

The Boxer Uprising — I

The Gathering Storm in North China (1860-1900)

Essay by Peter C. Perdue & Ellen Sebring

The Boxer Uprising

Carving Up China

Imperialist Rivalries

Sources & Credits



*Detail from stereograph card with caption:
"Company of Boxers, Tien-Tsin, China."*

*This is one of the few existing unstaged photographs of Boxers,
other than depictions of them as prisoners.*

© 1901, Whiting Brothers
Library of Congress
[libc_1901_3g03917u]

In 1898 and 1899, masses of Chinese peasants armed with swords and spears began attacking Christian Chinese villagers in the North China provinces of Shandong and Hebei. They called themselves “Righteous and Harmonious Fists” (Yihequan 义和拳), because they practiced martial arts and traditional military techniques. They also called themselves “Righteous and Harmonious Militia” (Yihetuan 义和团), because they claimed to be defending their homes against attacks by foreign bandits and their supporters. Western observers called them “Boxers,” focusing on their use of martial arts techniques, their belief in spells and amulets, and their violent attacks on local Christian communities. By mid 1900, Boxer attacks had spread widely across rural north China, and many groups converged on Tianjin and Beijing. They besieged the foreign legations in Beijing for 55 days and massacred foreigners in the coastal treaty port of Tianjin and in Taiyuan, the capital of Shanxi province.

In response, the armies of eight foreign powers landed in China and marched from Tianjin to Beijing to lift the siege. The foreign armies occupied the imperial palace, while the imperial court fled to safety in Xi’an. The foreigners blamed the Qing court for encouraging the Boxer attacks, as local officials had failed to suppress them or even encouraged them as local militia. After extensive negotiations, the Qing court was forced to sign a treaty providing for execution of guilty officials and a payment of an indemnity of 450 million taels of silver. This amounted to about one ounce of silver per Chinese person, or one and one-half times the annual tax revenue of the dynasty.

Extensive looting of the imperial palace by all the foreign armies, along with public executions of suspected Boxers and massacres during the fighting, further devastated Beijing and north China. But the treaty negotiations—because of rivalries among the imperial powers—left the Qing court in power. Chinese activists in exile, fearing that China would be “sliced up like a melon,” agitated for rapid strengthening of China’s military forces and economy to respond to the foreign threat, and the Manchu court itself launched a reform program in 1905. But it was too late to save the dynasty, which collapsed in the wake of nationalist uprisings in 1911.

The Boxer movement marks a dramatic turning point in the history of imperial China and in the history of imperialism. It attracted more global media attention than any other event in China. Illustrated newspapers and journals, pamphlets, memoirs, and etchings propagated lurid images of savage Orientals and noble Christian martyrs to fascinated audiences in the U.S., Western Europe, Russia, and Japan. More than just a story of rebellion, invasion and negotiation in China, the Boxers were truly a global media event of the highest magnitude. Chinese media played their part too, in the form of woodblock prints glorifying the heroic activities of the Boxers and their military leaders. Amid the cacophony of conflicting images, we can find persisting patterns that illustrate underlying themes of late imperial China's encounter with foreign expansionism: the struggle of local elites against the penetration of Christian missions; the rise of martial arts groups and local militia to support anti-foreign resistance; foreign Orientalist views of China as a savage, backward country waiting to be redeemed by Christianity and modern science and technology; and the divisions within the Qing court between diehard Manchu defenders of the old ways and mainly Han Chinese proponents of reform.

THE BOXER UPRISING

The Rise of Anti-Christian, Anti-Foreign Movements

After 1860, under the provisions of the treaty settlement of the second Opium War, Western missionaries, like other foreigners, gained the right to travel and proselytize in the interior of China, and Chinese subjects could practice Christianity without punishment. These provisions especially benefited French Catholics, who actively promoted new missionary activity. Unlike the earlier Christian presence in China in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, whose followers were mainly members of the literati elite, this second arrival of Christianity penetrated Chinese villages and small towns, and attracted illiterate peasants.

The first Western Christians, the Jesuits, beginning with Matteo Ricci in the sixteenth century, had aimed to convert the official elite, preaching a doctrine of accommodation between Christian rituals and Confucian ancestral rites. Some late Ming scholars embraced Christian doctrine, and the Kangxi emperor, who reigned from 1661 to 1722, tolerated Christianity until the late-seventeenth century.

The Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci (left) and the Chinese Christian scholar Xu Guangqi (right) in an image from Athanasius Kircher's China Illustrata, published in 1667.

[ricci_wp]



The favorable embrace of Christianity by officials and emperors ended in the eighteenth century, when the Pope rejected the Jesuit assertions of the compatibility of Chinese ancestral rituals and Christian practices. The Pope's hardline position, along with rivalry between Jesuits and other Catholic sects, doomed official approval of the Christian mission to China. Once the emperors, suspicious of the Pope's political influence, banned the foreign religion, it survived only underground, in remote communities. By contrast, the missionaries who arrived in the nineteenth century, instead of trying to convert the emperors and local elite, aimed directly at the villagers and townspeople. Unlike the early Jesuits, they regarded the gentry elite as their main rivals. Most nineteenth-century Protestant and Catholic missionaries, firm believers in the superiority of their creed, were intolerant of traditional Chinese rituals, because they aimed at a total transformation of Chinese values.

The gentry, for their part, saw the foreign religion as the main threat to their local power. They attacked Christianity as a heterodox doctrine that would undermine the moral purity and political stability of the empire. Missionaries could offer food, charity, and orphanages to their followers, and they could protect converts who quarreled with other villagers. Impoverished villagers who converted found that they could gain new powers. They could, for example, ride in sedan chairs, resist taxes, wear foreign clothing, and gain foreign backing for lawsuits over property. Officials could not challenge the Christian converts because foreign diplomats and gunboats protected them. Converts refused to participate in local village festivals, while many of the Catholic missions acquired large amounts of land. From the point of view of many villagers and their gentry leaders, Christians were an alien, disruptive force.

Gentry writers, reviving an old tradition of the seventeenth century, began to circulate anti-Christian tracts which contained both rational arguments against Christian doctrine and emotional denunciations depicting the foreigners as animals and demons with dangerous supernatural powers. Making a play on words on the Chinese words for "Lord" and "Pig" (*zhu*), they portrayed Christianity as pig worship, involving blood sacrifices.



Caption (translation): "The Devils (foreigners) worshipping the Hog (Jesus)," from *The Cause of the Riots in the Yangtse [Yangzi] Valley*, published 1891 in Hankou.

[cr75_01]

The text of this image, part of a long illustrated anti-Christian pamphlet states, "If these men worship a Heavenly Hog as their Lord, where is their sense of shame?"

Chinese villagers, hearing that the communion mass involved consuming the blood of Jesus, concluded that Christians had an insatiable need for blood. They assumed that Christian churches accepted orphans and abandoned children only to extract their blood. Gentry pamphlets abetted these fears, accusing Christians of outrageous sexual practices, disloyal gatherings, and dangerous plotting against the state. These pamphlets, beginning in the 1860s, instigated violent attacks against Chinese converts and missionaries across the empire, culminating in a major diplomatic crisis after the "Tianjin massacre" in 1870, in which a French official was killed after discharging a revolver into a hostile crowd. After the French demanded indemnities, the court punished the local officials responsible for the riot, but general hostility to missionaries continued to grow. By the late-nineteenth century, attacks on Christians, lawsuits, and resistance to missionary activity had spread through many of north China's cities and parts of the countryside.

Origins of the Boxers

The Boxers came from an ecologically fragile, impoverished region of Shandong province. This area, whose peasant farmers could only barely scrape out a living, had for a long time suffered from frequent natural disasters. From 1852 to 1855, when the Yellow River shifted its course from the south to the north of the Shandong peninsula, massive floods struck the whole province and destroyed commerce on the Grand Canal, the lifeline of the marketing system. Foreign competition and the closure of the Grand Canal damaged the market for cotton, which was almost the only crop that provided farmers with cash income. Banditry flourished everywhere, and the local officials were helpless to suppress it.

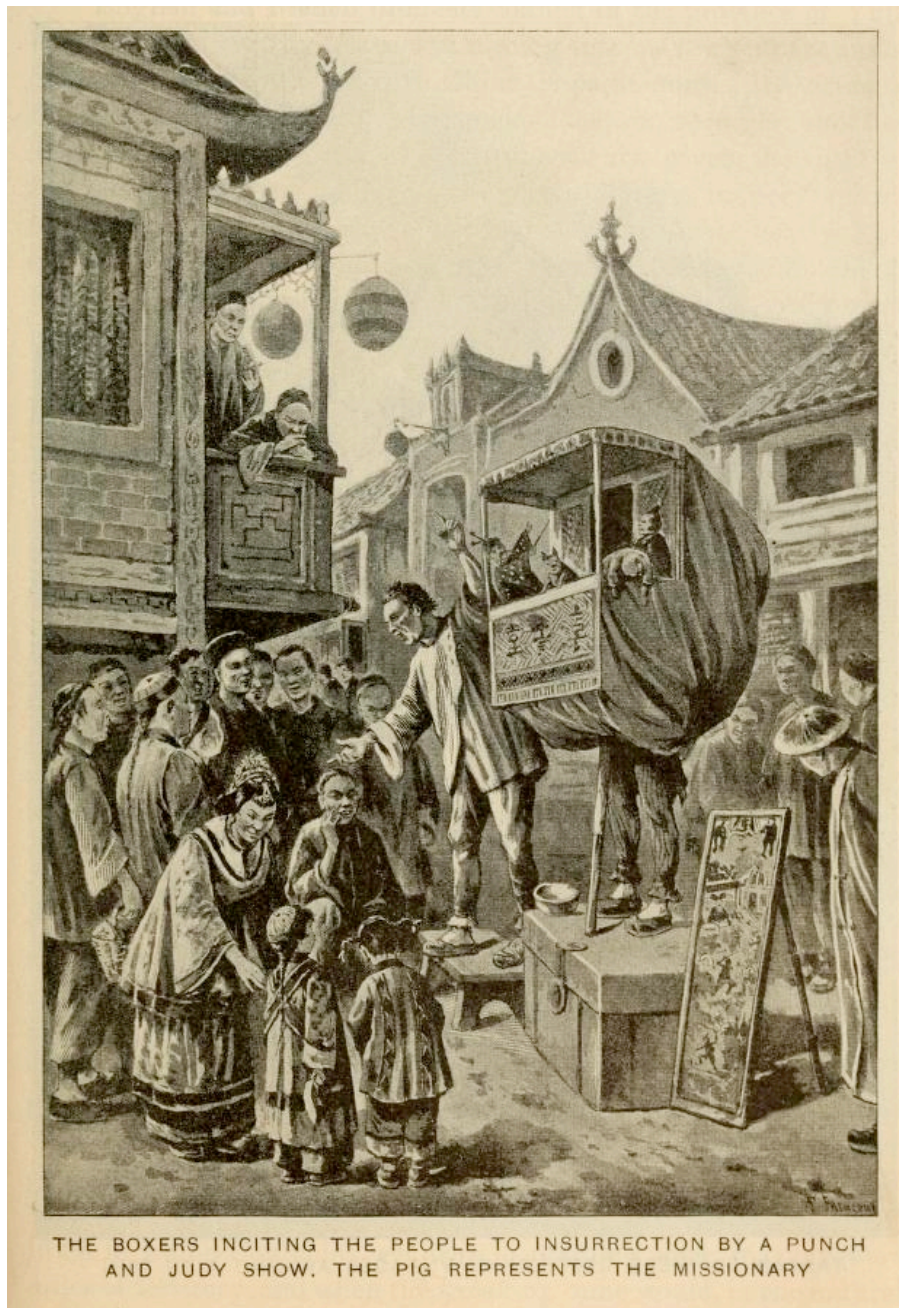
In the poor districts of Shandong, very few men could afford enough education to obtain examination degrees, so the imperial culture of obedience to civil officials and respect for classical learning had little impact. Instead, the people of Shandong's periphery took pride in their military skills. Outlaws of the Marsh, a famous novel of the sixteenth century, widely read and retold by storytellers, had celebrated a band of martial arts fighters from southern Shandong. These strongmen fought tigers, engaged in drunken brawls, and like Robin Hoods defended local people from abuse by the wealthy. Martial arts teachers founded schools that taught young men special fighting techniques, and rival schools fought each other in competitions in the marketplaces. Other people could hire these toughs to help them out in local brawls. This image from a popular illustrated newspaper shows a crowd of people watching an exhibition of martial arts and gymnastics. The Boxers made their living by traveling around the countryside to perform before such audiences.



