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THE POLITICS OF THE CIVIL WAR OF 1868

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The year 1868 was a time of extreme trials for the new Meiji government. Perhaps because these trials were ultimately weathered, historians have tended to underemphasise their importance, and the importance of the civil war itself. Within the new government there were two closely balanced opposing forces: the group led by Chōshū and Satsuma leaders, chiefly Ōkubo Toshimichi, Saigō Takamori, both of Satsuma, and Kido Kōin of Chōshū, and usually associated with the crafty and influential court noble Iwakura Tomomi. This group is often called in Japanese *buryoku tōbaku-ha* (the faction favouring bringing down the Bakufu—the Shogunate—by military force). For convenience, as this is a bit unwieldy in English, I will refer to this faction as the Ōkubo group. It is the party associated with a policy of thorough and uncompromising centralisation of the country under the Emperor, and, increasingly, with an anti-feudal policy and modernisation on the Western model.

The other group, *kōgi seitai-ha* in Japanese, the faction advocating a political structure based on consultation, consisted of a loose alignment of moderate and conservative forces. It was not nearly so singleminded, but in numbers it was vastly superior to the Ōkubo group. Its numerical advantages were, however, largely outside the government. It favoured compromise, clemency to the Tokugawa, and maintenance of a modified, more centralised feudal system. I will use the term 'moderate group' to characterise this faction.

Despite strong pressure for a moderate solution, the Ōkubo group won in the end due to determination and willingness to use force, to a clearsighted policy, and also, as is often the case in human affairs, to simple good luck as well. Three events played a crucial role in this success: the victories of the Imperial forces in the battles at Toba and Fushimi (27–30 January 1868)—this, in fact, was a virtually independent action of Satsuma and Chōshū forces—in the one-day battle of Ueno in Edo (4 July), and in the taking of the castle of Wakamatsu in northern Japan (5 November) after a long and difficult campaign.*

* See Figure 1, p. 29, for domain and other geographical location.

Last, and most important, the challenges and opportunities offered to the government during the day-to-day hostilities created patterns which did much to determine the kind of central government which emerged, and the options open to that government.

There are two indisputable facts which no doubt have led historians to underestimate the importance of the civil war: at the very beginning, the most crucial battle, that at Toba and Fushimi, ended in a decisive victory for the new government; and the pro-Tokugawa holdouts under Admiral Enomoto, far away in Hokkaido, who were the last to surrender, were obviously no serious threat to the Meiji government. But this is to overlook the importance of the struggle that went on throughout most of 1868, which included a long and difficult campaign in the north against a large anti-government alliance. This comprised thirty-one domains, plus Aizu and Shōnai, aided by several thousand officers and men from the Bakufu, from Kuwana, Mito and other *han*, together with French 'military advisers', and by the former Bakufu fleet under Enomoto. It also misses the importance of the use of government troops to threaten or to force recalcitrant or hesitant feudal lords throughout much of the country to swear allegiance to the new government under the Emperor. Under these conditions, military considerations and military men came to the fore. Both force and the threat of force proved to be very important politically, in the effects they had on the breakdown of the feudal system and its later abolition. Ōkubo and other leaders, fully aware of the basic weakness and narrow base of the new government, took the war very seriously indeed. The nature of the war, in which both sides were striving to 'modernise', spurred on the search for new military and political methods and solutions, mostly suggested by Western experience, and the fear of foreign aid or intervention on behalf of the 'rebels', made this search all the more pressing.

The year 1868 marked the real beginning of the shift from a feudal to a modern Japan, when the political struggle which had been set off by Perry's arrival in 1853 finally broke out into an open fight. The ruling classes, the many-tiered hierarchy of warriors, were not alone involved in the fighting. Whether in the villages, towns or cities, people of all classes were involved in one way or another. The civil war served to intensify conflicts and compromises of group interests, breaking down feudal solidarity among the samurai, stimulating new ideas and innovations, and speeding the defeat of the traditional political and moral principles associated with feudalism.

However, it was not simply a struggle between progressive and unprogressive forces. The reforms of the Bakufu under the last

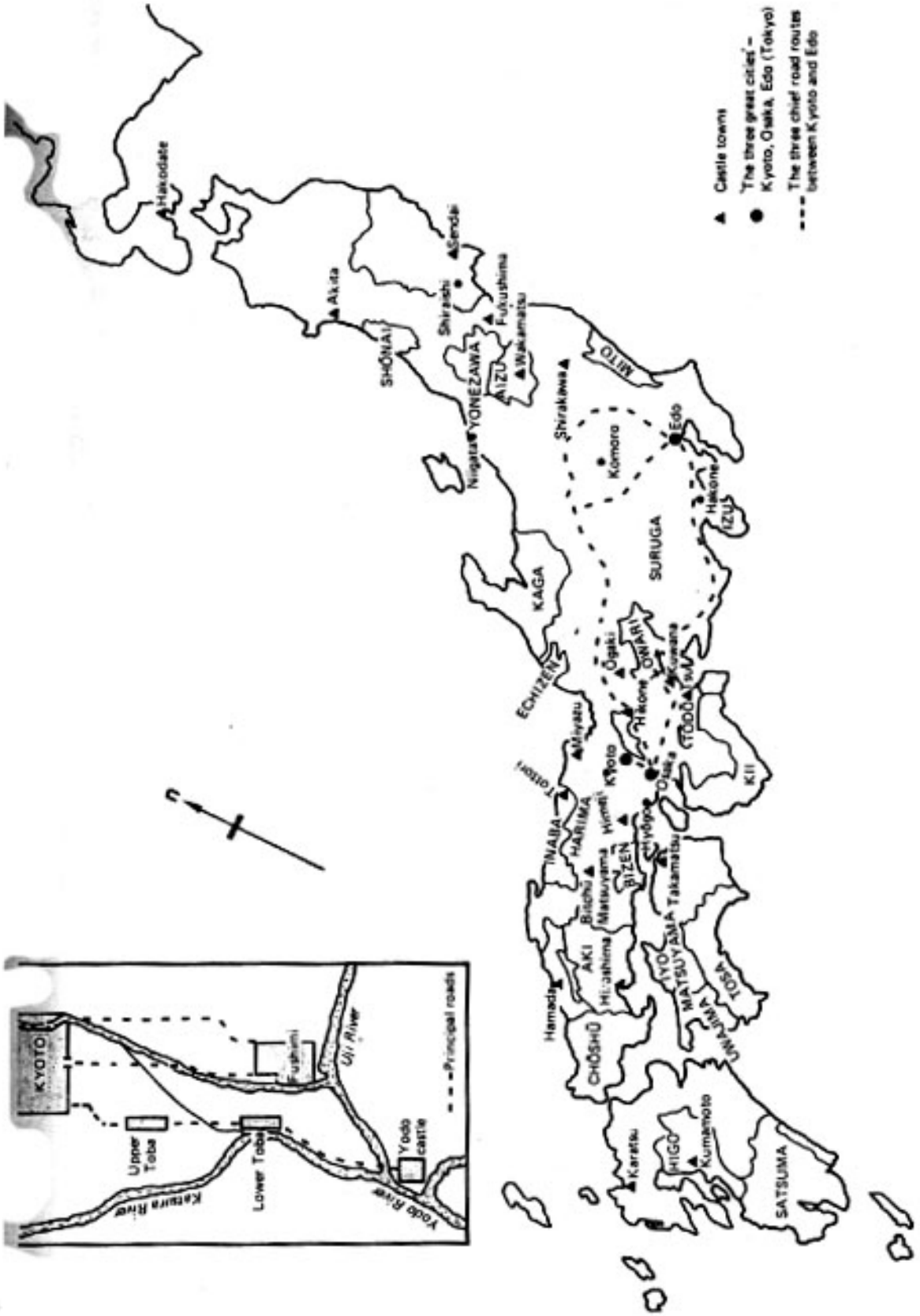

Figure 1. Sketch Map to show Geographical Names mentioned

Shogun, the vigorous and impressive Tokugawa Yoshinobu (Keiki) were in some ways surprisingly progressive. Not only were efforts made to build a modern navy (with British help) and to modernise the Bakufu army (with French aid), but Oguri Tadamasa and other Bakufu bureaucrats, under French tutelage, planned to institute a prefectural system which would have cut off the prerogatives of the feudal lords (*daimyo*).[1]

