

# The meiji restoration

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MEIJI Few countries have undergone the sort of extraordinary political, educational, economic changes as those undergone by Japan during the period between approximately 1868-1912. The period began with the opening of Japan by Matthew Perry's Black Ships in Tokyo Bay, and effectively ended with Japan on the verge of the becoming the single most important colonial power in Asia. The Meiji Restoration cannot be underestimated as defining modern Japan.

To begin with, let us examine its political impact. Adopting various Western influences, Japan in this period began to shift from a feudal society to one that was more capitalist and Western oriented. The government grabbed a lot of power by imposing conscription on its citizens and by abolishing old classes of citizens. The emperor gained a lot of power from the landowners during this period.

The emperor felt very strongly about education during this period and he instated mandatory education for children. He felt it would create more informed citizens. He also believed it would be an effective way of instilling national honour.

The Meiji period saw many Western advisors come to Japan to tell them how to improve and modernize their economy. The textile and manufacturing industries were dramatically improved under this advice. Japan began for the first time to look out to the world for opportunity—both in terms of technology and trade. Since then, Japan has never looked back.