Name _____ Mod ____ Global Studies Ms. Pojer HGHS

#1 – A Speech on Constitutional Government
(1889 – Ito Hirobumi)

Ito Hirobumi (1841-1909) was one of the key leaders of the Meiji government during the 1880s and 1890s. He oversaw the drafting of the Meiji constitution decreed by the Emperor on February 11, 1889, the supposed anniversary of the founding of the Japanese state in 600 BCE. Ito was much influenced by constitutional ideas in Germany and Austria, countries to which he had led a study mission in 1882.

"When our enlightened emperor decided to accept the open-door principle as an imperial policy….it became a matter of urgent necessity to develop the intellectual faculties of our people and to increase their business activities. This led to the abolition of the feudal system and made it possible for the Japanese people to live in a new political environment and to have diverse freedoms….The first of these freedoms was the freedom of movement, followed by the freedom to pursue an occupation of one's own choosing. Moreover, the freedom to study at any place of one's choosing was given to all. There was also granted freedom of speech in political affairs. Thus, the Japanese today enjoy freedom, each according to his own desires, within the limits of the law. These rights belong to people who live in a civilized government. If these rights are withheld and their enjoyment refused, a people cannot develop. And if the people cannot develop the nation's wealth and the nation's strength cannot develop….But the fact is that because of the imperial policy of the open-door, we have established a government which is civilized. And as we have advanced to such a position, it has become necessary to establish a fixed definition of the fundamental laws. This, in short, is the reason for the establishment of constitutional government.

A constitutional government makes a clear distinction between the realms of the ruled and the ruled, and thereby defines what the people and the sovereign should do; that is, the rights which the sovereign should exercise and the rights which the people should enjoy, followed by the procedure for the management of the government. According to the Constitution the people have the right to participate in government, but this right is at once an important obligation as well as a right. Government is a prerogative of the emperor. As you will be participating in government—which is the emperor's prerogative—you must regard this right as the responsibility of the people, the honor of the people, and the glory of the people. It is therefore a matter of the greatest importance.

In this connection what all Japanese must bear in mind is Japan's national polity [kokutai]. It is history which defines the national polity {an organized society}; thus the Japanese people have a duty to know their history….The national polity of the various countries differs one from another, but it is the testimony of the history of Japan to this day that the unification of the country was achieved around the Imperial House. So I say that the understanding of the national polity of Japan is the first important duty of our people.

In the next place we must know the aims and the policies of our country. Political parties may have their arguments, and others may have their views about the government, but they must be kept within the bounds of the aims and policies of the government. What then is the aim of the nation? It is the imperial aim decided upon at the time of the Restoration of imperial rule….The aim of our country has been from the very beginning, to attain among the nations of the world the status of a civilized nation and to become a member of the comity {social harmony} of European and American nations which occupy the position of civilized countries. To join this comity of nations means to become one of them, but in this connection, we must consider the rights and duties attendant upon membership. Among fellow men of civilized nations there is a thing called common justice. To become a member of this comity of nations it is necessary to respect this common justice. Generally speaking, all Oriental countries—China and Japan

included—have the habit of holding foreign countries in contempt and of holding their own country in esteem. But in carrying on relations according to civilized standards of common justice, it is done according to a procedure of mutual equality without contempt for the other and esteem for oneself, or vice versa….

From the standpoint of the sovereign power, that is, the emperor's prerogative to rule the country, the people are one and equal under the constitutional government. They are all direct subjects of the emperor. The so-called 'indirect subjects' no longer exist. This means that the Japanese people have been able to raise their status and to achieve for themselves a great honor. They now have the right to share in legislative rights, which come from the emperor's sovereign powers, and to elect and send representatives. Having the right to send representatives they can, indirectly, voice their opinions on the advisability and the faults of their country's administration. Thus, every member of the nation—be he a farmer, craftsman, or merchant—must become familiar beforehand with the merits and demerits of questions of government. Not only on questions of government, but also on matters concerning his own occupation, the citizen must give due thought and become prosperous. When every man becomes wealthy, the village, the county, and prefecture in turn become wealthy, and the accumulated total of that wealth becomes the wealth of Japan. The expansion of military strength and the promotion of national prestige depend upon the power of the individual members of the country. Therefore, in order to promote the development of military strength and national prestige, it is only proper and necessary to diffuse education so that the people can understand the changes and improvements with respect to their government and their society. In a constitutional government the occasions for secrecy are few—except for laws not yet proclaimed—in contradistinction to a despotic government. The principle of keeping the people uninformed in order to make them obedient has no place here. To inform them well so that they will serve well is the way of constitutional government….

