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**TOPIC**

ANCIENT CHINESE DIPLOMACY

China gave birth to one of the four greatest ancient civilizations of the world and has a recorded history of about 4,000 years. In feudal times the Chinese created a civilization that led the world, but China lagged behind the West after the Industrial Revolution. In 1840 Britain launched the Opium War and forced open the door of China with its warships and cannons. After that, other Western powers such as France, Russia, Japan, Germany and the United States also invaded China successively, and as a result the country lost almost all of its national sovereignty. Statistics show that between 1840 and 1949, the imperialist powers had forced 1,175 unequal treaties on China. The history of China's diplomacy in that period of more than a century was full of humiliation.

Imperial China had a long tradition of foreign relations. From the Qin dynasty until the Qing dynasty, Chinese culture had influenced neighboring and distant countries, while gradually being transformed by outside influences as well.

In premodern times, the theory of foreign relations of China held that the Chinese Empire was the Celestial Dynasty, the center of world civilization, with the Emperor of China being the leader of the civilized world. This view saw China as equivalent to "all under heaven". All other states were considered to be tributaries, under the suzerain rule of China. Some were direct vassals. Theoretically, the lands around the imperial capital were regarded as "five zones of submission", - the circular areas differentiated according to the strength of the benevolent influence from the Son of Heaven.

There were several periods when Chinese foreign policy took on isolationist tones, because of the view that the rest of the world was poor and backward with little to offer.

Nevertheless, China was a center of trade from early on in its history. Many of China's interactions with the outside world came via the Silk Road. This included, during the 2nd century AD, contact with representatives of the Roman Empire, and during the 13th century, the visits of Venetian traveler Marco Polo. Chinese foreign policy was usually aimed at containing the threat of so-called "barbarian" invaders (such as the Xiongnu, Mongols, and Jurchen) from the north. This could be done by military means, such as an active offense (campaigns into the north) or a more passive defense (as exemplified by the Great Wall of China). The Chinese also arranged marriage alliances known as heqin, or "peace marriages."

Chinese officers distinguished between "matured/familiar barbarians" (foreigners influenced by Chinese culture) and "raw barbarians".

In many periods, Chinese foreign policy was especially assertive. One such case was exemplified by the treasure voyages of Admiral Zheng He during the Ming dynasty.

First Sino-Japanese War 1894-1985

Second Sino-Japanese War 1937-1945.

Diplomacy through dynasties & Period of disunity

Qin Dynasty

Although many kings of the Shang and Zhou dynasties ruled beforehand, in 221 BC, the ruler of the Qin state, Ying Zheng (Qin Shi Huang), was the first to conquer the different vassal states under the Zhou dynasty, as well as other non-sinicized states. He was able to transform these different states into a relatively unified and uniform empire, the Qin Empire. Under his leadership and a society modelled around strict adherence to legalist philosophy, his once backwater western frontier state conquered all of the rivaling Warring States in ancient China. The Chinese domain was also extended into Inner Mongolia and Manchuria to the north, and with naval expeditions sent to the south, the indigenous Baiyue of modern-day Guangdong and northern Vietnam were also quelled and brought under Chinese rule.

Han dynasty

* The first diplomatic contact between China and the West occurred with the expansion of the Roman Empire in the Middle-East during the 2nd century, the Romans gained the capability to develop shipping and trade in the Indian Ocean. The first group of people claiming to be an embassy of Romans to China is recorded in 166, sixty years after the expeditions to the west of the Chinese general Ban Chao.
* It came to Emperor Huan of Han China, "from Antun (Emperor Antoninus Pius), king of Daqin (Rome)". Although, as Antoninus Pius died in 161, leaving the empire to his adoptive son Marcus Aurelius (Antoninus), the convoy arrived in 166, and the both Emperor being "Antonius" the confusion arises about who sent the embassy.

Ming dynasty

* The Ming dynasty (1368–1644), after the Han and Tang dynasties, was another high point in Chinese power.
* The greatest diplomatic highlights of the Ming period were the enormous maritime tributary missions and expeditions of the admiral Zheng He (1371–1433), a favored court eunuch of the Yongle Emperor (r. 1402–1424).

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Adam Watson the evolution of international society.