CHAPTER 29

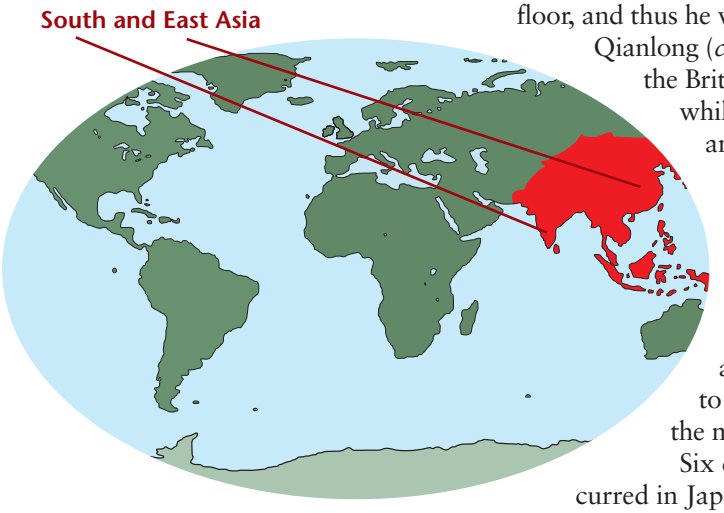
Confrontation and Adaptation in Eastern and Southern Asia, 1770–1914

Asians Confront Western Technology

In the nineteenth century Asians confronted and adapted to Western impacts and technologies. This color print shows Japanese observing an American ironclad steamship.

In 1793, at China's bustling seaport of Tianjin (*t'YEN-JIN*), a large warship arrived from a distant land. Aboard was an assortment of diplomats, scientists, artists, musicians, and translators, led by Lord George Macartney, representing Britain's King George III. Hoping to persuade China's leaders to open their ports to British goods, Macartney's mission brought six hundred cases of his country's finest wares, including textiles, carpets, cutlery, pottery, clocks, scientific gadgets, and musical instruments.

The mission, however, soon ran into problems. Macartney, a proud English aristocrat, refused to perform the kowtow, a humble bow that involved touching one's forehead to the floor, and thus he was at first denied an audience with China's Qianlong (*ch'YEN LŌNG*) Emperor. The Chinese treated the British goods as tribute from an inferior nation, while Macartney, observing conspicuous poverty and crude weapons, concluded that China was backward and weak. When finally allowed to visit Qianlong at his splendid summer palace, Macartney was shown pavilions full of exquisite Chinese commodities, and learned of the ruler's disdain for Western products. "Our celestial empire possesses all things in prolific abundance," the emperor proclaimed in a letter to King George III. China had "no need to import the manufactures of outside barbarians."



Six decades later, in 1853, a similar encounter occurred in Japan. Here the visitors were Americans, arriving in ironclad steam-powered warships, with a letter from their president insisting that Japan open its ports to trade with the United States. After several days of awkward standoff, Japanese officials agreed to take the letter to Japan's military leader, the shogun. The visitors departed but promised to return the next year. Awed by America's warships with their large guns, but faced with strong resistance from his samurai warriors to the American demands, the shogun agreed in 1854 to open two small ports to U.S. trade. At the agreement's ceremonial signing, Japanese sumo wrestlers entertained their Western guests, while Japanese officials went for rides on a scale-model steam-powered train, brought from America to impress them.

These two encounters exemplify Asian responses to increasing Western intrusions during the nineteenth century. Accustomed to regarding Westerners as inferior "barbarians," Asians tried first to limit these intrusions, then to exploit them by selectively adapting Western commerce, ideas, and weapons, hoping to strengthen themselves to resist the outsiders. The result was a century of confrontation and adaptation in Asia.

Instability and Endurance in China

In the nineteenth century the Chinese empire, which long had dominated East Asia (Map 29.1), endured a series of disasters that shattered its power and prestige. In part, these calamities resulted from poverty, corruption, and discontent in China. In part, they stemmed from the intrusions of Western merchants, missionaries, and military forces, which helped to undermine China's central authority and destabilize Chinese society.

FOUNDATION MAP 29.1 East and South Asia Around 1800

At the end of the eighteenth century, China remained East Asia's dominant power, with neighboring nations paying it tribute in return for protection and trade. Notice, however, that Spain ruled the Philippines, and that Western commercial interests controlled parts of India and Indonesia. Why did China and Japan seek to minimize connections with the West?

China's Internal Problems

After conquering China in the mid-1600s and establishing the Qing (*CHING*) dynasty, China's Manchu rulers presided over a long era of stability and prosperity, leading most Chinese to accept the rule of the outsiders from Manchuria (Chapter 21). By the early 1800s, however, both stability and prosperity in China were on the wane.

Southeast Asian and American crops spur Chinese population growth

One key factor in China's instability was population growth. Agricultural advances, including cultivation of fast-growing rice from Southeast Asia and sweet potatoes from the Americas, along with irrigation and forest clearing to bring more land under cultivation, produced abundant food in the early Qing era. But this abundance also helped double China's population, from about 150 million in the mid-1600s to more than 300 million by the early 1800s, while the growth in farmland and food production failed to keep pace. Countless impoverished peasants, lacking sufficient land to support themselves and their families, joined rebel groups that sought to gain land and food by attacking the estates of large landowners.

A second contributing factor was bureaucratic corruption. Local officials often enriched themselves through bribes and extortion, taxing the peasants far beyond what the state required and then pocketing the excess themselves. This practice, aptly called the "squeeze," sapped the common people's scant resources, while the emperor and his favorites drained the imperial treasury to live in lavish splendor.

Poverty and corruption fuel Chinese discontent with Qing regime

Such developments bred widespread discontent, especially in southern and western China, where corruption and poverty were acute. One result was the White Lotus Rebellion (Chapter 21), a vast peasant uprising that disrupted much of western China from 1796 to 1804. Another was growing disenchantment with the Qing government, once more regarded by many Chinese people as a foreign regime.

The Opium Trade and Its Impact

Chinese trade restrictions frustrate the British

Meanwhile Western influence in China was beginning to grow. Since the mid-1700s, the Chinese government had limited trade with Westerners (mostly Dutch and British merchants) to the large southern port of Guangzhou (*GWAHNG-JŌ*), which the British called Canton. Even there this trade was restricted and controlled by the **Cohong**, the city's merchant guild, a group of Chinese firms authorized by the imperial government to conduct commerce with foreigners. Despite these restrictions, the British developed a lucrative trade, buying Chinese products and then selling them in the West at huge profit. But the trade was one-sided: Europeans readily bought China's tea, silk, and porcelain, but since the Chinese bought little in return, the foreigners had to pay for their purchases mostly in silver. In 1793, frustrated by these restrictions and the growing silver drain, Britain sent the Macartney mission, described at the start of this chapter, to urge the Chinese to buy more British goods. But the British made little headway, as China's emperor insisted that his realm already possessed "all things in prolific abundance." (See "Excerpts from Qianlong's Letter to King George III")

There were, however, several things that China did not possess in prolific abundance. One was industrial technology: the machines and weapons that would soon make little Britain mightier and wealthier than enormous China. Another was **opium**, an addictive

Document 29.1 Excerpts from Qianlong's Letter to King George III

In 1793, in an effort to get China to reduce its restrictions on foreign trade, Britain's King George III sent a mission under Lord Macartney to meet with China's Qianlong Emperor. The emperor's condescending response, disdaining the British as barbarians from a remote island whose goods China had no need for, reflected China's attitude toward outsiders at the end of the eighteenth century.

You, O King, live beyond the confines of many seas, nevertheless, impelled by your humble desire to partake of the benefits of our civilisation, you have dispatched a mission respectfully bearing your memorial . . .

I have perused your memorial: the earnest terms in which it is couched reveal a respectful humility on your part, which is highly praiseworthy. In consideration of the fact that your Ambassador and his deputy have come a long way with your memorial and tribute, I have shown them high favour and have allowed them to be introduced into my presence. To manifest my indulgence, I have entertained them at a banquet and made them numerous gifts . . .

Our dynasty's majestic virtue has penetrated unto every country under Heaven, and Kings of all nations have offered their costly tribute by land and sea. As your Ambassador can see for himself, we possess all things. I set no value on objects strange or ingenious, and have no use for your country's manufactures . . .

You, O King, from afar have yearned after the blessings of our civilization . . . I have already taken note of your respectful spirit of submission, have treated your mission with extreme favour and loaded it with gifts . . .

