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| **China: 1793-1949: An Overview                                                      by Professor Richard Horowitz, California State University, Northridge**  |

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| [**China in 1793**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#china)[**The Macartney Mission and China’s Drift to Isolation**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#macartney)[**The Opium Wars and the Birth of the Treaty System**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#opium)[**The Qing Restoration and Self-Strengthening, 1860-1895**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#qing)[**The Sino-Japanese War and Its Aftermath**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#sino)[**Reform and Revolution, 1901-1911**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#reform)[**The Early Republic, 1912-1927**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#republic)[**The Nanjing Decade**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#nanjing)[**The Second World War and the Road to Revolution**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#wwii) **China in 1793** When Lord Macartney traveled to China in 1793 on an embassy to the Qianlong Emperor (r. 1736-1796), he was facing Europe’s great unknown.  China, with its vast size and reputed wealth, was the source of much that Britain wanted – tea, silk, porcelain – and much that was imagined.  In Europe during the eighteenth century, China was lionized by some for its philosopher-emperors and scholar-officials, and demonized by others for its supposed despotism. The Qing empire in the 1790s was a source of curiosity, but little was known about it. The Qianlong Emperor had ruled since 1736, and for much of it with great success. He had brought to a conclusion the efforts of his grandfather (the Kangxi Emperor, r. 1662-1722) and father (the Yongzheng emperor, r. 1723-1735) to establish the dominance of the Qing Empire over much of central Asia by bringing Mongol and Turkic tribes into submission.  At home in the 1760s Qianlong’s officials had begun to celebrate his reign as a “prosperous age” – and for good reason.   Population had grown rapidly, tripling by some estimates in the course of the century, driven by the introduction new American crops such as sweet potatoes and peanuts, the settlement of new lands on the frontier, and intensive commercialization.   Chinese cities were large, supporting vigorous mercantile activity that ranged from street peddlers to specialized merchants, from local pawnshops to bankers who specialized in transferring money from one end of the empire to another. Economic historian Kenneth Pomeranz has argued that the lower Yangzi valley (known as Jiangnan) was one of the most economically sophisticated regions in the world in the eighteenth century, comparable to southern England which was then giving birth to the opening stages of the Industrial Revolution. [**1**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref1) Chinese government and society was also by most measures very sophisticated. In 1644 the Manchus swept into China from the northeast, overthrowing the tottering Ming Dynasty.  The conquest was often violent and while Manchus (who dubbed their dynasty Qing in Chinese) largely recreated the structure of Ming government, they gave ethnic Manchus a privileged place in it.  Over time the new government co-opted the Chinese elite, but ethnic tensions, proscribed from public discourse, remained below the surface.   The Manchus, especially under the Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong emperors, had demonstrated great skill at dealing with Central Asia, the historic threat to Chinese empires.  The preceding Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) had never solved the security threat posed by semi nomadic regimes on the northern steppe with their powerful cavalry. Their defensive strategy of enlarging fortifications (the Great Wall as we know it was largely built in this period) proved of limited value.  In contrast, the Manchus expanded well beyond the wall, using a mix of diplomacy and conquest  to gain control of a huge swath of central Asia, incorporating Mongolia into the empire, claiming suzerainty over Tibet, concluding with Qianlong’s  completion of the conquest of what were dubbed Xinjiang (“the New Dominions”), sometimes described as Chinese Turkestan.  On other edges of the empire, the Qing conquered Taiwan in the 1680s, and expanded control in the in the predominantly non-Chinese southwestern borderlands of Yunnan and Guizhou.    The government itself was structured rationally in comparison with its contemporaries in much of *ancien regime* Europe.  A hierarchy of centrally appointed officials stretched from Beijing to the county seats.  Governors general (also known as viceroys) oversaw both civil and military affairs in a region (usually two provinces), and governors administering to civil affairs in each province.  Below the governors, a hierarchy of local officials including circuit intendants, prefects, and county magistrates presided over defined areas.  The bureaucracy operated by elaborate administrative rules, and senior officials reported directly to the throne using specialized secret memorials (memoranda) that were opened only in the emperor’s presence, and the emperor wrote comments on in his own hand, using a writing brush and special vermillion ink.  The system was optimized to maximize the power of the emperor, though as studies suggest, the sheer volume of paperwork and the limited sources of information tended to limit the power of the throne.  Indeed where Qianlong, like his father Yongzheng and his Grandfather Kangxi, was an assertive chief executive, his successors were far less active.[**2**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref1) Qianlong’s officials were chosen by the great socio-political institution of late Imperial China – the civil service examination system.  The exam system was open to virtually all males, and required an extensive knowledge of the Confucian classics and commentaries, and an ability to write essays in a rigid, rhymed format known as the eight legged essay.  Students began locally, and after demonstrating some proficiency progressed to their prefectural capital to take the lowest level of the system.  Those who passed were then qualified to advance to take the next level, held in each provincial capital.  Those who passed this second level then could proceed to the highest level of exams held in Beijing.  Only those who had passed the provincial level of exams or higher were normally eligible for jobs in the civil service, and only a tiny percentage passed.  The exam system served multiple purposes: on the most basic level it ensured that officials were highly educated, and shared a common Confucian outlook. At the same time the attractiveness of government service resulted in what was, in effect, a national curriculum studied not just by officials but by the vast numbers of unsuccessful candidates, and ensured the centrality of neo-Confucian ideas to elite culture in general. While it was surely rare for a truly poor man to succeed in the exams (in accordance with Chinese myth), it did provide a measure of social mobility over time, as successful merchant families invested capital in the preparation of their sons for the exams.   Unlike its European contemporaries of the old regime, the Chinese elite could not depend on birthright to maintain position.  High status was defined more by cultural attainments: members of the literati elite were educated in the Confucian classics and classical literature, had a modicum of mastery of refined arts like poetry and calligraphy, and showed an appreciation for aesthetics. The late imperial system of government had proved remarkably durable: created at the end of the fourteenth century by the Ming dynasty, it had been taken over and only modestly improved by the Qing. But as the story of the nineteenth would show, while the late imperial mode of government was stable, it was not nimble.  Change occurred slowly, and officials were often reluctant, or lacked the resources to respond effectively to new developments.   By the time Lord Macartney appeared before Qianlong, cracks had begun to appear.  Even at its peak, the total number of officials – especially those assigned to local administration – were extremely limited in number.  Albert Feuerwerker estimated that there were around 20,000 civil officials and 7,000 military officials (i.e. officers of high rank) who governed China on the Emperor’s behalf.  At the local level, there were around 1,500 counties, each governed by a single magistrate. [**3**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref1)  But from the perspective of governance, the “prosperous age” had its dark side.   Population growth and commercial development had put people in motion seeking land and economic opportunity.  Chinese migration into areas dominated by other ethnic groups produced new sources of conflict.  Sectarian uprisings rooted in the millenarian White Lotus religion broke out sporadically, and would lead in 1796 to a major rebellion.  Local magistrates, always hard pressed to police their jurisdictions, were now often stretched beyond their limits.  Qianlong himself proved less able as ruler in his late years; as the massive flow of paper up to the Throne was increasingly (and inevitably) dealt with by his bureaucrats, Qianlong struggled to assert his authority.  The one official he did put his trust in, an attractive former palace guard named Heshen (whose relationship with Qianlong has been a source of speculation ever since) created a massive network of corruption and bribery that infected key government administrative bureaus.  When Qianlong died in 1799 (he had officially abdicated three years earlier to avoid a longer reign than his grandfather), Heshen was tried, convicted and executed.  But the Jiaqing emperor (r. 1796-1821), fearing factional infighting, did little to uproot the corruption or to confront the growing systemic problems in government. [**4**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref1) **The Macartney Mission and China’s Drift to Isolation** Lord Macartney’s embassy sought to establish regular diplomatic relations between Great Britain and the Qing Empire, and to expand opportunities for British merchants in China. This was part of a broader British expansion into Asia in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. But it was also a response to the increasingly guarded attitude of the Qing leadership towards Europe. In the first century of Qing rule, contacts with Europeans, while by no means close, were significant. Jesuit Missionaries worked in the Qing court as technical advisors, seeking to use European technical skills to ingratiate themselves with Qing rulers and begin a conversion to the Catholic Church.  While few were converted, Jesuits employed western techniques in a diverse range of areas including astronomy, manufacturing cannon, cartography.  