



FCMUN VIII

At Mount Holyoke College

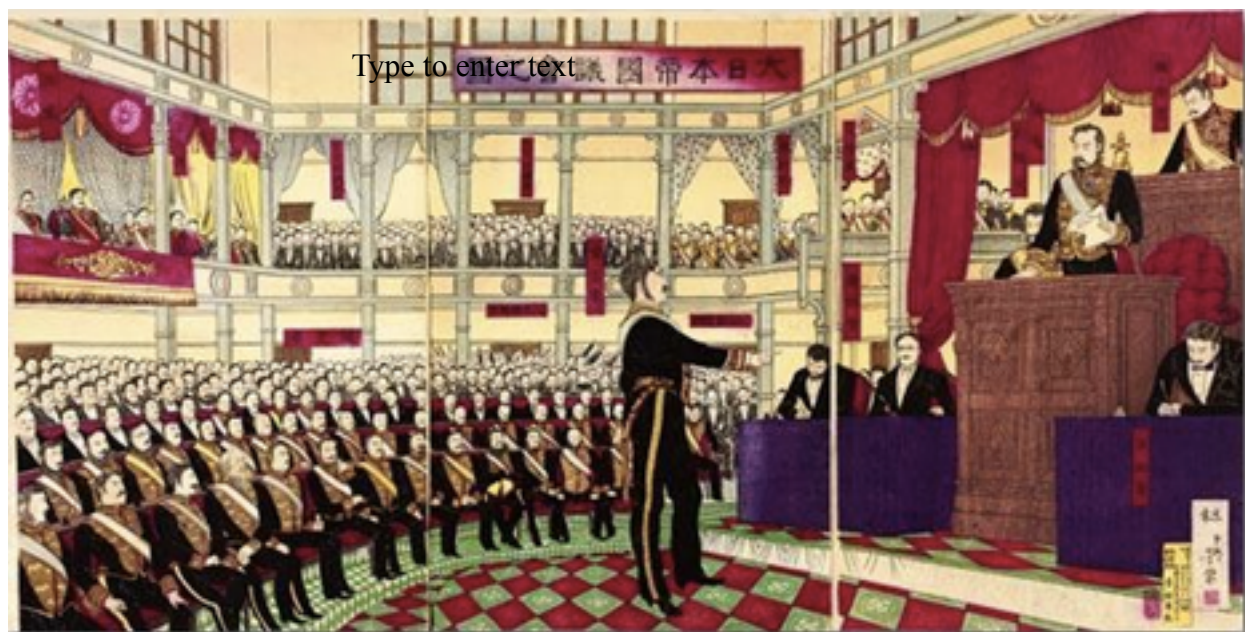
March 27th - March 29th

Welcome Letter:

Dear Delegates,

I'd like to welcome you to FCMUN VIII and to the Japanese Imperial Diet. My name is Kelly Charest and I will be serving as your director for the committee Democracy and Empire: Taisho Period Japan. I am a sophomore at Mount Holyoke College where I'm majoring in International Relations and minoring in Mandarin Chinese. I have been involved in Mount Holyoke MUN since my first year, and in addition to traveling to conferences I also was a staff member during FCMUN VII. Outside of MUN I enjoy traveling (I will be studying abroad in Beijing this summer), snowboarding and sailing. I am looking forward to seeing your thoughtful and creative solutions to the crises coming your way!

Best,
Kelly Charest



“Illustration of the Imperial Diet of Japan” by Gotō Yoshikage, 1890



Historical Background

Historians frequently place the beginning of the “Taisho Democracy” period of Japanese history in 1910, and terminate that period not with the death of the Taisho Emperor in 1926, but instead with the Manchurian Incident in 1931. In the 1910s and 1920s, millions of Japanese people felt they had greater access to rights, prosperity, education, and culture than the previous generation. Many could take part in a government increasingly led by political parties, rather than unelected oligarchs as in the Meiji period. A key feature of Taisho democracy was the growth of parliamentary politics, manifested in the Japanese Imperial Diet. However, this period was also characterized by a simultaneous and seemingly contradictory pursuit of empire. By 1910 Japan had officially annexed Korea as a central part of its expanding empire.



