

L. The Century of Humiliation, Part 1: The Opium Wars

1. How are we to understand the peculiar fact that an ancient culture like China, with whom the rest of the world was so eager to trade, was itself closed off to trade, and only re-opened itself to the world in 1978?
2. The answer lies in the way Chinese culture struggled to adapt itself to globalization, especially when it was imposed on China by force.
3. Seeking a way to “balance” trade with China—i.e. hoping to receive gold & silver in exchange for selling their products to the Chinese, to balance the flow of money for purchases in the other direction—the British began to promote the consumption of opium (a highly addictive drug) to the Chinese people. Such drugs had always been available in small amounts, but the British were able to obtain much larger quantities from India, which they had colonized. Thus could thus encourage its consumption in China on a scale not previously seen.
4. When the Chinese emperor tried to prohibit the opium trade and seized British supplies of it, the British viewed this as an illegal and offensive act. They decided to punish China, sending a small fleet of advanced steam-powered warships to destroy the Chinese navy and bombard the coast to force China’s submission.
5. The **First Opium War (1839-42)** was an utter defeat for China, because European industrial and military technology had by that point surpassed that of all other cultures.
6. China was forced to pay a large penalty in silver as well as to accept trade with Britain and the rest of Europe at four additional ports along the coast. Also, the island of Hong Kong became British territory in perpetuity. (Eventually, it was returned to Post-Maoist China, as we will see soon.)
7. Despite a second attempt to prohibit the opium trade, France joined Britain’s side in the **Second Opium War (1856-60)** and China was again defeated, resulting in further penalties.

M. The Century of Humiliation, Part 2: The Collapse of Traditional Government

1. In between the opium wars, the Chinese government had to put down a rebellion led by a charismatic religious leader named Hong Xiuquan, who promoted himself as the Chinese brother of Jesus Christ.
2. This **Taiping Rebellion of 1850-64** showed the imperial family that foreign values such as Christianity were dangerous and could overrun Chinese culture, thus when they initiated the so-called “Self-Strengthening Movement” to find a way to deal with foreign powers, they could not commit to the kind of modernization that would involve copying foreign cultures.
3. The half-hearted strengthening initiative that the royal family endorsed was too little compared to what was happening in neighboring Japan. Japan had committed to a radical modernization plan and decided to copy the European powers by building an empire. When Japan set its sights on Korea as its first target, they convinced some of

- Korea's leaders to promote trade with Japan at the expense of China, leading to a conflict with China to see who would have the most influence over the Korean government. A rebellion against the Korean monarchy became the excuse for Japan and China to both send troops to support the king, but with both sides unwilling to tolerate an invasion by the other, they were soon at war. In this **Sino-Japanese War of 1894-5**, Japan completely dominated China.
4. Following the defeat in the war with Japan, the Chinese people were increasingly desperate for the restoration of their national honor. A strange rebellion took place, when a private militia, known to foreigners as the "boxers" (because of the martial arts they practiced) initiated the **Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901)**. The Boxers laid siege to the foreign embassies in the hope of coaxing the monarchy to join them and expel the foreigners. The imperial family was divided over how to respond, but the foreign powers quickly formed a coalition and attacked, bringing the rebellion to an end and against imposing harsh penalties on China.
 5. The cumulative failures of the royal family were too much to bear. As was always the case when a Chinese dynasty was judged to have failed the people, rebellions grew in intensity until finally, anarchy reigned. When yet another rebellion was sparked, China's leading general Yuan Shikai sided with the rebels, forcing what remained of the royal family, including a child emperor named Puyi, to give up power entirely. This **Chinese Revolution of 1911** set the scene for the rise of some kind of new government—but what kind would it be?