



Imperialism and the Open Door

Student Name _____ Date _____

John Hay's Open Door Note, September 6, 1899:
<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/opendoor.htm>

American Secretary of State John Hay was a leading architect of the rise of the United States to world power status. He had begun his public career as a secretary to President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War. Hay had recently returned to Washington after serving as U.S. ambassador to Britain. Hay was an advocate of close Anglo-American cooperation but because of domestic and international politics, chose to issue the Open Door Notes as a unilateral U.S. initiative. After President McKinley's assassination he continued to serve as Theodore Roosevelt's Secretary of State until his death in 1905. This note was sent to the German government through the American Minister in Berlin. Copies were sent to American diplomats in Britain and Russia, and later in Italy, France and Japan.

At the time when the Government of the United States was informed by that of Germany that it had leased from His Majesty the Emperor of China the port of Kiao-chao and the adjacent territory in the province of Shantung, assurances were given to the ambassador of the United States at Berlin by the Imperial German minister for foreign affairs that the rights and privileges insured by treaties with China to citizens of the United States would not thereby suffer or be in anywise impaired within the area over which Germany had thus obtained control.

More recently, however, the British Government recognized by a formal agreement with Germany the exclusive right of the latter country to enjoy in said leased area and the contiguous "sphere of influence or interest" certain privileges, more especially those relating to railroads and mining enterprises; but as the exact nature and extent of the rights thus recognized have not been clearly defined, it is possible that serious conflicts of interest may at any time arise not only between British and German subjects within said area, but that the interests of our citizens may also be jeopardized thereby.

Earnestly desirous to remove any cause of irritation and to insure at the same time to the commerce of all nations in China the undoubted benefits which should accrue from a formal recognition by the various powers claiming "spheres of interest" that they shall enjoy perfect equality of treatment for their commerce and navigation within such "spheres," the Government of the United States would be pleased to see His German Majesty's Government give formal assurances, and lend its cooperation in securing like assurances from the other interested powers, that each, within its respective sphere of whatever influence--

First. Will in no way interfere with any treaty port or any vested interest within any so-called "sphere of interest" or leased territory it may have in China.

Second. That the Chinese treaty tariff of the time being shall apply to all merchandise landed or shipped to all such ports as are within said "sphere of interest" (unless they be "free ports"), no matter to what nationality it may belong, and that duties so leviable shall be collected by the Chinese Government.

Third. That it will levy no higher harbor dues on vessels of another nationality frequenting any port in such "sphere" than shall be levied on vessels of its own nationality, and no higher railroad charges over lines built, controlled, or operated within its "sphere" on merchandise belonging to citizens or subjects of other nationalities transported through such "sphere" than shall be levied on similar merchandise belonging to its own nationals transported over equal distances.

The liberal policy pursued by His Imperial German Majesty in declaring Kiao-chao a free port and in aiding the Chinese Government in the establishment there of a custom-house are so clearly in line with the proposition which this Government is anxious to see recognized that it entertains the strongest hope that Germany will give its acceptance and hearty support.

The recent ukase of His Majesty the Emperor of Russia declaring the port of Ta-lien-wan open during the whole of the lease under which it is held from China to the merchant ships of all nations, coupled with the categorical assurances made to this Government by His Imperial Majesty's representative at this capital at the time and since repeated to me by the present Russian ambassador, seem to insure the support of the Emperor to the proposed measure. Our ambassador at the Court of St. Petersburg has in consequence been instructed to submit it to the Russian Government and to request their early consideration of it. A copy of my instruction on the subject to Mr. Tower is herewith inclosed for your confidential information.

The commercial interests of Great Britain and Japan will be so clearly served by the desired declaration of intentions, and the views of the Governments of these countries as to the desirability of the adoption of measures insuring the benefits of equality of treatment of all foreign trade throughout China are so similar to those entertained by the United States, that their acceptance of the propositions herein outlined and their cooperation in advocating their adoption by the other powers can be confidently expected. I inclose herewith copy of the instruction which I have sent to Mr. Choate on the subject.