A map from 1919 of Asia showing the political boundaries at the time: the Japanese Empire, including Chosen (Korea) and Formosa (Taiwan)

The year is 1918, the end of the Great War is in sight, and Japan is prepared to emerge as a great power on the world stage. Despite Japan’s relatively minor military involvement in the war, its role has had major political and diplomatic significance. Japan has gained greater status internationally and expanded territorially in Asia and the Pacific. This territorial expansion was accomplished in part by gaining German-held territory. Within weeks of declaring war on Germany, Japanese forces took Qingdao, and in October of 1914, the Japanese navy seized the Marshall, Caroline, and Mariana Islands from the Germans. Japan’s political and economic influence in China has also grown. In January 1915, Prime Minister Okuma Shigenobu and Foreign Minister Kato Takaaki presented the Twenty-One Demands to Yuan Shikai. These demands served to: confirm Japan’s role in Qingdao, grant Japanese settlement and extraterritorial rights in Manchuria and eastern Inner Mongolia, give Japan control of the Hanyeping mines, and prohibit China from granting other countries harbor and coastal rights.

Since the autumn of 1917, Japanese generals have been agitating for Japanese intervention to support the anti-Communist (White) Russian forces in Siberia. Prime Minister Terauchi has agreed, concerned over the presence of the Communist USSR so near to colonial Korea. Along with British, American, and Canadian forces, Japanese troops are currently active in Siberia.

During the war effort, European countries directed their attention and resources toward the battles in Europe, allowing Japan to compete in sales of advanced industrial products in Asian markets, and to play a radically expanded role in China. The economic benefits of the Great War have improved the lot of Japan's poorest and led to the expansion of the middle class, who aspire to greater political and social participation. Industrial output increased fivefold during the war, from 1.4 billion yen in 1914 to 6.8 billion yen in 1918. This increase resulted from Japanese producers filling orders for munition from the allies and claiming former European and American markets in Asia. The war allowed technologically advanced industries space to develop, and these industries are poised to retain their foothold in Japan when Europeans reenter the Japanese market. It also opened less technologically sophisticated markets, such as match production, which face stiff foreign competition following the war's conclusion.

Structure of the Committee

This committee begins in 1918 and ends in 1931. As members of the Japanese Imperial Diet, delegates must contend with factionalism, conflicting individual aims, and the power of the emperor and military, in order to confront domestic crises and colonial unrest. Ultimately, the actions of this body will dictate course of Japanese history and the future role of parliamentary government in Japanese politics.

Contemporary challenges facing the committee

Tension with the new USSR:

Since the autumn of 1917, Japanese generals have been agitating for Japanese intervention to support the anti-Communist (White) Russian forces in Siberia. Prime Minister Terauchi has agreed to send troops, fearful that Communist USSR might endanger Japanese interests in colonial Korea. Along with British, American, and Canadian forces, Japanese troops are currently active in Siberia.

Post-war economic downturn:

The economic benefits of The Great War have improved the quality of life for Japan's poorest, and led to the expansion of the middle class. Industrial output increased fivefold during the war, as Japanese producers were filling orders for munition from the allies and claiming former European and American markets in Asia. Technologically advanced industries developed during the war, and these industries are poised to retain their foothold in Japan when Europeans reenter the Japanese market. However, the war also opened less technologically sophisticated markets, which are now facing increased foreign competition.

Labor unrest:

Post-war Japan has seen the rise of mass movements advocating political change. Labor unions started large-scale strikes to protest various grievances, most notably protesters called for universal male suffrage and greater popular participation in government. The number of yearly strikes rose from 108 in 1914 to 417 strikes in 1918. At the outset of the war, there were 49 labor organizations with a membership total of 100,000, and by the end of the war 187 labor organizations had attained as many members.

Japanese Empire:

Japan's acquisition of Korea and Taiwan have made it into a powerful player in the regional and global arenas. Japan hopes to assimilate Korea to become an integral part of its empire. However, people are rarely content to be conquered. In order to preserve or expand the empire, the Diet must carefully consider its colonial policies. Whether Japan's colonies serve as valuable assets or sources of strife depends on the Diet's approach.

Ultra-nationalism and militarization:

In accordance with the Meiji Constitution, the Japanese Army and Navy are not under the direct control of the Diet. The armed forces are therefore able to exercise independent political power, despite being nominally under the control of Emperor Yoshihito. Militaristic ultra-nationalists frequently oppose the Diet and do not hesitate to use aggressive tactics to accomplish their aims.

Parliamentary procedures

Delegates will use parliamentary procedure to discuss and debate within the committee, and will also use inter-committee notes to communicate with other delegates, and crisis notes to communicate with the crisis room. Directives passed by the committee will be issued to the crisis room.

Characters

Hara Takashi (1856-1921)



Politician best known for established the political party as a fundamental institution of politics in Japan. Hara was the son of a high-ranking samurai family of northern Japan, but chose to be classified as a commoner and was baptized as a Roman Catholic. He was elected to the Diet in 1900 and re-elected eight times thereafter, serving as home minister repeatedly. He acted as the 10th Prime Minister of Japan from 1918 to 1921. Hara lowered the property qualifications for voting, enlarging the electorate to include the small landholders. However, he refused to use his party's majority to institute universal male suffrage in Japan. Hara attempted to reduce the power of the military, and he opposed the

use of Japanese soldiers in Siberia. During his term of office, Japan participated in the Paris Peace Conference, and joined the League of Nations as a founding member. He advocated for lenient policies in Korea, unpopular among conservatives and ultra-nationalists.