In his earlier years Qianlong had also patronized Jesuit artists and architects, and a portion of his massive Yuanming palace outside of Beijing (often referred to as the old summer palace) was designed by Jesuits. Jesuits in turn provided Europe with its most detailed and reliable information on China through the first half of the Qing period. There were other contacts as well.  While early Qing rulers had severely restricted trade as they battled rebels and pirates on the coast in Taiwan, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century restrictions were eased, trade flourished in the South China Sea.  The island of Macau, near the major port city of Canton (Guangzhou), originally settled by the Portuguese in the 1500s, developed into an important trading center.  Not only did Europeans trade on the China coast, but they participated politically in the Qing system. Both the Dutch and Portuguese sent embassies to China in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and Qing officials viewed as outer tributary states that acknowledged Qing overlordship, but were not regular participants in Qing foreign relations. The Russian empire, expanding rapidly eastward, had its own relations with the Qing empire, which led to two significant treaties, the Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689 and Kiakhta in 1727 which, in effect, divided central Asia between the two.  The Russian treaties were negotiated following European practice, and the Russians established an Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing which kept the lines of communications open. But over time the Qing contacts with Europeans became chillier, and more inflexible. In the 1750s the Qing authorities limited European traders to the city of Guangzhou, known to foreigners as Canton.  The “Canton System” limited European traders to a tiny concession area on an island in Canton Harbor, and required that they trade with merchants of guild called the Co-Hong who were given a monopoly on the European trade.   The Canton system limited foreign trade, and in the eyes of European merchants, denied them access to the most desirable ports such as those in the Yangzi valley, China’s richest region. While the Canton trade was unquestionably very lucrative, foreign merchants complained that their commercial opportunities were severely restricted in this system. The balance of trade, moreover, was greatly in favor of China. European (and North American) demand for tea, silk, porcelain and other commodities was increasing, but foreigners were unable to find foreign products for which there was substantial demand in China, and were forced to import large volumes of silver. The influx of silver specie – used as currency in China – was a further contributor to China’s eighteenth century prosperity.   In some respects, the Qing restrictions on the Canton trade were not unusual.  Mercantilist policies and the creation of state chartered companies with monopolies on long distance maritime trade were commonplace in Europe before the nineteenth century.  The British participation in the China trade was itself a monopoly of the chartered East India Company, and was carried out by company ships (as seen in the [**Journal of the Dorsetshire**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=3401&list=manuscript)) or private vessels licensed for the Asian trade). For all of its restrictiveness, the Canton system permitted and in some respects promoted the lucrative trade between China and Europe.  But it explicitly limited political and cultural interchange. Sir George Thomas Staunton, a leading figure in the East India Company in Canton early in the nineteenth century, was a rare exception.  As a boy had accompanied the Macartney Mission with his father (Sir George Leonard Staunton) and had learned to speak and read Chinese, and made the first important translations of Chinese documents, including the Qing criminal code, into English (the materials in the **Sir George Leonard Staunton and Sir George Thomas Staunton papers** offer valuable material).[**5**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref1) The end of the Jesuit missionary effort further curtailed the flow of information and technology from Europe.  The Jesuits had made little progress in promoting Catholicism in China, and the doctrinal compromises their efforts involved – particularly allowing Chinese Catholics to continue rituals of ancestor worship - were sharply criticized by European critics of the Jesuit order.  In the 1773 the Jesuit order, embroiled in controversies in Europe, was dissolved. While former Jesuits would continue to serve the Qing throne for some time, the end of the Jesuit missionary effort effectively severed the Qianlong emperor’s most valuable source of advice and information about the European world. [**6**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref1)   Macartney’s 1793 Embassy, for which the collection offers a host of  interesting sources including the drawings by [**William Alexander**, **Samuel Daniell**, **William Henry Parish and John Barrow**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Resources/Slideshow.aspx) from the British Library and **Journals of** [**William Alexander**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=52&list=manuscript) and [**Sir Erasmus Gower**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=40&list=manuscript), sought to transform China’s relations with Britain, by expanding both political contacts and trading opportunities for British merchants.  The mission was doomed.  On one hand the embassy was famously delayed by conflicting conceptions of diplomatic practice.   Macartney wished to follow European protocols in which states were considered equals, while Qing officials presumed that such a mission should follow the more hierarchical Asian tribute model, in which the tributary acknowledges the superiority of (in this case) China, and the representative would kowtow to the Emperor, an act of submission unacceptable in European eyes. While the mission reached a temporary resolution to the protocol issues (British sources indicate that Macartney bowed, Chinese indicate that he kowtowed), the mission failed on more substantive grounds:  Qianlong refused to alter trading patterns or accept a permanent diplomatic missions in Beijing.  Moreover, he made clear that the Qing empire had “never valued ingenious articles, nor do we have the slightest need of your country’s manufactures.”  As Johanna Waley-Cohen has shown, this was hyperbole - Qianlong’s armies had benefited in no small measures from the products of foreign advisors.  Almost certainly the Qing rejection of the British mission was as much a result of growing preoccupation with internal problems as the issues that Lord Macartney was presenting.  The Embassy was a great disappointment (see [**Macartney’s letters**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=187979&list=manuscript) and the [**Staunton papers**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=188007&list=manuscript)).  But it initiated a half century in which Britain’s efforts to expand relations with China and define them on the bases of European international law and diplomatic practice, and were met by stubborn resistance. [**7**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref1)  The decades following the Macartney Mission were marked by a paradox in China’s relations with the British Empire and the European world.  On one hand, trade was increasing, on the other the Qing government pursued isolation as never before. The rising tide of trade was driven by the discovery in the late eighteenth century of a foreign commodity for which there was strong Chinese demand: opium.  The drug produced primarily in India, was shipped to China in increasing volumes, in spite of sporadic efforts by Qing authorities to ban it.    The Qing government, meanwhile, was preoccupied by growing domestic problems, and became more inflexible in its management of foreign problems.  Diplomatic advances by the Russian government (the Golovkin Mission of 1805) and the British who in 1816 tried again to send an Embassy lead by Lord Amherst were rejected (see the Journal of [**Sir William Fanshawe Martin**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=3389&list=manuscript) and the published account of [**Clarke Abel**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=3686&list=printed)). With the Jesuits gone and few if any Chinese officials studying the maritime world, the Qing court lacked reliable sources of information about the world of Europe.  The Qing isolationism of the early nineteenth century coincided with  growing domestic crises.  Massive population growth produced problems of its own:  ethnic Chinese migrating from the overcrowded core areas of China proper into frontier areas in the southwest and Taiwan sparked ethnic based rebellions.  The Qing state, dealing with perhaps triple the population of 1700 did not substantially increase the size of its already thin official bureaucracy.  Local magistrates, the key local government officials,  were overworked, understaffed, and inadequately paid.  They faced an impossible task in trying to maintain local order, administer justice and collect taxes.  They were increasingly dependent of the assistance of local elites, or unpaid ‘yamen runners’ (a yamen was a term used for government office) to aid in performing critical tasks.  The cost of this dependence was growing corruption and inequality in tax collection, and a diminished ability to implement government policy at a local level.  For decades, this sparked localized tax revolts, and added fuel to sectarian rebellions.   There were also problems at the very top. None of the emperors who followed Qianlong proved to be a decisive or particularly effective chief administrator.  Corruption became an enduring problem.  Some was systemic: official salaries were too low, forcing honest officials to accept ‘gifts;’ but some was rooted in greed of high officials and members of the imperial family, and an unwillingness of the throne to crack down.  The revenue problem arose out of the conservatism of the political system: revenues were primarily drawn from taxes on agricultural land, while the bulk of the economic growth had been in trade.  Unwilling to increase taxes, the Qing government suffered from a pervasive shortage of revenues which prevented the effective maintenance of existing state activities, let alone new commitments.   The most obvious signs of decaying government were the long run of internal rebellions.  The first of these was the massive White Lotus rebellion that sprung up in central China in 1796, and the contemporaneous rebellion among the ethnic minority Miao people in Hunan and Guizhou. These took a decade to suppress, in part due to incompetence and corruption among the Qing military commanders sent to suppress it.  In succeeding decades, other signs of administrative decay became apparent. The Qing granary system which had contributed to a relative absence of famine in the eighteenth century became non-functional in the first quarter of the nineteenth.  