
Rise or Resurgence? China's 'Century of Humiliation' and the Role of Historical Memory in Contemporary China

Introduction

Much of the discussion in academic and think tank circles in recent years has focused on the nature and implications of what has been dubbed as China's 'rise'. Following China's astronomical economic development in the 1980s, two times Pulitzer Prize winner Nicholas Kristof proposed in 1993 that "[t]he rise of China [...] may be the most important trend in the world for the next century" (p. 59). Almost thirty years on, most political commentators in the broader Asia-Pacific region appear to agree with Kristof. The narrative of an increasingly empowered China, driven by consistent and unprecedented economic and industrial growth has remained a key component of the contemporary discourse on the People's Republic. Especially the visual imaginary of China's 'rise' in the international order has prevailed: in his seminal 2008 article, John Ikenberry (2008), Professor of Politics and International Affairs at Princeton University, suggested that the rise of China "*will undoubtedly be one of the great dramas of the twenty-first century*" (p. 23). Ikenberry's article is concurrently emblematic of questions commonly associated with China's rise: "*[w]ill China overthrow the existing order or become a part of it? And what, if anything, can the United States do to maintain its position as China rises?*" (Ikenberry, 2008, p. 23). More broadly speaking, the questions appear to be: what does China's rise mean for the existence and role of the post-WWII international order? Will China seek further integration into the given order or is Beijing pursuing the creation of a more Sino-centric order? What does this mean for the international relations of the wider region?

Public and academic debate, especially in recent years, has displayed a tendency to view China's shifting international role in a zero-sum logic in which the rise of China invariably comes at the expense of the contemporary order and its institutional manifestations. The adherence to this discourse has accelerated following the emergence of Xi Jinping as President of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Under Xi in particular, the narrative goes, China has shown limited to no respect for international conventions, including concepts of national sovereignty, as is purportedly exemplified by the territorial disputes in the Himalayas and the East and South China Sea (Kandhari, 2020).¹ In regard to trade, China is seen as generating unfair competitive advantages by undervaluing its currency, the Renminbi (RMB) (U.S. Department of the Treasury, 2019). In conjunction with China's efforts to enlarge and modernize its military, expand its 5G network and the notion that China's Belt-and-Road Initiative (BRI) constitutes either a form of imperial expansion (Torres & Thayer, 2019) or "*colonialism with Chinese characteristics*" (Kleven, 2019), these narratives converge into an

¹ This discourse is particularly pronounced in India and maritime actors in the East and South China Sea. Under the erstwhile President Donald Trump, the U.S. has also taken a highly assertive stance against Chinese violations.

image of China as a somewhat revisionist if not altogether hostile political actor. Developments within China, most notably the 2019 Hong Kong Security Law, the marginalization and repression of ethnic minorities and the lack of communication surrounding the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis additionally add a domestic element, too. It is notable that technically separate policy matters (e.g. military budget, monetary policy and domestic ethnic policies) are rarely distinguished anymore, creating a conception of China as an inherently authoritarian actor and, more crucially, as a peril to the present global order.

This paper seeks to re-narrativize China's growth over the past decades: through its industrialization and economic growth, China has reclaimed the political role it played until the 19th century, namely that of East Asia's political centre. In the process, China has obtained an increasingly central role in global economic processes by emerging as the world's leading export actor. Conceptualizing China as reclaiming its role in the world pre-necessitates a longer understanding of history that considers China's regional role prior to its encounters with Western imperialism, and, subsequently, how its encounters and experiences with imperialist expansion transformed its political place within East Asia. China's experience throughout the latter half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, this paper posits, are imperative to contextualize and understand modern China and its conduct, both in domestic and external affairs. To elaborate on this, this paper retraces the emergence of contemporary (i.e. communist) China through China's 'century of humiliation' (1839-1949), a period in which China faced several internal and external crises that fundamentally challenged the country's social norms, governmental structures and ideological frameworks. The century of humiliation has dramatically shaped China's self-image and sense of historicity, engendering a 'never again' mentality that factors into Chinese behavior today. Establishing an understanding of the role of history and corresponding social and political norms that *"regulate many areas of human interactions and create self-reinforcing (stable) patterns of behaviour"* (Acemoglu & Jackson, 2013, p. 1) is key to fostering a more constructive political approach towards China today.

To contextualize the impact of the century of humiliation, the paper will first discuss the perceptual origins of China as the 'Middle Kingdom' (*zhōngguó* in standard Chinese), which espoused a vertical, Sino-centric understanding of the world that situated China at its cultural-civilizational core and was shaped by China's historical experiences with its surrounding regions and peoples. This ideological framework, coupled with a unique history and geography, generated an insular framework that resulted in a lacking understanding of other, especially non-Asian cultures. After this, the paper turns to the events of the First Opium War (1839-1843) and China's imperial decline and collapse. Followingly, the paper discusses the different stages of the Chinese Civil War, interrupted only by the traumatic Japanese attack on China in the 1930s, and, ultimately, the end of the century of humiliation in modern communist historiography, marked by the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949. This time period has had a profound societal impact and shapes the ideational context under which China operates today, highlighting that understanding modern China requires understanding its history.

China as the 'Middle Kingdom'

Similar to the concept of manifest destiny in the United States, which suggested that it was the United States' God-given mission to expand to the Pacific coast, the concept of *zhōngguó* constitutes a national-civilizational myth that emphasizes the purported exceptionality of Chinese culture relative to other cultures. As laid out by Henry Kissinger (2011), who helped to negotiate the re-establishment of diplomatic ties between China and the U.S. in the early 1970s, China is unique in its cultural continuity: the Chinese script used today was developed more than four thousand years ago, a point at which the Greek city States that laid the foundation for European democracy had not been founded. It would take another thousand years for Rome to emerge as a political unit. The concept of China as a political-civilizational unit thus drastically predates the developments of modern Western political structures and thought and is comparatively linear: despite civil wars, the rise and decline of several dynasties and continuous political and geographical fragmentation, China as a State-esque political system prevailed to an extent at which Chinese historicity understands China as equal to civilization (and time) itself. Kissinger (2011) contends that because of this sense of continuity, Chinese historicity conceptualizes time in a different manner: whilst European cultures have an understanding of time as a progressive and linear phenomenon, political formation in China has taken on a cyclical form in which the state collapses before reconfiguring itself again, with periods of instability forming minor disruptions of a longer historical process centred around the existence of China. Crucially, the new agents of governance (i.e. following the rise of a new dynasty) would often re-employ the social norms and methods of the previous dynasty to ensure stable governance in China, allowing for cultural and systemic continuity.

China's political existence and culture was further protected and reinforced by geographical constraints limiting China's exposure to other cultures and civilizations. At the height of its territorial expansion, China laid claim over some of Central Asia's deserts, parts of Siberia, the jungles of Southeast Asia and China's eastern coastline. At the same time, its environment created natural borders limiting Chinese expansion: to the South and West, China was removed from other political entities by the Himalayas, the Pamir Mountains, located primarily in what today is Tajikistan, and the Central Asian deserts. To the north, expansion into Siberia's cold vastness guaranteed little strategic gains, and expansion to the east was limited by the maritime borders of the Western Pacific. In its immediate surroundings, China had relatively little competition by settled civilizations that were as developed as China was. China was not fully insular either, however, engaging in trade with the Middle East and the Mediterranean region via the Silk Road throughout and following the first millennia AD (Frankopan, 2015). Exposure to trade nevertheless mainly took place in the form of exposure to goods and merchants rather than whole-scale civilizations, and military defeat by outside actors (for instance by the Mongols in the late 13th century) did not result in whole-scale civilizational destruction but in the new Mongol leaders adopting the imperial title of Yuan, thereby integrating themselves into the Chinese body politic rather than destroying it (ibid).²

² The Mongol legacy in China should not be understated in its civilizational importance, leaving marked cultural implications for the country and region as a whole. Following the military victory over the Song Dynasty in

Predominantly absorbing foreign invaders into its heterogeneous population, China as a civilization remained mostly faced with the cultures on its periphery, none of which were as demographically or geographically large as China. The inequity in military and political power between China and these smaller units resulted in mostly vertical power relations that saw China's political neighborhood as serving a tributary role to the imperial centre.

China's size, its natural and topological diversity and comparative isolation further enabled a distinctly Sino-centric understanding of the world in which the emperor obtained a seemingly universal role. The Emperor was perceived as ruling over *tianxia*, "the earth or all lands under the sky" (Zeng, 2010). In this cultural imaginary, inextricably tied to China's geography and political-cultural experience, the changing yet continuous Chinese state and its values obtained a universal role that laid the foundation for conceptualizing the ideational and known physical world. Concurrently, the power dynamics present to China in its surroundings reinforced the notion that vertical power relations between the Chinese state and other political actors were nothing less than the natural order of things. In this world view, the emperor, who descended directly from the Gods and ruled over *tianxia* as *tianzi*, the Son of Heaven, ruled over a world that had China at its economic, cultural and political 'middle.'

Over time, China took active steps to maintain its limited exposure to foreign cultures and civilizations, resulting in the country's relative isolation. The perhaps most salient example of this partially self-chosen isolation is the destruction of the fleet of Admiral Zheng He in the first half of the 15th century. Commanding a fleet that was larger and more technologically developed than any other fleet in the world at that point in time, Zheng set out to explore the littorals of the Pacific and the Indian Ocean, reaching places such as Mecca, Calcutta, the Horn of Africa and the Strait of Hormuz (Wei, 2014; Frankopan, 2015). *Inter alia* due to shifting economic conditions at home, Zheng was recalled by the reigning emperor of the Ming Dynasty. Refocusing its endeavors on China's continental neighborhood, the Ming ultimately destroyed not just Zheng's fleet but eventually also the documentation and findings of his travels, striking a major blow to China's seafaring capacities and exposure to technological advancements elsewhere (Finlay, 2008; Reddick, 2014). Lacking maritime interaction reinforced China's isolation and reaffirmed a cognitive framework that saw China not as one civilization amongst others, but as *the* central civilization of the world. This had pivotal implications for its understanding of other people and their cultures: Thomas Meadows, a British translator who worked in China in the 19th century, observed that

An intelligent European, accustomed to reflect on the state of a number of countries, enjoying a variety of different advantages, and laboring each under peculiar disadvantages, could, by a few well directed questions, and from very little data, form a tolerably correct notion of the state of a people hitherto unknown to him; but it would be a great error to suppose that this is the case with the Chinese. Their exclusion of foreigners and confinement to their own country has, by depriving them of all opportunities of making comparisons, sadly circumscribed their ideas; they are thus

1279, the Mongols erected a new city on the grounds of Zhongdu, the imperial city of previous dynasties. This new city became known as Beijing (Frankopan, 2015).

totally unable to free themselves from the dominion of association, and judge everything by rules of purely Chinese convention. (Meadows, 1847, quoted in Kissinger, 2011).