In view of the present favorable conditions, you are instructed to submit the above considerations to His Imperial German Majesty's Minister for Foreign Affairs, and to request his early consideration of the subject.

Copy of this instruction is sent to our ambassadors at London and at St. Petersburg for their information.



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Read the following documents and list their key points on the 5x7 piece of construction paper given to you to construction a class timeline of events. Be prepared to present your document to the class.

Group 1: Britain Reacts to the Open Door Note, November 30, 1899:

<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/opbrit.htm>

I have the honor to state that I have carefully considered, in communication with my colleagues, the proposal . . . that a declaration should be made by foreign powers claiming "spheres of interest" in China as to their intentions in regard to the treatment of foreign trade and interest therein.

I have much pleasure in informing your excellency that Her Majesty's Government will be prepared to make a declaration in the sense desired by your Government in regard to the leased territory of Wei-hai Wei and all territory in China which may hereafter be acquired by Great Britain by lease or otherwise, and all spheres of interest now held or that may hereafter be held by her in China, provided that a similar declaration is made by other powers concerned.

Russian Response to the Open Door Note, December 18, 1899:

<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/rusdoor.htm>

I had the honor to receive your excellency's note ... relating to the principles which the Government of the United States would like to see adopted in commercial matters by the powers which have interests in China.

In so far as the territory leased by China to Russia is concerned, the Imperial Government has already demonstrated its firm intention to follow the policy of "the open door" by creating Dalny (Ta-lien-wan) a free port; and if at some future time that port, although remaining free itself, should be separated by a customs limit from other portions of the territory in question, the customs duties would be levied, in the zone subject to the tariff, upon all foreign merchandise without distinction as to nationality.

As to the ports now opened or hereafter to be opened to foreign commerce by the Chinese Government, and which lie beyond the territory leased to Russia, the settlement of the question of customs duties belongs to China herself, and the Imperial Government has no intention whatever of claiming any privileges for its own subjects to the exclusion of other foreigners. It is to be understood, however, that this assurance of the Imperial Government is given upon condition that a similar declaration shall be made by other powers having interests in China.

With the conviction that this reply is such as to satisfy the inquiry made in the aforementioned note, the Imperial Government is happy to have complied with the wishes of the American Government, especially as it attaches the highest value to anything that may strengthen and consolidate the traditional relations of friendship existing between the two countries.



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Group 2: The Powers and Partition of China, by Rev. Gilbert Reid, May 1900:

<http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/moa-cgi?notisid=ABQ7578-0170-61>

The Reverend Gilbert Reid was an American missionary who established the International Institute of China in Peking (Beijing) and Shanghai. He was a scholar of comparative religion whose publications on Chinese affairs were widely read in the United States.

THE unusual attention given to Chinese affairs for two years past has been largely due to affairs in China which are foreign as well as Chinese. The scramble of European Powers has shifted from Constantinople to Peking, and into this scramble Japan and the United States have entered. The destiny of China seems to depend upon action taken in London, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Paris and Tokyo. The future of Europe and America, and the question of the new “balance of power,” depends on action taken in Peking. After all, in an unexpected way, one-fourth of the human race as concentrated in China must be reckoned with in making the map of the world.

The present, has been in favor of maintaining the integrity of China. Parties have been agreed on this matter. So long as Great Britain was the predominant Power in China, this policy was unmodified. With the growing advance of other Powers, and especially with the increasing influence of Russia at the capital of China, the present Salisbury Government drifted into a policy of passivity. Instead of insisting on maintaining the integrity of China, it excused itself from that task, and insisted on maintaining British interests, whatever became of China. The strong position sustained in the speeches of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach in the early part of 1898 for the “open door,” was relinquished for the new theory of “spheres of interest,” as enunciated by the Rt. Hon. A. J. Balfour, and as illustrated by the agreement made with Russia concerning spheres of railway and mining concessions. All the time, however, the Government has declared that the open door is not closed, and plainly shows a desire to have China kept intact.