These reforms were making good progress until they were interrupted by the civil war. Their very successes, in the short run, and their radical nature, coupled with respect for the political abilities of Yoshinobu, provoked greater militancy on the part of the anti-Bakufu forces, and helped to bring about the Satsuma-Chōshū alliance. It is, however, problematical whether they would have been ultimately successful in reviving the Bakufu. In any case, they were interrupted by the civil war, and, aside from the basic difficulty, perhaps impossibility, for the Bakufu to dispense with the feudal system, there were many more immediate obstacles to the ultimate success of the reforms. They included the limitations of French aid, corruption in the Bakufu bureaucracy, and the fact that public opinion had already foresaken the Bakufu after the failure of the second punitive expedition against Chōshū in October 1866. Evidences of widespread disillusionment with the Bakufu include increasing disregard for Bakufu law, the lack of response by the *daimyo* to Bakufu requests and even orders, as well as peasant uprisings and riots which were at their worst in Bakufu territories. All this leads one to conclude that although something of the feudal system might well have been prolonged, the Tokugawa system was without doubt irretrievably lost by the time Yoshinobu became Shogun in January 1867.

Perhaps the best description of Yoshinobu comes to us from the British diplomat A. H. Mitford, later Lord Redesdale:

> '[He] was a very striking personality. He was of average height, small as compared with Europeans, but the old Japanese robes made the difference less apparent. I think he was the handsomest man, according to our ideas, that I saw during all the years I was in Japan. His features were regular, his eye brilliantly lighted and keen, his complexion a clear, healthy olive colour. The mouth was very firm, but his expression when he smiled was gentle and singularly winning. His frame was well-knit and strong, the figure of a man of great activity; an indefatigable horseman, as inured to weather as an English master of hounds. . . . He was a great noble if ever there was one. The pity of it was that he was an anachronism.'[2]

The *coup d'état* of 3 January 1868, which secured control of the

young Emperor by a small group of court nobles and representatives of the three *tozama* ('outside') *han* of Satsuma, Tosa and Aki (Hiroshima) and the Tokugawa related houses of Owari (*sanke*) and Echizen (*kamon*), proved to be the decisive date for the Restoration of the Emperor and the beginning of far-reaching changes. But, as Professor Beasley has pointed out: 'To all appearances it was no more than another palace revolution—as many of the participants must have thought it.'[3]

The decisions taken by a council, which excluded all known opponents, included stripping the former Shogun of his offices and lands. But this was understood by some to mean only part of his lands, and in any case, the decisions of the council were not made public. Chōshū, having been pardoned by the Emperor, moved troops to Kyoto, and Yoshinobu left the capital for Osaka on 7 January. Mitford, who was there, describes the scene when the former Shogun arrived at Osaka castle:

> 'A more extravagantly weird picture it would be difficult to imagine. There were some infantry armed with European rifles, but there were also warriors clad in the old armour of the country carrying spears, bows and arrows, curiously shaped with sword and dirk, who looked as if they had stepped out of some old pictures of the Gem-Pei wars in the Middle Ages. Their *jimbaoris* [coats worn over armour], not unlike heralds' tabards, were as many-coloured as Joseph's coat. Hideous masks of lacquer and iron, fringed with portentous whiskers and moustachios, crested helmets with wigs from which long streamers of horsehair floated to their waists, might strike terror into any enemy. They looked like the hobgoblins of a nightmare. Soon a troop of horsemen appeared. The Japanese all prostrated themselves and bent their heads in reverent awe. In the midst of the troop was the fallen Prince, accompanied by his faithful adherents, Aidzu and Kuwana. The Prince himself seemed worn and dejected . . . his head wrapped in a black cloth, taking notice of nothing. . . . At the gate all dismounted, according to custom—save only the War Lord himself; he rode in, a solitary horseman. It was the last entry of a Shogun into the grand old castle which had come into the heritage of the Tokugawa by one tragedy, and was to pass out of their possession by another.'[4]

But this was not the end of Yoshinobu as a force in Japanese politics. With less thought for himself than for the preservation of the Tokugawa clan, he turned his efforts towards a compromise settlement, with the help of Owari and Echizen, two of the *han* which had participated in the Restoration council, both related to the Tokugawa. Yoshinobu agreed to their proposal that he would give up his

offices and court rank, but only enough of his domains to give the Emperor a sufficient revenue. Yoshinobu's explanation of his withdrawal to Osaka was that he wished to avoid civil war. On 14 January, he wrote a memorial to the Court interpreting the *coup d'état* as having resulted from plans, based on self-interest, of one or two *han* (a reference to Chōshū, banned from the Court, and Satsuma), brazenly making use of the boy Emperor. Yoshinobu proposed a return to the situation before the *coup*, calling a meeting of the principal lords, selecting men 'of integrity', and securing the resignation of the traitors. The memorial was received by Iwakura, who shelved it, not telling others in the government, perhaps for fear of a disturbance.[5]

In the Imperial council meeting of 18 and 19 January, the issue between the two factions on the problem of the resignation of the Shogun and the confiscation of his lands was reconsidered. Iwakura, while ostensibly carrying out the implications of the *coup d'état*, absented himself from the meeting on the pretext of illness. The meeting finally decided that, 'After an investigation into the administrative means for the distribution of lands, the matter will be decided by reference to opinion in the country', significantly omitting any reference to the return of lands to the Emperor. The efforts of the Ōkubo group and the demand for the return of lands in Iwakura's letter were swept aside by the moderate faction, now evidently in a position of predominance. Iwakura's withdrawal left a strong suspicion that the position he had taken earlier had been no more than a manoeuvre. The same day, returning to the principles of the memorial of Yamauchi Yōdō (the Tosa Memorial), on the basis of which the Shogun had resigned, the moderate faction took the lead in deciding that government expenses would be levied against the main *han*, including the Tokugawa, 'as soon as a decision in detail is taken on the problem of Yoshinobu's return of lands to the Emperor'.[6]

At this point, Yoshinobu advanced a step further. On 23 January he sent word to Tokugawa Yoshikatsu (of Owari) and Matsudaira Keiei (of Echizen), leaders of the moderate group in Kyoto, that if the expenses of the government were not met first by his order, then by the *daimyo* doing likewise, and if all did not levy an equal tax on all land in the country, it would be impossible to keep subordinates quiet. The government was apparently moving towards an acceptance of this.[7] Just before the battles of Fushimi and Toba, Iwakura agreed to a proposal that Yoshinobu be invited to come to Kyoto, and be appointed as a senior councillor (*Gijō*). He praised Yoshinobu's ability and talents, and said they would be able to do nothing without him.[8]