For China, its vertical relations to other regional actors were supported by strategic considerations: China's existence as *zhōngguó* rendered it the region's central actor that other, smaller actors had to accommodate to as it remained practically impossible to defeat Chinese militarily or to occupy China as a whole (Womack, 2012). At the same time, China's geographical and economic centrality for the region and its control over resources raised the political costs for Chinese expansion and heightened the potential of imperial overreach, de-incentivizing direct Chinese control over the entire region and supporting a tributary structure between peripheral regions and the imperial core.

These strategic considerations factored into China's relative restraint in expanding its control beyond its immediate neighborhood, yet it is also important to note that China's regional role and legitimacy was defined in fundamentally different ways than notions of Western Statehood. China's understanding of the political self and its own legitimacy was delineated in cultural-civilizational terms rather than the Westphalian norms of European governance that demarcated political legitimacy as tied to executing political control over a defined territory (Osiander, 2001). This comparatively narrow Western sense of political sovereignty and legitimacy does not exist in the same form in the historical context of China and points towards the important role diverging political philosophies played (and, in some ways, continue to play). China's diverging understanding of Statehood must be recognized in its importance: as the Sinologist Lucian Pye (1992) famously argued, China is a "civilization-state" that is "pretending to be a [nation-]state" (p. 1662). China's approach to its regional role and the assumption that Chinese civilization was recognized as superior by all allowed for a heterogeneous societal system that included religious and ethnic minorities that were simply assumed to eventually (and almost inevitably) become 'Chinese.'³ Such an internal dynamic was only feasible due to this diverging understanding of sovereignty and legitimacy and the historical processes that gave rise to it.

Encounters with the West and the Opium War

Led by the Qing Dynasty, China prevailed as the unrivalled commercial and political centre of East Asia until the 19th century. The Qing Dynasty had displaced the Ming Dynasty in 1644 and expanded the control of the Empire into Tibet and Xinjiang (see Map 1). Towards the beginning of the 18th century, the Qing rulers began permitting traders affiliated to the British East India Company to conduct their operations from the southern port city of Canton (now

³ It must be noted here that 'Chinese' as an identity category is all-inclusive only on a theoretical level. In practice, what being Chinese meant (and means) was often defined by ethnic and religious majority groups, most notably the ethnic Han Chinese and the Confucian faith. In other words, ethnic and spiritual affiliations played a key role in who was viewed as more or less Chinese by what rulers at what point in time.

known as Guangzhou) in what became known as the Canton System (Van Dyke, 2005).⁴ All licit economic interactions between foreigners and China took place in Guangzhou, with opium, produced in British India, emerging as one of the most pivotal trading products between China and the colonial world. In lieu of slightly opening up Guangzhou, China remained restrictive of the presence and activities of foreigners in the country: teaching ‘barbarians’ Chinese or selling them books on Chinese history or culture was criminalized, foreign merchants had to leave Guangzhou in the winter and merchants could only conduct trade with state-authorized Chinese traders (Kissinger, 2011). Put differently, the trade between European countries, its colonies and China remained highly regulated and constrained. European powers also lacked political projection powers in China as the Russian Empire remained the only country with a permanent diplomatic representation in Beijing. Although China tacitly acknowledged and engaged with the growing European presence in Asia, it managed to uphold its relative isolation, both in economic and social terms.

Map 1: Chinese Territory in 1820



Source: Asia Pacific Curriculum (n.d.)

Amidst a growing trade imbalance vis-à-vis China and the sustained restrictions for foreign trade, British traders began to domestically lobby for enhanced access to the Chinese market, and the British Crown sent out Lord George Macartney in 1793 to discuss a further opening of the Chinese consumer markets. In what was an unusual move from the British Crown at the time, Macartney approached the Emperor not as an inferior representative of a

⁴ This institutionalized form of trade was not the first interaction the Chinese state had had with maritime European trade. Portuguese traders had landed on islands in Guangdong Province as early as 1513 before arriving in Guangzhou in 1516. In 1602, the Dutch East India Company began shipping Chinese ceramics to European markets. Yet, Great Britain were the first European power to establish sustained forms of economic representations in China’s coastal regions.

purportedly backwards country but adhered to the diplomatic protocol shown in Europe, reflecting the perception of the Emperor as an equal negotiation partner (Kissinger, 2011). The British approach towards China was steeped in more general popular European imaginations of China, which was perceived as

A magnificent spectacle: an empire far larger than any Europe had known since the fall of Rome, governed by a central administration through officers appointed, removed, transferred, or dismissed at the pleasure of the Throne, unhampered by feudal privileges or local powers. It possessed a vast historical record far more accurate, better dated, and reaching back farther than any comparable achievement of the West (Fitzgerald, 1964, p. 33)

Whilst the Europeans displayed a fascination with and interest in China, the Chinese Emperor appeared rather unimpressed with Macartney's audit and mission. Following a lengthy stay during which he displayed the advancements of British industrialization, Macartney was informed that China had no interest in purchasing any (industrial) British goods, creating a Chinese political representation in London (or allowing Great Britain to construct one in Beijing) or granting the Britons additional trade privileges (Harrison, 2017). What is known today as the Macartney Mission proved to be a tremendous disappointment for the British trading community, failing to negotiate a liberalization of the trade conditions. Beyond deficit concerns, the Macartney Mission had also highlighted the diverging cultural frameworks under which the Chinese and their British visitors operated: Macartney had been expected to perform the traditional *kowtow* bow in front of the Emperor, interpreted as humiliating by Macartney. The European and especially British disillusionment with China resulted in a shift of European perceptions of China, increasingly viewed as "*weak, corrupt, ill governed, racked by rebellions, swept by famine, ignorant of science, indifferent to progress, and still pagan*" (Fitzgerald, 1964, p. 34). The failure of the Macartney Mission, which represented both the British attempt to impose its imperial trade network as well as the Chinese reluctance to accept this marked the first breakdown in European-Sino relations.

There is scholarly disagreement on why the Macartney Mission failed in achieving its formulated goal of liberalizing regional trade. Some (Summers, 2016) have viewed Chinese behavior, especially in regard to the imperial insistence on the performance of the *kowtow* as an embodiment of Chinese arrogance and insularity. Others (Waley-Cohen, 1999) have argued that China's reluctance to liberalize trade served regime legitimacy considerations that attempted to reduce the role of foreign ideas in China and, hence, ensure the ideological supremacy of the Qing rulers (Waley-Cohen, 1999). Again others (Wright, 1960) have viewed Chinese behavior as consistent with its traditional Confucian values of 'harmony, stability, and hierarchy', thus marking an adherence to Chinese norms and practices that was interpreted as arrogant by the British who lacked the means to understand Chinese behavior in its own cultural context (Shakir, 2008). Whatever was the case (and it is possible that all three explanations are equally valid), China's behavior had ostracized Great Britain and the broader European political community.

China's continuous refusal to liberalize trade found its escalation in the First Opium War (1839-1842), fought between the Qing Dynasty and Great Britain. Opium consumption had

accelerated over time, especially due to the sustained supply by British traders, and was criminalized in China in 1729. At the same time, the Chinese refusal to amend the Canton System had resulted in British traders pushing more opium into China via corrupt Chinese officials in Guangzhou (Blue, 2000). To halt the trade, the Emperor instructed all European opium traders to destroy their produce in 1839. When they refused to do so, Chinese authorities detained the merchants in their factories, making the destruction of their opium supply the condition for release. The Emperor furthermore sent a direct letter to the British Crown, instructing that Britain should immediately halt its opium production in British India (Têng et al., 1954). This symbolically reaffirmed the vertical power relations China had communicated during the Macartney Mission some decades earlier, indicating that China considered Great Britain not to be equal but subordinated. The detention of British nationals and China's seeming refusal to enter diplomatic relations ultimately escalated in the Opium War during which British ships blocked and attacked Chinese trading ports along the coast, with the modern equipment of the Royal Navy ensuring a Chinese defeat.

The subsequent Treaty of Nanjing in 1842 inflicted severe long-term damage on China. The treaty stipulated that China was to pay a compensation of six million silver dollars whilst losing Hong Kong to the British Crown and having to open up so-called 'treaty ports' (Fuzhou, Ningbo, Shanghai and Xiamen) in which merchants could operate without Chinese regulations and create permanent trade posts (USC US-China Institute, n.d. a). Moreover, the cities would no longer be subject to Chinese law but to the law of the countries operating in these cities, effectively rendering treaty ports extraterritorial enclaves of imperial powers and ending the trade monopoly of Chinese authorities and merchants. The Treaty of Nanjing ended the Canton System and constituted the first of what is known in Chinese historiography as a series of 'unequal' treaties that were *"not negotiated by nations treating each other as equals but were imposed on China after a war [...] they encroached upon China's sovereign rights [...] which reduced her to semicolonial status"* (Hsü, 2000, p. 239). For China, the issue was not necessarily that of military defeat: the Empire had been defeated prior, yet previous losses resulted in the absorption of the victors (such as the Mongols) into the Chinese body politic. Great Britain, however, had questioned China's Sino-centric world order by assuming the same rights as the Middle Kingdom and its Emperor and inflicting an unequivocal military defeat on the country. It had challenged a China-dominated order with one that was wholly incompatible with the millennia-old Chinese assumptions of how and why the world functioned the way it did. The outbreak of the Opium War had increased Europe's stakes in China and initiated China's 'century of humiliation'.