Kato Takaaki (1860-1926)



Japanese politician and prime minister whose government and policies were considered the most democratic in Japan before World War II. His first job was with Mitsubishi, and he supported its interests in return for the conglomerate's backing. Kato served as Foreign Minister during WWI, and was involved in the controversial issuance of the Twenty-One Demands to Chiang Kai-shek. In June 1924 he became prime minister of a new coalition government. His party won a majority in the Diet in 1925. A new period of democratic government began: universal male suffrage was enacted, the army was greatly reduced in size and influence, the power of the House of Peers was lessened, and moderate social

legislation was introduced.

Terauchi Masatake (1852-1919)

Prime Minister at the outset of the committee. A politician and military officer, Terauchi was the 9th Prime Minister of Japan from 9 October 1916 to 29 September 1918. He entered the military at the age of 12, and was army minister from 1902-1912. In 1910 he was concurrently appointed resident general of the Japanese colony in Korea, with orders to complete the annexation of Korea to Japan. He rapidly completed the Japanese military's control of the country, forcing the Korean government to accept an annexation treaty. His heavy-handed approach fostered anti-Japan sentiment in Korea. As Prime Minister Terauchi pursued a forceful policy in foreign affairs, working to increase Japanese influence in mainland China and supporting military intervention in Siberia.

Tanaka Giichi (1863- 1929)

Tanaka distinguished himself in the Russo-Japanese War and as a member of the Japanese army stationed in Manchuria in the early 1900s. Appointed minister of war in 1918, he was one of the most forceful advocates of Japanese involvement in a Siberian expedition against the new Soviet regime in Russia. As Prime Minister his foreign policy was more belligerent than that of his predecessors, but Tanaka continued to seek international cooperation, pursuing trade and economic interests in China but remaining adamant about retaining Japanese control in southern Manchuria. Tanaka's aggressive tone toward China provoked an anti-Japanese reaction on the Chinese mainland. His efforts to deal with the 1927 economic crisis in Japan led to an inflationary spiral in the country, causing social unrest. When he moved to punish army officers involved in the assassination of Chang Tso-lin, the army refused to back him.

Shidehara Kijuro (1872-1951)

Japanese diplomat, statesman, and prime minister for a brief period after World War II (1945–46). He was so closely identified with the peaceful foreign policy followed by Japan in the 1920s that this policy is usually referred to as Shidehara diplomacy. Shidehara entered the diplomatic service in 1899 and served in Korea, London, Washington, and the Netherlands. As ambassador to the United States in 1919, he argued in vain against U.S. immigration laws discriminating against the Japanese. He was the chief Japanese delegate to the Washington Conference. As foreign minister of Japan from 1924 to 1927 and again from 1929 to 1931, Shidehara became known as an advocate of a conciliatory policy toward China and a policy of economic rather than military expansion. Although a liberal in foreign policy, he was conservative in domestic affairs, a fact that may be partly explained by his long association with the Mitsubishi financial interests.

Kato Tomosaburo (1861-1923)

Navy Minister at the outset of the committee. Tomosaburo was a career navy officer and statesman. He was born in Hiroshima, the son of a samurai of the Hiroshima Clan. In 1873 he entered the Naval Academy, and served in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars. As navy minister from 1915 to 1923, Tomosaburo directed Japanese naval operations in World War I and the naval expansion thereafter. At the Washington Conference he accepted the principle of naval limitation. He was prime minister from 1922-1923. He decided on the withdrawal from Siberia and acceded to the Washington Naval Treaty.

Hamaguchi Osachi (1870-1931)

Japanese politician and prime minister (1929–30) at the outset of the Great Depression. After his graduation from the Tokyo Imperial University in 1895, he joined the government in the Finance Ministry. Rising rapidly through the ranks, he entered politics and in 1914 was elected to the Diet. In 1924 he became finance minister in the government of Katō Takaaki and then minister of home affairs. Soon he was elected president of the liberal Minseitō, and in July 1929 he was made prime minister. His policies as Prime Minister were often unpopular. In order to combat rising inflation, he returned Japan to the gold standard and promoted mechanization and “rationalization” of industry. The effects of the world depression, however, deflated the Japanese economy even further than Hamaguchi had intended, and his measures led to great social unrest.