This shift can be seen in foreign affairs as well as in the problem of

stripping the Shogun of his lands. On 11 January Yoshinobu gave an audience in Osaka to the representatives of the six powers—England, France, the U.S.A., Italy, Prussia and Holland. Giving his interpretation of the radical changes in the political structure, he voiced his dissatisfaction with the *coup d'état*, saying: 'Until, in due course, by means of the general opinion throughout the country, detailed decisions are taken about the political forms of our country, I wish to make it clear that it will be my duty to comply with the treaties, carrying out all conditions as promised, and to perfect our foreign relations.'[9] In this he expressed his determination to remain at the centre of political power, refusing to recognise the Imperial government's authority in foreign affairs, but the government could do nothing. Further, even the proclamation to foreign countries of the restoration of Imperial rule was finally suspended due to the opposition of the moderate faction, when dissenting opinions were put forward by Matsudaira Keiei (of Echizen) and Asano Yoshiteru (of Aki), and Tokugawa Yoshikatsu and Yamauchi Yōdō joined them in refusing to sign it.[10]

The main point of their opposition was that it was unsuitable that such an important decision should be made by the handful of *daimyo* in Kyoto rather than by all the *daimyo*. Ōkubo, connecting this setback with Yoshinobu's announcement to the foreign representatives, remarked: 'It is certainly due to fear of the Tokugawa clan.' But it is possible that Ōkubo did not wish to make too much of an issue of this because of a letter from Terajima Munenori transmitting to him views attributed to the English, to the effect that Satow and others had told him that Yoshinobu's proclamation was sufficient, and that as the form of government had not yet been definitely decided, to proclaim this now would simply invite laughter from the foreigners.[11]

It was clear that in the appointment of non-Satsuma-Chōshū councillors (*Gijō* and *Sanyo*), things were turning in favour of Yoshinobu and the moderate group. The attitudes of the ten *han* represented in Kyoto on 7 January changed. The military situation did not develop to the advantage of the Ōkubo group either: a number of important *daimyo*, who might have supported the new government, left the capital. Maeda of Kaga returned with a large force to his own *han*, on the excuse of not wanting to cause any incidents in Kyoto, and others such as Sakai, the lord of Himeji, and Hisamatsu of Iyo Matsuyama, joined Yoshinobu in Osaka.

The reasons for this shift towards the moderate position included the very narrow base of the new government, financial stringency leading to a need to rely on a larger base, the tendency of the majority of the *han* to be pro-Bakufu and to adopt opportunistic, 'wait-and-

see' policies, and efforts to avoid a military conflict, at a time when the nation needed solidarity against the Western threat as it was seen at the time. There was a general fear both of foreign intervention and domestic disturbances.

At this point, the victory of the Ōkubo group and, *ex post facto*, of the new government in the Toba-Fushimi hostilities was decisive, bringing about a drastic loss of influence within the government by the moderate group, the grasping of control by the militant anti-Bakufu faction (the Ōkubo group), and the decision of the feudal lords of the Kinki area (around Kyoto), and to the west, to support the new government. The sudden swing back to control by the Ōkubo group resulting from this first outbreak of hostilities in the civil war is interpreted by some Japanese historians, especially Marxists like Inoue Kiyoshi, as having greatly encouraged bureaucratic absolutism and as having dealt decisive blows against the advocacy of a parliamentary political structure as a means of consulting public opinion, and against the political prerogatives of the alliance of important lords associated with this idea.[12] It is hard to avoid doubts, however, about whether one side was any more democratic than the other.

There seems to be no actual evidence that Yoshinobu approved the sudden movement of between 10,000 and 15,000 troops from Osaka towards Kyoto on 26 January. It is known that he was having trouble controlling his more zealous subordinates, especially the lords of Kuwana and Aizu, who had been the Bakufu military officers responsible for the security of Kyoto, and it is quite possible they started out without Yoshinobu's consent. On the other hand, Yoshinobu may have decided to take the initiative by permitting a demonstration of power ostensibly to strengthen further the moderate party in Kyoto,[13] but this seems somehow slightly out of character, unless it was a desperate compromise with the explosion of anger among the Tokugawa adherents over news of fighting in Edo between Satsuma and Bakufu troops who counter-attacked and burned the Satsuma residence in Edo. The latter had become the headquarters of a group of Satsuma hot-heads with a link to Saigō in Kyoto, who evidently gave the signal to begin disturbances in order to provoke the enemy into making the first move. The existence of a secret agreement between Saigō and Sagara Sōzō and others of the Sōmō Rōshitai (popular force of masterless samurai), whose activities were centred in the Satsuma residence in Edo, has been affirmed by a number of Japanese historians.[14]

Perhaps there was no time to get government approval of the dispatch of troops from Kyoto to reinforce those already guarding the southern approaches to the city. In any case, Saigō moved

immediately on hearing that Aizu, Kuwana and allied troops had left Osaka. In the next few days decisive defeats were administered by the Imperial forces, mostly Satsuma units under Saigō's instructions. The two separate Bakufu columns coming from Osaka were stopped at Toba and Fushimi by the numerically inferior guard units, about 2,000 of them, who refused demands for passage through to Kyoto. In the ensuing battles, begun when Satsuma cannons were fired into the ranks of the enemy, the anti-Tokugawa forces numbering between 5,500 and 6,000 were made up of Satsuma men aided by Chōshū and Tosa troops, and, later, by smaller units from Inaba (Tottori) and Tōdō *han*, a combined force of about half the size of the pro-Tokugawa army. The defenders were in well-prepared positions, were much better equipped with rifles and cannons, and their solidarity and morale, already strong, were heightened after the first day by the bestowal of Imperial banners rushed from Kyoto. And luck was with them as well.

The historical importance of the battle at Toba and Fushimi may justify the addition of some details here. Hostilities began on 27 January at Lower Toba (see inset to map, p. 29), after long negotiations and arguments with the Satsuma guards, who resolutely refused passage. The Bakufu commanders of the Kuwana troops, former Bakufu units, Ōgaki and other *han* forces temporarily withdrew to Yodo castle. When they returned and resumed the argument, suddenly, at 5 p.m., Satsuma cannons opened fire on their ranks. An attack with spears and swords was attempted, but met rifle fire 'like rain' from the Satsuma positions, and the attackers were forced to retreat. At the entrance to Fushimi, the other column of the pro-Tokugawa forces, also under Bakufu commanders, was waiting. It was made up of the Aizu troops, Bakufu units, and troops from Hamada, Takamatsu, Toba and other *han*. The commanders were similarly demanding entrance. Shortly after the artillery fire at Toba was heard, hostilities began there as well. At Toba, there was a withdrawal by the pro-Yoshinobu troops at 10 p.m., and a short rear-guard action took place at about midnight. At Fushimi, indecisive fighting continued until about 1 a.m., followed by a withdrawal to Yodo, where Aizu, Kuwana and Bakufu commanders held a conference in Yodo castle.

