

II.F.11

The Development of Modern States

China and the West during the Imperialism – Reformer gegen Reaktionäre

Nach einer Idee von Dr. Michael Brabänder



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Kasai, Torajirō, artist / Public domain

Was bedeutet es für einen historischen „Champion“, wenn seine überlegene Selbstperzeption unversehens in einen eklatanten Widerspruch zur Realität gerät? Zweitausend Jahre hindurch die „Mitte der Welt“, sah China im 19. Jahrhundert plötzlich von den fortschrittlichen imperialistischen Mächten Europas existenziell herausgefordert – und konnte nicht mithalten. Der Beitrag führt Schülerinnen und Schülern die Erfahrungsräume und Handlungsoptionen, aber auch die immanenten Selbstblockaden historischer „Fortschrittsverlierer“ exemplarisch vor Augen.

KOMPETENZPROFIL

Klassenstufe:	Sek. II
Dauer:	5 Unterrichtsstunden
Kompetenzen:	1. die Selbst- und Fremdwahrnehmung der Chinesen im 19. Jahrhundert erfassen; 2. das konfliktreiche Eindringen der imperialistischen Mächte in den chinesischen Kulturkreis analysieren
Thematische Bereiche:	Die Sicht der Chinesen auf die Europäer; die englische Gesandtschaft des Jahres 1793; der erste Opiumkrieg; die Selbststärkungs-bewegung; die „Reform der hundert Tage“; der Boxerkrieg
Medien:	Texte, Bilder



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M 3 The first Opium War (1840–1842) – Reasons

England imported large amounts of Chinese tea for domestic consumption every year and paid with silver. In order to stop the continuous spending of the noble metal, England started exporting opium to China – even though opium trafficking was strictly forbidden there. In 1839, imperial commissioner Lin Zexu took vigorous action and detained 350 foreigners, confiscated 20,000 boxes of opium from English merchants and burned them.

Tasks

1. Describe Lin Zexu's reasoning (Text 1).
2. Conceptualise and discuss possible reactions of the British government.
3. Relate the caricature and Text 2 to each other.

Text 1: Letter from Lin Zexu to Queen Victoria, 1839

But after a long period of commercial intercourse, there appear among the crowd of barbarians both good persons and bad, unevenly. Consequently, there are those who smuggle opium to seduce the Chinese people and so cause the spread of the poison to all provinces. Such persons who only care to profit themselves, and disregard their harm to others, are not tolerated by the laws of heaven and are
5 unanimously hated by human beings.

Let us ask, where is your conscience? I have heard that the smoking of opium is very strictly forbidden by your country; that is because the harm caused by opium is clearly understood. Since it is not permitted to do harm to your own country, then even less should you let it be passed on to the harm of other countries – how much less to China! Of all that China exports to foreign countries, there is not a
10 single thing which is not beneficial to people: they are of benefit when eaten, or of benefit when used, or of benefit when resold: all are beneficial. Is there a single article from China which has done any harm to foreign countries? [...] How can you bear to go further, selling products injurious to others in order to fulfill your insatiable desire?

Aus: *Ssu-yü Teng und John Fairbank (Hrsg.): China's Response to the West. A Documentary Survey 1839–1923. Cambridge / USA 1979, S. 24–26.*

Text 2: Letter from English Prime Minister Lord Palmerston to the Chinese government, 1840

[...] Her Majesty cannot permit that Her Subjects residing abroad should be treated with violence and be exposed to insult and injustice; and when wrong is done to them, Her Majesty will see that they obtain redress. [...] The British Government therefore has determined at once to send out a Naval and Military Force to the Coast of China to act in support of these demands, and in order to convince the
5 imperial Government that the British Government attaches the utmost importance to this matter, and that the affair is one which will not admit of delay. [...] These measures of hostility on the part of Great Britain against China are not only justified, but even rendered absolutely necessary, by the outrages which have been committed by the Chinese Authorities against British Officers and Subjects, and these hostilities will not cease, until a satisfactory arrangement shall have been made by the Chinese
10 Government.

Nach: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Lord_Palmerston_to_the_Minister_of_the_Emperor_of_China



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The English secure unrestricted access to opium trafficking through their military superiority.

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M 6

The Self-Strengthening Movement – Criticism

Tasks

1. Summarise Wo-jen's arguments against Western-style reforms.
2. Relate the picture to Wo-jen's statements.
3. Write a fictional answer from a Self-Strengthening Movement representative.

Conservative savant Wo-jen writes to the Emperor, 1867

Mathematics, one of the six arts, should indeed be learned by scholars as indicated in the imperial decree, and it should not be considered an unworthy subject. [astronomy and mathematics] are of very little use. If these subjects are going to be taught by Westerners as regular studies, the damage will be great... [...] The empire is so great that one should not worry lest there be any lack of abilities

5 therein. If astronomy and mathematics have to be taught, an extensive search should find someone who has mastered the technique. Why is it limited to barbarians, and why is it necessary to learn from the barbarians?

Moreover, the barbarians are our enemies. In 1860 they took up arms and rebelled against us. Our capital and its suburb were invaded, our ancestral altar was shaken, our Imperial palace was burned,

10 and our officials and people were killed or wounded. There had never been such insults during the last 200 years of our dynasty. [...] How can we forget this enmity and this humiliation even for one single day?

Since the conclusion of the peace, Christianity has become prevalent and half of our ignorant people have been fooled by it. The only thing we can rely on is that our scholars should clearly explain to

15 the people the Confucian tenets, which may be able to sustain the minds of the ignorant populace. Now if these brilliant and talented scholars, who have been trained by the nation and reserved for great future usefulness, have to change from their regular course of study to follow the barbarians, then the correct spirit will not be developed and accordingly the evil spirit will become stronger. After several years it will end in nothing less than driving the multitudes of the Chinese people into

20 allegiance to the barbarians.

Aus: Ssu-yü Teng und John Fairbank (Hrsg.): China's Response to the West. A Documentary Survey 1839–1923. Cambridge/USA 1979, S. 76 f.

Confucius (551–479 BC) is considered the most important Chinese philosopher. He advocated for a harmonious, hierarchically structured society.

Did you know ...

In the second Opium War (1858–1860), British and French troops occupied the Chinese capital in 1860. During this occupation, the magnificent imperial summer palace was plundered and completely destroyed. In the Treaty of Tianjin (came into effect in 1860), among other concessions, China was forced to grant foreigners freedom of travel. Missionaries in particular used this to spread their Christian faith.