



VMUN 2019

# Grand Council of the Qing Dynasty, 1853

CRISIS BACKGROUND GUIDE



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*Proclaimed in the fourth year of the Xianfeng Era:*

To my loyal subjects,

I welcome you all to the Grand Council. You are my most loyal and trusted servants, as well as the delegates from Western nations that China has seen fit to recognize. You will have the privilege and honour of serving the Emperor, and through me, the heavens.

For centuries, China was the undisputed centre of the world, our lands the envy of all civilizations. Yet, our power is no longer unchallenged. Having opened up our culture to the rest of the world, China now faces chaos of an unprecedented scale since the Great Qing restored order to China two centuries ago—long-haired savages sweep through central China and Western nations exploit our markets with their gunboats. A great flood at the Yellow River has displaced many who live along its banks.

Yet, I have faith that these problems are fleeting and will be resolved swiftly. China endures; China has always endured, with the Mandate of Heaven surviving for thousands of years. Thus I entrust to you, my subjects, the fate of the Qing dynasty and China herself. Beijing readies itself for defence against imminent attack. I have faith in your ingenuity and ability to restore prosperity to the Empire. With the might of more than 400 million people and your guidance to my infinite wisdom, China will once again regain her pre-eminent position in the world.

Thus, I command you: go forth in the name of Heaven and do your duty.

His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of the Great Qing Dynasty, Son of Heaven, Lord of Ten Thousand Years



# Position Paper Policy

## What is a Position Paper?

A position paper is a brief overview of a country's stance on the topics being discussed by a particular committee. Though there is no specific format the position paper must follow, it should include a description of your positions your country holds on the issues on the agenda, relevant actions that your country has taken, and potential solutions that your country would support.

At Vancouver Model United Nations, delegates should write a position paper for each of the committee's topics. Each position paper should not exceed one page, and should all be combined into a single document per delegate.

For the Historical Crisis Committee, position papers are mandatory, especially for a delegate to be considered for an award.

## Formatting

Position papers should:

- Include the name of the delegate, his/her country, and the committee
- Be in a standard font (e.g. Times New Roman) with a 12-point font size and 1-inch document margins
- Not include illustrations, diagrams, decorations, national symbols, watermarks, or page borders
- Include citations and a bibliography, in any format, giving due credit to the sources used in research (not included in the 1-page limit)

## Due Dates and Submission Procedure

Position papers for this committee must be submitted by midnight on January 13, 2019.

Once your position paper is complete, please save the file as your last name, your first name and send it as an attachment in an email, to your committee's email address, with the subject heading as your last name, your first name — Position Paper. Please do not add any other attachments to the email or write anything else in the body.

Both your position papers should be combined into a single PDF or Word document file; position papers submitted in another format will not be accepted.

Each position paper will be manually reviewed and considered for the Best Position Paper award.

The email address for this committee is [hcc@vmun.com](mailto:hcc@vmun.com).

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# Grand Council of the Qing Dynasty, 1853

## Overview

It is March 19, 1853, and Nanjing has fallen to rebels. The Qing Dynasty under the Xianfeng Emperor faces its greatest existential threat since its founding in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when it first crossed the Great Wall and conquered the failing Ming state. The Chinese ethnicities, especially the Han majority, have since resented the foreign rule of the Manchu, with many viewing them as barbarians. The forced customs of submission, like the queue, and Manchu favoritism have led many to reminisce on the times of the Ming Dynasty, when China was ruled by the Han themselves. There have been many movements attempting to restore Han rule over China, like the White Lotus Rebellion of 1813, but the Qing have brutally suppressed these uprisings. However, the humiliation incurred by the Qing in 1842 with the conclusion of the Opium War reignited unrest and exposed the weaknesses of the Qing military.

In 1851, Christian millenarian movement the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace (*Taiping Tianguo*) attacked Qing forces in Guangxi and swiftly moved to occupy Hunan, and eventually, Nanjing. With the city and the Yangtze delta in Taiping hands, they assert control over the most important trading network in all of China, strangling the Qing economy. They are also able to easily reach other important strategic locations through the use of the river, including Beijing itself.

