



FCMUN VIII

At Mount Holyoke College

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Welcome Letter

Delegates,

Welcome to FCMUN's Taiping Rebellion committee, I am Julian del Prado, a Junior history and political science double major at UMass Amherst and I will be serving as the crisis director for this committee. I did not start Model United Nations until I came to UMass in 2012, but have been involved ever since. I have attended PICSIM at Princeton and NCSC in Washington, D.C. at Georgetown as a delegate, and served as crisis director for the Game of Thrones Committee here at FCMUN last year. As someone who has spent the bulk of their primary major studying China, I am very excited to make the Taiping Rebellion a MUN Committee. So prepare yourselves for rebellion on the grandest of scales, with challenges of the same caliber, and I wish you all the best of luck!

Best,
Julian del Parodo

History

This committee will take the form of a Qing emperor and his counselors, beginning with a highly centralized government and ending with a more fragmented government where provinces have a vastly increased presence. As such, the first third of the committee will feature several Confucian officials tasked with overseeing particular facets of the economy and empire as a whole. This will include an adviser on foreign affairs, a Manchu adviser to represent Northern interests, an adviser on the military, an adviser on the navy, along with others. With the rise of the Taiping in the south and the Nien in the North, such a system will eventually be deemed infeasible by the emperor as generals like Zeng Guofan make gains independent of the committee. At this point, delegates will take on the role of state actors through representatives of generals like Guofan himself along with Zuo Zongtang and Li Hongzhang. In short, the committee will be focused primarily on garnering foreign support and bolstering the shattered

infrastructure of the Qing in the first half of the committee, while military strategy defines the second half.

Background information

Beginning in 1850, the Taiping Rebellion was a massive surge of peasant forces which shook Qing Dynasty China to its core and almost lead to China's dissolution as a nation. This civil war started with Hong Xiuquan, an overstressed student who was attempting to pass the civil service examinations of the time in order to become part of the Qing bureaucracy. Policies implemented hundreds of years earlier in Qing history led to a highly exclusive bureaucracy, and Hong was doomed from the start due to the astronomical chances of gaining entrance to even the most basic of dynastic institutions. Born and raised amid poverty and desolation in Southern China, driven delirious by panic attacks, and inspired by Western missionaries, Hong created the Heavenly Kingdom of the Taiping. The Taipings were characterized by their evangelical Christianity, vast numbers, and extreme poverty. Most importantly, the Taiping were exceedingly fast. By 1853, the entirety of Southern China was overwhelmed and the Heavenly Kingdom of the Taiping began to attempt gathering foreign support from Christian Western powers as a competing dynasty. This came in the midst of the Nien Rebellion in Northern China, where economic despair, flooding, and infanticide created an enraged and eventually well-trained population of fighters against the Qing. Ultimately, the Qing Dynasty was unable to cope alone. The centralized Qing were not able to address threats quickly and effectively, and it was only saved by provincial leaders and foreign intervention. This began in Hunan province, where Zeng Guofan implemented sweeping military reforms in order to more effectively deal with the threat. Rather than using the law of removal (officials cannot be from the province they work in), Zeng created a military hierarchy based on loyalty to your commander that went up all the way to Zeng himself. Rallying behind anti-western sentiment and Hunanese loyalty, this proved highly effective when Hunan became the first province to successfully deflect a Taiping invasion in 1851. By special decree, Zeng Guofan, Zuo Zongtang, and Li Hongzhang were given sweeping

were given sweeping liberties in creating volunteer provincial armies. These armies formed the backbone of the suppression of the Taiping, while foreign training sealed the southern Dynasty's fate. However, China required some foreign support to completely shake the Rebellion. Fredrick Townsend Ward, an American, worked with Li Hongzhang to train 5,000 shock troops as Western-style soldiers. This “Ever-Victorious Army” proved instrumental in sending the Taiping running from their strongholds, and ultimately sealed their fate. This committee will be formed at the outbreak of the Taiping and Nien Rebellions, as imperial advisers attempt to use and change woefully inadequate infrastructure as a tool against hordes of peasant fighters. Upon the deflection of the Taiping from Changsha in Hunan province, some of these advisers will cede power to the leaders of provincial forces and foreign advisers.