...Russians with reference to China is about equalled by Russian suspicion of Great Britain. British suspicion arises from an ignorance of what the Russians really think or intend to do. Russian suspicion arises from the open declarations and threatening propositions of the British public and its free press. Russia wants to take possession of the whole of China, or at least of Peking and all North China. Our personal conviction to the contrary has always been received with surprise as a strange hallucination.

...Different from the influence of the European Powers in China is that of the United States. While the equal of any of the Powers, this advancing Republic, the predominant Power on the American continent, has maintained from the year 1842 a friendly attitude to China. Even with the cry for expansion and her presence in Asiatic waters, she has displayed no inclination to participate in the dismemberment of

China. Certain Americans are inclined to unite with the British in some definite China policy, while others look with favor on closer relations with Russia, but the National Government, in so far as it has a policy, puts forth no positive action either to divide China or maintain her integrity, but seeks to protect American interests as guaranteed by treaties. Naturally, this policy, like that of the British Government, is more allied to an “open door,” with equality of opportunity, but there is no readiness to resist the aggressions of other Powers, so long as American trade is not hampered nor American citizens molested. It is, therefore, possible for the United States to maintain equally friendly relations with China, with Great Britain, with Russia, or any other Power, if nothing is done to eliminate China as a treaty-making Power, or to make sections of China partial to some one country in rights, privileges and opportunities. If China is not to be dismembered, there is no need for the United States to interfere, but if dismemberment is to be undertaken, the very existence of extensive American interests, commercial and missionary, and the fact that for over half a century the United States has had in Eastern Asia diplomatic relations equally with others, will require that the United States be not only consulted, but given an equal share in the distribution of new opportunities.

All seek their own interests first, from what some would term patriotic motives, and yet this very self-interest is dependent on the preservation of China. A scramble for conquest, possessions, sovereignty, in China would endanger the peace of the whole world. Even a struggle for established spheres of influence, with Chinese authority weakened more and more, would not only be treacherous to China but provoke such discord, animosities, riots and resentments as to make the loss and trouble of the participants greater than the gain and honor. Each nation, while anxious for more influence, is opposed to the increased influence of any other nation. The whole territory of China presents so many opportunities for foreign enterprise that all prefer competition to exclusiveness and dismemberment.



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Group 3: McKinley's Annual Address to Congress, 1900:

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29541>

...In our foreign intercourse the dominant question has been the treatment of the Chinese problem...The recent troubles in China spring from the anti-foreign agitation which for the past three years has gained strength in the northern provinces. Their origin lies deep in the character of the Chinese races and in the traditions of their Government...foreign activity made itself felt in all quarters, not alone on the coast, but along the great river arteries and in the remoter districts, carrying new ideas and introducing new associations among a primitive people which had pursued for centuries a national policy of isolation.

The telegraph and the railway spreading over their land, the steamers plying on their waterways, the merchant and the missionary penetrating year by year farther to the interior, became to the Chinese mind types of an alien invasion, changing the course of their national life and fraught with vague forebodings of disaster to their beliefs and their self-control.

...Posting of antforeign placards became a daily occurrence, which the repeated reprobation of the Imperial power failed to check or punish. These inflammatory appeals to the ignorance and superstition of the masses, mendacious and absurd in their accusations and deeply hostile in their spirit, could not but work cumulative harm. They aimed at no particular class of foreigners; they were impartial in attacking everything foreign. An outbreak in Shan-tung, in which German missionaries were slain, was the too natural result of these malevolent teachings.

...The sect, commonly styled the Boxers, developed greatly in the provinces north of the Yang-Tse, and with the collusion of many notable officials, including some in the immediate councils of the Throne itself, became alarmingly aggressive. No foreigner's life, outside of the protected treaty ports, was safe. No foreign interest was secure from spoliation.