The Qing military forces have so far failed to stop the advance of these rebels. The Green Standard Army, the primary branch of the military, lacks a central command structure and has its forces scattered disproportionately across China. Their training is also lacklustre, and there is a striking contrast between their weak morale and that of the almost-fanatical Taiping troops. The Qing do not have a separate administrative structure for the navy at all, which comprises 300 junks in its entirety. Although they certainly dominate the rebels, the dearth of naval experience and the lack of technological advancements of the Qing fleet will give it little resistance against the ironclads of the Western powers.

In addition to the Taiping rebels, there are other groups and ethnicities who may also rebel, particularly those at the borders of the empire who feel a cultural or religious disconnect between themselves and the dominant Han culture. These groups have historically proven to be quite rebellious and may prove so again, taking advantage of the current weakness of the Qing.

At the moment, bandits in Northern China (the Nian) raid and loot wealthier villages and occasionally coordinate with the Taiping forces, although there has been no formal alliance yet. Their numbers have grown in the past few years due to the Yellow River flooding in 1851, destroying the livelihoods of many peasants and forcing them to seek security in these bandit groups, which specialize in using cavalry for raiding.

In addition to the internal unrest, foreign powers seek to exploit more of China's rich resources. Although the British, French, and Americans have all obtained exclusive rights involving freedom of trade and diplomatic recognition from the Qing, they will not let an opportunity to gain more concessions from China pass them by. Perhaps the most worrying power is Russia, which has set its sights on eastern expansion and places the acquisition of a warm-water port as its top priority.

China under Qing and former Ming administrations has been in a state of isolation for centuries, causing it to lag behind technologically. The growing corruption of Qing officials and a slew of incompetent rulers have weakened trust in the state and diminished revenue collection, in addition to fueling mass unrest. The

government was also unable to cope with China's growing population, leading to famines. While China has resisted change based on its belief in the intrinsic superiority of Chinese civilization, the recent capitulation to Western powers and the many problems that plague the Qing Empire suggest that perhaps it is time to implement reforms.

The Qing dynasty seems to be on its last legs, with manifold insurrections controlling the heart of China and foreign powers waiting to prey on her. Delegates, it is up to you to ensure the survival of the Qing dynasty and decide China's destiny!

## Timeline

**1593** — Nurhaci defeats the allied armies of nine Jurchen tribes.

**1616** — Nurhaci declares himself the Great Khan of a unified Manchu state, the *Later Jin*.

**1636** — Hong Taiji renames the state the Great Qing (Qing dynasty).

**1644** — Qing forces capture Beijing and its Imperial Bureaucratic Structure.

**1645** — All adult males are ordered to shave and adopt queues within 10 days or face execution.

**1662** — The Qing army apprehend the Yongli Emperor, the last emperor of the Southern Ming rebels, in the Kingdom of Toungoo (modern-day Myanmar) and execute him, ending Ming resistance on the Chinese mainland.

**1681** — The Revolt of the Three Feudatories is crushed.

**1683** — The Kingdom of Tungning (based in Taiwan) surrender to the Qing invasion, extinguishing the last vestiges of the Ming Dynasty.

**1689** — Kangxi Emperor resists Russian incursions and consolidates Mongolia and parts of Siberia with the Treaty of Nerchinsk.

**1774** — Wang Lun, leader of an offshoot White Lotus sect, raises a small army and fails to siege the city of Linqing.

**1793** — British envoy Lord George Macartney seeks an audience with the emperor to discuss free trade with China, but the emperor does not give a favourable response.

**1794** — The White Lotus Society leads a revolt against the government in central China in response to the oppression of local officials and the widespread famine in the region.

**1795** — The Miao tribes rise up against the Qing authorities.

**1796** — The Qing officially ban opium.

**1799** — The governor of Canton orders the opium trade to stop.

**1800** — After facing initial setbacks, the Qing form citizen militia units and divert more of their troops to put down the White Lotus Rebellion.

**1804** — The White Lotus Rebellion is fully put down; rebels are exterminated while deserters are pardoned. Yet, the Qing cannot disband the militias formed.

**1834** — Lord William John Napier commands his fleet to fire on Chinese forts after temporary restrictions are imposed on British trade. British traders are thereafter expelled from Canton.

**1839** — The emperor appoints Lin Zexu as Imperial Commissioner to put an end to the opium trade, which leads to the Opium War against Britain.

**1842** — The conflict ends with the signing of the Treaty of Nanking, establishing treaty ports and transferring Hong Kong to Britain.

**1843** — Treaty of Bogue confers special status on the United Kingdom and provides extraterritoriality for its subjects.

