

Feudal Japan Edo and the US Empire

By [Hiroyuki Hamada](#)

Asia-Pacific Research, April 22, 2020

Region: [Japan](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [History](#), [Media](#)

After the warlord period of 15th century, Japan was united by a few families then by a shogun family. The period is called Edo period. They disarmed civilians and established a mild caste system. The country was closed except for a few ports controlled by the central government, travel restrictions were put in place and certain technological developments were prohibited. The period also had an interesting feature called sankinkoutai. It forced regional leaders to march across the country in formal costumes along with their armies in order to alternate their residences between their home regions and the capital of the feudal Japan, Edo. It also forced leaders' wives and family members to remain in Edo at all time. It was an elaborate system to keep the hierarchical structure intact.

The reign lasted a few centuries with no conflicts within the land until the US forced to open Japan in order to use its ports for whaling business. I've been suspecting that the aim of some people among the ruling class circle is to establish such a closed hierarchical system which can function in a "sustainable" manner. But of course it is not exactly a system of equality and sharing as it would be advertised. The notion of "sustainable" is also very much questionable as we see blatant lies hidden behind carbon trade schemes, nuclear energy, "humanitarian" colonialism rampant in Africa and other areas and so on.

Image on the right: Tokugawa Ieyasu, first *shōgun* of the Tokugawa shogunate (Source: Wikimedia Commons)



I mentioned about the special feature, sankinkoutai, since I see an interesting parallel between it and "representative democracy" within the capitalist West today. Of course, we don't have such an obvious requirement among us, but similar dynamics occur within our capitalist framework. Our thoughts and activities are always subservient to the moneyed

transactions guided by the economic networks. Our economic restrictions can force us to make decisions to do away with our needs—we might abandon our skills, interests, friendships, life styles, philosophies, ideologies, community obligations and so on. In fact, some of us are forced to live on streets, die of treatable illness, suffer under heavy debt and so on as we struggle. In a way, we surrender our basic needs as hostages to the system just as the Japanese regional leaders had to leave their family members under the watch of the Shogun family. Moreover, the more our thoughts differ from that of neoliberal capitalist framework, the more we must put our efforts in adjusting to it. Some of us might be labeled as “dissidents”, and such a label can create obstacles in our social activities. This functions similar to the fact that Japanese feudal regional leaders who were further away from the capital geographically had to put more efforts in marching across the country, requiring them to expend more resources. In capitalist system, this occurs economically as well—those who are already oppressed by the economic strife must spend more resources to conform to the draconian measures to survive.

Now, one might wonder why regional leaders had subjected themselves to such an inhumane scheme. The march across the country was considered as a show of strength and authority—it was a proud moment to put on their costume to show off. The populations across the country were forced to respect this process with reverence and awe. There were strict regulations regarding how to treat such marches.

This situation can be compared to our political process—Presidential election in particular, in which our powers and interests are put in the corporate political framework to be shaped, tweaked and distorted. Sanctioned by capitalist mandates and agendas, political candidates march across the nation while people proudly cheer their favorite ones. The more complacent to the capitalist framework the candidates are, the more lavish the marches. This forces the contents of political discourse to remain within the capitalist framework while excluding candidates and their supporters whose ideas are not subservient to it. “Representative democracy” within a capitalist framework can be one of the most strong ways to install values, beliefs and norms of the ruling class into minds of the people whose interests can be significantly curtailed by those ideas. All this can be achieved in the name of “democracy”, “free election” and so on.

Since people’s minds and their collective mode of operations are deeply indoctrinated to be a part of the capitalist structure, any crisis would strengthen the fundamental integrity of the structure. I heard a Trump supporter saying that “people should be shaking up a little”. That’s actually a very appropriate description. You shake their ground, people try to hold onto whatever they think is a solid structure. Some of us might however try to hold onto a Marxist perspective for example. That of course provokes triggering reactions by those who goes along with the capitalist framework, because they are particularly threatened, sensing that their entire belief system might fall. Examination of facts and contexts during the time of crisis can generate divisions and opportunities to control and moderate opposing views.