*"Exhibition of Boxing and Acrobatics" with enlarged detail of "Boxer."
From Dianshizhai huabao 35, GX 11 (1885), 2nd month.*

[dz_v04_036_boxers]

In addition, popular culture supported practices like spirit possession which were quite alien to the orthodox Confucian literati. People believed that these shamans could enter a trancelike state which gave them access to divine powers. Local village operas celebrated the feats of great generals of the past and divinely inspired mediums, giving weak, impoverished people hope that the gods would relieve their suffering in a time of extraordinary calamity.



"The Boxers Inciting the People to Insurrection by a Punch and Judy Show. The Pig Represents the Missionary."
Originally printed in The Illustrated London News, August 25, 1900.

Graphics like this show the pervasive impact of popular theatre in Chinese towns. Some of the theatrical performances used the themes represented in the anti-Christian pamphlets. They were widely disseminated in books like the one reproduced here, Massacres of Christians by Heathen Chinese, and Horrors of the Boxers by Harold Irwin Cleveland, published in Philadelphia in 1900.

[massacresofchris00clev_0539]

When a drought struck Shandong in 1900, desperate, starving farmers looked for scapegoats. Interpreting the drought as Heaven's wrath against the moral decadence caused by Christian converts, they attacked all signs of foreign influences and anyone who relied on the missionaries' protection. Germany, having seized the Shandong town of Jiaozhou in 1897, aggressively expanded the activities of German Catholic missionaries, stimulating nearly a thousand incidents of attacks on converts and foreigners. These attacks spread to destruction of railroad and telegraph lines. The villagers, egged on by local elites, destroyed these modern communications and transportation systems both as a violation of fengshui, the harmonious interaction of humans with their landscape, and as potential routes of invasion by foreign powers.



Boxers destroy railway tracks in this cover illustration of a French periodical.

"Les Boxeurs Chinois"

Le Petit Parisien, Supplément littéraire illustré, Paris, June 17, 1900

Artist: Fortuné Louis Méaulle

[lpp_1900_17July]

As the Boxers rampaged across Shandong, conservative officials at the court convinced the empress dowager, grandmother of the ruling emperor and the real power behind the throne, to view them as a useful tool for resisting foreign pressure. She told provincial officials not to suppress the Boxers. Although Shandong Governor Yuan Shikai defied her order, the Boxer groups moved north, encouraged by the top officials of Zhili (modern Hebei) to converge on Beijing. By June 1900, the Boxers, supported by Qing troops, had killed the chancellor of the Japanese mission and the German ambassador, burned the British summer legation west of Beijing, and cut off telegraph contact with the city. The legation quarter in the southeast district of the city came under siege.



"Les Événements de Chine. Carte du Théâtre de la Guerre"
Le Petit Journal Supplément Illustré, July 8, 1900

This map, published in 1900, shows the main theatre of war (encircled by the red line), the railroads, and the main foreign possessions in East Asia.

Source: Widener Library, Harvard University
[lpj_1900_07_08_widener]

An obviously staged photograph of a “Boxer” (below) was widely distributed by foreign news agencies in 1900. This man represents one of the Boxer fighters who was recruited into the officially sponsored Qing militia. Despite the fact that most of the Boxers were poor peasants fighting in warm weather, the man is dressed in warm, newly issued clothing. He wears a distinctive hat, and waves a banner stating “Imperially Commissioned Righteous Militia.” It is of interest for its presentation of martial equipment associated with the Boxers, such as the woven shield and heavy pole topped by a short blade.



A widely circulated, clearly staged photograph of a Chinese “Boxer” with pike, shield, and a banner stating “Imperially Commissioned Righteous Militia,” ca. 1900.

Source: Wikipedia
[us_1900_Boxer_WarConfCD]

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The Boxer Uprising

Carving Up China

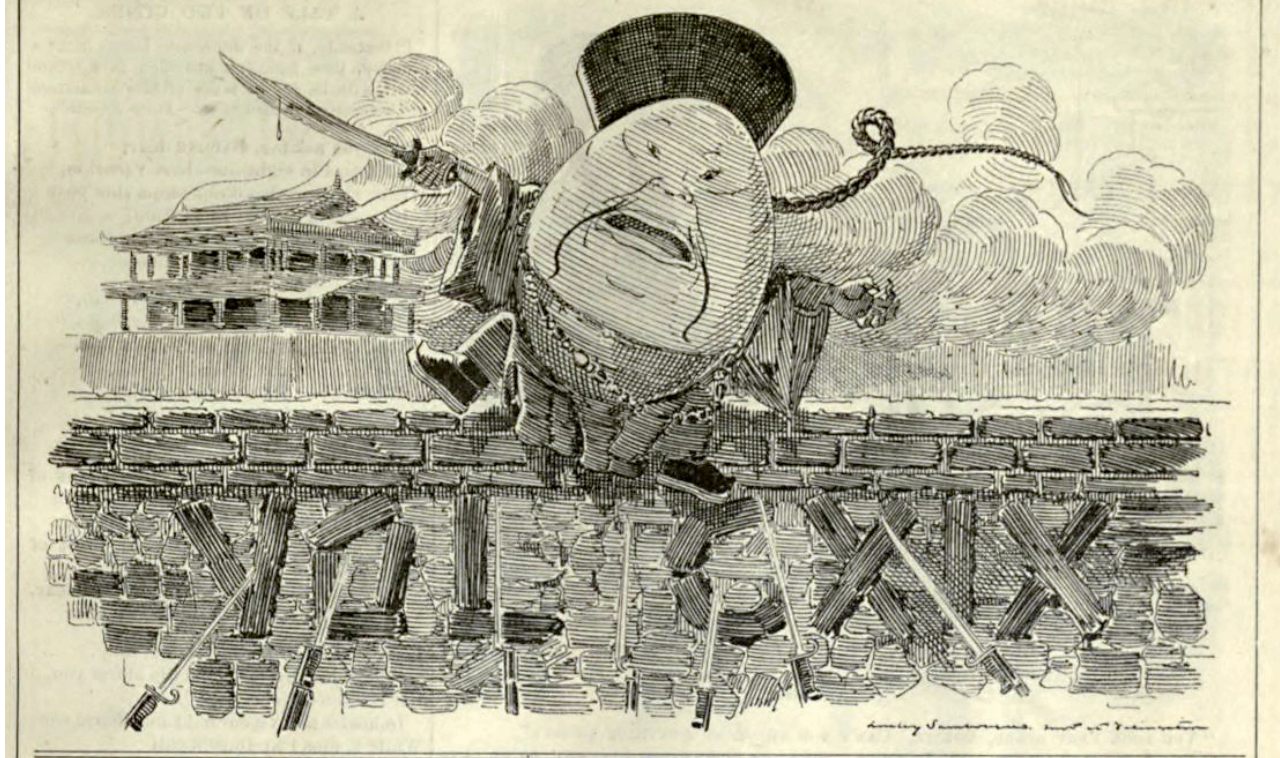
Imperialist Rivalries

Sources & Credits

JULY 4, 1900.]

PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.

1



China in crisis—flames behind, bayonets in the foreground—is depicted as the egg poised to fall in the English nursery rhyme:

*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again.*

Punch, or the London Charivari, July 4, 1900

[1900_punchvol118a119]

CARVING UP CHINA

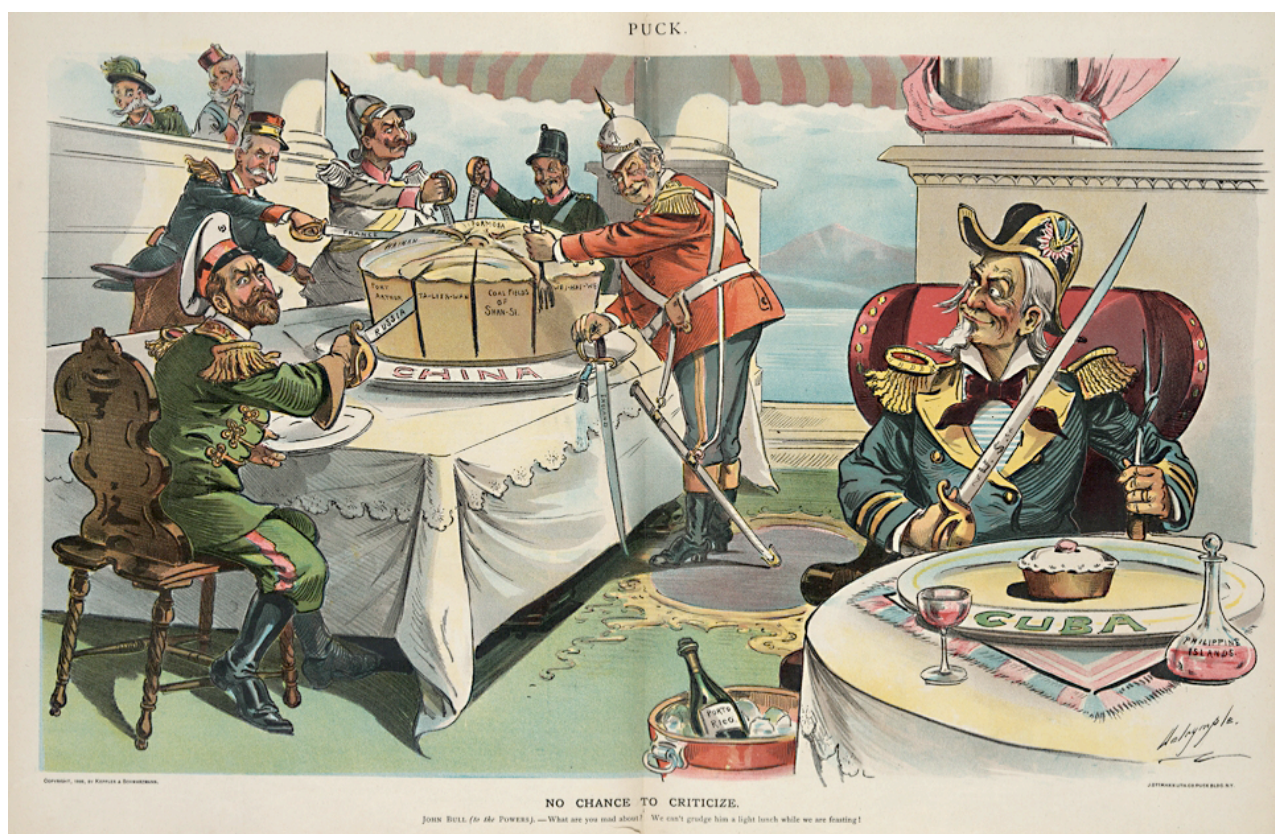
In the late-nineteenth century, the major imperial powers competed more aggressively for domination of most of the world's territory. Railroads supported increasing penetration of remote regions, and the telegraph rapidly communicated one nation's victory to others around the world. The first durable trans-Atlantic telegraph cable, laid in 1866, connected the New and Old Worlds with a rapid communication link. The opening of the Suez canal in 1869 dramatically shortened the route to the Far East, just as the U.S. completed the transcontinental railroad.