1842-1912: Unequal Treaties and Dynastic Collapse

Contemporary China frames its 'century of humiliation' (*bainian guochi* in standard Chinese) as stretching from the beginning of the First Opium War to the victory of Mao Zedong's CCP in the Chinese Civil War in 1949. In this period, Beijing lost control over a third of its territory, was hit by internal uprisings and foreign interference and saw its millennia-old dynastic system collapse. The notion of national humiliation is fundamental for modern Chinese political culture, constituting a key part of political education in China and being frequently

referenced in popular culture and political messages by CCP leaders (Kaufman, 2010). China today, then, has been socialized to think about Chinese history, at least until 1949, in terms of humiliation. National humiliation consequently plays a key role in the formulation of modern national identity and historical consciousness (Wang, 2008).

The collapse of the Canton System and the increased British presence on China's coast was further compounded by additional unequal treaties and internal strife during the 1840s and 1850s. Although the defeat in the First Opium War had undermined China's ideological foundations and transformed the political status quo, most stratas of China's elite remained insistent on maintaining China's traditionally non-industrial structure, viewed as key for the survival of China's social fabric. Whilst this approach sustained China's Confucian structures, it also further embedded China's industrial underdevelopment relative to the Western powers. France capitalized on this to enforce the Treaty of Whampoa in 1844, another 'unequal treaty' that granted France the same trade privileges the British had gained in the Treaty of Nanjing (Wright, 1943). In 1844, Chinese representatives also signed the Treaty of Wanghia, which granted the United States preferred nation status alongside Great Britain and France and reversed some Chinese policies, formalizing the creation of Christian representations in American treaty ports, reversing the ban on Christianity more generally and decriminalizing the teaching of Chinese dialects to non-Chinese people (USC US-China Institute, n.d.c). The growing European presence and its political challenge to the Qing Dynasty had also weakened the domestic standing of the Emperor as several rebellions in the following decades resulted in the death of approximately 60 million people between 1850 and 1873, reducing China's population from around 410 million inhabitants to 350 million (Fairbank & Goldman, 2006). Of particular notability was the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864), led by a Chinese-Christian sect in Southern China, which openly threatened not just the political but also the Emperor's Confucian-ideological authority to rule over China (Reilly, 2004). Both internally and externally, the power of the Chinese court had become challenged by the arrival of the Europeans and Christianity.

China's growing subjugation and the Chinese response to this continued sense of political change resulted in China fighting the Second Opium War against France and Great Britain from 1856 until 1860, again culminating in military defeat and additional losses in territory and sovereignty. The overall size of bilateral trade had not developed to the satisfaction of the British, also because the trade benefits stipulated in the Treaty of Nanjing and the Treaty of Whampoa were met with significant domestic opposition within China. Great Britain was eager to renegotiate the stipulations of the Treaty of Nanjing, which was to expire in 1854, pressuring the Qing government to further liberalize the trade for British merchants in line with Britain's trade status as most favored nation (Ting Sun-Pao, n.d.). Moreover, China was to open up all of its coastline for trade with European powers (ibid.), an interest that other European actors inevitably shared. Great Britain found a welcome excuse to enforce its demands when Chinese authorities confiscated a British merchant vessel in 1856. The ensuing British war efforts were joined by France, representatives of which cited the killing of a Christian missionary in Guanxi Province as reason for entering the war (Young, 2016). In the following military offensive, the joint forces took Guangzhou and the northern Dagu forts, a position that could have been used to march towards Beijing. China proved again unable to

counter the military threat posed by European navies and went on to sign the 1858 Treaty of Tientsin (also known as the Treaty of Tianjin), which granted the establishment of additional treaty ports. Moreover, the treaty allowed Great Britain, France and the United States the construction of permanent diplomatic representations in Beijing whilst also including a provision that followers of the Christian belief were to be protected from prosecution (USC-US China Institute, n.d.b). In 1859, Chinese forces attacked allied troops once more, resulting in another joint military expedition that completely destroyed the Emperor’s summer palaces before marching towards Beijing and threatening (but not enacting) the destruction of the Forbidden City. Again, China had been left defeated and its coastline further exposed to the political and economic interests of foreign powers (see Map 2 below).

Map 2: China’s Treaty Ports, 1860



Source: Asia Pacific Curriculum (n.d.)

China was also under territorial pressure at its northern borders as the Russian Empire sought to capitalize on China’s weakened political position by extracting territorial concessions in Inner Mongolia, Manchuria and Xinjiang. Having claimed special ‘spheres of influence’ in these border regions, the Russian Empire had tacitly expanded its regional clout by entering agreements with local leaders, hereby exploiting the Dynasty’s weak peripheral control and its ethnic minority policies. Although not a fighting party in the Second Opium War, Russia inserted itself into the negotiations of the conflict as a mediator to effectively impose the 1858 Treaty of Aigun, which granted Russia control over a large strip of land in outer Manchuria and the large Sakhalin island in the Japanese Sea, translating into a territorial gain of 965.000km square kilometre (Denisov, 2015). Russia also gained enhanced trade access to cities in the Chinese periphery, most notably Kashgar in Xinjiang and Urga (today Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia). On the newly gained territory, Russia founded the city of Vladivostok in 1860, giving Russia access to a deep water port that hosts Russia’s Pacific Fleet until this day. The Treaty of Aigun manifested multiple strategic losses for China: China had ceded territory whilst its political control over and legitimacy in its peripheral regions had been

further undermined. At the same time, Russia's control over Manchuria had changed the security dynamics of the Sea of Japan by adding a new regional stakeholder with vested strategic interests in the region. In another unequal treaty, gains by a foreign party had been at the expense of China.

China's strategic control over its periphery was further diminished in the French-Sino War (1884-1885) that culminated in the creation of French Indochina. The Nguyen Dynasty, a tributary to the Qing Dynasty, had ruled what today is known as Vietnam with imperial power since 1802, with Cambodia and Laos serving tributary relationships to the government in Hue. France had begun to expand its colonial power into Southeast Asia as early as 1858, occupying Southern Vietnam and making further inroads into the region in the following decades. Here again, the territorial and political gains made by France came at the detriment of China's political interests. When French-Sino tensions escalated in the 1880s, French troops reaffirmed the superiority of the Western militaries by expelling the Chinese support forces from Vietnam and using its navy to attack targets along the Chinese coast (Harris, 2018). China lost control over its tributary possessions in the 1885 Peace Treaty, and, after defeating a local insurgency, France incorporated the territorial gains made in Southeast Asia into one colonial entity: French Indochina. The symbolism of the Qing Dynasty's imperial decline, both in its core and periphery, became more apparent with every lost conflict.

Nine years after losing Indochina, China was challenged for the first time not by a continental Western power but by another East Asian actor that had responded markedly different to the European entrance into East Asia: Japan. Similar to China, Japan had remained averse to the growing colonial influence in East Asia throughout the 19th century. China and Japan shared other similarities as well: like China, Japan presumed its understanding of the world to be universal and its Emperor to be divine and had maintained a relative isolation (Brownlee, 2011) until the 1853-1854 Perry Expedition, which had effectively forced Japan to open itself to trade and diplomacy with the Western world (Hones & Endo, 2006). Japan took a different path to China, modernizing and Westernizing its bureaucracy and military in the so-called Meiji Era, which followed the Meiji Restoration of 1868 (Garon, 1994).⁵ In line with domestic political influence of the military, Meiji Japan was increasingly eager to expand its control over the Korean Peninsula, which had been used in the past as a bridgehead for the invasion of Japan, i.e. by the Mongols in the 13th century (Duus, 1998). China, however, also held continued strategic interests in Korea given the shared borders between both countries and its alliance with the local Joseon Dynasty.

Influence over Korea emerged as a defining issue in Japanese-Sino relations in the 1880s and 1890s, exacerbated by hardening anti-Chinese sentiments in Japan. Tensions escalated following the assassination of a pro-Japanese Korean activist in Shanghai in 1894 and the outbreak of a rebellion against the Joseon Dynasty that convinced Japan that China would annex Korea to defend its interests. China did indeed send a military contingent in support of

⁵ The Meiji Restoration refers to the re-establishment of imperial rule in Japan under Emperor Meiji. Between 1603 and 1868 Japan had been under the rule of the Tokugawa shogunate, which had faced growing domestic and external pressure following the Perry Expedition and ended following the resignation of the last *shōgun* in 1868.

the Korean Dynasty, sparking a Japanese invasion of Korea and the outbreak of the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). Japan was able to ensure victory in the conflict due to its modernized army and navy. The defeat in the war ended China's control over Korea, which declared itself as an independent State in 1897.⁶ The ensuing Treaty of Shimonoseki formalized Japan's territorial gains: China ceded control over Taiwan, the Liaodong Peninsula as well as several islands in the East China Sea and Taiwan Strait to Japan (Haipeng & Guoqiang, 2017).⁷ Despite these stipulations Tokyo never managed to fully enact the Treaty of Shimonoseki: wary of Japan's growing influence in China, the 1895 'Triple Intervention' by Russia, Germany and France created enough diplomatic pressure on Japan to cede control over Liaodong to Russia (Fuping, 2015).⁸ Despite this, the trends in regional power dynamics were obvious for everyone to observe: for the first time, China was no longer East Asia's political centre - rather, Japan had grown to be a competitor, manifesting another challenge to China's political and cultural role in the region.

China's public opposition to the interference by foreign and especially Christian-Western powers found its domestic manifestation in the Boxer Rebellion (1889-1901), supported by the *de-facto* ruler of the Qing Dynasty. The rebellion, named after the Chinese martial arts practice, was anti-imperialist, anti-foreign and anti-Christian in character and erupted in the backdrop of the defeat in the Japanese-Sino war and the growth of foreign influences spheres in China as well as an ongoing drought that detrimentally impacted agricultural production (Cohen, 2007). Anti-Christian and anti-foreign violence initially erupted in Northern China against foreign elements, viewed as the epitome of China's woes. In 1900, the Boxers marched to Beijing in support of the Qing Dynasty and its opposition to the foreign presence, forging a new, more strongly pronounced nexus between public and governmental opposition (Silbey, 2012). Foreigners and Chinese Christians gathered in Beijing's Legation Quarter, where most foreign businesses and representations were concentrated, and barred themselves in the quarter in fear of violent repercussions. The Boxers received diplomatic support by China's reigning monarch of the time, Empress Dowager Cixi, who declared war on the Western powers when she was informed about the formation of the 'Eight-Nation Alliance' (consisting of Austria-Hungary, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States) that sought to suppress the uprising.