In the 1820s, the Grand Canal, a north-south trading route managed by the state became silted up, and became impassable, a problem that took years to resolve. [**8**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref1)  Meanwhile, the foreign situation was also leading inexorably towards crisis.  Imports of opium grew rapidly after the beginning of the 19th century, periodic Qing efforts to ban the drug trade had little effect - although the Company, aware of the Qing efforts to outlaw opium, preferred to let private agencies undertake carrying opium, rather than risk the company’s reputation with Qing officials.   Opium created both social and economic problems.  Opium addiction would come to be seen as a serious social problem that affected rich and poor alike until the Communist revolution.  But the economic problem was more immediate and far-reaching. Long the beneficiary of a balance of trade surplus, by the 1820s, thanks to the booming drug trade, China began to import more than it exported.  Silver specie and coins were now exported to pay for imports.  The Chinese monetary system was bimetallic:  everyday expenditures were made in copper coins, but silver measured by weight was used for larger payments including taxes.  The opium trade created what some Chinese observers at the time called a “silver famine” – silver became scarce and therefore more expensive in relation to copper, contracting the money supply, and raising the real impact cost of taxes to Chinese peasants. [**9**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref1)  Foreigners, themselves ignorant of many of the problems Qing China faced, were frustrated.    They thought restrictions of the Canton system prevented the further expansion of commerce.  The end of the East India Company’s monopoly of (and participation in) the China trade in 1833-4 only intensified the engagement of commercial interests.  By and large, foreign merchants were not morally troubled by the trade in opium, for the drug was legal in Europe.  At the same time, the lack of direct relations with the Qing government, and the perceived attitudes of arrogance and superiority of Chinese officials infuriated foreigners. Local frictions in Canton were also irritants: on several occasions, foreign seamen were accused of serious crimes by the local officials, who insisted on applying Chinese law.  For example in 1821, Francis Terranova, a sailor on an American ship, was charged, convicted, and executed for manslaughter after a jar he threw overboard hit a Chinese woman in a small boat.  The woman was allegedly knocked unconscious and drowned – the evidence was slim.  To foreigners, unfamiliar with Chinese conceptions of law, and distrustful of Qing officials, the results of such cases was shocking.  To European eyes, defendants were  not given a fair shake by magistrates who assumed their guilt, and who were willing, in accordance with Qing law, to utilize torture during interrogation. [**10**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref10) As the nineteenth century wore on, these frustrations began to receive a broader hearing.  Following the end of the Napoleonic wars, the British imperial presence was expanding eastward into Southeast Asia – seeking new markets for British and Indian products, and a slice  of the massive inter-Asian trade long carried on by Chinese and Muslim merchants in the region.   Sir Stamford Raffles (see the [**Raffles Papers**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=44&list=manuscript)) established the British colony of Singapore in 1819,  which rapidly became a major trading center.  The prominent role that ethnic Chinese migrants played in Singapore and other European colonial holdings in Southeast Asia offered British officials a new window on Chinese culture and a growing sense of the potential value of China in a freer trading environment.  **The Opium Wars and the Birth of the Treaty System** By the 1830s Qing officials were increasingly concerned about opium: the silver drain was widely felt, and there was growing awareness of opium addiction as a social problem.  From 1836 to 1838, there was vigorous debate at the Qing court between advocates of tighter enforcement of a ban on opium, and those who advocated legalizing and controlling the drug trade.  Through this period, foreign and Chinese traders in Canton were hopeful of legalization, only to be disappointed.  At the end of 1838, the Daoguang Emperor (r. 1820-1849) rejected legalization, and appointed Lin Zexu, a prominent advocate of the ban, to be a special imperial commissioner to stop the opium trade.  Within months, Lin introduced new measures banning the trade in opium, destroying opium stocks in the hands of Chinese merchants, and offering opium addicts medicine to help with withdrawal.  The opium trade came to a standstill.  But when Lin confiscated stocks of the drug in foreign hands, the British government escalated diplomatic conflict into war, seeking primarily to open up the China market to British merchants. Criticism in Britain of what would become known as the Opium War made little impact.  For sources on British policy see the [**Aberdeen Papers**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=3399&list=manuscript) and [**Lord Auckland’s China books**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=54&list=manuscript). Once the battle was joined, it quickly became apparent that the Qing forces were no match for the British, who benefited from superior organization and firepower and for the first time used steam gunboats to move up and down China’s rivers.  The final settlement came in the Treaty of Nanking and the Treaty of the Bogue, which brought about a fundamental restructuring of Sino-foreign relations. The treaties included several key points:1. British and Chinese officials would meet and communicate on equal footing.
2. The end of the Canton system and the opening of five ‘treaty ports’ – Canton, Amoy Fuzhou, Shanghai,  and Ningpo – where foreigners could reside and trade freely.
3. British subjects received rights of extraterritoriality.  In other words,  British nationals in China were to be tried under British law and by a court established by the British consul.
4. Tariffs on trade would be limited to those set in treaty agreements.
5. Britain obtained the island of Hong Kong as a colony.

Ironically, the main cause of the conflict, opium, was left unmentioned in these early treaties. [**11**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref10) Over the next twenty years the ‘treaty system’ as it became known would evolve in a number of ways.  First the French and Americans, and then other foreign states, obtained similar concessions to the British.  The establishment of ‘most favored nation’ status for each of the foreign powers insured that each would receive the same concessions extracted by others.  Second, Shanghai, benefiting from its location at the end of Yangzi valley and much less xenophobic local officials and population, quickly replaced Canton as the center of foreign activity.   But the settlements coming out of the first Opium War did not resolve foreign concerns.  Relations with the Qing government were limited to local officials and there were no indications of further opening.  Foreigners were restricted to the treaty ports and their immediate hinterlands.  Disagreements over taxation of imports and exports continued.  From the Qing side, perhaps the most contentious issue related to foreign demands to expand diplomatic relations, following European rules in which states were treated as equals, and foreigners maintained permanent representatives in foreign capitals.  As the basis of dynastic power became more rickety, xenophobic officials argued that accepting foreign practices threatened the dignity of state. [**12**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref10) The Qing disregard for the foreign presence is in retrospect understandable.  In 1850, a rebellion by Christian-influenced sect known as the Taipings, had exploded out of the mountainous borderlands Guangxi and Guangdong provinces.  By 1853 the Heavenly Kingdom of the Supreme Peace, as the rebel state called itself, controlled much of the Yangzi Valley, and was threatening the very existence of the Qing regime. Indeed, the Taipings were only one of several massive rebellions that shook the foundations of the Empire over the next quarter century: the Nian rebellion emerged in 1853 in the Yellow River region, the Panthay rebellion broke out in 1858 among Muslim minorities in the southwest, and in the mid-1860s even bigger Muslim sectarian rebellions would shatter Shaanxi and Gansu provinces and temporarily wrest Xinjiang from Qing control.  But it was the Taipings that represented the most serious and sustained threat.  Foreigners, particularly missionaries, were initially enthusiastic about the Taipings, hoping they would bring about a Christian revolution in China and replace the Qing with a regime more open to foreign influence.  But as they became familiar with the idiosyncrasies of Taiping ideology (Taiping leader Hong Xiuquan believed himself to be the younger brother of Jesus Christ), and the brutality of Taiping leadership, this enthusiasm faded (see for example the reports of [**William Henry Sykes**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=3671&list=printed)).   Increasingly through the 1850s, British representatives recognized that if trading opportunities could be opened up the continuation of the Qing empire was preferable to its overthrow.  And as the Indian Mutiny reminded them, indirect control was certainly cheaper than imposition of direct rule. In 1856, Harry Parkes, a British Consul with extensive experience in China, manufactured an incident in Canton harbor, claiming that Chinese officials, in seizing the lorcha *Arrow*, had torn down the Union Jack.  This incident then became the cause of a new war, fought by the British and French against the Qing government.  This conflict, known variously as the Second Opium War, the *Arrow* War and the Second Anglo-Chinese War, dragged out over four years.  Qing forces proved largely ineffective against the British and French, but after an initial treaty settlement was negotiated at Tianjin (Tientsin) in 1858, the Qing side reneged.  The following year, a foreign flotilla sent to North China to exchange ratifications was bombarded from the forts at Dagu (Taku) with considerable loss of life.  In the late summer of 1860, a combined Anglo-French army launched an invasion of north China.  After easily defeating Qing forces in several battles, the foreigners marched on Beijing.  The Emperor fled the city for the imperial retreat in Rehe (Jehol).  With some skilful diplomacy, the officials left behind to manage the crisis, Prince Gong and Wenxiang, quickly settled the situation.  But before the Convention of Beijing was signed, the British, as punishment for the mistreatment of British prisoners, looted and destroyed the imperial summer palace (referred to as the “old summer palace” by foreigners), the ruins of which remain in a suburban Beijing park and have become an icon of China’s subjection to foreign imperialism.  