

Chinese Lesson Plan

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Evaluating the Open Door Policy in China

Purpose: Analyze the motives for imperialism in China
Evaluate the validity of John Hay's Open Door Policy in China

Essential Questions:

1. How much influence and control did China have over its own territory?
2. What benefits did European power gain from trading with China?
3. Should one country have the right to dictate the actions of another country?

Rationale: To have students understand how the actions of one country can affect other countries

Materials: Hay's Circular Letter, September 6, 1899
Jay's Letter of Instruction, March 20, 1900
Roles Cards
Map – Imperialism in China

Activities: Introduction – Conduct a brain storming session of all the people in the lives of teenager who have power over them and discuss how these people control them

- Examples – parents, teachers, boyfriends/girlfriends, etc
- Types of control – money, grades, etc.

Group Work – Divide the class into 6 groups (each group will represent a country – Germany, Great Britain, Japan, Russia, China, and the United States)

- Explain that each group represents a “sphere of influence”
- Show map “Imperialism in China” - have groups locate their country's sphere of influence and locate the United States' sphere of influence
- Pass out and have each group read the handout “Spheres of Influence in China and the Open Door Policy” (omit group from China)
- Pass out and have each group read the handout “Hay's Circular Letter, September 6, 1899” (omit group from China)
- Pass out role cards for each group and have each group respond to the United States' policy
- Finally, have the United States' representative (John Hay) thank each group for its acceptance of the policy and announce the Open Door Policy in effect
- Pass out and have each group read “Jay's Letter of Instruction, March 20, 1900” (omit group from China)
- Each country should respond by writing a letter back to John Hay and the United States

Assessment: Each group will be assessed through their group work
Each group's letter back to the United States will be graded
Group discussion concerning the essential questions following the group work

Grade Adaptation: American history – grade 10

Modern world history – grade 9

Teacher can assume the role of the United States

Role Card
Germany

You do not favor the United State's plan for an Open Door Policy. In fact you do not feel the United States has any right to intervene in China. You have maintained your sphere of influence and you do not want to be told what to do. You are your own country and will do as you see fit.

Role Card
Great Britain

You are in favor of the Open Door Policy in China as it would protect everyone's best interest however, you think it will be difficult to enforce. Who will do the enforcement? What if another country does not follow the policy?

Role Card
Japan

You do not favor the United State's plan for an Open Door Policy. In fact you do not feel the United States has any right to intervene in China. You have maintained your sphere of influence and you do not want to be told what to do. You are your own country and will do as you see fit.

Role Card
Russia

You do not favor the United State's plan for an Open Door Policy. In fact you do not feel the United States has any right to intervene in China. You have maintained your sphere of influence and you do not want to be told what to do. You are your own country and will do as you see fit.

Role Card
China

You are confused about what is going on in your own country. You feel badly about having to accept what the foreign powers are forcing you to do. You want to expel **all** foreign powers from China.

Role Card
United States

You want the other countries to accept the Open Door Policy, but if they don't you will simply force it upon them as you feel that it will be best for everyone.

Spheres of Influence in China and the Open Door Policy

From a letter of John Hay to A.D. White (6 September, 1899)

Why was the United States concerned at Germany's new 'sphere of influence' in Shantung province?

Germany was the first power obtaining a leased territory on the coast of China in 1898, and similar actions were taken subsequently by the other great powers of Europe and Japan. The United States, which had not claimed its sphere, was worried that its rights and privileges insured by previous treaties with China would be impaired within these new leased territories and spheres of influence. Once the other great powers closed their spheres of influence off to American trade, the most-favoured-nation status of the United States would be threatened immediately. Moreover, the scramble for concessions would arise serious conflicts of interest among the great powers, and the interests of the Americans might be jeopardized as well. As a result, the United States promoted the Open Door Policy to ensure the equal trading opportunities and to alleviate international tensions.

Why were the Western powers so interested in opening treaty ports in China?