The Eight-Nation Alliance set out to lift the siege on the Legation Quarter, which had been surrounded by joint Chinese forces since June 1900. In August 1900, the allied corps marched

⁶ In 1910, the Korean Empire was formally annexed by Japan. Five years prior, Japan had already made Korea a Japanese protectorate following Tokyo's victory over the Russian Empire in the Japanese-Russo war.

⁷ Until this day, China has not recovered control over all of the territories lost in the Treaty of Shimonoseki. Especially the issue of the Senkaku/Diaoyudao Islands, a series of uninhabited islands stretching between Taiwan and the Okinawa Islands are a space for major geopolitical tensions between Beijing and Tokyo.

⁸ The Triple intervention is believed to have had key implications for Japanese foreign policy. Zachmann (2006) suggests that the "*Tripartite Intervention convinced Japan that diplomacy without real power was too precarious a game*" (p. 80), resulting in a growing armament investment in Japan and the formulation of a more aggressive and imperialist foreign policy that would ultimately find its manifestation in the Asia-Pacific theatre of WWII.

from Tianjin to Beijing, quickly lifting the siege and defeating the joint Chinese troops, herewith putting an end to the Boxer Rebellion. The Cixi government had to sign the Boxer Protocol in September 1901, which imposed a series of severe sanctions on Imperial China. These included: (1) financial reparations, (2) a two-year import ban on arms, (3) permanent stationing of foreign troops in major Chinese cities, (4) the destruction of China's northern coastal forts, which further decimated China's coastal defence, (5) a ban on Chinese inhabitants in the Legation Quarter, and (6) several symbolic acts (i.e. the creation of Western statues and the execution of insurgents) that manifested the rebellion's military defeat (Library of Congress, n.d.). The Boxer Protocol added insult to injury: following their military victory in September 1900, the allied forces had ransacked Beijing, including the Forbidden City, resulting in a vast destruction and theft of Chinese cultural heritage that has not been recovered until today (Barmé, 2008). The symbolic dimension of this destruction must be underscored: the ransacking of the Forbidden City was not just an insult to the Qing Dynasty, but also to the Chinese civilization and its historical experience and achievements as such. Marred by defeat after defeat, the Qing Dynasty was tumbling towards its collapse.

The 1903/1904 British mission to Tibet, often also referred to as the British invasion of Tibet, further destabilized China at its southern periphery and consolidated British control over the Eastern Himalayas. Led by the British Army officer and explorer Francis Younghusband, the British launched an expedition to establish a border between Sikkim in British India and Tibet, the only Himalayan State that fell under Chinese rather than British suzerainty at the turn of the 19th century (Aldrich, 2020). Younghusband's mission was also driven by geostrategic concerns connected to the 'great game' between Imperial Britain and Imperial Russia: Lord Nathaniel Curzon, then Viceroy of India, remained eager to constrain the power projections of the Russian Empire in Central and South Asia and saw Tibet as a strategic space into which Russia could expand its power given China's peripheral weakness (Carrington, 2003). British India had formally demarcated the Indo-Sino borders in the 1890 Calcutta Convention, in which the Qing Dynasty considered Tibet's Southern border, tangling the Himalayas, as the border between China and British India (Cheney, 2017). The authorities in Tibet, however, neither recognized the demarcated borders nor Beijing's political legitimacy to demarcate its borders in the first place, resulting in the British viewing the Qing's claims over Tibet as "*constitutional fiction*" (Anand, 2009). China's inability to enforce its regulations reinforced an understanding of Qing China as fundamentally weakened, and the Tibetan decision to not recognize the borders could also be read as an internal recognition of the Dynasty's wavering power.

Tibet also rejected direct negotiations with British authorities and cordially engaged with Russian representatives, a development that exacerbated Curzon's strategic fears. The Younghusband-led 'Tibet Frontier Commission,' sent to Tibet by Curzon in 1903, encountered opposition from the Tibetan armed forces that was readily matched by the better equipped and well-trained British-Indian forces. The British troops entered Tibet's capital of Lhasa in 1904, where the Tibetan authorities signed the 1904 Anglo-Tibetan Convention under pressure from Younghusband. The Convention stipulated that (1) Britain was allowed to trade in parts of Tibet, (2) Tibet was to pay reparations, (3) Tibet was to recognize the Sikkim-Tibet border and (4) no outside intervention bar from the British was to be permitted by Tibet

(McKay, 1997). Points (2) and (4) were later amended in the 1906 Anglo-Chinese Convention (also known as the Chinese Adhesion to the 1904 Lhasa Convention), in which Britain agreed to reducing the to-be-paid reparations and recognized Chinese authority over Tibet under the condition that China would not allow any other foreign State to interfere in Tibet's internal affairs (Cheney, 2017). The Younghusband mission had changed relatively little in the political constellations of the region. It had nevertheless reasserted the Europeans' capacity to impose treaties on China and its affiliates whilst also raising concerns regarding the internal legitimacy of the Dynasty, especially in its peripheral regions. In its historical context, the Younghusband expedition reasserted the perception of the Qing Dynasty's imperial decline as an accelerating political process.

China's continuous experience of degradation, in combination with the Qing's inability to formulate a strong political response to European, Japanese and Russian imperialism ultimately culminated in the collapse of the Dynasty in the 1911/1912 Xinhai Revolution and the birth of the Republic of China (ROC). The turn of the century had seen growing mass civil disorder in China which Empress Dowager Cixi sought to counter via widespread social reforms. In 1908, however, both Emperor Zaitian and Cixi died, resulting in growing uncertainties regarding the future of the Dynasty as Zaitian had had no male heir. Zaitian's nephew, Prince Puyi, who had only been born in 1906, was declared Emperor by Cixi before she died, with Puyi's father, Prince Chun, taking over his son's affair as Regent (Hudson, 2020). Three years later, in 1911, parts of the Imperial Army launched a rebellion in Wuhan in the so-called Wuchang Uprising that initiated the Xinhai Revolution. The Revolution saw its goals formulated in the republican, nationalist and anti-Qing terms of the *tongmenghui* organization (Zheng, 2018). The Dynasty initially suppressed the uprising through the armies of General Yuan Shikai, who rose to the rank of Prime Minister (PM) of the Imperial Cabinet in December 1911 and enjoyed practically unrivalled political power in the court. Yuan's rise came at the detriment of Prince Chun, who was replaced by his sister-in-law, Empress Dowager Longyu. To avoid further bloodshed, Longyu permitted Yuan to enter negotiations with the republicans, led by Sun Yat-sen, who had been elected President of the ROC's provisional government in late 1911. Longyu ultimately signed an Imperial edict in 1912 that formalized the abdication of Emperor Puyi, therewith ending the reign of the Qing Dynasty and enabling the creation of the ROC (Jie, 2017). China's last dynasty had collapsed 73 years after the British had first attacked Guangzhou, bringing an end to the dynastic tradition that had reigned China for two thousand years.

1912-1931: Warlord Era and Civil War

Whilst it marked a major disruption in the historical continuity that had largely dominated China until then, the collapse of the Qing Dynasty did not alleviate China's immediate problems at home or abroad. Instability dominated the early political existence of the ROC: Sun had resigned as President in 1912 and was replaced by Yuan that same year. This exacerbated the factional fault lines within the ROC that ultimately led to some of the factions violently fighting one another. China's destabilized condition made it a welcome prey for regional colonial powers, most notably Japan. Japan had already extracted vast territorial

concessions from China, most notably in Manchuria, following the 1894-1895 war. Following the growing international isolation of Imperial Germany that escalated in WWI, Japan moved to expand its political presence in China, laying siege on the German troops stationed in Tsingtao (now Qingdao) in Shandong Province in the early stages of the war and occupying Shandong Province in November 1914. In 1915, Japan formulated what are known as Tokyo's twenty-one demands to Beijing, paired up into five groups (Naraoka, 2017):

- Group 1 (four demands): Japan was to gain formalized legal control over the former German ports in Shandong Province as well as the regional industries.
- Group 2 (seven demands): Japan's territorial holdings in Manchuria were to be expanded further into Southern Manchuria and Inner Mongolia, including settlement rights for Japanese citizens and extraterritorial legal status for Japanese settlers.
- Group 3 (two demands): Japan was to gain access to the resource-rich areas in Central China for industrial use.
- Group 4 (one demand): China was to be prohibited from granting any further coastal or island concessions to any imperial power bar Japan.
- Group 5 (seven demands): China was to hire Japanese policing and financing advisors, allowing Japan to construct three additional railways in China and creating a joint, Japan-dominated policing organization. Japan was also to gain exclusive rights to construct cultural bodies (such as temples) in China, as well as control over Fujian Province, located on the Chinese mainland opposite of Taiwan.

Japan's vast political demands were never fulfilled as Yuan's government leaked the demands of Group 5 to other imperial powers (Minohara et al., 2014). Under growing diplomatic pressure, Tokyo was forced to delete Group 5, a fulfillment of which would have effectively turned China into a Japanese protectorate (ibid.). The subsequent treaty, signed in 1915, nevertheless exacerbated and formalized Japan's control over China, resulting in heightened nationalist and anti-Japanese sentiments in China. Internationally, Tokyo's twenty-one demands intensified Japan's isolation due to its imperially overbearing, aggressive posturing in East Asia.