Capitalist institutions are dominated by this mentality which might explain the extremely quick mobilization of the draconian restrictions and the demand for more restrictions during the time of “crisis”. Economic incentives as well as self-preservation within the system force people to engage actively in unquestioning manner. For example, we have observed concerted efforts in mobilizing media, government agencies, legal system and so on to “combat” “drug issues”, “inner-city violence” and so on which has led to mass incarceration, police killings and “gentrification” of primarily minority communities. Needless to say, [9/11](#) has created enormous momentum of colonial wars against middle

eastern countries. No major media outlets or politicians questioned blatant lies surrounding WMD claim against Iraq for example. As a result, many countries were destroyed while one out of hundred people on the planet became refugees. Draconian regulations became normal, racism and xenophobia among people intensified and the term “global surveillance” became a household term.

This situation require further examination since there are a few layers which must be identified. First, we must recognize that there is an industry that commodifies “dissenting voices”. The people who engage in this have no intention of examining the exploitive mechanism of capitalist hierarchy. Some of them typically chose topics of government wrongdoings in contexts of fascist ideologies (jews are taking over the world, for example), space aliens and so on. The angles are calibrated to keep serious inquiries away but they nonetheless garner major followings. When certain topics fall into their hands, discussing them can become tediously unproductive as it prompts a label “conspiracy”. It also contributes in herding dissidents toward fascist ideology while keeping them away from understanding actual social structure.

Second point is related to the first, when the topic enters the realm of “conspiracy”, and when we lose means to confirm facts, many of us experience cognitive dissonance. The unspoken fear of the system becomes bigger than any of the topics at hand, and some of us shut down our thought process. As a result, we are left with hopelessness, cynicism and complacency. This is a major tool of the system of extortion. It makes some of us say “if there is a President who tries to overthrow capitalism, he or she will be assassinated”. Such a statement illustrates the fact that understanding of violent system, fear and complacency can firmly exist in people’s minds without openly admitting to it.

Third, aside from the unspoken fear toward the destructive system, there is also unspoken recognition that the system is inherently unsustainable to itself and to its environment. The cultish faith in capitalist framework is upheld by myths of white supremacy, American exceptionalism and most of all by our structural participation to it. Any cult with an unsustainable trajectory eventually faces its doomsday phase. It desires a demise of everything, which allows cultists to avoid facing the nature of the cult. It allows them to fantasize a rebirth. This in turn allows the system to utilize a catastrophic crisis as a spring board to shift its course while implementing draconian measures to prop itself up. “The time of survival” normalizes the atrocity of structural violence in reinforcing the hierarchical order, while those with relative social privilege secretly rejoice the arrival of “the end”.

Any of those three dynamics can be actively utilized by those who are determined to manipulate and control the population.

Now, there is another interesting coincidence with the Japanese history. The title Shogun had been a figurehead status given by the imperial family of Japan long before the Edo period. Shogun is a short version of Seiitaishogun, which can be translated as Commander-in-Chief of the Expeditionary Force Against the Barbarians. The tilte indicates the nature of the trajectory more bluntly than the US presidency which is also Commander in Chief-which has engaged in numerous colonial expeditions over the generations. But as I mentioned above, the Edo period was not a time of fighting “barbarians”, it was a time of a closed feudal system and its hierarchy was strictly controlled by its customs and regulations. The current trajectory of our time prompts one to suspect that the inevitable path to be a similar one.

Our thoughts and ideas have been already controlled by capitalist framework for generations. We knowingly and unknowingly participate in this hostage taking extortion structure. While shaken by crisis after crisis, we have gone through waves of changes, which have implemented rigid social restrictions against our ability to see through lies and rise above the feudal order of money and violence.