Yesterday your Ambassador petitioned my Ministers to memorialise me regarding your trade with China, but his proposal is not consistent with our dynastic usage and cannot be entertained. Hitherto, all European nations, including your own country's barbarian merchants, have carried on their trade with our Celestial Empire at Canton. Such has been the procedure for many years, although Our Celestial Empire possesses all things in prolific abundance and lacks no product within its own borders. There was therefore no need to import the manufactures of outside barbarians in exchange for our own produce. But as the tea, silk and porcelain which the Celestial Empire produces, are absolute necessities to European nations and to yourselves, we have permitted, as a signal mark of favour, that foreign *hongs* [merchant firms] should be established at Canton, so that your wants might be supplied and your country thus participate in our beneficence. But your Ambassador has now put forward new requests which completely fail to recognise the Throne's principle to "treat strangers from afar with indulgence," and to exercise a pacifying control over barbarian tribes, the world over. Moreover, our dynasty, swaying the myriad races of the globe, extends the same benevolence towards all. Your England is not the only nation trading at Canton. If other nations, following your bad example, wrongfully importune my ear with further impossible requests, how will it be possible for me to treat them with easy indulgence? Nevertheless, I do not forget the lonely remoteness of your island, cut off from the world by intervening wastes of sea, nor do I overlook your excusable ignorance of the usages of our Celestial Empire. I have consequently commanded my Ministers to enlighten your Ambassador on the subject, and have ordered the departure of the mission . . .

SOURCE: Emperor Qian Long, *Letter to George III, 1793*, Chinese Cultural Studies, http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/core9/phalsall/texts/qianlong.html. From E. Backhouse and J. O. P. Bland, *Annals and Memoirs of the Court of Peking* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914) 322–331.

narcotic drug, made from poppies that grew profusely in India, which produced a sense of euphoria when ingested or smoked. Although opium was illegal in China, the British smuggled it in by sea from India, and its addictive properties soon created a growing demand among the Chinese people. Opium thus gave the British a pernicious but profitable way to redress the trade imbalance.

Opium smuggling helps British reverse trade imbalance

And redress it they did. From 1800 to 1840 the amount of opium smuggled each year into China increased more than tenfold, from fewer than four thousand 130-pound chests in 1800 to more than 40 thousand in 1840. Its value soon exceeded that of all Chinese goods sold to the British, shifting the trade balance in Britain's favor and causing silver to flow *out* of China—a serious problem for China since its taxes were paid mainly in silver. The spread of opium addiction, moreover, weakened China's army and bureaucracy and created a public health crisis in its urban slums. No wonder many Chinese perceived the British not just as "barbarians" but also as "foreign devils."

Lin Zexu oversees destruction of British opium.

To confront the opium crisis, in 1839 China's Daoguang (*DOW-GWAHNG*) Emperor, who reigned from 1821 to 1850, dispatched a conscientious commissioner named Lin Zexu (*LIN DZUH-SHOO*) to Guangzhou to halt the opium trade. Lin Zexu used drastic measures, confiscating and destroying more than 20 thousand chests of British opium and sending Britain's Queen Victoria a letter threatening to execute opium-smuggling "barbarians" by "decapitation or strangulation" (see "Lin Zexu's Letter to Queen Victoria"). Enraged at the destruction of what they insisted was their "private property," and maintaining that China had no authority to prosecute British subjects, the British merchants appealed to their home government, which in turn sent warships to blockade Guangzhou.

Chinese effort to halt opium trade results in Opium War

The resulting conflict, known as the First Opium War (1839–1842), was a humiliation for China. The British, with modern warships and well-armed troops, easily defeated China's outmoded forces, occupied Chinese ports, and even sent a 70-ship armada led by an iron-hulled steamship up the Yangzi River to demonstrate their naval superiority (Map 29.2).

The Treaty of Nanjing (1842), which ended the war, required China to abolish the Cohong monopoly, pay Britain a huge indemnity, and cede it the island of Hong Kong (southeast of Guangzhou). It also gave the British full commercial access to five major Chinese ports and exempted British subjects from Chinese jurisdiction. Before long the French and Americans, eager to get in on the China trade, pressured the Qing regime to grant them similar rights.

China's defeat opens door to further Western intrusions

These Western intrusions proved catastrophic for China. The opium trade, although still illegal, expanded to more than 60 thousand chests a year by the 1850s, intensifying China's public health crisis. A cruel new commerce called the **coolie trade** emerged, as Western merchants hired or kidnapped Chinese workers and shipped them abroad to serve as laborers in places such as Cuba, Peru, and California. These involuntary migrants, disparagingly called "coolies," helped fill a labor shortage created by the banning of the slave trade (Chapter 30), working in mines and building railways that added to the wealth of the West. But wages were so low and working conditions so brutal that "coolies" were often little better off than slaves.

Discredited by defeat and weakened by rampant opium use in its army, the Qing regime found it harder than ever to deal with widespread discontent. Its problems were compounded in 1850 when the prudent and frugal Daoguang Emperor died, leaving the throne to his dissolute 19-year-old son, who reigned from 1850 to 1861 as the Xianfeng (*shē-YAN FUNG*) Emperor. From a traditional Chinese perspective, as floods and famines ravaged the land, the Qing dynasty appeared to have lost the Mandate of Heaven.

Document 29.2 Lin Zexu's Letter to Queen Victoria

In 1839 Commissioner Lin Zexu, the Chinese official tasked with stopping the smuggling of opium by British subjects into China, composed a letter to Britain's Queen Victoria demanding British aid in ending this practice, warning that persons who persisted in this illegal commerce would be liable to execution under Chinese law.

The kings of your honorable country . . . have always been noted for their politeness and submissiveness . . . For this reason the Celestial Court in soothing those from afar has redoubled its polite and kind treatment . . .

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 . . . His Majesty the Emperor, upon hearing of this, is in a towering rage . . .

Suppose there were people from another country who carried opium for sale to England and seduced your people into buying and smoking it; certainly your honorable ruler would deeply hate it and be bitterly aroused. We have heard heretofore that your honorable ruler is kind and benevolent. Naturally you would not wish to give unto others what you yourself do not want . . .

Suppose a man of another country comes to England to trade, he still has to obey the English laws; how much more should he obey in China the laws of the Celestial Dynasty?

Now we have set up regulations governing the Chinese people. He who sells opium shall receive the death penalty and he who smokes it also the death penalty. Now consider this: if the barbarians do not bring opium, then how can the Chinese people resell it, and how can they smoke it? The fact is that the wicked barbarians beguile the Chinese people into a death trap. How then can we grant life only to these barbarians? He who takes the life of even one person still has to atone for it with his own life; yet is the harm done by opium limited to the taking of one life only? Therefore in the new regulations, in regard to those barbarians who bring opium to China, the penalty is fixed at decapitation or strangulation. This is what is called getting rid a harmful thing on behalf of mankind.

Now we . . . have received the extraordinary Celestial grace of His Majesty the Emperor, who has redoubled his consideration and compassion. All those who from the period of the coming one year (from England) or six months (from India) bring opium to China by mistake, but who voluntarily confess and completely surrender their opium, shall be exempt from their punishment. After this limit of time, if there are still those who bring opium to China then they will plainly have committed a willful violation and shall at once be executed according to law, with absolutely no clemency or pardon. This may be called the height of kindness and the perfection of justice . . .

After receiving this dispatch will you immediately give us a prompt reply regarding the details and circumstances of your cutting off the opium traffic. Be sure not to put this off . . .

SOURCE: Lin Zexu [Lin Tse-Hsü], *Letter of Advice to Queen Victoria.* Chinese Cultural Studies, http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/core9/phalsall/texts/com-lin.html. From Ssuyu Teng and John Fairbank, *China's Response to the West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954).

The Taiping Rebellion and China's Disintegration

But who would gain Heaven's Mandate? For a while it looked to be Hong Xiuquan (*HŌNG shē-Ō choo-WAHN*), a tempestuous young man from southern China, who led a vast uprising called the **Taiping Rebellion** (1850–1864). Fueled by anti-Manchu hostility and Western religious ideas, this massive revolt, together with natural disasters and other uprisings, produced colossal devastation in China.

Map 29.2 China in Turmoil, 1830s–1870s

From the 1830s to the 1870s, China disintegrated into disarray. Note that in these years China was ravaged by two disastrous Opium Wars, a series of rebellions that included the massive Taiping Revolt, a Yellow River course change that produced both flooding and drought, and other calamities, including famine and disease. How did China's Qing Dynasty manage to survive such catastrophes?