The Satsuma and Chōshū forces were clearly well prepared for an attack, but Saigō planned, if things went badly, to announce an Imperial progress to Hiei, the mountain just north-east of Kyoto. Then, he planned to take the young Emperor to a strong, strategic point between Hiroshima and Okayama via the inner mountain road (the San'indō), dividing the Imperial commands into three regional ones to carry on the fight. In later years, Saigō recalled: 'I was

happier at the first sound of cannon fire at Toba than I would have been if I had gained a following of a million allies.' For him, it was a sound which meant he was staking everything on victory or defeat.

The morning of the second day (28 January) began with a unit of Bakufu troops being ambushed by Satsuma and Chōshū riflemen hidden in a bamboo thicket, with disastrous effect. After a prolonged exchange of rifle fire, the Bakufu troops retreated, leaving two of the Bakufu commanders dead on the battlefield. Then, the Imperial Prince Ninnaji no Miya arrived from Kyoto and bestowed Imperial banners on the Satsuma-Chōshū command.

The Tosa commanders had no orders to participate in the battle, and knew that Yamauchi Yōdō, the active head of the *han*, preferred a peaceful settlement. The official Tosa view of the battle was that it was essentially a private one between Satsuma and Aizu, and the *han* was holding to a neutral position. But after the first day of fighting, perhaps the majority of the troops wanted to join the Satsuma and Chōshū forces. The bestowal of the Imperial banners, and persuasion from Itagaki Taisuke, who had promised Saigō his co-operation, decided two of the three commanders. Then, they were fired on by Takamatsu troops. The Tosa men repulsed them successfully, but with some loss of life. At this point the commanders decided that if the battle went badly, and their action brought trouble to Yamauchi Yōdō, they would commit suicide. But in fact they were given no further chance to play an active part in the battle.

The samurai of Kumamoto *han* (Higo) actually divided into opposing groups, one planning to attack Satsuma in Kyoto, the other intending to join Satsuma and Chōshū at Toba and Fushimi. Neither plan was actually carried out, due to prolonged arguments between the opposed groups. Among the samurai of Tōdō *han* stationed nearby at Yamazaki, across the river and just south of Yodo, some actually arranged secretly to ally with one or the other of the Kumamoto groups. The action of other domains as well was unpredictable, and depended on how the military situation developed.

On 29 January the Satsuma-Chōshū forces turned to the offensive, making good use of their superior fire power and experience with rifles. The Aizu forces under remaining Bakufu commanders were forced to retreat to Yodo castle, one of their three commanders being killed and another seriously wounded during the retreat. A fresh Satsuma unit, released from guard duty in Kyoto, arrived on the scene where about eighty Aizu spearmen were between them and the other Aizu men, some of them riflemen. The Aizu riflemen could not fire for fear of hitting their own spearmen, so Miura, the Satsuma commander, seeing his opportunity, ordered a charge. The spearmen were mostly shot down, and the other Aizu men forced to

abandon their positions, including the Yodo bridge, to the Satsuma attackers.

The Bakufu, Kuwana and Aizu forces planned to make a stand in Yodo castle, and stop the attack, but this was not to be. They found the castle held by Yodo troops, their allies of yesterday, who greeted them with threats to cut them to pieces if they attempted to enter the castle. Inaba, the *daimyo* of Yodo *han*, was a Senior Councillor (*Rōjū*) in the Bakufu, but was on duty in Edo. The officers in the castle sent word that without the permission of the *daimyo*, they could not admit troops of any other *han* to the castle. In fact, they had decided not to sacrifice their *han* for an apparently doomed cause. The next day (30 January), they allied formally with Chōshū and Satsuma, the Imperial side.

Denied entrance to Yodo castle, the pro-Tokugawa troops withdrew south of the castle for the night. The following morning (30 January), from across the river, the Tōdō *han* army, having watched developments closely, opened up with cannons on the pro-Tokugawa forces. The previous day they had been visited by representatives of the old Bakufu as well as by a court noble from Kyoto. Their decision to join the fray on the Satsuma-Chōshū side proved to be the final blow. Nagai Kōshi, a Junior Councillor (*Wakadoshiyori*) of the old Bakufu, had taken the precaution of obtaining from Yoshinobu an order to retreat. Accordingly, a retreat to Osaka was ordered on 30 January and by the morning of 31 January, all troops had returned to Osaka.

As seen from Osaka castle, defeat was certain by 30 January, and any desire to continue hostilities had been lost. Yoshinobu, suffering from a cold, listened to the battle reports with a heavy heart, not having taken a step outside the castle. Convinced by arguments that he should return to Edo, he slipped secretly out of the castle at 10 p.m. on 30 January, with a small escort. Unable to find a Bakufu ship in the dark, they spent the night on board an American warship anchored off Osaka. In the morning, joined by two *Rōjū*, Sakai and Itakura, and by the lords of Aizu and Kuwana and a few others, Yoshinobu travelled on a Bakufu ship to Edo. The wounded were taken to Edo on other Bakufu ships. The defeated troops dispersed after their return to Osaka. Chōshū units arrived late on 31 January, and when they entered the castle the following morning, they found it burned out and its famous treasures stolen. Osaka castle was formally surrendered on 5 February.[15]

During the battles of Toba and Fushimi, gale-force winds, very cold, were blowing from the north. As the Satsuma and Chōshū men advanced, they had the winds to their backs, while their enemies had to face them. The Imperial forces considered these winds providential.

Three special Bakufu units (or groups, *kumi*) fought well, especially the one which had received training from French officers, and there were many Aizu and Kuwana soldiers who fought bravely, though their morale was not nearly as high as that of the Imperial forces. In the face of withering cannon and rifle fire, they had little opportunity to show their more traditional skills. Also, other troops from various *han* who fought with them in fact contributed very little. Large numbers of spearmen tended to get in the way, and horses, frightened by the noise of cannon and rifle fire, often bolted and unseated their riders. Compared with the total of some 15,000 pro-Tokugawa troops, Satsuma apparently had only about 3,000, Chōshū about 1,500, and Tosa something over 1,000. Since Tosa was involved in only one small action, and Inaba (Tottori) and Tōdō forces were involved only after the outcome was in little doubt, the difference in totals is all the more impressive.

The advantages enjoyed by Satsuma and Chōshū included superior solidarity and spirit, better equipment and training in riflery, professional confidence in the skills of their troops, and a psychological advantage conferred by the Imperial banners proclaiming them as the Imperial army. This was an advantage both for their own morale and in persuading the undecided *han* to ally themselves with the Imperial side, or at least not to aid the side branded as 'enemies of the Court' (*chōteki*). In so designating the 'rebels', the Court held Yoshinobu responsible for the resort to arms, and ordered a punitive expedition against him and the lords of the domains who were involved, or whose men were involved on the Tokugawa side in the actual hostilities.[16]

Before the battle began, the moderate party in Kyoto, hearing of the departure of Shogunal forces from Osaka towards Kyoto, cast about for means to prevent hostilities. In a memorandum written after the event, it is recorded that Echizen proposed, in great haste, to co-operate with Owari *han* in meeting and placating the Aizu and Kuwana forces as near Osaka as possible, placing, if possible, the two armies of Owari and Echizen between the opposed forces to keep them apart. But this was seen to be impossible, due to insufficient preparation. Then, it was agreed that at Court every effort had to be made to prevent the issuance of an Imperial order for the punishment of the former Shogun. But this, too, proved impossible. The Echizen memorandum continues: 'The Tokugawa were, of course, branded as enemies of the Court. But not only that. Without asking about right or wrong, everyone who could be said to have supported the Bakufu was branded as an enemy of the Court and subjected to pressure.'[17]