This collection includes extensive resources on the Second Opium War, including the [**Halifax Papers**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=3537&list=manuscript), [**Baillie Journals**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=3405&list=manuscript), and the papers of British military commander [**Hope Grant**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=3411&list=manuscript). The Treaty of Tianjin (Tientsin) and the Convention of Beijing added important elements to the existing treaties. They stated that foreigners would be allowed to establish permanent diplomatic legations in Beijing, that additional treaty ports would be opened, including Tianjin and other ports in north China, that foreigners with a passport from their consul would be allowed to travel inland from the treaty ports, and the Yangzi river was opened to foreign shipping.  Foreign missionaries were now allowed to travel and proselytize in China.  Efforts were made to further clarify the taxes on trade. Opium imports were now legalized and taxed.  While it was not written into the treaties, one element that came out of this was the Imperial Maritime Customs service, a foreign manned organization which had been collecting the treaty tariffs in several ports at the behest of foreign consuls, which was expanded and transformed into a Qing government agency. While there were further extensions in the treaty system – including a vast expansion of treaty ports over the next half century, and an agreement to allow foreign manufacturing concerns in the treaty ports in 1895 – the treaty system as a means of dealing with the foreign powers as a whole - as opposed to bilateral arrangements - would remain largely unchanged into the Second World War. **The Qing Restoration and Self-Strengthening, 1860-1895**  The Anglo-French invasion of 1860 marked a turning point in Qing politics in general, and foreign relations in particular.  In the eyes of many, the dynasty was on the verge of collapse.  Foreign invasion coincided with internal rebellion:  the Taipings, after a period of internal dispute in 1856-7, had revived, capturing the famous city of Suzhou and threatening Shanghai.  The Nian rebellion, which had sprung up in the early 1850s, continued unabated in the north China plain.  In the Southwest provinces of Yunnan and Sichuan, a Muslim rebellion lead by Du Wenxiu had been raging since 1858.  Localized rebellion and lawlessness were widespread - in Beijing in 1860 for example, domestic looters and local bandits posed almost as much as a problem for the authorities as the invading foreign troops.  Clearly something had to change.  In the following years new leadership in Beijing began to direct the Qing Empire towards a more cooperative and productive relationship with the foreign powers, while a group of powerful, mostly younger provincial officials led new armies to suppress rebellion and, in several cases, lead the way towards the introduction of new Western technologies. In Beijing in early 1861, with the Xianfeng Emperor (r. 1850-1861) still refusing to return from Rehe (where he would die later that year), Prince Gong (Yixin, the younger brother of the Emperor) and Wenxiang, the officials in charge in Beijing following the Emperor’s move to Rehe, began to advocate a new foreign policy.  In a famous memorial to the throne, they remarked that the rebellions constituted an immediate and mortal threat, “a disease of the heart and abdomen”, the Russians who had taken advantage of Qing weakness to force concessions on the Manchurian border represented a disease “of the arm  and shoulder”, and while the British acted “harshly and without human decency” they represented a less immediate problem, a disease of the extremities.  Their solution was simple: avoid conflict with the foreign powers which had been so unproductive over the previous two decades, and focus energy on suppressing internal rebellion, and then they could confront the foreign threat.  A new foreign policy apparatus was created centered on a new foreign office established in Beijing called the *zongli geguo shiwu yamen* (‘office for the general management of affairs with the various countries) or Zongli Yamen (Tsungli Yamen) for short.  Under the leadership of Prince Gong and Wenxiang the Zongli Yamen managed to orchestrate a ‘cooperative policy’ with the foreign powers, especially Great Britain, through the 1860s.   Taking advantage of this new environment, reformers both in Beijing and the provinces began to promote the importation of foreign weapons, and by the mid-1860s projects to create new arsenals and shipyards to produce modern weapons and warships were well underway.  These efforts aimed at introducting foreign technology and foreign learning came to be known as the self-strengthening movement. [**13**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref10) The Zongli Yamen’s efforts were aided by an unexpected source: the new Foreign Maritime Customs Service.  The service was manned by foreigners, but in 1861 it became a part of the Qing government reporting to the Zongli Yamen.  When the first Inspector General, Horatio Nelson Lay, overstepped his authority (see the [**Lay Papers**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=3423&list=manuscript) in this collection) he was sacked by the Zongli Yamen and replaced by Robert (later Sir Robert) Hart, who would run the Service until 1908.   Its primary role in the Qing period was assessing customs owed on imports and exports, actual payments were made to Chinese customs banks.  The revenues the customs produced became a godsend to Qing leaders, fueling many of the self-strengthening reforms and providing the backing under which loans could be contracted.  The Customs also provided a valued source of information about the non-Chinese world, and customs officials, who Hart insisted needed to study Chinese, served as advisors on many issues relating to the management of trade and foreign relations. [**Hart**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=53954&list=printed), as his papers in this collection show, was quietly involved in many diplomatic negotiations, and his discretion and understanding of both sides made him valuable to both sides. [**14**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref10) But while the initial impetus for the shift towards the cooperative policy and self-strengthening came from Beijing, a number of provincial governors-general would play the most prominent role in the Qing revival.  Zeng Guofan, a Hunan official and scholar – perhaps the most unlikely of all generals - had, in the mid 1850s begun to organize new armies and cultivated talented members of China’s elite to serve.  Zeng would go on to mastermind the defeat of the Taipings, combining traditional forms of recruitment and organization, with modern weapons.  The campaign was aided by some foreign-officered units, including the Ever Victorious Army led by General C. G. “Chinese” Gordon ( see the [**Gordon Papers and Maps**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=3409&list=doctype)). Two former subordinates, Li Hongzhang and Zuo Zongtang, distinguished themselves fighting against the Taipings and would go on to defeat, respectively, the Nian Rebels and a new Muslim rebellion which sprung up in the Northwestern regions of Shaanxi, Gansu and Xinjiang in the mid-1860s.  The three provincial governors-general would also become leading advocates of the importation of foreign technology and the training of Chinese in western languages and technology.   In the short term the new policies were a great success:  the dynasty seemingly on its last legs in 1860,  rose up and defeated the Taiping rebellion in 1864, the Nian Rebellion in 1868, the Panthay  Rebellion in 1873, and the northwestern Muslim rebellion in 1876.  By the early 1870s Qing officials were praising these developments as a ‘restoration’.  There were signs of improvement in the international arena as well.  In contrast to the disastrous and embarrassing outcome of the Opium Wars, near wars with Japan in 1874 over Taiwan and Russia in 1879 over Yili (in Xinjiang) were avoided with only minor concessions.   But over time the self-strengthening effort lost momentum.  Key leaders of the restoration like Zeng Guofan and Wenxiang passed from the scene in the 1870s, and Zuo Zongtang, engaged in campaigns in the Northwest was unable to pursue new modernization projects like the Fuzhou Navy Yard he had created in the 1860s. Conservatives were emboldened, and subjected advocates of expanding education in western learning and technology to withering criticism.  The Empress Dowager Cixi, the dominant figure on the throne through two extended regencies, played reformers and their conservative critics against each other.   In an increasingly poisonous political environment most officials shied away from new efforts to introduce modern technologies.   By the 1880s Li Hongzhang had emerged as by far the most important official in China, and the major supporter of modernizing reforms. From 1870 he served as Governor General of Zhili province (the province around Beijing, now called Hebei), and oversaw coastal defense in North China.  The army he had created, the Huai Army, was the most effective in China, and he was responsible for managing coastal defenses.  Li remained the most prominent advocate of self strengthening, and undertook a series of projects to establish strategic shipping, mining and other enterprises by combining official involvement with merchant investment.   In the 1880s and 1890s, as the Zongli Yamen became much more conservative, Li undertook many important diplomatic negotiations.  Only in the mid 1880s did a younger official, Zhang Zhidong, serving first in Guangdong Province, and later as Governor-General of Hunan and Hubei, begin to launch comparable efforts, such as his own army reforms and a new ironworks in Hanyang.  While the efforts of Li Hongzhang and Zhang Zhidong were an important foundation, compared with the extraordinary developments in Meiji Japan, reforms in China were slow, and reformist politicians were relatively isolated. In the meantime the cooperative diplomacy of the 1860s disappeared.  Foreign diplomats were aggravated by what they saw as China’s slow progress.  Popular anti-foreignism and anti-missionary activity resulted in frequent incidents or “outrages” ranging from the posting of scurrilous anti-foreign placards to violence against foreigners (a constant concern in foreign missionary writings).  Foreign powers were increasingly coercive, demanding indemnities and the opening of new treaty ports.  In 1884-5 war broke out with France.  While the Qing southern fleet was demolished in a surprise attack, Chinese ground forces acquitted themselves reasonably well in Taiwan and northern Vietnam.  Although the treaty ending the war forced the Qing Empire to accept French predominance in Indochina, it did not force major new concessions.   In China, the Sino-French war generated mixed reactions.  