

JCC Bakumatsu Japan,  
1860: The Daijō-kan  
Government

**MEIJI**



**MUNUC 36**

Model United Nations at the University of Chicago

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## CHAIR LETTER

Hi Everyone!

Before diving into the committee details, let me share a bit about myself. My name is Shiv Sawhney, and I'll be serving as the Chair for the MEIJI side of the JCC. I am a second-year at the University of Chicago (as you may have guessed), double majoring in biology and economics, with hopes to go into public health or biotech. I love naps, basketball, crosswords (hot take: Washington Post > NYT), and listening to music (currently in my post-ironic Drake era).

Growing up in a majority-White suburb of Boston (also like most schools in this country), our history curriculum was super Eurocentric, and thus, we didn't really learn about the history of Japan. Even when we did cover Meiji-era Japan, we mainly learned about it relative to Western Europe. Thus, I am very appreciative to have this opportunity to learn more about such an important part of history. The topics that are bound to be discussed—including foreign influence on domestic affairs, political revolutions, and nation development—are ones that are of great importance in today's world, so I look forward to hearing all of your ideas and considerations.

As you hopefully know by now, our committee will be a JCC. JCCs can be confusing. Please do not hesitate to ask questions. Moreover, there will be a section in the background guide which will provide an in-depth explanation of committee mechanics. This committee is meant to be a learning experience and a way for you to expand your knowledge. Our expectations for delegates are very high and I have full faith that you will exceed them.

As a reminder, we expect you all to handle debate maturely and with our 21st-century principles in mind. Treat your fellow delegates the way you would like to be treated, and keep in mind the issues that plague this activity. We want delegates to actively participate, include others, work collaboratively, and amplify others' voices, not diminish them. Moreover, please be cognizant of what you're saying; while this technically is just a simulation, please remember that you're discussing real individuals and real-world problems.

Akshay, Veda, and I are very much looking forward to meeting all of you and watching your development over the course of the conference. If you have any questions at all, whether about committee content or anything conference-related (or even if you just want to say hello!), please do not hesitate to send me an email. See y'all soon, and may your research and preparation go smoothly!

Good luck and best wishes,

Shiv Sawhney (he/him)

Chair

[shivsawhney@uchicago.edu](mailto:shivsawhney@uchicago.edu)



## CRISIS DIRECTOR LETTER

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 1860s where we are LIVE in Tokugawa Japan, witnessing one of the biggest political revolutions in history! My name is Veda Swaminathan, and I am so excited to be your Crisis Director for the JCC Bakumatsu Japan, 1860: The Daijō-kan Government, or Meiji side of the Meiji Restoration. We have an amazing slate of conference executives and I am really pumped for you to meet Shiv (your chair), Sarah, Sameer, and Akshay when the conference starts! I hope you are just as excited to attend MUNUC 36, discuss our topics, and have fun while resolving some of history's most important conflicts.

I am currently a second-year at the University of Chicago and originally hail from Connecticut. I have been doing Model UN since I was a freshman in high school and met some of my closest friends through this activity. I had a blast staffing MUNUC 35, where I was an AC on the 1906 Iranian Constitutional Revolution committee, and ChoMUN, where I AC-ed the 1200 Chola Empire committee. At UChicago, I am studying Economics and Public Policy, and am very passionate about international relations and world history. I briefly studied the Meiji Restoration in high school and have been very interested in it since. So, I am super excited to get to explore it alongside you guys! Outside of MUN, I am a member of a few finance organizations, social impact organizations, and a boxing club on campus. I also run a non-profit organization outside of school dedicated to the development of small businesses through the use of high school talent. In my free time, I enjoy hanging out with my friends, spending time in the cities near me, walking my dog, and listening to (live) music! If you have solid music taste, send me some recommendations!

The Meiji Restoration is one of the most underrated political revolutions in world history — I remember having to independently research this in high school because it wasn't discussed in any of the classes I took. This revolution reinstated imperial rule in Japan and marked the beginning of the country's transition into a world power. The two sides — the Daijō-kan Government and the Rōjū Government — represent the rebellious, imperial Meiji side and the ruling Tokugawa Shogunate, respectively. Our committee is set a few years before the actual revolution, and I am hyped to see how you guys operate in the pre-revolution limbo as the representatives you play. This is a super engaging committee with domestic upheavals, foreign threats and influences, and a lot of potential for power-grabbing and nation-building in Japan!

Our Committee Is Also Unique In That It Is A Joint Crisis Committee (Jcc). We Recognize That Not Everyone Has Experience With This Setup, So I Highly Recommend You Read Through The Committee Structure And Mechanics Section Of The Background Guide For A More In-Depth Explanation Of

Committee Mechanics. However, Put Simply, A Jcc Is Made Up Of Two Crisis Rooms That Are In The Same Universe. In This Case, One Room Of Delegates Represents The Daijō-Kan Government, And The Other Room Represents The Rōjū Government. You Will Spend The Weekend Responding To Backroom Updates And Reacting To The Actions Of The Opposite Room As They Represent The Other Side Of This Political Revolution.

Sarah, Sameer, Shiv, Akshay, and I are thrilled you've joined our committee! We know not everyone has the same level of MUN experience in this room, so please don't hesitate to reach out to any of us with questions, comments, or concerns before or during the conference. MUNUC prides itself on being a learning conference, and we are excited to help you grow as delegates through this experience.

Best of luck,

Veda Swaminathan

Crisis Director

[vedaswaminathan@uchicago.edu](mailto:vedaswaminathan@uchicago.edu)



# MUNUC

## COORDINATING CRISIS DIRECTOR LETTER

Hello, delegates!

My name is Akshay Joglekar, and I will be the CCD for the JCC: Bakumatsu Japan, 1860 committees. I am a fourth-year who is majoring in economics. I am looking forward to my eighth year doing MUN, having been active in the activity since the beginning of ninth grade. Outside of this activity and classwork, I spend my time learning about random parts of history, dabbling with linguistics, playing the piano and jazz guitar, and practicing Taekwondo. That first point, especially, is what drew me to this particular topic for the committee. Ever since first exploring the history of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Japanese characters, conflicts, and controversies from the past few centuries, I have been thrilled about the prospect of running this committee. From there, I have only grown more invested in unravelling the diversity of the region's economic conditions and political movements.

I am excited to see whether you delegates can work together ideologically to build a new Japanese government and to protect it from both expansionist neighbors and internal crises—and to see which of your sides proves itself successful in the eternal march for the furtherment of Japan's national interests.

I am very much looking forward to what your arcs turn out to be. These characters represent many of the primary viewpoints and ideologies which dominated the formative years of what would become modern Japan. I hope to see you all consider what makes your character stand out and how that can determine the governmental structure and the foreign policy of your nation.

Let me know if you have any questions!

Sincerely,

Akshay

Coordinating Crisis Director

[akshayjoglekar@uchicago.edu](mailto:akshayjoglekar@uchicago.edu)

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## SENSITIVITY STATEMENT

During the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, as throughout much of the region's history, political figures similar to some of those whom you will be representing or who are from neighboring countries advocated for or committed atrocities against civilians of differing class or cultural backgrounds. The years soon following the start of this committee and throughout the Bakumatsu in particular saw questions of national self-determination be construed as excuses for political assassinations and the formation of terrorist organizations.

Know that we will absolutely not tolerate any similar behavior, whether in your private notes, in directives, or outside of official committee time. There is ample room to explore ideological differences between characters while still refraining from connecting your arc at all to your characters' or to civilians' ethnicities or religions. Even if your character is opposed to cooperation with foreign powers or otherwise antagonistic towards particular political groups, creating a modern Japanese identity and government does not necessitate violence against other identities.

While discrimination against minority groups was well-spread and accepted in many places during this time period, please keep in mind that we are running this committee in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Using historical "accuracy" as an excuse to be discriminatory towards other demographic groups will not be tolerated in this committee.

Keep this in mind as you craft your arcs.

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# COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND MECHANICS OF THE JCC

Given that this committee is a Joint Crisis Committee (JCC) within the Hybrid USG group, we want you to be prepared to engage with both General Assembly (GA) and Crisis elements in committee, while also working with delegates in another committee room. We recognize that delegates may not have experience with JCCs or Hybrids, so we want to provide a little background on what this committee will look like and give you an idea of what to prepare for. MUNUC has excellent [training modules available on our website](#) for more information.

Genuinely, don't hesitate to reach out to your CDs and/or Chairs if you have any questions! We would love to hear from you if you have questions!

## Elements Of A Joint Crisis Committee

JCCs are committees that have two rooms under one crisis, historical event, or within one universe. For this committee, one room will represent the *Bakuban* Government and one side will represent the Imperial Cabinet as we lead up to and enact the Meiji Restoration of Japan.

Some MUN basics that we want to highlight are that this committee will feature both frontroom and backroom elements. Frontroom is the committee room where moderated caucuses, unmoderated caucuses, round robin speeches,

public directives, and resolutions will take place. During this conference, we will have a few sessions where public directives, or short-form written solutions, will be passed before we culminate in a session where a resolution, or long-form written solution, will be passed. Public directives are one to two clause solutions to a recent topic of debate or crisis update and must go through formal voting procedures to pass.