Characters

‘DISCLAIMER: Many of these positions are approximations of imperial advisers. There were dozens of mandarins, officials in the upper reaches of government, who contributed military and economic strategies but who remain nameless in the history books. I have opted not to give them random or generic names, because I think that the transition from advisers to generals during the committee should be marked by a transition from nameless to named leaders in the government, as it was during the actual event.

1. **The Xianfeng Emperor** is the chair of the committee. He reigned from 1850 until 1861. Once the Summer Palaces are burned in the Second Opium War (which will be a brief incident for this committee) he will be replaced with Empress Dowager Cixi.
2. **Adviser on Eight Banners Strategy**: This adviser will have control over the Eight Banners Army. This army is comprised of 250,000 elite soldiers organized according to ethnicity and region. The Eight Banners was a remnant of the Manchu armies which invaded China and established the Qing Dynasty and became a salaried, bureaucratized body by the time of the Taiping Rebellion. With Western military training becoming the norm in Japan, and Western colonial powers accelerating



their growth, the Eight Banners was large but ultimately obsolete before it was disbanded. As the hand of the emperor, it is the job of this adviser to identify problems within the structure of the Eight Banners, and devise ways of using the emperor's most trusted army efficiently against the Taiping. This army will be unique in its ability to act in any province, but be warned; as a mostly-Manchu army, the ethnic makeup of the province in which they are mobilized will matter a great deal.

3 Adviser on Green Banner Strategy: The Green Banner Army was the largest, by far, of China's armies during the Taiping Rebellion. However, it was also the least efficient. Although the Eight Banners ran on a rather antiquated training regiment, it was still a well-organized force. This is not true of the 610,000 Green Standard soldiers. With poor training and a generally impoverished, uneducated roster, the Green Standard Army was prone to disloyalty and rebellion wherever famine and unpaid salaries became too much for its soldiers to bear. As such, the Taiping Rebellion forced the Qing to reassess the use of these soldiers and their impact on the battlefield. Overzealous and concentrated use of the army (that is, sending hundreds of thousands of troops to one location) led to massive civilian casualties, and further starvation in a time when famine was widespread. Scorched Earth did eventually win out against the Taiping, but was responsible for many of the 20 million (or more) deaths the Taiping Rebellion incurred. In short, the easy way is to destroy all Taiping-occupied villages; the right way is to re-purpose the Green Banner Armies for rebuilding provinces most affected by the Rebellion.

4 Imperial Envoy: This adviser will be the Qing's voice in Shanghai, where the representatives of Western powers made their home. The Imperial Envoy will do correspondence by letter with the British, the French, and the Germans, and is chiefly responsible for negotiating with representatives that exist outside of the committee. The emperor will only hear that which the envoy repeats, and so it is also the responsibility of the envoy to judge whether statements made by foreigners would be detrimental to the war effort due to the emperor's personal sensibilities. The Qing struggled to gain support from foreign powers during the Taiping Rebellion, as the splitting of China in two caused them to regard it as a civil war. Ultimately, while the Taiping and the Qing both vied for the support of Western powers, the Qing managed to gain this valuable asset because the West was wary of an empire it had never known before. The envoy should use this to their advantage, and citing past successes between the Qing and Western powers is their greatest tool. Unfortunately, the history of the Qing and the West is rather tumultuous, with the First Opium War more or less defining their relationship.

5 Adviser on Agriculture and Famine: The aftermath of the First Opium War left Southern China impoverished, while natural disasters in the North of China caused widespread and severe anti-Qing sentiment. Criminal gangs and cults proved better protection against crime and starvation than the government, and corruption was rampant among low-level officials. This was the foundation of the Taiping Rebellion in the South of China, and the Nian Rebellion in the North. For the Adviser on Agriculture and Famine, the destruction of China's populace is of the utmost concern. Without a reliable source of constant labor, it was impossible to feed China's massive population, which exacerbated the already brutal realities in China's villages. Redistributing food within China is the unique responsibility of the Adviser on Agriculture and Famine, and they alone will receive updated maps on the location and severity of famines within the Empire. Using this data, the Adviser on Agriculture and Famine can help the emperor and others make informed decisions without killing millions of peasants.