On one hand it probably contributed to overconfidence on the part of conservatives, and lead the Empress Dowager to launch an expensive effort to build a new summer palace outside of Beijing, with funds that should have gone to naval expansion.  On the other hand, among some officials and members of the elite it stimulated growing concern and new efforts to learn about the West.  Newspapers introduced by foreigners in the 1870s rapidly expanded their circulation, and gave members of the Chinese elite increasing opportunities to learn about the outside world.  Gradually some awareness spread among the literati elite of the precarious position of the Qing Empire in a rapidly changing world.**The Sino-Japanese War and Its Aftermath** In 1894-5, a fifteen year competition with Japan over influence over Korea sparked a war.  To the surprise of many observers the Japanese demolished the Qing forces at sea and on land (see the [**Althorp Papers**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=3641&list=printed)).  The war radically changed China’s foreign relations. The Treaty of Shimonoseki which ended the conflict resulted in a massive indemnity, the cession of Taiwan to Japan, acknowledgement of Japanese predominance in Korea.  Initially Port Arthur on the southern Liaodong Peninsula was also ceded, but the “triple intervention’ of France, Russia and Germany, forced the Japanese to give this back.  To pay for the costs of the war and exorbitant indemnities, China floated massive foreign loans, guaranteed against customs revenues, further aggravating the already parlous state of government finances.  Customs officials, as is apparent from the papers of [**Hart**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=14950&list=manuscript), the [**Bowra**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=66351&list=doctype) family and a young [**Frederick Maze**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=3086&list=printed), were well-informed observers.   In the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese war Qing China was virtually defenseless, and the foreign powers quickly took advantage in what would come to be known as the scramble for concessions.  For decades the Qing government had resisted pressure to allow foreign companies to construct railroads and develop mines.  Now, one by one the foreign powers demanded that the Qing government grant them railway and mining concessions, and give their navies exclusive use of coaling ports.  These concessions were generally located in particular geographic regions.  Foreign powers began to claim first refusal on concessions granted in these so-called ‘spheres of influence’ – with Russia seeking concessions in Manchuria, Germany in Shandong, France in Yunnan and other areas adjacent to its colonial possessions in Indochina, and Japan in Fujian (opposite its new colonial possession in Taiwan).  British diplomacy had until this point focused its policies on maintaining free trade for foreign merchants (known in the parlance of the time as ‘the open door’).   But, unwilling to press the issue, Britain joined the scramble with a vengeance, claiming the Yangzi valley as its own sphere, obtaining sovereignty over Kowloon and a 99-year lease over the New Territories – vastly expanding Hong Kong – and securing the leasehold of Weihaiwei in north China as a naval base.  The scramble for concessions appeared to observers to be the first step in the break-up of China. Of the major foreign powers only the United States, preoccupied with its war with Spain and conquest of the Philippines, remained on the sidelines; secretary of state John Hay was concerned enough that in the autumn of 1899 he requested that each of the foreign powers articulate their support for maintaining an “open door for trade” for the merchants of all countries.  While responses were equivocal, Hay claimed all had accepted his proposals. Hay’s “open door” notes would have an iconic importance in the history of American diplomacy, but did little to change things in China. In the longer term, the scramble for concessions would prove less significant than it looked at the time.  The spheres of influence proved rather limited in their impact – most of the powers were not terribly interested in trying to govern parts of China, and by the First World War, European influence was on the wane.  But it is hard to underestimate the impact that the scramble for concessions had in the late 1890s.   Defeat and international humiliation dramatically changed the calculus of Chinese politics.  Recognizing the perilous situation, younger intellectuals advocated rapid reforms, and large numbers sought to go abroad to study.  A radical Cantonese intellectual named Kang Youwei, author of a quixotic work entitled *Confucius as a Reformer*, insisted that reform was consistent with long suppressed elements in the Confucian tradition, and pressed for institutional reforms and studying western methods.  Kang, while living in Beijing in the 1890s sought at once to learn what he could about the west, and influence the throne to change.  One of his windows was the British missionary Timothy Richard.  While Chinese reformers were hardly enamored of Christianity (Kang would later advocate the establishment of Confucianism as a national religion in China), the willingness of missionaries to teach a range of western learning in schools was welcomed, and aspects of the missionary critique of Chinese society, such as their opposition to footbinding, were incorporated into the reform agenda (for missionary views of China and the reform efforts, [***The Chinese Recorder***](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doctype.aspx?doctype=1) is a valuable resource). [**15**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref10) In 1898 came the first effort to radically shift the direction of Qing politics.  The Guangxu Emperor (r. 1875-1908), who had come to the throne as a child, and long remained in the shadow of his great aunt, the Empress-Dowager Cixi, began to take a more active role.  An imperial tutor named Weng Tonghe introduced Kang Youwei and his young protégé Liang Qichao to the emperor, and Guangxu gradually became convinced of the need for reform.  For three months in 1898, at the urging of Weng and Kang, Guangxu initiated a brief and intensive series of reform edicts seeking to reform the Qing educational and military systems, with an apparent eye towards establishing a more representative system of government.  The so-called Hundred Day’s Reforms, while ambitious, proved politically naïve.  The Empress Dowager together with officials in the north launched a coup d’etat.  Guangxu was forced to retire due to purported ill-health (he was imprisoned in the summer palace), with the Empress Dowager graciously agreeing to resume the regency in his place. Reformers were arrested and several executed, and Kang and Liang fled overseas.  The reform edicts were reversed. If the Hundred Days reforms constituted an overly ambitious radical reform effort in response to the Sino-Japanese war and its aftermath, in 1899-1900 would come a very different kind of response.  As the century came to a close, north China was racked by intense drought and famine, and a popular anti-missionary society, *yi he tuan* (modern scholars translate this as Boxers United in Righteousness, contemporaries translated it picturesquely if less accurately as “Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists”) began to appear in rural north China.  The Boxers (the ‘boxing’ referred to was a form of kung-fu) blamed these problems on Christian missionaries and especially Chinese converts to Christianity for the natural disasters that had overcome China.  Practicing martial arts, and believing that spells would make them invulnerable to foreign bullets, the Boxers rapidly began to spread, and numerous incidents followed in which Chinese Christians, and sometimes foreigners were killed.  Foreign protests to the Zongli Yamen produced little.  While some Qing officials were resolutely anti-Boxer, others tolerated and even encouraged the movement.  A group of conservative officials at court saw the Boxers embodying a popular revulsion against the foreigners, and believed this, rather than new armies or government reforms, was the antidote to the foreign threat.  In the May of 1900, the Empress Dowager threw her support behind the Boxers, and direct attacks on foreigners accelerated.  From late June to early August of 1900, hundreds of foreign diplomats and others (including foreign employees of the Chinese Government like Sir Robert Hart) were besieged in the Legation Quarter in Beijing.   While the international media screamed about Boxer atrocities, an eight power international expeditionary force was assembled to liberate them and punish Chinese barbarism. [**16**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref10)  The Boxer War of 1900 would prove one sided.  While Qing troops in places proved quite effective, they were soon overwhelmed, and the Boxers found they were less invulnerable to bullets than they had been lead to believe.  Moreover, the Qing government itself split over the Empress Dowager’s support for the Boxer movement. The Qing Imperial troops seem to have refrained from an all out attack on the Legations.  The powerful Governors-General in the Yangzi river region, Zhang Zhidong and Liu Kunyi negotiated a compact with the British, in which they agreed to suppress any Boxer spread into the Yangzi region.   In the end, the Boxer rising was limited to the north, and foreign troops occupied Beijing and other parts of North China for a year, engaging in looting, rape and massacre on a level not previously seen in China.  The Boxers episode stimulated an astonishing outpouring of writings, including many first hand accounts such as those by [**Mary Hooker**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=1129&list=printed) (the pen name of Peggy Condit Smith) and Robert Hart (see [***These from the land of Sinim***](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=3646&list=printed)). The powers imposed a humiliating settlement which included a massive indemnity, and required changes to make the legations more defensible, and to insure that foreigners would be shown suitable respect (this included reforming the Zongli Yamen and renaming it the Foreign Office (*waiwubu*) and placing it at the front of the more traditional six ministries in protocol lists).  Meanwhile Russian troops had taken advantage of the situation to move into Northern Manchuria, where they would remain.   **Reform and Revolution, 1901-1911** The Boxer war proved a turning point, crushing any legitimacy that remained for anti-foreign conservatism.  The fact that in 1905 Japan and Russia would with impunity fight a war largely on Chinese soil, gave still more emphasis to this lesson.  The decade following the Boxer disaster saw dramatic reforms to the Qing system, which would, perhaps ironically, lead only to the end of the Dynasty.  In the post-Boxer years politically active Chinese both within the government and outside of it pressed for a rapid transformation of the political system, to enable China to stand up.  