**1843** — Hong Xiuquan, having failed the Imperial Examinations four times, starts to spread his Christian millenarian ideas in Guangxi. His cousin Feng Yushan starts to gather followers into a movement later known as the God Worshipping Society.

**1844** — The Treaties of Huangpu and Wangxia grant similar privileges to France and the United States respectively.

**1851** — The Jintian Uprising occurs in Guangxi as Hong Xiuquan and his followers defeat the Qing forces stationed there. He establishes the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace with himself as its ruler.

**1851** — The Yellow River floods and causes widespread destruction. The Qing offer little aid, and peasants begin to gather in bandit groups out of necessity, plundering villages for their wealth and resisting the Qing authorities.

**1852** — The God Worshipping Society moves into Hunan and captures Wuchang after an unsuccessful siege of Changsha.

**1853** — Hong Xiuquan successfully captures Nanjing, located at the mouth of the Yangtze, and renames it Tianjing, making it the capital of his new state.

## Historical Analysis

The founders of the Qing dynasty were initially one of the many Manchu tribes roaming the Manchurian steppes. Nurhaci of the Aisin Gioro clan led the Jianzhou Jurchens to dominance after the defeat of the allied forces of nine tribes in 1593 and would finish consolidating the region within 30 years.<sup>1</sup> He renounced his vassalage to the Chinese Ming Dynasty and unified the tribes under a new Manchu identity and state in 1616, capturing many Ming cities in the Liaodong region, including Shenyang by 1625, which he designated as his new capital.<sup>2</sup> He also reorganized the Jurchen tribes into tribal and military units known as the Eight Banners, the initial principal fighting force of the Manchu, which has survived to this day (1853). His successor, Hong Taiji, expanded the banner system to include ethnic Han defectors or captives, with Han bannermen swiftly outnumbering all other

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<sup>1</sup> Ulhicun Aisin Gioro and Jin Shi, “Manchuria from the Fall of the Yuan to the Rise of the Manchu State (1368-1636),” *Ritsumeikan Bungaku*. (August 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Patricia Ebrey, *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook (2nd ed.)*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993).

ethnicities. They provided an infantry core and artillery expertise to the mostly-cavalry Banners. After multiple military reforms, he renamed the Later Jin the Great Qing (Qing dynasty).<sup>3</sup>

In 1644, the Qing captured Beijing, the imperial capital of China, and declared themselves the successors to the Ming dynasty by relocating, for the final time, the court there. The regent of the newly-coronated Shunzhi Emperor, Dorgon, decided to preserve the city and to keep the former Ming officials in their bureaucratic positions. He secured the region around the capital, and soon the Qing had control of northern China, pushing its border with the remnants of the Ming to the Qiantang river by 1645. At this time, Dorgon issued orders to various provinces threatening to kill any adult Han male should he not braid his hair into a Manchu queue within 10 days. This was enormously humiliating to the Chinese, as removing a part of one's body went against Confucian values. Resistance was widespread, and populations were massacred for defying Qing rule.<sup>4</sup>

After Dorgon's death in 1652, the Shunzhi Emperor took direct power. He and his successor, the Kangxi Emperor, slowly destroyed the Southern Ming holdouts in China, culminating with the capture of the Ming Yongli Emperor in the Kingdom of Toungoo in 1662, ending resistance on the mainland. In 1683, the last surviving Ming holdout, the Kingdom of Tungning in Taiwan, surrendered to the Kangxi Emperor.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, even at the beginning of Qing's dominance of China, it faced other rebellions. China was vast, and the Manchu's conquest was swift. Much of their short-term administrative strategy was to allow for defected Ming generals to govern territories farther from the imperial capital in the north. In addition to the added military strength, this method diminished unrest in the newly-conquered lands. In particular, the generals Shang Kexi, Wu Sanggui, and Geng Zhongming were rewarded with the lucrative provinces of Guangzhou, Yunnan and Guizhou, and Fuzhou respectively. This was only meant to be temporary as the central government gradually integrated the provinces, but the governors did not see the arrangement in the same light. They also demanded continuous large payments of silver that drained the imperial treasury, siphoning half of China's revenue in 1670.<sup>6</sup> In 1673, Shang Kexi requested to retire and have his son succeed the feudatory. The newly-enthroned Emperor Kangxi acquiesced to his retirement but did not grant his son's succession. The other two generals feared that their descendants would not hold on to the feudatories and, after having tested the emperor, raised their banners in rebellion against Emperor Kangxi, along with Shang's son, who conveniently locked away his own father, the instigator of this whole affair. After initial setbacks, the gathered Qing forces defeated the last of the rebel armies in 1680 and routed the ones who fled into Taiwan when they conquered the island three years later. The Han Green Standard Army performed remarkably better than the Bannermen, signalling a shift in the preferred army for the defense of the empire. The Chinese elites also showed a reluctance to join in the rebellion, demonstrating their then-satisfaction with the ruling Manchu dynasty.<sup>7 8</sup>

