

NEW AGE IMPERIALISM IN CHINA: THE CENTURY OF HUMILIATION

I. CHINA IS ISOLATED

Out of pride in their ancient culture, the Chinese looked down on all foreigners. For years, China was able to reject offers of trade from the West because it was largely self-sufficient with regard to resources and manufacturing. The Chinese were happy with their agricultural economy and traditional culture under the Qing (Manchu) Dynasty. With the introduction of new products, like quick-growing strains of rice, China was able to feed its growing population and turned away attempts by the British to trade.

II. OPIUM WAR (1839-1842)

For decades, China only allowed foreign trade to take place out of one southern port. In fact, the Chinese used to earn more for its exports (silk, porcelain and tea) than it spent on imports. But, European merchants were determined to find a product that the Chinese would buy in large quantities. Eventually, they found one—opium (a habit forming narcotic made from the poppy plant). Chinese doctors had been using he drug as a pain-reliever for centuries. In the late 18th century, British merchants began smuggling it into China for nonmedical use. Within a few decades, opium smoking became an addiction for as many as 12 million Chinese. By 1839, this created such a severe trade imbalance between Britain and China that it would lead to war. The Opium War, which occurred mainly at sea, was a humiliation for China because it lacked the military technology to stand up to Britain's steam-powered ships. In 1842, the war ended with the **Treaty of Nanking (see below)**, giving Britain extraterritorial rights and control over the Chinese ports of Hong Kong. Extraterritoriality meant foreigners were not subject to Chinese law in China!

III. TAIPING REBELLION (1850-1864)

The frustrations of China's situation during New Age Imperialism would eventually lead to rebellions throughout the country. Over the course of 20 years, a young man from southern China wanted to build a kingdom of "Taiping" (meaning: "Great Peace"), in which no one lived in poverty and China's wealth would be shared among all its citizens. This uprising of peasants was caused by many factors: unfavorable balance of trade with foreigners, government corruption and bribery, widespread starvation and overpopulation. Over the course of 14 years, the Taiping army invaded and took control of large areas of southern China until the rebellion was put down by the Qing dynasty with foreign help. The result of this civil war was 20 million deaths and the reality that the Chinese government could little to control its own country without the help of the foreigners.

Legacy of Treaty of Nanjing

- One of several unfair treaties
- Opened the door for other nations to develop spheres of influence:



IV. SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

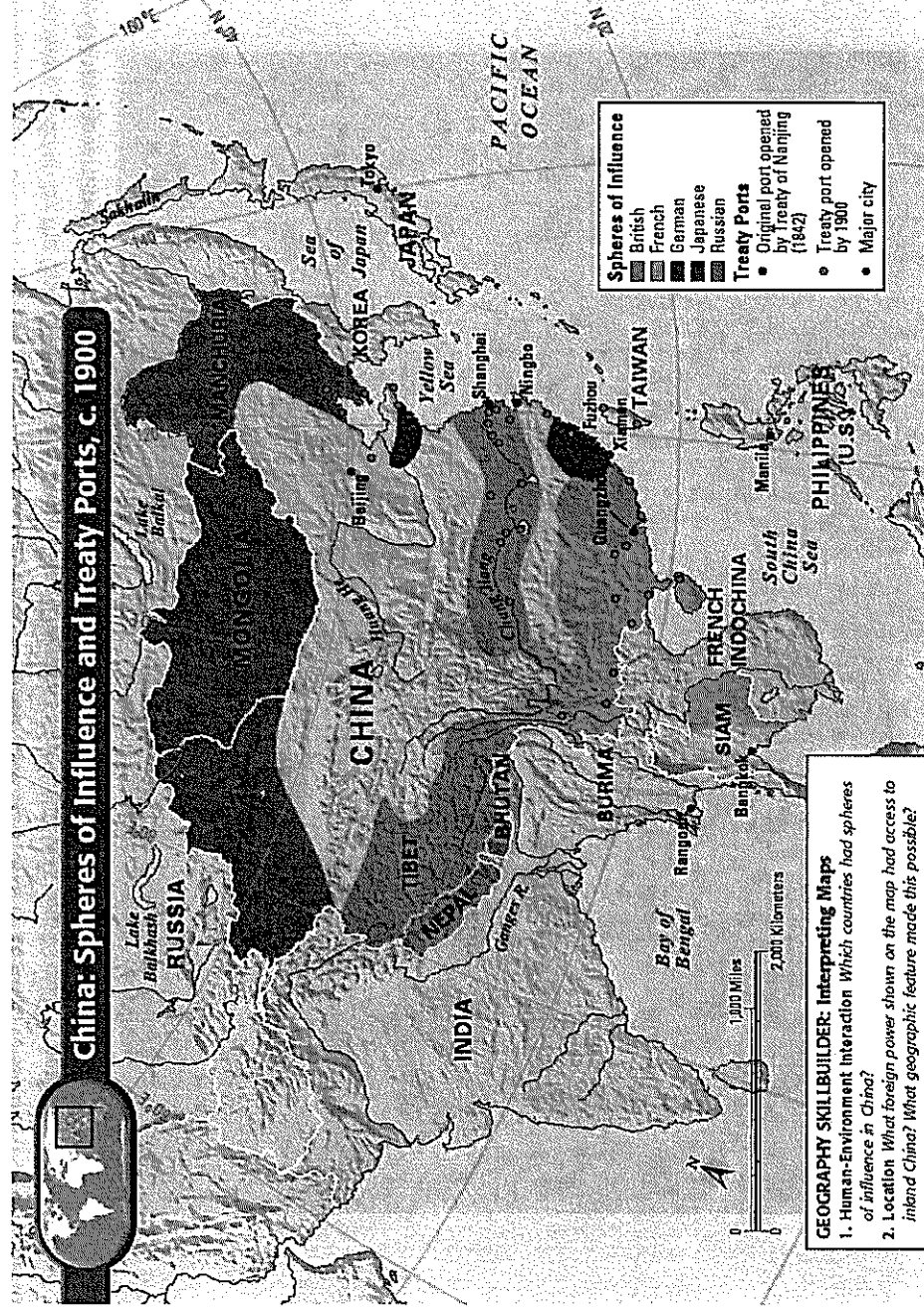
China's economic and political problems caused foreigners to take advantage of China. Foreign nations began to control trade and investment in many parts of China. These areas were known as **spheres of influence** (see below). For example, the USA issued an "open door policy" so it would not be shut out from controlling parts of China. In order to assert its power, the Chinese began a self-strengthening movement, during which they aimed to update their educational system, diplomatic service and military. China set up factories to manufacture steam-powered gunboats, rifles and ammunition. However, the self-strengthening movement failed to gain support, which further weakened China in the late 1800s.