I must say that I do understand that above discussion is very much generalized. One can certainly argue against validity of the parallel based on historical facts and contexts. Some might also argue that Edo period to be far more humane on some regards, in terms of how people related to their natural surroundings, or the system being actually sustainable, for instance. But I believe that my main points still stand as valid and worthy of serious considerations. Also, it is not my intention to label, demean and demonize policy makers of our time in cynical manner. My intention is to put the matter as a topic of discussion among those who are concerned in a constructive manner. The comparison was used as a device for us to step back from our time and space in evaluating our species' path today.

Lastly, as I describe the historical trajectory of the US empire, one can not not examine the nature of the current coronavirus situation. Although the event is still very much developing some of us have already raised many questions. [This article](#) is from a Chinese state media outlet repeating some questions regarding the origin of the Coronavirus. The questions are serious ones which can easily topple entire official US narratives on the matter and beyond.

If the illness has originated from the US military facility as it has been concluded by some, and the US has covered it up and blamed the illness on China, the US didn't only exposed its own citizens to the virus, but it knowingly caused deaths and sufferings among its own people. It erroneously blamed China for not acting fast enough against the situation, while adding the coronavirus deaths to the US annual flu deaths—which is always high due to its dysfunctional healthcare system.

According to the allegations, some elected officials might have even profited from this murderous situation.

Subsequently, it stands to reason to question what has motivated the US to act in such a drastic manner against the virus after knowingly tolerating the deaths being caused by the virus for a few months.

Some points to keep in mind are:

1. A social crisis exacerbates structural violence against already oppressed population leading to augmentation of ruling class interests.
2. A crisis allows bailout measures for those who are already being served by the system generously.
3. A crisis allows codification of draconian policies to further restrict already oppressed population.
4. A crisis justifies the existence of the authoritarian system.
5. All of the above are various aspects of capitalist hierarchy to serve itself by harming its own people.

Please also refer to [articles](#) by Cory Morningstar on the topic.

When a crisis situation is identified in mobilizing the population, one common technique to contain dissenting voices is a use of false equivalency. For example, in discussing the US imperial war against Syria, one might have said that Russia was bombing just like the US.

However, needless to say, Russia was invited by Syrian government to fight West backed al-Qaeda affiliated terrorist groups in Syria. The liberation efforts by the Syrian Arab Army and its allies brought back Syrian people to their own communities which were devastated by the US proxy war against Syria.

Instances of falsely equating actions by the Chinese government and that of the US government must be pointed out in discussing the virus situation. Chinese government detecting a disease epidemic so that it can allocate sufficient medical care to its people is very different from the US totally ignoring medical threats regularly and suddenly decides to “care” in aimlessly draconian ways.

This Facebook post by Phil Greaves concisely lays out the differences. The post refers to Britain but it also applies to the US.

“China:

- Lockdowns in only the most affected areas.
- Quarantine and hospital treatment for ALL suspected cases.
- Masks provided for everyone, no “two-meter” bullshit.
- 200 million CPC members & volunteers mobilised to serve the elderly & vulnerable with food and medicine.
- ALL wages paid in full for anyone off work due to the virus, for the entire duration.
- 95% production regained after 4 weeks.

Britain:

- Nationwide house-arrest.
- Shuts down nearly the entire economy, sacks millions of workers, does not guarantee pay for even half of them.
- Gives the banks hundreds of billions.
- Massively reduces healthcare capacity.
- Allows supermarket chains to exploit panic buyers.

Economic depression inevitable.”

It is also very different for the Chinese government to regulate circulation of false information in order to implement its policies effectively from the US censoring legitimate questions about its ineffective policies and its active policies to harm its own people and “others”.

The differences in the approach of the two countries toward the peoples across the globe during this time of crisis are also very clear. While China is reaching out to other countries to help their struggles—sending medical equipments and experts to those countries, the US is actively punishing some of the hardest hit countries with trade sanction, trade embargo and demonization campaigns against them.

Corona panic incident is yet another milestone in clearly marking inhumanity of the imperial order perpetuated by the western hegemony.

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