Emperor Kangxi is noted for his expansion of China's northern and western borders. Under his rule, Russia's eastern expansion clashed with China; for the first time, a boundary delineating the periphery of Manchuria from that of Russian Siberia was required as Russia sought warm-water ports (a policy started by Peter the Great

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Lococo Jr., "The Qing Empire," in *A Military History of China*, ed. David Andrew Graff and Robin Higham (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 115-118.

<sup>4</sup> Frederic Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise: The Manchu Reconstruction of Imperial Order in Seventeenth-Century China*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Lynn Struve, *The Southern Ming, 1644-1622*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

<sup>6</sup> Harold Miles Tanner, *China: A History*. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2009), 344-348.

<sup>7</sup> Chuannan Fan, *Revolt of the Three Feudatories* (Changchun: Jilin Publishing Group Ltd., 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Paul Lococo Jr., "The Qing Empire," in *A Military History of China*, ed. David Andrew Graff and Robin Higham (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 118-121.

and continued ever since). The Qing forces were able to repel the Russians at every encounter, and the favourable Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689 determined the border to be the Amur River. Russia also gained the right to expand its fur trade into the Chinese market; yet, with Russian ports locked in the Baltic and the Black Seas of the west, it still desires the Qing's Manchurian territories.<sup>9</sup>

The Mongol tribes were also reined in by the Kangxi Emperor. In 1675, the Chahar Mongols, bordering China proper and Manchuria, revolted alongside the Three Feudatories in 1675, and its ruling class was subsequently eradicated for their betrayal. The more remote Mongolian tribes had autonomy, but many sought the direct protection of the emperor in response to the western invasion of the Dzungars in 1687. The Qing victory led to the consolidation of the rest of Outer Mongolia.<sup>10</sup>

The emperor also took the opportunity to recapture any opportunistic gains Tibet had made in the neighbouring Sichuan province; the expedition resulted in the installation of a puppet Dalai Lama. Tibet was slowly transformed into a Chinese protectorate, although it exercises considerable autonomy, and has slowly drifted away from Chinese control in recent years. Once again, it would be acts of Dzungar aggression that led China to intervene and annex Tibet.<sup>11</sup>

Under the campaigns of the subsequent Yongzheng and Qianlong Emperors, the Dzungars would be defeated and Xinjiang would be added into the Chinese Empire in the late 1750s. Unfortunately, Emperor Qianlong decreed that the rebels should receive no mercy at all. As a result, the Dzungar population was reduced to a mere fraction of its previous size, paving the way for Uyghur and Han settlers to dominate Xinjiang.<sup>12</sup>

The Yongzheng Emperor succeeded the Kangxi Emperor in 1722, and his reign was relatively peaceful and short. He reformed this body, the Grand Council, to be more involved in matters of the state, giving it unprecedented powers. He also recognized the rapid growth of the Chinese population, thus incentivizing the creation of more farmland (and therefore more food) by granting tax relief to those who did so; however, many citizens lied about their deeds and exploited this system. He also encouraged private orphanages as a means to reduce mass poverty. Throughout his reign, he and his father became increasingly hostile towards Jesuit missionaries, and began to persecute them.<sup>13</sup>

The Qianlong Emperor came to power in 1735. His most notable accomplishments were his ten great campaigns, one of which involved the defeat of the Dzungar tribes. His campaigns were focused primarily on securing his borders and pacifying rebellious elements. In 1776, there was a Tibetan tribe causing trouble near the borders of Sichuan. The Qing army annihilated the tribe and, much like in the later Dzungar conflicts, it would not be an exaggeration to term the affair a genocide. He suppressed an anti-Manchu rebellion in Taiwan and launched campaigns into the Kingdom of Toungoo (Myanmar), Đại Việt (Vietnam), and Nepal, none of which yielded any significant results. Ultimately these military expeditions greatly drained the imperial treasury, with only Xinjiang proving a major gain. The Qianlong Emperor also reinvented the Eight Banners as a Manchu

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<sup>9</sup> Mark Mancall, *Russia and China: Their Diplomatic Relations to 1728*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

<sup>10</sup> Louise Lux, *The Unsullied Dynasty & the K'ang-hsi Emperor*. (Philadelphia: Mark One Printing, 1998), 269-271.