Backroom is where you will engage with your backroom staff (CD and ACs), as well as the opposite room. Your goal here is to build your character arc, the path to accomplishing your final goal. Think of this arc as a story in which your character is the protagonist, and you have to gather adequate resources, develop relationships, and *use* both of those to gain power, money, or something else that will put your character in a better position than where they started. To achieve this goal, you will write [private directives or notes](#) detailing steps you intend to take. Joint private directives are notes to backroom written by two or more delegates where they combine their resources to accomplish a larger goal without needing the approval of the whole committee.

Our committee will set a note-run time in the beginning that will remain flexible throughout the conference. Note-run times mean that after X

minutes (often after about twenty minutes), the backroom staff will come back to committee, collect the private directives delegates have written, and will return the private directives they have responded to. Some of these note-runs will include crisis breaks/updates, and some of the updates will be independent.

To explain the special mechanics of a JCC, we will use a sample JCC to illustrate some of the things you may see. In this example JCC, let's make Room 1 "The General's Army" and Room 2 "The Invaders."

Actions taken in one committee room will have an effect on the other committee room. This means the committee will be much more delegate-driven than a normal committee. For example, if the Invaders start threatening nearby towns, the General's Army will hear about it and be tasked with reassuring the public. In a regular crisis committee, your backroom staff drive crisis updates a little more. This connectivity also applies to actions taken in backroom — if delegates are creative enough with their notes, they can get something to happen in the opposite room that may redirect their debate.

Importantly, the dual-room structure allows for many more opportunities for collaboration and communication. In addition to writing notes to your backroom staffers who will represent characters you make up and use to build resources, delegates in each room will be able to

communicate with each other. This means there are more chances for you to build relationships, create larger plans within the realm of the Meiji Restoration, and figure out how to accomplish your arcs using other people's resources. For example, there may be a delegate in the Invaders Room who actually sympathizes with the citizens of the land they are trying to invade. So, they reach out to a delegate in the General's Army and the two figure out a way to gather intelligence and bring down the Invaders from the inside; they combine their resources and knowledge to accomplish a huge task.

## The Flow Of Our Committee

Given the pedagogical (teaching/learning) nature of MUNUC, we want to provide some insight into how our committee will flow. Your slate of executives (Chairs and Crisis Directors) place a high priority on developing your Model UN skills through this committee. As a result, we are going to ease certain elements of the JCC into our committee. Keep in mind that Model UN crisis, hybrid, and JCC committees are extremely flexible. While the following outline is given to you, it is at the discretion of the committee executives to make any changes they see fit.

Sessions I and II will have a block on communication across rooms. This means delegates will not be able to send notes to the opposite room (just yet). Our goal here is to make sure delegates have enough time to build up their

resource arsenal, begin creating relationships with backroom, and figure out how to balance frontroom and backroom. Committee will move on the slower side during these sessions, as we expect delegates to be completing smaller goals and tasks. We will not allow massive crisis goals to go through, like assassinations.

Depending on how Sessions I and II go, Session III will release that block on communication between rooms. Once this block is released, delegates will be able to send notes back and forth with the other room. Backroom will approve each note, but otherwise plays no role in how this relationship develops. We expect the committee pace to pick up a bit when this block is released, as delegates will be accomplishing bigger and bolder goals. As this session progresses, more of your arcs should be nearing the peak.

Session IV is anticipated to be the fastest-paced session since it will be our final crisis session.

During this session, the biggest crisis updates will be revealed, and everyone's arcs should be coming together. Consider this session the climax of your character's story, and the more bold and relevant your actions are, the more they will be featured in updates.

Session V will be a nice cool-down as the crisis sessions of our hybrid come to an end and we move into a more GA-style treaty-writing session.

Taking into consideration all that has happened over four sessions, delegates will spend Session V writing out a final constitution that sets up a new governance structure. We will put a stop to note-sending, as all the crisis arcs would have been completed in the previous session.



## HISTORY OF THE COMMITTEE

During the Edo period, the *daimyōs*—the term for both the noblemen in charge of various plots of land and the land itself—were separated into two categories depending on their connection to the Tokugawa shogunate. *Fudai daimyōs* were those who had been on the side of the Tokugawa before the Battle of the Sekigahara and were considered loyalists. *Tozama daimyōs* were the less trusted group of noblemen. As a result, the *tozama daimyōs* were given smaller pieces of land that were located further away from the political center of Japan. In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the anti-Tokugawa and pro-Imperial movement largely developed in areas controlled by the *tozama daimyōs*.

This committee is made up of the revolutionary forces and individuals who share an interest in bringing down the Tokugawa shogunate. The individuals in this committee have been the victims of the power-hungry shogunate and the *bakuban* government. For the last few centuries, the government has taken family, land, money, and power away from this committee.

Within this committee, there are *daimyōs*, *samurai* (noble warriors who serve the land they fight on), foreign entities who have a vested interest in expanding trade routes, police, statesmen, and imperial loyalists. Due to the policies enacted against this group, many of the

activists in this committee come from some of the lowest-ranking warrior families. Together, this committee represents the rebellious forces that seek to overthrow the Tokugawa shogunate.

Opposing this committee is the *bakuban* government, composed of executives who control the administrative, legislative, monetary, spiritual, and judicial functions of government across the majority of Japan. This government has the backing of the strongest warrior family in the land — the Tokugawa shogunate. The *bakuban* administration has left the representatives in this committee largely isolated from the rest of East Asia and the world.

Though united in their anti-*shōgun* sentiment, the representatives of this committee are not quite allies. Each *daimyō* operates as its own political force, with its own laws, customs, people, armies of *samurai*, and more. The Representatives in this committee must figure out a way to strike a balance between all the actors present so they can unite in the goal of creating a new Japan.

### History Of The Problem

#### Pre-Shogun Era

The Heian period (794-1185) of classical Japan is remembered as the turbulent era in which the emperor gradually lost power in favor of military

government. By the early 11<sup>th</sup> century, four large clans, generally in balance with one another, had conquered almost all of the landmass of modern Japan. These four clans—the Taira, Minamoto, Fujiwara, and Tachibana—were not composed of nobility.<sup>1</sup> Instead, Kyōto empowered them because these four clans would maintain their armies that could be summoned by the emperor. Subordinate clans within these four comprised the smaller *shoen*, who were governors focused on tax collection from and protection of peasants living within their individual domains.<sup>2</sup> While these *shoen* would, in later centuries, evolve into the much more autonomous *daimyō*, their authority was restricted to that which was conferred upon them by the emperor and was therefore hardly significant militarily.

Then, everything changed when the Taira attacked. It was an 1156 dispute over the succession to the emperor's throne which greatly disturbed this order. A succession dispute between two claimants, Go-Shirakawa and Sutoku, led the former to hire the Taira and the latter the Minamoto to support their efforts to take the throne by force. Though the Taira quickly emerged victorious, their influence—and that of their newfound rivals—was hardly innocuous. The military leaders of each clan began to impose themselves more strongly on either the government in Kyōto or on smaller

local *hans* led by the *shoen*, seeking to increase their own military potential in anticipation of further instability. This anticipation was not unfounded. As the *samurai* class grew in prominence not just on the battlefield but also in politics, several inter-clan rebellions such as the Hogen and Heiji erupted across Japan, culminating in a clash between the Taira and Minamoto.<sup>3</sup>

Over several decades in the late 1100s, Japan saw intense bloodshed as the Genpei War raged on further. The clans themselves saw several *shoguns*, or head generals, come and go, and the war did not conclude for generations.<sup>4</sup>



The painted screen above depicts the Battle of Yashima, one of the last major battles of the Genpei War.<sup>5</sup>

In 1184, the Minamoto emerged victorious. With the emperor's affirmation, Minamoto no Yoritomo, chief commander of the Minamoto army, was granted the title of "*Shogun*" over all of Japan and began rule from Kamakura.<sup>6</sup> Though the emperor's court remained fairly powerful in

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 220.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>5</sup> *Battle of Yashima Folding Screens Kano School*, painting, retrieved from

<https://picryl.com/media/battle-of-yashima-folding-screens-kano-school-8b672d>.

<sup>6</sup> Kitagawa, 221.

<sup>1</sup> Kitagawa, "Monarchy and Government: Traditions and Ideologies in Pre-Modern Japan," 218-219.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*.

administrative and religious matters, military power was generally concentrated in the *de facto* ruling shogunate, or military government. The Kamakura shogunate came to be called a *bakufu* in Japanese, which comes from *baku*, meaning tent. The “tent government” term immortalized the distinction between the authoritarian, but civil, rule of the emperor and the decentralized military rule of the *shogun*.<sup>7</sup>

After the death of Minamoto no Yoritomo, his wife Hōjō Masako aimed to solidify the decentralized system of government already put in place by her husband. She worked to entrench an organizational structure whereby the *shogun* would select *shugos* as provincial governors to supervise the *shoen*, who otherwise retained their sizable economic and military independence.<sup>8</sup> This revamped system contrasted heavily with the prior centuries’ rule by the emperor and marked a sharp turn to a strict feudal structure; vassals were loyal to immediate superiors but focused on maximizing agricultural production within their jurisdictions. During this time, technological and managerial innovations such as double cropping heralded a period of spectacular economic growth and newfound stability for Japan.<sup>9</sup>

The stability would prove ephemeral, however.

