

ter held the former in some degree of contempt and treated them in the matter of trade very much as they did the Dutch. He was also aware that the Chinese, when they made their treaty, did know something of the advantages that might result from an intercourse with the rest of the world. As to the Japanese, in their long-continued isolation, either they neither knew nor desired such advantages, or, if they knew them, feared they might be purchased at too high a price in the introduction of foreigners who, as in the case of the Portuguese centuries before, might seek to overturn the empire. It was too much, therefore, to expect that the Japanese would imitate the Chinese in *all* the particulars of a treaty. Still, they might be disposed to adopt some of its most important features when suggested to them by a knowledge of what other orientals had done. . . .

The Commodore, whose wish it was to do as far as possible everything that might conciliate, of course made no objection to a request [to translate the treaty] so seemingly reasonable, though he knew it to be needless, and was content to wait patiently for their reply. In one week that reply came in writing, and was very explicit: "As to opening a trade, such as is now carried on by China with your country, we certainly cannot *yet* bring it about. The feelings and manners of our people are very unlike those of outer nations, and it will be exceedingly difficult, even if you wish it, to immediately change the old regulations for those of other countries. Moreover, the Chinese have long had intercourse with western nations, while we have had dealings at Nagasaki with only the people of Holland and China."

This answer was not entirely unexpected, and put an end to all prospect of negotiating a "commercial treaty," in the European sense of that phrase. It only remained, therefore, to secure, for the present, admission into the kingdom, and so much of trade as Japanese jealousy could be brought to concede. At length, after much and oft-repeated discussion, the point was yielded that certain ports might be opened to our vessels. . . .

. . . [T]he whole treaty shows that the purpose of the Japanese was to try the experiment of intercourse with us before they made it as extensive or as intimate as it is between us and the Chinese. It was all they would do at the time, and much, very much, was obtained on the part of our negotiator in procuring a concession even to this extent.

But, as he knew that our success would be but the forerunner of that of other powers, as he believed that new relations of trade once commenced, not only with ourselves but with England, France, Holland, and Russia, in the progress of events, could not fail effectually and forever not only to break up the old restrictive policy and open Japan to the world, but must also lead gradually to liberal commercial treaties, he wisely, in the ninth article, without "consultation or delay," secured to the United

States and their citizens all privileges and advantages which Japan might hereafter "grant to any other nation or nations."

As far as we have yet learned, all other powers have been content to obtain just what we, as pioneers, have obtained. Their treaties are like ours. . . .

We respectfully submit, that all, and indeed more than all, under the circumstances, that could reasonably have been expected, has been accomplished. Japan has been opened to the nations of the west. It is not to be believed, that having once effected an entrance, the enlightened powers that have made treaties with her will *go backward*, and, by any indiscretion, lose what, after so many unavailing efforts for centuries, has at last been happily attained. It belongs to these nations to show Japan that her interests will be promoted by communication with them. As prejudice gradually vanishes, we may hope to see the future negotiation of more and more liberal commercial treaties, for the benefit, not of ourselves only, but of all the maritime powers of Europe, for the advancement of Japan, and for the upward progress of our common humanity. It would be a foul reproach to Christendom now to force Japan to relapse into her cheerless and unprogressive state of unnatural isolation. She is the youngest sister in the circle of commercial nations. Let those who are older kindly take her by the hand, and aid her tottering steps, until she has reached a vigor that will enable her to walk firmly in her own strength. Cautious and kindly treatment now will soon lead to commercial treaties as liberal as can be desired.

15

II NAOSUKE

*Memorial on the American
Demand for a Treaty*

1853

The ancestors of Ii Naosuke (1815–1860), daimyo of the domain of Hikone, had traditionally served as advisors to the bakufu in times of crisis. When the Perry expedition arrived in Japan, Naosuke threw himself into the debate over how to respond to the American demands. As his memorial indi-

Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853–1868, tr. and ed. William G. Beasley (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 117–19.

cates, he was strongly in favor of signing a treaty with Perry to avoid a military confrontation that was bound to end in disaster for Japan. Ii became a bitter political enemy of Tokugawa Nariaki, who firmly opposed any concessions to the Americans. When Hotta Masayoshi, the bakufu's chief minister, failed to secure imperial approval for the Harris treaty in 1858, Ii Naosuke was appointed "great elder" (tairō). After agreeing to sign the treaty, he dealt harshly with the daimyo who opposed him, including Tokugawa Nariaki, and he ordered the arrest or execution of samurai activists and scholars who opposed opening ports to trade. In 1860 he was assassinated by a band of disgruntled samurai, mainly from the domain of Mito.