<sup>11</sup> Xiuyu Wang, *China's Last Imperial Frontier: Late Qing Expansion in Sichuan's Tibetan Borderlands*. (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> Peter C Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> William T. Rowe, *China's last empire: The Great Qing*. Cambridge, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009).

organization instead of one based on loyalty to the empire. Although he brought the Qing Empire to the height of its territorial expansion, he did not implement any significant reforms.<sup>14 15</sup>

The most apparent sign of the Qianlong Emperor's weakness appeared during the White Lotus Rebellions, when there were multiple rebel groups congregating under the White Lotus Society. This movement was a mixture of Persian and Buddhist beliefs heralding the imminent arrival of the future Buddha, Maitreya. During the Yuan dynasty, this movement inspired a young peasant to rebel against the Mongols. This young man would go on to found the Ming dynasty as the Hongwu Emperor. Thus, the White Lotus Society was a strong proponent of Ming restoration as it re-emerged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is also debated whether the rebels were all true supporters of White Lotus, or if the Qing bureaucrats used the Society as an umbrella classification for the revolts. The most attractive aspect of the White Lotus Society was perhaps its focus on tax protests, a call behind which many disgruntled farmers could easily rally. There was an initial rebellion that was swiftly crushed in 1774, but a larger wave of rebellions exploded in the mountains on Sichuan's borders in 1794. Qing armies were repeatedly defeated, and their generals killed, exposing their weaknesses. The emperor's reliance on his eunuchs meant that he did not act until his trusted advisor died and he saw the situation for himself. It was only when they employed local mercenary armies (*tusi*), along with promises of clemency, that the rebels were finally defeated. Yet, it should be noted that these *tusi* were not easily disbanded; the villages decided to retain them as a guarantee of security. The Qing armies no longer commanded the same respect and authority as they did a century ago.<sup>16</sup>

Miao tribes also revolted between 1795 and 1806. As with many minorities, the Qing sought to control them by giving significant autonomy to these communities led by indigenous chieftains. The Miao had autonomy, and resented the centralizing attempts of the Chinese bureaucracy and colonists. The revolt was crushed, and the Qing implemented harsh punishments on the Miao, repressing their cultural practices and segregating them from the Han settlers, breeding a hotbed of resentment. In 1813, the Eight Trigrams Sect, inspired by the earlier White Lotus Rebellion, attempted to capture Beijing and reinstate the Ming, reaching as far as the Forbidden City before they were destroyed.<sup>17</sup>

While European nations had a voracious appetite for Chinese goods, China wanted nothing to do with Europe. China would trade anything to the Europeans, but would only accept silver in exchange. Unlike the West, which valued freedom of trade due to the influences of Adam Smith and other economists, China valued morality from its Confucian teachings, and foreign goods were deemed unnecessary and thus degrading to morality. The insistence on silver was a matter of concern, since these nations required silver to produce hard currency. This policy eventually resulted in a substantial trade deficit. The ports in which European traders could actually engage in mercantile activities were also heavily restricted. In 1816, British ambassador Amherst directly appealed to the emperor to grant Britain more trading rights, and in 1834, Napier attempted to intimidate China with a show of force; neither moved the Chinese. However, the United Kingdom managed to find something the Chinese would want: opium. Their holdings in India gave them the perfect conditions for growing and smuggling opium into China. The Chinese government, seeing the detrimental influence of the addictive narcotic, had banned it long ago in 1640 (opium was banned in the United Kingdom and the United States before 1840).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Harold Miles Tanner, *China: A History*. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2009), 349-352.

<sup>15</sup> William T. Rowe, *China's last empire: The Great Qing*. Cambridge, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> B.J. Ter Haar, *The White Lotus Teachings in Chinese Religious History*. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992)

<sup>17</sup> Bruce A. Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*. (London: Routledge, 2001), 7-12.