After this, there was a considerable development of ideological

opposition to the new government, based principally on loyalty to the Tokugawa clan, but also on feelings of resentment over the treatment of Yoshinobu. The *daimyo* of Komoro in Shinshū complains in a memorial: 'Now the lords are required to attack the Tokugawa clan. For example, Inaba and Bizen are younger brothers of the Tokugawa [i.e. of Yoshinobu]. The family of Ii [Hikone] are ministers of the Tokugawa. Others too have been followers of the Tokugawa for three hundred years. But younger brothers are caused to attack their elder brothers. Ministers are made to kill their lords. What will later generations say of this?'[18]

Back in Edo, Yoshinobu endeavoured without success to revert to the situation just before the Toba-Fushimi defeats. To strengthen his position, he took two positive steps. He asked for foreign support through the French Minister, Léon Roches, and gave orders to defend key points along the high-roads from the Kansai to Edo. Meanwhile, he sought clemency from the government through an intermediary, arranging to send as his emissary to Kyoto the Princess Kazu no Miya, younger sister of the former Emperor Kōmei who, at the age of 15, had married Iemochi, Yoshinobu's predecessor as Shogun. Then, on 5 March, he declared his absolute fidelity to the Emperor. These actions may seem contradictory, but Yoshinobu apparently wished, by resigning completely, to preserve the Tokugawa clan if at all possible. But his efforts to strengthen his position failed. No help was forthcoming from the foreign powers; the powerful lords of the central regions, including the Ii of Hikone, the largest of the *fudai daimyo*, had all pledged their allegiance to the Emperor; and he received a discouraging letter from Matsudaira Keiei telling him of the hardening attitude of the government towards him.[19] This reversal of the political situation after defeat in a battle in which both sides had some claim to be the government (and therefore, the Imperial) army, is often referred to as another example in Japanese history of the adage, *Kateba Kangun* (If you win, you are the Imperial army).

Before the Toba-Fushimi battles, the uncommitted *daimyo*, although frequently receiving orders from the Restoration government, did not necessarily follow them. After the battle, the majority of them did, and with alacrity. The powerful *han* of the Kansai and Chūbu areas (South and West Honshū and Shikoku), Aki, Bizen, Harima, Tosa, Owari and others, moved over quickly to the support of the government, and, together with Satsuma and Chōshū, played an important part in deciding the movements and actions of their neighbouring *han*, which were mostly smaller. The lords of those domains were asked point blank where they stood, and when they claimed loyalty to the Emperor, they were required to swear formal

allegiance, and in some cases were given Imperial banners. In the course of organising and pushing forward the campaign against Yoshinobu, the forces moving toward Edo along the three principal road routes carried out a similar policy of assuring the absolute loyalty of ail along the way.[20]

As the Imperial armies approached, confusion in the Kantō increased. Peasant disturbances flared up in part due to change-overs in Bakufu territories which sometimes left temporary gaps in administrative control. Some *daikan* and other Bakufu officers, with their staffs, simply left their posts, mostly to collect in discontented bands in Edo. Some of the uprisings were caused by rumours that a reduction in the land taxes by half, which had been announced in some places in an irregular manner, had been retracted. Others were protests against rapidly rising prices, forced labour and special exactions required by the military, etc.; in general, conditions caused by military movements which, among other things, cut off ordinary transport and communications.[21]

Among some of the small *han* in the Kantō, confrontations between pro-Bakufu and pro-government cliques flared into open clashes,[22] and these troubles spread southward to the Izu and Hakone regions.[23] *Han* close to the Tokugawa tried to avoid being involved in anti-Tokugawa military action by asking for other duties. Some asked for, and received, orders to suppress pro-Tokugawa factions in their own domains. In the case of Owari and Mito, there was actual fighting, and a considerable loss of life. Some were permitted to make financial, rather than military, contributions to the campaign. In one case, as his son was a well-known *Rōjū* in the old Bakufu, Ogasawara Nagakuni, the lord of Karatsu *han* in Kyūshū, disowned him, and, insisting that he was not related to him, requested to be in the vanguard of the attack on the former Shogun.[24]

The government's policy was a positive one of facing directly the crisis situation, domestic and foreign. The immediate foreign crisis was caused by three incidents in the period from the end of January to April, which had an indirect relation to the civil war: in Hyōgo (Kōbe), the firing on a group of unarmed foreigners, one of whom was injured, by Bizen troops; the killing of eleven French soldiers and sailors in Sakai by Tosa troops; and the attack on the British Minister, Sir Harry Parkes, by *jōi* extremists in Kyoto. These incidents, occurring at a time when the new government, deeply involved in the civil war, lacked both solidity and recognition of legality by the foreign powers, greatly increased the fear of serious foreign intervention. To prevent this, quick action was taken. In February, the demands of the foreign representatives made after the first incident (in Hyōgo), were immediately accepted. An Imperial

judgement to punish the offenders was served on Echizen, with the threat of an attack on the *han* if it was disobeyed.[25] Similarly, quick action was taken to satisfy the powers in the other incidents. After the attack on Sir Harry Parkes, notices, whose original text was submitted to and corrected by Sir Harry himself, were posted at road and street intersections throughout the country. Haraguchi Kiyoshi, describing this concession with distaste in 1963, called it 'needlessly servile'.[26]

The need for the foreigners to see the Imperial Court imposing a 'justice common to all countries' was pressed by a memorial to the government signed by five major heads of *han*, all closely associated with the government: Shimazu, Asano, Hosokawa, Matsudaira Keiei, and Yamauchi Yōdō. As we have seen, the government did not hesitate to use threats against the domains in order to placate the powers and to prevent further incidents. Soon, persuasion was added to coercion. The first formal expression by the government of ideas later seen in the Five-Article Charter Oath of 6 April 1868 was a direct result of these efforts. In the Imperial Proclamation of 11 February, an attempt was made to pacify anti-foreign elements, and a pointed suggestion was made that changes in attitudes were necessary: 'What is urgently needed now is to respond to the times with eyes open, to rid ourselves of former evil customs, and to show forth the light of virtue to all countries', ideas repeated in a public statement by the Emperor on 22 March.[27] These worries about possible foreign intervention in the civil war thus not only impelled the government to placate the powers by moving quickly against anti-foreignism, but also served to strengthen the hand of innovators in the government.

When the decision was taken, at the instigation of Iwakura, to send a large Imperial army to the Kantō, Matsudaira Keiei of Echizen wrote a dissenting memorial which was not accepted. Again, Keiei wrote a proposal on 10 March, supported by Owari and Kii, asking for the pardon of Yoshinobu, also rejected.[28] The moderate position at Court still had its spokesmen.

On 3 May, Yoshinobu, who had been working for a negotiated settlement through Katsu Awa (the naval expert and head of a 'loyalist' faction in the Bakufu which favoured a compromise settlement), surrendered Edo to the Imperial forces whose active head was Saigō Takamori. Yoshinobu's explanation of this was that it was the only way of avoiding needless bloodshed and major hostilities which could bring down upon Japan the additional calamity of foreign intervention. The agreement negotiated with the government provided for the resignation of Yoshinobu as head of the Tokugawa clan. The headship was to move to the Tayasu branch of the family,

which was to hold a maximum domain of 700,000 *koku*, roughly 10 per cent of the former Shogunal holdings. This compromise settlement was not easily accepted by either side. In Kyoto, the Ōkubo group calmed the protests of unsatisfied loyalists only with difficulty. In Edo, the dissatisfaction of Tokugawa retainers led eventually to the battle of Ueno (4 July), after which Admiral Enomoto, taking part of the Bakufu fleet, fled to Ezo (Hokkaido), which he intended to preserve as a domain for Yoshinobu.[29] In the north, opposition began organising under Aizu leadership.

