



VMUN 2024

Joint Crisis Committees

BACKGROUND GUIDE

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State Minister



VANCOUVER MODEL UNITED NATIONS
The United Nations General Assembly, 2024

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VANCOUVER MODEL UNITED NATIONS

The Twenty-Third Annual Session | January 26–28, 2024

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Joint Crisis Committees at VMUN 2024! My name is Briana Chen, and I am incredibly honoured to serve as your Crisis Overlord for this iteration of VMUN.

Ever since I embarked on my journey of Model UN in Grade 8, crisis committees have always been the highlight of my Model UN experience. Through engaging in rounds of fast paced debates, questionable assassinations, and most importantly, creating long lasting friendship and memories, crisis committees were always the most memorable. After this iteration of VMUN, I genuinely hope that you will feel rewarded in terms of both knowledge and personal growth.

Throughout this experience, I will be joined by Max Chen and William Jiang, your directors of the Empire of Japan and Qing Dynasty blocs; Elizabeth Jen and Annalise Politis, your admirable chairs; and Brad Guo and Jason Huang, your knowledgeable crisis staff. On behalf of the entire dais team, I sincerely welcome you to our committee and wish you all the best in preparations for the upcoming conference.

This year, you will be diving deep into the topic of the First Sino-Japanese War. You will be challenged to take risks and step out of your comfort zone to resolve this pressing historical issue. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us at jcc@vmun.com.

Best regards,

Briana Chen
JCC Overlord

Position Paper Policy

What is a Position Paper?

A position paper is a brief overview of a country's stance on the topics being discussed by a particular committee. Though there is no specific format the position paper must follow, it should include a description of your positions your country holds on the issues on the agenda, relevant actions that your country has taken, and potential solutions that your country would support.

At Vancouver Model United Nations, delegates should write a position paper for each of the committee's topics. Each position paper should not exceed one page and should all be combined into a single document per delegate.

For the Joint Crisis Committees, position papers are mandatory.

Formatting

Position papers should:

- Include the name of the delegate, their country, and the committee
- Be in a standard font (e.g. Times New Roman) with a 12-point font size and 1-inch document margins
- Not include illustrations, diagrams, decorations, national symbols, watermarks, or page borders
- Include citations and a bibliography, in any format, giving due credit to the sources used in research (not included in the 1-page limit)

Due Dates and Submission Procedure

Position papers for this committee must be submitted by **11:59 PM PT on January 22, 2024**. Once your position paper is complete, please save the file as your last name, your first name and send it as an attachment in an email to your committee's email address, with the subject heading as "[last name] [first name] — Position Paper". Please do not add any other attachments to the email.

Both your position papers should be combined into a single PDF or Word document file; position papers submitted in another format will not be accepted.

Each position paper will be manually reviewed and considered for the Best Researched award.

The email address for this committee is jcc@vmun.com.

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First Sino-Japanese War, 1894

Overview

It is July 1894. Tensions are rising between the Empire of Japan and the Qing Dynasty as they begin to seek dominance over all of East Asia.¹ Since the late 1860s, the Empire of Japan has begun to steadily modernize in what is known as the Meiji Restoration. With the arrival of avaricious foreign imperialist states, Japan, desperate to face them, was forced to quickly dissolve their centuries-old isolation policies, reforming their military, business, and political structure. On the other hand, the once prosperous Qing Dynasty slowly diminished in power due to internal and external factors—specifically the Opium Wars and Taiping Rebellion.² Furthermore, China's exponential population growth presents another major factor in the famines, economic conflict, and political deterioration occurring within the nation's borders. Yet what both of these countries had in sight was the prospect of annexing Joseon Korean to fuel their countries' growth.

Beginning in the fourth century, the Western Jin Dynasty held power over the Korean Peninsula through the tributary system—a form of foreign relations where a dominant state would receive gifts and tributes from lesser countries and vassals in return for protection or Chinese trade.³ For centuries, this system maintained hierarchical economic, political, and religious relationships between the two regions; notably, it helped legitimize local rulers over disputed regions such as Korea, with the connection to the Chinese Empire. Moreover, the tributary states gained access to Chinese technology and trade.⁴ On the other hand, the Empire of Japan rapidly modernized under the new administration of Emperor Mutsuhito. Starting in the 1860s, Japan adopted Western practices that transitioned them to modern factories and railway systems to develop their country. Around this time, the nation swiftly initiated projects into heavy industry that involved steel and improved strategic frameworks and traditions of both the government and new corporate businesses.^{5, 6} Japan has been shockingly successful with their change with only their new political system struggling as they tried to establish the military's independence. However, Japan, desperately needing resources for their country's quick growth, has started looking towards the lands in Korea. The Peninsula has valuable resources and its strategic location between the Japanese islands and mainland China plays a beneficial role to the hegemony over Asian politics. In hopes of becoming the next formidable imperial power in the continent, Japan is thus keen to begin its colonial conquest there.