Internally, the demise of the Dynasty enabled the growing infighting between different factions of Yuan's government and emerging actors, including the CCP and the nationalist Kuomintang (KMT). Yuan, who had helped to establish the ROC, also known as the Beiyang government, declared himself Emperor of China in 1915 but had to distance himself from the claim after a wave of public unrest. Three years earlier, the *tongmenghui* and smaller rebelling parties merged to form the Kuomintang (KMT), a republican-nationalist organization led by former ROC President Sun. Yuan died in 1916, further factionalizing the already fragmented political landscape and resulting in what has become known in China as the 'Warlord Era'. The now divided and infighting Beiyang factions remained relatively weak in Southern China, where the KMT established its own government with Guangzhou as a capital. In 1921, the KMT began requesting international assistance to unify the country - in a global system ravaged by WWI, however, the newly-established Soviet Union was the sole party to grant

support to Sun. Hopes in the activities of the international community were weak as it was: the 1919 Treaty of Versailles that ended WWI in Europe formalized and agreed to the Japanese claims over Shandong Province, causing widespread Chinese uproar and culminating in the May Fourth Movement (Ip et al., 2003). The Soviets inserted themselves into China's political factionalism by supporting both the KMT and the CCP, which had been formally founded in 1921 with direct Soviet support. Under pressure from the Soviet Union, the then larger KMT and relatively minor CCP joined forces in 1923. However, the simultaneous support by the Soviet Union to the organizations, both of which had different ideological orientations (Republican-nationalist vs. Marxist) also generated a competition for Soviet material and political support as well as competition for ideological primacy. This struggle for political and ideological primacy would manifest itself as one of the defining caveats of modern Chinese history in what became known as the Ten Years Civil War.

The fault lines between the CCP and the KMT began to deepen in the latter half of the 1920s, especially following the rise of Chiang Kai-shek's as leader of the KMT. Chiang, who succeeded Sun in 1925, faced both KMT-internal opposition as well as ideological conflicts with the CCP, closely influenced by the Soviet Union. The CCP and the Soviets undermined Chiang's position in the coalition by denying approval and support for Chiang's plan to attack the Beiyang armies in Northern China, a plan commonly referred to as the 'Northern Expedition' (Jordan, 2019). The final split occurred in 1927 when the CCP and the leftist wing of the KMT, led by Wang Jingwei, moved the coalition's headquarters to Wuhan, where communism enjoyed a greater level of public support than in Guangzhou. Chiang grew increasingly opposed to the communist elements in the CCP-KMT coalition, viewing KMT members that aligned with the CCP as betraying the KMT's republican values (ibid). The KMT's growing anti-communist sentiment violently escalated in the anti-communist April 1927 purges. This alienated the left-wing factions of the KMT and caused a split between Chiang's and Wang's KMT factions, with Wang fleeing to France in 1927 (Smith, 2000). Having purged the KMT of alleged communists whilst hardening its ideological position, Chiang re-launched his Northern Expedition, capturing Beijing in June 1928. The KMT had emerged as China's main political player. Yet, the purge of the left-wing elements in the KMT had also marked the overt split between the CCP and the KMT. The activities of warlords and the CCP also remained salient threats despite the KMT's control over Beijing.

1931-1945: Japan's Manchurian Campaign and the Second Japanese-Sino War

Engulfed in violent civil war, China's sovereignty was again challenged by Japan's imperial ambitions in Manchuria in the 1930s. Japan had failed to expand its hold over Manchuria in the context of the twenty-one demands in 1915. Tokyo's position in China had prior been strengthened by its victory in the Japanese-Russo war of 1905, which had allowed Japan to re seize control over the Liaodong Peninsula that stretches into Manchuria. Japan had initially ceded control over Liaodong to Russia following the 1895 Triple Intervention. To ensure the long-term viability of its strategic interests in Manchuria and Liaodong after 1905, Japan had established a sustained regional military presence in the form of the Kwantung Army. The Kwantung Army, despite being formally connected to the remainder of Japan's military,

enjoyed significant autonomy in its operations in Manchuria (Young, 1998). Moreover, many Kwantung leaders were members of the *Kōdōha* (“*Imperial Way*”) faction that advocated for an aggressive continental expansion of the Japanese Empire and a reorganization of Japanese society along proto-fascist, authoritarian lines (Skya, 2009).⁹ Manchuria was particularly pivotal for these plans given its richness in natural resources and its geographical proximity to Siberia, the control over which, the *Kōdōha* narrative went, would address Japan’s lack of resources and poor economic and financial performance. The 1920s had been hard on the Japanese economy: after initial growth, the 1923 Great Kantō earthquake, which cost over 100.000 lives, the 1927 Shōwa financial crisis and the global Great Depression had ravaged Japan (Skya, 2009). To strengthen its hand in Manchurian political developments during the Civil War, Tokyo had already started supporting the local warlord Zhang Zuolin (Kwong, 2017). In 1928, Zhang was assassinated by Japanese authorities in Manchuria after failing to halt the Northern Expedition, with Zhang’s son Zhang Xueliang taking his father’s position. Zhang Xueliang, however, pledged allegiance to the KMT rather than Japan, uniting parts of China under the rule of the KMT and weakening Japan’s grip over Manchuria at the turn of the decade.

In September 1931, members of the Kwantung Army perpetrated what became known as the ‘Mukden Incident’ by staging an attack on a Japanese railway line in Mukden (now Shenyang) in Southern Manchuria and blaming the attack on Chinese insurgents (Qingqing, 2015).¹⁰ Japan invaded Manchuria as a reaction later that month, encountering opposition from local warlords but little from the KMT, which remained focused on defeating the CCP (Zhang & Weatherley, 2013). Led by the Kwantung Army, the Japanese forces systematically committed war crimes and other human rights abuses in Manchuria that became globally known and further fermented a popular image of Japan as a hostile and revisionist international actor (Wilson, 2003). To add to the political legitimacy of its imperial project, envisaged by some leaders as enabling Japan’s economy to take “*a great leap forward*” following the Great Depression (quoted in Yamamuro, 2006, p. 17), Japan established the State of Manchuria in 1932, later transformed into the Empire of Manchuria in 1934. Also known as Manchukuo, the ruler of Japan’s puppet State was no other than Puyi, the former child Emperor of the Qing Dynasty. Manchukuo enjoyed minimal international recognition, most notably due to the 1932 Lytton Report, commissioned by the League of Nations, which contended that Japan had operated as an aggressor and had illegally occupied Chinese territories (World Digital Library, n.d.). The Lytton Report was a decisive factor contributing to Japan’s exit from the League of Nations in 1933, intensifying Tokyo’s international isolation (Presseisen, 2013) and heightening Japan’s sense of urgency in Manchuria.

⁹ The *Kōdōha* faction was not unrivalled within Japanese elite policy and military circles. The *Tōseiha* faction, also known as the Control Faction, advocated for a less aggressively expansionist foreign policy (Skya, 2009).

¹⁰ There is some evidence to suggest that the Mukden Incident was staged by the Kwantung Army without prior coordination with the Imperial War Office in Tokyo, meaning that the Kwantung Army potentially attacked autonomously and thus created a situation in which the Japanese invasion of Manchuria became a political imperative for the War Office (Thorne, 1972).

The establishment of Manchukuo, *de-facto* led by the Kwantung Army rather than Puyi, allowed Japan to establish an exploitative system in Manchuria that served the labor and resource-related needs of the Japanese economy. To address the issue of overpopulation, Japan encouraged the migration of Japanese families as settler-colonials to Manchukuo, developing a highly structured ethnic system that prioritized ethnic Japanese over local ethnic groups (Yamamuro, 2006). The Manchurian administration legalized exploitative, slave-like working conditions whilst substituting regional-cultural frameworks with those imposed by Japan, i.e. via educational programs (Dryburgh, 2019). The legal system was designed to serve the political and economic interests of Japan while the Kwantung Army used Manchuria as an economic laboratory to trial drastic socio-economic reforms that were not feasible in Japan, aiming towards the establishment of an economically self-sustainable, highly militarized system. Japan's reforms in Manchuria yielded industrial benefits for Tokyo but were based on the systematic exploitation of non-Japanese locals, dehumanized in Manchukuo's industrial system (Yamamuro, 2006). The Kwantung Army also trialled biochemical weapons on human subjects, most notably in the activities of Unit 731, reducing non-Japanese Manchurians to effectively non-human status. Japan had transformed Manchuria into a Japanese colony whilst establishing a long-term, heavy military presence in China in the form of the Kwantung Army.

Manchuria's colonization by Japan and the outbreak of the Second Japanese-Sino War connected to the events of the Chinese Civil War as the KMT's focus on defeating the CCP initially prevented a united policy against the Japanese policy in Manchuria. The KMT had initially accepted Japan's incursion into Manchuria via the 1933 Nanggu Truce agreement - yet, skirmishes between Japanese troops and different Chinese factions remained consistent and ultimately escalated in the 1937 Marco Polo bridge incident in Beijing. The 1901 Boxer Protocol and its post-1905 control over Liaodong had granted Japanese forces close access to Beijing and its surrounding areas. Tokyo moved its troops largely freely through the country, especially surrounding Japanese railway projects and major cities. Fighting between Chinese and Japanese armed forces broke out on 7 July 1937 after Japanese troops began to initiate military drills in Beijing's vicinity, resulting in conflict with members from the National Revolutionary Army (NRA), the military wing of the KMT (Kaiser, 2017). The NRA managed to repel the Japanese troops at the bridge in Beijing's Fengtai District, with a truce being called on July 8. Despite the truce, Japan began shelling the Fengtai District with full-scale fighting occurring soon after, escalating a minor skirmish into a full military conflict. On July 20, Japan authorized the dual incursion of the Manchurian divisions of the Kwantung Army and the Japanese-Korean Army into China proper. Ensuing negotiations with Chiang's KMT failed, also due to the assassination of a Japanese officer in Shanghai. Beijing and Tianjin fell to Japan in July and August 1937. Tokyo now had a logistical base for launching military incursions into China.

The conflict with Japan evoked a (re)unification of the CCP and KMT in opposition against Japan whilst concurrently marking one of the most traumatic periods in modern Chinese history. Chiang had entered into an alliance with the CCP in 1937, known as the Second United Front, after Zhang Xueliang refused to suppress CCP movements in China's rural northern areas and abducted Chiang to coerce Chiang to agree to a CCP-KMT alliance (Shai, 2012). At

the same time, the Japanese forces moved against other major KMT strongholds, most notably Shanghai and Nanjing, the base of the KMT government, capturing both in late 1937. The conduct of the Japanese troops in Nanjing in particular has become infamously known as the “*rape of Nanjing*”, referring to the systemic rape and murder of Chinese civilians at the hands of Japanese armed forces between December 1937 and January 1938 (Brook, 2001). The total death toll of the Nanjing massacre is subject of academic discussion today, with the PRC placing it north of 300,000 victims (Chengshan, 2014). This number has been disputed by some Japanese historians, who have suggested a lower number, and tensions regarding the issue continue to shape bilateral relations until this day (Sneider, 2013).

