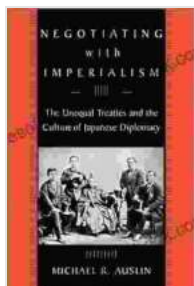


The Unequal Treaties: A Historical Retrospective and their Impact on Japanese Diplomacy



Negotiating with Imperialism: The Unequal Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy by Michael R. Auslin

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 2437 KB

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Word Wise : Enabled

Print length : 263 pages



The unequal treaties, a series of agreements imposed upon Japan by Western powers in the mid-19th century, had a profound and lasting impact on the nation's diplomacy and foreign policy. These treaties, which granted extraterritoriality and other privileges to foreign nationals, were a source of humiliation and resentment for many Japanese and contributed to a sense of national weakness and vulnerability. In the years that followed, Japanese diplomats worked tirelessly to revise these treaties and regain Japan's sovereignty, a process that would ultimately culminate in the Meiji Restoration and the end of the feudal era.

The Origins of the Unequal Treaties

The unequal treaties were a product of the Western imperialism that swept across Asia in the 19th century. As European powers sought to expand

their empires and secure access to new markets, they increasingly turned their attention to Japan, a strategically located island nation. In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States Navy arrived in Tokyo Bay with a fleet of warships, demanding that Japan open its ports to American trade. The Japanese government, fearing war with the superior Western forces, reluctantly agreed to Perry's demands, signing the Treaty of Kanagawa in 1854.

The Treaty of Kanagawa was followed by a series of similar treaties with other Western powers, including Great Britain, France, Russia, and the Netherlands. These treaties granted foreign nationals extraterritoriality, meaning that they were not subject to Japanese laws and could only be tried in their own consular courts. The treaties also gave foreigners the right to establish businesses and trade freely in Japan, and they imposed a low tariff on imported goods, making it difficult for Japanese industries to compete.

The Impact of the Unequal Treaties

The unequal treaties had a profound impact on Japanese society and politics. The presence of foreign nationals in Japan and the extraterritoriality they enjoyed created a sense of national humiliation and resentment among many Japanese. The treaties also weakened the Tokugawa shogunate, the ruling military government of Japan, and contributed to the growing unrest that would eventually lead to the Meiji Restoration in 1868.

The Meiji Restoration was a period of rapid modernization and reform in Japan. The new Meiji government sought to revise the unequal treaties and regain Japan's sovereignty. In 1871, the government sent a delegation to

the United States to negotiate a new treaty, but the American government refused to make any concessions. The Meiji government then turned to Great Britain, which was more willing to negotiate. In 1889, Japan and Great Britain signed a new treaty that abolished extraterritoriality and gave Japan control over its own tariffs.

The revision of the unequal treaties was a major diplomatic victory for Japan. It marked the end of a period of national humiliation and weakness, and it paved the way for Japan to become a major power in the world. However, the legacy of the unequal treaties would continue to shape Japanese diplomacy and foreign policy for decades to come.

The Legacy of the Unequal Treaties

The unequal treaties had a lasting impact on Japanese diplomacy and foreign policy. The humiliation of the treaties instilled in many Japanese a deep-seated distrust of Western powers, and it contributed to a sense of national insecurity that would shape Japan's foreign policy for decades to come. The treaties also created a sense of urgency among Japanese diplomats, who were determined to revise the treaties and regain Japan's sovereignty.

The legacy of the unequal treaties can be seen in a number of Japanese foreign policy decisions in the 20th century. For example, Japan's decision to ally with Nazi Germany in World War II was partly motivated by a desire to gain revenge against the Western powers that had imposed the unequal treaties. Similarly, Japan's decision to launch a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 was partly motivated by a desire to break free from the constraints of the unequal treaties and to establish a new order in Asia.

The unequal treaties are a reminder of the importance of sovereignty and the dangers of imperialism. They also provide a valuable lesson in the power of diplomacy and the importance of perseverance. The Japanese people were able to overcome the humiliation of the unequal treaties and regain their sovereignty through a combination of diplomatic skill and determination. Their story is an inspiration to all those who struggle for freedom and independence.

Additional Resources

* [The Unequal Treaties and the Meiji Restoration]

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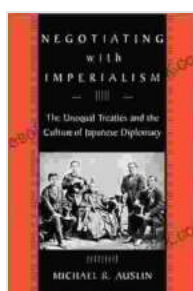
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[Japanese Foreign Policy in the 20th Century]

(<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Japanese-foreign-policy>) * [The Unequal

Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy]

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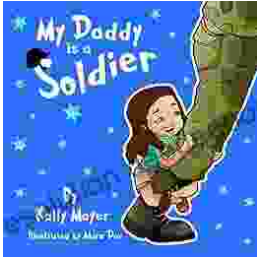
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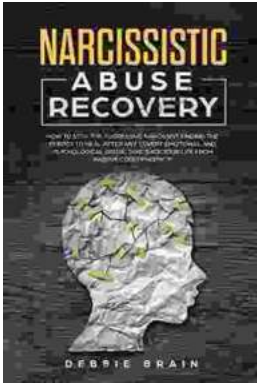
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