In 1864, the King Cheoljong of Korea died without male heirs to ascend his position, and so his 10th cousin, Gojong became his successor at only 12. However, Yi Ha-eung, holding strict isolation ideologies, ruled as the *de facto* regent in place of his son since he was too young to govern the nation. Yet by 1874, Queen Min, married

¹ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. "First Sino Japanese War," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, November 14, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/event/First-Sino-Japanese-War-1894-1895>.

² "First Sino Japanese War," *Asia for Educators, Columbia University*, n.d. http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/main_pop/kpct/kp_1750-1919.htm.

³ Everett Munez, "Tributary System," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, April 18, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/tributary-system>.

⁴ Yuan-kang Wang, "Explaining the Tribute System: Power, Confucianism, and War in the Medieval East Asia," *Jstor*, 2013. .

⁵ John Tang, "Technological leadership and late development: evidence from Meiji Japan, 1868–1912", *The Economic History Review*, Feb 2011, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27919535?read-now=1&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

⁶ Graham Squires, "Meiji Restoration," *World History Encyclopedia*, October 29, 2022. https://www.worldhistory.org/Meiji_Restoration/.

to Gojong, opposed this isolation policy, and began to politically fight Yi Ha-eung, begging to modernize and splitting the nation in half.⁷ This would intensify a series of revolts and skirmishes in the region for almost 20 years, bringing political turmoil and civil unrest. Japan supported this reformist party in Korea in hopes the nation would modernize its economy and trade with Japan. Therefore, in 1884, aided by Japan, reformists initiated the Gapsin coup, a failed coup d'état in efforts to overthrow the conservative Korean government, who was reluctant about modernization.⁸ In addition, Kim Ok Gyun, the lead Korean reform activist, was assassinated by a Korean official enroute to Shanghai. With the embarrassing treatment and dismemberment of Kim's remains by the Koreans and Qing, tensions between Japan and the Qing Dynasty began to rise.⁹

The crisis begins in the midst of the Tonghak Rebellion of 1894, a Korean religious and social movement led by the Minjung peasants class against corrupt officials and Western foreign religious beliefs and powers.^{10, 11, 12} Through organized religious missionaries, peasants protest endlessly, leaving the turbulent Korean government with no choice but to seek assistance from the Qing Dynasty. Immediately, Japan, feeling threatened by Qing's dominance over East Asia, made their entry into Korea initiating the inevitable First Sino Japanese War.

Timeline

August 17, 1842 — The Treaty of Nanking ends the First Opium War between Britain and the Qing Dynasty, forcing the Qing Dynasty to foreign trade and influence.¹³

December 1850 — The Taiping Rebellion against the Qing Dynasty, one of the deadliest civil wars, finally ends after 14 years. As a result of the chaos, the once impenetrable dominance of the Qing Dynasty begins to weaken over its political leaders and across East Asia.¹⁴

March 31, 1854 — The United States Commodore Matthew Perry forces Japan to sign the Convention of Kanagawa, opening the country to foreign trade for the first time in 220 years. It destroys their embedded isolation policy and will soon transform the face of Japan affairs.¹⁵

June 1858 — The Qing Dynasty is forced to sign the Treaty of Tianjin which ends the first phase of the Second Opium War. The European powers and the United States are given the ability to spread their influence without any repercussions with this unequal treaty, ending any dominance of China over other global powers.¹⁶

⁷ Jinwung Kim, "A History of Korea: From 'Land of the Morning Calm' to States in Conflict," *New York: Indiana University Press*, 2012. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16gh5vd>.

⁸ "Upheavals in Korea and the reactions of Japan and China – Donghak Rebellion," *Japan Center for Asian Historical Records National Archives of Japan*, n.d. <https://www.jacar.go.jp/english/jacarbl-fsjwar-e/about/p001.html>.

⁹ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "First Sino Japanese War," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Nov 14, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/event/First-Sino-Japanese-War-1894-1895>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Chong, Key Ray, "The Tonghak Rebellion: Harbinger of Korean Nationalism," *Journal of Korean Studies*, July-December 1969. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23849478?seq=3>.

¹² "The Tonghak Rebellion 1894," *KoreanHistory.info*, n.d. <http://koreanhistory.info/Tonghak.htm>.

¹³ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "Treaty of Nanjing," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, February 9, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Treaty-of-Nanjing>.

¹⁴ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "Taiping Rebellion," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Jun 30, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Taiping-Rebellion>.

¹⁵ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "Treaty of Kanghwa," *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Treaty-of-Kanghwa>.

¹⁶ Kenneth Pletcher, "Treaty of Tianjin," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Treaty-of-Kanghwa>.