After the Toba-Fushimi battles, the government classified the following as enemies of the Court, in order of importance: (1) Tokugawa Yoshinobu; (2) Matsudaira Katamori (Aizu) and Matsudaira Sadaaki (Kuwana), the two former Bakufu military supervisors of Kyoto; (3) Hisamatsu Teishō (Iyo Matsuyama), Sakai Tadaatsushi (Himeji) and Itakura Katsukiyo (Bitchū Matsuyama); (4) Honjō Munetaka (Miyazu); and (5) Toda Ujitomo (Ōgaki) and Matsudaira Yoriaki (Takamatsu). Troops from all these domains had been involved against the Chōshū-Satsuma-Tosa troops at Toba-Fushimi, although some were clearly 'without instructions' from their lords.[30] It was considered that once all the *daimyo* were brought to guarantee absolute obedience to the Emperor, the government's objective in the civil war would be reached. Until a *daimyo* did this, the government was uncompromising, but once allegiance was sworn, it was prepared to be lenient.

Government army rules and regulations applying to the campaign in the north were aimed at uniting all domain units into a single command, and preventing depredations by government troops, for which severe punishments were provided. If it became necessary, the army was to suppress peasant revolts and riots. Despite regulations, however, there were cases of government troops stealing, firing on the houses of ordinary people, terrorising them, and taking part in all the other kinds of depredations that are associated with civil war (especially when one aspect of the opposition takes the form of guerrilla warfare). Although in principle, and to some extent in fact, it was a united Imperial army, its ideology and ideals did not necessarily penetrate down through the subordinate ranks. Also, there were cases of trouble between regional army commands, between Satsuma and Tosa troops, and between Satsuma and Chōshū. In the early phases of the campaign, the Imperial commands experienced many difficulties about supplies, communications and organisation.[31]

Even most Japanese writers have overlooked two important aspects of the army's role in the civil war period: propagandising the people on behalf of the new government, and transmitting orders to

the *han* as well as supervising them to see that they were enforced. Towards the peasants, the ultimate weapon of propaganda was the Imperial declaration of a reduction by half in the annual taxes on crops. Such declarations were apparently reserved for particularly difficult areas, but the general effect must have been considerable, provided the peasants were disposed to believe in them. Charity for the most impoverished people was often offered, and sometimes delivered, in a conscious attempt to contrast what the government liked to call the Emperor's concern for his people with the traditional unconcern of the feudal overlords.[32]

Given the history of the success of irregular troops or auxiliary militia in Chōshū, it is not surprising that the government army included a number of such units, incorporating members of the lower classes trained mostly in the use of rifles. Some were attached as integral units of the army, others were permitted to operate independently, and it is those last which presented the greatest problems of discipline. One of these units was called the Sekibōtai, organised immediately after the Toba-Fushimi battles by Sagara Sōzō, with a nucleus of the Sōmō Rōshitai, already mentioned as the gang organised in Edo in 1867 to create disturbances on orders from Saigō Takamori. The Sekibōtai was a mixed group of about five hundred men, the majority of peasant origin. They were dedicated to fighting against supporters of the Bakufu, all those who got in their way, and those engaged in foreign trade. They collected money by force from wealthy houses, mostly of merchants, in Edo. Some were caught by Bakufu officers and executed for armed robbery.[33]

The Sekibōtai received an order from the government to be a vanguard for the Imperial army in the Kantō, and at the same time they were informed of orders to reduce by half the taxes collected from former Bakufu direct territories, and were given instructions to render material assistance to the poor. The members of the Sekibōtai were rather overzealous in spreading the word not only in former Bakufu territories, but in the *han* as well, especially in the Tōsan region. In this area, the government never acknowledged publicly that the orders were inapplicable, but it simply did not apply them, and it charged the Sekibōtai with fomenting peasant uprisings. The government's attitude towards groups like the Sekibōtai who were not exactly under military discipline changed after mid-February from making use of them to suppressing them. The domains were rapidly turning towards co-operation with the government, and there was no longer a need for these semi-independent irregulars.[34]

The problem of the final disposition of the Tokugawa clan was still open when the one-day battle took place at Ueno on 4 July. The resolute action of the government at Ueno in attacking and defeating

a force of about 3,000 Tokugawa adherents opened up an escape route from its difficulties in the former Bakufu stronghold, the Kantō. First, it dealt a crushing blow to one of the largest anti-government units, which had been preparing for and carrying out attacks in the Kantō. This weakened them and restored confidence in the security of the area. There were still some small actions here and there, but nothing serious. Some groups fled from Edo to join likeminded units in the north, where they were welcomed as 'guest fighters' (*kyakuhei*). Secondly, the government army was released to apply its full power in the north. Thirdly, it had the effect of deciding the as yet uncommitted *han*, especially in the Kantō area, in favour of the government. In addition, it moved closer to possibility the plans to move Yoshinobu to a domain in Suruga and to make Edo, as Tokyo, the new capital. On 14 July, Sanjō Sanetomi was named commander-in-chief for the eight provinces of the Kantō, and the announcement was made that the Tokugawa clan had been granted a fief assessed at 700,000 *koku* in Suruga. In August, the change of capital from Edo to Tokyo was announced.[35]

On 20 September, an Imperial proclamation was issued announcing that the entire country had now been united under the Imperial government except for 'a corner of Ōu'. As this comprised most of northern Honshū, it was a rather large 'corner'! The Emperor expressed regret for this, and went on, rather pointedly, to say that the people were one family under the Emperor, that no distinction would be made among the peasants of the entire country, and that they would not be forgotten. The war was still raging in the north when the announcement was made of the change of capital, and some small operations were still continuing in the Kantō. But, although the civil war was not yet finished, the period of real danger to the new government was over.[36]

This does not mean that the outcome of the war in the north was necessarily a foregone conclusion, or that it would be easy. In fact, it proved extremely difficult. But it had the advantage for the government of being fought at a considerable distance from the strategic areas of the Kansai and the Kantō. At the same time, in military terms, the remoteness of some of the domains involved, especially Shōnai, to the north of Aizu, did pose serious problems of communications, transport and organisation, providing, incidentally, the government army and its commanders with valuable experience.

