

Final Exam POL 2018, Fall 2018:
MODEL ANSWERS

Identifications: Based on readings and class lectures, explain the significance of two of the following. Each answer is worth 25%:

1. Oda Nobunaga

Answer: A famous and warlord of the second half of the 1500s who largely succeeded in reunifying Japan after more than a century of nearly continuous civil war, and whose rise marks the beginning of the Azuchi-Momoyama period that lasted from 1568 to 1600. In the process of reunifying central Japan, Oda subdued a Joudo-shinshuu, a virtual “Buddhist people’s republic” or peasants’ state in the Kaga region (also known as Kaga-ikki). Oda was more generally known for his battles against several Buddhist sects and temples, for welcoming Christian missionaries (in part to check the power of Buddhism), and for promoting trade domestically and with Western countries. Oda was assassinated by a disgruntled subordinate, and was succeeded by Toyotomi Hideyoshi, another subordinate who avenged Oda’s death and completed the reunification of Japan.

2. *Kokusanka*

Answer: Indigizenization, or literally National Productionalization. An important element of Japan’s technology policy, *Kokusanka* tends to prioritize national production over cost and, sometimes even, quality considerations. Samuels has identified four unwritten rules of *Kokusanka*: 1) domestic supply; 2) if domestic supply is unavailable, licensed production; 3) aim to only import equipment with technological significance beyond the project at hand; 4) import the first one and indigenize the second.

Kokusanka does not mean autarchy, but the ability to import foreign technology and turn it into new and improved domestic technology through several incremental stages.

Kokusanka has been based upon two other pillars: large scale importation of foreign technology (through licenses) and capital controls used to prevent foreign companies from buying Japanese companies or setting up their own subsidiaries, thereby preventing leakage of indigenized technology to domestic subsidiaries of foreign firms.

3. SNTV

Answer: Single Non-Transferrable Vote: The electoral system for Japan's Lower House until 1996 (or 1994, the year electoral reform was passed into law). Under this system, Japan was divided up into medium-sized districts, generally with two to five representatives for each district, depending upon population. The top two to five vote-receiving candidates are thus elected to the Diet. Each voter was given a single, non-transferable vote, with which they could cast for only one candidate, hence the SNTV label. This system has also been used on a limited basis in South Korea and Taiwan, and is still used in the prefectural constituencies in Japan's upper house election in populous urban prefectures that have sufficient population to elect more than one representative. This system is sometimes compared to the Limited Vote system used in Spain's upper house elections. SNTV produces more proportional results, and fewer wasted votes, than a first-past-the-post plurality system, but is less proportional than a proportional representation system. SNTV creates strategic dilemmas for political parties. The first is the danger of over-nomination: if a party nominates too many candidates in a multi-member seat district, they risk candidate fratricide—dividing their support base too thinly and electing fewer candidates than they could otherwise. The opposite danger is under-nomination, when a party nominates fewer candidates than the party's supporter base in the district could elect if their votes were well distributed among the optimal number of candidates.

4. *Obon*

Answer: Japan's Buddhist Festival of the Dead. Under the Gregorian calendar, *Obon* is held from August 13th to August 16th. In some parts of Japan, especially near Tokyo, it is still, popular to celebrate *Obon* in July according to the lunar calendar. *Obon* begins with the welcoming of the family's spirits to one's home with fire (*Mukaebi*), which is normally held on evening of August 13th (lanterns are sometimes substituted for fire). *Obon* Ends with a Lantern or Fire Ceremony (*Okuribi*), when ancestral spirits are given a ceremonial send-off which is intended to help them find their way back to the spirit world. Other central parts of *Obon* include cleaning ancestral graves, the placing of a table with food and other ceremonial items in front of the family's *Butsudan* (Buddhist altar), and *Bon Odori*, a dance performed during *Obon* to welcome back the spirits of the dead. Reflecting centuries of mixing Buddhism and Shintoism, Shintoism also has an *Obon*-like festival coinciding with Lunar *Obon* in July, and which features lantern festivals of souls (*mitama*).

Essays: Answer only 1 question based upon class readings and lectures. This answer is worth 50%:

1. Japan is said to possess the twin qualities of “plasticity” and “endurance.” Explain the meaning of these two qualities, their historical origins, and at least one well-noted comparative advantage of modern Japan that is attributed to these twin qualities.

Answer: In the 1930s, the German scholar Kurt Singer, in *Mirror, Sword, and Jewel* developed these two concepts. Plasticity is the ability to import and indigenize aspects of foreign culture, and endurance is the ability to maintain certain central elements of one’s own culture. Singer found that Japan showed remarkable strength in these two contradictory areas. Arguably, Japan’s strength in these areas originates in the Asuka-Nara period when the Yamato polity came into sustained contact with Chinese civilization, and began importing and adopting elements of Chinese culture, including Buddhism, Chinese characters, elements of Confucianism, etc. In the process Japan became very skilled at blending imported culture with indigenous culture, and deciding what elements of imported culture to adopt and which to reject as incompatible with domestic culture and self-identity. This became a legacy of this period. The Meiji era slogan *Wakon Yousai*, or promoting the combination of Japanese spirit and Western technology, well captures the duality of endurance versus plasticity. At least two of modern Japan’s well-noted comparative advantages can be attributed to its dual strengths in terms of plasticity and endurance: 1. popular culture, especially animation, manga and pop music, and 2. the adoption, diffusion and improvement of foreign technology. In both areas Japan has demonstrated an ability to import foreign influences and ideas, remake them and then export them as remade Japanese creations.