January 3, 1868 — The Meiji Restoration begins, heralding the end to the Tokugawa Shogunate—a warrior clan that ruled Japan for more than 260 years. This begins the process of creating a newly modernized, centralized Empire of Japan under Emperor Mutsuhito.¹⁷

February 27, 1876 — Through the use of gunboat diplomacy, Korea is coerced after Japan displays their newfound threatening navy. The Korea-Japanese Treaty of Amity, also known as the Treaty of Ganghwa, opens up three ports in Korea to Japanese trade and ends Joseon's status as a tributary state of the Qing Dynasty.¹⁸

1882 — After the violent uprising of military leaders and soldiers against the reforms of the royal family in Seoul, the Qing Dynasty re-enters Korea under the request of Joseon's Queen. The Qing regain control of the capital and quash the revolt, but they also bring greater Qing influence to the region.¹⁹

April 18, 1885 — The Japanese-backed Gapsin Coup fails to overthrow the Korean Monarchy; however, this leads to the signing of the Convention of Tientsin, securing Japanese influence in Joseon Korea.²⁰

March 28, 1894 — Kim Ok-gyun, a lead reformist Korean activist, is assassinated by a Chinese general, further angering Japan as they believe it was an attempt to destroy the Japanese-Korean relationship.²¹

June 3, 1894 — The Korean royal court under King Gojong, struggling to control the peasant Tonghak rebellion, requests the Qing Dynasty to supply military assistance. However, Japan claims they were not warned about this direct intervention.²²

July 1894 (Crisis Initiation) — Both the Qing Dynasty and Japan enter Korea and are showing no signs of withdrawing their troops.

Historical Analysis

Meiji Restoration (1868–1889)

Prior to the rise of Emperor Mutsuhito and the modern Meiji period, Japan was run under a Bakuhan system—a feudal political system which separated the population into different class levels.²³ From the inception of the Tokugawa Shogunate in the 17th century until the Meiji Restoration, Japan pursued an isolationist policy known as *sakoku*, which limited contact with foreign nations.^{24, 25} They did so through restricting foreign trade and prohibiting Japanese people from traveling overseas.²⁶ At the beginning of the Tokugawa period, Japan

¹⁷ Mark Ravina, "To Stand with the Nations of the World: Japan's Meiji Restoration in World History," *Oxford University Press*, 2017. <https://academic.oup.com/ahr/article-abstract/125/4/1399/5933593>.

¹⁸ "Treaty of Ganghwa" *New World Encyclopedia*, 2022.

https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Treaty_of_Ganghwa.

¹⁹ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "First Sino Japanese War," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, November 14, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/event/First-Sino-Japanese-War-1894-1895>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Key Ray Chong, "The Tonghak Rebellion: Harbinger of Korean Nationalism," *Journal of Korean Studies (1969-1971)*, July-December 1969. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23849478?seq=3>

²³ Squires, Graham, "Meiji Restoration", *World History Encyclopedia*, October 29, 2022. https://www.worldhistory.org/Meiji_Restoration/.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Everett Munez, "Sakoku," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/sakoku>.

²⁶ Ibid.

experienced an era of stability with economic, population, and cultural growth.²⁷ However, by the 18th century, the *sakoku* system began to show its flaws. With parts of the certain regions beginning to develop a commercialized economy that benefited wealthier individuals, greater wealth disparities between the rural villages and the urban areas emerged.²⁸ In 1853, American commander Commodore Matthew C. Perry arrived in Japan with aspirations of expanding trade and exploiting the luscious resources and wealth of Asia. Utilizing gunboat diplomacy, he forced the Japanese to open two ports for American trade ships.²⁹ Eventually, Japan signed the Treaty of Kanagawa in 1854, bringing a close to their *sakoku* period. Later, in 1858, the Harris Treaty brought five more ports for foreign business.³⁰ Similar agreements collectively known as the Ansei treaties of 1858 soon followed with other European nations such as Russia, Great Britain, Netherlands and France arriving in Japan and seeking for riches. Western and European contact and trade allowed Japan to access technological innovations and led to rapid industrialization; however, the prevalence of foreign powers and Western ideologies weakened the control of the Tokugawa Shogunate as the warrior clan slowly began to lose legal power over the nation. Moreover, extensive exports of domestic goods such as silk and tea led to domestic shortage among the citizens, resulting in prices significantly increasing and the economy crumbling. The eventual fall of the Shogunate occurred after a coup d'état at the Imperial Palace in Kyoto on January 3, 1868.³¹ This coup d'état was led by the Satsuma domain, a powerful feudal domain during the Tokugawa period.³² The Satsuma, in collaboration with the Chōshū domain, were motivated by increasing domestic issues such as taxation and the threat of Japan's weakening sovereignty.^{33, 34} The Satsuma-Chōshū alliance also pushed to restore the Emperor's authority as a central figure who could modernize independently while maintaining traditional cultures and traditions.

