



Stanford Model United Nations Conference 2014

The Meiji Restoration



Chair: Justin Hsuan, jhsuan@stanford.edu

CoChair: Jiabo Feng

Crisis Director: Brooke Mandujano

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to this special committee! I hope you are as excited as I am. As you will witness first-hand, the Meiji Restoration was a dramatic turning point in Japan's history. For that reason, many believe it to be more accurately a revolution.

Please first consider the tumultuous environment of the 19th century. This was the age of rapid industrialization. Across the world populations were shifting due to urbanization, factories were displacing farms, and new markets were being created. Hungry for new consumers and the natural resources necessary, newly-industrialized nations sent emissaries overseas to search for new opportunities in foreign lands. Asia became a prime target for Western governments as Europe and the United States made inroads on countries such as India, China, and Japan.

Now please consider the state of Japan at this time. Imagine a government being threatened for the first time by a Western power. Imagine an ultimatum signed by the U.S. President threatening military action to enforce open trade between Japan and the West. Imagine the numerous young and patriotic samurai witnessing their beloved nation threatened and helpless to resist. Imagine the rice farmers moving from the villages to the capital city of Edo for the first time to open up shops. Imagine wealthy merchants who still cannot gain the respect of poor peasants and impoverished samurai. I hope that is helpful to attempt to gain the mindset of the people of Japan during this fascinating and chaotic time.

The committee opens at that very critical tipping point: that moment when anything can happen. Everything is within the grasp of you, the leaders of a newly-enlightened Japan, provided that you have the will and the vision. Japan is a putty of a nation, waiting to be shaped into the state of your dreams. Do not be restrained by your knowledge of what Japan eventually became. At this moment, you can only guess at the consequences of your actions. Plan not for the future Japan you know, but the future Japan you, the Meiji leaders, believe in and strive for. Do not live in the shadow of Japan's past; do not live in the penumbra of Japan's future either. Believe that you do not, that you cannot, know what will happen tomorrow or even today. This is a crisis committee after all. It will be extremely helpful to you to delve deeply into Japanese history and especially the specifics of the Meiji Restoration; you will need enough knowledge to feel confident in this fast-paced committee. Creativity and a willing and adventurous spirit are key.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me. Happy researching, and get excited!

Your Chair/Emperor,
Justin Hsuan

Introduction to the Historical Context of the Meiji Restoration

The Meiji Restoration, though it was carried out rather swiftly, had been in the making for many years. To understand its roots, we must go far back – very far back – back to the medieval period of Japanese history (1185-1600), when the nation was loosely united and ruled by powerful feudal lords and their clans known as daimyo. The daimyo would continually fight one another over territory, enlisting samurai to fight their battles for them. This period of instability would finally come to a halt in 1600, when the feudal lord Tokugawa Ieyasu decisively conquered his enemies and established the far-reaching Tokugawa shogunate, also known as the Bafuku. For the next two and a half centuries, the Bafuku would control Japan, heralding an era (the Edo period, 1603-1868) of dramatic changes. As the government centralized and solidified its power, a merchant economy developed. A greater portion of the population shifted from the traditional occupation, rice farming, to trading in goods and services as urban centers expanded. There was greater contact with the outside world, and foreign traders and missionaries came to Japan; Western governments would soon send representatives to negotiate for special trade arrangements, as they did in China.

There were many positive developments during the Edo period. This period of peace produced remarkable cultural development, increased literacy (though not compulsory education) due to the printing press, and technological advancement that enabled farmers to greatly expand rice production in order to meet the demands of a growing population.

But despite this being a period of peace, the Tokugawa regime was not beloved by all of its citizens. Those who were eager to continue shepherding Japan into the modern age did not find the government wholly cooperative. The shogunate was very much conscious of preserving their power, and for that reason, refrained from engaging in foreign affairs or inking trade agreements with Western powers. The government was even weary of foreign influence within, as foreign missionaries had been spreading Christianity amongst the peasants. Concerned about their loyalty, the shogunate persecuted the Christian peasants, leading to a revolt known as the Shimabara Rebellion in 1637. After the rebellion was crushed, foreigners were placed under even stricter restrictions.