V. SINO-JAPANESE WAR (1894-1895)

China was still unprepared to take on foreigners in any sort of military dispute. In 1876, when Japan was modernizing like the Europeans, they worked Korea to open its ports to trade. But, China considered Korea to be an important trading and military partner. Since they both had similar interest in Korea, China and Japan signed a "hands-off" agreement pledging never to send armies into Korea. When rebellions broke out against the Korean king, China broke the agreement by sending armies into Korea to help put down the rebellions. Japan protested and sent armies into Korea to fight the Chinese. The Sino-Japanese War led to a quick defeat for China, who was driven out of Korea with its navy destroyed. The treaty signed between Japan and China gave Japan its first colonies, as they made inroads in Manchuria and gained control of Taiwan.

VI. BOXER REBELLION (1900)

The growing frustration with the Qing Dynasty's treatment of foreigners and humiliation by China's continued loss of power in the 19th century finally erupted into violence in 1900 with the Boxer Rebellion. The Boxers were part of a secret organization known as "The Society of Harmonious Fists," with the motto and goal being "death to foreign devils." The main causes of the rebellion was resentment of Chinese Christians and the special privileges being granted to foreigners. The Dowager Empress supported the Boxers in their attempt to eliminate foreign influence, but a multi-national (foreign) force of 20,000 troops marched on the city of Beijing and quickly defeated them. This defeat, while another example of how the 19th century was a "century of humiliation" for China, did lead to an increase in Chinese nationalism and forced the government to begin real reforms that would put the country into a more powerful position in the 20th century.



NEW AGE IMPERIALISM IN CHINA

AIM: WHY WAS THE 19TH CENTURY KNOWN AS THE CENTURY OF HUMILIATION FOR CHINA?

I. CHINA IS ISLOATED

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II. OPIUM WAR (1839-1842)

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III. TAIPING REBELLION (1850-1864)

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IV. SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

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V. SINO-JAPANESE WAR (1894-1895)

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VI. BOXER REBELLION (1900)

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USE THE READING TO PUT THE STATEMENTS IN THE CORRECT SECTION OF THE OUTLINE.

- 1) The war, which occurred mainly at sea, was a humiliation for the Chinese
- 2) China was self-sufficient with regard to resources and manufacturing
- 3) Known as the "Society of harmonious Fists"
- 4) CAUSE = resentment of special privileges to foreigners
- 5) CAUSE = large scale government corruption and bribery
- 6) China's economic problems caused foreigners to take advantage of its weakness
- 7) Viewed foreigners as inferior and looked down upon them
- 8) RESULT = Japan makes inroads in Manchuria and also gets Taiwan
- 9) CAUSE = the trade imbalance that existed between Britain and China
- 10) A very traditional existence under the Qing (Manchu) Dynasty
- 11) Lasts 14 years until it is put down by the Qing Dynasty with foreign help
- 12) Foreign nations begin to control trade and investment in parts of China
- 13) RESULT = Britain gets Hong Kong and the right to extraterritoriality
- 14) CAUSE = China sends armies into Korea to help the king put down rebellions
- 15) Was happy with its agricultural economy
- 16) Defeat increased nationalism and made China's government begin to reform
- 17) Name of uprising means "Great Peace"
- 18) China and Japan have a hands-off agreement over Korea
- 19) Ended with the Treaty of Nanjing (Nanking) in 1842
- 20) USA issues the "open door policy" so it won't be shut out from controlling parts of China
- 21) Turned away attempts by the British to trade
- 22) China is driven out of Korea and has its navy destroyed
- 23) British smuggle a drug into China which causes severe addiction
- 24) MOTTO = "Death to Foreign Devils!"
- 25) CAUSE = widespread starvation due to huge population growth
- 26) "Self-strengthening Movement" FAILS to gain support and China is further weakened in the late 1800s
- 27) RESULT = at least 20 million people die in the uprising
- 28) CAUSE = resentment of Chinese Christians
- 29) Supported by the Empress but put down by a multi-national force of 20,000
- 30) Introduction of new products allowed China to feed its growing population