Under the Charter Oath, established in April 1868, Japan's political system was restructured, entering a democratic society and abolishing feudal classes, specifically the *samurai* class.³⁵ Moreover, the country underwent many reforms, including the Westernization and strengthening of their education system and their military. In 1870, after military statesmen Yamagata Aritomo of Chōshū and Saigo Tsugumichi of Satsum returned from their trips in Europe to study leading military systems, the Japanese military began modeling after the French military system. The well-structured French military system brought a new rank system, a conscription system, and the development of engineering, such as modern artillery cannons, to the Imperial Japanese military.^{36, 37} In addition, a national draft was established to grow its new national army, resulting in a larger and more diverse military force in place of the old *samurai* armies.³⁸ This conscription also enabled easier methods to standardize and centralize the military into one force, compared to the *samurai* groups that were

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ "The United States and the Opening to Japan, 1853," *United States Department of State*, n.d. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1830-1860/opening-to-japan>.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ The Editors of Encyclopaedia, "Meiji Restoration," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, July 6 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Meiji-Restoration>.

³² Kawai Atsushi, "The Meiji Restoration: The End of the Shogunate and the Building of a Modern Japanese State," *Nippon.com*, November 19, 2018. <https://www.nippon.com/en/views/b06902/>

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Tristan Grunow, "Japan's Meiji Restoration," *Origins | Current Events in Historical Perspective*, January, 2023. https://origins.osu.edu/read/japans-meiji-restoration?language_content_entity=en.

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Kublin, Hyman. "The "Modern" Army of Early Meiji Japan". *Far Eastern Quarterly*, November 1949, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2049123?read-now=1&seq=9#page_scan_tab_contents

³⁷ "From the Edo Period to Meiji Restoration in Japan". *Lumen Learning*. n.d. <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-fmcc-boundless-worldhistory/chapter/from-the-edo-period-to-meiji-restoration-in-japan/>

³⁸ Ibid

divided by regions and leaders. Through the establishment of business conglomerates known as *zaibatsus* such as Mitsubishi, the country rapidly industrialized. Often, *zaibatsus* are involved in supplying warships, ammunition and other military equipment.³⁹

Concurrently, the popular rights movement known as the Freedom and People's Rights Movement encouraged the establishment of a constitutional and formalized national government. In 1889, the Japanese statesman Ito Hirobumi, following his visit to Europe, created a constitution based on the Prussian constitutional systems that consisted of a constitutional monarchy.^{40, 41} Subsequently, three additional government entities, each with distinct powers, were created to form the government and advise the Emperor: the Imperial Diet, Cabinet and Privy Council.⁴² The Imperial Diet is a bicameral parliament with co-equal powers; they are responsible for tasks such as approving laws, reviewing the national budget, and overseeing international agreements.⁴³ On the other hand, the Privy Council provides advice directly to the Emperor on an amount of ranging topics and can help influence diplomatic affairs. Nonetheless, all three bodies aid the Emperor in managing the new nation.⁴⁴

The growth of Japan within the Meiji period established its strengthening imperial power within Asia and globally for future years.

Prelude to the Fall of the Qing Dynasty

The Qing Dynasty was formed in 1636 following the collapse of the Song Dynasty. During the early 1700s, the dynasty was flourishing with their isolationist policy similar to Japan and Korea. However, with the turn of the 1800s, the dynasty started to crumble under the vast amounts of domestic unrest and foreign imperial encroachment. In the 1830s, Great Britain sought to open Qing's borders to foreign trade as they possessed vast amounts of valuable silver and gold.⁴⁵ After refusing to trade their resources for British goods of tea, silk, and porcelain, Great Britain began to introduce and trade a new substance: opium. They began to illegally smuggle opium from India into China. Opium originally was used as a precious medicine to help cure pain and insomnia; however, it was found to be highly addictive. The economy was severely damaged as opium had to be paid in silver, a generally accepted form of currency for international trade during this period, and depleted China's currency reserves.⁴⁶ Moreover, the new widespread use of opium also resulted in decreased worker and soldier productivity, shattering the Qing Dynasty. The Qing government did everything in its power to bar the trade which escalated and resulted in the two nations fighting with a conclusive British victory. As a result, unequal treaties between China and imperial powers were signed, including the Treaty of Nanking on August 29, 1842. The treaty heavily benefited the Crown, opening four new Chinese ports and allowing British merchants to operate without any restrictions or paying high tariffs. Moreover, the treaty also provided Britain with an

³⁹ Tang, John. "Technological leadership and late development: evidence from Meiji Japan, 1868–1912". *The Economic History Review*, Feb 2011, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27919535?read-now=1&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

⁴⁰ Xavier Bara. "The Kishū Army and the Setting of the Prussian Model in Feudal Japan, 1860–1871". *War in History*, April 2012, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26098427>

⁴¹ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. "Itō Hirobumi". *Encyclopedia Britannica*. N.A., <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ito-Hirobumi>

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. "Diet". *Encyclopedia Britannica* January 31, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Diet-Japanese-government>

⁴⁴ "The Privy Council of Japan," *Wikiwan*, n.d. https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Japanese_Privy_Council.

⁴⁵ Kenneth Pletcher, "Opium Wars," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Opium-Wars>.