The Empress Dowager herself, who had fled to Xi’an in 1900, returned a convert to reform.  In famous edict she declared that “what misleads the country can be expressed in one word selfishness, and what suffocates all under heaven is precedent” and urged officials to make bold proposals for reform. [**17**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref10)  Lead by reformist officials like Zhang Zhidong, Yuan Shikai and Zhao Erxun, the New Policy Reforms sought to improve the efficiency of government administrative reforms, build an effective army, transform local government, and recruit officials with desperately needed technical and linguistic skills.  The examination system was abolished, and commissions went abroad to study European, American and Japanese models for state administration and constitutional government.  Foreign institutional models, like police forces, were adopted in a number of Chinese cities.  Late in the period, local and even provincial assemblies began to appear, and by 1908 it was generally understood that constitutional reforms were imminent. But unlike the self-strengthening effort which was driven by officials and had a limited impact on society at large, the New Policies coincided with a remarkable mobilization of interest among China’s educated classes. Local elites were becoming increasingly active, driven by nationalist fervor and desire to preserve China.  Elites sought roles in government, established new schools, created philanthropic  societies, lead boycotts of foreign goods to protest foreign political activities (such as the American exclusion laws that prevented Chinese immigration), and eventually assembled resources to buy railways from foreign syndicates. Outside of China, expatriate Chinese intellectuals campaigned for change as well – they roughly divided into two groups, the ‘reformists’ and the ‘revolutionaries.’  The Reformists were in a large part an outgrowth of the Hundred Days reforms.  Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao had fled to Japan in 1898 and established the Save the Emperor Society, calling for the release and the return to the throne of the Guangxu emperor, with a rapid move to a constitutional monarchy to follow.  While Kang’s eccentricity gradually diluted his influence, his former protégé Liang emerged as the leading Chinese intellectual of the time, published voluminously in newspapers and hugely popular travel books.  Liang inveighed against both foreign aggression, and those aspects of Chinese society and culture that he believed were holding China back.  “The main deficiency of  our citizens” he wrote “is their lack of public morality” – he meant that Chinese were concerned only about themselves and their families, and lacked the concern for society at large and the nation.  Influenced by social Darwinism, Liang believed that the Chinese people must adapt in order to survive.   While Liang Qichao remained in exile, his ideas became enormously influential among reformers in and out of government in China. [**18**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref10) The revolutionaries wanted to overthrow the Qing regime and establish a Republican government.  They were a rather mixed crowd, including some members of the old elite, as well as many less educated Cantonese, many with connections with or support from triad societies overseas.  The most prominent of the revolutionaries with Dr. Sun Yat-sen, educated in Hawaii and Hong Kong, who had gained international notoriety when he was held hostage in the Chinese legation in London in 1896.  Sun drafted a political plan centered on the slogan of “[**The Three People’s Principles**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=3689&list=printed)” (*sanmin zhuyi*) – nationalism, peoples’ sovereignty, and peoples’ livelihood (all three terns use the Chinese word *min* which translates as people) – what this meant was not always clear, and Sun redefined their meaning repeatedly.  In these years, Sun was an ethnic nationalist who blamed China’s problems on the foreign Manchus, and called for their expulsion from China and the creation of a new republic. [**19**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref10)  Up until the end of the decade, reforms proceeded quickly, and the revolutionary movement gained relatively little traction. But following the death of the Empress Dowager in 1908, the new regency (ruling on  the boy emperor Puyi) moved away from the constitutional reforms that seemed to be imminent.  The Court proceeded to alienate prominent officials ( for example forcing Yuan Shikai into an early retirement),  excite ethnic nationalism by giving Manchus far greater prominence in the government, and inflame local elites with an ill-considered effort to nationalize railways.  In 1911 an uprising at the military garrison in Wuchang rapidly spread across south and central china.  By December the revolutionaries, who had nominated Sun Yat-sen (who was in America when the revolution began) as their president, controlled much of the southern half of China.  The Court recalled Yuan Shikai to end the rebellion, but instead of fighting, Yuan negotiated the abdication of the Qing imperial house, and his own nomination as the President of a new Republic of China. **The Early Republic, 1912-1927** The advocates of the republican revolution hoped that with the end the Manchu regime a new, constitutional system would bring about better government and China would rise again to be a force in the world.  They were bitterly disappointed.  The Republic of China lasted from 1912 to the communist victory in 1949, and throughout this period political unity and effective government would prove elusive.  The early republic (1912-1926) saw the humiliating failure of the effort to establish constitutional government, followed by a decade of political division known as the warlord period.  In 1927, the Nationalist Party, led by Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi) would finally reunite the bulk of China, but two decades of Nationalist rule would be wrecked by government corruption, foreign invasion and civil war.  The breathtaking speed of the 1911 Revolution was followed by the creation of an interim government, and elections for a national assembly – won by the emergent Nationalist Party (which had developed out of  the revolutionary alliance) led by a promising young leader named Song Jiaoren.   But Song was assassinated at a Shanghai railroad station in March, 1913 – and while never proven, it was widely believed that Yuan Shikai, still the president, was behind the killing.   Within months, facing a chorus of criticism, Yuan openly turned his armies against the nationalists.  In fierce fighting during the summer, troops loyal to Yuan defeated forces loyal to the Nationalists.  In October he forced the assembly to elect him to a five year term as President. The Nationalist Party was now branded as seditious, and leaders like Sun Yat-sen fled into exile.  But having consolidated his power, Yuan quickly overreached.  In 1915 and 1916  he tried to establish himself as emperor of a new dynasty.  But support for this evaporated, and now even the northern armies, which had been Yuan’s power base, turned against him.  Yuan’s desperately cancelled the monarchy in March 1916, but the damage was done.  In June Yuan died, allegedly from kidney failure, but his power was already broken.   His successor, Vice President Li Yuanhong was neither admired nor powerful and proved unable to assert his authority, before being dislodged in a coup a year after Yuan’s death.  While an ostensibly national government persisted in Beijing throughout through the so-called the warlord period (1916-27), and foreign diplomats would continue to recognize and deal with it, it had little influence outside of the immediate environs of the capital.   Government in China was now largely in the hands of a motley assortment of local powerholders, mostly military officers who used the coercive power of their armies to maintain control. While some tried to maintain effective government and promote local welfare, often they were corrupt and parasitic - and they came to be described pejoratively as warlords. [**20**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref20)   Given the weak governments of the early republic, not surprisingly, foreign influence was on the rise.  Yuan Shikai’s government, and others that followed, failed to establish consistent sources of revenue, and depended on foreign loans.  To satisfy foreign creditors, more and more of the Chinese revenues came to be collected by foreign run organizations – the Maritime Customs Service (see the [**Bowra**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=66351&list=doctype) and [**Maze Papers**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=3086&list=printed)), and the new foreign salt inspectorate established in 1913.  While Chinese had once been rather sanguine about the Customs, they were now increasingly inclined to see it and similar agencies as fronts for foreign power.  In retrospect, however, the British financial power these developments represented was already beginning to wane. During the First World War, Japan moved aggressively to expand its influence, through the infamous Twenty-One demands, presented to Yuan Shikai’s government.  Had they been accepted in full they would have made the republican government a near protectorate of Japanese power.  The Chinese resisted, and the most offensive of these demands were withdrawn under pressure from other foreign powers.  Nevertheless, in the early Republic the influence of the Japanese in Manchuria and north China expanded rapidly.  Other foreign powers were also quick to use force to support their own citizens – Britain and the United States had flotillas of gunboats patrolling the Yangzi river to protect their citizens and interests.   As a result even the most brutal of warlords generally avoided offending foreign powers, so many foreigners felt largely immune from the lawlessness and fear that afflicted Chinese.   The treaty settlements in cities like Shanghai, Tianjin, and Canton were well-established and continued to grow.  Shanghai, in particular, came to be known, for better and for worse, as a city of global importance.  It was a place of extremes: of great wealth and hideous poverty.  It was a center of manufacturing and commerce, of bright lights and brilliant popular culture on one hand, and of organized crime, drug-running and prostitution on the other.   In foreign concessions themselves, Chinese residents far outnumbered foreigners.  For ordinary Chinese treaty-port Shanghai was a place of opportunity, offering jobs and a refuge from the political chaos of China’s interior.  For Chinese businessmen Shanghai and other treaty ports offered stable places to build businesses.  For many intellectuals and political activists, Shanghai was a refuge from political oppression, and an opportunity to learn about the outside world.  