Hong Xiuquan blends Hakka and Christian ideals

Hong, who belonged to an oppressed minority called Hakka, initially aspired to a career in China's civil service. In 1837, however, after three times failing the civil service exams, he became very ill. By his own account he lapsed into a 40-day coma, during which he had visions. Later, influenced by Christian writings and Western Protestant missionaries, he concluded that he had been taken up to heaven, given a new heart that made him the younger brother of Jesus Christ, and commanded by God to smite the foreign devils who were destroying China. Inspired by this experience, Hong formed a new

faith that embraced puritanical Christian values, banning opium, alcohol, adultery, gambling, and foot binding. Defying China's patriarchal traditions and social stratification, his "Society of God Worshipers" also stressed ideals popular among the Hakka, such as gender equality, communal property, and an end to social classes. It thus attracted many poor and oppressed men and women.

In 1850, concluding that the foreign devils he must smite were China's Manchu rulers, Hong Xiuquan assembled a devout and highly disciplined militia, made up of both men and women, who were treated as equals. By 1853 they had defeated a large Manchu army, captured the city of Nanjing, and declared it the capital of a new realm called the Taiping (*TĪ-PING*) Kingdom. For the next decade it ruled much of central China.

Revolts, disasters, and foreign incursions devastate China

Although Taiping means "Great Peace," the Taiping Rebellion brought horrific violence, as Taiping forces fought Manchu armies in a bloody civil war that lasted until 1864. Revolts among Muslims in southern and western China added to the chaos, as did the Yellow River's sudden change of course in 1852, causing drought and famine in its former path and devastating floods in its new one. This wreckage in turn sparked an uprising called the Nian Rebellion, in which starving peasants, led by secret rebel bands called Nian, seized a large segment of northeastern China, terrorizing landlords and attacking towns with a quick-striking cavalry militia. Taking advantage of this turmoil, Britain and France launched a Second Opium War (1856–1860) to further impose their will on the Qing regime. From 1850 to 1864, as rebellions, famine, disease, and war took perhaps 20 million lives, China's once-illustrious empire fell into disarray.

The Dynasty's Survival and Regional "Self-Strengthening"

The Qing dynasty nonetheless survived. Chinese Confucian officials, terrified by the rebels, rallied to its support, while the Taiping Kingdom was weakened by internal conflicts. Furthermore, after 1860, having won the Second Opium War and forced the Qing regime to grant them new privileges, the Western powers supported its survival in order to protect their gains. The regime itself, desperate to restore order, allowed some officials to form regional armies to combat the rebels. One of these armies, led by an eminent Confucian named Zeng Guofan (*DZUNG GWŌ-FAHN*), defeated the Taiping forces in 1864 and, after Hong Xiuquan committed suicide, massacred his followers in Nanjing. Another regional army, formed by Zeng's talented protégé Li Hongzhang (*LĒ HŌNG-JAHNG*), crushed the Nian rebels four years later, and the Muslim revolts in the West were finally quelled in the 1870s.

Regional "self-strengthening" efforts adapt Western ideas

The dynasty thus endured, but momentum shifted to the regional leaders, who now had their own armies and officials. Distressed by China's vulnerability to the Western powers, they worked to modernize its industry and military in a series of efforts that came to be called "self-strengthening." Before his death in 1872, for example, Zeng Guofan built shipyards, military schools, and munitions factories, and he sent young men to America to study Western science and engineering. Li Hongzhang created his own industrial empire of railways, factories, and mines. He made numerous international contacts, negotiating treaties with Britain and France, buying warships built in the West, and using Western experts to help run his railways and mills. As head of his own army and China's leading industrialist, he amassed great power and wealth.

The Empress Dowager Cixi.

Corruption and conservatism hamper China's modernization

Although they often acted on their own, most regional leaders for the time being supported the imperial government, dominated from 1861 to 1908 by a capable but unscrupulous woman called Cixi (*TSUH-SHĒ*). Formerly one of emperor Xianfeng's many concubines, she had borne him a son in 1856 and, after Xianfeng died in 1861, used her status as the new child emperor's mother to become China's regent and effective ruler. Fourteen years later, when her son the emperor (rumored to have been weakened by syphilis acquired in sexual debaucheries) died at age 19, she intrigued to keep her power by placing her four-year-old nephew on the throne.

Known as the Empress Dowager (widow empress), Cixi worked tenaciously from 1861 until her death in 1908 to preserve her own power and that of the Qing regime. To restore stability after the rebellions, she and her officials granted tax relief, repaired roads and canals, and built grain storage facilities to protect against famine. But she also used her position to enhance her lavish lifestyle and prevent social or political change, at least until her last few years.

China thus failed to modernize quickly enough to resist continued Western intrusion. The Chinese bureaucracy's traditional disdain for foreign goods and ideas hampered efforts to buy Western weapons and build industries that might compete with the West. Corruption and greed among Chinese leaders also diverted funds and resources needed for modernization. Cixi, for example, used money intended for updating China's navy to finance lavish personal projects, including an extravagant houseboat made of solid marble, so heavy it could not float. Even Li Hongzhang, the most notable of the "self-strengthening" regional leaders, took bribes and seemed more eager to enhance his wealth and power than to strengthen China.

Subordination and Resistance in India

In the mid-nineteenth century, while Western intrusions were contributing to China's disintegration, Western domination was helping unite and transform the Indian subcontinent. The British enterprise in India, at first primarily commercial, expanded and solidified into outright political control. One result was that India's distinct cultures were subordinated by the British, who sought not only to exploit the subcontinent but also to impose Western ideas and ways. Another result was that many of India's autonomous states were consolidated into a huge British colony, administered largely by British-educated Indian professionals, some of whom would later lead the quest for a united, independent India.

Commercial Connections and Cultural Conflicts

Unlike China, but somewhat like Europe, India historically was not a unified state, but rather an assortment of independent realms, connected by commerce, common cultural values, and the Hindu religion. In the sixteenth century, however, much of the subcontinent had come under the Mughal Empire, an Islamic regime that initially allowed the native cultures and faith to flourish, but later oppressed them and subjected them to Muslim domination (Chapter 17).

Then, in the eighteenth century, as the Mughal regime declined, large parts of the subcontinent came under the sway of the British East India Company, a commercial venture

that held a monopoly of Britain's trade with southern Asia (Chapter 22). In some regions, which it had conquered using **sepoys** (*SĒ-poyz*)—Indian soldiers who were trained and commanded by the British—the company's rule was direct. In other areas, which it administered through pacts with Indian princes, the company exercised its influence indirectly.

The British East India Company gains influence in India

At first the expansion of British influence mattered little to most people in India. Foreign domination was nothing new to them: in the Mughal era they had accepted alien rule as long as the rulers tolerated Indian cultures and beliefs. And the British East India Company, whose major concern was trade, initially was quite tolerant. Indeed, the company seemed less oppressive than the most recent Mughal rulers, who had imposed harsh taxes and restrictions on India's non-Muslim majority. So in the early years of company control, common people across the subcontinent were scarcely aware of their new overlords from a distant land.

British industry and commerce have growing impact on India

In the nineteenth century, however, the British presence had significant consequences. First, cheap slave-grown cotton from America and inexpensive cotton clothes from England's textile mills ended India's traditional dominance of the global market for cotton and cotton goods. Second, the British started imposing Western values on India. They took steps to abolish such practices as **sati** (*suh-TĒ*), a custom by which upper-caste Hindu widows were sometimes burnt to death on their husband's funeral pyre, and **thagi** (*thuh-GĒ*), the work of professional bandits (or "thugs") who attacked and strangled travelers as a religious ritual. Dismissive of Indian institutions, British reformers sought to establish Western-style educational and judicial systems in India. One of them, historian Thomas Babington Macauley, even asserted that "a single shelf of a good European library is worth the whole native literature of India."

Britain expands direct control over much of India

Meanwhile, to protect their commercial and strategic interests, the British expanded their direct control over other parts of India (Map 29.3). During the Napoleonic Wars (1799–1815), for example, fearing a possible French attack on the Indian subcontinent, the British seized the state of Mysore (*mī-SOR*) in southern India (1799). Several years later they invaded the lands of the Maratha (*mah-rah-TAH*) Confederacy in western and central India, finally annexing them in 1818. In 1839–1849, to counterbalance Russian expansion in Central Asia, the British took control of the Sind and Punjab (*pun-JAHB*) regions in northwest India. By the 1850s, the British dominated most of the Indian subcontinent.