⁴⁶ The Editors of Encyclopaedia, "Opium Wars," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Western-colonialism/The-Opium-Wars>.

extremely high compensation of twenty one ounces of silver per damaged opium. Extraterritorial rights were also given to foreign residents and traders, providing them more autonomy in China.^{47, 48, 49} Notably, after the First Opium War, China was forced to cede the territory of Hong Kong to the British Government. The Second Opium War in 1858 worsened conditions as Britain, other European imperial powers, and the United States began to carve out more of China.^{50, 51}

Around the same time, China was experiencing significant population growth, doubling in size since the 1700s and leading to a lack of jobs and farmlands to provide abundant food supplies for its civilians.⁵² The dynasty was not only weakened by its rising population, pressure from foreign imperialism, and a lack of structural leadership, but, in the late 1870s, it also suffered a severe drought in the Yellow River Basin—a fertile river that provided rich soils and water for agriculture and life. This led to a large famine crisis and several peasant rebellions.⁵³ Consequently, the central government had to allocate over 5 million taels to aid the impoverished provinces with agricultural productivity being hindered for many years, adding to the already deteriorating economy.⁵⁴ The famine further exposed the internal turmoil within the divided Qing rulers and officials as they debated between the importance of protecting itself from foreign invasions or providing nourishment for its civilians.⁵⁵ This conflict overall received a stagnant response and limited relief programs from the government.

In 1850, a deadly rebellion aggravated the dynasty's conditions as the Hakka led Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, a theocratic Chinese absolute monarchy, sought to overthrow the Manchu-led Qing Dynasty. The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom was led by Hong Xiuquan, a Hakka descent revolutionary and religious leader. The leader Hong Xiuquan promoted the spread of Christianity, compared to Qing's traditional religion of Confucianism and Buddhism, gathering thousands of Hakka people, an ethnic minority of the Han Chinese.⁵⁶ As the Qing Dynasty was ethnically Manchu, the Han Chinese population, including the Hakka, was subject to higher taxes and ethnic discrimination.⁵⁷ Therefore, they desired to bring an end to the corrupt Dynasty and establish the equitable Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. The Taiping Rebellion became one of the bloodiest and longest civil wars in human history with 20 million deaths.⁵⁸ Although it ended with a decisive Qing victory, the nation suffered grave economic losses as well. Facing these detrimental issues, the future of sustaining the Qing Dynasty's lasting imperial dominance within East Asia and globally will be reliant on the results of this war against Japan.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Andy Lee, "A Century of Humiliation: Understanding the Chinese Mindset," *The McGill International Review*, February, 18, 2018. <https://www.mironline.ca/century-humiliation-understanding-chinese-mindset/>.

⁴⁹ "Treaty of Nanking," *University of Southern California*, n.d. <https://china.usc.edu/treaty-nanjing-nanking-1842>.

⁵⁰ "The Opening of China Part I: The First Opium War, the United States, and the Treaty of Wangxia 1839-1844," *United States Department of State*, n.d. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1830-1860/china-1>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² "The Fall of the Qing Dynasty," *British Broadcasting Centre*, n.d. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/znmk4xs/articles/zds2qfr>.

⁵³ Kathryn Tarpley, "North China Famine, 1876-79," *Disaster History.Org*, n.d. <https://disasterhistory.org/north-china-famine-1876-79>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ The Editors of Encyclopaedia, "Taiping Rebellion," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Jun 30, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Taiping-Rebellion>.

⁵⁷ James Newman, "The Taiping Rebellion: The Bloodiest Civil War You've Never Heard of," April 11, 2021. <https://www.thecollector.com/the-taiping-rebellion-the-bloodiest-civil-war-youve-never-heard-of/>.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Current Situation

Economic State

Japan is driven by the prospect of Korea's resources of oil, coal and gold to fuel their development as their island holds limited amounts of natural resources. With Japan's modernization, the new Meiji government began to work towards the ideology of Enrich[ing] the Country, Strengthen[ing] the Armed Forces otherwise known as *fukoku kyohei*.⁵⁹ This policy focuses on creating infrastructure for industrialization including finance, education, and transportation, and establishing a modern navy and army to protect itself from foreign powers. Supported by four main large conglomerates (Sumitomo Group, Mitsubishi, Mitsui and Yasubi) and using Western technologies such as iron smelting furnaces, the centralized government supports the development of advanced agricultural practices and establishes new heavy industries like chemical, steel, and mining production. Moreover, they are creating private banking systems to fund this array of projects.^{60, 61, 62, 63}