The conflict cost millions of lives and produced millions of refugees, compounded by the destructive *modus operandi* of Japan and infighting in the Second United Front. The KMT government refused to negotiate with Japan as long as Tokyo did not return to the pre-1937 boundaries. Within the Second United Front, the CCP formally recognized the KMT as China’s government in return for material and financial support, yet the actual interoperability between both groups remained minimal as the KMT focused on engaging the Japanese forces in direct combat whereas the CCP primarily employed guerilla tactics (Goodman, 2000). The uneasy character of the Front began to impede the effectiveness of the collaboration as early as 1938 as the CCP appeared to concentrate its efforts on recruitment and the purge of what were viewed as reactionary, pro-KMT elements in the Chinese countryside. Collaborative efforts between the CCP and KMT came to an end after CCP commanders showed insubordination to KMT officials in 1939 and 1940, resulting in the return of overt CCP-KMT fighting and the dissolution of the Second United Front (Garver, 1988). The KMT returned to attempting to contain the communist spread in China whilst the CCP expanded its popular support base by operating in rural areas and absorbing left-leaning KMT affiliates. A united front against Japan had shown limited effectiveness and reflected the deep fault lines between CCP and KMT.

Japan managed to make widespread territorial gains in the early years of the conflict but struggled to effectively govern the occupied territories, also as its brutality alienated local populations. Japan reemployed some puppet governments in the occupied zones, bringing back the former KMT leader Wang Jinwei, who had fled to France following the anti-communist purges, to preside over the puppet Nationalist Government in Nanjing (Jie, 2012). Similar to the political apparatus in Manchukuo, the creation of administrative Chinese divisions served to uphold a sense of political legitimacy as well as lighten the administrative workload for the Japanese - however, public opposition to Japan and the lack of real political power by installed puppet governments resulted in Japan struggling to effectively govern its occupied territories. For Tokyo, strategic advancements were further complicated by the KMT’s scorched earth tactics. The KMT’s strategy devalued the territorial gains made by Japan but inflicted severe damages on the own civilian population which were further compounded by rural guerilla operations that evoked an additional targeting of China’s civilian population by the Japanese forces (Mitter, 2013). Despite the growing violence against its own population, Chiang’s government received surging diplomatic support by the United States and the United Kingdom from 1942 onwards, with Chiang being declared allied commander-in-chief, thereby making the KMT a *de-facto* member of the anti-Axis entente.

The growing logistical support by Western powers via the Indian subcontinent and the creation of American air bases on Chinese soil boosted the KMT's position vis-à-vis Japan, enabling territorial gains and growing KMT offensives from 1944 onwards that also benefited from Tokyo's weakening position in the Pacific and Southeast Asia. At the same time, the KMT began fighting the Muslim-communist Ili Rebellion in Xinjiang that was supported by the USSR (Han, 2010), thus briefly transforming the KMT's struggle into a both anti-Japanese and anti-Soviet one. The impending Japanese defeat in the war was propelled by the decisive allied victories in Burma/Myanmar that allowed for the reestablishment of the Ledo Road connecting India and China and facilitating the transport of resources and personnel. In mid-1945, the KMT retook Hunan and Guanzhong and the Soviets invaded Manchuria from Siberia in August 1945, resulting in a Japanese exodus from the region and the end of the short-lived Empire of Manchukuo. The nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki brought an end to the Japanese war effort throughout Asia. The Chinese government, led by the KMT, had emerged as one of the victors of the war. China's price for victory, however, had been high: China lost between fifteen and fifty million people during the war (here again, estimates differ) (The National WWII Museum, n.d.) and was faced with an immense refugee crisis, with up to 90 million people having been displaced by the war (Mitter, 2013). Moreover, the victory in the war had not addressed China's internal issues, with the CCP having expanded its popular base and the KMT turning towards increasingly repressive methods targeting alleged communists. The Chinese Civil War was about to launch into its final phase.

1945-1949: Second Phase of the Civil War and the Victory of the CCP

Beyond the early stages of the Second United Front, the fighting between the CCP and the KMT had never subsided completely. The trajectory of WWII had boosted the CCP's strategic position as the KMT-Japanese fighting had weakened the KMT. Concurrently, the CCP's guerilla tactics enhanced the CCP's legitimacy, experience in combat and overall support base, especially in rural areas. Chiang and Mao Zedong, who had risen as the CCP's leader, began engaging in peace negotiations in August 1945 and reached the so-called Double Tenth Agreement in which the CCP recognized the KMT as the legitimate government whereas the KMT acknowledged the CCP as its legitimate political opposition. The Double Tenth Agreement had little impact on the military situation on the ground, however, where the NRA and the CCP's People's Liberation Army (PLA) carried on fighting for political supremacy.

For Chiang, Manchuria was of particular concern as the Soviets, who had strongly sided with the CCP, held the territory until their scheduled departure. The CCP enjoyed a stronghold in Northern China and was in prime position to take over Manchuria and its developed industrial system following the Soviet departure. The foreign interests in China, somewhat still persistent today, were tacitly demarcated in these early stages of the final phase: the KMT received support from the U.S., which helped to airlift nationalist troops to Northern China to challenge the CCP's control in the region. At the same time, the USSR refused access to Manchuria to the KMT, and, despite dismantling the remainders of Japan's industrial infrastructure in Manchuria and shipping it to the USSR, the Soviets left the arms gathered from the Kwantung Army to the CCP and enabled the CCP to take over Manchuria in 1946

(Tanner, 2003). Supported by these strategic gains, the CCP's strategy shifted in this period from one that opportunistically sought to exploit the KMT's weaknesses to one that considered the CCP strong enough to be successful in an all-out conflict with the KMT. The CCP's more expansive regional designs were boosted by the KMT's poor governance performances in nationalist zones and the use of former Japanese collaborators in the fight against the CCP (Fairbank & Goldman, 2006). Overt fighting between the CCP and KMT broke out again in June 1946, ending the intermediary stages of negotiations and fully initiating the final stage of the conflict.

Especially the CCP's rural support base, propelled by the promise of land reform and the abolition of exploitative feudal structures, enabled the CCP to generate a sizable military force that was able to absorb immense losses of personnel. The support for the CCP and its rural appeal was boosted further by the KMT's increasingly militarized approach to national unification that saw the total military defeat of the communists as the only way of achieving unity. The KMT partially repeated the government failures of the Japanese by sustaining a corrupt system that failed to delegate local responsibility, which helped to alienate the left-leaning rural populations and incentivized support for the CCP (Fairbank & Goldman, 2006). Mao capitalized on the KMT's strategic failures in a counterattack from 1947 onwards, resulting in territorial gains, the integration of surrendering NRA troops into the PLA and the acquisition of U.S.-funded arms. Chiang also refused to surrender large nationalist holdings such as cities to the CCP, resulting in the KMT making no relative strategic gains or mitigating the losses inflicted upon them. The CCP's appeal to local populations was made apparent in the 1949 Battle of Huaihai in which NRA troops were surrounded by CCP tanks that had been hidden with the help of up to four million local peasants (Fairbank & Goldman, 2006). Mao took Beijing in October 1949, proclaiming the founding of the People's Republic and decimating the last coastal pockets of nationalist resistance in the last months of 1949. Chiang and the KMT fled to Taiwan, where they declared themselves as the last representatives of the ROC and, thus, the sole legitimate government of China. China's Civil War had come to an end. Communist China had been born.

The victory of Mao's CCP brought an end to more than a century of political and ideological fragmentation. Mao, both an ardent nationalist and communist who viewed many of China's historical-political failures with contempt, went on to fundamentally revolutionize China's social fabric towards the one-party State that China is today. China's transition from a dynastic system to a highly fragmented, disunited system and ultimately to Mao's communist regime inflicted immense and potentially unrivalled humanitarian damage on the Chinese civil population. For better or for worse, the CCP introduced stability to China after more than a hundred years of unrest and death. China's century of humiliation had ended.

[Assessing the 'Century of Humiliation'](#)

The century of humiliation, a notion first established in 1915, and the historical experience of the Chinese people between the outbreak of the First Opium War in 1839 and the establishment of the PRC in 1949 plays a profound role in contemporary Chinese identity. On

the one hand, the experiences have given rise to the contemporary system of political control. On the other hand, the ideological connotations associated with the governance of the CCP and the way in which history is understood in China are fundamentally rooted in the century of humiliation. The rule and role of the CCP is inextricably linked to the legacy of China's encounters with the West and general processes of East Asia's political development in the context of capitalism and imperialism. This historical period and the connected notion of national humiliation serves as a highly ideological framework that plays a key role in the internally legitimizing the CCP as well as China's behavior in foreign affairs. At the same time, the humiliation discourse is not a purely utilitarian construct serving ideological purposes of governmentality but marks a reference to distinct historical experiences that have impacted the entirety of China and are deeply ingrained into the national consciousness.

