

Japan’s “Hunter Council” and its influence on national policy-making

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Abstract

This study investigates the role and influence of Japan’s “Hunter Council” in shaping national policies related to dungeons, awakened individuals, and resource management following the 2025 catastrophe. Drawing upon interviews with council members, government officials, and other stakeholders, the authors analyze how this unique advisory body, composed of experienced hunters and guild leaders, has navigated the complex political landscape of post-catastrophe Japan. The findings suggest that the Hunter Council has played a significant role in informing government decisions on issues such as dungeon exploration regulations, awakened individual training programs, and the allocation of resources for research and development. However, the study also reveals concerns about the council’s transparency, accountability, and potential conflicts of interest, raising questions about the democratic legitimacy of its influence on national policy-making.

1 Introduction

On January 1, 2025, a catastrophic event occurred that forever changed the world as we knew it. Mysterious portals, or “gates,” appeared in densely populated areas around the globe, unleashing hordes of dangerous creatures into our cities and towns (Y. Nakano & Takahashi, 2025; Kim et al., 2027). In the aftermath of the initial chaos and destruction, it became clear that these gates were not mere anomalies, but rather entrances to vast, enclosed environments filled with resources, treasures, and deadly monsters (Yamamoto et al., 2026).

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As governments and societies struggled to adapt to this new reality, a small portion of the population began to exhibit extraordinary abilities, becoming “awakened” individuals with the power to combat the invading monsters and explore the treacherous dungeons (Novikova et al., 2027; Gao et al., 2026). These awakened individuals, also known as “hunters,” quickly organized themselves into guilds, which became influential actors in the post-catastrophe world (Nguyen & Agarwal, 2026; S. Nakano & Watanabe, 2026).

In Japan, the government recognized the need to work closely with the hunter community to address the challenges posed by the gates and dungeons. To facilitate this cooperation, the “Hunter Council” was established in early 2026, comprising experienced hunters and guild leaders from across the country. The council’s primary purpose was to advise the government on policies related to dungeon exploration, resource management, and the training and regulation of awakened individuals.

This study aims to explore the role and influence of Japan’s Hunter Council in shaping national policies in the wake of the 2025 catastrophe. Through interviews with council members, government officials, and other stakeholders, we seek to understand how this unique advisory body has navigated the complex political landscape of post-catastrophe Japan and the extent to which it has influenced government decision-making processes. Additionally, we examine the concerns raised by some observers about the council’s transparency, accountability, and potential conflicts of interest, and discuss the implications of these issues for the democratic legitimacy of the council’s role in policy-making.

2 Background

2.1 The 2025 Catastrophe and the Emergence of Gates and Dungeons

The catastrophic events of January 1, 2025, marked a turning point in human history. The sudden appearance of gates in densely populated areas around the world unleashed a wave of destruction and chaos, as hordes of monsters emerged from these portals and attacked civilians (Y. Nakano & Takahashi, 2025; Müller et al., 2026). In the initial aftermath of the catastrophe, governments and emergency services struggled to contain the threat, leading to significant loss of life and damage to infrastructure.

As the immediate crisis subsided, it became apparent that the gates were not temporary anomalies, but rather permanent fixtures of the new reality. These one-way portals led to vast, enclosed environments, or “dungeons,”

filled with valuable resources, rare treasures, and increasingly powerful monsters (Yamamoto et al., 2026; Santos et al., 2027). The appearance of gates was found to be proportional to population density, with more portals manifesting in highly urbanized areas (Y. Nakano & Takahashi, 2025).

The discovery of the dungeons’ resource-rich environments sparked a global rush to explore and exploit these new frontiers. However, the dangers posed by the monsters inhabiting the dungeons necessitated the development of specialized skills and abilities to navigate and survive in these treacherous environments (Santos et al., 2027; Kowalczyk et al., 2026).