After several decades of rule by the Kamakura shogunate, Emperor Go-Daigo, dissatisfied with

the growing disparity in the civil and military governments’ shares of power, sought to return the country to the older, more centralized system. By enlisting the help of a defecting Kamakura general, Ashikaga Takauji, he managed to overpower the Kamakura shogunate which, despite its military power, was not able to maintain consistent support from its vassals, the *shoen*. This conflict, now known as the Genko War, saw a brief three-year period brought about during which Emperor Go-Daigo refused to appoint a new *shogun* and instead aimed to enact decrees to revoke the decentralizing policies of the prior regime. His Kenmu Restoration, however, proved unsuccessful by 1336.<sup>10</sup> Trying to move too quickly and being too ignorant of the desires of the *samurai*, he failed to reinstate full subordinate civilian governments before the discontent of the warrior class could unite them against Kyōto more assuredly than ever before. Ashikaga Takauji would launch a rebellion against the emperor, overpowering him and exiling him to the Oki Islands.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 222.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*



*Ashikaga Takauji's armor.*<sup>11</sup>

Ruling from Muromachi, the Ashikaga shogunate oversaw a turbulent time in Japan. While Ashikaga Takauji proved capable of balancing the wishes of his clan, his vassals, and his direct peasant subjects, his method for doing so often led to greater freedom for the vassals in both military and political matters. The *shoen* increasingly began to style themselves as *daimyōs* over their land, suggesting not that they were granted the right to rule from either the emperor or the *shogun* but instead that they were inherent local lords.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Armor (Yoroi) of Ashikaga Takauji (1305-1358)*, photograph, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, retrieved from <https://picryl.com/media/armor-andltiandgtyoroiandltiandgt-of-ashikaga-takauji-13051358-fe440c>.

<sup>12</sup> Kitagawa, 222.

The story of the Muromachi period following the death of the childless Ashikaga Takauji is that of the most violent civil conflict in Japanese history. The Ōnin War over the succession to the shogunate ensued and entrenched the country in the fog of war. This period is generally known as the *Sengoku Jidai*, or the “Warring States Period,” named after the similarly violent period in ancient Chinese history.<sup>13</sup> Even following the conclusion of the Ōnin War, the now highly independent *daimyōs* exerted heavy influence over the *shogun* in Muromachi, who was frequently a puppet of their own vassals.<sup>14</sup> Political, economic, and military power all truly rested in the individual *daimyōs*, who independently dealt with foreign powers. As a result, Japan very rarely had a unified policy toward merchants from abroad, and the *daimyōs*, busy conquering one another, frequently changed their attitudes toward the foreigners. Infrequently, one *daimyō* would successfully assert power over a majority of Japan, such as in the case of Daimyō Oda Nobunaga, and a more uniform policy would be—at least nominally—enacted. During various times, the Buddhist and Shinto elites would ban Catholicism—introduced by Dutch and Portuguese traders—and ban interaction with foreign powers altogether.<sup>15</sup> Individual *samurai*

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<sup>13</sup> Osamu, “The Emergence of the State in Sixteenth-Century Japan: From Oda to Tokugawa,” 343.

<sup>14</sup> Kitagawa, 222.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

were, from the 1600s onwards, given the right to enforce the law through whatever means necessary and however they felt it best interpreted, nullifying any sense of centralized justice.<sup>16</sup> Farmers' uprisings, known as *ikko-ikki*, became increasingly common in response to this asserted superiority of the *samurai*, which brought about bans on the ownership of weaponry by non-*samurai*.<sup>17</sup> As Japan found itself becoming more decentralized than ever before, it also saw the feudal structure become wholly entrenched. The segregation of the classes was never stronger or more violently enforced than earlier in the history of the islands.

While the end date of the Sengoku Jidai is contested, it is generally accepted that the reforms enacted by the Tokugawa shogunate, whose rule—beginning after the Battle of Sekigahara—now wears the moniker of the *Edo Period* and returned Japan to a more stable point.<sup>18</sup> Although the *daimyōs* had too long experienced power for any sort of centralization to be viable, it was evident that the military government in Edo had earned sufficient respect from its vassals as to produce more uniform policies toward foreign powers.

## The Rise Of The Tokugawa Shogunate

Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the nation of Japan has been ruled by the Tokugawa shogunate. After the Battle of Sekigahara, Tokugawa Ieyasu emerged as the victorious *daimyō* in the Warring States Period. As a child in this period, Ieyasu had been captured by the Imagawa family and the Oda family as a method of controlling Ieyasu's family.<sup>19</sup> After the death of his father and the defeat of the Imagawa family by Oda Nobunaga, Ieyasu was returned to his province, Okazaki, and brought it under control.<sup>20</sup> By 1582, Ieyasu's impressive military campaigns had added the four provinces of Suruga, Tōtōmi, Kai, and southern Shinano under his control.<sup>21</sup> The battle for supremacy followed the demise of the Hideyoshi regime, where Ieyasu was one of the highest officers.<sup>22</sup> After a decisive victory against the other officers, Tokugawa Ieyasu was granted the title of *shogun* by Emperor Go-Yozei in 1603 and united the Eastern and Western provinces. Previously, the imperial family had little to no power in the nation, so Tokugawa Ieyasu created complex military, social, and political systems to concentrate power and rule over Japan.

One of Tokugawa Ieyasu's first policies was to institute the *bakufu*, or military government, where the Tokugawa was the strongest warrior

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<sup>16</sup> Osamu, 344.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 346.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 364.

<sup>19</sup> "Japan - Bakuhan, Feudalism, Shogunate."

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*.



family, or clan, in the country. However, rather than destroy the other noble families, Tokugawa Ieyasu chose to keep Japan in a quasi-feudal state where noble families recognized the Tokugawa's power in exchange for control of their land. Under this system, roughly thirty percent of Japanese land was owned by the Tokugawa shogunate, and the rest of the land was split between 270 *daimyōs*. The land owned by the *daimyōs* was called a *han* and was delineated not by physical borders, but by output of rice. The closer the *han* to the center of Japan, the more trusted the *daimyōs* were, even if the *han* was physically smaller. The *daimyōs* owned and legislated for their own *han*, though the Tokugawa did institute various policies to try and control them. Under the guise of rewarding loyalists, Tokugawa Ieyasu confiscated large amounts of land from *daimyōs* who opposed him and gave it to his family and friends.<sup>23</sup> The “friends and family” of the Tokugawa were known as the *fudai daimyōs*, who were hereditary vassals of the *shogun* and pledged loyalty prior to the Battle of Sekigahara. The non-*fudai daimyōs* were known as *tozama daimyōs*, who pledged fealty after the title of *shogun* was given to Tokugawa Ieyasu. This latter group often felt marginalized and bore the brunt of the restrictive policies the Tokugawa shogunate enacted; the Tokugawa shogunate limited the size of *daimyōs*' armies, prohibited more than one castle per *han*,

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

and required *daimyōs* to get express permission to rebuild or fortify their territories. Additionally, the Tokugawa shogunate built a castle in Edo and required *daimyōs* to spend alternate years living in Edo and in their own territories while their families were effectively held hostage in Edo. This system was called *sankin kōtai*. Along with draining the *daimyōs*' coffers by forcing them to make these expensive trips, the Tokugawa shogunate also forced the *daimyōs* to spend large sums of money to support public works. This drainage often had trickle-down effects within a *han*, and farmers ended up bearing the brunt of financing the *daimyōs*.<sup>24</sup> In 1615, Tokugawa Ieyasu destroyed the Hideyori and Toyotomi families, who he had been targeting from the start of his campaign. By the second and third *shoguns*, the *bakufu* control policy had reached its peak as a government system known as the *bakufuhan* system. It contained 42 executives making up several bodies: the senior councilors (*rōjū*), the junior councilors (*wakadoshiyori*), and three commissioners for the temples and shrines of the country, capital, and treasury (*bugyō*).<sup>25</sup> These executives continued Tokugawa Ieyasu's policies of favoritism—strategic pieces of land, like Kantō, Kinki, Tōkaidō, Kyōto, Ōsaka, Nagasaki, and the mines of Sado were under the direct control of the *bakufuhan* government and used to control

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<sup>24</sup> Horie, “Revolution and Reform in Meiji Restoration,” 25.

<sup>25</sup> “Japan - Bakuhan, Feudalism, Shogunate.”

commerce, industry, and trade.<sup>26</sup> As the 1860s approached, this internal government began to hear whispers of the wealthy *daimyōs* wanting independence if they were further mistreated by the *shogun*.<sup>27</sup>

The Tokugawa shogunate also instituted rigid social hierarchies in an attempt to regulate society. This caste system was made up of rulers, warriors (both *samurai* and *ronin*, who were warriors stripped of their *samurai* rank), farmers, and artisans and merchants, in descending order. The Tokugawa shogunate claimed the purpose of this caste system was to prevent unnecessary violence by restricting the number of people who had access to weapons; the ways in which the warrior class, only seven percent of the population, could engage in violence were also restricted. Additionally, the Tokugawa shogunate placed heavy restrictions on trade and the spread of Christianity, which meant limiting contact with Europeans. The shogunate feared that Europeans would provide support for rebellious *daimyōs*, so they banned all Europeans except the Dutch, who were only allowed to trade in the port of Nagasaki.