The Indian Revolt of 1857

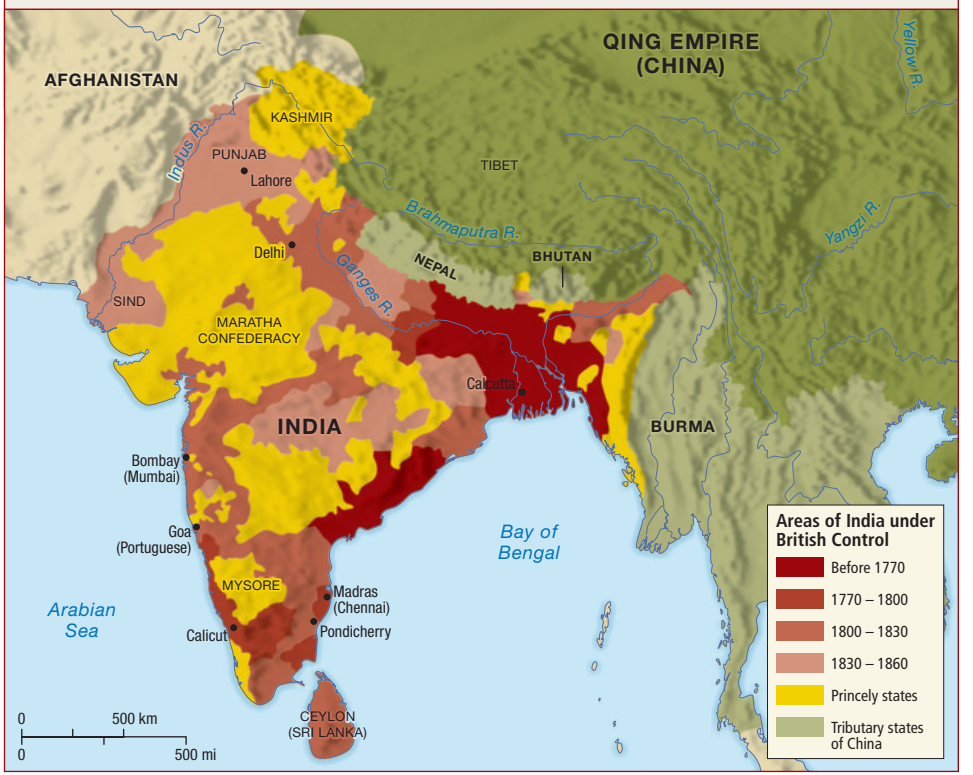
Over the years, as the British role in India expanded, Britain's government had become concerned that the company, a commercial enterprise, was wielding too much political and military power. Reacting to reports of plunder and abuse of Indians by company officials, the British Parliament passed an India Act in 1784, setting up a board of control to oversee the company's operations. Parliament then restricted the company's commercial monopoly in 1814 and ended its privileged status altogether in 1833. More and more, control of India was shifting from the company to the crown, that is, from the officers of the British East India Company to the leading officials of the British royal government.

Indians revolt against British domination

The expansion of British rule, combined with British insensitivity to Indian ways, led to the Indian Revolt of 1857. Begun as an insurrection by Indian sepoy soldiers against their British commanders, it is also known in Britain as the "Sepoy Mutiny."

Map 29.3 Growth of British Power in India, 1770–1860

Between 1770 and 1860 the British extended their rule over most of the Indian subcontinent. Notice that in 1770 the British role in India was still primarily commercial, with the British East India Company controlling several coastal regions, but by 1860 almost all of India was under the direct or indirect dominion of Britain's imperial government. How did British rule help unite India and pave the way for Indian nationalist movements?



The revolt was triggered by British introduction of accurate new rifles for the sepoys and by rumors that, to use the cartridges for these rifles, they would have to bite off a protective wrapping greased with the fat of cows or pigs. Both Hindu soldiers (who considered cows sacred) and Muslim soldiers (who considered pork unclean), upset that they might violate their religious laws by tasting a forbidden substance, refused to use the new cartridges. Although the British eventually withdrew the order that sepoys must bite off the wrapping, they chained and imprisoned many sepoys for refusing to follow this order.

Enraged at this treatment of their comrades, hundreds of sepoys rampaged across the Ganges River valley, killing their British officers and many other Britons, including women and children. Others in northern India, including former landowners and regional rulers who had been displaced by the British, joined in the rebellion. Horrified by the

slaughter of their own people, British officials responded by ruthlessly crushing the revolt in 1858, burning whole villages and executing rebels by hanging them or shooting them with cannons. Superior weapons, and the loyalty of sepoys brought from elsewhere in India, helped the British prevail.

British troops crushing Indian Revolt.

After the revolt the British enterprise in India, begun as a commercial venture, was fully converted into imperial rule. Determined both to assert full control and provide more effective governance, Britain abolished the East India Company, imposing crown rule through a viceroy who governed in the name of the British monarch. Many Indian soldiers, their loyalty no longer trusted, were replaced with British troops. Local Indian rulers were formally subordinated to Britain's Queen Victoria, who in 1876 was declared Empress of India by the British Parliament.

The Rise of Indian Nationalism

In strengthening its control over India, however, Britain inadvertently aided the rise of Indian nationalism. By unifying India's diverse states under direct and indirect British rule, for example, and by creating a uniform civil service, along with a network of roads, railways, and telegraph lines, the British helped unite the subcontinent politically and economically. And by encouraging Indians to learn British ways to reinforce this rule, the British helped to foster a growing sense of Indian national unity.

Since the eighteenth century, a number of Indians had studied English language and ways, partly to participate in commerce and partly to incorporate Western science and technology into India's long tradition of mathematical and scientific expertise. Now the British, eager to instill their ideals in Indian leaders and officials, further encouraged such study, helping to develop a British-educated, English-speaking Indian elite. Many of its members attended British universities and then returned to play leading roles in Indian society.

Indian elites adapt Western liberal and nationalist ideas to India

In time some members of this elite formed an Indian nationalist movement. In learning British ways they also learned Western liberal and nationalist ideals, which they adapted to India. If liberal ideals such as freedom and self-rule were vital to the British people, reasoned these Indian leaders, should not such ideals also apply to the people of India? If European nationalists took great pride in their historic institutions and beliefs, should not Indians do likewise?

Indian National Congress pushes for Indian self-rule

In 1885, a group of British-educated Indian leaders convened the first session of what came to be called the Indian National Congress. Based on earlier regional political associations in India, and modeled in part on British political parties, the Congress pushed for greater involvement of Indians in their own governance. Over the next several decades, faced with British resistance, it became increasingly assertive, developing into a full-blown nationalist movement. One faction, led by Gopal Krishna Gokhale (*GŌ-kuh-lā*), a highly respected educator and moderate political leader, called for greater Indian autonomy within the British Empire. Another faction, led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak (*TĒ-lahk*), a prominent mathematician and radical nationalist whom the British at one point deported for sedition, pressed for full independence. Later, under the inspirational leadership of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Chapter 32), the Indian National Congress led a sustained nonviolent struggle for a united, independent India.

Restoration and Adaptation in Japan

Japan, like China and India, was forced to deal with Western intrusions during the nineteenth century. As in China and India, these intrusions resulted in humiliation and internal upheaval. Unlike China and India, however, Japan avoided Western economic and political domination. It did not, however, avoid Western cultural and technological influence. Indeed, in order to defend itself from Western powers, Japan modified many of its traditional ways and institutions, borrowing ideas and technologies from its Western antagonists. As the Asian nation that most successfully resisted Western rule, Japan also became the most fully Westernized of the major Asian nations.

The Tokugawa Shogunate and the Western Challenge

By the mid-nineteenth century, Japan had experienced more than two hundred years of self-imposed isolation under the Tokugawa family, whose leaders ruled from the city of Edo as shoguns. In theory the shogun was merely Japan's highest military official, appointed by the emperor to command the imperial armies. In practice, however, as overlord of the daimyo (regional warlords) and samurai warriors, the shogun was far more powerful than the emperor, who reigned in the ancient city of Kyoto as a godlike religious figure lacking political power.

Japan minimizes Western connections for two centuries

Since the early 1600s, to protect Japan from European influence, the Tokugawa shoguns had banned most contact with Westerners, except for limited commercial and cultural connections with the Dutch, who were allowed to operate a small trading post near the southern port of Nagasaki (*NAH-gah-SAH-kē*). For over two centuries, then, Japan had preserved and developed its culture without much Western intrusion.