2. Describe and critique John Dower’s take on Victor’s Justice in *Embracing Defeat*.

Answer: With one exception, Dower’s argument regarding Victor’s Justice largely pertains to so-called A Class War Criminals, the handful of individuals indicted at the Tokyo Tribunal for crimes against peace, and not the many B and C Class War Criminal trials held elsewhere. Dower argues that the Tokyo Tribunal is more Victor’s Justice, or court decisions that seemingly serve the interests and convenience of the victors in war, rather than serving a more neutral conception of justice rooted in established international law. He identifies several aspects of victor’s justice that undermine the legitimacy and credibility of the Tokyo Tribunal’s decisions. First, the seeming

legislation or creation of new international law ex post facto by the Tribunal's prosecution, especially making aggressive war a crime, and introducing the idea of individual responsibility for acts of state. Second, decisions on whom to indict and put on trial, versus whom not to indict, or to arrest but then release without trial, were very arbitrary. Even if the goal was merely to hold show trials that aimed merely to indict and convict individuals who were representative of larger guilty groups, the Tribunal failed, as major groups were not represented among those put on trial: industrialists and zaibatsu leaders who supported the war, and members of the military police, or Kempeitai, were not put on trial. Third, the trial was designed to deflect the issue of the Emperor's responsibility for Japan's wartime behavior and whether he should also stand trial. Fourth, in its conception the Tokyo Tribunal was too much an echo of the Nuremberg trials of Nazi leaders, one that did not take account of the fact that the militarist dominated wartime regime in Japan was very different from the Nazi regime, along with aspects of the respective wars themselves. For example, in the Pacific, most of the countries attacked by Japan were in fact colonial or semi-colonial possessions of Western countries where the native inhabitants lacked most democratic rights. Fifth, and relatedly, the Tokyo Tribunal was very much "white man's justice," with only three of the 11 justices coming from Asian countries, and two of them, one from India and the Philippines, added only at the last minute. Dower also notes the omission of any justice from Korea, seemingly legitimizing its status as a colony rather than as a victim of Japanese expansionism. Here, Dower brings in Class B and C war crimes trials, by noting that except for trials in China, these were almost entirely conducted by white judges, and the prosecuted crimes were overwhelmingly those committed against white soldiers and civilians; crimes against Asians were largely overlooked. Sixth, also related, Japanese were not allowed to participate in the Tokyo Tribunal as either judges or even prosecutors, only as translators, defense lawyers, and support staff. Attempts by the Japanese government itself to try war criminals were quashed by the US occupation. This leads to the seventh and Dower's most powerful critique: Loser's Justice. The Japanese government itself, especially royalists who sought to maintain the emperor and his authority, were also planning trials of military and other leaders most implicated in Japan's militarism from the 1930s to 1945, and who had led Japan into a disastrous and unwinnable war. Dower suggests that these plans would have resulted in show trials similar to those of the Tokyo Tribunal, with many of the same people put on trial and punished to a similar degree, although they would have been convicted of perverting the Emperor's trust and his abiding commitment to peace, rather than of crime the Tribunal convicted them of, namely plotting long-term wars of aggression and global

domination. Nonetheless, these charges were in many ways parallel with those of the Tribunal. The Japanese plan, contained in an unpublished imperial decree, replaced the parallel concept of a conspiracy to commit aggressive war with “military-clique politics.” This plan even introduced the Anglo-American legal concept of conspiracy as a crime. Dower’s Loser’s Justice argument can be critiqued for possibility under estimating how much the unpublished cabinet plan was mainly a reaction to the pending Tokyo Tribunal (especially visible in the importing of conspiracy as a crime), and how much momentum this idea would have received absent US development of the Tokyo Tribunal. Dower argues that there was initially much interest among the Japanese public on conducting trials of war criminals, even people’s tribunals, but given how quickly this interest faded, one can question whether he exaggerates the extent of this interest. On the other hand, Dower’s Loser’s Justice argument does offer a potent critique of post-war revisionists, especially Japanese conservatives and nationalists, who see the Tokyo Tribunal as simply allied vengeance. The unpublished imperial decree Dower introduces offers a powerful counter point to this view, as does the evidence Dower presents that Japanese elites were already pointing fingers of culpability at Tojo and those around him for Japan’s embarking on a reckless and destructive war even before Japan had surrendered (e.g. the Konoe Memorial to the Emperor of February 1945). Even if Dower’s suggestion that Loser’s Justice as a potential alternative is exaggerated, he does at least suggest the point that Loser’s Justice, or at least greater Japanese and Asian involvement in the Tokyo Tribunal, might have produced verdicts that would have been more legitimate and less controversial in Japan, and this in turn might have aided Japan’s historical reconciliation with its neighbors, and constrained the nationalist revisionism we see in Japan today. This revisionism is sometimes echoed in the policies of current Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, grandson of arrested (but never formally tried and eventually released) A Class War Criminal Kishi Nobusuke (who became prime minister a few years after the occupation ended), and which tends to see Japan’s wartime behavior as a noble crusade to rid East Asia of Western imperialism.