At the beginning of the Qing Dynasty in the 1700s, the nation was far more prosperous than Japan but less so compared to European nations.⁶⁴ Over time, the unequal treaties from the aftermath of the Opium Wars slowly began to weaken the Qing economy.⁶⁵ Additionally, the dynasty lost most of their silver and remaining wealth during the Opium Wars, which decreased Qing currency reserves. The silver drain was the result of the unequal treaties, because the Qing Dynasty had to use its silver to pay for the damaged smuggled imports of opium. This forced the nation to mass export their goods such as tea and silk to other nations to regain some of their money back.⁶⁶ A restricted low tariff was also put in place with the Treaty of Nanking, leading to significant reduction in state revenue from Qing imported goods. Despite the economy being in a state of hardship, the Self Strengthening movement began in 1861, creating a period of reform in China's economy, military and technology. Under the funding of private businesses and provincial governments, the movement attempted to modernize industries such as transportation services like railroads, shipbuilding. However, in particular, it started the creation of China's Peiyang naval fleet, mining, education and the Qing army.⁶⁷ This movement provided exceptional results; however, the efforts failed to address the political and social unrest and strife.⁶⁸ Civilian rebellions and civil wars such as the Taiping Rebellion in 1871 created further instability within China,

⁵⁹ Carl Mosk, "Japanese Industrialization and Economic Growth," *Economic History Association*, n.d. <https://eh.net/encyclopedia/japanese-industrialization-and-economic-growth/>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ John Tang, "Technological leadership and late development: evidence from Meiji Japan, 1868–1912," *The Economic History Review*, Feb 2011. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27919535?read-now=1&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

⁶² Thomas Smith, "The Introduction of Western Industry to Japan During the Last Years of the Tokugawa Period," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2718077>.

⁶³ The Editors of Encyclopaedia, "Zaibatsu," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, June 6, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/money/topic/zaibatsu>.

⁶⁴ Richard Glahn, "The Economic History of China (From Antiquity to the Nineteenth Century)," *Cambridge University Press*, 2016. <https://books.google.ca/books?id=Z02SCwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ The Editors of Encyclopaedia, "Opium Wars," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Western-colonialism/The-Opium-Wars>.

⁶⁷ "The Self Strengthening Movement," *Alpha History*, n.d. <https://alphahistory.com/chineserevolution/self-strengthening-movement/>.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

worsening economic conditions.⁶⁹ Currently in the 1890s, the Qing government lacks the needed revenue to continue their development of the industry and risks losing an important tributary and economic state of Korea.

Military Power: Army and Navy

Prior to the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese military was composed of mercenaries, *samurai*, rather than having a centralized force; the *samurai* was a relatively educated military class who fought under their *daimyo* (feudal lord).⁷⁰ This system was effective in mitigating local conflicts as there was a strong degree of loyalty under the *samurai* code of conduct *bushido*.⁷¹ However, around the 1700s, it became extremely rigid and resulted in fragmentation between each region and different relationships between the *daimyo* and *samurai*. Moreover, the *samurai* also only used traditional equipment such as swords, spears and crossbows, significantly worse than the technological advancement of Europe.⁷² Japan's navy at the time was also small and underdeveloped due to their lack of knowledge under the isolationist foreign policy of the time.⁷³

However, with the start of the Meiji Restoration in 1868 and the westernization of Japan, the country made a significant effort to restore and strengthen their army and navy so they could rival the imperial powers and the Qing Dynasty who was losing their dominance over Asia. However, despite their rapid growth, Japan lacked the necessary funds to continue their independent development of advanced ships and weapons due to the expensive cost of modernization. By the end of the Meiji restoration, fiscal reforms were made to help Japan's vast expenditures and also increase the economy. At first, it was difficult to establish a national tax collection system, so they initiated strict land tax reforms such as the Land Certificate Law of 1872 which determined land values, rights to land ownership, and established possible mortgages for selling.⁷⁴ Overtime, this became extremely effective in bolstering the economy despite the lengthy period it took to plan and enact. Ultimately, this allowed Japan, with the support of foreign nations such as France, to expand and complete the Imperial Japanese Navy. Notably, Japan implemented a new French military system which ensured that ranks and commands were given based on knowledge and experience rather than a feudal hierarchy. This allowed for better engineering, techniques, and strategies when building and using naval warships and new weaponry.⁷⁵ Currently, although Japan's army is better equipped than the Qing army, Japan needs to work on both ensuring the autonomy and independence of their military from the government and also stabilizing the new governmental system.

Despite their internal and external struggles, the Qing Dynasty underwent a significant military expansion in the 1880s, ordering gunboats and cruisers from Germany and Great Britain. These ships formed Qing's Beiyang Fleet which was described to be the most formidable fleet in Asia. It was led by sister ships Ting Yuen and Chen

⁶⁹ Nan Li, "Legacy of War: The Long-term Effect of Taiping Rebellion on Economic Development in Modern China," *Shanghai University of Finance and Economic*, July 2015. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3220756.

⁷⁰ Dennis Campbell, "Meiji Restoration," *The Khan Academy*, n.d. <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/whp-1750/xcabef9ed3fc7da7b:unit-3-industrialization/xcabef9ed3fc7da7b:3-2-global-industrialization/a/meiji-restoration-beta>.

⁷¹ The Editors of Encyclopaedia, "Bushido," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, February 14, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Bushido>.