Americans press Japan to open trade

In the 1850s, however, a new Western power, the United States of America, decided to do business with Japan. As American whaling ships and merchant vessels increasingly traveled the Pacific, the U.S. government came to see Japan as a potential refuge for stranded whalers and refueling point for American steamships on their way to and from Chinese ports. In 1853, as described at the start of this chapter, an American squadron with ironclad steamships arrived near Edo and transmitted to the shogun a letter calling for open trade relations.

U.S. forces in Japan, 1853.

This naval visit, led by Commodore Matthew Perry, triggered a crisis in Japan. On one hand, Japanese law forbade most contact with Westerners under penalty of death; on the other hand, the Americans had superior ships with powerful guns that Japan could not match. When Perry returned with a larger force in 1854 and insisted on a response, the shogun tried to compromise, agreeing to open two small ports to trade with the United States.

This compromise satisfied no one. It went too far for many defiant samurai, who had wanted to fight the Americans and felt that their shogun dishonored his country by dealing with "barbarians." But it did not go far enough for the Americans and other Western powers, who soon forced Japan to sign unequal treaties, like those imposed on China, that opened more ports to Western trade and exempted Westerners in Japan from Japanese jurisdiction. By 1859, not only the Americans, but also the Dutch, Russians, British, and French, had imposed such treaties, fully opening Japan to Western trade and Western influence.

Western powers impose trade treaties on Japan

Civil War and Meiji Restoration

The shogun's submission to Western demands created a distressing dilemma for many samurai warriors. They believed that his action had betrayed Japan and compromised his moral authority, but, according to their samurai code, they were honor-bound to serve him loyally. If they defied him they would dishonor themselves, and for the samurai dishonor meant death.

To resolve this dilemma, some of the samurai launched a movement to "honor the emperor" and "expel the barbarians." Inspired by Yoshida Shoin (*YŌ-shē-dah SHŌ-ēn*), a passionate young patriot who had earlier tried to hide on one of Perry's ships to study Americans first hand, these samurai declared that their ultimate loyalty was not to the shogun but to the emperor, the shogun's divine overlord and rightful Japanese ruler. In their view they could best honor the emperor by defying the shogun and fighting the foreign devils.

Rebellious samurai depose shogun and restore emperor

Although Yoshida was beheaded in 1859 for plotting to murder an agent of the shogun, in the 1860s Yoshida's admirers helped to trigger a series of civil wars in which some daimyo and their samurai remained loyal to the shogun, while others sought to overthrow him and restore the emperor to full political power. The Western powers, perplexed by these upheavals, responded to occasional attacks on their ships by shelling some coastal fortresses, but did not intervene directly. Finally, in 1868, the forces supporting the emperor prevailed, defeating the shogun and abolishing his office.

To emphasize the end of the shogunate, the victorious samurai had the young emperor Mutsuhito (*moot-soo-HĒ-tō*), who had recently inherited the throne, move from Kyoto to the shogun's former palace at Edo. That city, replacing Kyoto as Japan's imperial capital, was renamed Tokyo, or "eastern capital." Since Mutsuhito's reign was given the title Meiji (*MĀ-jē*), meaning "Enlightened Rule," he was called the Meiji Emperor, and the re-establishment of the emperor as head of Japan's government came to be known as the Meiji Restoration.

Meiji Emperor in samurai attire.

Centralization and Western Adaptations

Japan's government, however, was actually run by the emperor's advisors, a gifted group of young samurai drawn from the factions that had defeated the shogun. They soon decided that, to protect their country from the West, they must unite and adapt to Western ways: in order to "expel the barbarians" Japan must first emulate them. During the long Meiji reign (1867–1912), Japan pursued both centralization and selective adaptation of Western ideas and technologies.

To strengthen Japan, the Meiji regime adapts Western ideas

Aware of the recent humiliations imposed by the West on India and China, the Meiji regime moved quickly to concentrate its power and unite Japan in the face of the foreign threat. The regime required the various daimyo warlords to surrender their troops and domains to the emperor and then to move to Tokyo and become imperial officials. The regime also moderated Japan's rigid class distinctions, curtailing samurai class privileges and ending regular stipends to the samurai. The regime then began in 1873 to create a new military system, based on French and German models, replacing the old class-based samurai armies with a large army made up mainly of commoners drafted into service. Armed with modern rifles rather than samurai swords, the new army was controlled by the central government, rather than by local lords.

Some samurai rebel against the end of class privilege

Although most daimyo and samurai accepted these reforms, knowing they could not face the Western threat as separate forces with outmoded weapons, some were deeply distressed at the loss of their honored status. In 1877, after the regime ordered the samurai to discard the fabled swords that symbolized their status, about 40 thousand samurai staged a mass revolt led by Saigo Takamori (*SĪ-gō tah-kah-MAW-rē*), a heroic warrior who had helped defeat the shogun in 1868. Saigo fought bravely, but he and his forces could not overcome the new army's superior size and weaponry. Defeated and branded a traitor, Saigo regained his honor by committing seppuku, the samurai suicide ritual, and thus became a romantic symbol of the glorious samurai era that had come to an end.

Japan adapts Western ways to fit its culture

In the ensuing decades, anxious to replicate the power and wealth of the industrial West, Japan adapted many Western ways to fit its East Asian society. To spur industrial growth, for example, the government built railways, textile mills, factories, and mines, then sold them to wealthy families to raise money. Thus arose the **zaibatsu**—distinctive Japanese family-owned conglomerates, each typically having its own banks, shipping lines, railways, mines, factories, and retail outlets. To provide the knowledge needed for industrial society, the Meiji regime established a new system of mandatory education, modeled on those in America and France, combining Western-style technical knowledge with traditional Japanese literature and learning. In 1889 the regime adopted a Western-type constitution, establishing a two-house parliament and a cabinet, while reserving vast authority for the emperor, to whom the cabinet and military were directly responsible. Culturally, the Japanese imitated Western forms of dress, dining, architecture, art, and entertainment, blending them with traditional Japanese styles.

By the 1890s, then, Japan was emerging as a blend of East and West, a Western-style industrial power on the edge of Asia. Two ominous factors were also beginning to emerge. One was the absence in the new constitution of effective checks on the power of the military, which reported directly to the emperor, enabling it at times to act without approval of the civilian government. Another was the reality that the Japanese islands, so favored by climate and rich in beauty, lacked large deposits of mineral resources—such as iron and petroleum—that were essential for industry. These two factors would dominate Japanese policies for the next half century, as Japan embarked on increasingly audacious efforts, from 1894 until 1945, to gain control of such resources through military expansion.

The Impact of Imperialism in Asia

Japan was not the only power seeking to expand in Asia. In the nineteenth century the British, French, and Dutch, exploiting China's declining ability to protect the smaller nations to its South from outside intervention, increasingly brought these nations under imperial control. Then, in the 1890s, after Japan exploited China's weakness in a war for control of Korea, these and other European powers forced the Qing regime to grant them zones in China for economic exploitation. For a time it seemed as if the "foreign devils" would dismantle the celestial empire.

Southeast Asia and the West

Southeast Asian states pay tribute to China

Mainland Southeast Asia, the region east of India and south of China, was so strongly influenced by both these cultures that it was often called "Indochina." Its various states, although politically autonomous, derived their main beliefs and institutions from the Indian and Chinese traditions. Most of these states also paid tribute to China and looked to it for protection. For centuries this region, populated mainly by Buddhist village farmers who grew rice in the hot, rainy climate, attracted scant attention from European visitors, most of whom focused on the profits they could make by trading with India, the East Indies, and China (Map 29.4).

From 1771 until 1802, however, a massive revolt called the Tay-Son Rebellion rocked Vietnam, Southeast Asia's easternmost state, leading a young prince named Nguyen Anh (*'n-GIH-un AHN*) to seek outside assistance (Chapter 21). The French, hoping to regain some influence in Asia after their ouster from India by the British, provided him with soldiers and weapons, helping him crush the revolt and found the Nguyen dynasty (1802–1945). Reigning until 1820 as Emperor Gia Long (*jē-AH LAWNG*), he did not promote trade with France but did allow the French to send some Catholic missionaries, who in time attracted a number of Vietnamese converts.