As regions of the Ottoman empire loosened their dependence on the center, the French, British, and Russians looked to expand their influence. Each imperial power felt that it had to defend its own territories and pre-empt the moves of others. The "Scramble for Africa," touched off in 1882 by the submission of the ruler of Tunis to a French resident, was followed by British intervention to secure its financial investments in Egypt. Over the next twenty years British, French, Belgian, and German troops, explorers, and investors carved up nearly all of the African continent.

In the 1890s, the global scramble expanded to Asia, and new powers joined the race. Japan's defeat of China in the Sino-Japanese war in 1895 put Taiwan and Korea under its control, starting its road to become the next imperialist in Asia. The United States joined the pack of genuine imperial powers with its victory in the Spanish-American War of 1898, adding Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines to the list of colonial possessions. Russia, turning eastward, began building the trans-Siberian railroad in 1891 to connect its Asian regions closely to Moscow. The railroad reached the port of Vladivostok (meaning "Ruler in the East") in 1916. Russia's turn to the East inevitably brought it into conflict with the rival powers of northeast Asia: China, Korea, and Japan. As Britain and Russia competed in the "Great Game" for power over Central Asia, Britain allied with Japan in 1902 to balance Russian expansion.

The multipower scramble for China, from 1895 to 1905, followed a similar pattern to that of Africa, but with very different results. Japan's surprising defeat of the Qing empire instigated all the powers to secure spheres of influence connected to their economic interests, and fears of "slicing the Chinese cake" increased. Many writers predicted the imminent breakup of the empire into regions, each dominated by one imperial power.

The four images below exhibit variants of the metaphor of the slicing of China, representing critiques from French, American, and British perspectives.



"No Chance to Criticize."

*Caption: "John Bull (to the Powers). — What are you mad about?
We can't grudge him a light lunch while we are feasting!"*

Puck, May 25, 1898

Artist: Louis Dalrymple

Puck, the American counterpart to the famous British humor magazine Punch, sardonically juxtaposed U.S. expansion in and immediately after the Spanish-American War of 1898 against the contemporaneous scramble by other imperialist powers to carve up China. As in the French cartoon, Russia, France, Germany, Japan, and England slice the Chinese cake, but the not-so-subtle point of this cartoon was that while the United States self-righteously criticized the foreign scramble for spheres of influence in China and called for an "Open Door" policy there, it was in the process of establishing its own spheres of influence in the Caribbean and the Philippines.

[puck_1898_May25_CarveCh_loc]



"En Chine" (In China)

Caption: *"La France et La Russie. — Pas si vite! Nous sommes là"*
(*France and Russia: Not so fast! We're here*)

Le Petit Journal Supplément Illustré No. 594, April 6, 1902

In the foreground England and Japan, who had just negotiated the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1902, find themselves surprised by Russia and France, who claim equal rights in slicing the Chinese cake.

[lpj_1902_04_06]



"An Interruption."

Caption: "The Newcomer. — Say, you fellows! If there's any cutting up to be done, I'm here for the lion's share."

Puck, January 19, 1898

Artist: Louis Dalrymple

In this cartoon, Britain, which held the dominant position in spheres of influence in China, confronts the rival claims of Russia and Germany, while the French cock squawks in the rear.

Source: Library of Congress (view)
[puck_1898_Jan19_SliceChina]

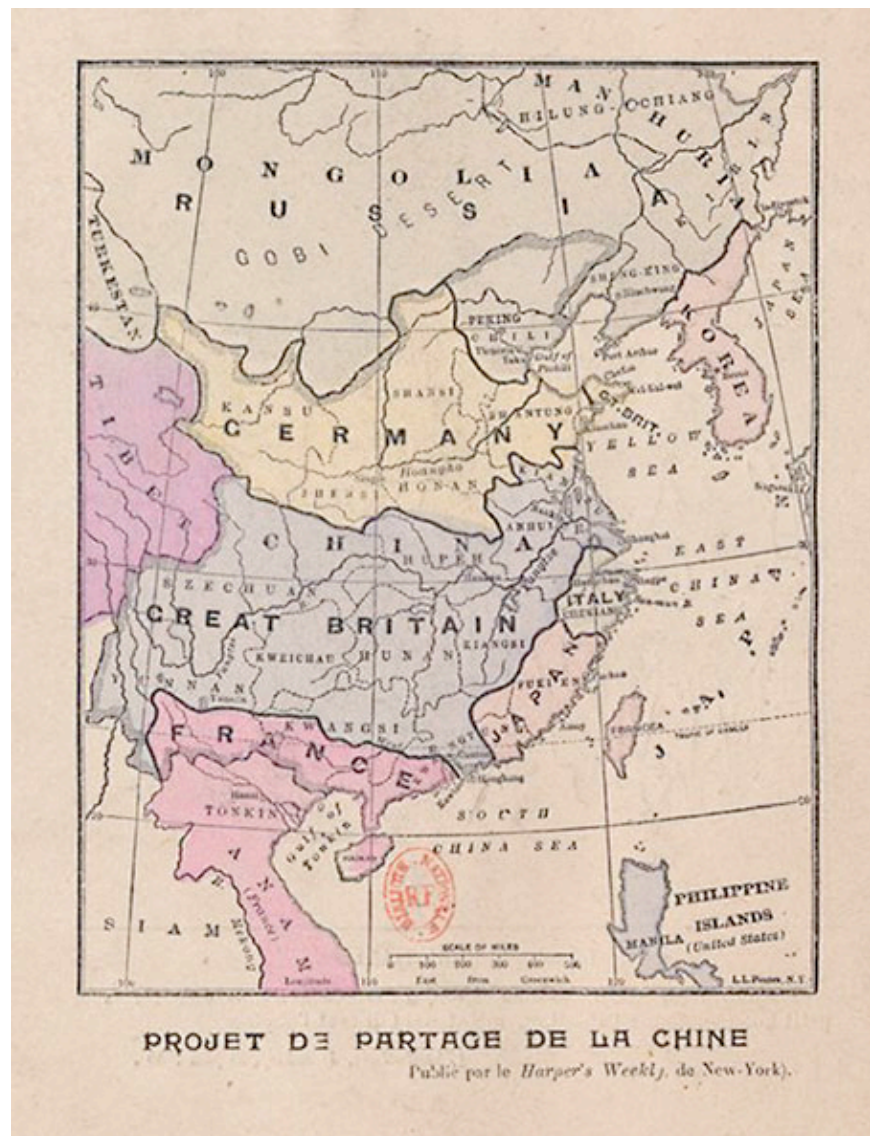
From the satirical realm of cartoons, we turn to apparently more neutral cartographic commentary. Two maps published in *Harper's Weekly* in 1900 graphically depict the imperialist rivalries and tensions that accompanied the carving up of China. One is a "forecast" of Russian, German, British, French, Japanese, and Italian spheres of influence in the beleaguered country. The second highlights the strategic significance of the U.S. conquest and colonization of the Philippines in 1899–1900, which placed America at "the geographical centre of the Oriental commercial field." The anxiety over China's partition shown in these two maps helps to explain why U.S. foreign policy called for an "open door" in China, in which all foreign powers had equal rights to exploit China's territory, without reserved spheres of influence.

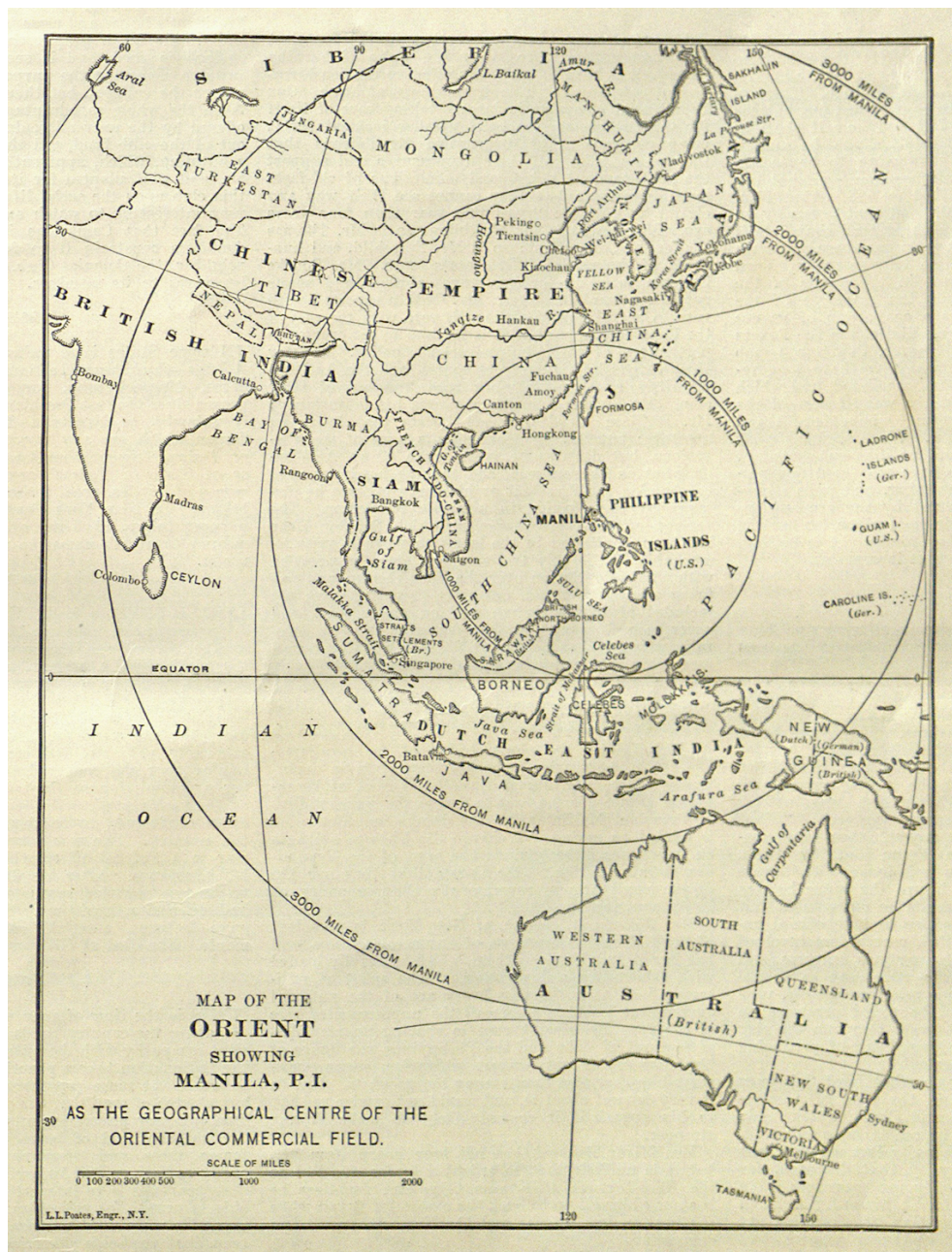
"A Forecast of the Partition of China"

This "forecast" was roughly accurate, although in the end Italy did not establish a sphere in China.

Originally published in Harper's Weekly, ca. 1900, this version is from "Chinois d'Europe et Chinois d'Asie," an undated archival album of cartoons collected by John Grand-Carteret.

[Grand-Carteret_48_MAP]





"Map of the Orient showing Manila, P.I. as the Geographical Centre of the Oriental Commercial Field."