The concept of national humiliation remains a highly ideological notion that has been invoked in different ways by different actors. The sense of humiliation continues to be used in both China and Taiwan until this day. For the KMT, still the major political force on Taiwan, the period ends with the KMT's recognition as one of the victors of WWII and the defeat of Imperial Japan in 1945 as Chiang declared it the KMT's aim to "*avenge [the] humiliation inflicted upon China*" (Wang, 2012). Mao, on the other hand, saw the establishment of the PRC as largely ending the humiliation inflicted on China. This also helps to explain why Taiwan's independence is still viewed as a historical manifestation of humiliation that must be addressed by reintegrating Taiwan into China. The KMT's and CCP's different understandings of when and how the century of national humiliation ended are thus highly emblematic of how diverging ideological underpinnings produce different readings of history. In spite of these ideological differences, the discourse in both China and Taiwan places the outbreak and defeat in the First Opium War as the launch of a highly traumatic national experience for the Chinese people. As observed by Callahan (2004), this humiliation-centred discourse continues to shape the cognitive framework of the country and also has an influence on how China conducts itself in regard to other countries: "*one of the goals of Chinese foreign policy has been to "cleanse National Humiliation"* (p. 202), prominently manifested in the territorial losses inflicted on the Qing Dynasty. The discourse and experience of humiliation hereby legitimizes a regime that can be aggressive both in its foreign policy (i.e. regarding a potential encirclement by the U.S. and its allies in the Western Pacific) as well as its interior policy (i.e. towards ethnic minorities or political elements that allegedly challenge the CCP's internal legitimacy). As such, the discourse surrounding humiliation has created an underlying threat-perception that legitimizes the CCP's one-party rule and its masculine posture towards issues of territoriality to never let such a humiliation occur again (Florick, 2016). There is perhaps nothing in the Western world that carries the same seminal importance - as put by Mark Tischler (2020) in *The Diplomat*, "*[political] weakness is something that the Chinese people simply cannot afford*". Chinese behavior today, then, is only cognizable when China's historical experience and the social and ideological impact of this experience is considered.

Recognizing this historical context (and China's civilizational history prior to the 18th century) can stimulate a reconceptualization of China's role in the world and a modification of the narrative of China's 'rise' that has become so prevalent in the West. The narrative of China's

rise conceptualizes China as rising in the context of an international order largely created without China's political input, most prominently by the United States and its allies following WWII. For China, the contemporary order therefore presents itself as one that, at best, has been created to serve the national interests of others rather than China. At worst, the still partially U.S.-dominated international and regional order is perceived as one that actively seeks to contain China, for instance by stringing a series of American allies along China's coast. This political order does not assign China the centrality it used to have or that Beijing feels it is entitled to. This, of course, does not mean that the order yields no benefits for China: entering the World Trade Organization, for instance, has dramatically enhanced China's access to global markets. For China, partial gains do not detract from the fact that the current order has, to some extent, been imposed on China and partially operates to China's detriment.

Bandwagoning on components of the current order whilst simultaneously shaping an order that is more Sino-centric can perhaps be best conceptualized as not embodying China's rise but its resurgence. From a Chinese perspective, China's current growth and its establishment as one of the central actors in global politics equals a reclaiming of its regional, and, increasingly also global role. This can also help to contextualize why China has been eager to create parallel political economic and financial structures (such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization) that are predominantly Sino-centric in their character. It is important to note that the narrative of China's rise implies a distinctly Westernized understanding of global history that reduces the international order to the institutions and norms that have been in place since 1945 without sufficiently incorporating an analysis of how the contemporary order has been shaped by the legacy of colonialism and imperialism. China is rising in relation to the current order - it is resurging in relation to its historical place in the world. This is not to justify Chinese aggression or to suggest that changes in international relations pertaining to China do not deserve attention or criticism. It is to say, however, that the Chinese way of making sense of its own history and international relations must be recognized to foster a more nuanced understanding of Beijing and its policy. Contextualizing history means contextualizing behavior: China's territorial claims in the Himalayas and Taiwan, for instance, manifest not necessarily forms of classical imperialism but are made sense of as reclamations of lost Qing territories. Again, this does not mean that concessions should be made or that Chinese policy should not be criticized. The international community must nevertheless refrain from consistently simplifying Chinese behavior to known categories such as imperialist, colonialist etc. Its historical experience and the implications of this experience on its system today must be recognized and understood. Only a more nuanced, less hawkish understanding of China can yield sustainably satisfactory results.

Conclusion

Social norms and historical experiences remain interlinked with one another, ultimately shaping the cognitive framework under which individuals as well as States contextualize their understanding of the world and their present, past and future in it. Comprehending the nexus

between how and why States behave the way they do necessitates an understanding of their history and how historical experiences have shaped their contemporary framework. In the case of China, the world has often shown a lack of contextualization: China's behavior is predominantly (but not exclusively) conceptualized as if it occurred in a vacuum, detached from history and how this history shapes ways of thinking about the world. China's internal (i.e. in Hong Kong, Tibet and Xinjiang) and external behavior (i.e. in the Himalayas and the South China Sea) is recognized and rightly criticized, yet it is not understood in its own cultural, political and historical context, meaning that it is also not responded to in a way that is aware of this context. Beijing's approach towards Tibet and Xinjiang, for instance, can only be comprehended if it is contextualized with the historical experiences of the Chinese State regarding political instability in the periphery and the implications this instability had on Chinese realms of the past. China's aggressive conduct in the South China Sea and the ardent militarization of its coastal defense can only be understood when it is recognized that a weakly defended coastline has evoked highly traumatic experiences for the Chinese people. China's claim in Arunachal Pradesh, beyond a geopolitical component, only becomes cognizable when it is acknowledged that China has historically shown a fundamentally different understanding of sovereignty and territoriality. This does not mean that China's behavior cannot or should not be questioned and criticized. It must. The analysis, however, must go beyond a superficial account to examine not just how China behaves, but why China behaves the way it does.

China should be criticized for violating international conventions and the norms that govern modern interstate behavior. It would also be over-simplistic to suggest that geopolitical considerations play no role whatsoever in China's behavior in international affairs. Many geostrategic imperatives are constants that are similarly perceived by different forms of government and hence produce similar forms of posturing. However, even geostrategic considerations are sometimes linked to the role of social and historical experiences, making it paramount for historical contexts and narratives to be acknowledged and considered rather than forgotten and ignored. Obliviousness and indifference towards China's past can evoke serious misinterpretations of China's intentions and thus produce outcomes that are undesirable for everyone.

Genuine understanding of the other's fears and concerns, as well as what historical contexts they derive from, will be paramount for forging a global order that accounts for the inevitability of a resurging China in a more effective and positive way for all.

Bibliography

- Acemoglu, D., & Jackson, M. O. (2013). History, Expectations, and Leadership in the Evolution of Social Norms. *Review of Economic Studies*, 1-34.
- Aldrich, R. (2020). The Himalayan kingdoms, British colonialism and indigenous monarchs after the end of empire. In R. Aldrich & C. McCreery (Eds.), *Monarchies and decolonisation in Asia* (pp. 60-79). Manchester University Press.
- Anand, D. (2009). Strategic hypocrisy: the British imperial scripting of Tibet's geopolitical identity. *Journal of Asian Studies*, 68(1), 227-252.
- Asia Pacific Curriculum. (n.d.). *The Opium Wars in China*. Retrieved November 24, 2020, from <https://asiapacificcurriculum.ca/learning-module/opium-wars-china>
- Barmé, G. (2008). *The Forbidden City*. Harvard University Press.
- Blue, G. (2000). Opium for china: the british connection. In T. Brook & B. T. Wakabayashi (Eds.), *Opium regimes: china, britain, and japan, 1839-1952* (pp. 31-55). University of California Press.
- Brook, T. (2001). The Tokyo judgment and the rape of Nanking. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 60(3), 673-700.
- Brownlee, J. S. (2011). *Japanese historians and the national myths, 1600-1945: the age of the gods and Emperor Jinmu*. UBC Press.
- Callahan, W. A. (2004). National insecurities: humiliation, salvation, and Chinese nationalism. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 29, 199-218.
- Carrington, M. (2003). Officers, gentlemen and thieves: the looting of monasteries during the 1903/4 Younghusband mission to Tibet. *Modern Asian Studies*, 37(1), 81-109.
- Cheney, A. J. (2017). Tibet lost in translation: sovereignty, suzerainty and international order transformation, 1904–1906. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 26(107), 769-783.
- Chengshan, Z. (2014, April 04). Number of victims in Nanjing Massacre irrefutable. *China Daily*. https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2014-04/04/content_17405780.htm
- Cohen, P. A. (2007). Humanizing the Boxers. In R. A. Bickers & R. G. Tiedemann (Eds.), *The Boxers, China, and the world* (pp. 179-197). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Denisov, I. (2015, June 10). *Aigun, Russia, and China's "Century of Humiliation"*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Moscow Centre. Retrieved November 18, 2020, from <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/60357>
- Dryburgh, M. (2019, Autumn). Life Histories and National Narratives: Remembering Occupied Manchuria in Postwar China. *History Workshop Journal*, 88(229-251).
- Duus, P. (1998). *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea*. University of California Press.
- Fairbank, J. K., & Goldman, M. (2006). *China: a new history* (2nd ed.). The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Feng, Z. (2010). The tianxia system: world order in a chinese utopia. *China Heritage Quarterly*, 21. http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/tien-hsia.php?searchterm=021_utopia.inc&issue=021.
- Finlay, R. (2008). The Voyages of Zheng He: Ideology, State Power, and Maritime Trade in Ming China. *Journal of the Historical Society*, 8(3), 327-347.
- Fitzgerald, C. P. (1964). *The Chinese View of their Place in the World*. New York University Press.