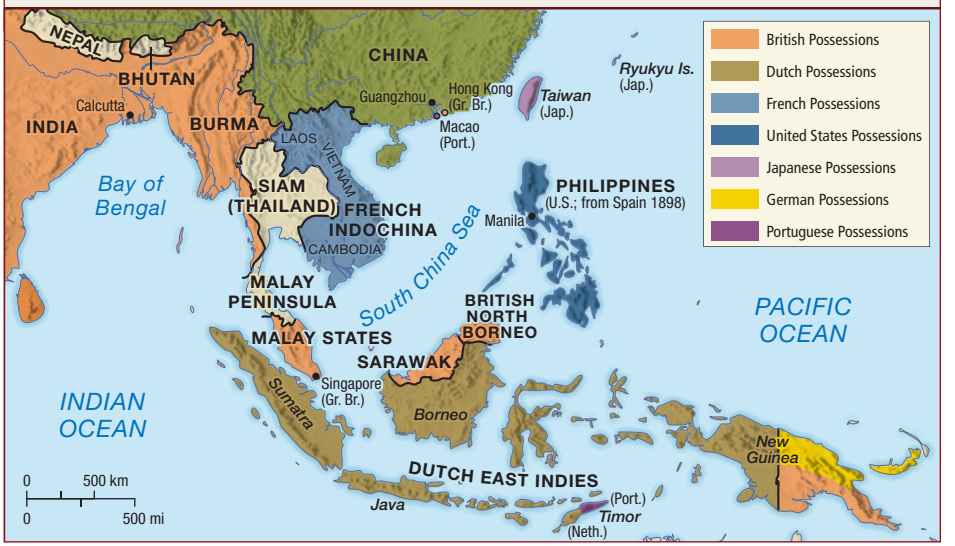
In the 1850s, alarmed at the growing number of Catholics in this largely Buddhist land and angered by a French priest's alleged involvement in a plot to overthrow him,

Map 29.4 Southeast Asia and Indonesia in the Eighteenth Century

In the eighteenth century much of Southeast Asia consisted of autonomous states, many of which had connections with both China and the West. Note that mainland Southeast Asian was made up of autonomous states that paid tribute to China, while Indonesia too had autonomous states, as well as coastal regions controlled by the Dutch United East India Company. To what extent were these states affected by their connections with China and the West?

Map 29.5 Southeast Asia and Indonesia in the Early Twentieth Century

By the early 1900s, Southeast Asia was largely under Western imperial rule. Observe that Britain and France controlled most of mainland Southeast Asia, while most of Indonesia had become a large colony called the Dutch East Indies. Note further that even the United States had become an imperial power, having taken the Philippines from Spain in 1898. How did Siam, now called Thailand, managed to escape Western rule?



Emperor Tu Duc, who reigned from 1847 to 1883, executed thousands of Vietnamese Catholics and several dozen French priests. France responded in 1858 by sending forces to occupy cities in southern Vietnam. China, engulfed at this time by the Taiping Rebellion and Second Opium War, was unable to help Vietnam, despite the fact that it had long paid tribute to China for trade and protection.

France exploits China's weakness to expand in Southeast Asia

Five years later a revolt in Cambodia, Vietnam's western neighbor, allowed France to further extend its sway in Southeast Asia. Despite the fact that Cambodia's king neither sought nor desired French assistance, France sent in troops and proclaimed Cambodia a French **protectorate**, that is, a country controlled by an outside power claiming to provide security. In the 1870s France also sent forces to combat rebels in northern Vietnam; in 1883 it, too, was declared a protectorate by the French. China finally responded, at the behest of Vietnam's emperor, by sending an army to attack the French, but superior weapons helped France defeat China in the Franco-Chinese War of 1883–1885. Finally, in 1893, the French took over neighboring Laos, completing the formation of a large new colony called French Indochina, encompassing Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos (Map 29.5).

Meanwhile Britain was also moving into Southeast Asia. To guard their sea route between India and China, over which traveled such valuable items as opium, tea, and silk, in 1819 the British had occupied Singapore, a port on the straits, between mainland Southeast Asia and the East Indies, connecting the Indian Ocean and South China Sea. In the 1870s, as France expanded its control over Vietnam and Cambodia, the

British extended their influence northward from Singapore, to protect that port. They took over several small sultanates on the southern Malay peninsula, soon a key source of industrial resources such as tin, and later rubber—after rubber trees were planted there by the British who smuggled seeds from Brazil. In the 1880s, anxious to prevent the French from expanding toward British India, Britain conquered and annexed the kingdom of Burma, a country today called Myanmar (*mē-AHN-mar*), rich in oil and teakwood.

Thailand exploits Western rivalries to maintain its independence

In all Southeast Asia only Thailand, then called Siam, escaped colonization in the nineteenth century, partly because neither Britain nor France was willing to let the other gain control there. Two talented Thai kings, Rama IV (1851–1868) and Rama V (1868–1910), cleverly exploited the British-French rivalry to keep Thailand independent. To further reinforce their realm against Western intrusion, these kings centralized the state bureaucracy, established an educational system, and introduced such technologies as printing presses, railways, and telegraphs. Modernized by its monarchs and spared the disruption of Western imperial rule, Thailand emerged as Southeast Asia's most stable and prosperous nation.

Indonesia and the Dutch

The East Indies, a long string of islands today known as Indonesia ("Indian Islands"), stretching from Southeast Asia toward Australia, had a past that paralleled in many ways that of the Indian subcontinent. Like India, Indonesia included many diverse realms, most of which had been influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism; like India, by the sixteenth century, Indonesia had come largely under Muslim control. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, much as parts of India came under the sway of the British East India Company, parts of Indonesia came to be controlled by the Dutch United East India Company, a similar state-sponsored enterprise that monopolized trade between the Netherlands and East Indies from 1602 until 1799.

Indonesia is subjected to Dutch commerce and control

In the nineteenth century, the Kingdom of the Netherlands expanded Dutch influence in Indonesia, first by forging agreements with various local rulers and then by requiring Indonesian villagers to set aside one-fifth of their land for cultivation of export crops such as sugar, pepper, coffee, tea, and tobacco. By collecting these globally popular products as a form of taxation, and then selling them abroad at huge profits, the Dutch gained vast wealth while most Indonesians continued to live in great poverty. By the early twentieth century, as the islands also began supplying industrial resources such as rubber, tin, and oil, the Dutch ruled most of Indonesia as a large and lucrative colony called the Dutch (or Netherlands) East Indies.

Japan Versus China in Korea

Japan exploits China's weakness to annex Ryukyu Islands

Meanwhile, noting China's weakness in the face of Western intrusions, Japan had begun to expand and carve out its own Asian empire. As early as 1872, influenced by expansionist advisors, the new Meiji regime in Tokyo laid claim to the Ryukyu (*rē-YOOK-yoo*) Islands, a chain of small isles south of Japan, the largest of which is Okinawa (*ō-kē-NAH-wah*). The Chinese, who had long received tribute from the Ryukyu king, refused to recognize this new Japanese claim. So Japan responded by moving the king to Tokyo in

1879, proclaiming him a Japanese nobleman, and declaring that the Ryukyu chain was officially part of Japan (Map 29.6). The Qing regime in China, facing France's challenge in Southeast Asia and not yet fully recovered from the calamities of the 1850s and 1860s, could do little more than protest.

Tonghak Revolt in Korea blends Eastern and Western beliefs

Far more troubling to the Qing regime was the Japanese challenge in Korea, a former Chinese colony and longtime tributary that had copied much of its culture from China. So similar to China was Korea, in fact, that in the 1860s it had even experienced its own variant of China's Taiping Rebellion. In 1860 an impetuous young man named Cho'e Che-u (*CHEH CHĀ-OO*), having repeatedly failed the Korean civil service exams, claimed that he was commanded by God to start a new religion. Known as Tonghak ("Eastern Learning"), this messianic creed combined Buddhist, Daoist, Confucian, and Christian ideas, calling for creation of an earthly righteous kingdom in which all would be equal under God. Its radical egalitarianism attracted numerous poor Korean peasants, who rose in a mass revolt against oppressive landlords and state officials. In 1864, however, Korean authorities crushed the revolt, beheading Cho'e Che-u and killing thousands of his followers. But the Tonghak creed was not entirely suppressed.

In the 1870s, eager to industrialize, Japan began to covet Korea's natural resources, which included sizable deposits of coal and iron. In 1875, in a move reminiscent of the U.S. opening of Japan two decades earlier, the Meiji regime sent a fleet to Korea, hoping to force the Koreans to trade with Japan. The overmatched Koreans, advised by their Chinese overlords to negotiate with the Japanese, agreed the next year to let them conduct commerce at three Korean ports.