Harper's Weekly, ca. 1900

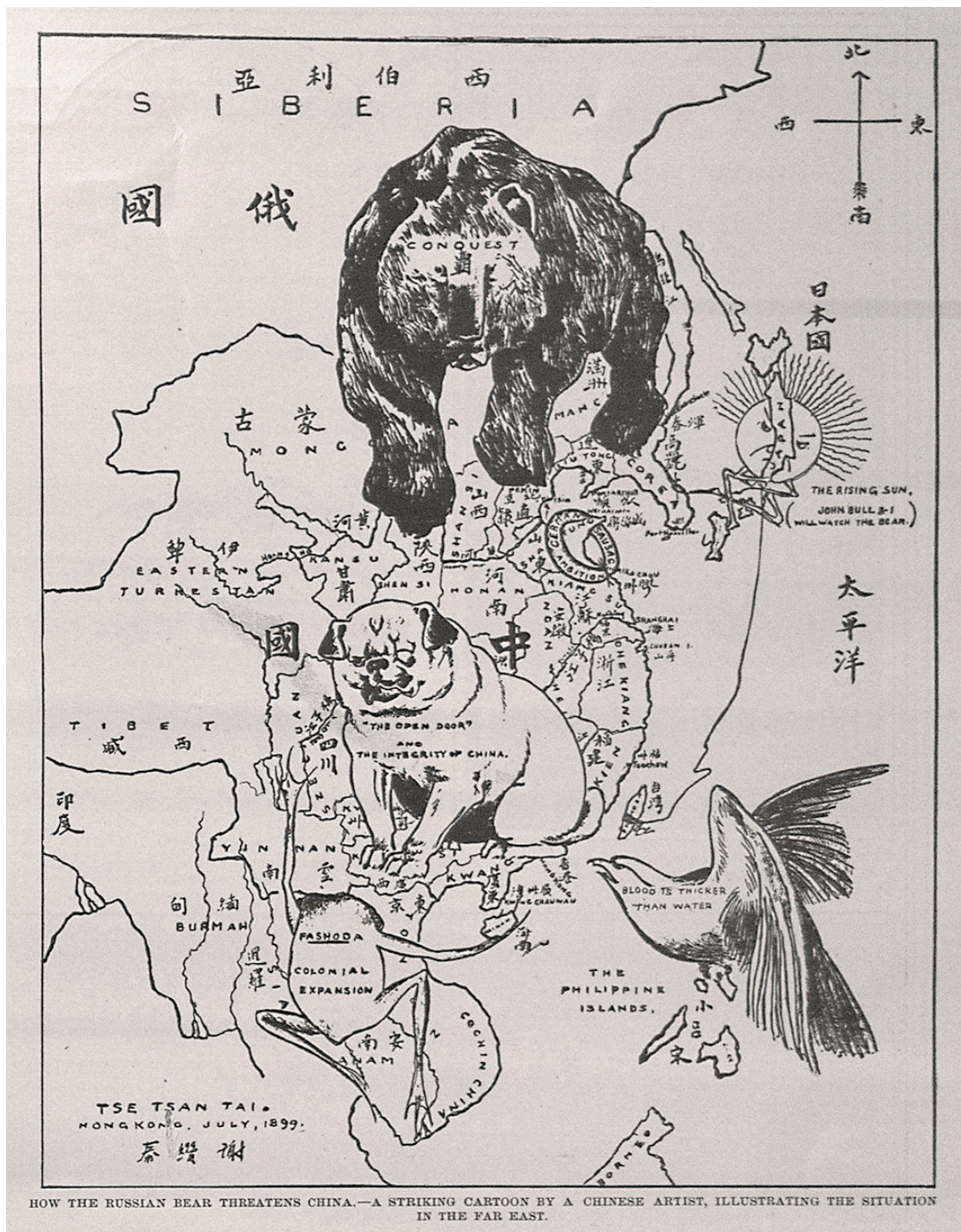
This map, published in New York, puts Manila close to the center, indicating the strategic location of the Philippines for U.S. commercial interests in all of Asia.

[cb113_harpers1900_07_v2a_014_map]

As it happened, the push to carve China into foreign spheres of interest coincided with a revolutionary transformation in the nature of international communication. Advances in telegraph transmission expedited the speed of journalistic reporting. At the same time—and more vivid and dramatic—the turn of the century saw a great leap forward in color printing. The lavish political cartoons in illustrated periodicals such as *Punch* in England and *Puck* and *Judge* in the United States are classic examples of this explosion in dramatic, colorful political commentary. They had counterparts, moreover, throughout Europe.

Abetting this technological transformation was the emergence of international postal regulations that facilitated the global dissemination of picture postcards. Images produced in one country were frequently reproduced for a global audience—sometimes so quickly that the original place of origin became obscured. Naturally, this heightened popular awareness of international affairs. Beyond this, it also stimulated international give-and-take in the form of graphic replication, imitation, adaptation, and even outright parody.

A particularly colorful example of this new world of pictorial global sharing was a bilingual English and Chinese political map of foreign encroachment on China at the time of the Boxer uprising. Of uncertain origin, this was disseminated in several variations. The colloquial correctness of English notations on the map make some kind of British-Chinese collaboration plausible, and one version—reproduced in the American magazine *Leslie's Weekly* in 1900—assigns authorship to a Chinese artist in Hong Kong in July 1899. The most sophisticated and often reproduced rendering of this elaborate geopolitical commentary—replete with the Russian bear, British lion, American eagle, French frog, Japanese rising sun, and caricatures of the Chinese—bears a bold border of Chinese ideographs. Clearly, this was directed to Chinese (and possibly Japanese) audiences.



"How the Russian bear threatens China. — A striking cartoon by a Chinese artist, illustrating the situation in the Far East."

Leslie's Weekly, ca. 1900

[leslies_1900_v92_1_023_animal_map_detail]

時局圖

一目了然

不言而喻



"The Situation in the Far East"

Political map of 19th-century China, ca. 1902–1903

This graphic rendering of the political map of China probably dates from ca. 1902–1903. The bold lettering in the borders reads “Picture of Current Times” (top), “Obvious in One Glance” (left), and “It Speaks for Itself” (right). The Russian bear approaches from Siberia. Japan, which would go to war with Russia in 1904, is identified as “The Rising Sun” and accompanied by a parenthetical declaration that “John Bull & I will watch the bear.” (A reference to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902.) England—here depicted as a lion (rather than the bulldog on the 1899 map)—sinks its claws into south China, while a circular sausage with the legend “German Sausage Ambitions” surrounds Shandong.

The American eagle, approaching from the Philippines, bears the quotation “Blood is thicker than water,” a famous comment made by a U.S. admiral in 1859 indicating that the U.S. would side with Britain in the Second Opium War. France, depicted as a frog, is ensconced in Southeast Asia and reaches toward China, with the words “Fashoda: Colonial Expansion” on its back, referring to the clash between British and French troops in East Africa in 1898. The Chinese figures (which do not appear on the 1899 version of the map) depict Manchu soldiers, coolie laborers, sleeping officials, and literati carousing with mistresses while the wild beasts prowl.

Source: Wikimedia
[j_1900_map04_wm]

Race, Religion, & the “Yellow Peril”

In 1895, at the very moment that Japan was inflicting a stunning military defeat on Qing China, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany popularized a soon notorious phrase: the gelbe Gefahr, or “Yellow Peril.” This reflected alarm not just at Japan’s unexpected military prowess, but at the broader specter of non-White, non-Christian Asian peoples emerging to challenge the Western world.

A lithograph of this imagined threat, based on a drawing by the Kaiser, was produced that same year by a German artist whom he favored. It attracted worldwide attention. In this, the archangel Michael, holding a flaming sword, stands before a host of female warriors personifying the nations of Europe. He points to a distant Buddha wreathed in flames against black thunderclouds—or, in some interpretations, the black smoke of a burning village. The Christian cross shines in the sky above the imperiled Westerners. The original lithograph carried a handwritten caption, allegedly written by Wilhelm, exclaiming “Peoples of Europe, defend your holiest possessions!”



NATIONS EUROPÉENNES!
DÉFENDEZ VOS BIENS SACRÉS!

*Kaiser Wilhelm II.
empfiehlt seinen europäischen Völkern*

NATIONS OF EUROPE!
JOIN IN THE DEFENCE OF YOUR FAITH AND YOUR HOMES!

THE YELLOW PERIL.

"AFTER A SKETCH BY HIS MAJESTY EMPEROR WILLIAM II. OF GERMANY, KING OF PRUSSIA, EXECUTED BY H. KNACKFUSS, 1895."

"The Yellow Peril."

Caption (translation): "Peoples of Europe, Defend Your Holiest Possessions"

This famous "Yellow Peril" lithograph by the German artist Hermann Knackfuss was based on a drawing by his patron, Kaiser Wilhelm II, in 1895 and widely disseminated thereafter. The version reproduced here appeared three years later, on the eve of the Boxer uprising, in the January 22, 1898 issue of the American magazine Harper's Weekly.

[1898_Jan22_Harpers_Weekly_Yellow_Peril_rarenews]

Yellow Peril imagery proved irresistible to political cartoonists throughout the West, often enhanced by the new phenomenon of mass-circulation color printing. In July 1900, at the peak of the Boxer uprising, for example, cartoonists in both Italy and Switzerland used the color yellow dramatically to essentially echo the animus of Wilhelm's lithograph (which was black and white) and thereby intensify evocation of the racial dimension of the menace of the Orient.

In the Italian case, the West is personified by a female figure surrounded by European soldiers and waving the flag of "Civilization" (*Civilta*). She points to the East (as the archangel Michael had done in Wilhelm's graphic), where the gigantic leering yellow face of a Chinaman looms on the horizon.



*"Petits, Suivez mon Étendard." (Youth, Take Up My Flag)
Published in Turin in the magazine Pasquino, July 15, 1900*

The caption to this Italian "Yellow Peril" cartoon translates as follows: "Come, strike the barbarian all united in my name and you will overcome... Strike with the same vigor with which he has struck you!"

Source: "Chinois d'Europe et Chinois d'Asie," undated archival
album of cartoons collected by John Grand-Carteret
[Grand-Carteret_38a_YELLOW_bpt6k63508640]

In the Swiss variant of this racist cartooning, an abstract Europe occupies center stage in the form of a delicate maiden holding the dove of peace with an olive branch in its beak. Here, the Yellow Peril takes the form of a monstrous dragon labeled China, which merges into collapsing walls behind which flames lick the sky. To the right of the maiden, foreign militaries led by the Russian bear, the French cock, and the German eagle stand poised to take on the yellow monster. In the distance behind her stand small figures representing foreign leaders—with “America” conspicuously detached and looking on.

The left foreground of the graphic introduces a striking additional dimension to the scene in the form of the British lion standing over an armed white corpse identified as “Transvaal,” one of the two Dutch settler states in colonial South Africa that rebelled against British rule. This refers to England’s concurrent war against white colonialists of Dutch descent in the Second Boer War (1899–1902) in South Africa. Like American political cartoons that depict the United States engaged in asserting dominion over Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines at the very same time that “carving up the Chinese pie” was taking place, this Swiss graphic is a reminder of the global frenzy of war and imperialism at the turn of the century.