Despite the political and social rigidity, the Tokugawa shogunate enjoyed a period of economic growth and prosperity coming out of the Warring States Period. The population of Japan doubled from 15 million to 30 million, and

because the shogunate imposed financial burdens, the *daimyōs* were incentivized to increase economic productivity on their lands. From this productivity came new farming lands, irrigation, new farming methods, cash crops, diverse trading methods, and a more commercial economy. Additionally, the *daimyōs* were able to monopolize the goods of their *han* and sold them cheaply in Osaka and Tokyo.<sup>28</sup> However, the Tokugawa shogunate experienced a series of agrarian revolts between 1603 and 1860. This was likely due to the fact that wealthy farmers—who acted as village officials—were heavily opposed to the guilds that poor farmers tried to create in order to advocate for lower prices.<sup>29</sup> The shogunate saw an increase in the average number of farmer revolts between 1713 and 1842, increasing from 4.2 revolts per year on average to 11.7 revolts per year on average.<sup>30</sup> As the scale of these revolts grew, the farmers found themselves allying with lower class fighting men within a feudal army.<sup>31</sup> This was because these lower class soldiers also wanted to benefit from the social change they saw as an outcome of these revolts. In 1837, the Oshio revolts saw participation from these lower class soldiers; almost 30% of the participants came from this group.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Horie, 25.

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

The newfound prosperity led to a rise in urbanization and the development of new cultures. The *daimyōs* would demonstrate their wealth by building larger and more complex castles which would then have towns develop around them. In large cities like Edo, Osaka, and Kyōto, urban culture became more progressive. *Bunraku* and *kabuki* theater became popular forms of entertainment and intellectual innovation began to occur. Neo-Confucianism became a widely spread ideology, its central idea being that human nature is essentially good, but that goodness could be clouded by engaging with the world. In order to restore original human goodness or purity, people had to engage in self-cultivation. Originally, neo-Confucianism was treated suspiciously, as many officials believed its scholars were advocating some form of Christianity, which was banned in the 1620s. Later, however, neo-Confucianism was accepted as a form of moral teaching. Yamaga Sokō, a scholar, argued that since the warrior class now governed society, they had to be role models as well as rulers. Thus, they should engage in self-cultivation in the fields of both military training and the literary arts. Neo-Confucianism also helped unite Japan through *kokugaku*, or national learning, which represented a form of early nationalism.

Leading up the 1860s, Japan dealt with an ever-changing international landscape. In the late 1850s, the British imperial forces were making

aggressive moves in the Asian region. India was dealing with the aftermath of failed anti-British rebellions and a civil war, which led to the consolidation of British governance.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, the British-French war in China raged on as the two fought for free trade.<sup>34</sup> The shogunate was very wary of foreign powers—the *shogun* was nervous about the potential effect of foreign influence on the hierarchies which had been created within the country. As a result, all ports (with the exception of Nagasaki), were closed to international trade. Only the Dutch were able to trade at Nagasaki. However, in 1853, U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry arrived in Japan and forced the shogunate to sign trade treaties that opened Nagasaki and Yokohama up to all international trade in 1859.<sup>35</sup> In 1860, Japan sent its first delegates to the West, marking a significant turning point in its isolationist policies and initiating a period of rapid modernization and engagement with the global community.

## The Shoguns

During the Tokugawa shogunate, a total of thirteen *shoguns* ruled before the events of this committee: Tokugawa Ieyasu (R: 1603 - 1616), Tokugawa Hidetada (R: 1605 - 1623), Tokugawa Iemitsu (R: 1623 - 1651), Tokugawa Ietsuna (R: 1651 - 1680), Tokugawa Tsunayoshi (R: 1680 -

<sup>33</sup> Metzler, "Japan and the World Conjunction of 1866," 16.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

1709), Tokugawa Ienobu (R: 1709 - 1712), Tokugawa Ietsugu (R: 1713 - 1716), Tokugawa Yoshimune (R: 1716 - 1745), Tokugawa Ieshige (R: 1745 - 1760), Tokugawa Ieharu (R: 1760 - 1786), Tokugawa Ienari (R: 1787 - 1837), Tokugawa Ieyoshi (R: 1837 - 1853), Tokugawa Iesada (R: 1853 - 1858), and Tokugawa Iemochi (R: 1858 - Present).

Of the thirteen, four in particular stand out for the role they played in this nation's history.<sup>36</sup>

### **Tokugawa Ieyasu (R: 1603 - 1616)**

Tokugawa Ieyasu (depicted in the illustration to the right)<sup>37</sup> is known as the “Unifier” of Japan. During the Conquest of the Hōjō, Ieyasu solidified his control over the nation. In the period of turmoil before the death of Hideyoshi, Ieyasu arranged his domain into the most organized domain with the largest reliable army.



He did this by placing his strongest vassals (the *fudai daimyō*) strategically along main access routes.<sup>38</sup>

After the Battle of Sekigahara, where

Ieyasu's mastery over Japan became permanent,

Ieyasu scaled this policy to a national level. One of his first actions as *shogun* was to reorganize *daimyōs*. In doing so, he was able to strip his former enemies of their land, place allies in strategic locations, and give himself and his friends control of central Japan.<sup>39</sup> In the following years, Ieyasu continued to restrict the movements and actions that *daimyōs*, imperial court nobles, clerics, and even his allies could take as he issued more regulations and created more supervisory bodies. Ieyasu had an interest in foreign affairs; with the demise of the Ming dynasty next door, Ieyasu initially welcomed the Portuguese, Dutch, and English trade requests, seeing these trade relationships as a chance to acquire firearms, commercial profits, and information.<sup>40</sup> However, when Ieyasu became convinced that missionaries were a threat to Japan's political order, he stopped all missionary activity, discouraged the practice of Christianity, and took steps to close trade relationships. Tokugawa Ieyasu was responsible for the construction of the largest castle in the world, the development of Edo — which became a lively town and port filled with artisans, traders, laborers, and clerks — and the *sankin kōtai* policy, among other achievements.

### **Tokugawa Yoshimune (R: 1716 - 1745)**

<sup>36</sup> P.S. If you've read through the background guide, you get a sweet surprise! Tell an Exec @ the end of Session I.

<sup>37</sup> *Tokugawa Ieyasu2 full*, illustration, retrieved from <https://picryl.com/media/tokugawa-ieyasu2-full-fe295>

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<sup>38</sup> “Tokugawa Ieyasu.”

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

Tokugawa Yoshimune (depicted in the painting below)<sup>41</sup> was the eighth *shogun* and is known as one of Japan's greatest rulers. Interestingly, Yoshimune was not a direct descendant of



Tokugawa Ieyasu, rather he became *shogun* due to a lack of sons in the original line. Before becoming the *shogun* of Japan, Yoshimune was head of the *Kii* and instituted several policies to alleviate his *daimyōs'* fiscal troubles.

Once the *shogun*, Yoshimune tried to do the same on a national level. He cut the number of hereditary government retainers and stopped most inheritances from passing the first generation.<sup>42</sup> Yoshimune was also determined to return the shogunate to the simple ways of the beginning and eliminate court luxuries. His goal was to make Japan more frugal, introducing greater governmental control over the economy, as well as increased taxation. His Kyōhō Reforms aimed to achieve these goals by making more land available for rice cultivation and instating new taxes in order to combat the rapidly falling price of rice. He lifted book bans on Western novels in

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<sup>41</sup> Kawamura Kiyoo, *Tokugawa Yoshimune*, painting, Tokugawa Memorial Foundation, retrieved from <https://garystockbridge617.getarchive.net/amp/media/tokugawa-yoshimune-by-kawamura-kiyoo-tokugawa-memorial-foundation-1bd572>.

<sup>42</sup> "Tokugawa Yoshimune."

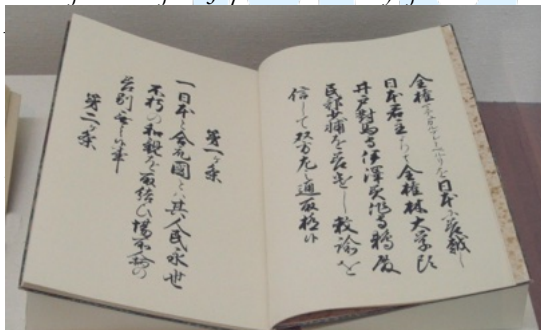
order to allow for more modernization of the economy, and returns on taxation were higher for Yoshimune than for any other *shogun*. However, when disease struck valuable rice crops and sparked a famine, many citizens took to attacking merchants from Edo due to their monopoly on the rice market and refusal to control the skyrocketing rice prices. The famine, as well as some of the stricter economic reforms, helped to contribute to growing animosity towards the shogunate, despite increased economic activity during Yoshimune's rule.