The two most aggressively anti-government domains were Aizu and Shōnai, and later, Sendai. In the early stages, Sendai and Yonezawa were only nominal supporters of the government, continually postponing action on various pretexts, the most important of which was that they did not wish to interfere with peasants

during the early planting season, for fear of peasant uprisings. But basically, there was too close a balance of opinion within the samurai of these doubtful domains, between pro-government and anti-government factions, in which fear of Aizu and Shōnai, whose samurai enjoyed a high reputation for their fighting ability, played a part.[37]

In Fukushima, on the evening of 10 June, a band of samurai from Sendai assassinated Sera Shūzō, a government army staff officer. This was a move by the anti-government clique in Sendai to push Sendai *han* into the anti-government camp. Sera, in his frustration at the lack of response from Sendai to repeated calls for troops, had let slip a remark about the 'cowardice' of Sendai samurai. A Governor-General, the Court Noble Kujō, was put under house arrest in Sendai, and a staff officer, Daigo, was kidnapped with some of his men and taken to Sendai; the *han* joined the anti-government alliance. On 11 June, Aizu troops took Shirakawa castle. Communications with the large government force sent north to subdue Shōnai had been cut off, and requests for help from Akita and Hirosaki were rejected. The situation of the government army in the north in mid-June had reached its lowest point.[38]

In Aizu, solidarity and morale were high. Like Chōshū and Tosa, Aizu organised mixed militia units. These incorporated about 2,700 peasants, and a few sons of merchants and other commoners. Units of Bakufu *hatamoto*, volunteers from Kuwana (some 2,000), Mito, and many others, mostly representing defeated factions of other *han*, were organised. Special units of hunters, gamblers, wrestlers, even Buddhist and Shinto priests were used, perhaps in part for psychological effect on the enemy. The Aizu authorities bought Western rifles and ammunition from foreign merchants, mostly from a Dutch merchant in Edo named Snell. They borrowed cannons and rifles from the Bakufu pro-war faction, and continued to receive training from French military experts.[39]

The anti-government alliance was concluded on 23 June by twenty-five lords of domains in Ōu, later joined by six others. In a memorial to the Emperor, they heaped the blame on Satsuma and Chōshū, rather than on the Imperial government, for harsh terms and a dictatorial attitude towards Aizu and Shōnai, and injustice on the part of the Imperial regional commands. Citing the case of Shōnai, they charged the government with proclaiming, from a distance, the confiscation of certain lands in favour of neighbouring domains thought to be loyal, and then branding the *daimyo* as an enemy of the Court when his officials collected the annual taxes from those lands. The alliance did not include the two accused domains, Shōnai and Aizu, and was in a sense another appearance of the

conservative, feudal, moderate position, pressing for the traditional methods of conciliation as a means to solve the problem. The memorial begins with a statement of basic support for the return of political power to the Emperor (*ōsei fukko*). It goes on with detailed complaints about obstacles to the 'great project' of building an Imperial Japan: the peremptory orders of the regional headquarters under the nominal command of Kujō, ordering various *han* to mount immediate attacks on recalcitrant domains; the harsh attitude of the command on the conditions for the surrender of Matsudaira Katamori of Aizu; the campaign against Shōnai whose guilt, chiefly of collecting their own taxes, was unclear and doubtful; and the pursuit by the regional commanders of personal enmity by means of Imperial orders. It goes on to plead for clemency towards Aizu and Shōnai, and for a just disposition granting the former Shogun Court rank and lands. It ends by pleading for the suppression of 'false Imperial soldiers' and for the establishment of a just Imperial rule in the north.[40]

As for Aizu *han*, the memorial states that that domain did not intend to revive the Bakufu, but merely wished to remove the charge of treachery and wrongdoing on the part of their *daimyo*. But it was clear that Aizu was not willing to support or participate in a government dominated by the uncompromising faction led by Satsuma and Chōshū. The headquarters of the alliance was established in Shiraishi in August, and former Bakufu Senior Councillors Itakura and Ogasawara were put in charge of the administration.[41]

To return for a moment to problems of foreign relations, the government was convinced that there was danger for Japan until all opposition to the government had been suppressed. The official neutrality of the powers, speculation about the splitting of the country, north and south, among foreigners in Japan and in the foreign press (especially newspapers published in Japan), the possibilities of Russian aid to the anti-government forces in the north, and inability to prevent the provision of arms to them by smuggling, all pointed up potential dangers in the situation.[42]

Niigata, on the Japan Sea, was scheduled to open as a treaty port for foreign trade, but its opening was postponed due to the fact that it was held by 'enemies of the Court'. This did not, however, prevent the port from being used by the northern anti-government domains for foreign trade, especially with the Dutch—the peripatetic Mr Snell again. The government informed the foreign representatives that it could not guarantee the safety of foreigners trading at Niigata, but this, again, appears not to have deterred the foreign merchants. Bakufu officials who had been negotiating the purchase from the United States of an ironclad ship, the *Stonewall*, declared excess

after the American Civil War, continued the negotiations from Shiraishi. But the fall of Niigata to the Imperial forces on 16 September prevented completion of the purchase. Meanwhile, a joint administration of the foreign trade at Niigata was set up by the major northern anti-government domains, and trade flourished. Beginning with Snell, later traders from Prussia, America and Britain came to join in the trade, partly because of the drop in trade at the other ports due to the war.[43]

By this time, the victory in the battle of Ueno, which placed the government in a position of superiority, permitted the shifting of troops from the Kantō, and a large army was before long on its way north, later placed under the able and aggressive leadership of Saigō, sent by sea to join his forces in September for the final stages of the campaign. There was progress in foreign relations as well. In a memorial written in August, Kido Kōin emphasised the need to press the foreign governments to recognise the Imperial government as the one legal government of Japan. This would mean, he explained, that there would be no further links with the Tokugawa, and there would be no room for foreign interference and foreign aid to the enemy. Within a month, such a notification was made. In December, although the naval force under Enomoto was still holding out in Hakodate, the declaration by the foreign powers of neutrality in the civil war was cancelled.[44]

During the northern campaign, two main efforts were made to bring the common people over to the Imperial side: first, continual notices prohibiting troops from stealing and mistreating the people, plus a public demonstration of determination to punish violators; and second, proclamations of a reduction by half in the annual land taxes. In the Echigo area, permission was given to peasants to arrest any wrongdoers. In a system of joint responsibility, squad commanders were held responsible for the conduct of their men. Even these measures, however, did not prevent a large number of incidents from happening. The anti-government army had similar troubles and adopted similar policies, but with generally less success. To protect their property, women, and their own lives, some villagers organised their own defences. There were a number of peasant uprisings during the hostilities in the north, some directed against the new, some against the old, authorities and the military forces supporting them. In most places, there seemed to be more fear and resentment against the anti-government forces, which were more of a motley lot, some of them mere guerilla bands, living off the land.[45]

The small domains associated in the anti-government alliance suffered most. They had either to follow the larger *han* in the alliance, often near neighbours, or be forced by government military pressure

to leave the alliance and support the government effort with manpower, supplies and money. Most domains were divided internally between pro- and anti-government factions, a confrontation which became extreme under military pressure. The *daimyo* who tried to stand between these factions would be in the most unenviable position, since compromise and neutrality proved impossible, and often disastrous. In some cases, when a domain was defeated, those pro-government groups who quickly surrendered were made into the vanguard for the next government attack. Foraging and demands for financial and material aid from defeated *han* greatly increased their difficulties.[46]

The struggle on the main islands ended completely in January 1869, after the surrender of the various northern domains by the middle of November, following the decisive victory over Aizu when the strongly defended Wakamatsu castle was taken by a large Imperial army under Saigō on 6 November. Admiral Enomoto's 'semi-feudal republic'[47] in Hakodate surrendered in July 1869.