“La Paix Européenne. ” (The European Peace)

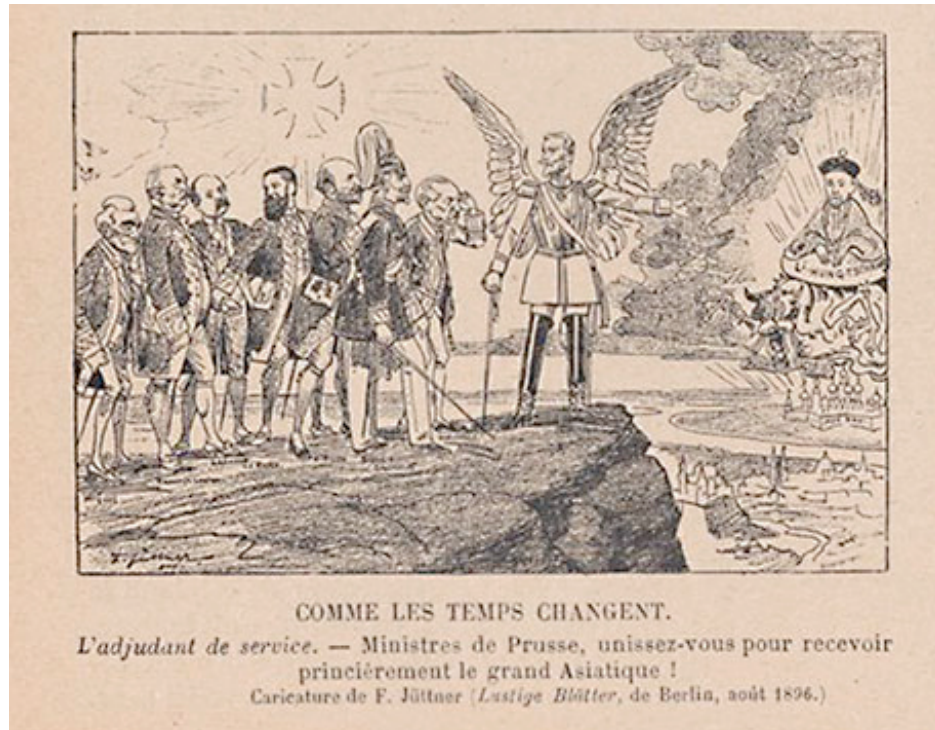
Caption (translation): “The end of the beginning, beginning of the end. — Europe holds in her arms the dove with olive branch and wonders about the fate of this poor little weakling.” The writing on the cloud under the Peace figure reads: “The poor child is delicate and tender; what will be her fate?”

Published in the Zurich periodical Nebelspalter, July 7, 1900

Artist: F. Boscovitz

Source: “Chinois d’Europe et Chinois d’Asie,” undated archival album of cartoons collected by John Grand-Carteret [Grand-Carteret_38b_YELLOW_bpt6k63508640]

Cartoon commentary in the Yellow Peril genre was, however, far from monolithic. Christian contempt for and fear of the heathen masses of Asia, as seen most explicitly in Kaiser Wilhelm's presentation of the Cross versus the Buddha, was only one of its dimensions. Plain color-coded racism pervaded the Italian and Swiss graphics, but at the same time, other artists gleefully turned Wilhelm's alarmism on its head. In 1896, for example, a Berlin publication ridiculed the original Yellow Peril lithograph with a satirical take-off in which a winged Wilhelm himself replaces the archangel Michael, the feminized nations of Europe are replaced by the Kaiser's own male ministers, the iron cross of Prussian militarism replaces the Christian cross in the sky, and the ominous Buddha on the distant horizon has metamorphosed into a Chinese statesman (referring explicitly to Li Hongzhang, the preeminent Chinese diplomat of the time).



Translation: "How Times Change! The adjutant announces, — Ministers of Prussia, come together to welcome honorably the great Asian minister!"

Lustige Blätter, Berlin, August 1896

Artist: F. Jüttner

Source: "Chinois d'Europe et Chinois d'Asie," undated archival
album of cartoons collected by John Grand-Carteret
[Grand-Carteret_22b_LIHUNGCHANG_bpt6k63508640]

Another German periodical subjected the Kaiser's alarmism to even more caustic ridicule. In this rendering, the whole thrust of the putative Europe/Orient confrontation has been turned into a commercial enterprise. Archangel Michael has metamorphosed into a silly rendering, naked but for a fig leaf, of the Roman god Mercury—the patron deity (among other things) of commerce, financial profits, travelers, boundaries, trickery, and thieves. Wilhelm's Buddha, the ominous anti-Christ, has been replaced by a Chinese merchant or politician surrounded by bags of coins. The billowing black clouds of the original lithograph now clearly emanate from factory smokestacks, and the feminine personifications of European nations all clutch projected exports to the envisioned China market. And what has replaced the shining Christian cross in Wilhelm's heaven? A glittering sack of gold (or money, or profits).

This satirical cartoon was titled "Mercury Addresses the European Powers," followed by a parody of Wilhelm's original caption that reads (in translation) as follows: "The enemy from the east approaches, and you rush to meet him to do battle. Peoples of Europe, sell him your most valuable commodities!"

Although in this instance the explicit take-off on the original gelbe Gefahr lithograph was unique, the underlying observation was not. The reason expansionist foreign powers were intent on carving China into spheres of influence was, after all, their perception that untold profits would derive from this. This glittering sack of gold was, indeed, the other side of the "yellow peril."



MERCURE S'ADRESSANT AUX PUISSANCES EUROPÉENNES.
L'ennemi venant de l'Orient, s'approche; précipitez-vous au devant de lui pour lui livrer bataille.
Peuples d'Europe, vendez-lui vos marchandises les plus précieuses!
Caricature de Brandt. (*Kladderadatsch*, de Berlin, juin 1895.)

Un Chinois, non plus de paravent, mais un homme d'état, un colosse taillé à la Bismarck et, avec cela, un bagout de méridional.

On le vit dans les rues de Paris; il se montra dans toutes les grandes capitales d'Europe. Et partout il fut choyé.

Ne venait-il pas en nos contrées civilisées faire des achats, commercer..., tel un vulgaire occidental.

La Chine toute grande ouverte aux produits européens, la Chine allant chercher chez nous de l'argent, et mille autres choses. Donc l'idéal.

Et, naturellement, les grandes usines, les grandes manufactures ne se firent point prier pour livrer armes et canons, tout ce qui sert à la destruction des humains — il faut bien que chacun vive — et la caricature que nos politiciens feraient bien de consulter, pour s'instruire un peu, ne manqua pas de noter cet empressement des Européens à faire avec Li-Hang-Chang toutes sortes de *petites commerces*. Si bien que certaines images, hier simple fait-divers, se trouvent être, aujourd'hui, du document qui fait penser.

"Mercury Addresses the European Powers"

Kladderadatsch, Berlin, June 1895

Artist: Brandt

This satirical take-off on Wilhelm II's notorious lithograph, published in Berlin, turns the Kaiser's Christian demonology into an invitation to exploit the potential riches of the China market.

Source: "Chinois d'Europe et Chinois d'Asie," undated archival
album of cartoons collected by John Grand-Carteret
[Grand-Carteret_22a_LIHUNGCHANG_bpt6k63508640]

In 1900, at the height of foreign condemnation of the Boxer uprising, the Kaiser's iconic lithograph was subjected to yet another lively transmutation. The artist in this instance was Johann Braakensick, a Dutch cartoonist publishing in Amsterdam. His revisionist target was explicitly stated in the title of the cartoon: "A New Interpretation of Kaiser Wilhelm's Picture." And his iconoclasm was thoroughgoing—for he completely inverted the original format of Europeans gazing at a threatening Asia. In Braakensick's striking graphic, it is China and the peoples of Asia who stand on a headland and behold a threatening West in the form of a huge warship.

The Christian cross remains in this rendering, albeit relocated above the warship. Archangel Michael has been replaced by the great Chinese sage Confucius (who also holds a sword). The female personifications of European nations have been replaced by female figures in various Asian native costumes—suggesting that China leads the multiple peoples and races of the Orient. A flying dragon rides the heavens where Wilhelm had placed his Christian cross. And as if all this were not “new interpretation” enough, the sub-caption has Confucius exhorting: “Peoples of Asia, protect your sacred possessions.”



*“A New Interpretation of Kaiser Wilhelm’s Picture”
Published in Weekblad vor Nederland, June 24, 1900
Artist: Johann Braakensick*

This iconoclastic cartoon, published in Amsterdam at the height of the Boxer uprising in 1900, dramatically turns Wilhelm II’s famous lithograph upside down. The point of view is Asian rather than Prussian, and the looming peril is Western warships sailing under the Christian cross.

Source: “Chinois d’Europe et Chinois d’Asie,” undated archival album of cartoons collected by John Grand-Carteret
[Grand-Carteret_34_GelbeGefahr_bpt6k63508640]

While this Dutch cartoon was unique in its direct and explicit reversal of the original “Yellow Peril” lithograph, the underlying critical perspective was, once again, not exceptional. Racist Yellow Peril imagery was indeed ubiquitous in Western publications in these turn-of-the-century years. It became even more hysterical when Japan proceeded to defeat (white and Christian) Imperial Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 to 1905. At the same time, however, the revolutionary new world of publications aimed at mass audiences—and the new levels of international stimulation and cross-fertilization this helped expedite—also encouraged a diversity of outlooks.

The imperialist foreign powers were the very opposite of monolithic, and harmonious in their attitudes and ambitions. And the new world of literally graphic political commentary ranged across a spectrum from flat-out racist ideologues and imperialists to incisive (and witty) anti-imperialists like Johann Braaksick in Amsterdam. The latter—and they were not few in number—were able to imagine how Asians might look at the world and reasonably see a truly threatening “White Peril.”

The Boxer Uprising — I

The Gathering Storm in North China (1860-1900)

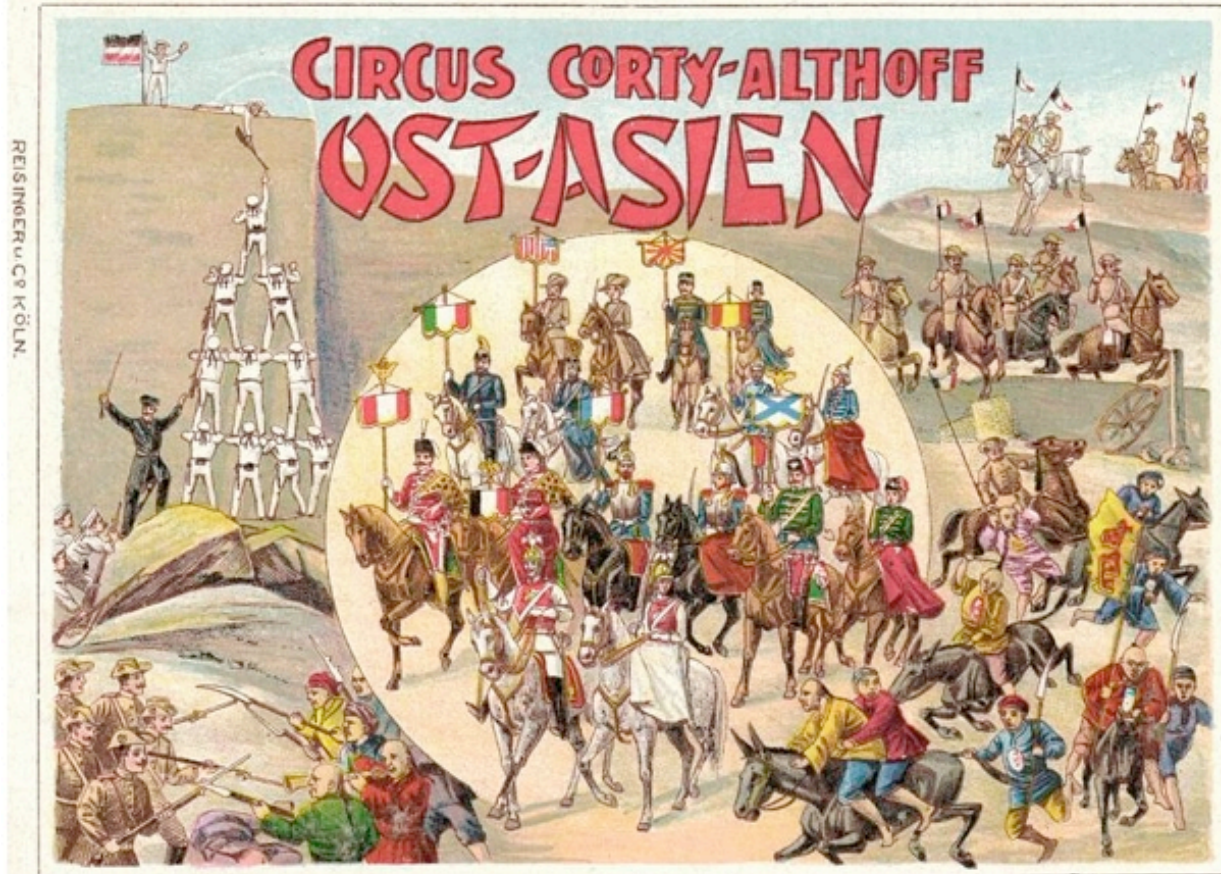
Essay by Peter C. Perdue & Ellen Sebring

The Boxer Uprising

Carving Up China

Imperialist Rivalries

Sources & Credits



“Circus Corty-Althoff Ost-Asien”

(Circus Corty-Althoff East Asia)

Postcard, Germany, ca. 1900

[c1900_236_001]

IMPERIALIST RIVALRIES

Although the imperial powers joined together to raise an Eight Nation Army to relieve the siege, each of the major powers had its own special relationship with China and its own view of its geopolitical interests. In sum, each of the imperial powers had its particular motives for sending troops to China, and each of them distrusted the others.