The Separate Paths of Japan and China

Japan's ability to change in response to new Western pressure contrasted strikingly with the sluggishness of Chinese reactions into the 20th century. The contrast draws particular attention because China and Japan had been part of the same civilization orbit for so long, which means that some of the assets Japan possessed in dealing with change were present in China as well. Indeed, Japan turned out to benefit, by the mid-19th century, from having become more like China in key respects during the Tokugawa period. The link between Chinese and Japanese traditions should not be exaggerated, of course, and earlier differences help explain the divergence, that opened so clearly in the late 19th century. The east Asian world now split apart, with Japan seizing eagerly on Chinese weakness to mount a series of attacks from the 1890s to 1945, which only made China's troubles worse.

Japan and China had both chosen isolation from larger world currents from about 1600 until the West forced new openings between 1830 and 1860. Japan's isolation was the more complete. Both countries lagged behind the West because of their self-containment, which was why Western industrialization caught them unprepared. China's power and wealth roused Western greed and interference first, which gave Japan some leeway.

However, China surpassed Japan in some areas that should have aided it in reacting to the Western challenge. Its leadership, devoted to Confucianism, was more thoroughly secular and bureaucratic in outlook. There was no need to brush aside otherworldly commitments or feudal distractions to deal with the West's material and organizational power. Government centralization, still an issue in Japan, had a long history in China. With a rich tradition of technological innovation and scientific discovery in its past as well, China might have appeared to be a natural to lead the Asian world in responding to the West.

However, that role fell to Japan. Several aspects of Japanese tradition gave it a flexibility that China lacked. It already knew the benefits of imitation, which China, save for its period of attraction to Buddhism, had never acknowledged. Japan's slower government growth had allowed a stronger, more autonomous merchant tradition even as both societies became more commercial in the 17th and early 18th centuries. Feudal traditions, though declining under the Tokugawa shogunate, also limited the heavy hand of government controls while stimulating some sense of competitiveness, as in the West. In contrast, China's government probably tried to control too much by the 18th century and quashed initiative in the process.

China was also hampered by rapid population growth from the 17th century onward. This population pressure consumed great energy, leaving scant capital for other economic initiatives. Japan's population stability into the 19th century pressed

resources less severely. Japan's island status made the nation more sensitive to Western naval pressures.

Finally, China and Japan were on somewhat different paths when the Western challenge intruded in the mid-19th century. China was suffering one of its recurrent dynastic declines. Government became less efficient, intellectual life stagnated, and popular unrest surged. A cycle of renewal might have followed, with a new dynasty seizing more vigorous reins. But Western interference disrupted this process, complicating reform and creating various new discontents that ultimately overturned the imperial office.

In contrast, Japan maintained political and economic vigor into the 19th century. Whereas by the late 19th century China needed Western guidance simply to handle such bureaucratic affairs as tariff collection and repression of peasant rebellion, Japan suffered no such breakdown of authority, using foreign advisors far more selectively.

Once a different pattern of response was established, every decade increased the gap. Western exploitation of Chinese assets and dilution of government power made conditions more chaotic, while Japanese strength grew steadily after a very brief period of uncertainty. By the 20th century, the two nations were enemies—with Japan, for the first time, the stronger—and seemed to be in different orbits. Japan enjoyed increasing industrial success and had a conservative state that would yield after World War II to a more fully parliamentary form. China, after decades of revolution, finally won its 20th-century political solution; communism.

Yet today, at the onset of the 21st century, it is unclear whether east Asia was split as permanently as 19th- and early 20th-century developments had suggested. Japan's industrial lead remains, but China's economy is stirring. Common cultural habits of group cooperation and decision making remind us that beneath different political systems, a fruitful shared heritage continues to operate. The heritage is quite different from that of the West but fully adaptable to the demands of economic change. And so Westerners begin to wonder whether a Pacific century is about to dawn.

QUESTIONS:

1. What features of civilization had Japan and China shared before the 19th century?
2. What attributes did Chinese civilization possess going into the 19th century that should have enabled it to resist the challenge from the west?
3. What factors contributed to China's weakness and ultimate collapse in the face of the western powers?
4. In what ways were Japanese institutions more adaptable than Chinese institutions when faced with the western challenge?