Careful consideration of conditions as they are today . . . leads me to believe that despite the constant differences and debates into which men of patriotism and foresight have been led in recent years by their perception of the danger of foreign aggression, it is impossible in the crisis we now face to ensure the safety and tranquillity of our country merely by an insistence on the seclusion laws as we did in former times. Moreover, time is essential if we are to complete our coast defences. Since 1609, when warships of over 500 *koku*¹ were forbidden, we have had no warships capable of opposing foreign attack on our coasts with heavy guns. Thus I am much afraid that were the foreigners now to seize as bases such outlying islands as Hachijō-jima and Ōshima, it would be impossible for us to remain inactive, though without warships we should have no effective means of driving them off. There is a saying that when one is besieged in a castle, to raise the drawbridge is to imprison oneself and make it impossible to hold out indefinitely; and again, that when opposing forces face each other across a river, victory is obtained by that which crosses the river and attacks. It seems clear throughout history that he who takes action is in a position to advance, while he who remains inactive must retreat. Even though the Shōgun's ancestors set up seclusion laws, they left the Dutch and the Chinese to act as a bridge [to the outside world]. Might this bridge not now be of advantage to us in handling foreign affairs, providing us with the means whereby we may for a time avert the outbreak of hostilities and then, after some time has elapsed, gain a complete victory?

I understand that the coal for which the Americans have expressed a desire is to be found in quantity in Kyūshū. We should first tell them, as a matter of expediency, that we also have need of coal, but that should their

¹One koku equals 10 cubic feet in measuring ship capacity.

need of it arise urgently and unexpectedly during a voyage, they may ask for coal at Nagasaki and if we have any to spare we will provide it. Nor will we grudge them wood and water. As for foodstuffs, the supply varies from province to province, but we can agree to provide food for the shipwrecked and unfortunate. Again, we can tell them, of recent years we have treated kindly those wrecked on our coasts and have sent them all home. There is no need for further discussion of this subject, and all requests concerning it should be made through the Dutch. Then, too, there is the question of trade. Although there is a national prohibition of it, conditions are not the same as they were. The exchange of goods is a universal practice. This we should explain to the spirits of our ancestors. And we should then tell the foreigners that we mean in future to send trading vessels to the Dutch company's factory at Batavia to engage in trade; that we will allocate some of our trading goods to America, some to Russia, and so on, using the Dutch to trade for us as our agents; but that there will be a delay of one or two years because we must [first] construct new ships for these voyages. By replying in this way we will take the Americans by surprise in offering to treat them generally in the same way as the Dutch.

We must revive the licensed trading vessels [system] . . . , ordering the rich merchants of such places as Ōsaka, Hyōgo, and Sakai to take shares in the enterprise. We must construct new steamships, especially powerful warships, and these we will load with goods not needed in Japan. For a time we will have to employ Dutchmen as masters and mariners, but we will put on board with them Japanese of ability and integrity who must study the use of large guns, the handling of ships, and the rules of navigation. Openly these will be called merchant vessels, but they will in fact have the secret purpose of training a navy. As we increase the number of ships and our mastery of technique, Japanese will be able to sail the oceans freely and gain direct knowledge of conditions abroad without relying on the secret reports of the Dutch. Thus we will eventually complete the organization of a navy. Moreover, we must shake off the panic and apprehensions that have beset us and abandon our habits of luxury and wasteful spending. Our defences thus strengthened, and all being arranged at home, we can act so as to make our courage and prestige resound beyond the seas. By so doing, we will not in the future be imprisoning ourselves; indeed, we will be able, I believe, so to accomplish matters at home and abroad as to achieve national security. Forestalling the foreigners in this way, I believe, is the best method of ensuring that the Bakufu will at some future time find opportunity to reimpose its ban and forbid foreigners to come to Japan, as was done in the Kan'ei period [1624-44]. Moreover, it would make possible the strictest prohibition of

Christianity. And since I understand that the Americans and Russians themselves have only recently become skilled in navigation, I do not see how the people of our country, who are clever and quick-witted, should prove inferior to Westerners if we begin training at once.