<sup>18</sup> Glenn Melancon, *Britain's China Policy and the Opium Crisis: Balancing Drugs, Violence and National Honour, 1833-1840*. (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003).

The problem peaked in the 1830s, as the British East India Company allowed more people to join the opium trade. In 1838, Lin Zexu was appointed Imperial Commissioner and sent to Canton to find a solution to the opium crisis. His solution was quite simple: he proclaimed that opium was prohibited, seized all the opium from foreign ships, and destroyed it all in broad daylight without any compensation. He demanded that all foreign merchants immediately cease their opium dealings or face the death penalty. Tensions escalated in 1839 when two drunken British sailors murdered a local at Kowloon. Lin Zexu demanded the men be surrendered to the Chinese courts, but Charles Elliot, the Chief Superintendent of British Trade in China, had the men tried under British law on his ship, giving them a lighter-but-fair sentence. In response to this lack of respect for Chinese laws, Lin Zexu prohibited the sale of supplies to British merchants. The resulting lack of food and water for British merchants forced Elliot to give an ultimatum to the Chinese to end the embargo at once. Receiving no response, he fired on Chinese ships. This marked the battle of Kowloon, the first naval conflict of the First Opium War. The British government decided to prosecute the war, hoping to gain concessions, while the Chinese had a defensive, strategic mindset. An early issue of the war was the overly-optimistic reports of regional governors; the central government in Beijing felt no need to intervene until they discovered the true state of the war. British military technology rendered Chinese forts and their numerical advantage useless. British ships easily secured the Pearl and Yangtze rivers, strangling China economically; British firearms were more precise and had a longer range. The Qing suffered a humiliating defeat, and were forced to cede Hong Kong to Britain in perpetuity as well as give Britain special rights and extraterritoriality with the Treaty of Nanking in 1842 and the Treaty of Bogue in 1843.<sup>19</sup> In 1844, France and the United States also obtained special rights with the Treaties of Huangpu and Wangxua respectively.<sup>20 21</sup>

Now, the Qing dynasty is plagued by its greatest threat yet: the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. In 1843, after Hong Xiuquan failed to pass the Imperial Examinations for the fourth time, he started a millenarian Christian movement promising redemption for his followers. His teachings also included shared property (a very communist idea) and the notion that he was the younger brother of Jesus Christ sent down by his father, God, to rid the world of the Manchurian Qing dynasty, being devils in disguise (not so communist). While he preached, his cousin gathered Hakka peasants harassed by bandits to be the new core of Hong's followers, the God Worshippers. The group was originally more moderate, and tried to address the local issues of Guangxi, like fighting banditry.<sup>22</sup> However, the Qing authorities took a harsher stance towards these activities, demanding that the group disband and threatening to kill members of the Society. In what would be known as the Jintian uprising of 1850, Hong Xiuquan staged an attack and defeated the Qing garrison of 30,000 men in Guangxi. Shortly thereafter, in January 1851, he proclaimed himself the Heavenly King of the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace, attracting a great number of peasants to his cause.<sup>23</sup>

As well, the Yellow River flooded in 1851, displacing countless families and destroying innumerable livelihoods. Many of the farmers affected by the flood joined bandit groups, largely as a means of self-preservation. These groups became collectively known as the Nian, their main goal to raid more prosperous villages for wealth to

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<sup>19</sup> Peter Ward Fay, *The Opium War, 1840–1842: Barbarians in the Celestial Empire in the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century and the Way by which They Forced the Gates Ajar*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> Angelus Francis J. Grosse-Aschhoff, *The Negotiations between Ch'i-Ying and Lagrené, 1844-1846*. (St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute, 1950).

<sup>21</sup> "Treaty of peace, amity, and commerce, between the United States of America and the Chinese Empire." Signed July 3, 1844. *Treaties, etc., 1845-1849* (Polk). <https://lccn.loc.gov/12033773>.

<sup>22</sup> Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Of Hong Xiuquan*. (New York: WW Norton, 1997).