In Shanghai a new commercial culture, both modern and distinctively Chinese, came into being, symbolized by giant department stores and a vibrant film industry. [**21**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref20)  But treaty-port China quite literally privileged the foreign elite.  Places of recreation like the Public Garden in Shanghai (where according to myth a sign admonishing “No Dogs or Chinese Allowed” was posted near the entrance) were explicitly segregated. The foreign elite lived in European-style houses, worked for foreign firms and socialized with one another at foreign clubs; many took pride in not learning Chinese, and had little contact with Chinese beyond their domestic servants.  Foreign arrogance fueled Chinese resentment. Frustrated with the political chaos of the warlord period, and China’s political weakness internationally, in the late 1910s and early 1920s educated young Chinese began a wave of political activism.  The May Fourth Movement (also known as the New Culture Movement) began with protests in Beijing against the failure of China to win concessions in Versailles Treaty. But it gradually morphed into something much bigger:  a broad cultural movement rejecting Chinese tradition seeking to establish a new culture based on science, participatory politics, and aiming to create a strong China.    In the ensuing years, foreign presence became a particular target, played out in public demonstrations and boycotts of foreign goods.  In 1925, the shooting of protesters at a Japanese owned mill in Shanghai, turned into months of public demonstrations, and a general strike in what was known as the May Thirtieth Movement.  Demands for the abolition of extraterritoriality and other privileges were angrily rejected by foreign residents (see Rodney Gilbert, [***The Unequal Treaties***](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=49406&list=printed)).  But behind the scenes, British government officials, recognizing that the age of British predominance was nearing a close – and well aware that similar extraterritorial systems had been recently abolished elsewhere -   were increasingly reluctant to pour more resources in aid of local Britons who one admiral memorably described as the “spoilt children of empire.”  [**22**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref20) Ironically, one group of foreigners whose position became somewhat less ‘imperial’ in the early republic were missionaries.  A constant source of conflict in the nineteenth century, and central players in the rise of the Boxers in 1900, in which many were attacked, the Protestant missionary movement adapted in the early twentieth century.  Recognizing the failure to convert significant numbers of Chinese, they shifted focus to developing educational institutions and medicine, leaving efforts to proselytize to Chinese churchmen.  In a China in which modern education was highly desired by the Chinese elite, and medicine was badly needed, missionaries won new respect.  Certain aspects of missionary work, like efforts to end the practice of footbinding, were embraced by progressive elements of the Chinese elite (see missionary publications like [***The Chinese Recorder***](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doctype.aspx?doctype=1) and [***Light and Life Magazine***](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=1139&list=index&id=l)).   By the mid-1920s the Chinese political situation began to take on a more promising appearance.  After years in the political wilderness, Sun Yat-sen returned to Canton in 1920 and began to build a new Nationalist Party (Guomindang or Kuomintang).  While not a Marxist, Sun was impressed by the Russian Revolution, and began to utilize Leninist ideas of a disciplined revolutionary vanguard party.  The Communist International (better known as the Comintern), came to Sun’s aid, sending a series of advisors to help him organize the party, and establish an effective military.  Comintern officials concluded that China was a long way from a communist revolution, and pressured the newly created Communist party (established by a group of May Fourth activists in 1920) to form a United Front with the Nationalists.   For several years the two parties cooperated effectively, and their leaders worked side by side.  When Sun died of cancer in 1925, Chiang Kai-shek, a man with a chequered past but the leader of the new Army, gradually took over the reins, edging out more established Nationalist political leaders.  Chiang would begin to move the Nationalist revolution in a more conservative direction Shortly after Sun Yat-sen’s death the Nationalists initiated their long planned effort to unify China militarily, called the Northern Expedition.  The Communists mobilized organized labor as well as local peasant uprisings in support.  The Northern Expedition proved a great success.  After the Nationalist armies won early victories, much of the opposition from warlord armies melted away.  Chiang Kai-shek moved to secure his position: ignoring and isolating opponents within the nationalist party sympathetic to the United Frond.  Then, when he arrived in Shanghai in 1927, he turned on his erstwhile allies in the Communist party, and with the help of the Shanghai organized crime network called the Green Gang, Chiang launched a bloody coup, wiping out the Communists in Shanghai. **The Nanjing Decade** Chiang Kai-shek established a new government in a new capital – Nanjing – and somewhat grudgingly won foreign recognition.  In what is sometimes called the ‘Nanjing Decade’ 1927-37, the Nationalists operated a one party state.  From the start there were limits to Nationalist power, as Manchuria, Xinjiang, and Sichuan remained largely outside of Nationalist influence and Tibet was in effect an independent state.   Chiang rather too quickly brought outsiders – often former warlords or their henchmen -- into the Nationalist party itself, weakening party discipline.  Problems quickly emerged:  corruption eroded popular support; urban oriented Nationalists failed to confront the growing economic and political problems in the rural hinterland; and China was hit hard by the global depression in the 1930s.   The Communists, almost destroyed a few years earlier, rebounded, and under the leadership of Mao Zedong, shifted to a strategy of organizing in the countryside, and turned to guerilla warfare.   A series of government ‘extermination’ campaigns failed to destroy the revived communist movement.    By the early 1930s, Chiang Kai-shek, aware of the parlous state of his government, was calling the Nationalist Party revolution a failure– pointing particularly to the problems of corruption and inefficiency in government.   Chiang’s response to the failures of the early years in power was a flirtation with fascism.  He brought in German military advisors to assist in his struggle against the Communists, and established a semi-secret fascistic organization within the Nationalist party called the Blue Shirts.  The Blue Shirts swore particular loyalty to Chiang as commander in chief, and did his bidding – Lloyd Eastman uncovered a Blue Shirt handbook of assassination. The idea was to reassert discipline within the party.  But in a political party already suffering from intense factionalism, the Blue Shirts were in some respects just another, particularly unattractive faction.  Chiang’s oft expressed desire to reassert party control and curtail corruptions, did not prevent him from appointing Du Wenxiu, the leading organized crime boss in Shanghai, as the head of the government’s anti-opium agency and other prominent positions.[**23**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref20) As bad as the internal problems were, the greatest threats to the Nationalist Party government came from the outside. In the early years in Nanjing the new Nationalist government gamely pressed for treaty revision.  At the same time, they sought greater control of semi-colonial institutions like the customs service (see the papers of the very controversial Inspector-General Sir [**Frederick Maze**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=3046&list=printed)).  But after 1931, these concerns shifted to the back burner.  On September 18, 1931, Japanese army officers, acting independently of Tokyo, arranged for a bomb to go off in a Mukden railway station.  Using this as a pretext, Japanese troops marched across the border from Korea with the goal of seizing control of Manchuria, a long-standing strategic priority in the eyes of Japanese military planners.  The Japanese made quick work of the conquest and established a puppet state called Manchukuo, rescuing the last Qing emperor, Puyi, from obscurity to serve as its figurehead.  In early 1932, the Japanese sent troops into the Chinese governed section of Shanghai.  Chinese forces defended stoutly, and a month of fierce urban warfare followed under close scrutiny of journalists and the international community. While a League of Nations investigation of the Mukden incident came down firmly on the side of China after an examination of the evidence, the international community offered nothing more than moral support.  In late 1932 a tense and rather unsatisfactory truce was made: the Japanese limited their military action to Manchuria and pulled their troops out of Shanghai. But no actual settlement was reached and both sides expected conflict to be resumed in the future. Unable to resolve the Japanese problem, the Nationalist government focused its attention on the Communists.  In 1934, the Communists, under intense military pressure fled their base areas in mountainous regions of southeast China, and in a long strategic retreat that they would later rather decorously dub the ‘long march,’ they fled thousands of miles across China, before reestablishing themselves in the mountainous region of Yan’an in Shaanxi province.  While Chiang Kai-shek could reasonably congratulate himself for significant progress in this area, he remained tone-deaf to popular perceptions.  By 1936 a growing movement for National Salvation was imploring the Nationalist government, the communists and various regional warlords to come together and form a united front to face the Japanese threat.  The Communists and other powerholders and political parties, expressed willingness to join together for the sake of the nation, while Chiang demurred and pressed ahead with another campaign against the Communists.  In December of 1936, in the bizarre Xi’an incident, Chiang Kai-shek was held hostage by one of his own generals, Zhang Xueliang, whose father, Zhang Zuolin, had been murdered by the Japanese in 1928. Zhang demanded that Chiang and the Nationalists  join a united front.  After delicate negotiations and claims that no deal had been made, Chiang was released, and shortly after a new United Front was formed.  **The Second World War and the Road to Revolution** In July 1937, a skirmish between Japanese and Chinese troops at the Marco Polo Bridge near Beijing set off the long expected conflict.  The Japanese moved quickly to occupy major cities in north China including Beijing, and again landed troops in Shanghai.  Through the autumn of 1937 the Japanese advanced down the Yangzi River towards the Nationalist capital in Nanjing, facing tough resistance from Chinese forces.  