### **Tokugawa Ieyoshi (R: 1837 - 1853)**

Tokugawa Ieyoshi wasn't originally intended to be the twelfth *shogun*, but when his elder brother passed away, he was trained to take over from his father and took power at the age of 45. At the beginning of his reign, Japan remained in isolation despite multiple attempts from Western powers to initiate trade. Ieyoshi is credited with putting in place the Tenpō Reforms—strict economic policies that restricted public access to entertainment and other luxuries, in order to encourage frugality and prevent more events like the Great Tenpō Famine. These highly restrictive policies were largely unpopular and caused a mild depression due to their dampening of economic activity throughout Japan. The Tenpō Reforms were revoked almost immediately after Tokugawa Ieyoshi passed away, leaving the throne to his son.

Another controversial policy from Tokugawa Ieyoshi were the Agechi-rei Reforms, which redistributed the land of several *daimyōs* around Edo and Osaka, putting it back directly in the *shogun's* hands. This move strengthened the power of the shogunate, helping to centralize Japan's government, but was unpopular with several of the *daimyōs*. In return for their taken land, the *daimyōs* were reimbursed either with land of equal size elsewhere or rice and grains, but these policies stirred unrest among several powerful noble families, as well as members of the general public who lived on their land. Towards the end of Ieyoshi's reign, there were a series of threats made by an American tradesman, Commodore Matthew Perry, who docked his ship in one of Japan's restricted ports and warned that he would attack Edo if the shogunate refused to negotiate with him and open trade. Ieyoshi began negotiations on the Treaty of Kanagawa (in lieu of a depiction of Tokugawa Ieyoshi, please see the photo of the treaty below<sup>43</sup>), which was designed to allow for some restricted trade between the West and Japan without allowing for any cultural influence from Western powers. Before the treaty could be finalized, Ieyoshi died from a heart attack, leaving his son, Tokugawa Iesada to sign the agreement.

<sup>43</sup> *Ratification of the Japan USA Treaty of Peace and*



The signing of the Treaty of Kanagawa represented the official opening of Japan's ports (albeit in a highly restricted manner) to Western trade. This development sparked unrest among many of Japan's citizens who did not want to see an intrusion of Western powers. Ieyoshi's reign and its end represent a decreasing popularity of the Tokugawa shogunate and set the stage for the beginning of the *Bakumatsu*.

#### **Tokugawa Yoshinobu (R:1858 - 1866)**



Following the untimely death of his predecessor, Tokugawa Iemochi, Tokugawa Yoshinobu (shown in the picture above)<sup>44</sup> took power in 1858. Originally, Yoshinobu was supposed to rule instead of Iemochi, but a small coup within the shogunate resulted in Yoshinobu's more radical family being forced into domiciliary

<sup>44</sup> *Tokugawa Yoshinobu as Jakō no ma Shikō*, March 26, 2023, photograph, National Diet Library Digital Collections, retrieved from <https://boudewijnhuijgens.getarchive.net/media/tokugawa-yoshinobu-as-jak-no-ma-shik-e063fd>.

confinement.<sup>45</sup> Later, Yoshinobu forced the government to accept him as guardian to the *shogun*; thus, when Iemochi died, Yoshinobu took power. He is currently in power, ruling over this committee as *shogun*.

## Current Situation

This is where we find ourselves today. The current situation of our committee is one of impending chaos, struggles for dominance in the political sphere of Japan, and one where we must balance domestic, international, and other interests. Regular and elite Japanese citizens must decide how to preserve their nation in the face of looming foreign influence and domestic upheaval—should the shogunate be entirely overthrown, or should the two governments collaborate and share power? Should the country remain partially closed, open itself to free trade, or return to the policy of *sabaku*? These conflicting economic and foreign policy issues should guide delegates’ decisions on the best possible form of government for the nation moving forward.

## Statement Of The Problem

The year is 1860, and the rebellious Meiji forces have gathered today to debate how to navigate the sociopolitical, economic, international, and domestic threats that they see impacting the Japanese way of life and the rights of civilians.

<sup>45</sup> “Tokugawa Yoshinobu.”

This group of delegates is primarily made up of people who have become disadvantaged as a result of the policies of the Tokugawa shogunate. For too long, the *shoguns* have favored their friends and family, forced *daimyōs* to spend beyond their means, and held the families of *daimyōs* effectively hostage in Edo. A series of economic, political, and social events have occurred in recent years, setting the stage for this committee to endeavor to determine the future of the Japanese nation.



Photo of a guard’s tower at the ruins of Edo Castle.<sup>46</sup>

## Economic Update

Early transformations in social life have begun—cities are springing up around the nation and urbanization of the country is increasing. New education policies have led to increased literacy rates among the population. Though the quality of life seems generally improved on the

<sup>46</sup> Bernard Spragg, *Edo Castle.Tokyo.*, May 19, 2018, photograph, retrieved from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/volvob12b/51334303085>.

surface, farmer populations in some *hans* have begun a series of intense and violent protests. Between 1833 and 1860, there have already been more than two hundred entirely agrarian revolts—a rare sight in a country where weapons are meant to be restricted to the *samurai* class. Life under the shogunate is highly stratified, even within the social classes. For example, the two classes of *daimyōs* are separated into those who were loyal to the Tokugawa family before the Battle of Sekigahara—the *fudai daimyō*—and those who had to pledge allegiance after—the *tozama daimyō*. The two classes of warriors are similarly separated into *samurai*, who are noble warriors commanded by a *daimyō*, and *ronin*, who are warriors without masters or titles.

Leading up to and during 1860, there has been a declining focus on agricultural production as the primary driver of economic growth. A wealthy middle class is emerging, which consists of those shifting their focus towards large-scale agriculture. These affluent landowners are adopting modern farming techniques and investing in agricultural infrastructure, effectively transforming agriculture into a commercial venture rather than subsistence farming. Administration has also begun to evolve; the traditional *gonin gumi* system of law enforcement whereby five families within a farming community are held collectively responsible for meeting production quotas has been abandoned in some domains in favor of external oversight

from the government itself. This shift has not only contributed to the modernization of agricultural practices but also altered the economic landscape of Japan, as industrialization and other sectors are beginning to take center stage. The standard of living has skyrocketed in the Edo period compared to before; an economic analysis found that even “the poor [in Japan] were eating soybean paste (*miso*) soup and usually one or more side dishes of seasonal vegetable, bean curd, dried fish and pickles,” along with a mixture of rice and grains during this period.<sup>47</sup>

A new type of economic group, the *zaibatsu*, has also begun to emerge, and though there are few examples of it in 1860, they are deemed to be of great importance in furthering Japan’s economic development. *Zaibatsu* are loosely affiliated conglomerates of companies—often headed by one of those member companies themselves—designed to enable planning of raw material purchases and of total output levels to be performed in concert.<sup>48</sup> Generally created through government sanction, the few examples which exist of these groups in 1860 are localized to specific domains. The intention in these areas is that these groups will act as the industrializing wing of that specific domain, requiring only

<sup>47</sup> Susan B. Hanley, “A High Standard of Living in Nineteenth-Century Japan: Fact or Fantasy?” 183. *See also* Mutsuhito, “Constitution of the Empire of Japan,” <https://doi.org/10.12356>, 1889.

<sup>48</sup> Okazaki, “The Role of Holding Companies in Pre-War Japanese Economic Development: Rethinking Zaibatsu in Perspectives of Corporate Governance,” 245.



oversight from the *daimyō*, not total control.<sup>49</sup> This has contributed slightly to the growth of manufacturing industries in some areas, though the long-term nationwide impact of these groups is yet to be unveiled.

The urbanization and modernization of Japan's economy have been accompanied by ongoing natural disasters, including drought-induced famines. These disasters have had severe consequences, leading to civil unrest and increasingly frequent peasant uprisings. The vulnerability of the agricultural sector to natural disasters, combined with socio-economic disparities, is creating a breeding ground for discontent among the peasantry. Peasants, who suffer the most from famine and economic hardships, increasingly are voicing their grievances through uprisings and protests. These upheavals highlight the challenges and social tensions associated with the rapid changes taking place in Japan during this time, as urbanization and modernization are clashing with the hardships faced by the rural population.

The government in Edo and the people of Japan have been struggling with how to cope with these events. The natural disasters, growing middle class, and stratified society have caused them to begin thinking about a potential switch in payment procedures. The feudal Japanese society primarily trades or deals with disunited clan notes, but there have been rumblings about

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

switching to a more modern and nationalized currency system. However, Japan has no Western institutions like a central bank or bank culture like the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Controlling, monitoring, and saving a hypothetical national currency are problems which key players are already thinking about.