The national situation being what it is, if the Bakufu protects our coasts peacefully without bringing upon us permanent foreign difficulties, then even if that entails complete or partial change in the laws of our ancestors I do not believe such action could really be regarded as contrary to the wishes of those ancestors. However, I think it is essential to win the support of the country for Bakufu policy on this occasion, . . .

It is now no easy matter, by means of orders concerning the defence of the capital and the nearby coast, to ensure that all will be fully prepared for any sudden emergency, so not a moment must be wasted. However many iron walls we construct, they will certainly not be as effective as unity of mind if the unforeseen happens. The urgent task of the moment, therefore, is for the Bakufu to resolve on relieving the nation's anxieties and issue the appropriate orders.

16

TOKUGAWA NARIAKI

*Memorial on the American
Demand for a Treaty*

1853

Tokugawa Nariaki (1800–1860) was appointed daimyo of Mito after a bitter dispute over the succession. Backed by reform-minded scholars like Fujita Toko and Aizawa Seishisai, he launched an aggressive program of domain reform, aimed at building up its military and economic strength. In the 1830s, as more and more foreign ships appeared in Japanese waters, he built new coastal defenses on the shores of his domain, melting down Buddhist temple bells to cast cannon. Fearing that an ominous conjunction of "threats from without" and "troubles within" might lead to the collapse of the country, he constantly pressed similar reform measures on the bakufu. Irritated by his pes-

Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853–1868, tr. and ed. William G. Beasley (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 102–07.

tering memorials, the bakufu leadership forced him into retirement in the late 1840s, but he was released from house arrest in 1849. In 1853, as this memorial demonstrates, he became a leader of the forces opposing a treaty with Perry, and he remained associated with the anteforeign cause until his death.

Observations on coast defence

It is my belief that the first and most urgent of our tasks is for the Bakufu to make its choice between peace and war, and having determined its policy to pursue it unwaveringly thereafter. When we consider the respective advantages and disadvantages of war and peace, we find that if we put our trust in war the whole country's morale will be increased and even if we sustain an initial defeat we will in the end expel the foreigner; while if we put our trust in peace, even though things may seem tranquil for a time, the morale of the country will be greatly lowered and we will come in the end to complete collapse. This has been amply demonstrated in the history of China and is a fact that men of intelligence, both past and present, have always known. It is therefore unnecessary for me to speak of this in detail. However, I propose to give here in outline the ten reasons why in my view we must never choose the policy of peace.

1. Although our country's territory is not extensive, foreigners both fear and respect us. That, after all, is because our resoluteness and military prowess have been clearly demonstrated to the world outside. . . . Despite this, the Americans who arrived recently, though fully aware of the Bakufu's prohibition, entered Uraga displaying a white flag as a symbol of peace and insisted on presenting their written requests. Moreover they entered Edo Bay, fired heavy guns in salute and even went so far as to conduct surveys without permission. They were arrogant and discourteous, their actions an outrage. Indeed, this was the greatest disgrace we have suffered since the dawn of our history. The saying is that if the enemy dictates terms in one's own capital one's country is disgraced. . . . Should it happen not only that the Bakufu fails to expel them but also that it concludes an agreement in accordance with their requests, then I fear it would be impossible to maintain our national prestige [*kokutai*]. That is the first reason why we must never choose the policy of peace.

2. The prohibition of Christianity is the first rule of the Tokugawa house. Public notices concerning it are posted everywhere, even to the remotest corner of every province. . . . The Bakufu can never ignore or overlook the evils of Christianity. Yet if the Americans are allowed to come again this religion will inevitably raise its head once more, however strict the prohibition; and this, I fear, is something we could never justify