The deluge of global imagery from this period thus not only reveals a common racial prejudice against savage Orientals, but also shows the deep tensions between the powers that were only temporarily soothed by the joint expedition.

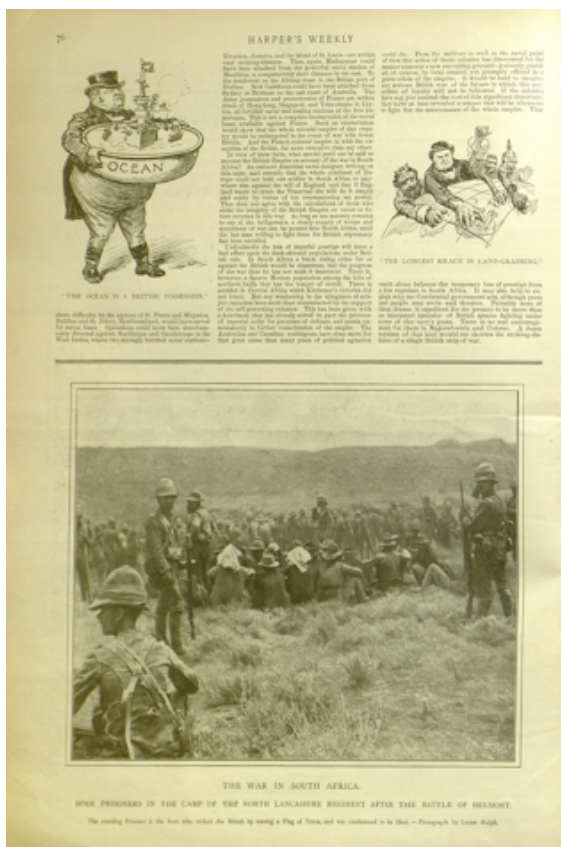
Great Britain

The British were still the predominant world imperial power, as they had been during the nineteenth century since the defeat of Napoleon. Their primary interests in China were commercial, and they focused most of their attention on the lower Yangzi valley, while they sent steamships up the Yangzi to obtain goods from the interior. They also held Hong Kong and developed substantial commerce in the Canton region. But British dominance, based on its control of the oceans and its large colony in India, was coming under challenge from several fronts. Germany began building a navy to contest British supremacy, while the French moved to take control of Indochina and extend their interests into south China. Russia presented a constant imagined threat to India as it moved into Central Asia. Rudyard Kipling saw the future for the British empire in an alliance with the United States, which also needed to build up its navy to become a global power.



*"Imperial Federation,—Map of the World Showing the Extent of the British Empire in 1886," with "British Territories Coloured Red."
 Supplement to the "Graphic," July 24, 1886.*

Source: Wikipedia Commons
 [1886_July24_the_Graphic_Map]



This presentation in the January 27, 1900 issue of Harper's Weekly calls attention to the global reach of the British empire, on which, it was said, the sun never set. In "The Longest Reach in Land-grabbing," John Bull's empire-building extends beyond that of Russia, Italy, France, and Germany.

Detail, above left, caption: "The ocean is a British possession."

Detail, above right, caption: "The longest reach in land-grabbing."

Harper's Weekly, January 27, 1900

[harpers1900_01_005]

From 1899 to 1902, British troops in South Africa fought a war against two independent republics founded by Dutch Afrikaners, the Transvaal and the Oranje Vrijstaat. Early victories by the British were not decisive, as the Boers waged a drawn-out guerrilla war campaign, just as the Filipinos were doing against American forces at the same time. Both countries used brutal tactics of internment of civilian populations in concentration camps and ravaging of the countryside to force surrender by the farmer fighters. The popular press, however, showed a sanitized picture of the war, with traditional pictures and lithographs of military operations. But the Boers were depicted as savages, analogous to the Boxers in their closeness to the earth and rejection of the British civilizing mission.



"The Chinese Kopje; — Not so Easy as it Looked from a Distance."
Puck, July 25, 1900
Artist: Udo Keppler

This illustration represents the eight-nation alliance that invaded China looking up at a mountain labeled "Chinese Question" topped with the face of an angry Chinese person. Kopje, the Dutch name for "small hill," indicates similarities of the Boxer Expedition to the Boer War in South Africa.

[puck_1900_ChKopje_008]

France

The French, unlike the British, had never created a successful East India Company to participate in the Canton trading system, and they had not traded in opium. Initially, their primary interest in China was the promotion and protection of Christianity. They joined with the British in 1856 to make war on China, benefiting the most from the provisions of the treaty ending the Second Opium War (1856-1860), which allowed missionary access to the Chinese interior. Beginning in the late-nineteenth century, they moved to take control of Indochina. In 1884, they fought their first independent war with China, when the court in Vietnam appealed for aid from China against French incursions. The French victory in the Sino-French war gave the French unimpeded control of Indochina, and the opportunity to spread their influence in south and southwest China. They sent commercial missions to the region to explore mineral and plant resources and to plan for railroad development.





This series of French postcards caricaturing the conflict in China depicts the brutality of British and Russian imperialists, as they torture and carve up the Chinese dragon. On the left (top), John Bull the Englishman confronts the Russian over the dead body of the Chinese dragon. Under the title "Dissection of the Chinese monster," the Russian Cossack says, "Look but don't touch."

In the second image, the title reads, "A Counter blow in China to the famine in India." As foreign powers carry away portly Chinese mandarins, John Bull says to his "faithful subject", the starving Indian, "What do you think I am, a drum [to beat upon for aid?]." In the third image, foreigners sharpen a razor to shave the sleeping mandarin. The title says, "Don't complain: we're doing everything we can to make you happy."

In the fourth image, John Bull, stuck in the war in Transvaal, shouts impotently while other foreigners saw off the legs of the mandarin's chair. The title says, "John Bull, caught in his own trap, can only grind his teeth while the others saw away." The fifth image (bottom) shows the Russians and others tearing China to pieces while John Bull screams under them. The title says, "Poor John Bull, they're thumbing their noses at you. On your back they rip off the juiciest morsels. Get up quick ...if you can!"

top row: [flkr10-15_FrPostcards_4]
bottom [flkr12_6004395961]

GERMANY

Germany, unified as a nation state in 1870, soon felt that it, too, needed an imperial mission to make itself into a recognized world power and to secure sources of raw materials for its rapid industrialization. Real estate available in the world for colonization was scarce, but Germany joined the struggle to carve up Africa, established a colony in Samoa, and looked for a chance to take a piece of Chinese territory. German missionaries also penetrated Shandong province under government protection beginning in the 1890s. When Chinese murdered two German missionaries in 1897, the Germans found their pretext and occupied Jiaozhou on the coast of Shandong, forcing the Chinese government to lease the territory to them for 99 years.

Jiaozhou became a popular tourist destination for Germans, who sent back postcards depicting both its exotic markets and the availability of familiar German products like beer and sausages. The Germans founded the first major beer factory in Jiaozhou's capital of Qingdao in 1903. Tsingtao beer is still the most popular Chinese beer sold abroad. Postcards celebrated the harmonious mingling of different races—white, Asian, and black—in the new German empire.



While Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II promoted virulent "Yellow Peril" sentiments, many postcards on the eve of the Boxer uprising still conveyed a contrary image of amity and even intimacy between the Chinese and Germans resident in China.

"Kiautschou (Jiaozhou bay in Shandong)"

Postcard, Germany, ca. 1899

Source: Wikipedia Commons
[Tsingtau_Postkarten_ca_1900_Kiautschou].

Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II, however, held a more menacing view of Asia. He warned of a rising "Yellow Peril," first directed at Japan after 1895 and later at China, and supported German claims to lead the nations of Europe in a war of civilization against a savage Oriental threat.



These German postcards from ca. 1899 capture Kaiser Wilhelm II's bellicosity toward China. Left: a German in spiked helmet, possibly the Kaiser himself, threatens the powerful empress dowager Cixi. The caption reads: "The German: Just wait until I get there!" (Der Deutsche: Na wart! wenn ich dir rüber komme.) Right: "The Iron Fist" (Die gepanzerte faust) strikes a Chinaman with a dagger as if descending from heaven.

[1899_244_001_mailed_fist]

As in other imperialist nations, once the multi-nation foreign invasion of China was underway, private German commercial interests seized the opportunity to join in generating and disseminating popular images of the conflict. A run of postcards from the C. H. Knorr company, for example, which produced packaged convenience foods like soup mixes, wedded images of its products to scenes of ongoing developments in the invasion that it deemed would be of particular interest to a German audience.



Another set of German postcards shows how the Boxer events in China were dramatized in many kinds of media, including advertisements with lavish illustrations. A series of postcards from the C. H. Knorr company depicts events in China of interest to the German audience, with the company's packaged grocery products displayed in the corners.

The series begins with (1) the departure of German troops for China; (2) the naval bombardment at Taku; (3) the battle for the Taku forts; (4) the battle at Tientsin, interestingly shown from the Chinese troops' point of view; (5) murder of German diplomat von Ketteler; and ends with (6) the taking of Peking, looting already in progress.

[flkr01-06_Knorr_postcard_series]

Austria-Hungary and Italy

The two other European powers, Austria-Hungary and Italy, had very limited relations with China, but they joined the expedition, at least in name, in order to demonstrate their membership in the group of significant European powers. Italy had tried and failed to gain territorial and commercial concessions in China. The Hapsburg empire of Austria and Hungary had a few missionaries in China, and hoped to benefit from supporting its German ally.



Although Italy was a minor participant in the multinational invasion, this Italian cartoon conveys a subtle picture of the situation in China. The Chinese figure, slightly goofy-looking at first glance, represents Li Hung-chang, China's most eminent statesman, who is in fact adroitly juggling six foreign powers (clearly including Germany, Japan, France, and probably the U.S., Britain, and Russia). Lurking and smirking behind him is the formidable empress dowager Cixi.

*"Usages et Coutumes Chinois — Comment on joue au volant en Chine." (Chinese Customs: How the Chinaman juggles)
Il Fischietto, Turin, Italy, ca. 1900*

Source: "Chinois d'Europe et Chinois d'Asie," undated archival album of cartoons collected by John Grand-Carteret, p. 22
[dh7060_e1389]



LA CHEVAUCHÉE DES SORCIÈRES EN CHINE.