Western powers were willing to open treaty ports either by diplomatic means or by armed force because they could obtain huge profits from these places. Economically, the treaty ports served as profitable markets for raw materials and Western goods. Concessions for Western settlements were permitted to set up only in treaty ports, and within these areas, Westerners were granted 'unequal' privileges such as local administrative rights, missionary rights, extraterritorial jurisdiction, redemption on tax and tariff, etc. In the leased territories and spheres of influence, the rights of railway construction and mining were also granted. In leased territories, the powers could even build their naval bases and military fortresses for defence. So, it was the huge profits obtained that led to the opening of treaty ports in China.

What were the 'vested interests' of the United States in China at this time?

The interests of the United States in China were granted mainly through the recognition of a series of Sino-American treaties, and the most profitable interest was trade. Though the American trade with China was small as compared to other great powers, the United States enjoyed a favoured nation status, which guaranteed its free trade and equal opportunity. American goods were charged the same tariff at any treaty ports as other powers. American vessels were permitted free rights of navigation in coastal ports and inner waters, and the same harbour dues were levied at any port. Apart from trade, the United States was also granted missionary rights, extraterritorial jurisdiction, and a concession in Shanghai.

What benefits was China likely to receive from this Open Door Policy?

China was saved from partition due to the application of balance-of-power strategy in the Open Door Policy. The ambitions of the great powers were checked among themselves and the Western gunboat foreign policy of the mid-nineteenth century was replaced by a collective diplomacy. It was this new diplomacy that saved China from partition during the scramble for concessions and the Boxer uprising. Moreover, the territorial integrity and the independence of China were guaranteed by the great powers in the second Open Door Note in 1900. Besides, China was given the right to collect tariffs of all nationalities in all treaty ports and leased territories. China was also aided to improve its civil administration. But on the whole, the Open Door Policy was aimed to preserve the free trade of the Americans, it was not primarily targeted to prevent or protect China from further invasions.

What other sorts of documents would you use to assess the support of other nations for Hay's Open Door Policy?

Concerning the first response, since the Open Door Policy was issued in open note form, the responses were usually replied in the form of open declarations or diplomatic notes sent directly to the ambassador of the United States or to the Secretary of States in Washington. Apart from diplomatic documents, other sources such as foreign policy addresses and letters between diplomats could be used to assess the attitude of the great powers. Moreover, the history sources and documents related to upcoming events also assessed their support for the Policy.

What Chinese documents could you use in order to gauge Chinese opinions about the Open Door Policy?

Imperial edicts of the Qing court were the primary official sources. The diaries or memorials of senior officers and both official and private letters between Chinese officers and foreign legations were secondary official sources. Newspapers and individual criticisms could be considered as non-governmental sources. History essays and arguments were historical documents that revealed Chinese opinions on the issue.

HAY'S CIRCULAR LETTER, September 6, 1899

MR. HAY TO MR. WHITE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE:

WASHINGTON, September 6, 1899.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I have, etc. JOHN HAY.

JAY'S LETTER OF INSTRUCTION, March 20, 1900

[Sent to various U.S embassies overseas.]

Department of State,

Washington, March 20, 1900.

SIR: The _____ Government having accepted the declaration suggested by the United States concerning foreign trade in China, the terms of which I transmitted to you in my instruction No. _____ of _____, and like action having been taken by all the various powers having leased territory or so-called "spheres Of interest" in the Chinese Empire, as shown by the notes which I herewith transmit to you, you will please inform the government to which you are accredited, that the condition originally attached to its acceptance that all other powers concerned should likewise accept the proposals of the United States—having been complied with, this Government will therefore consider the assent given to it by—as final and definitive.

You will also transmit to the minister of foreign affairs copies of the present enclosures, and by the same occasion convey to him the expression of the sincere gratification which the President feels at the successful termination of these negotiations, in which he sees proof of the friendly spirit which animates the various powers interested in the untrammelled development of commerce and industry in the Chinese Empire and a source of vast benefit to the whole commercial world.

I am, etc., JOHN HAY.

Map of Imperialism in China

