

- Succeeded the Meiji era (1868-1912) characterised by authoritarian rule under oligarchs
- Post-World War One context of Japan
- Taisho Democracy (1912-26): Liberal and democratic trend across political, cultural and socio-economic spheres
 - Under Emperor Taisho until death in December 1926
- 1920s: flourishing of liberalism
 - Heralded by 1918 appointment of Prime Minister Hara Takashi
- Influences of Western-style liberalism and traditional Shinto-nationalism

#1 Success: Budding political democracy through structural reforms (top-down)

Party politics

- 1900 Ito Hirobumi established Seiyukai
 - Brought to prominence by Hara Takashi in 1918
- 1916 Kenseikai founded by merging 3 smaller parties
- 1922 Japanese Communist Party founded

Jansen: Power shifting from Meiji oligarchs to bureaucrats and zaibatsu

- 1918 Hara Takashi appointed to PM
 - First commoner background
 - Seiyukai
- 1924: PM Kato from Kenseikai
 - 3-party coalition government

Political representation granted

- 1925 Universal Male Suffrage expanded electorate from 3 million to 14 million

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Expanded political representation promulgated equity, growing power of democratic will to enact legislative change

Scale: Unprecedented diversification of political spectrum, increase in representation

- Conservative leaning Seiyukai to anarchist Communist Party

Symbolic and historic Prime Ministership of Hara Kei

- Common person able to risk the ranks = social mobility
- Destruction of feudal class restriction

Critical analysis: Japan only in infant stages, far from full-fledged democracy

1, Asymmetry of power still remained between bureaucrats and their electorate

- Only 20% of population could vote
 - Low regard for peasants and workers

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- Hara Kei used gerry-mandering and pork barrel politics in 1918 to rig Seiyukai majority
- Perceived corruption - zaibatsu, bureaucrats and party politicians all part of elite
 - Seiyukai = Mitsui cabinet (1927-29)
 - Miniseito = Mitsubishi cabinet (1929-30)

#2 Success: Rise in feminist culture, spread liberal ideals accompanying Westernisation

Awakening of feminist movement with influx of Western fashion and media

Pyle: Taisho democracy sowed seeds for increased representation in male-dominated society