⁷² Dennis Campbell, "Meiji Restoration," *The Khan Academy*, n.d. <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/whp-1750/xcabef9ed3fc7da7b:unit-3-industrialization/xcabef9ed3fc7da7b:3-2-global-industrialization/a/meiji-restoration-beta>.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Kokichi Asakura, "The Characteristics of Finance in the Meiji Restoration (The Period of Take Off)," n.d. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1746-1049.1967.tb00500.x>.

⁷⁵ Hyman Kublin, "The 'Modern' Army of Early Meiji Japan," *Far Eastern Quarterly*, November 1949. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2049123?read-now=1&seq=9#page_scan_tab_contents.

Yung, bought from AG Vulcan Stettin in Germany, and Japan had nothing that could possibly rival these.⁷⁶ Increasing naval efforts and purchases, the Naval Office was established in October 1885 with Li Hongzhang, the minister of the fleet and diplomat.⁷⁷ Through the Naval Office, Li Hongzhang also helped construct the Northern Naval College with the cadets later studying in England to learn better techniques and strategies.⁷⁸ By the late 1880s, the nation had built a growing naval expansion program. However, parts of the Qing Dynasty's military expansion efforts were slowed by a lack of political interest and support. In 1894, Empress Cixi diverted defence and naval development funds towards reconstructing her Summer Palace.⁷⁹ Furthermore, leadership within the Qing navy fleet lacked structural training and coordination to prove efficiency.⁸⁰ On the other hand, despite the large size of the military, the Qing soldiers were only equipped with traditional weapons such as spears, shields, and crossbows compared to the advanced technologies of Japan. The Qing Dynasty would have to reform their military and increase their focus to rival the strength of Japan's soldiers. More details on military abilities and numbers of the Japanese and Qing Dynasty will be allocated in the respective bloc background guides.

Diplomatic Efforts

Prior to the current escalation of war in Korea between Japan and the Qing Dynasty, diplomatic efforts were attempted but failed.⁸¹ If conducted effectively, a diplomatic resolution would be possible and can change the potential outcome of the war. In both Japan and the Qing Dynasty, there are dividing political factions, split between a more aggressive or neutral approach. On one hand, most of the Japanese government supports a more aggressive and expansionist approach to Korea. After their recent success of annexing the Ryukyu Islands, they are emboldened to continue their colonial conquest for dominance over East Asia for wealth and natural resources such as oil, rubber, and steel.⁸² However, a small faction of the politicians such as Ito Hirobumi, the Prime Minister of Japan, favour a diplomatic and more passive military policy due to their consideration of Qing's existing relationship with Korea.⁸³ Meanwhile in the Qing Dynasty, military generals such as Ding Ruchang are pushing for war against Japan as they believe their military and fleets will overwhelm the smaller Japanese army. This is also promoted in Qing newspapers as they portray a "conflict with Japan as a great opportunity to wash away the humiliation and shame that had persisted since the Opium Wars."⁸⁴ The editorials also urge that China and its newly developed army has the obligation to protect Korea from foreign states even if there is no military provocation.⁸⁵ Despite this seemingly popular consensus, almost half of the government officials such as Li Hongzhang and Empress Cixi support a more neutral approach that obtained their interests

⁷⁶ Hans Lengerer, "A Pre History of the Sino Japanese War 1894-1895: Introduction and Summary," *Warship International*, March, 2019. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26864210?seq=3>.

⁷⁷ Lieutenant Michael Forsythe, "The Navy That Almost Was," *U.S. Naval Institute*, April 1997. <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/1997/april/navy-almost-was>.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Hans Lengerer, "A Pre History of the Sino Japanese War 1894-1895: Introduction and Summary," *Warship International*, March, 2019. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26864210?seq=3>.

⁸² Kallie Szczepanski, "What Motivated Japanese Aggression in World War II?" *ThoughtCo.com*. <https://www.thoughtco.com/japanese-aggression-in-world-war-ii-195806>.

⁸³ "Hirobumi Ito *Encyclopedia of the World*," July 25, 2023. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/people/history/japanese-history-biographies/hirobumi-ito>

⁸⁴ Weipin Tsai, "The First Casualty: Truth, Lies and Commercial Opportunism in Chinese Newspapers during the First Sino-Japanese War," *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, January, 2014. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43307286?read-now=1&seq=6#page_scan_tab_contents.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

in Korea without military intervention.⁸⁶ Diplomatic negotiations, such as The Convention of Tientsin in 1885, which dictated that neither countries could send soldiers to Korea without prior notification, were attempted in the past by Ito Hirobumi and Li Hongzhang.⁸⁷ But, with the increasing tension at the Tonghak rebellion, the convention was promptly broken in order to protect national interests.