2.2 The Rise of Awakened Individuals and Hunter Guilds

In the weeks and months following the 2025 catastrophe, a small portion of the global population began to exhibit extraordinary abilities, becoming “awakened” individuals with enhanced physical and mental capabilities (Novikova et al., 2027; Lee & Choi, 2027). These abilities manifested in various forms, such as increased strength, speed, sensory perception, and even psychokinetic powers, enabling awakened individuals to combat the monsters emerging from the gates and explore the dungeons more effectively than ordinary humans.

As the number of awakened individuals grew, they began to organize themselves into “hunter guilds,” which served as support networks, training grounds, and operational units for dungeon exploration and monster combat (S. Nakano & Watanabe, 2026; Sokolov & Volkova, 2026). These guilds quickly became influential actors in the post-catastrophe world, as they controlled access to valuable dungeon resources and possessed the expertise necessary to navigate the dangers of these environments.

Hunter guilds developed hierarchical structures, with experienced hunters assuming leadership roles and overseeing the training and development of newer members (S. Nakano & Watanabe, 2026). Many guilds also established codes of conduct and ethical guidelines to govern the behavior of their members and ensure responsible resource extraction and monster combat practices.

As hunter guilds grew in size and influence, governments around the world recognized the need to engage with these organizations to effectively manage the challenges posed by the gates and dungeons. In Japan, this realization led to the establishment of the Hunter Council, a unique advisory body designed to bridge the gap between the government and the hunter community.

2.3 Japan's Response to the Catastrophe and the Establishment of the Hunter Council

Like other countries, Japan was severely impacted by the 2025 catastrophe, with major cities like Tokyo and Osaka experiencing significant damage and loss of life due to the emergence of gates and monsters (Y. Nakamura & Tanaka, 2026). The Japanese government quickly mobilized its Self-Defense Forces to contain the threat and protect civilians, while also investing heavily in research and development efforts to better understand the nature of the gates and dungeons (Sakamoto & Kobayashi, 2026).

As the number of awakened individuals in Japan grew and hunter guilds began to form, the government recognized the need to establish a formal mechanism for cooperation and communication between these organizations and the state. In early 2026, the Japanese Diet passed legislation creating the Hunter Council, an advisory body composed of experienced hunters and guild leaders from across the country.

The Hunter Council's primary purpose was to provide expert advice and recommendations to the government on policies related to dungeon exploration, resource management, and the training and regulation of awakened individuals. The council was designed to operate independently from the government, with members selected based on their expertise and experience rather than political affiliations.

The establishment of the Hunter Council represented a significant shift in Japan's approach to managing the post-catastrophe world, as it acknowledged the importance of working closely with the hunter community to address the challenges posed by the gates and dungeons. However, the council's creation also raised questions about its transparency, accountability, and potential conflicts of interest, which would become increasingly relevant as the body began to influence national policy-making.

2.4 Initial Reactions to the Hunter Council and Its Early Activities

The establishment of the Hunter Council was met with mixed reactions from the Japanese public and political elites. Supporters argued that the council was a necessary step to ensure effective cooperation between the government and the hunter community, enabling Japan to better address the challenges posed by the gates and dungeons (Ishikawa & Nakajima, 2026b). They pointed to the council's potential to harness the expertise and experience of skilled hunters and guild leaders in the policy-making process, leading to more informed and effective decisions.

Critics, on the other hand, raised concerns about the council’s lack of democratic accountability and potential for conflicts of interest (S. Nakamura & Watanabe, 2027). Some argued that the council’s members, being drawn from the hunter community, might prioritize the interests of their guilds over those of the broader public. Others questioned the transparency of the council’s selection process and decision-making procedures, calling for greater oversight and public scrutiny.

Despite these concerns, the Hunter Council quickly began to engage in a range of activities aimed at shaping Japan’s response to the post-catastrophe world. In its early months, the council focused on establishing working relationships with key government ministries and agencies, such as the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry, and the newly-formed Ministry of Dungeon Affairs (Ishikawa & Nakajima, 2026a).

The council also convened a series of public hearings and expert panel discussions to gather input from a wide range of stakeholders, including hunters, guild leaders, academics, and civil society organizations. These events provided a platform for diverse perspectives on issues such as dungeon exploration regulations, resource management policies, and the training and support of awakened individuals.

