

## ✓ Question <sup>[2]</sup>

**What is the photograph's date, title, and creator?** 1921, *Just men, but mighty important ones! The "Big Nine" at the World Disarmament Conference, Washington, D.C.*, and an unknown photographer. Thinking historically about this photograph's source will provide important data: the year reveals this photograph was taken shortly after the Great War, the title reveals that nine "important" representatives of nations gathered in Washington, D.C. to discuss reducing their military arsenals and craft a strategy for peace in the Pacific.

**What type of person might have created this photograph, and for what purpose?** The photographer is unknown (it may have been B. L. Singley, founder of Keystone View Company). The copyright owner is Keystone View Company, a photography business that distributed compelling images to newspapers and magazines to accompany articles and help sell more copies. It also had an "Educational Department" that created images for social studies classrooms.<sup>[9]</sup> This photograph could have accompanied an article about the conference or a classroom activity about disarmament efforts after the Great War.

**Was it personal or published, candid or posed, amateur or professional?** Professional, because the Keystone View Company held the copyright. Obviously posed, although the men in the photograph are looking at a different photographer. Also, they seem to be standing in front of an important meeting place.

There are no women in this photograph. At the time of this conference, women in only two of the nine nations (i.e., United States and Netherlands) could vote. Many women in the United States formed the Women's Peace Society to focus on demilitarization and to keep the US out of wars.<sup>[7]</sup> During the Great War, the women's suffrage movement grew and many women also actively promoted peace: the issues were separate, yet many women advocated for both.

In Washington, the Japanese representative, Iemasa Tokugawa, advocated for political equality. When challenged on their interests and imperialism in the Far East, Japan was prepared to push back on the status of Hawai'i and the Monroe Doctrine of the United States. Just two years before this Washington Conference, Japanese representatives attended the international meeting to end the Great War (the Paris Peace Conference). In Paris, the Japanese proposed a clause to the Treaty of Versailles to affirm "equality of nations" and "equal and just treatment in every respect making no distinction, either in law or in fact, on account of race or nationality."<sup>[8]</sup> Most nations supported the clause; however, the proposal was rejected when Australia, Great Britain, and the United States opposed the clause. **How might the Twentieth Century have been different if Japan's clause was ratified and implemented by each of the nations attending the Paris Peace Conference?**

The nine "important" men attending this conference were, from left to right in the photograph: Ernesto Júlio de Carvalho e Vasconcelos from **Portugal**, Jonkheer Frans Beelaerts van Blokland from **Netherlands**, Alfred Sao-ke Sze from **China**, Alfred Balfour from the United Kingdom of **Great Britain**, Charles Evans Hughes from the **United States**, Aritide Briand from **France**, Carlo Schanzer from **Italy**, Baron de Cartier de Marchienne from **Belgium**, and Prince Iemasa Tokugawa from **Japan**.<sup>[3]</sup> All nine nations signed the "**Nine-Power Pact**" which affirmed China's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. All nations had the right to conduct business with China on equal terms. This pact was to address two centuries of what the Chinese called "unequal treaties,"<sup>[4]</sup> where Western Powers and Japan reached one-sided agreements with China (Qing dynasty) after military defeat or threat of invasion (e.g., the 1887 Treaty of Peking gave Portugal perpetual colonial rights over Macao; the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing gave Great Britain Hong Kong in perpetuity; Japan was given administrative rights to Shantung which was war-acquired in 1919 from defeated Germany and Article 156 of the Treaty of Versailles which transferred the territory to Japan). **Should Portugal, Great Britain, and Japan have returned control of Macao and Hong Kong and Shantung to China?**

## ✓ Observe

Unknown photographer. (1921) Just men, but mighty important ones! The "Big Nine" at World Disarmament Conference, Washington, D.C., 1921. Keystone View Company, Manufacturers and Publishers.<sup>[1]</sup>



The building is Memorial Continental Hall, a very short distance from the White House. It was selected to host the conference, in part, because its auditorium could seat the representatives, experts, advisors, and press from each nation: more than 1,200 people.<sup>[6]</sup> The meeting was the first known "Arms Control" conference in history. It was called to (1) limit the growing naval arms race and (2) negotiate security agreements in the Pacific to promote peace.<sup>[5]</sup> Five nations (United States, Great Britain, Japan, France, Italy) were more active in disarmament. The "**Five-Power Naval Limitation Treaty**" called for the nations to scrap almost 2 million tons of warships and limit the existing number of warships to a ratio of 5 each for the United States and Great Britain, 3 for Japan, and 1.67 each for France and Italy.<sup>[5]</sup> Four nations (United States, Great Britain, Japan, France) were more active in the Pacific element, they signed the "**Four-Power Pact**" which required each nation to be consulted in the event of any controversy between any other two of them over "any Pacific question." They also agreed to respect one another's rights regarding the various Pacific islands and mandates they possessed.<sup>[5]</sup> **Where were Russia and Germany? Should they—or the League of Nations—have played a role in this conference?**

## ✓ Reflect

**How does this photograph compare with other evidence?** Much of the information gathered from this photograph coheres with photographs that explore international law as it concerns national sovereignty.

**Why might other evidence (messages and data) agree or disagree with this photograph?** Other photographs or texts may explore international law from different perspectives that answer the overarching question differently. Other sources may have different reasons for presenting data, such as to make their perspective seem more reasonable, or to present the "other side" in a worse way.

**What else do you need or want to know about this image?** What role, if any, did the League of Nations play in this conference? That association was formed to promote international cooperation and peace; should "disarmament" have been a topic the League of Nations addressed? What role did the fact that the US was not a member of the League of Nations play in this conference? Which other world powers were not invited to attend and why?

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The original photograph was developed into two for a stereoscope viewfinder, a device that looked like a pair of binoculars and produced a three-dimensional effect. This activity will proceed with one of the two.

Citations →

**Citations: [#] throughout the primer and lesson**

1. Unknown photographer. (1921) Just men, but mighty important ones! The "Big Nine" at World Disarmament Conference, Washington, D.C., 1921. Keystone View Company, Manufacturers and Publishers. The Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2003678164/>.
2. Adapted from the "Teacher's Guides and Analysis Tools" from the Library of Congress, see <https://www.loc.gov/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/guides/?loclr=blogtea>
3. [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/tr22-01.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/tr22-01.asp)
4. <https://ehne.fr/en/encyclopedia/themes/europe-europe-ans-and-world/europe-and-legal-regulation-international-relations/unequal-treaties-china>
5. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Washington-Conference-1921-1922>
6. Wright, Q. (1922). The Washington Conference. *The American Political Science Review*, 16(2). 285-297
7. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Womens-Peace-Society>
8. <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2019/08/11/742293305/a-century-later-the-treaty-of-versailles-and-its-rejection-of-racial-equality>
9. <http://scua.library.umass.edu/keystone-view-company/>