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| Japan becomes a member of the **League of Nations** |

* Japan joined the League of Nations in 1920 as a charter member and one of four permanent members of the League Council. Until conflict arose between Japan and the organization over the 1931 Manchurian Incident, the League was a centerpiece of Japan’s policy to maintain accommodation with the Western powers. The picture of Japan as a positive contributor to international comity, however, is not the conventional view of the country in the early and mid-twentieth century. Rather, this period is usually depicted in Japan and abroad as a history of incremental imperialism and intensifying militarism, culminating in war in China and the Pacific. Even the empire’s interface with the League of Nations is typically addressed only at nodes of confrontation: the 1919 debates over racial equality as the Covenant was drafted and the 1931–1933 League challenge to Japan’s seizure of northeast China.

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| **Washington Conference** 1921: The first arms reduction conference in history, it resulted in three major treaties being signed between nine world powers (Soviet Russia was not invited) |

* Anglo-Japanese Alliance 1902 should be replaced by **Four-Power Treaty** (Britain, Japan, USA, France). Required mutual consultation regarding territorial disputes, and in general, aimed at maintaining the status quo in Asia.
* Feb 1922 **Nine-Power Treaty** (China, Belgium, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, + Four Power Treaty)
  + Chinese sovereignty to be respected
  + German territories taken in WWI by Japan should be returned (Shandong, Tsingtao)
* **Five-Power Naval Treaty** restricts naval arms race
  + Severely disliked by Japan’s naval general staff as it prevented them from fulfilling their plans of massive expansion

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| “**Taisho democracy**” – social reforms in the 1920’s |

* Full male suffrage
* Political positions increasingly based on merit rather than class
* More open society

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| Corruption in politics (business, landlords influencing the system) |

* Japanese politics were heavily influenced by the ***Zaibatsu***, or a small group of powerful Japanese companies

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| Fear of left-wing radicals and Communists (Japanese Communist Party 1920) |

* “**Peace Preservation Law**” limits political opposition

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| USA passes immigration reform with racial overtones (excludes “Asiatics”) |

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| Emperor Taisho dies; **Emperor Hirohito** assumes the throne |

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| Economic recession after 1921; farmers suffer but are suppressed by police when they try to demonstrate |

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| **Wall Street Crash 1929** |

* Precipitated an economic crisis in Japan
* Major reductions in foreign trade, currency inflation