<sup>23</sup> Stephen R. Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War*. (New York: Vintage Books, 2012), 13-18.

sustain themselves. They are critical of the Qing's inability to provide relief to victims of natural disasters and they have occasionally collaborated with the Taipings. Their use of cavalry is rather unique compared to the infantry-based armies of the Qing and the Taipings, and acts as a nuisance to the Qing forces occupied with a greater threat.<sup>24</sup>

In 1852, the Taipings traveled north and captured Hunan, and on March 10, 1853, Nanjing fell to the Taipings, who have renamed the city Tianjing (Heavenly Capital).<sup>25</sup> Although the Heavenly Kingdom has not yet captured other territories, it is attracting more and more followers, ready to strike north and west along the Yangtze and the Grand Canal.

## Current Situation

### Militaries

While the Taiping forces are outnumbered by the Qing, they have the advantage of being concentrated in their home regions. They have a strict organization system and chain of command, and there is a certain fervour that bolsters their morale and effectiveness on the battlefield. They have also attempted to integrate Western armaments into their armies.

The Qing forces lack cohesion and morale; they are underpaid, and their fighting units are often split to ensure they do not place their commander before the state. Soldiers therefore feel no loyalty to each other, and perform worse. They also have no qualms about exploiting civilians, provoking much resentment among local populations.<sup>26</sup> In terms of organization, the military is split into the Eight Banners, from the tribes of the north, and the Han Green Standard Army. The Bannermen number around 200,000, with roughly 100,000 based in the imperial capital and the rest stationed in various major cities, and 2,000–3,000 men per garrison. The Green Standard Army is 800,000 men strong (600,000 excluding officers), scattered throughout China's 18 provinces; however, only a small fraction of these men is mobilized to fight. China also has a navy of wooden junks, accustomed mainly to dealing with pirates.<sup>27</sup>

Presently, there is one more militia army in Hunan, raised by Zeng Guofan and numbering 17,000 men. Funded by landowners and merchants, the force is under Zeng's sole control, independent of the imperial military.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth J. Perry. *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845-1945*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980).

<sup>25</sup> Thomas H. Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom: Rebellion and the Blasphemy of Empire*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004).

<sup>26</sup> Maochun Yu, "The Taiping Rebellion: A Military Assessment of Revolution and Counterrevolution," in *A Military History of China*, ed. David Andrew Graff and Robin Higham (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 135-149.

<sup>27</sup> Lindesay Brine, *The Taeping Rebellion in China; A Narrative of its Rise and Progress, Based Upon Original Narratives and Information Obtained in China*. (London: John Murray, 1862), 30-35.

<sup>28</sup> John King Fairbank, Kwang-Ching Liu, and Denis Crispin Twitchett, *Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911*. The Cambridge History of China Volume 11, Part 2, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).



a vassal of Japan. The tributary network is more akin to a trading arrangement combined with guarantees of non-aggression.<sup>31</sup>

## Initiating Crises/Potential Solutions

Delegates should implement reforms to bolster the strength of the state. These could include army reorganization to bolster Qing fighting strength, or adaptations to ease the burden on the Chinese people through more-efficient revenue collection and diminished discontent. The largest denomination the Qing should appeal to is unquestionably the ethnic Han; repealing restrictions and regulations previously imposed on them may sway the largest ethnic group in China.

A strategy for countering the Taiping threat should be devised as soon as possible, given their control over the mouths of the Yangtze and the Grand Canal. Beijing and the imperial seat of power must be swiftly and thoroughly fortified against a potential attack by Hong's forces. Furthermore, the Nian bandits plague the countryside of central China; while they lack the numbers and insidious aims of the Taipings, their raids will divert already-strained resources away from combatting the other rebels.

It will be crucial to beware not only further potential rebellions, but also foreign vultures seeking to win concessions in this time of tumult. The European powers have extraordinary military might; they may choose to take more than what China is willing to concede. Britain has long desired Tibet to further the Great Game, France wishes to expand Indochina with the addition of southern Chinese territory, Russia wishes to advance south into Mongolia and Manchuria, and Japan views the conquest of Korea as integral to its security. Cooperating with these powers may be akin to drinking poison to quench thirst; while they can be enemies, they can also be courted as allies, should the committee resolve to grant concessions. Delegates should also seek to expand China's armed forces, establishing more independent militias or recruiting for the Green Standard Army at their discretion. Delegates may also choose to amass forces stationed across China, but a diminished presence in the outer provinces will undoubtedly facilitate further upheaval.

Delegates are encouraged to do more research on the diverse ethnic groups and regions of China in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as on military doctrine.

