ♥ Decision of the Headquarters on 17 bills, basic policies and plans
 - ♥ Submission of the bills to the Diet
- 🕒 **June 1999**
 - ♥ 17 bills passed through the House of Representatives
- 🕒 **July 1999**
 - ♥ 17 bills passed through the House of Councilors



Major Points of Current Government Reform

- ♥ Reinforcing the Cabinet functions and leadership of the Prime Minister
- ♥ Drastic Restructuring of Ministries and Agencies
- ♥ Reinforcing political leadership in every ministerial-level organization
- ♥ Slimming and streamlining government organizations and operations
- ♥ Other issues



Reinforcing the Cabinet functions and leadership of the Prime Minister

- ♥ Reduction of Ministers except for the Prime Minister:
Present 20 to 14 -17
- ♥ Cabinet Secretariat : newly given initiative for basic policy-making
- ♥ Creation of the Cabinet Office with several hundreds staff
- ♥ Creation of advisory councils on economy and finance, comprehensive science and technology policies



Drastic Restructuring of Ministries and Agencies

♥ Current 23 ministerial-level organizations to be reduced to 13



Reinforcing political leadership in every ministerial-level organization

- ♥ The Deputy-Minister System: positioned between the Minister and Administrative Vice-Minister
- ♥ The System of Political Aides: Specific policy-making and planning, dealing with political affairs



Slimming and streamlining government organizations and operations

♥ Government-operated enterprises

- ▶ **Postal Services**
- ▶ **The Printing Office and the Mint of the Ministry of Finance**
- ▶ **The National Forest Service**

♥ "Independent administrative corporation" system

- ▶ **Independent legal status outside ministry or agency**
- ▶ **Transfer policy-implementing and other functions**
- ▶ **Research activities, national hospitals, national museums, mint and printing operations, export-import insurance activities etc.,**
- ▶ **Flexible management**
- ▶ **Preparation of a mid-term plan**
- ▶ **An evaluation committee of the supervising Ministry**
- ▶ **A central evaluation organ of the Ministry of General Affairs**



Slimming and streamlining government organizations and operations - 2

♥ Reduction of organizations of ministerial-level organizations

- ▶ Bureau level units : From 128 to 96
- ▶ Division level units : From 1200 to 1000

♥ Reduction of the posts of full-time employees

- ▶ A reduction-in-force plan: At least 10% reduction for a ten-year period starting from January 2001
- ▶ Expected to reduce 25% of its employees in ten years



Other issues

♥ Civil service systems

- ▶ The reform of civil service systems and practices is indispensable
- ▶ A new government-wide system of personnel management

♥ Evaluation function

- ▶ Strengthening policy and performance evaluation function
- ▶ A policy evaluation unit of every ministry
- ▶ A central evaluation organ of the Ministry of General Affairs



Conclusion

♥ The reorganization of central ministries and agencies: 23 to 13

▶ Never experienced in Japan in peacetime

♥ Abolition or consolidation of ministerial-level organizations

▶ Extremely difficult task in every developed countries

♥ The reform of this time : highly appreciated

♥ Organizational changes

▶ Changes of framework and process of decision-making

▶ Changes of the contents of decision and the speed of decision-making



Conclusion - continued

♥ Several points to make the current reform as meaningful and fruitful as possible

- ▶ Changes in the mentality, attitude and culture of civil servants, politicians and the people
- ▶ Strengthening the role of politicians in the decision-making process and constructing the cooperative relationship between politicians and administrators
- ▶ Follow-up of the reform efforts by the mass media and the public
- ▶ Public disclosure of the results of the reform