Further dissent came from the growing merchant class and low-ranking samurai. These were the two main groups dissatisfied with the regime's stagnant policies, albeit for different reasons.

Though the merchants were high in income, their position near the very bottom of the social structure (below peasants, and just above prostitutes, beggars, and servants) had not changed. Even the most wealthy merchants could not raise their social status which was fixed at birth. They were also frustrated with the government's isolationism. They wanted access to those lucrative foreign markets to trade their goods, which the shogunate denied them.

The samurai, who, since the frequent skirmishes of the medieval period had ended, were essentially put out of work. Though they ranked high in social status, just below daimyo, many fell on hard economic times and were in debt. They were forbidden to engage in

business and farming, and many fell into poverty, or became aimless and detached wanderers.

The arrival of U.S. Commodore Perry in 1853 proved to be a watershed moment. Accompanied by an imposing fleet of massive warships, he came to deliver a letter to the shogunate demanding Japan open trade relations and promised to return a year later. The visit only confirmed what many dissenters had already feared - the shogunate was ill-equipped and too weak to handle what was becoming the inevitable influx of foreign influence. Opposition arose in strong force, led by a group of aggressive, disenfranchised young samurai known as shishi (men of spirit). They vowed to revere the emperor and banish the barbarians. The Satsuma and Chosu samurai clans began bulking up their armed forces in preparation of a coup d'eta, which they staged in 1868 even as the shogunate fought back. They established a new emperor, sixteen-year-old Emperor Mutsuhito and issued a Charter Oath promising an era of enlightened rule, hence the name, Meiji. This oath included the formal abolition of feudalism and an expansion of human rights. The first major action was a law requiring the feudal lords to cede their land to the emperor, and hence the new state, in 1870.

[The Committee]

Our committee begins here, at this precarious junction. The government has been established enough that it now solidly enough exists; the Tokugawa shogunate has been ousted, the daimyo stripped of their land. Promises have been made to the nation. As a committee,

you must now decide on a plan of action to make concrete your high-minded ideals. The future of Japan rests in your hands.

To help you think about and start planning a strategy, below are concerns that would be of importance to you, the leaders of the new Meiji regime. But in your research, you should really fully research the ambitions and actions of the Meiji government. Though not by any means beholden to what they did or do not do, you can glean from it the scope of what about Japanese society they were set on transforming (or "restoring").

- 1) How should the Tokugawa shogunate – and any of their loyal legions - be dealt with?
- 2) Should the traditional social hierarchy be altered, updated?
- 3) Should the restrictions on samurai be lifted, or new ones put in place?
- 4) How should Japan go about its foreign policy? Should it form alliances with certain countries? How to negotiate trade agreements? And what should the policy be towards foreigners (like traders and missionaries) living within Japan?
- 5) How will you deliver upon your promise of greater human rights (who will receive these)? What education system do you intend to implement? What will you teach?
- 6) Most generally, but perhaps most essentially, you must figure out this important question: what does it mean to be Japanese? What, exactly, is traditional Japanese culture? What elements of modernization should be kept, and which elements of traditional Japan should be restored?

Committee Rules and Procedures

Time Scope for the Committee

The committee will begin on October 24, 1972 and end on October 24, 1975.

Directives

Unlike GA committees, crisis committees pass directives. Directives are generally shorter than resolutions and several are usually introduced during one committee session. Different types of directives are explained below. The chair has to approve directives before they are voted upon. Once a directive has been passed, crisis will decide how to respond. The chairs will be placing a high emphasis on historical accuracy, creative and comprehensive directives. What that means is we don't want to see directives that say, "Ask contact in Emperor's government to enact reforms." Instead, we want to see you utilizing your character's background and influence, focusing on interests your gang's economic interests, and coming up with complete and thoughtful directives that achieve your objectives. The more thought-out your story line is, the more likely it will be successful in crisis.