As the council’s activities gained momentum, its influence on national policy-making began to grow, setting the stage for a more profound impact on Japan’s approach to managing the challenges and opportunities of the post-catastrophe world. However, this growing influence also intensified the debates surrounding the council’s role, transparency, and accountability, as will be explored in the following sections of this study.

3 Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the role and influence of Japan’s Hunter Council in shaping national policies related to dungeons, awakened individuals, and resource management. The primary data collection method consists of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including current and former members of the Hunter Council, government officials from relevant ministries and agencies, representatives of major hunter guilds, and academic experts in the fields of political science and public policy.

Interview participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, aimed at ensuring a diverse range of perspectives and experiences. A total of 30 interviews were conducted between June and September 2026, with each interview lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. All interviews were

audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized to protect participant confidentiality.

In addition to the interviews, we conducted a comprehensive review of relevant policy documents, legislative records, and media reports to triangulate our findings and provide additional context for the analysis. These secondary sources included official statements and reports from the Hunter Council, government ministries, and hunter guilds, as well as news articles and op-eds from major Japanese media outlets.

The collected data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, which involved iteratively coding the interview transcripts and secondary sources to identify key themes, patterns, and divergences in participants' perspectives and experiences. The analysis was guided by our research questions, which focused on understanding the Hunter Council's role and influence in policy-making, as well as the concerns and debates surrounding its transparency, accountability, and potential conflicts of interest.

4 Results

4.1 The Hunter Council's Role in Policy-Making

Our analysis of the interview data and secondary sources reveals that the Hunter Council has played a significant role in shaping Japan's national policies related to dungeons, awakened individuals, and resource management since its establishment in early 2026. Participants described the council as a "bridge" between the government and the hunter community, providing a platform for experienced hunters and guild leaders to share their knowledge and perspectives with policy-makers.

One government official from the Ministry of Dungeon Affairs emphasized the council's importance in informing policy decisions:

"The Hunter Council has been instrumental in helping us understand the realities on the ground. Their members have first-hand experience with the challenges and opportunities posed by the dungeons, and their insights have been invaluable in shaping our policies and regulations." (Participant 7, Ministry of Dungeon Affairs)

Council members and guild representatives also highlighted the council's role in advocating for the interests and needs of the hunter community, ensuring that their voices are heard in the policy-making process. One council member stated:

”Before the Hunter Council, there was no formal mechanism for hunters and guilds to provide input on government policies. We were often left in the dark about decisions that directly impacted our work and livelihoods. The council has changed that, giving us a seat at the table and a chance to shape the policies that affect us.” (Participant 12, Hunter Council member)

4.2 Key Policy Areas Influenced by the Hunter Council

Participants identified several key policy areas in which the Hunter Council has had a significant influence, including:

4.2.1 Dungeon Exploration Regulations

The council has worked closely with the government to develop a comprehensive set of regulations governing dungeon exploration activities, including safety protocols, resource extraction guidelines, and environmental protection measures. These regulations have sought to balance the need for efficient resource exploitation with the safety of hunters and the sustainability of dungeon ecosystems.

4.2.2 Awakened Individual Training and Support

The council has advised the government on the development of training programs and support services for awakened individuals, recognizing the unique challenges and needs of this population. This has included the establishment of specialized academies for awakened youth, as well as mental health and social support services for hunters and their families.

4.2.3 Resource Management and Distribution

The council has played a key role in shaping policies related to the management and distribution of resources extracted from dungeons, including the establishment of a national resource stockpile and the development of fair and transparent allocation mechanisms. These policies have sought to ensure the strategic use of dungeon resources for national security, economic growth, and public welfare.

4.3 Concerns and Debates Surrounding the Hunter Council

Despite the council’s significant influence on policy-making, participants also raised concerns about its transparency, accountability, and potential conflicts of interest. Some government officials and academic experts expressed unease about the council’s lack of formal oversight and public scrutiny, noting that its meetings and decision-making processes are often opaque to outsiders.

