Outline Lecture Fifteen—Japan’s Path to Reform

Key Focus:
1) What different course towards reform led to Japan’s shocking victory over its traditional neighbors in 1895?
2) What factors not only spared Japan China’s humiliating demise, but also in fact propelled it to regional prominence?

I) Confronting the Inevitable Tide of Change
   a) The Chinese Lesson
      i) Witnessed consequences of unequal treaties
         (1) “If an enemy dictates terms in one’s own capital, one’s country is disgraced”
      ii) What will be Japan’s fate?
         (1) “Will the mist gathering over China not come down as frost upon Japan?”
         (2) Pressure on Japan to open itself up for trade and diplomacy
   b) The American Initiative
      i) Upstart imperialist power around the mid-19th century
      ii) President Fillmore’s 1852 letter
         (1) Key incentives
         (2) Naïve optimism or shameless equivocation?
      iii) Commodore Perry’s Arrival in 1853
   c) The Sonno Joi vs. Kaikoku Debate in the Bakufu in 1853
      i) “Revere the emperor, expel the barbarians”
         (1) Represented by the powerful Mito faction of daimyos and samurai
         (2) “Buying time” not a good argument
      ii) Kaikoku—“Open the Country”
         (1) Geopolitical and practical considerations
         (2) Stall on key demands by agreeing to some small concessions
   d) The 1858 Harris Treaty of Amity and Commerce
      i) U.S. agree to provide arms sales and military advisors
      ii) Japanese concessions
      iii) A voyage of the Kanrin Maru
   e) Opposition to the Bakufu 1858-1868
      i) Choshu and Satsuma in the south
      ii) 1868, boy emperor Mutsuhito installed as the Meiji Emperor

II) The Meiji Reforms
   a) Similar to Goals of China’s Self-Strengthening Movement
      i) E.g. Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901)
   b) Demise of the Samurai Class
      i) Abolished traditional samurai social privileges
      ii) Instrumental role of young, low-level samurai in reforms
   c) Establishment of a Constitutional Monarchy
      i) Legislature called the Diet
      ii) Executive powers of the emperor
      iii) Political and social stability conducive to economic growth
d) Industrial Reform, not Social Revolution
   i) Government-backed Zaibatsus in 1880s
   ii) Source of capital for growth
       (1) E.g. Land Tax of 1873

e) Was the price of industrialization worth it?
   i) Decisive defeat of China in 1895
   ii) Resounding defeat of Russia in 1905
   iii) Fukuzawa’s appeal for “Datsu-a”