Joint Directives

Joint directives are between individuals. Include all the delegates names in the sponsors' list; it will not be formally voted on in committee. Individual joint directives can be secret or public. If marked public, the directive will be read out when directives are introduced but will not be formally voted on.

Personal Directives

Delegates may also issue personal directives. These may either be secret or public, with public directives read out when directives are introduced.

Communiqués

Communiqués are public declarations or private communications with individuals or groups. Crisis will embody the people you are trying to contact, and update you on your communiqué accordingly. Rules for committee, joint and personal communiqués follow the same rules as directives.

Please note that you should not assume your communiqués are secure just because you mark them as secret. You may want to include specific measures to prevent sabotage or sensitive information getting leaked.

Position List

1. Sakamoto Ryoma: negotiated the peace between the Choshu and Satsuma provinces, key figure in overthrowing the Tokugawa Shogunate
2. Saigo Takamori: leader of the Satsuma region, a great and influential samurai, leader of the imperial forces during the Boshin War, later a Meiji bureaucrat
3. Kido Takayoshi: instrumental in establishing the Satsuma-Choshu Alliance, Imperial Advisor in the Meiji government
4. Okubo Toshimichi: one of the three great nobles, one the main founders of modern Japan, helped form the Alliance
5. Ito Hirobumi: is eventually Japan's first Prime Minister
6. Guido Verbeck: Dutch advisor/missionary
7. Matsukata Masayoshi:
8. Saito Hajime (later known as Fujita Goro): perhaps best known as a character in the anime
9. Iwakura Tomomi
10. Saionji Kinmochi
11. Sanjō Sanetomi
12. Saigō Takamori
13. Kuroda Kiyotaka
14. Mori Arinori
15. Inoue Kaoru
16. Takechi Hanpeita
17. Yamagata Aritomo
18. Gotō Shōjirō
19. Katsu Kaishu
20. Ōki Takatō

21. Etō Shimpei
22. Saigo Judo
23. Hayashi Tadasu
24. Inoue Kowashi
25. Williams Smith Clark: Agriculture advisor
26. Erwin Balz: founded modern Western medicine in Japan
27. Gustave Boissonade: founder of Japan's modern legal system
28. Henry Willard Denison: American legal advisor and diplomat
29. Leonce Verny: naval engineer/modern infrastructure
30. Jakob Meckel: Prussian Army Advisor
31. William Edward Ayrton: Physicist/Science Advisor
32. James Alfred Ewing: seismologist
33. Thomas Waters: civil engineer/architect
34. Vincenzo Ragusa: introduced sculpting techniques to Japan
35. Franz Eckert: helped compose Japan's national anthem

Works Cited

- "Did the Meiji Restoration Destroy Traditional Values?" Stetson.edu. Stetson University, n.d. Web. 2 July 2014.
- The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Meiji Constitution (1889, Japan)." Encyclopedia Britannica Online. Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. Web. 4 July 2014.
- The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. "The Meiji Restoration." Encyclopedia Britannica. N.p., 8 Jan. 2014. Web. 4 July 2014.
- Kniola, Ben. "OPINION: The Significance of the Meiji Restoration." Think Japan. N.p., 8 Apr. 2011. Web. 2 July 2014.
- Lew, Calvin M. "The Meiji Restoration." Calvinlew.com. N.p., 28 Sept. 1995. Web. 2 July 2014.
- Sumikawa, Shunsuke. The Meiji Restoration: The Roots of Modern Japan (n.d.): n. pag. Lehigh University, 29 Mar. 1999. Web. 5 July 2014.
- Tiedemann, Arthur. "Excerpts from the Meiji Constitution of 1889." Modern Japan: A Brief History (1962): n. pag. Asia for Educators. Columbia University. Web. 3 July 2014.