*Examples of currency used in Japan during the Bakumatsu period.<sup>50</sup>*

## International Update

The international community, largely dominated by Western powers like the United States and the United Kingdom, has become increasingly interested in the resources (like an abundance of coal) that Japan holds and its strategic location relative to China. In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry arrived on the shores of Japan from the United States and forced an Open Door Policy. The United States demonstrated that the Western world knew nothing about Japanese culture and

<sup>50</sup> *Bakumatsu local coins*, 2008, photograph, retrieved from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bakumatsu\\_local\\_coins.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bakumatsu_local_coins.jpg).

society, having addressed the treaty to the Emperor of Japan.<sup>51</sup> As this committee knows, the Emperor is a mere figurehead, and Tokugawa Yoshinobu rules over the country. Upon the arrival of the armored Americans, many Japanese called them "black ships of evil *mien* (appearance)."<sup>52</sup>

Commodore Perry's Treaty of Kanagawa was begrudgingly signed into law by the *shogun*, but this act still angered many members of society. Most Japanese wanted the foreigners expelled. While this specific treaty did not contain a commercial trade clause, it provided an opening for future American contact and trade. The treaty stipulated that Japan would have to protect stranded seamen, open two ports for refueling and provisioning American ships in Shimoda and Hakodate, and allow the United States the right to appoint consuls to live in these port cities.<sup>53</sup> This last privilege was completely unique to the United States, as it was a privilege not previously granted to foreign nations. Additionally, the United States threw in a "most favored nation" clause that dictated that all future concessions granted by Japan to other countries would automatically apply to the United States, as well.<sup>54</sup> In 1858, the Americans forced another treaty, called the Treaty of Amity and Commerce,

or the Harris Treaty, on Japan that officially opened more ports and designated cities in which foreigners could live. This trade brought foreign currency into Japan, further upsetting the already disunited monetary system.<sup>55</sup> The Harris Treaty also brought the first delegation of Japan to the United States; the trip was entirely sponsored by the American government, and, at the time of this committee, the delegation is already in the United States.<sup>56</sup> The Japanese government has received, and is receiving, a few updates about the delegation—most surprising thus far has been a publication by an African American abolitionist paper that articulated similarities between the Japanese and African American communities based on a shared experience of racial prejudice and the right of all men to participate in the affairs of the world.<sup>57</sup>

Japanese *samurai* had the strongest and most public response to these treaties. Their leaders argued that the *shogun* was too weak to deal with the problems caused by foreigners and called for a change in leadership. Supporters of this claim continue to argue that the *shogun* has made too much room for foreign control of Japan and fear a threat to Japanese sovereignty and culture. Opponents point out the alleged economic boost that the country will receive if they industrialize

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<sup>51</sup> "Letters from U.S. President Millard Fillmore and U.S. Navy Commodore Matthew C. Perry to the Emperor of Japan (1852 - 1853)."

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> "Milestones: 1830–1860 - Office of the Historian."

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>55</sup> "Letters from U.S. President Millard Fillmore and U.S. Navy Commodore Matthew C. Perry to the Emperor of Japan (1852 - 1853)."

<sup>56</sup> Isobe, "Japanese envoy's first visit to U.S. Mint in 1860."

<sup>57</sup> Doan, "African America and Japan."

and modernize as the West has. Interestingly, supporters and opponents do not find themselves split along lines of “pro-shogunate” and “pro-imperial family”—it seems that the question of modernization and foreign influence afflicts both sides differently.

## Sociopolitical Update

The sociopolitical atmosphere in Japan is extremely tense leading up to the 1860s. Aside from agrarian revolts, tension between *daimyōs*, and the obvious contention over the state of the government, the country is grappling with large-scale issues like the question of democracy, how to modernize while maintaining Japanese culture, and much more.

For centuries, the *shogun* has ruled as a military leader, but many within this committee and Japan at large have seen the industrial might and power of democratic countries in the West. When Commodore Perry arrived on the shores of Japan, his ships carried advanced firepower, a telegraph, a working model of a steam locomotive, a telescope, and many Western wines and liquors.<sup>58</sup>

These goods impressed and inspired fear in the hearts of onlookers in Japan. These recent developments in commerce have resulted in the people of not just this committee, but your domains at large, beginning to float ideas about how to restructure the government so that it is better, stronger, and more Japanese. The

Tokugawa shogunate has had a very disjointed approach to dealing with the influence of foreign powers in the Japanese economy. The relative autonomy of some of the *daimyōs* has left specific parts of the country with extensive contact with foreign powers while others have been prevented from engaging entirely. The policy of *sakoku*, or “closing off the country,” has proven ineffective since the Perry Expedition in 1853, and though *rangaku* education and other scientific developments from foreign powers are of interest to many Japanese intellectuals, the *shogun*’s current attempted policy of forbidding exit from the country and access to these ideas has become deeply unpopular.

There are three main approaches currently being debated among the *sonnō jōi*-supporting intellectuals in 1860. They are (1) *tōbaku*, or the complete overthrow of the shogunate; (2) *kōbu gattai*, or a united government wherein the *shogun*, emperor, and individual *daimyōs* coordinate on all matters; and (3) *hanbaku*, or a united government wherein the *shogun* and emperor divide power between themselves.

Though all three ideologies find root in the need to “support the emperor and expel the ‘barbarians’”—that is, foreign powers—and in a neo-Confucian belief system, they differ sharply in how they believe the *shogun*’s existing power best be addressed. With various members of the committee supporting the Meiji reclamation of power espousing varying versions of these

<sup>58</sup> “Milestones: 1830–1860 - Office of the Historian.”

ideologies, it is unclear when the *sonnō jōi* front will present itself as united.



### **Yoshida Shoin, Military Educator from Chōshū**

Born to the family of military educators in Chōshū province, Yoshida Shoin has been raised in the center of militant pro-reformation thought. His upbringing in the military training quarters have earned him the respect of many *samurai* who would go on to become *ishin shishi*, a notorious group of *ronin* who sought to force the return of the emperor's power. He has also taken to studying Western military tactics due to Chōshū's proximity to trading ports. In 1851, seeking to make a name for himself, he embarked on a journey across Japan without yet receiving the express permission of the *Daimyō* of Chōshū. When he returned, he was stripped of his status as *samurai*. Over the next decade, he alternated between roaming the road to Edo and finding himself in prison, his only friends being the other former *samurai* expelled from Chōshū. Eventually, he founded a small but increasingly important military school called the Shōka Sonjuku. He has lost any fondness for the military government.

### **Yamagata Aritomo, Commander in the Kiheitai**

Born in 1838 to a weapon-carrying foot soldier, Yamagata Aritomo has long learned the consequence of military rule. “The petty soldier may lord over the peasant,” he once wrote in a diary at the age of fourteen, “so long as the experienced soldier lords over him; the experienced soldier may lord over the petty soldier so long as the commander lords over him, and so on the line goes until the petty soldier and the experienced soldier and the commander are all but commoners, unworthy in the eyes of the true lord.” As he was chastised in his native Chōshū when this diary was found one day several years later, he abandoned the *daimyō* and attended Yoshida Shōin's military school, the Shōka Sonjuku. There, he met lifelong friends—many of whom had also fled Chōshū—including Takasugi Shinsaku, who dreamed of creating a Western-style paramilitary force. Having been declared a commander of this emergent anti-Tokugawa force, Yamagata Aritomo must balance his hatred of a military regime and his need for the military group through which he might attempt to dismantle it.

### **Itō Hirobumi, Farmer from Suō**

Itō Hirobumi has hardly tasted the fruits of the Tokugawa shogunate's class system. His parents were poor farmers, and their family's total bankruptcy when he was five years old meant that he lived with his mother's parents. He toiled in the fields, developing special skills in growing rice, tea, sweet potatoes, and soy, and becoming passionate on the point that Japan could only progress if it could become an innovator in agriculture. He was adopted later in life into a *samurai* family, holding the meager role of a weapons-carrier.

This did allow him, however, to study martial arts more properly at the Shōka Sonjuku and to become close friends with bold visionary Katsura Kogorō as well as an acquaintance of several British soldiers who had been hired to teach weaponry at the academy. Itō must consider how to best further the agrarian lot in Japan.

### **Kido Takayoshi, Doctor and Admiral of the Chōshū Navy**

Kido Takayoshi is bold. He has spent his life in defiance, constantly losing everything for it and building it up again. He had been born into a physician's family and adopted by the Katsura nobles at the age of seven, but almost half the wealth in *oku* was taken by their *daimyō* as a consequence. Tragedy in his family made him the head of the household at the age of fifteen, but he was neither trusted nor respected by any other courtiers. It was not until 1849 that he found a reason for his defiance, running away from the prestigious Meirinkan School to study in the Shōka Sonjuku under Yoshida Shōin. There, he became an ardent advocate of *sonnō jōi*, specifically the *kōbu gattai* doctrine. He took to learning more about warcraft and, returning later to his *daimyō's* court, swore loyalty in exchange for being tasked with creating the territory's first great ship. Though he accomplished this task to great aplomb in 1858, he has since stayed in Edo as the domain's permanent representative. He has ties to *ronin* from Mito, friends from military school, and loyal supporters from the domain's navy. He must now decide how to use these for his greatest act of defiance yet.