Le savant Confucius a dit au sujet de la domination de l'étranger : « Quand sur les eaux du Yang-Tsé-Kiang le soleil se lèvera de Li-Hong-Chang, alors on verra sortir deux dragons du pays, tandis que des milliers de diables seront chassés dehors ».

(Der Flob, de Vienne, juillet 1900).

In this cartoon from an Austrian magazine, the foreign powers confront the familiar Chinese dragon, here ridden by a “witch” who obviously represents the powerful empress dowager Cixi. The figure in the sun at the upper right is the powerful minister Li Hongzhang.

“La Chevauchée des Sorcieres en Chines”

(The Ride of the Chinese Sorcerers)

Caption: “The sage Confucius said of foreign domination: When the sun of Li Hongzhang rises over the Yangzi river, two dragons will appear to drive out millions of foreign devils.”

Source: “Chinois d’Europe et Chinois d’Asie,” undated archival album of cartoons collected by John Grand-Carteret
[Grand-Carteret_36_DRAGON_bpt6k63508640]

United States

The United States was also a latecomer to the cause of imperialism in Asia. Although Commodore Matthew Perry's ships had begun the opening of Japan in 1853, and Americans eagerly participated in both the Canton trade and the chances to trade in opium after the opening of Chinese ports, Americans still saw themselves as different from European powers who aimed to occupy territory in China. American missionaries and businessmen hoped to help Asian peoples become richer and stronger without imposing discriminatory treaties on them: they argued that free trade would benefit all countries equally.



Harper's cover graphic at the height of the Boxer Uprising taps two cherished stereotypes: China as a mad and ferocious dragon, and the United States, personified by Uncle Sam, as poised and rational—offering “peace” but entirely prepared for war. The choice, as the caption declares, is entirely up to China.

“The Dragon's Choice”
Harper's Weekly, August 18, 1900

[harpers1900_07b_v2b_013]

The American proposal for an "Open Door" that made Chinese markets available to all countries equally implied that no single power could occupy territory with exclusive rights. All the other imperial powers, who did occupy Chinese territory, paid lip service to the American proposal but ignored it in practice.

For much of the nineteenth century the U.S., with its huge continental territory, was either insulated from economic dependence on the wider world across the Pacific, or too involved in the domestic repercussions of the Civil War to pay attention to geopolitical concerns.

But as its industrial economy needed more overseas markets and materials from abroad, and its expansion continued beyond the west coast into the Pacific, the U.S. inexorably became an imperial power in its own right. Promoters of open imperialist annexations argued that the U.S. needed to compete for global commercial supremacy by securing raw materials and territories. American businessmen staged a coup in Hawaii in 1893, and the U.S. annexed the islands in 1898.

The takeover of the Philippines from Spain in 1898 was followed by a brutal campaign to suppress the anti-imperialist Filipino force led by Emilio Aguinaldo. Popular journalists depicted the U.S. as a benevolent school teacher lifting the burden of Catholic medievalism from the ordinary Filipino peasant, and repelling the corrupt banditry of Aguinaldo and his rebels. Geopolitical analysts focused on the Philippines as the key gateway to Asia for American commerce.

The U.S. experience in the Philippines certainly affected views of the role of U.S. troops in the relief of the Boxer siege of foreign legations in Beijing. Images of benevolence toward smaller dark-skinned people transferred easily from one Asian country to another, but the awareness that Asian peoples could resist white domination with harsh military action prepared the American public to accept that the Boxers represented yet another savage, inexplicable outburst by ungrateful Asians against their white benefactors.

Chinese immigration to the U.S. also added a distinctive element to the American image of the Orient. Chinese had begun to leave Canton in significant numbers in the 1850s to flee the disturbances of the Taiping rebellion (1850–64) and to participate in the gold rush, and in the 1860s they worked to build the first transcontinental railroad, completed in 1869. The Burlingame treaty of 1868, which normalized relations between China and the U.S. also provided for free immigration of Chinese, but did not allow Chinese to become citizens.

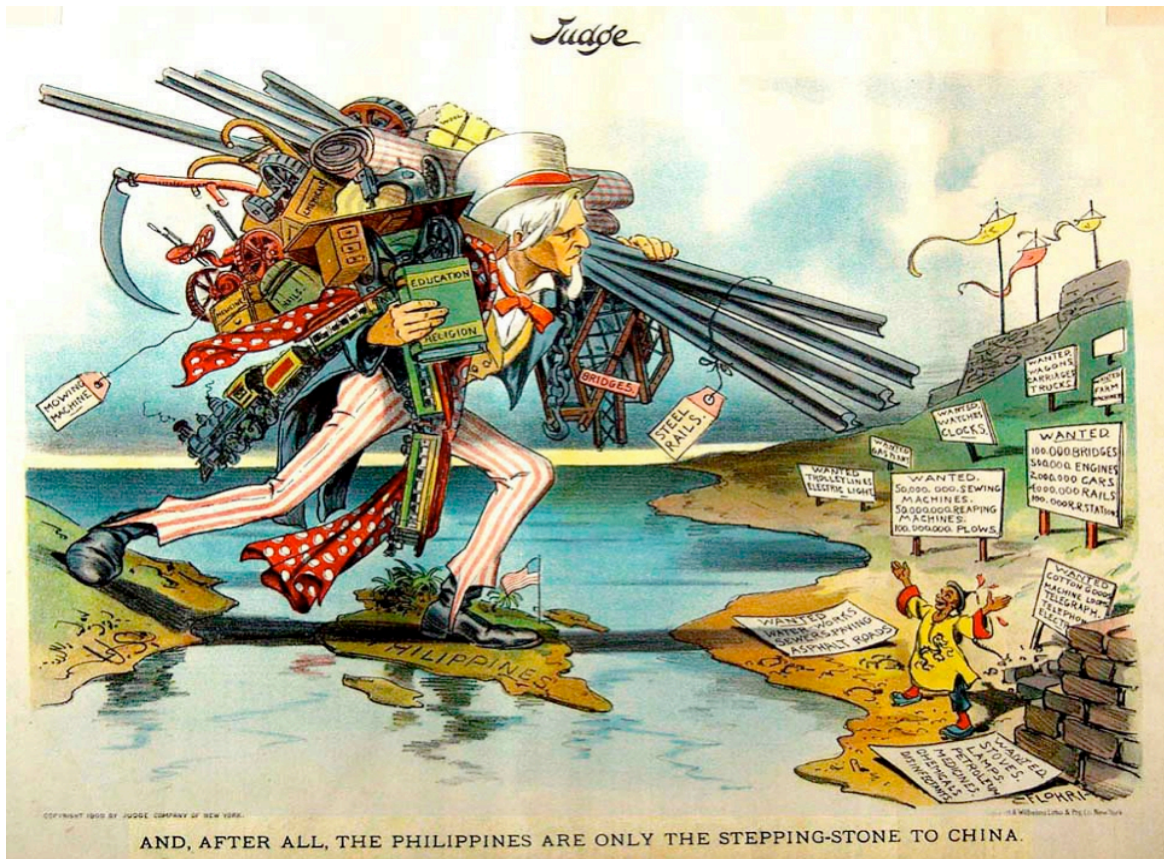
Chinese grew to become the largest immigrant group in California. 300,000 of them had entered the U.S. before the passage of anti-Chinese exclusion acts. They faced severe racial discrimination. White farmers and businessmen attacked the Chinese as an alien, dangerous race, easily adopting the Yellow Peril fears raised in Europe. The Exclusion Act of 1882 reversed the open policy of the Burlingame treaty, prohibiting further immigration and rejecting intermarriage of Chinese with Europeans. This and later exclusion acts were not repealed until 1943. Most Chinese were confined to crowded Chinatowns, which became known as places of disease, dirt, drugs, and gambling, dominated by ancient "secret societies" who engaged in violent "tong wars."

Newly organized public health campaigns to combat plague by quarantine in Chinatowns in San Francisco and Hawaii in 1900 coincided with the outbreak of the Boxer rebellion. These images linked the domestic threat of Chinese immigrants directly with the violent Boxer attacks on missionaries in China.

In the U.S. the Republican president William McKinley had defeated William Jennings Bryan in 1896 on a platform supporting the gold standard, plus high tariffs on foreign imports to protect American business interests. McKinley challenged Spanish control of its Caribbean colonies and led the U.S. into the war of 1898, prodded by the Hearst journalistic empire's whipping up of public opinion, obtaining as a byproduct America's first Asian colonies, the Philippines, Guam, and Hawaii. In 1900 he ran successfully against Bryan again, defending imperial acquisitions as necessary for American prosperity, but in September 1901 he was assassinated.

In 1899, the U.S. Secretary of State John Hay tried to ward off the division of China by announcing an "Open Door" policy, asserting equal access to Chinese markets for all powers and the prohibition of open territorial conquest. What held back the powers from an open division of China, however, was less the influence of the United States, which was still a weak imperialist beyond its own shores, than the recognition of all the powers that an inter-imperialist war over China would benefit no one. This common interest in preserving a weak, but united Qing empire undergirded the joint imperial expedition to Beijing and the treaties that kept the empire alive afterward.

Although U.S. publications contributed their fair share of racist cartoons and commentary to the Yellow Peril attitudes of the time, the conquest of the Philippines and upheaval in China also provided a fertile field for emphasizing the enormous commercial opportunities that Asia in general—and the China market in particular—offered, especially to dynamic trading nations like the United States and Great Britain.



"And, After All, the Philippines are Only the Stepping-Stone to China."

Judge, March 21, 1900

Artist: Emil Flohri

This spectacular cartoon in the American weekly Judge vividly conveys the dynamics and contradictions of the U.S. "Open Door" policy in Asia at the time of the Boxer Uprising. One side of this was the contemporaneous U.S. conquest of the Philippines, which artist Emil Flohri astutely points out was regarded by many Americans as a commercial "stepping-stone to China." The immensity of the envisioned China market is spelled out in both the huge burden of heavy industrial commodities Uncle Sam carries and the profusion of Chinese signs itemizing "Wanted" imports. These include locomotives and steel rails, farming equipment such as reaping machines and plows, cotton textiles, sewing machines, medicines and chemicals, trolley lines as well as trucks and carriages, telegraphs and telephones, etc.

As the book in Uncle Sam's hand indicates, the U.S. would simultaneously be bringing "education" and "religion" to China. The tiny welcoming Chinese figure in this graphic was a striking contrast to the more familiar cartoon caricatures of China as a raging dragon or ominous "Yellow Peril." At the same time, the graphic makes clear that the U.S. would be the prime beneficiary of an "open door" to China.

Source: Wikimedia

[cb28-038_1900_Mar21_Judge_Philippines_wm]

Awakening China

As the Boxer uprising flared into the multinational intervention, some graphic renderings depicted an even more precarious picture of the see-saw of imperialist rivalries. In this situation, China itself became a potential source of global discord—a giant firecracker; a dark and dangerous terrain to navigate, full of traps that might lead to future wars; a “sword of Damocles” hanging by a thread over the heads of the interventionist powers.



"A Dangerous Firecracker"
Puck, July 11, 1900
Artist: Louis Dalrymple

DEAN C. WORCESTER ON THE PHILIPPINES

HARPER'S WEEKLY

A JOURNAL OF CIVILIZATION

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NEW YORK, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1899

TEN CENTS A COPY
FOUR DOLLARS A YEAR



A FAIR FIELD AND NO FAVOR!
UNCLE SAM: "I'M OUT FOR COMMERCE, NOT CONQUEST!"

"A Fair Field and No Favor!"

Caption: "Uncle Sam: 'I'm Out For Commerce, Not Conquest!'"