Most histories of Japan treat the civil war as a virtually bloodless affair whose outcome from the beginning was almost a foregone conclusion. Before the Toba-Fushimi battles, it was, however, by no means a foregone conclusion. The latest study by a distinguished Japanese historian, Hirao Michio, published in 1971, refers to the risk Saigō took in pitting his forces, only about 2,000 of whom were actually available at Toba and Fushimi, against such odds. The total numbers he could rely on were about 3,000 troops from Satsuma and roughly 1,500 from Chōshū, in the Kyoto area. The position of possible allies, including Tosa, was doubtful. Hirao characterises Saigō's decision as 'staking everything on victory or defeat.'[48]

After the initial and crucial Toba-Fushimi battles, everything seemed to go well for the government. But this was really true only after a series of setbacks in the north. From Hirao's work, one can cite two evidences of the importance of the battles fought after Toba-Fushimi: the number of battles considered important enough to detail; and the numbers of killed and wounded in the civil war. As to the first, Hirao includes details of no less than twenty-four battles, two of them naval battles, and three of them involving some naval action. From incomplete statistics and estimates of casualties for 1868–9, one can reach conjectural totals of something like 10,000 dead and 12,000 wounded.[49] According to another source, during the ten years preceding 1868, more than 2,000 were killed in internal struggles in the domain of Mito alone.[50] Perhaps the civil war should no longer be characterised as 'bloodless'.

The end of the civil war meant the end of the feudal system of Bakufu and *han*. For the *han*, whether pro- or anti-government, the

civil war had brought extreme impoverishment, which made the later abolition of the *han* not only easier, but in some cases even welcomed by the *daimyo*. The civil war had aroused lasting enmities among the *han*, and, more importantly, within the *han*. There was never, after the battle of Osaka in 1615, very much solidarity among the *tozama* (outer) domains, except a common hostility to the Tokugawa among a few of them. But among the Tokugawa related houses, *sanke* and *kamon*, and among the hereditary vassal *daimyo* of the Tokugawa, the *fudai*, there was a degree of solidarity which was largely destroyed during the civil war, when, under extreme stress, each *han* took a position which had much less to do with its formal classification and historical relationship to the Tokugawa clan than with immediate problems of survival. Within the domains, through the splitting into warring factions forced into the open by military pressure, the solidarity of the feudal ruling classes was even more fragmented, leaving much mutual resentment.

Even in the domains which had provided the leadership for the Restoration, Tosa, Satsuma and Chōshū, there were divisive forces at work, notably the growing gap in attitudes and ideology between those who remained in the *han* and those in the central government. Satsuma and Tosa had perhaps the greatest difficulty of all in accepting the abolition of the *han*, because pride in the part they had played in establishing the Imperial government and in winning the civil war was essentially pride in the accomplishment of their *han*. In these domains, there was actually an increase in the strength of the *han* nationalism which the government found absolutely essential to convert into an Emperor-centred nationalism in the Meiji period.

In June 1869, the government collected answers to a questionnaire asking whether the *han* should be replaced with a prefectural system. The results were as follows: Yes (102 *han*, plus the Shōheikō, the Tokugawa-founded orthodox Confucian university in Edo-Tokyo); No (113 *han*); Neither (2 *han*). Among those voting for the change, those whose finances were most adversely affected by the civil war were prominent. Among the 102 favouring the prefectural system, there were 31 *tozama*, 1 *sanke*, 11 *kamon*, and 58 *fudai*, plus Shizuoka, whose status as the Tokugawa domain was still unclear. Among the *tozama* domains, with the exception of Kaga, the largest of all, Aki, and Uwajima, both large domains, all were *han* of 50,000 *koku* and less. Conspicuously absent were Satsuma, Chōshū and Tosa. It is quite possible that some of the domains favoured the change to a prefectural system in the hope that it would end the monopoly of power by Chōshū and Satsuma leaders. This was especially true in the case of large domains such as Kii and Echizen. Those *han* who opposed the change did not want simply to preserve the feudal

system as it was, but proposed major reforms to make it more logical and more effectively centralised.[51]

Obviously, the war was fought to unify the country. It began, after the outbreak of hostilities at Toba and Fushimi, as a punitive expedition against the former Shogun and other 'enemies of the Court'. But it was not aimed simply at eliminating the remaining power of the old Bakufu. It became a war against the Tokugawa as feudal lords and against the other 'enemies of the Court' as feudal lords. Until the surrender of Edo castle, the campaign went smoothly, with little opposition, and the old Bakufu system was extinguished, with few regrets. Only when it became apparent that the campaign was now aimed at depriving the Shogun of his lands did the opposition of the Tokugawa adherents begin to mount in the Kantō, and, at the same time, in the north. Their purpose was not to restore the Bakufu. On a deeper level, there was an element of self-interest in desiring to maintain the old system as much as possible, but as this was apparently not articulated, it is difficult to assess. We can say it was a desperate and emotional opposition, based on traditional feudal loyalty and prompted by fear of the extinction of the Tokugawa clan and the hope of maintaining the position of Yoshinobu (or, if necessary, another clan leader of the Tokugawa house) as a feudal lord.

Likewise, in the spring, the gathering alliance of feudal lords in the north, in an atmosphere of anger and outrage, represented a collective commitment to resort to force if necessary, to protest and, if possible, to modify the uncompromising enmity of the government, viewed as a Satsuma-Chōshū monopoly, towards the Tokugawa clan, and to expose the 'personal malice' of the regional commands toward Aizu and Shōnai. In terms of *han* interests, the lords saw in the government's disregard for the rights of the Tokugawa, inevitably, the same fate for their own domains if they did not make a stand. They felt that the moderate solution, along the lines of the Tosa Memorial, on the basis of which Yoshinobu had decided to resign as Shogun, and which had seemed certain of attainment earlier, had been overturned by what they considered the self-centred and megalomanic actions of Satsuma and Chōshū. They could see no disloyalty to the Emperor in insisting that the new dispensation be an effective, centralised alliance of domains under the Emperor. The monopoly of patriotism asserted by the Ōkubo clique raised resentments which long outlived the civil war.

The moderate party's insistence, throughout the year, on a government based on consultation, and on representative institutions suggested by European and American practice was, of course, understandable. The moderate position represented an overwhelmingly

majority opinion among the ruling classes, until the civil war forced a reluctant change. The need even in present-day Japan for a consensus before important decisions are taken, and involving concessions to the weaker party, at least for the sake of face and a façade of Confucian-style harmony, is, of course, a strong and deeply traditional one, and is perhaps sufficient to explain the 'consultative' emphasis in the moderate position without requiring a thesis that they were in any way progressives committed to parliamentarism as understood in the West. It should perhaps be added that in 1868, there had not yet been time for Japanese intellectuals and officials on either side of the civil war to work out the implications of the systems of representative government which Fukuzawa Yukichi had observed and found so difficult to understand.

The struggle to reach a consensus is the key to Bakumatsu political history, and as radical change was advocated strongly by only a small, although well-organised and singleminded minority, perhaps the war was necessary. Military men like Saigō and Yamagata[52] strode to the centre of the stage during the war, and the necessary military emphasis in the first year of the new government left its stamp on modern Japan.

The resentment at being forced to change, anger and frustration at the monopoly of power by the Satsuma-Chōshū leaders, and at their non-traditional use of that power, reached its peak during the civil war. In this resentment, which long outlived the war, can be seen the beginnings of two types of often closely related anti-government movements: that of people's rights and democracy, resulting in the granting of a Constitution, and that of ultra-nationalistic opposition outside the government, whose first manifestations were Saigō's Satsuma rebellion and the other suicidal rebellions of the early Meiji period.