### **Matsukata Masayoshi, Mathematician from Satsuma**

Matsukata Masayoshi has always been brilliant. His parents, before dying when he was thirteen, were always so proud of their fourth son. He was simply different from the rest of his noble *samurai* warrior family. After they died, Matsukata joined the Confucian academy in Satsuma called *Zoshikan* where he studied the teaching of Wang Yangming. Deeply influenced by the teachings that stressed loyalty to the Emperor, Matsukata began to feel resentment towards the shogunate, becoming a strong advocate of *tōbaku*. His brilliance got him sent to Nagasaki, where he devoured Western science and mathematics. Importantly, his favorite number is seven. He eventually became the liaison between Kyoto and the *daimyōs* of Kagoshima. His unique ability to see inside Kyoto has made Matsukata fairly certain that there is conflict brewing between the Tokugawa and some *daimyōs*. As a result, he has started collecting equipment he thinks will be crucial for his safety, like the Kasuga ship. Matsukata must continue to rely on his brilliance to keep himself safe and wade through the political tensions of today.

### **Mori Arinori, Naval Surveyor from Satsuma**

Though from a traditional Satsuma *samurai* family, Mori Arinori is the furthest from a traditionalist. He grew up exposed to the many cultures of the world. As a young boy in Japan, he was educated at the

*Kaisenjo* School for Western Learning and spent his college years at the University College London studying Western math, physics, and naval surveying. He found his home on the ocean, often taking up sailing in his free time and enjoying the cool spray of salt water on his face. His years in London have been his favorite thus far. Something about the English language on his tongue tickles his intellectual mind — the uniformity in communication has allowed him to learn so much more about the world. He dreams of teaching his countrymen about the world, its cultures, religions, peoples, and more. Mori Arinori wants to bring his newfound enlightenment back home, strongly supporting *hanbaku* and a more peaceful Japan.

### **Saigō Takamori, Samurai from Satsuma**

Saigō Takamori has long believed in blurred lines, smashed glass ceilings, and fairness. As the first son of a high-ranking, noble, *samurai koshōkumi*, Saigō Takamori was expected to follow in his footsteps and set the standard for his six siblings. Not only did he exceed his military expectations, he blurred the lines of these expectations by publishing poetry under the pseudonym Saigō Nanshū. This is why when the news broke of the forced Treaty of Kanagawa and Treaty of Amity and Commerce, Saigō Takamori took to vocally disagreeing that the West should be allowed in. He strongly believed that the money the West was forcing the Japanese to spend on expanding railway networks for trade should instead be going towards military modernization. Saigō Takamori believes that the strength and versatility that he embodies should be characteristics shared by everyone, making him a strong supporter of *tōbaku*—he has become utterly disappointed with the weakness that the Tokugawa has displayed.

### **Ōkubo Toshimichi, Retainer and Tax Collector of Satsuma**

Recognized early on for his talents despite his family's lowly status, Ōkubo Toshimichi presently serves as the retainer of the *Daimyō* of Satsuma. This position comes with great responsibility. As the *samurai* charged with making the *daimyō* swear to execute their lordship over the domain responsibly, he has great influence over Satsuma's ruler. In addition, his talent as a shrewd mathematician has earned him the role of tax collector, overseeing the process of gathering rice for the *daimyō*. He has great insight into the network of *samurai* and officials who carry out both the financial functions of the domain as well as the maintenance of the fiscal relationship between the domain and the *shogun*. Though he recognizes the room for corruption in this system, he supports *kōbu gattai*, and must balance these countervailing interests as the wheel of history turns in Japan.

### **Ōkuma Shigenobu, Philosopher and Samurai from Saga**

“If Shigenobu excels in anything particularly well,” his teacher once wrote, “it is his focus.” A story once became famous of the young artilleryman who, as a child, was asked to aim for a bird. When the instructor

asked other classmates what they saw, they described the skies and the trees, but when asking Ōkuma Shigenobu, he responded simply with “the eye of the bird.” His skill in artillery made him a respected *samurai* in the Saga domain, but it also taught him the discipline needed to act without haste, seeking only to succeed in the long term. Though Ōkuma studied in a Confucian school for much of his life, he was expelled when protesting against the school’s ideology, and he was moved to a Dutch school by 1854. Developing an interest in the Dutch constitutional monarchy, he started to advocate for the *hanbaku* doctrine of *sōnno jōi*. With tensions rising half a decade later in 1860, he must be careful about his next move.

### **Itagaki Taisuke, Counselor to the Daimyō of Tosa**

Having been appointed the *sobayonin*, or counselor, to the *Daimyō* of Tosa, Itagaki Taisuke wields a great deal of influence over the military and fiscal policy in his native domain. His *samurai* training has made him shrewd and cunning, and he has already been announced by the *daimyō* as being the domain’s representation on both economic and military matters in Edo starting next year. With both this future role and his present one, he has already been able to acquaint himself with many members of both his domain’s court and the *shogun*’s. He has been spurred to action in favor of *kōbu gattai* and the use of the *samurai* as an already existing force which might encourage Japan’s economic development for the better—under the emperor’s guidance. Itagaki must consider, given his influence in Tosa, how he might further influence all of Japan.

### **Sakamoto Ryōma, Master Swordsman from Tosa**

As the son of Sakamoto Shun, Sakamoto Ryōma grew up under both strong agricultural and military tutelage and great expectations. His father’s involvement in several agrarian revolts and list of military successes meant that he was given training intended to mold him into an equal warrior. Instead, Sakamoto, though masterfully capable on the battlefield, took more strongly to books, finding refuge in the thrilling art of public accounting. “Fiscal austerity,” he is once quoted to have said, “is the zenith of excitement in politics.” Sakamoto’s limited involvement in his five-family collective’s affairs had seen it become the *gonin gumi* with the most stable and consistent tax income, catching the eye of the *daimyō* himself. Sakamoto was not present at the most recent agrarian revolts, as he had been asked to advise in the readjusting of Tosa’s balance sheets. Whether his connections in court will help him achieve his dream of an economically stable nation—and whether those dreams will extend beyond Tosa’s borders—will be up to him.

### **Hijikata Toshizo, Peasant Warrior from Musashi**



Hijikata “Daredevil” Toshizo was very popular in his youth for his daring attitude and tremendous courage. He was always the first to enter the dark rooms while exploring decrepit buildings, and he always could withstand the dark for the longest in “Scare Dark,” the favorite game of his youth. Thus, as he entered his adult life, Hijikata had very unique, homegrown views on justice. Before his political career, Hijikata traveled to the Shōka Sonjuku School to study. While there, he made a number of strong acquaintances and learned how to play the violin very well. He returned from the school full of ideas and newly-acquired talents, including a strong belief in national self-determination and the rule of the emperor to further the lives of merchants. Hijikata values courage and bravery above all else, and derives his moral code from this view. His whole life, he has seen injustice fall to those who do not deserve it, and if the entire political structure is to change in Japan, Hijikata demands a fairer system for those who are good.

### **Iwakura Tomomi, Chancellor to the Emperor**

Born into a family of low nobility, Iwakura Tomomi has had ample opportunities given to him for which he is grateful. He was adopted by the much more significant Iwakura family when he was eleven years old, a consequence of his adoptive father’s being impressed by his progress in classes on Confucianism. In his early adulthood, he became a chancellor to Emperor Kōmei, the father of the later Emperor Meiji. He has recently acted as a liaison between the imperial court and the *shogun*, having already had to settle disputes despite his generally strong aversion to the *shogun*’s willingness to open the country to foreign powers. With the *shogun*’s rogue signing of the Treaty of Amity and Commerce with the U.S., however, this job has never been more difficult.

### **Sumitomo Kichizaemon, Head of Sumitomo Group**

Brother to the well-known Saionji Kinmochi and Tokudaiji Sanetsune, Sumitomo Kichizaemon is no stranger to the feeling of catching up to others’ successes. Though he loves his brothers dearly and has used his wealth to support their missions, he cannot help but wish that he might more significantly impact the future of Japan himself. As the head of the Sumitomo *zaibatsu*, a burgeoning conglomerate in the Sumitomo domain which specializes in copper refinement and bookmaking, he has built up a tremendous wealth and employs thousands of individuals in the domain. Though he is restricted to leading his own copper company and other member companies in the direction thought best by the *daimyō*, he does maintain significant autonomy in most of the details of the decision-making process. With members of the group clamoring to possibly seek foreign partners in order to grow further, Sumitomo is sure that he can no longer stand for the *shogun*’s trade restrictions.

### **Fukuzawa Yukichi, Translator for the Tokugawa Shogunate**

Fukuzawa Yukichi was not born into wealth or high status, nor even were many of his *samurai* ancestors particularly skilled in combat. Nevertheless, his love of learning and devotion to philosophy and linguistics has carried him far. He has studied many classics of both Confucian and neo-Confucian literature, becoming sure that steeped in tradition was the future of a more developed, meritocratic Japan. He later went on to study *rangaku* in a Dutch school, becoming fluent in both Dutch and English as a byproduct. He has since been promoted to the role of official translator for the Tokugawa shogunate, which rests unaware of his involvement in the underground movement supporting *sonnō jōi*. Though Fukuzawa believes in the *kōbu gattai* doctrine and does not believe the total overthrow of the *shogun* to be necessary, he is determined to render a more beautiful future for Japan.