...The increasing gravity of the conditions in China and the imminence of peril to our own diversified interests in the Empire, as well as to those of all the other treaty governments, were soon appreciated by this Government, causing it profound solicitude. The United States from the earliest days of foreign intercourse with China had followed a policy of peace, omitting no occasions to testify good will, to further the extension of lawful trade, to respect the sovereignty of its Government, and to insure by all legitimate and kindly but earnest means the fullest measure of protection for the lives and property of our law-abiding citizens and for the exercise of their beneficent callings among the Chinese people.

Mindful of this, it was felt to be appropriate that our purposes should be pronounced in favor of such course as would hasten united action of the powers at Peking to promote the administrative reforms so greatly needed for strengthening the Imperial Government and maintaining the integrity of China, in

which we believed the whole western world to be alike concerned. To these ends I caused to be addressed to the several powers occupying territory and maintaining spheres of influence in China the circular proposals of 1899, inviting from them declarations of their intentions and views as to the desirability of the adoption of measures insuring the benefits of equality of treatment of all foreign trade throughout China.

With gratifying unanimity the responses coincided in this common policy, enabling me to see in the successful termination of these negotiations proof of the friendly spirit which animates the various powers interested in the untrammled development of commerce and industry in the Chinese Empire as a source of vast benefit to the whole commercial world.

...As was then said, " The policy of the Government of the United States is to seek a solution which may bring about permanent safety and peace to China, preserve Chinese territorial and administrative entity, protect all rights guaranteed to friendly powers by treaty and international law, and safeguard for the world the principle of equal and impartial trade with all parts of the Chinese Empire."

Faithful to those professions which, as it proved, reflected the views and purposes of the other co-operating Governments, all our efforts have been directed toward ending the anomalous situation in China by negotiations for a settlement at the earliest possible moment. As soon as the sacred duty of relieving our legation and its dependents was accomplished we withdrew from active hostilities, leaving our legation under an adequate guard in Peking as a channel of negotiation and settlement--a course adopted by others of the interested powers. Overtures of the empowered representatives of the Chinese Emperor have been considerately entertained.



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Group 4: Fei Ch'i-hao: The Boxer Rebellion: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1900Fei-boxers.html>

Fei Ch'i-hao was a Chinese Christian. Here he recounts the activities of the millenialist "Boxers" in the Boxer Rebellion of 1900.

The people of Shansi are naturally timid and gentle, not given to making disturbances, being the most peaceable people in China. So our Shansi Christians were hopeful for themselves, even when the reports from the coast grew more alarming...The wicked Governor, Yü Hsien, scattered proclamations broadcast. These stated that the foreign religions overthrew morality and inflamed men to do evil, so now gods and men were stirred up against them, and Heaven's legions had been sent to exterminate the foreign devils. Moreover there were the Boxers, faithful to their sovereign, loyal to their country, determined to unite in wiping out the foreign religion. He also offered a reward to all who killed foreigners, either titles or office or money. When the highest official in the province took such a stand in favor of the Boxers, what could inferior officials do? People and officials bowed to his will, and all who enlisted as Boxers were in high favor. It was a time of license and anarchy, when not only Christians were killed, but hundreds of others against whom individual Boxers had a grudge.

...Late in july a proclamation of the Governor was posted in the city in which occurred the words, "Exterminate foreigners, kill devils." Native Christians must leave the church or pay the penalty with their lives. Li Yij and I talked long and earnestly over plans for saving the lives of our beloved missionaries. "You must not stay here waiting for death," we said. Yet we realized how difficult it would be to escape. Foreigners with light hair and fair faces are not easily disguised. Then where could they go? Eastward toward the coast all was in tumult. Perhaps the provinces to the south were just as bad.

...August had come, and we were still alive. Could it be that God wishing to show His mighty power, would out of that whole province of Shansi save the missionaries at Fen Chou Fu and Tai Ku?

...At this time it seemed as if the Boxer trouble might be over. There were few rumors on the streets, and there had never been organized Boxer bands in Fen Chou Fu. So our hearts were more peaceful. Perhaps it was God's will after all to save our little band. Still no word reached us from the outside world.