<p>Rise of the liberal moga (social + cultural)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seito magazine propagated the liberal moga <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ influential females Akiko and Raicho ● Counter-narrative against conservative magazines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Shunfu no Tomo</i> (The Housewife's Friend) ● 1920 New Women's Association <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Women's rights organisation for education, politics and work ● 60% female workforce <p>Socio-political involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1922 revision of Article 5 Police Law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Previously forbade women from attending political meetings ● Scale: Led majority of 1918 Rice Riots <p>Resistance against deeply ingrained female oppression - embedded in Meiji slogan "good wife, wise mother"</p>	<p>Gordon - despite liberal moga majority of Japanese viewed them as 'un-Japanese', no acceptance → Evaluation: PYLE more convincing.</p> <p>1, Nascent socio-political consciousness Resistance against deeply ingrained female oppression Meiji slogan "good wife, wise mother"</p> <p>2, Breakthrough: endorsement for feminism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lower House supported 1925 Election Law (suffrage bill) ● Resounding popular support by male feminists like Junichiro and Takeo <p>3, LT impact - smoother transition into post-war society.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1931: Suffrage bill defeated by conservative pressure in Upper House of Diet ● BUT feminist movements sowed seeds for suffrage in 1945.
<p>#3 Success: Politicisation of the masses, breaking the mould of <i>Kokutai</i> national polity (bottom-up)</p>	
<p>Urban activism (students and labour) challenged institutional power</p> <p><u>Labour</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Labour disputes increased tenfold to 497 (1919) ● 1921 Japanese Federation of Labour Unions ● 1920 Hachiman Ironworks strike 224,000 workers ● 1921 Kobe mass demonstration 35,000 workers for union rights <p><u>Student</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New Man Society (Tokyo University Law Faculty) - propagated <i>minponshugi</i> (popular will) ● Professor Minobe Director of Law Fac ● 1924 National Federation of Societies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Network to spread socialism, marxism, anarchism etc 	<p>Flourishing labour demonstrations despite no legal protection, hostile environment dominated by zaibatsu elites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bold challenge of institutional power entrenched in social hierarchy <p>Legislative change: 1925 revision of Police Regulation Law - removed restrictions on labour activities</p> <p>Jansen - large-scale student activities were short-lived, ended in 1928 police sweeps disagree</p> <p>1, Scale of impact ignited movements across Tokyo and Kyoto universities</p> <p>2, LT impact - penetrated deeply into society through emergence of mobo and moga.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ United various clubs and societies <hr/> <p>Rural social-activism shows awakening political consciousness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tenant-landlord disputes rose from 256 to 2700 (1918-1926) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 75% success rate ● Tenant unions mushroomed from 173 to 4582 (1917-1927) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Encompassed 10% of all farmers <p>→ Rural uprisings product of liberalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1918 Rice Riots <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1 million Japanese ○ 42 out of 47 prefectures 	<p>Creation of a new class of politically-active, educated youth</p> <hr/> <p>Wide scale - nationwide uprising shows pervasive rural-liberalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Largest popular demonstration in history originated in tenants in rural fishing villages <p>Structural reforms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1924 Tenancy Conciliation Law - legally addressed tenant disputes ● 1926 legislation - provided farmers low-interest loans <p>→ Pivotal shift!! Most traditional sector of Japanese population opposing elitist hierarchy, forcing politicians to pander to rural-liberalism</p> <p>Longevity - liberal <i>kokumin</i> ideology continued to be propagated (unification of masses)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Liberalism sinking its roots and transforming traditional social structure ● Shifting away from polarisation of rural and urban + class divisions
<p>#4: MIXED: Japan's inclusion in geopolitical decision-making, symbolic parity with West</p>	
<p>Treaty of Versailles - Shandong territory transferred from Germany to Japan</p> <p>League of Nations - permanent member</p> <p>Washington Conference 1922</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 4 Power Pact with USA, France, Britain <p>⇒ Era of Shidehara Kijuro's diplomacy: active favouring of peaceful conferences over aggression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Military spending cut from 42% of budget to 28% (1922-27) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1, Solidified Japan's status in the region → Only Asian power to be founding member of the LoN + seat at table 2, Intention: Suggested by downsizing of military to prioritise international engagement 3. Economic benefits - friendly trade relations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● USA was Japan's largest supplier of capital ● USA purchased 40% of Japan's exports
<p>Foreign policy frustrations due to Western resistance :(</p>	<p>Liberal Shidehara diplomacy appeared to have failed in granting Japan parity with West</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 5 Power Treaty: Curtailed Japan's foreign policy ambitions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Anglo-American rejection of 10:10:7 naval ratio ● 9 Power Treaty guaranteed Chinese sovereignty ● Rejection of racial equality clause on League Covenant ● 1924 Asian Exclusion Act - US immigration banned Japanese immigrants ● 1930 Hawley-Smoot Tariff on Japanese imports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resented disarmament, saw West as having already procured their colonies but obstructing Japan's interests in China <p>Magnitude: extended to resentment of all Western-style elements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fuelled nationalists like Kita Ikki and Konoe to reject party politics <p>Sowed the seeds for the rise of militarists Capitalised upon rising anti-West sentiment to champion expansion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1928 assassination of Zhang Zuolin ● 1931 railway explosion <p>→ Veered Japan off course of liberalism, enabled by disenchantment with peaceful diplomacy. Instead transitioned into decade of forceful assertion of Japanese power</p>
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#5 Failure: Pervasive ultranationalism