Since government is concerned with the administration for the country as a whole it does not follow that its acts are always favorable to all individuals. The nation's affairs, of their own nature, are not personal and concerned with the individual. They must be carried out according to the nation's aims, the nation's prestige, and the nation's honor. It is for this reason that the people have an obligation to understand the nation's aims. They must regard the nation as their own, meet the military obligation to defend it and pay for the cost of defending it. And what happens when this cost is paid? In the past the people remitted their payments to the authorities above, beyond which they were no longer concerned. It is not so today. Government is conducted today so that one may know clearly how the money is spent and what relation the payments have to the state of the nation. If one believes that an expenditure is unwise, he may readily avail himself of the freedom of speech which he possesses as a citizen and raise his voice in objection. To resolve a situation in which the opinions of the people are so diverse as to seem impossible of reaching a decision we have established a parliament to make the decision on the basis of majority rule of its members. If you do not send representatives who are well informed on matters of government, the rights which you have earned by great effort will prove ineffective in practice.

#2 - A Letter on Japanese Foreign Policy

(August, 1914 – Yamagata Aritomo)

Yamagata Aritomo (1838-1922) was a samurai from Chonshu domain who had a long career as a military and political leader during the Meiji era. An admirer of Chancellor Otto von Bismarck's Germany, Yamagata oversaw the founding of a modern army, police force, and system of local government in Japan. In the following letter, written to the Japanese prime minister at the beginning of World War I, Yamagata addresses key foreign policy issues.

"There are people in our country who rely excessively on the military prowess {superior skill} of our empire and who believe that against China the application of force alone will suffice to gain our objectives. But the problems of lie are not so simple as to permit of their solution by the use of force alone. The principal aim of our plan today should be to improve Sino-Japanese relations and to instill in China a sense of abiding trust in us….

The recent international situation points to an increasing intensity in racial rivalry from year to year. It is a striking fact that the Turkish and Balkan wars of former years and the Austro-Serbian and the Russo-German wars of today all had their inception in racial rivalry and hatred. The anti-Japanese movement in the state of California in the United States, and the discrimination against Hindus in British Africa are also manifestations of the same racial problem. Thus, the possibility of the rivalry between the white and colored races henceforth growing in intensity and leading eventually to a clash between them cannot be ruled out entirely. When the present great conflict in Europe is over and when the political and economic order are restored, the various countries will again focus their attention on the Far East and the benefits and rights they might derive from this region. When that day comes, the rivalry between the white and the non-white races will become violent, and who can say that the white races will not unite with one another to oppose the colored peoples?

Now among the colored peoples of the Orient, Japan and China are the only two countries that have the semblance of an independent state. True, India compares favorably with China in its expansive territory and teeming population, but she has long since lost her independence, and there seems to be no reason today to believe that she will recover it. Thus, if the colored races of the Orient hope to compete with the so-called culturally advanced white races and maintain friendly relations with them while retaining their own cultural identity and independence, China and Japan, which are culturally and racially alike, must become friendly and promote each other's interests. China in the past has been invaded by other races and even subjugated by them. Thus, it is not difficult to understand why China, in rivalry with white races, is not as deeply sensitive as Japan is in this regard. But the Chinese ought to know that China in her four thousand years of history has never been under the yoke {bondage} of the white man. And thus, if she is approached with reason it will not be entirely hopeless to make her change her attitude and to instill in her the feeling of trust and reliance in our empire.

In the formulation and execution of our Chinese policy, as indispensable consideration is our American policy. America is rich, and of late she is giving great attention to the commerce, industry, and trade of China. Moreover, the great European war has not deterred he in the least. On the contrary, America enjoys, because of the war, the full advantages of the proverbial fisherman [who makes off with the catch while birds quarrel over it.] And the government of China, suspicious of the true motives of our empire, and as a means of restraining our activities in China, has been turning to America. If we fail to dissipate {to disperse} China's suspicion of us, she will rapidly turn against us and instead turn more and more to America. America herself will take advantage of such a situation and will increasingly extend her influence over China.

The immigration problem in California has made for an unhappy situation in the relations between the empire and America. It is regrettable that this problem still awaits settlement. But the empire has never regarded America as a foe {enemy}. Therefore, it is advisable, for the realization of our China policy, not to aggravate America's feelings toward us nor needlessly to arouse her suspicions over our actions. For the maintenance of peace in the Orient in the future, and the promotion of China's independence, I deem it a matter of utmost importance to negotiate in a frank and open manner with America.

I have explained above the prevailing trend of racial problems and my premonitions of a bitter clash in the future between the white and colored peoples. However, I consider it more prudent, as far as China is concerned, not to raise the issue of a league of colored peoples. Our empire is now in alliance with England; it had agreements with Russia and France; and we are mutually striving to promote both the peace of the Orient and the independence of China. But we must also realize the need to negotiate with America. Our politicians must be sternly warned against raising the issue of racialism which would hurt

the feelings of other countries and impair their friendship for us. The crux {heart} of the matter is that China must be won over by hints and suggestions, and only gradually, before we can realize our plans in the future."

QUESTIONS:

1. According to Ito, what are the main features of constitutional government?
2. What should a constitutional government do?
3. What rights should citizens have?
4. What limitations should there be on a government, or on the citizens?
5. What foreign policy issues did Yamagata think were most important?
6. What were Japan's objectives regarding China and the United States?
7. How does Yamagata's letter suggest some of the causes of World War II?