### **Sakuma Shōzan, Physicist and Samurai from Shinshū**

Born in the Shinshū domain in 1811, Sakuma was a pioneer in several ways. First, his scholarly parents encouraged him to study well into his thirties—first a traditional Japanese *samurai* education, then a decade of focus on Chinese philosophy, and finally a *rangaku* education. Having learned to read and write Dutch, he then became an avid reader of scientific literature from the Netherlands and beyond. He began to dabble in invention, creating glass, magnets, thermometers, and other devices. Developing the country's first telegraph and proposed plans for producing electric generators, Sakuma consistently proved himself to be a leading pioneer on the Japanese islands. When he began to study the military tactics of Western powers, he truly became an advocate of westernizing education and modernizing technology in his country.

### **Saigō Shōma, Newspaper Owner from Satsuma**

Brother of the significantly better known Saigō Takamori, Saigō Shōma has also grown to be an ardent fighter in favor of the *tōbaku* doctrine. Having been adopted into the Saigō family, built a bond with his new father, and immediately having it taken away when he, his siblings, and his mother were made to live in Edo, he has been forever wrathful towards the social structures enforced by the shogunate. Seeing them as antiquated, he hopes to bring Japan to a more liberal future, allowing more meritocratic systems of politics, education, and social status to rule. He is well-spoken and verbose, a combination well-suited for the well-being of his newspaper, the *Satsuma Times*. He recognizes illiteracy as an issue in Japan, and he hopes that with meritocratic reforms, the country will overcome this and other obstacles to its progress.

### **Sanjō Sanetomi, Treasurer in Kyōto**

Born in 1837 to a *kuge* family of imperial courtiers, Sanjō Sanetomi has been blessed with the friendship of the emperor's family since childhood. His closeness to the imperial household granted him their trust. He has held several positions in the albeit weak imperial court, having been treasurer several times, an advisor on

agrarian matters in Kyōto between 1857 and 1859, and an advisor on relations with the *shogun* for a brief time. Now, again in the role of treasurer, he oversees the family's finances and is entrusted with maintaining its standing as Emperor Meiji prepares to reassert the power of the Chrysanthemum Throne in Japan.

### **Saigō Kichinosuke, Farmer from Muramatsu**

Saigō Kichinosuke was born into a poor agricultural family in 1842. His father was a soy farmer, and though his family was not itself impoverished, it had to struggle and see its neighbors teeter through increasingly challenging domestic economic crises throughout his childhood. This led to Saigō becoming very frugal and disapproving of the mysterious finances of the *shogun*. After his father's untimely demise, his family was supported by a local monk, who instructed him in ancient languages, history, philosophy, and religion. At the age of fourteen, Saigō began to hear elders all around him speaking of revolution and returning the thousands-of-years-old imperial dynasty back to its former glory. Eager to look back on the history of Japan to see what made great monarchs and greater wealth for the people, he began to come to odds with his instructor, an adamant supporter of the shogunate. At only the age of sixteen, he became involved in agrarian revolts in Muramatsu. He would love nothing more than to see the *bakufu* crumble.

### **Katsu Kaishū, Officer in the Tokugawa Navy**

Born in 1823 to a poorly reputed and low-ranking retainer of the Tokugawa family, Katsu Kaishū was always building his career upward—yet there was hardly ever any room to grow under the military regime. Though he was eventually made a commissioner in the navy of the Tokugawa dynasty, he was prevented from becoming its Chief Admiral or of proposing significant reforms despite having often pointed out its weaknesses. He has made many friends and met many adoring students since first studying and later teaching in the Nagasaki Naval Academy, but it proves difficult for him to truly succeed in the life which was given to him. Though he believes that it will be difficult to dismantle the shogunate entirely, he wholeheartedly agrees that it should cooperate with a more powerful imperial house in order to bring progress to Japan.

### **Araki Shōma, Engineer from Ryūkyū**

Cars, trains, and boats, oh my! Araki “Lightning” Shōma is truly a Jack-of-all-trades when it comes to transportation. He is the little engine that could revolutionize transportation in Japan. He is a classically trained mechanical engineer, and in his spare time likes to fiddle with boat designs, for he is convinced he can

improve upon current models. He is lucky to have a nice lifestyle, as his wife comes from a wealthy family. In his role as engineer in Satsuma, Araki recognizes several truths: first, Satsuma's roads are a mess and need to be fixed. Second, shipping will be essential in the future, and as of yet, Satsuma does not have a strong enough water presence. Third, trains are cool; can Satsuma do something with trains? Araki is also very lucky to have great friendships. His best friend, Otsuke Kenzō, has been by his side for as long as he can remember and is always willing to help him with major projects. Araki Shōma is convinced that the combined power of the *shogun* and a revitalized emperor would allow the world to marvel at the technological progress of Japan forever more!

### **Nomura Tokushichi I, Founder and Head of Nomura Group**

Tokushichi Nomura I is a businessman, and he has excellent connections. He runs a small, still weak *zaibatsu* in Osaka specializing in money changing. As the head of this conglomerate, he has built up a moderate wealth and employs hundreds of individuals in the Osaka domain. Though he is restricted to leading his own money changing company directly, it is by now generally accepted that he totally controls the planning of the other companies in the group as well. Now, he seeks to diversify and build the *zaibatsu*, and the emperor has encouraged him to do so. With foreign partners clamoring for the group to expand operations and insisting on investing in its other ventures if so doing, Tokushichi is sure that he can no longer stand for the *shogun's* trade restrictions.

### **Andō Hideko, Seishitsu of Iwakitaira**

Andō Hideko is disgusted by the loyalty of her husband, Andō Nobumasa, to the *shogun*. Though she has lived the better part of her life now as a high-ranking noble, she was born into a *samurai* family of only moderate status in Iwakitaira domain. Though she has studied swordsmanship since childhood, she has not yet found the ability to escape the court in Edo for long enough to use her abilities and further her interests—though they might counter her husband's. She is convinced that only a civil government with the autocratic rule of Emperor Meiji—not of a military general—can allow Japan to reap the rewards of a globalizing world and to respond to the threat of colonization by encroaching Western powers. She will do anything it takes, even bringing embarrassment to her husband's career, as long as she might support the *tōbaku* doctrine to its fullest.

### **Nakazawa Koto, Wife of the Head of Oshi Group**

Growing up in a small kingdom on the southern part of the Konkan coast, Nakazawa Koto has always been fond of the sea. She is once quoted as saying, “Wow, I love the sea!” She has spent much of her recent years focusing primarily on being a patron of arts and architecture using the great wealth which has befallen her since her husband’s Oshi *zaibatsu* began to grow. Nowadays, however, money is tighter. The members of the *zaibatsu*, primarily soy producers, have been hit hard by the droughts and other natural disasters of the last decade. Not receiving the support of the *shogun* in Edo or even an easing of tax expectations, she has become a devout hater of the shogunate. She has become a master of the sword, having already been skilled in *kenjutsu* since her early childhood. She believes that any semblance of a military government is a strict hindrance for economic progress in Japan.

### **Sakai Shun, Architect from Hirosaki**

Sakai Shun was always known by the other children as the fastest. He could run extremely quickly, and was expected to become a brave warrior. Instead, he took to engineering in school, and this interest found its niche in architecture. He has made enough connections to access some foreign materials from American traders which are highly prized for sculpture and encourages their use—though it is sometimes considered unorthodox—in temples and other public buildings. This has led to suspicions from the government in Edo, but Sakai will never stop building a brighter future for Japan.

### **Yamazaki Saki, Poet from Iwakitaira**

Yamazaki Saki was born in 1842 in the city of Hokkaido. Due to the wishes of her strict father, she initially received a *samurai* education, but, in 1860, she eventually rebelled and traveled to the capital to pursue her dreams of becoming a poet and songwriter. There, her education ironically proved helpful due to its focus on recitation and traditional grammar, though Yamazaki was more interested in writing about politics than philosophy. Despite the notoriety which this brings her around town, her claim to fame remains her poetry, which she uses to celebrate common farmers and merchants and to advocate for the *sonnō jōi* cause.

### **Hirata Setsuko, Courtier from Mito**

One of the several aristocratic families within the Mito domain, the Hirakata were a well-established family within the region. Hirakata Setsuko grew up on her family’s estates, and she employed her prodigious charm to get her parents to let her go outside its bounds. She spent much of her adolescence in the region, becoming a well-liked figure in the aristocratic milieu. She then married a high-ranking noble, who succeeded his father to be the retainer of the *daimyō* of Mito. She once again used her charisma to win over her in-laws, allowing her to retain much of her status even following the death of her husband in 1858.

### **Yamamoto Miyako, Vegetable Vendor**

Yamamoto Miyako is a seller of vegetables. She has sold all sorts of goods for as long as she can remember, traveling Japan with her husband and five sons to earn their living. At the bottom of the social order, however, her merchant lifestyle is not well-respected. She has recently taken to reading about new political philosophies and the goals of the emperor to develop and build Japan into an economic powerhouse and that the need for skilled tradesmen follows from these goals. As such, she is eager to see the current social order dissolve.



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