Initiating Crisis

Founded in the 1860s by Choe Je-u, the Tonghak ideology was created under a Neo Confucian Movement—a philosophical thought of mixing natures and morals from Buddhism and Taoism—that specifically rejected Western technology and ideals. It aimed to aid peasants suffering from poverty and restore political and social stability within Korea from foreign influence and exploitation. Beginning on January 11, 1894, a series of peasant rebellions in Southwestern Korea began to threaten the power of the royal court in Seoul. The Tonghak peasant army, after crushing the government troops sent from Chonju, are now pushing further north to take control. In March of 1894, 4,000 armed Korean peasants that follow the Tonghak ideology then congregated in Jeolla-do province to release their manifesto.^{88,89} The manifesto demanded the spread of new “eastern learning,” including religious beliefs, land redistribution, tax reductions, equal human rights, and the eventually overthrowing the Korean monarchy.⁹⁰

In the following few months, the peasant army fought governmental forces, officials, and wealthy landowners. By the beginning of May, the peasants captured the Jeonju fortress in Jeonju, the capital and largest city of Jeolla-do Province, which is 90 kilometres from Korea’s capital city, Seoul. On June 3, 1894, the Korean Royal Court, under King Gojong, struggling to control the violent rebellion, requested the Qing Dynasty to supply military assistance. Although the Qing originally abstained from involving themselves as parts of the government preferred a diplomatic approach to protect the economic interests of the Emperor Guangxu, Li Hongzhang began preparations to dispatch his Beiyang army to Korea.

On the morning of June 5, 1894, two Qing warships arrive in Incheon, Korea after 2,900 land troops established a base in Asan, Korea.⁹¹ Japan, once notified of this, saw it as a violation of the Convention of Tientsin.⁹² Therefore, they sent approximately 6,000 troops and seven warships to Incheon and Seoul in an attempt to secure economic interests and imperial dominance over Korea.⁹³ However, by the time both China and Japan arrived, the Tonghak army slowly drew back, giving no reason for either to intervene anymore. Immediately after, the Qing Dynasty sent a proposal for a joint withdrawal. On June 16, 1894, Japan refuses under the excuse of

⁸⁶ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, “Li Hongzhang,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, February 11, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Li-Hongzhang>.

⁸⁷ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, “First Sino Japanese War,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, November 14, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/event/First-Sino-Japanese-War-1894-1895>.

⁸⁸ “The Tonghak Rebellion 1894,” *KoreanHistory.info*, n.d. <http://koreanhistory.info/Tonghak.htm>.

⁸⁹ Key Ray Chong, “The Tonghak Rebellion: Harbinger of Korean Nationalism,” *Journal of Korean Studies*, July-December 1969. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23849478?seq=3>.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ “Upheavals in Korea and the reactions of Japan and China – Donghak Rebellion”, *Japan Center for Asian Historical Records National Archives of Japan*, N.A, <https://www.jacar.go.jp/english/jacarbl-fsjwar-e/about/p001.html>

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

suppressing the Tonghak rebellion and looking to modernize the Korean economy, military, and society.^{94, 95} Now approaching July, both nations are now reluctant to withdraw from Korea.⁹⁶

As a result, both the Qing Dynasty and the Empire of Japan will need to coordinate strategic movements and fight for dominance over East Asia. The fate of each nation is now upon your hands.

Discussion Questions

1. How can each bloc exploit the other's weaknesses to ensure their army and navy's effectiveness?
2. How might both Japan and the Qing Dynasty, in particular as of their weakening economic state, sustain their economy over the period of the war? Would this require:
 - a. Foreign aid or loans from Western/European countries?
 - b. Establishing closer relationships with private businesses?
 - c. Requirement of civilians to pay higher taxes or donate money?
 - d. Taking funds from other sectors/industries such as infrastructure, education, healthcare, etc?
3. What impacts could the war have on both nations' stability and legitimacy of these ruling systems?
4. What specific conditions and points must a new treaty (such as the existing historical Treaty of Shimonoseki) include for the aftermath of the war? What is each country seeking?
5. To what extent did the First Sino-Japanese War mark a turning point for China's future and relationship with both Japan and Korea? How might that change the Qing Dynasty's approach within this war?
6. How did nationalist sentiments and aspirations influence public opinion and political leaders during the conflict?
7. What might the future of Korea and control over East Asia look like depending on which respective bloc wins?

Additional Resources

The First Sino Japanese War — The Birthplace of Imperial Japanese Expansionism:

<https://youtu.be/ReRoh7GRB4s>

Feature History — The First Sino-Japanese War:

<https://youtu.be/LdWY8aWxNL4>

Spotify Podcast — Fall and Rise of China: Donghak Rebellion:

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/7j0aDbp4sDRFn4rpYCjtz2?si=b31731f8257d4133>

⁹⁴ "The Tonghak Rebellion 1894," *KoreanHistory.info*, n.d. <http://koreanhistory.info/Tonghak.htm>.

⁹⁵ Edmund Fung, "Ch'ing Policy in the Sino Japanese War," *Journal of Asian History*, 1973.
https://www.jstor.org/stable/41930098?read-now=1&seq=5#page_scan_tab_contents/.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

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