Japanese inroads in Korea trigger conflict with China

In the 1880s, however, anxious to forestall any further expansion of Japanese influence in Korea, still regarded by China as a tributary and protectorate, Chinese industrialist Li Hongzhang decided to take action. Using his private army, which he had refused to disband after crushing the Nian Rebellion, he sent troops into Korea under the command of a talented protégé named Yuan Shikai (*yoo-AHN shur-KĪ*). Then, in 1894, as tensions increased between China and Japan, the Tonghak Revolt resurfaced, threatening to topple the Korean government. Seeing this unrest as a golden opportunity to expand their influence in Korea, the Japanese sent in troops to help crush the revolt. Quickly these troops came into conflict with the Chinese forces already in Korea.

Japan defeats China in conflict over Korea

The resulting war between China and Japan, known as the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), was the first direct test of each country's modernization program. The conflict proved painful for China. Corrupt Chinese officials had purchased inferior weapons from the West, pocketing what they saved by not buying higher-priced arms. Chinese commanders, moreover, had not learned how to use the new weapons or employ new naval methods. The Japanese, better led and better equipped, defeated the Chinese at sea, then overran Korea and the southern part of the Chinese province of Manchuria. As Japanese forces moved toward Beijing, China's capital, the Qing regime agreed to terms, recognizing Korea as fully independent and ceding to Japan both the island of Taiwan and southern Manchuria's Liaodong (*lē-OW DŌNG*) Peninsula (Map 29.6).

The Scramble for Chinese Concessions

Western powers pressure Japan to give up gains in Manchuria

Stunned by Japan's decisive victory, and by its acquisition of so much Chinese territory, Russia, France, and Germany quickly intervened, pressuring Japan to return the Liaodong Peninsula, its newly gained foothold in Manchuria. Once Japan complied,

Map 29.6 Japanese Expansion in Asia, 1867–1912

During the reign of the Meiji Emperor (1867–1912), Japan created its own colonial empire in East Asia. Notice that Japan annexed the Ryukyu Islands in 1879, acquired Taiwan in the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), and gained southern Sakhalin Island, a protectorate in Korea, and influence in Manchuria as a result of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). What key factors facilitated Japan's imperial expansion?

however, it became clear that this **Triple Intervention** was meant not to protect China's territorial integrity but to advance the intervening powers' imperial ambitions in China.

China agrees to let Russia build railway through Manchuria

First to move in were the Russians, who were building the **Trans-Siberian Railway**, a 5,800-mile railroad stretching from European Russia to Russia's Pacific coast. Intended as a great new trade route linking East and West, it was also designed to aid Russian industry by providing access to Asia's natural resources. In 1896, with a large bribe to Li Hongzhang, the Russians gained China's consent to build a segment of this railway through the northeast Chinese province of Manchuria, saving them hundreds of miles of track and huge sums of money.

China forced to grant Western powers economic exploitation zones

This Russian advance sparked a three-year **scramble for concessions**, in which European nations pressed China for special privileges, called concessions, that would allow their economic exploitation of key regions of China (Map 29.7). Seeking to gain industrial resources such as coal and iron while opening extensive markets for their textiles and other industrial goods, Westerners imposed their will on the Qing regime. In 1897, for example, France demanded and received railway and mining privileges in southern China, adjacent to French Indochina. Later that year, after two German missionaries were killed by a Chinese anti-Christian mob in northeastern China's Shandong (*SHAHN-DŌNG*) peninsula, Germany seized the Chinese port of Qingdao (*CHING-DOW*), then negotiated a 99-year lease on the port and mineral rights to the whole region. Soon Russia got a similar lease on Port Arthur (now Lüshun) at the southern tip of the Liaodong Peninsula. By 1899 France and Germany had extended their concessions, Britain had extracted a huge new concession to exploit the Yangzi River valley, and even Italy had secured a small concession along China's eastern coast. For a while it looked as if much of China would be divided into Western concessions.

U.S. Open Door Policy helps deter dismemberment of China

But then another Western power, flexing its newfound muscles in Asia, came to China's rescue. The United States of America, despite its anticolonial origins, in 1898 had acquired its own East Asian possession, taking the Philippine Islands from Spain in the brief but decisive Spanish-American War. Concerned that the European concessions in China might cut Americans out of the Chinese trade, in 1899 the United States proclaimed an **Open Door Policy**, issuing a note to each imperial power calling for free and equal trade with China and for the preservation of China's territorial integrity. One by one the other powers, worried that China's dismemberment might lead to wars among them, agreed in principle to the American demands, and by 1900 the scramble for concessions was over.

Cartoon depicting U.S. Open Door Policy.

The Chinese and Japanese Response

The events of the 1890s brought humiliation and anger to both China and Japan. The Chinese were humiliated by their loss to Japan in the Sino-Japanese War, and angered at the Western powers, which had claimed rights to exploit regions of China in their scramble for concessions. The Japanese were humiliated by the Triple Intervention, which forced them to return the Liaodong Peninsula to China, and especially angered at the Russians, who had subsequently moved into Manchuria themselves.

Both Asian nations reacted by waging war against Western powers: China's Qing dynasty supported an internal anti-Western uprising, and Japan's Meiji leaders started a

Map 29.7 East and South Asia in the Early Twentieth Century

By the early twentieth century, China had lost its dominant role in East Asia. Observe that most of the neighboring regions and states had come under Western or Japanese rule, and China itself had been forced to grant concessions (economic exploitation zones) to Western countries and Japan. Why was China unsuccessful in resisting Western and Japanese expansion? How did China manage to avoid total Western colonization?

conflict with Russia. China's efforts proved futile, leading to a series of last-ditch reforms that failed to save the regime, while Japan's were successful, bringing new status and global respect to the island nation. By 1912 Japan had emerged as East Asia's foremost power, while China's ancient celestial empire was gone, overthrown by revolution and replaced by a republic.

The Boxer Uprising in China

In 1898, amid the Western scramble for concessions, China experienced devastating floods, renewing the widespread perception that the Qing dynasty had lost Heaven's Mandate. That same year Empress Dowager Cixi, determined to maintain her power, blocked an effort begun by her nephew, the emperor, to institute Western-style reforms. She then arrested him, declared that he was too ill to rule, and once again proclaimed herself regent, even though her nephew was by this time 27 years old. The next year, angered at the foreign powers partitioning her empire, she aligned with a secret martial arts society that launched an extensive anti-Western rebellion.

Boxer Uprising attacks Western interests in northern China

The Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists, whose members were called Boxers, blamed the floods on the Europeans, saying that they had upset the sacred Earth by violating it with their railways, mines, and telegraph poles. By reciting a magic oath three times, then breathing through clenched teeth and foaming at the mouth, the Boxers believed they could make themselves impervious to Western bullets. In early 1900, with Cixi's tacit consent, they went on a rampage in northern China, smashing railways and telegraph lines, burning down Christian churches and convents, slaying thousands of Chinese Christians, and killing a few hundred Europeans. In June, as the Boxers invaded Beijing and laid siege to the Legation Quarter, a section of the city housing foreign embassies, Cixi and her regime formally declared war on the imperialist powers—Britain, France, Germany, Russia, Japan, and the United States.

Western forces combat Boxer Uprising.

The Boxer War was short and bloody. For two months the Western embassy guards, who numbered less than five hundred, held out against about 200 thousand rebels, who quickly found that they were not immune to Western bullets. Meanwhile the Western powers and Japan assembled a force of 30 thousand soldiers, who then stormed Beijing and lifted the siege, bringing the war to an end.

Incredibly, the empress dowager managed to hold on to power. Having fled Beijing in a peasant cart to the ancient city of Xi'an, she called on the foreigners to help her put down the revolt, pretending that she had not backed the rebels and declared war on the West. Her rival Li Hongzhang, who had opposed the war and remained on good terms with the Western powers, persuaded them to go along with her pretence. Eager to restore order and exploit the concessions they had won from Cixi's regime, and seeing no viable alternative to her continued rule, the invading nations agreed to the fiction that they had merely assisted her in crushing the rebels.

The Russo-Japanese War

Russia occupies Manchuria during the Boxer Uprising

In the midst of the chaos in China, the Russians sent troops to Manchuria to protect their railway interests from the Boxers. This Russian action further angered the Japanese, already irate at having been forced to give China back the Liaodong Peninsula. Now, fearing

that Russia's presence in Manchuria would hinder their access to its ample coal and iron deposits, which they considered crucial to their industrial growth, the Japanese resolved to force the Russians out.

There followed several years of diplomatic maneuvering by both Japan and Russia. Having boosted its status with the Western powers by joining them in crushing the Boxers, Japan played skillfully on growing Western fears of Russian expansion and even concluded an "Anglo-Japanese" alliance with Britain in 1902 (Chapter 31). Bowing to international pressures, Russia agreed to evacuate its troops from Manchuria by the end of 1903.