One political scientist commented:

”While the Hunter Council has undoubtedly played an important role in shaping policies, there are legitimate questions about its accountability to the public. The council operates largely behind closed doors, and there are few mechanisms for citizens to hold its members accountable for their decisions and actions.” (Participant 22, academic expert)

Other participants raised concerns about potential conflicts of interest, noting that council members may be influenced by the interests of their guilds or personal financial stakes in dungeon-related industries. A government official from the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry stated:

”We have to be mindful of the fact that many Hunter Council members have a direct financial interest in the policies they are advising on. While their expertise is valuable, we need to ensure that their recommendations are not driven by personal or guild-specific interests at the expense of the broader public good.” (Participant 9, Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry)

These concerns have sparked debates about the need for greater transparency, oversight, and conflict-of-interest provisions in the council’s operations, with some participants calling for reforms to enhance its democratic legitimacy and public accountability.

5 Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the complex and multifaceted role of Japan’s Hunter Council in shaping national policies related to dungeons, awakened individuals, and resource management in the aftermath of the 2025 catastrophe. The council’s establishment represents a unique approach to

governance in the post-catastrophe world, one that seeks to harness the expertise and experience of the hunter community in the policy-making process.

Our analysis suggests that the Hunter Council has had a significant influence on key policy areas, from dungeon exploration regulations to awakened individual training and support. By providing a platform for hunters and guild leaders to share their knowledge and perspectives with policy-makers, the council has helped to bridge the gap between the government and the hunter community, enabling more informed and responsive decision-making.

However, the study also highlights the concerns and debates surrounding the council's transparency, accountability, and potential conflicts of interest. These issues raise important questions about the democratic legitimacy of the council's role in policy-making and the need for greater public oversight and scrutiny of its operations.

The challenges and opportunities posed by the Hunter Council's role in Japan's post-catastrophe governance are not unique to the country, and our findings have broader implications for other nations grappling with the emergence of dungeons, awakened individuals, and hunter guilds. As these phenomena continue to shape the global landscape, it is crucial for governments to develop effective and accountable mechanisms for engaging with the hunter community and integrating their expertise into policy-making processes.

At the same time, the concerns raised about the Hunter Council's transparency and potential conflicts of interest underscore the need for careful design and ongoing evaluation of such governance arrangements. Governments must strive to balance the benefits of hunter involvement in policy-making with the imperatives of democratic accountability, transparency, and the protection of the public interest.

Further research is needed to explore the long-term impacts and evolution of hunter-government collaboration in Japan and other countries, as well as to identify best practices and innovative approaches to addressing the challenges of post-catastrophe governance. By deepening our understanding of these issues, we can work towards the development of more effective, equitable, and resilient policies and institutions in the face of the unprecedented challenges posed by the gates and dungeons.

6 Conclusion

This study has explored the role and influence of Japan's Hunter Council in shaping national policies related to dungeons, awakened individuals, and resource management in the aftermath of the 2025 catastrophe. Our findings suggest that the council has played a significant role in bridging the

gap between the government and the hunter community, providing a platform for experienced hunters and guild leaders to share their knowledge and perspectives with policy-makers.

However, the study also highlights the concerns and debates surrounding the council's transparency, accountability, and potential conflicts of interest, raising important questions about the democratic legitimacy of its role in policy-making. These issues underscore the need for careful design and ongoing evaluation of hunter-government collaboration arrangements, as well as for greater public oversight and scrutiny of their operations.

As the world continues to grapple with the challenges and opportunities posed by the emergence of dungeons and awakened individuals, the experiences of Japan's Hunter Council offer valuable lessons and insights for other nations seeking to develop effective and accountable mechanisms for engaging with the hunter community in policy-making processes. By learning from these experiences and continuing to explore innovative approaches to post-catastrophe governance, we can work towards the development of more resilient, equitable, and responsive policies and institutions in the face of unprecedented global challenges.

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