## Bloc Positions

### The Princes

The princes are usually related by blood to the ruling house, Aisin Gioro. They also serve as commanders of the Eight Banners and diplomats and negotiators representing the emperor with foreigners. They wish to preserve imperial power, and the interests of Manchuria and the Qing dynasty.

#### **Prince Gong of the First Rank: Aisin Gioro Yixin**

Brother to the Xianfeng Emperor and chief negotiator who holds the most senior position in the Grand Council.

#### **Prince Zheng of the First Rank: Aisin Gioro Duanhua**

Relative to the Xianfeng Emperor who acts as a negotiator with Western powers.

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<sup>31</sup> John E. Wills. *Past and Present in China's Foreign Policy: From "Tribute System" to "Peaceful Rise"*. (Portland: Merwin Asia, 2011)

**Prince Yi of the First Rank: Aisin Gioro Zaiyuan**

Relative to the Xianfeng Emperor and commander of the Imperial Guard.

**President of the Lifan Yuan: Aisin Gioro Sushun**

Relative to the Xianfeng Emperor who oversees foreign affairs regarding Russia, Mongolia, and Tibet.

**The Governors and Generals**

They wish to safeguard the interests of China and the Qing, as the foundation of their current power, yet there are those who may wish to amplify their own influence. All governors and two generals have control of their province(s), and will have a degree of authority over the garrisons there. They will also be intermediaries for revenue collection and may wish to develop the province as they see fit. Any one of these officials may be granted an army and additional powers to combat enemies with an appointment to Imperial Commissioner.

**Viceroy of Liangjiang and Secretary of Defense: Ma Guozhu**

Governs Jiangxi, Jiangsu, and Anhui.

**Viceroy of Liangguang and Supervisor of Waterways: Ye Mingchen**

Governs Guangdong and Guangxi.

**Viceroy of Min-Zhe: Huicheng**

Governs Fujian, Zhejiang, and Taiwan.

**Viceroy of Yun-Gui: Wu Raodian**

Governs Yunnan and Guilin.

**Viceroy of Huguang: Zhang Liangji**

Governs Hunan and Hubei.

**Viceroy of Sichuan: Yurui**

Governs Sichuan.

**Viceroy of Shaan-Gan: Yi Tang**

Governs Shaanxi and Gansu.

**Viceroy of Zhili: Guiliang**

Governs Zhili.

**General of Fengtian: Xiliang**

Governs Manchuria, including Fengtian (Liaodong), Jilin, Heilongjiang, and Outer Manchuria.

**General of Ili: Changqing**

Governs Xinjiang.

**Jasagh: Sengge Rinchen**

Leads the Mongol Bannermen as a minor military commander.

**Assistant to the Provincial Governor of Hunan: Zeng Guofan**

Has complete control over his own militia in Hunan and serves the Qing loyally. He has his own reservations about the competency of the imperial forces, and has adapted his army to his standards.

## **The Imperial Consorts**

While lacking formal offices of state, the consorts of the emperor wield considerable influence over palace life, and perhaps even the emperor himself. Representing the imperial household, discretion and tact will engender the greatest efficacy in the advancement of the consorts' interests.

### **Noble Consort Yi: Cixi**

One of the many concubines of the emperor, she has no official position but her influence and social networks in the Forbidden City give her a unique voice to the emperor, especially on the subject of palace affairs.

## **The Ambassadors**

The United Kingdom, France, and the United States are the only countries to have signed treaties with China conferring diplomatic recognition, and will accordingly be represented in this committee. Ambassadors should seek to advance the interests of their countries, allowing for much opportunism and conspiracy.

### **Ambassador of the United Kingdom: Lord George Bonham**

The United Kingdom has the largest foreign interest in the Chinese market as well as direct control over territories in Canton. Britain advocates for freedom of trade, and may wish to pressure the Chinese government to make further concessions. The British also, however, desire a stable China to maintain their trade interests, especially those proximate the Yangtze delta.

### **Ambassador of France: Baron Jean-Baptiste Louis Gros**

France wishes to gain greater access to the Chinese market, and is thus less concerned with China's prosperity and more so with securing a foothold in China (as with the British). The French are prominent in the Indochina region, and may wish to expand their sphere of influence into southern China.

### **Ambassador of the United States: Robert Milligan McLane**

The United States professes a policy of isolationism yet has an acute interest in China's market. The United States will most likely not interfere in the region unless there is an extreme provocation, although there is American consternation about European expansion in Asia.

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