Russians resist Japanese pressure to withdraw from Manchuria

But the Russian troops did not actually withdraw. Instead, they began to extend their influence into northern Korea through a commercial enterprise, supposedly designed to exploit Korean timber resources, but actually formed by Russian expansionists with the support of Russia's tsar. Then, as the deadline for troop withdrawal neared, Russia offered to negotiate with Japan to divide Manchuria and Korea into Japanese and Russian economic exploitation zones.

Japan attacks Russia and wins Russo-Japanese War

Japan, however, sensing that Russia merely meant to stall and keep its troops in Manchuria, secretly prepared for war. On February 8, 1904, in a pre-dawn surprise strike, Japanese torpedo boats devastated the Russian Pacific fleet, based at Port Arthur. Thus began the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). Having destroyed Russian sea power in the region, the Japanese landed troops in Korea and Manchuria, where they defeated the Russians in several big land battles. Russia then sent its large Baltic fleet, stationed near Saint Petersburg, on a six-month journey all the way from Europe around Africa to East Asia. But the Japanese navy, with ample time to prepare, ambushed and destroyed the Russian fleet off Japan's southwest coast in May 1905 (Map 29.6).

In August, American-sponsored peace talks at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, brought the war to an end. The defeated Russians returned Manchuria to China, while Japan gained primary influence in Korea, a leasehold on the Liaodong Peninsula, railway rights in southern Manchuria, and the southern half of Sakhalin (*SAH-kuh-LĒN*) Island (north of Japan). Five years later, Japan formally annexed Korea, transforming it into a colony of the Japanese Empire.

Negotiators at Portsmouth peace talks.

The Russo-Japanese War, although fought only in East Asia, had a profound global impact. Shattering the myth of European superiority, Japan demonstrated that Western ways and weapons could be used to defeat a Western imperial nation. Japan's victory thus gave hope to millions of Asians and Africans who had come under European rule. It also convinced the Japanese that military expansion was a good way to gain access to industrial resources. And it showed them that staging a surprise attack was a good way to fight a great power.

The End of the Chinese Empire

China, meanwhile, was belatedly trying to imitate Japan's modernization. Both to help her regime survive and to relieve the people's poverty, which she had witnessed during the Boxer War as she fled Beijing in a peasant cart, Empress Dowager Cixi at last agreed to allow reforms. From 1901 until 1908 her regime worked to replace the age-old Confucian civil service exams with a new Western-style education system and to create an imperial parliamentary system similar to those in Germany and Japan. After Li Hongzhang

died in 1901, she also provided his protégé, the ambitious Yuan Shikai, with the means to modernize China's military forces.

These reforms, designed to save the dynasty, may have hastened its end. Since the time of the Taiping rebellion, when regional leaders were allowed to form their own armies, some had led the "self-strengthening" movement and grown used to acting with considerable autonomy. Now that the regime, with its reforms, seemed to be trying to regain the initiative, regional leaders resisted. Even Yuan Shikai, rather than upgrading the entire Chinese army, focused on expanding and improving the forces directly loyal to him, making him a potential threat to the regime. Thus, after both Cixi and her nephew the emperor died in 1908, the regents of the new emperor, a three-year old boy called Puyi, forced Yuan Shikai to retire.

Chinese Revolution blends anti-Manchu fervor with Western ideologies

By this time a revolutionary movement, aimed at replacing the Qing regime with a parliamentary republic, was gaining support in China. The movement's main spokesman was Sun Yixian (*SUN Ē-shē-AHN*), also known abroad as Sun Yatsen (*YAHT-SEN*) and in China as Sun Zhongshan (*JONG-SHAHN*). A peasant from southern China, he had lived in Hawaii as a youth with his brother, become a Christian, and studied Western medicine in British Hong Kong. Blending anti-Manchu hatred of the "foreign" Qing regime with Western-style liberal and nationalist ideals, he had returned to China to press for political change. But his activism had upset the imperial authorities, and in 1896 he had fled abroad to avoid arrest. For the next 15 years he had traveled the world promoting a democratic Chinese revolution. Then, while in Denver, Colorado, in October 1911, he learned that a rebellion had begun in China.

The revolt started quite by chance. At Wuchang (*WOO-CHAHNG*), a provincial capital in central China (Map 29.7), a group of rebel conspirators were discovered by police after accidentally blowing up their own hideout with a bomb. On October 10, 1911, as the police began to round up the conspirators, those who were not immediately arrested seized a local weapons arsenal, prompting the regional governor to panic and flee. Large-scale riots soon broke out at various places in China, while disaffected regional leaders did little to aid the regime. In December, Sun Yixian returned and declared a Chinese revolutionary republic.

Revolt leads to end of Qing dynasty and creation of Chinese Republic

Meanwhile, in desperation, the young emperor's regents summoned Yuan Shikai from retirement, seeing him as the only one in China with the military skills and experience to restore order. But rather than crushing the rebels, Yuan negotiated with both them and the regents. As a result of these talks, the boy ruler Puyi formally abdicated his throne on February 12, 1912, and in March Yuan Shikai became president of a new Chinese Republic, conceived as a Western-style parliamentary regime. Sun Yixian emerged as the leader of its main political opposition party. China's celestial empire, having dominated East Asia for over two thousand years, thus came to an end.

Chapter Review

Putting It in Perspective

Before 1800, Asian peoples had few direct contacts with the Western world. Commercial connections were limited to places such as Nagasaki in Japan, Guangzhou in China, and various footholds established by the British East India Company in India and its Dutch counterpart in Indonesia. Most Asians were unaware that Westerners existed, and those Asians who did know about them tended to regard them as "barbarians," aliens from inferior cultures who came to Asia seeking to acquire some of the riches of Eastern civilizations.

In the nineteenth century, however, the dynamic changed. The Europeans, empowered by new technologies and weapons, extended their control over India, Indonesia, and much of Southeast Asia, while intruding extensively in China. By the century's end, most of southern Asia and much of eastern Asia had come under the direct or indirect influence of the Western powers. Of the major Asian nations, only Japan and Thailand escaped this fate, and they did so in part by adopting Western ideas and technologies.

Western incursions intensified the internal problems of many Asian societies, helping to subvert their traditional economies and values. China was ravaged by opium addiction, foreign wars, and disastrous internal rebellions. Japan was shaken by civil war and subjected to sweeping social changes. India was rocked by rebellion and transformed by British rule. Southeast Asia was colonized and exploited by France, while Indonesia was similarly exploited by the Dutch. By the early twentieth century, Asians were adapting some of the ways of the West, not only because these ways were imposed by Western imperialists but also because, as the Japanese showed, Asians could adapt Western ways to resist and defeat the West.

Reviewing Key Material

KEY CONCEPTS

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ASK YOURSELF

1. What factors and events contributed to China's instability from 1796 to 1864? How and why did the Qing dynasty survive?
2. How did India's commercial connections with Britain lead to India's subjugation? How did Indians respond? Why and how did British policies expedite Indian resistance to British rule?
3. What factors account for the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate and the Meiji Restoration in Japan? What factors account for the rise of Japanese imperialism under Meiji rule?
4. How did China and Japan respond to Western intrusions? Why was Japan more successful in its efforts than China? How did Western influence contribute to the end of the Chinese empire?
5. How did people in each key Asian country adapt Western ways and ideas to fit their Asian cultures and to resist or challenge Western influence and control?

GOING FURTHER

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Key Dates and Developments

1771–1802	Tay-Son Rebellion in Vietnam
1793	Macartney mission to China
1799	Dissolution of Dutch United East India Company
1839–1842	First Opium War
1850–1864	Taiping Rebellion in China
1853–1854	Perry's visits to Japan
1856–1860	Second Opium War
1857–1858	Indian Revolt
1859	French occupation of southern Vietnam
1860–1864	Tonghak Revolt in Korea
1868	Meiji Restoration in Japan
1876	Britain's Queen Victoria declared Empress of India
1877	Samurai Rebellion in Japan
1883–1885	Franco-Chinese War over Vietnam
1885	Formation of the Indian National Congress
1889	Japanese Constitution
1894–1895	Sino-Japanese War and Triple Intervention
1896–1899	Scramble for concessions in China
1899–1900	Open Door Policy
1900	Boxer Uprising in China
1902	Anglo-Japanese alliance
1904–1905	Russo-Japanese War
1911–1912	Chinese Revolution: End of Chinese Empire