...We had been imprisoned within walls for two or three months, and our hearts had all the time been burdened and anxious. Now suddenly we were outside the city in the pure, bracing air, in the midst of flowers and trees, luxuriant in summer beauty, riding through fields ripe for the harvest. It was all so beautiful and peaceful and strength-giving. So as soon as we were out in the country air our spirits rose and fresh life and joy came to us.

...The sun had risen when I opened my eyes in the morning. I forced myself to rise, washed my face, and asked for a little food, but could not get it down. Sitting down I heard loud talking and laughter among the guests. The topic of conversation was the massacre of foreigners the day before! One said:

"There were ten ocean men killed, three men, four women, and three little devils.

" Another added, "Lij Cheng San yesterday morning came ahead with twenty soldiers and waited in the village. When the foreigners with their soldier escort arrived a gun was fired for a signal, and all the soldiers set to work at once."

Then one after another added gruesome details, how the cruel swords had slashed, how the baggage had been stolen, how the very clothing had been stripped from the poor bodies, and how they had then been flung into a wayside pit....The poor remains of the missionaries would have been left on the village street had not the village leaders begged that they be taken away. So the soldiers dragged them to a pit outside the city, where they found a common grave.



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Group 5: Remarks by Kaiser Wilhelm II on the Boxer Rebellion: <http://www.history.com/resources/boxer-rebellion/kaiser-wilhelm-ii-remarks>

Kaiser Wilhelm II was the German Emperor during the Boxer Rebellion. He advocated an assertive foreign policy for the newly-reunited Reich and “a place in the sun” for the German people. Strongly influenced by the geopolitical writings of Alfred Thayer Mahan, Wilhelm II supported the development of a naval fleet rivaling that of Britain and the acquisition of overseas colonies and claims of special economic rights. His address to the German troops dispatched to deal with the Boxer Rebellion was widely cited at the time as an example of his personal bellicosity—as well as the attitude of foreign powers towards China.

Into the midst of the deepest peace--alas, not surprising to me--the torch of war has been hurled. A crime unprecedented in its brazenness, horrifying in its cruelty, has struck my trusted representative and carried him off. The ambassadors of the other powers are in danger of their lives and along with them your comrades who were dispatched for their protection. Perhaps, they have today fought their last battle. The German flag has been insulted, and the German Empire held up to scorn. This demands an exemplary punishment and revenge.

With fearful speed the conditions have become extremely serious. Since I have summoned you to arms, [the situation has become] still more serious. What I had hoped to restore with the help of the marines will now require the united contingents of troops from all the civilized nations. Today the chief of the cruiser squadron has implored me to consider sending an [entire] division.

You will oppose an enemy no less resolute in the face of death than yourselves. Trained by European officers, the Chinese have learned the use of European weapons. Thank God your comrades in the marines and in my navy, with whom you will join, have asserted and maintained the old German repute in combat; they have defended themselves with glory and victory and eased your task.

Thus I send you now to avenge injustice, and I shall not rest until the German flag, united with those of the other powers, waves victoriously over the Chinese, planted on the walls of Peking, and dictating peace to the Chinese.

Maintain a good comradeship with all the troops whom you will join with there. Russians, Englishmen, Frenchmen, and whoever else--they all fight for one cause, for civilization.

Yet we also bear in mind something higher, our religion, and the defense and protection of our brothers overseas, some of whom have stood up for their Savior with their life.

Think also of our military honor, of those who have fought for you, and depart with the old motto of the flag of Brandenburg: "Trust God, defend yourself bravely. In that lies all your honor! For whoever ventures on God with a full heart will never be routed."

The flags that wave above you here go into fire for the first time. Bring them back to me pure, unblemished, and without stain!

My thanks and my concern, my prayers and my solicitude will not leave you. With these I accompany you.