- Florick, D. (2016, September 24). *China's National Century of Humiliation: Context for Today's Tensions*. Human Security Centre. Retrieved November 18, 2020, from <http://www.hscentre.org/asia-and-pacific/chinas-national-century-humiliation-context-todays-tensions/>
- Frankopan, P. (2015). *The Silk Roads: a new history of the world*. Bloomsbury.
- Fuping, G. (2015). France and the First Sino-Japanese War, 1894-1895. *Social Sciences in China*, 36(4), 138-163.
- Garon, S. (1994). Rethinking modernization and modernity in Japanese history: a focus on state-society relation. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 53(2), 346-366.
- Garver, J. w. (1988). The Origins of the Second United Front: The Comintern and the Chinese Communist Party. *The China Quarterly*, 113, 29-59.
- Goodman, D. S. G. (2000). *Social and Political Change in Revolutionary China: The Taihang Base Area in the War of Resistance to Japan, 1937-1945*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Haipeng, Z., & Guoqiang, L. (2017). The Treaty of Shimonoseki, the Diaoyu Islands and the Ryukyu Issue. *International Critical Thought*, 7(1), 93-108.
- Han, E. (2010). Boundaries, discrimination, and interethnic conflict in Xinjiang, China. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence (IJCV)*, 4(2), 244-256.
- Harris, L. J. (2018). The Sino-French War, 1884–1885. In L. J. Harris (Ed.), *The Peking Gazette: A Reader in Nineteenth-Century Chinese History* (pp. 238-252). Brill.
- Harrison, H. (2017). The Qianlong Emperor's letter to George III and the early-twentieth-century origins of ideas about traditional China's foreign relations. *The American Historical Review*, 122(3), 680–701.
- Hones, S., & Endo, Y. (2006). History, distance and text: narratives of the 1853–1854 Perry expedition to Japan. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 32(3), 563-578.
- Hsü, I. C. Y. (2000). *The rise of modern china* (6th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Hudson, J. J. (2020). A Game of Thrones in China: The Case of Cixi, Empress Dowager of the Qing Dynasty (1835–1908). In Z. E. Rohr & L. Benz (Eds.), *Queenship and the women of Westeros* (pp. 3-27). Springer.
- Ikenberry, G. J. (2008). The rise of china and the future of the west: can the liberal system survive? *Foreign Affairs*, 87(1), 23-37.
- Ip, H. Y., Hon, T. K., & Lee, C. C. (2003). The plurality of Chinese modernity: a review of recent scholarship on the May Fourth movement. *Modern China*, 29(4), 490-509.
- Jie, C. (2017). Why Late Qing Constitutional Reform Failed: An Examination from the Comparative Institutional Perspective. *Tsinghua China L. Rev*, 10, 107.
- Jie, L. (2012). Wang Jingwei and the “Nanjing Nationalist Government”: Between Collaboration and Resistance. In D. Yang, J. Liu, H. Mitani, & A. Gordon (Eds.), *Toward a History Beyond Borders: Contentious Issues in Sino–Japanese Relations* (pp. 205-239). Harvard University Press.
- Jordan, D. A. (2019). *The Northern Expedition: China's National Revolution of 1926–1928*. University of Hawaii Press.
- Kaiser, D. (2017, July 7). The War That Started 80 Years Ago Wouldn't Happen Today. We Can Still Learn From It. *Time*. <https://time.com/4839373/marco-polo-bridge-incident-lessons/>
- Kandhari, Y. (2020, July 10). China's Expansionism - A Strategic Perspective. *Indian Defence Review*. <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/chinas-expansionism-a-strategic-perspective/>

- Kaufman, A. A. (2010). The “Century of Humiliation,” then and now: Chinese perceptions of the international order. *Pacific Focus*, XXV(1), 1-33.
- Kissinger, H. (2011). *On China*. Penguin Books.
- Kleven, A. (2019, May 6). Belt and Road: colonialism with Chinese characteristic. *The Interpreter*. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/belt-and-road-colonialism-chinese-characteristics>
- Kristof, N. D. (1993). The rise of China. *Foreign Affairs*, 72(5), 59-74.
- Kwong, C. M. (2017). *War and Geopolitics in Interwar Manchuria: Zhang Zuolin and the Fengtian Clique during the Northern Expedition*. Brill.
- Library of Congress. (n.d.). *SETTLEMENT OF MATTERS GROWING OUT OF THE BOXER UPRISING (BOXER PROTOCOL)*. Retrieved November 20, 2020, from <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/us-treaties/bevans/must000001-0302.pdf>
- McKay, A. (1997). *Tibet and the British Raj: the frontier cadre, 1904-1947*. Curzon Press.
- Minohara, T., Hon, T., & Dawley, E. (2014). Japan and the Wider World in the Decade of the Great War: Introduction. In T. Minohara, T.-K. Hon, & E. Dawley (Eds.), *The decade of the Great War: Japan and the wider world in the 1910s* (pp. 1-21). Brill.
- Mitter, R. (2013). *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945: The Struggle for Survival*. Penguin UK.
- Naraoka, S. (2017). Japan's Twenty-One Demands and Anglo-Japanese relations. In A. Best (Ed.), *Britain's Retreat from Empire in East Asia, 1905-80* (pp. 35-56). Routledge.
- The National WWII Museum. (n.d.). *Research Starters: Worldwide Deaths in World War II*. Retrieved November 26, 2020, from <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/students-teachers/student-resources/research-starters/research-starters-worldwide-deaths-world-war>
- Osiander, A. (2001). Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth. *International Organization*, 55(2), 251-287.
- Preseisen, E. L. (2013). *Germany and Japan: A Study in Totalitarian Diplomacy, 1933-1941*. Springer.
- Pye, L. (1992). Social science theories in search of chinese realities. *The China Quarterly*, 132, 1161-1170.
- Qingqing, S. (2015). Reinterpreting the Soviet Policy toward Japan before and after the Mukden Incident. *Social Sciences in China*, 36(4), 193-218.
- Reddick, Z. (2014). The Zheng He Voyages Reconsidered: A Means of Imperial Power Projection. *Quarterly Journal of Chinese Studies*, 3(1), 55-65.
- Reilly, T. H. (2004). *The Taiping heavenly kingdom : rebellion and the blasphemy of empire*. University of Washington Press.
- Shai, A. (2012). *Zhang Xueliang: The General Who Never Fought*. Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Shakir, S. (2008). Confucianism and the Macartney mission: dispelling the myth of Chinese arrogance. *Emory Endeavors in World History*, 2.
- Silbey, D. J. (2012). *The Boxer Rebellion and the great game in China: a history*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Skya, W. A. (2009). *Japan's holy war: the Ideology of radical Shinto ultranationalism*. Duke University Press.
- Smith, S. A. (2000). *A road is made: communism in Shanghai 1920-1927*. University of Hawaii Press.
- Sneider, D. (2013). Textbooks and patriotic education: Wartime memory formation in China and Japan. *Asia-Pacific Review*, 20(1), 35-54.

- Summers, C. C. (2016). Addiction, arrogance, and aggression: the question of attitude in the first opium war. *Tenor of Our Times*, 5(3), 1-15.
- Tanner, H. M. (2003). Guerrilla, Mobile, and Base Warfare in Communist Military Operations in Manchuria, 1945-1947. *The Journal of Military History*, 67(4), 1177-1222.
- Têng, S.-Y., & Fairbank, J. K. (1954). *China's Response to the West A Documentary Survey, 1839–1923*. Harvard University Press.
- Thorne, C. (1972). Outbreak: From the Mukden Incident to the League Resolution of 24 October 1931. In *The Limits of Foreign Policy: The West, the League and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1931–1933*. Macmillan.
- Ting Sun-Pao, J. (n.d.). *The Second Opium War and the annexation of Kowloon Peninsula*. Hong Kong Marine Department. Retrieved January 15, 2021, from https://www.mardep.gov.hk/theme/port_hk/en/p1ch3_1.html
- Tischler, M. (2020, August 18). *China's 'Never Again' Mentality*. The Diplomat. Retrieved November 27, 2020, from <https://thediplomat.com/2020/08/chinas-never-again-mentality/>
- Torres, S.-M., & Thayer, B. A. (2019, June 27). China's Belt and Road Initiative is neo-Imperialism. *The Spectator*. <https://spectator.us/china-belt-road-initiative/>
- USC US-China Institute. (n.d. a). *Treaty Of Nanjing (Nanking), 1842*. Retrieved November 18, 2020, from <https://china.usc.edu/treaty-nanjing-nanking-1842>
- USC US-China Institute. (n.d. b). *Treaty Of Tianjin (Tien-Tsin), 1858*. Retrieved January 7, 2021, from <https://china.usc.edu/treaty-tianjin-tien-tsin-1858>
- USC US-China Institute. (n.d. c). *Treaty Of Wangxia (Treaty Of Wang-Hsia), May 18, 1844*. Retrieved January 15, 2021, from <https://china.usc.edu/treaty-wangxia-treaty-wang-hsia-may-18-1844>
- U.S. Department of the Treasury. (2019, August 5). *Treasury Designates China as a Currency Manipulator*. Retrieved November 5, 2020, from <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm751>
- Van Dyke, P. A. (2005). *The Canton trade: Life and enterprise on the China coast, 1700-1845* (1st ed.). Hong Kong University Press.
- Waley-Cohen, J. (1999). *The Sextants of Beijing: Global Currents in Chinese History*. New York: Norton.
- Wang, Z. (2008). National Humiliation, History Education, and the Politics of historical memory: patriotic education campaign in China. *International Studies Quarterly*, 52, 783-806.
- Wang, Z. (2012). *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*. Columbia University Press.
- Wei, Y. (2014). Admiral Zheng He's voyages to the "West oceans". *Education About Asia*, 19(2), 26-30.
- Wilson, S. (2003). *The Manchurian Crisis and Japanese Society, 1931-33*. Routledge.
- Womack, B. (2012). Asymmetry and China's tributary system. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 5, 37-54.
- World Digital Library. (n.d.). *Situation in Manchuria: Report of the Lytton Commission of Inquiry*. Retrieved November 25, 2020, from <https://www.wdl.org/en/item/11601/>
- Wright, A. (1960). *Confucian Persuasion*. Stanford University Press.
- Wright, Q. (1943). The End of Extraterritoriality in China. *The American Journal of International Law*, 37(2), 286-289.
- Yamamuro, S. (2006). *Manchuria Under Japanese Dominion*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Young, E. P. (2016). The Catholic Invasion of China: Remaking Chinese Christianity by DE Mungello. *The Catholic Historical Review*, 102(3), 655-656.

Young, L. (1998). *Japan's total empire: Manchuria and the culture of wartime imperialism* (Vol. 8). University of California Press.

Zachmann, U. M. (2006). Imperialism in a Nutshell: Conflict and the "Concert of Powers" in the Tripartite Intervention, 1895. *Japanstudien*, 17(1), 57-82.

Zhang, Q., & Weatherley, R. (2013). Owing up to the past: the KMT's role in the war against Japan and the impact on CCP legitimacy. *The Pacific Review*, 26(3), 221-242.

Zheng, X. (2018). *The politics of rights and the 1911 revolution in China*. Stanford University Press.



March 2021. © European Foundation for South Asian Studies (EFSAS), Amsterdam