<p>Ultranationalistic politics</p> <p>Shinto constitution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Military Chief of Staff direct access to Emperor ● Army responsible to Emperor ● Ministers of War and Navy could influence cabinet formation <p>1925 Peace Preservation Law</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Banned changed to political structure (entrenched power) <p>PM Tanaka Giichi's Prime Ministership in 1927</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Heavy censorship ● Arrested 2300 in 1928-29 ● 1928 banned all political parties infiltrated by Communists. ● Tokko established to monitor left-wing activity 	<p>Blocked many structural reforms from facilitating full democracy = political liberalism short-lived</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ministers Ugaki and Araki endorsed ultranationalists <p>Tanaka = peak of ultra-nationalist politics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Militarisation of politics through use of state violence <p>Critical analysis: Shintoism enshrined ultranationalism through Emperor deification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Role as figurehead allowed ultranationalist elements to corrupt liberalism from within. ● Paved the way for Japan's descent into militarism.
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<p>Pervasive in civilian population</p>	<p>Long-term undercurrent of ultranationalism that seeped into the mindsets of population.</p>
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<p>Ultrationalist groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Late 1800s: Genyosha, Black Dragon Society ● 1920s: Kokuhonsha and Blood Brotherhood League ● Kita Ikki championed military governance under deified Emperor <p>Political assassinations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hara Kei 1921 ● Failed attempt by radicals of Emperor Hirohito in 1923 ● Hamaguchi 1930 ● Inukai 1932 <p>⇒ Reflects ultrationalism embedded in psyche</p> <p>Militaristic intensification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PM Kato (1924-6) sent 4 disbanded army units to schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Military education introduced in middle and high schools ● Perpetuated through semi-governmental organisations: youth groups, military associations, women's auxiliaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1890 Imperial Rescript - infiltrated education curriculum since Meiji era <p>Evaluative: Ultrationalism reared its head in a series of assassinations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Extremely significant tell of political instability, suggests unpopularity of liberal democracy. ● Fact that blatant assassinations did not incite public backlash shows how endemic ultrationalism was <p>→ Society tolerant towards subversion of democracy and radicalism</p>
#6 Failure: Great Depression that catalysed collapse of liberalism	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Post-war inflation and debt ● 1923 Kanto earthquake ● 1927 Bank crisis - 25% of banks failed ● 1929 Great Depression <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rural incomes fell from index of 100 to 33 ○ Over 50% of active factories shut down ○ Silk prices fell by ⅔ ○ Exports lost 43% of value <p>Jansen: Depression and economic crises accompanied the decade of budding political liberalisation. Economics hugely contributed to continental expansion.</p>	<p>Fuelled anti-establishment and support for militarism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Post-Kanto: Military, police and 3000 vigilante groups massacred 2600-6600 Korean and Chinese (scapegoat) ● Osugi Sakae (anarchist) strangled by police captain ● 9 alleged communists shot <p>→ Rooted in <i>kokutai</i> - in bid for national polity, any divergence was deemed anti-Japanese</p> <p>Rural: Suffered most from fall in silk. (Hanneman)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ignited support amongst 2 million rural households for military propaganda due to low incomes. ● Trigger: Supported expansion into Manchuria for resources and space

	<p>Synthesis with political weaknesses of parties - inability to deal with effects of GD undermined Taisho Democracy</p>
<p>#7 Failure: Underlying conservatism in party politics under guise of democracy</p>	
<p>Elitist acts by party politicians</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pork barrel politics and gerrymandering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hara Kei made promises to better infrastructure in provinces that supported him ● Used redistricting to rig Seiyukai majority <hr/> 2. Perceived corruption - zaibatsu, bureaucrats and party politicians all part of elite <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seiyukai 1927-29 deemed Mitsui Cabinet ● Minseito deemed Mitsubishi cabinet 1929 <hr/> 3. Tokenistic reforms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1925 male suffrage passed as a valve for growing public unrest demonstrated in growing activism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Passed in conjunction with 1925 Peace Preservation Law banning political discussion ● Failed to enfranchise women <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1925 Election Law Upper House overruled Lower House ● Neglected peasants and workers 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Suggests that historic rise to power of commoner not entirely founded on popular support, but rather political manoeuvres within the confines of a conservative system. <hr/> 2. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Power still constrained in elite political circles ● Perceived corruption weakened public faith in democracy <hr/> ● Penetration: Superficial championing of democracy, sustained roots of conservatism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Weak hold on society made it easy to topple ○ Longevity: collapsed with death of Inukai in 1932