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Group 6: The Future of the Chinese People, by D.Z. Sheffield, January 1900:
(<http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/moa-cgi?notisid=ABK2934-0085-10>)

Davello Z. Sheffield, a Congregationalist minister, as Principal of TungChow Boy's Boarding school, North China College and North China Union College from 1869 to 1912. He was an advocate of an assertive Western role in the reform and modernization of China.

THE question "What is to be the future of the Chinese people?" is not identical with the question What is to be the future of the Chinese nation? The nation in its present form of government may disappear, and the people come under the government of other nations, and yet the Chinese race continue, and the civilization in its essential features be perpetuated.

...If the Chinese are conquered by other nations, they must still be left in their places, must be given a government, and must be taken into account in the international problems of the future.

...It is a principle of international law that every nation should be left to itself to develop its form of government and regulate its internal affairs; but no nation has the right to close the door to intercourse with other nations, and decline to have with them either political, social, or mercantile relations. There is no doubt that, down to the present hour, this is what is desired by the vast majority of the officials, the literati, the merchants, and the common people of China. They would shut and bolt the door against other nations, and live on into the ages of the future as they have lived from the ages of the past; praising the institutions that have been bequeathed to them by the ancients; straggling with one another to secure from nature a sufficient ministry to the necessities of the masses, and to the comforts and luxuries of the few; and not doubting that, in spite of the sorrows which they experience in life, their inheritance from the past is vastly superior to that of the outside nations.

It is clear that in dealing with China, with her petrified and exclusive civilization, the principles of Western international law must have a modified application. It would be difficult to do a greater wrong to the people of China than to leave the nation to itself, — to the operation of those forces of evil that have their source in the selfishness, the passions, and the ambitions of men, and are of the nature of an organic disease in all strata of government and all conditions of society. It is a fact deeply regretted by the best friends of China that she has failed to improve the opportunities for reform that have been presented to her during the last forty years.

...China ought not to have been left to herself to decide as to what reforms should be undertaken, or as to the time and manner of carrying them out. Adequate pressure should have been used to compel China to move. She should have been made to open her doors more rapidly and completely to foreign trade and intercourse, and to give more thorough protection to foreigners in her midst. She should have been

made to administer proper punishment to the instigators of mobs and persecutions, and to call her officers to strict account for their neglect of duty toward foreigners residing in China. She should not have been allowed to resist the introduction of telegraph lines for half a generation, and of railroads for an entire generation. She should have been pressed to reform her antediluvian system of education, to introduce Western learning, to multiply schools under the care of foreign instructors, and to send selected students abroad for a wider education. If these and other lines of national reform had not only been proposed, but insisted upon, the international problems of the Far East would have been wholly different from those that now occupy the thoughts of statesmen.

The time for change and reform has fully come to China. New ideas from the Western world are already operating in the thoughts of many of the people, and new aspirations and hopes are beginning to be awakened. She must move from this time forth, and her great need is that type of sympathetic guidance and help that will promote her best interests; but under existing international complications it is not easy to give such assistance.

...Men are disposed to think lightly and superficially of problems that do not immediately concern themselves; but the question What of China? will not down by its being dismissed from thought. It enters as an important factor into the great world problems that are now pressing for solution. It is a question not only concerning the future of one fourth of the human race, but also concerning the influence of that portion of the race upon the other three fourths. The vast potential resources of China, the labor power of the people, and their undeveloped capacity to share in the consumption of the products of the world's industries will compel statesmen and students of political and social problems to acquire that knowledge of China which as yet is possessed only by the few; and the opportunity for the religious and social renovation of that people will more and more draw out the interest and claim the help of Christian teachers and philanthropists. Already the forces that are destined to create a new China are beginning to operate upon the lives of the people. The nation is waking from its long dream of the past to live in the present. There are many "signs of the times" which assure us that the day is not distant when China will be delivered from its effete civilization, will enjoy a stable and well-ordered government, will enter upon a period of material prosperity, and will come under the power of those motives which have their source in the vital truths of the Christian revelation.