Harper's Weekly, Vol. 43, No. 2239, November 18, 1899

Artist: W. A. Rogers

This November 1899 Harper's cover illustration also reflects endorsement of the "Open Door" policy, which the U.S. announced as its official policy toward China in September of that same year. In contrast to the bellicose European powers clamoring for spheres of interest, Uncle Sam offers unfettered commercial expansion. Italy, Russia, France, and Germany clamor for "conquest" behind him, with a suave hat-tipping England off to the side. As a symbol of the commerce the U.S. had in mind, the male figure personifying China—with his typical long queue and traditional garb—holds a locomotive in his hand.

Source: HarpWeek
[1899_Nov18_Harpers]

Japan

Of all the nations engaged in the Boxer expedition, Japan and Russia had the most well-defined material and territorial interests to protect, and the most reason to distrust each other. In the Sino-Japanese war of 1895, Japan had established pre-eminent influence over Korea, forcing Korea open to Japanese trade and driving out the pro-Chinese faction in the country. Japan saw its role in Korea in the same way as the other imperial powers viewed their own colonies. Japan claimed to bring "enlightenment" in the form of modern science and culture to backward peoples. Japan had no missionaries to protect in China, and it was not a target of Boxer attacks, but it identified itself with the Western powers' goal of forcing China to accept trade and modern culture, and it saw advantages in joining the Western expedition as a way of raising its status among the Western powers. Not until the signing of the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902, directed against Russia, could Japan gain recognition of its role as one of the major world powers. Its participation in the Boxer expedition, for which it sent the largest number of troops and often took the lead in attacks, showed that Japanese could fight for the Western version of "civilization" even more effectively than the Westerners themselves.

Most Japanese graphic renderings of the multinational intervention tended to be detailed and relatively straightforward nationalistic depictions that emphasized the discipline of Japan's military forces and their equality to and close collaboration with the Western powers.

福島の将軍と軍合連隊の津関へ入るの図



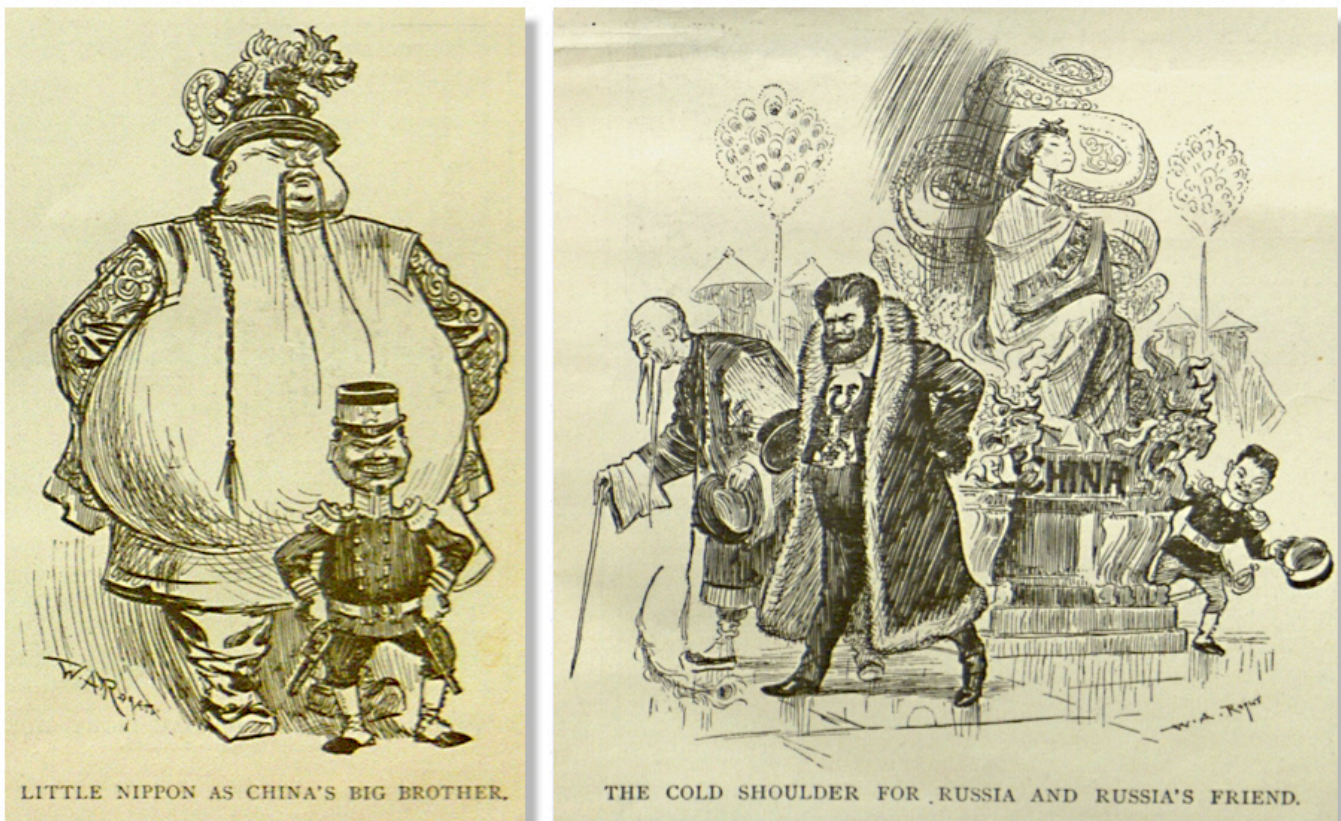
"The Japanese army under Major General Fukushima advancing with the allied armies toward T'ien-chin, China"

Japan, July 1900

Artist: Nakajima Ishimatsu

Source: Library of Congress
[1900_02539u_July_loc]

The Japanese sense of perfect equivalence to the Western powers was rarely reciprocated, however. On the contrary, most European and American depictions of the foreign forces in China routinely depicted the Japanese as "little men"—not only vis-à-vis the Westerners, but vis-à-vis China and the Chinese as well. A full-page treatment in *Harper's Weekly* in early 1900—five full years after Japan had crushed China in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 to 1895—reflected the resilience of this lingering anti-Japanese condescension.



This full-page article, "The Pacific to the Fore," in Harper's Weekly, February 24, 1900, still depicted a diminutive Japan despite its victory over China five years earlier, and speculated on Japan's relationship to China and Russia.

Detail, above left, caption: "Little Nippon as China's big brother."

Detail, above right, caption: "The Cold Shoulder for Russia and Russia's Friend."

Harper's Weekly, February 24, 1900

[harpers1900_01_012]

Russia

Russia was the power with the longest historical engagement with China, having signed its first treaties with the Qing dynasty in 1689 and 1727. The early period of equitable interaction changed in the late-nineteenth century, when Russia took advantage of China's defeat in the Second Opium War to gain its own favorable treaty, and sent troops into the Ili valley during the Muslim uprisings of the 1870s, where they stayed until China forced them out diplomatically in 1881. By the 1890s, Russia had developed its commercial interests on the Pacific coast, founding the town of Vladivostok in 1880. But Russian interests in the Far East faced resistance both from the British, who feared a potential move against India, and from Japan, which aimed for uncontested influence in Korea. Russia, like Japan, had no missionary activities in China and was not a target of Boxer attacks, but it saw the foreign expedition as a golden opportunity to take advantage once again of China's weakness and other powers' interests to advance its own at low cost. The Russian Minister for War General Alexi Kuropatkin and Count Sergei Witte, the minister of finance, saw the Boxer expedition as a perfect excuse for seizing Manchuria and turning it into a Russian colony.



"The Same Old Bear."

Caption: "Russian Bear (to British Lion), 'You've got so much to do elsewhere, I'll tackle this obstreperous Party.' British Lion, 'Oh, thanks! But I wouldn't leave you alone with him for worlds!'"

Punch, June 13, 1900

In this cartoon in England's premier humor magazine, Punch, the British lion and Russian bear express their mistrust of one another in ironically polite terms, while the other nations involved in the Boxer uprising comprise a motley and noticeably goofy background. The Chinese dragon sports, among other things, a pair of boxing gloves.

[1900_punchvol118a119lemouoft_0429_archive]

Dangerous China: Another Kind of China Peril

As a general rule, most foreign caricatures of China depicted the country as either a formidable menace to the world or a small backwater ripe for commercial penetration. A cartoon published in the American periodical *Judge* in 1898, as the Boxer depredations were about to rise to a crescendo, conveyed a somewhat different picture. Here the world was a "see-saw," in which the Anglo-American powers were engaged in a uneven "balance of power" game vis-a-vis the other major nations of the world. In this power struggle, some countries already had fallen off the see-saw—and China was hanging on for dear life and perilously close to falling also.



"The See-saw of Nations."

Caption: "The Anglo-Saxons hold the balance of power."

Judge, April 9, 1898. Note that China hangs off the end of the plank.

In this depiction of global power struggle at the turn of the century, Uncle Sam and John Bull weigh heaviest, while other nations—notably Russia, Germany, France, Spain, and Turkey—struggle to stay on the other end, and China is merely holding on for dear life. "History" stands in the balance, and the fulcrum of the see-saw is, ominously and tellingly, a cannon.

[Judge_1898_Apr9]

Awakening China

As the Boxer uprising flared into the multinational intervention, some graphic renderings depicted an even more precarious picture of the see-saw of imperialist rivalries. In this situation, China itself became a potential source of global discord—a giant firecracker; a dark and dangerous terrain to navigate, full of traps that might lead to future wars; a “sword of Damocles” hanging by a thread over the heads of the interventionist powers.



“A Dangerous Firecracker”

Puck, July 11, 1900

Artist: Louis Dalrymple

John Bull, representing England, and the rulers of Germany, France, Austria, and Japan watch as the ruler of Russia lights the fuse of a large firecracker labeled "China."

[puck_1900_11July_firecracker_007]



Puck, September 6, 1901

Artist: Udo Keppeler

Representing the dangers of war between the imperial powers during the Boxer intervention, the cartoon shows Uncle Sam holding a lantern labeled "Prudence" in one hand and John Bull with the other, leading Austria, Japan, France, and Germany through a field of traps labeled "Casus Belli" (an act that provokes war).

[puck_1901_744_yale_beinecke]



"Awakening of China"

Caption: "A Disturbing Possibility in the East."

Puck, September 4, 1901

Artist: Udo Keppler

Here, Uncle Sam sits at a table with 10 figures, three of whom are unidentified, the others representing the leaders of the eight nation alliance: Russia, England, Germany, Japan, Italy, Austria, and France. There is a large tray of fruit labeled "Chinese Indemnity" on the table. Hanging above the table by a thin string is an enormous sword labeled "Awakening of China."

[puck_1901_04Sep_25561u_LOC]

The danger was multifold. Intervention threatened to intensify already-existing rivalries among the imperialist powers (as indeed happened, when the intervention was followed four years later by war between Tsarist Russia and Japan). At the same time, the humiliation of China threatened to awaken the nation in truly perilous ways. This latter premonition became especially strong in 1901. The victorious foreign powers had weakened the Qing court by imposing a harsh indemnity on it, and by forcing it to execute officials who had stirred up the Boxers, but they shared an interest in keeping the dynasty alive. They feared the possibility of another uprising of the Chinese masses and the onset of conflict between the imperial powers themselves. This China, unlike the slain dragon, as firecracker or as sword of Damocles, threatened to blow up the imperial world order.

The Boxer Uprising — I

The Gathering Storm in North China (1860-1900)

Essay by Peter C. Perdue & Ellen Sebring

The Boxer Uprising

Carving Up China

Imperialist Rivalries

Sources & Credits

SOURCES & CREDITS

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Links

"Chinois d'Europe et Chinois d'Asie," undated archival album of cartoons collected by John Grand-Carteret.
<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k63508640/f46.image>

About John Grand-Carteret:

https://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=fr&u=https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Grand-Carteret&prev=search

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