The Japanese had expected a quick victory, and Chinese resistance bred growing frustration.  In December when Japanese troops finally entered Nanjing, left as an open city by the Nationalists, the infamous Rape of Nanjing followed.  For six weeks, without interference from their superiors, Japanese troops engaged in an orgy of rape, murder and abuse.  Horrified foreign diplomats, missionaries and businessmen could only protest, and try to aid the victims who converged on the diplomatic quarter of the city.  International publicity generated considerable sympathy, but no foreign intervention.  But the Nanjing massacre set the tone for a brutal war.    By the end of 1938, the Japanese controlled virtually all of coastal China and the Nationalist government retreated inland, eventually establishing its wartime capital in Chongqing.  The Japanese tried to establish a puppet government lead by Wang Jingwei (Wang Ching-wei), a longtime Nationalist Party leader and former associate of Sun Yat-sen.  But the puppet government never gained legitimacy, either with foreign representatives or the population in occupied China.  To an astonishing degree, from 1937 to the end of 1941, foreign life in China was untouched by the war.  The treaty port cities continued on much as they had before, and for a few years the international settlement in Shanghai was a kind of neutral island.   Refugees poured in, including 20-30,000 central European Jews fleeing the Nazis, for whom Shanghai was virtually the only place they could go without a visa.  Following Pearl Harbor, the Japanese asserted control, and most British, American and Dutch nationals were dispatched to internment camps. The Chinese theatre during the Second World War was extremely bloody and frustrating for both sides, and yet important. The Japanese military had expected a quick victory.  But strong Chinese resistance continued, and the Japanese were forced to keep much of their army in occupied China.  From the point of view of Roosevelt and Churchill, therefore, keeping China in the war an important, as it made it much easier for the Americans to make progress in their island-hopping campaigns across the Pacific.  In 1942, the acerbic American general Joseph Stillwell was sent to China to lead the training of Chinese troops and provide advice in the field.  Stillwell was an able soldier but no diplomat, and as he became convinced that Chiang was more interested in solidifying his post-war position than fighting the Japanese, his relationship with him soured; Stillwell was replaced at Chiang’s request in late 1944.  The Allies struggled to supply equipment to the Chinese through an airlift over the Himalayas (“the hump”), reopening the Burma road.  As a further bonus, the British and Americans agreed to abrogate the unequal treaties, fulfilling a long standing goal of Chiang and of Chinese across the political spectrum.   But the Nationalists took terrible losses early in the war, and never regained the combat effectiveness they had shown early on.  In Chongqing, meanwhile, old problems of corruption and factionalism reappeared with a vengeance, undermining the morale of the population and the legitimacy of what was described as the government of free China. Meanwhile, the Chinese communists, operating out of their base area in Yan’an, made huge gains during the war.  Their guerilla campaigns against the Japanese were both popular (with Chinese) and effective.   Anti-Japanese sentiment was a superb recruiting tool for Mao and the Communists.   In the course of the war, the areas effectively controlled by the Communists expanded rapidly. [**24**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/horowitz.aspx#ref20)  When the atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki brought the Second World War to an end, China was on the side of the victors, but faced great challenges.  The government needed to reassert its authority over much of the nation.  Foreign observers were less than sanguine about its prospects:  the Chongqing government was rife with corruption and in the last year of the war seemed more concerned about the Communists than the Japanese. Early returns on reintegration were not particularly promising.  When Nationalist troops were flown in to Taiwan to begin its reintegration with the mainland after half a century of Japanese colonial rule, frictions developed immediately between ham-fisted Nationalist authorities and a populace who initially welcomed them, leading eventually to a brutal 1947 Nationalist purge of Taiwanese suspected of political activism. At the war’s end, the U.S. Government tried to avoid conflict between the Nationalists and Communists by brokering a national unity government.  But the final and most intensive effort along these lines, General George Marshall’s mission in the winter of 1945-6 failed.  Neither side, it would seem, was much interested in preventing a final confrontation. From 1946 to 1949, civil war raged across China between the Nationalist Government and Chinese Communist insurgents. Then Nationalists quickly seized control of major cities, but proved unequal to the tasks of governance.  Endemic corruption and general political chaos prevented economic recovery.   Nationalist monetary policies – printing money – led to a disastrous hyperinflation that destroyed the value of the currency, the yuan, and wiped out the savings of much of the urban middle class, severely damaging Chiang’s standing with a group that one would have expected to support the Nationalist side. The Communists based much of their support in the countryside.  In the areas they controlled, they governed rural areas effectively, cleared out alleged evil landlords and local bullies, and encouraged peasants to form small cooperative arrangements.  Their success in these areas seems to have had more to do with re-establishing a sense of order and the revival of local markets than their avowed goals of redistribution of land.  The Communists had a reputation for incorruptibility – Mao Zedong and his lieutenants made a point of wearing rough clothing, living simply and carefully paying for food and supplies requisitioned by their armies.   Mao’s flexible guerrilla tactics (developed over two decades of fighting the Nationalists and the Japanese) effectively made use of their strengths, motivation and familiarity with – and popularity in – rural areas.  The contrast with the Nationalists was stark.   In 1947 what would turn out to be the decisive battle in the civil war was fought in Manchuria.  The Communists under General Lin Biao, departing from their guerilla tactics, surrounded the Nationalists in the cities.  While the Nationalists had superior equipment, their motivation and discipline was poor.  By the middle of 1948, they were retreating south, and whole units shifted from the Nationalist side to the Communists.  As the Communist armies moved south, the Nationalist government crumbled.  Chiang Kai-shek, realizing that the war was likely lost, began preparing Taiwan as a retreat, from which he hoped the Nationalists would rise again to expel the Communists. On October 1 1949, Mao and his chief lieutenants mounted Tiananmen – the gate of heavenly peace – which faces into Beijing’s central square, and declared the establishment of the People’s Republic of China. The foreign experience of the Chinese Civil War and the Communist takeover was extremely varied.  For avowed leftists, like Edgar Snow, William Hinton and [**Rewi Alley**](http://www.china.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/doc-detail.aspx?documentid=1146&list=printed), the revolution was China finally standing up – a new beginning.   Mao and his party, glowingly portrayed in Snow’s *Red Star Over China*, was a heroic figure.  But for others it was the end of a life in China; the new government did not want the burden of so many foreign residents, and had no interest in resuming China’s previous position in the world trading network.  For missionaries who had struggled for so long in a difficult environment, and who had only gradually won the appreciation of Chinese, the outcome was particularly painful.  They faced a new government that had a deep antipathy for their work and which quickly moved to expel them; many left their life’s work deeply embittered.  For foreigners living in the treaty ports, many of whom ran their own businesses and had called China home for decades, they had little choice but to leave behind what they had created.  Most saw the writing on the wall well before 1949  – those that stayed quickly found that their businesses were unable to operate profitably within the framework of a state-run economy, and the foreign schools had closed.  The groups perhaps hardest hit were those ‘old China hands’ who had no other place to go: stateless Russians who had fled the revolution there, Jews who had fled the Nazis, Maccanese and others, often of mixed race. Some ended up waiting for long months in a Philippine refugee camp for visas before moving on to the US, Canada or South America.  Others went to Hong Kong.  The British colony would live on for another half a century, but in 1997, when it was finally transferred back to the sovereignty of Chinese government, the last relic of the treaty system had passed.**Endnotes****1** Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence:  Europe, China and the Making of the World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). **2** Beatrice Bartlett, *Monarchs and Ministers: The Grand Council in Mid-Ch’ing China*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).  Philip A. Kuhn, *Soulstealers: The Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768*, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990). **3** Albert Feuerwerker, *State and Society in Eighteenth Century China:  The Ch’ing Empire in its Glory* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies University of Michigan, 1976), 39-40. **4** Philip A. 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(Oct., 1991):.1073-1100. **21** There is a large literature on Republican Shanghai.  A good starting place on culture Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern:  The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), on the dark underbelly of Chinese Shanghai see Frederic Wakeman, Jr. *Policing Shanghai, 1927-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). **22** On foreigners in Shanghai see Nicholas Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire: Westerners in Shanghai and the Chinese Revolution of the 1920s (*Hanover: Middlebury, 1991).  The myth of the sign in the Shanghai public garden see Robert Bickers and Jeffrey Wasserstrom, “Shanghai’s ‘Dogs and Chinese Not Admitted Sign: Legend, History and Contemporary Symbol.”  *China Quarterly* 1995 (142): 444-466. **23** Lloyd Eastman*, Abortive Revolution: China Under Nationalist Rule*, 1927-1937 (Cambridge:  Harvard University Press, 1974). **24** The best starting point for China’s experience of the war is James C. 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