



The Constitution of the Empire of Japan, 1889

Japan Country

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The Constitution of the Empire of Japan , known informally as the Meiji Constitution , was the organic law of the Japanese empire, in force from November 29, 1890 until May 2, 1947. After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, it provided for a form of constitutional monarchy based on the Prussian model, in which the Emperor of Japan was an active ruler and wielded considerable political power (over foreign policy and diplomacy) which was shared with an elected Diet. The Diet primarily dictated domestic policy matters. After the Meiji Restoration, which restored direct political power to the emperor for the first time in over a millennium, Japan underwent a period of sweeping political and social reform and westernization aimed at strengthening Japan to the level of the nations of the Western world. The immediate consequence of the Constitution was the opening of the first Parliamentary government in Asia.[1] The Meiji Constitution established clear limits to the power of the executive branch and the absolutism of the Emperor. It also created an independent judiciary. However, it was ambiguous in wording, and in many places self-contradictory. The leaders of the government and the political parties were left with the task of interpretation as to whether the Meiji Constitution could be used to justify authoritarian or liberal-democratic rule. It was the struggle between these tendencies that dominated the government of the Empire of Japan. The Meiji Constitution was used as a model for the 1931 Ethiopian Constitution by the Ethiopian intellectual Tekle Hawariat Tekle Mariyam. This was one of the reasons why the progressive Ethiopian intelligentsia associated with Tekle Hawariat were known as "Japanizers".[2] By the surrender on 2 September 1945, the Empire of Japan was deprived of sovereignty by the Allies, and the Meiji Constitution was suspended. During the Occupation of Japan, the Meiji Constitution was replaced by a new document, the postwar Constitution of Japan, which replaced the imperial rule with a form of Western-style liberal democracy. [Source: Wikipedia]

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