Moreover, his plan to cut civil-service salaries met with resistance. His attempts to force the military to yield to civilian leadership aroused conservative disapproval. His acceptance of the terms of the 1930 London Naval Treaty limiting armaments also gained him enemies.

Saionji Kinmochi (1849-1940):

Saionji was the longest-surviving member of the oligarchy that governed Japan after the Meiji Restoration (1868). As prime minister and elder statesman (genro), he attempted to moderate his country's increasing militarism in the early 20th century. Saionji was born into the old court nobility. After studying in France, he returned to Japan in 1881. During his years in office he attempted to curtail military expenditures and pushed for party control of the cabinet. In 1919 he headed Japan's delegation at the Paris Peace Conference. As a genro he was a close and trusted adviser of the emperor. Because of his moderating influence on ultra-nationalistic and militaristic elements in pre-World War II Japan, right-wing fanatics in the 1930s made several unsuccessful attempts to assassinate him.

Takahashi Korekiyo (1854-1936)

Finance Minister at the outset of the committee. Takahashi was born in Tokyo out of wedlock, he was adopted by a Sendai Clan samurai. After studying in the United States, he worked for Ministry of Education and Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce. He displayed his skill in the flotation of foreign loans for raising funds for the Russo-Japanese War. He became the president of the Nihon Ginko (Bank of Japan) in 1911. He had a positive financial approach called “Takahashi Finance.” To bring Japan out of the Great Depression, he instituted expansionary monetary and fiscal policy, abandoning the gold standard in December 1931, and running deficits. As his policy was to control military expenditure, he opposed the military.

Wakatsuki Reijiro (1866-1949)

Wakatsuki was a government official and statesman, who served as Prime Minister on two separate occasions. Born in Shimane as the son of a samurai of the Matsue Clan. In 1892, he graduated from the Law College of the Imperial University and served in Ministry of Finance. He held posts as tax bureau director and Vice-Minister of Finance and became a member of the House of Peers in 1911. In addition, he served as Minister of Finance repeatedly. In 1924, he assumed the office of Minister of Home Affairs in the cabinet of Takaaki Kato and worked to enact the Universal Manhood Suffrage Law. During Wakatsuki's second term as Prime Minister, he failed to control the Imperial Japanese Army. He was unable to prevent the Manchurian Incident, or to rein in the Army from further escalation of hostilities in China afterwards.



Goto Shinpei (1857-1929)

Home Minister at the outset of the committee. Born in Iwate, the son of a samurai of the Mizusawa Clan. He graduated from Sukagawa Medical School. After receiving his M.D. degree in Germany, Gotō became a member of the Public Health Bureau in Japan. Imprisoned on a poisoning charge, he was soon released and rose rapidly within the government. After his country's seizure of Taiwan during the Sino-Japanese War, he was made the director of the civil administration of the island. Along with General Kodama Gentarō, Goto successfully modernized the Taiwanese economy and made Taiwan a financially independent colony of Japan. Gotō believed in the urgency of Japanese expansion into Asia, and worked toward this goal as the first head of the South Manchurian Railroad. Gotō pushed for an aggressive and expansionist Japanese foreign policy during World War I, and strongly endorsed the Japanese intervention in Siberia.



Uchida Kosai (1865-1936)

Foreign Minister at the outset of the committee.

Son of a samurai of the Kumamoto clan, Uchida Kosai graduated from the Law College of the Imperial University in 1887 and joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that same year. He was variously appointed as envoy to the Qing, Austria, and the United States. He signed the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between the United States and Japan in 1911. In 1931 Uchida became president of the South Manchuria Railways Company. He earned himself the nickname of the Uchida Shodo Gaiko on occasion of his parliamentary replies over the issue of the endorsement of Manchukuo.



Inukai Tsuyoshi (1855-1932)

Inukai Tsuyoshi was born in Okayama, the son of a samurai of the Okayama Clan. Inukai began his career as a reporter. Inukai's efforts in party politics opened the way for the gradual development of a cabinet selected by the majority party in the Diet. Upon becoming prime minister in December 1931 his government immediately took the country off the gold standard and began efforts to reflate the economy. Inukai was staunchly opposed to attempts by the military to wrest control from the Diet, and attempted to de-escalate the situation in Manchuria.

Research Resources:

<http://history.hanover.edu/texts/1889con.html>

<http://etc.usf.edu/maps/pages/2700/2778/2778.htm>

http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/throwing_off_asia_01/toa_essay02.html

<http://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/a03302/>

<https://www.facinghistory.org/nanjing-atrocities-crimes-war/taisho-democracy-japan-1912-1926>

<http://www.ndl.go.jp/portrait/e/>

Lipman, Molony, and Michael Robinson. *Modern East Asia*. London: Laurence King Publishing, 2012.