6 Adviser on Economy: Due to the massive costs incurred from the Opium War, and various punishing concessions demanded by Western powers, the Qing Dynasty was in a massive amount of debt. As such, the Adviser on Economy will be chiefly responsible for reigning in the ambitions of the Emperor and his court. Only the Adviser on Economy will have access to the Qing Dynasty's coffers, and they will be given updates on China's finances as the committee goes along. For maximum effectiveness, the Adviser on Economy will work closely with other advisers to create an affordable plan of attack against the Taiping. Additionally, the adviser on Economy has access to the gentry in Beijing, and therefore throughout the country. By lobbying these powerful merchants and scholars, the Adviser on Economy may bring about provincial changes even if they fail to single-handedly drag the empire out of its massive debt.

7 Adviser on Morals: The First Opium War saw Western powers completely disregarding the moral values put in place by the Qing government. Namely, opium was illegal and drug use considered immoral, though this did not stop Western powers from allowing the drug to enter China for profit. The Adviser on Morals is faced with tackling drug use in China, along with regulating customs and traditions in Qing-occupied territory. While this may not seem especially significant, everything from clothing to hairstyle separated rebels from Qing subjects, and the proper implementation of moral policy will determine the number of avoidable civilian casualties in this war. For example, the mandated haircut of the Qing, the queue, was outlawed in Taiping territories. As a result, many civilians who were forcibly shaved under threat of death would be terminated as soon as Qing Dynasty armies appeared in their municipalities. The Adviser on Morals will receive a list of practices imposed by both the Taiping and the Qing, and will be able to propose modifications to the Qing practices. The goal of such modifications is to soften the severity of military incursions while maximizing loyalty among Qing subjects. An effective Adviser on Morals will work closely with generals and military advisers to avoid an unnecessary reduction in China's peasant workforce.

8 Zeng Guofan, Special Representative of Hunan Province: After recovering the capital of Hunan, Changsha, from the Taiping in an unprecedented victory, Zeng Guofan was made Viceroy of Liangjiang in order to rid the three provinces therein (Anhui, Jiangxi, and Jiangsu) of the Taiping. Zeng will have control of a new kind of army: the Xiang, or Hunan, Army. This force was comprised of 70,000 soldiers, divided by clan or village, who were all directly connected to Zeng himself through personal loyalties all the way up the line. In other words, this army was more loyal and anti-foreign than any other. As one of the three generals who were given credit for defeating the Taiping, Zeng Guofan will be responsible for coordinating with the other two generals in creating an effective military strategy against the Taiping. Additionally, Zeng will be responsible for coordinating with the Eight Banners and Green Standard Armies to ensure that these inadequately trained groups do not ruin provincial campaigns. Zeng alone will be given a roster of the Xiang Army, and will be allowed to privately correspond with his troops without interference from the Xianfeng Emperor. Zeng will be limited to Hunan province and provinces in the immediate vicinity of Hunan.

9 Li Hongzhang: Formerly a student of Zeng Guofan, Li Hongzhang became leader of the Huai Army, the Anhui equivalent of the Xiang Army. The Huai comprised 70,000 soldiers, trained and outfitted with modern weapons in a similar fashion to the Xiang Army. Additionally, these soldiers shared the paternalistic structure of the Xiang Army which led to increased loyalty and effectiveness. By working with Zeng Guofan and Zuo Zongtang, Li will have to coordinate to create a provincial offensive against the Taiping while more traditional advisers work on defending existing Qing territory. Similar to Zeng Guofan, Li Hongzhang will be limited to Anhui province and the immediate vicinity.

10. **A Note on the Generals:** Ultimately, while the powers of the two generals are similar, and will all begin in Hunan, their responsibilities will vary greatly once they are mobilized to the East in order to counter the Nanjing government there. An effective general will maintain consistent communication with the other two generals, coordinating attacks that are smaller but far more likely to succeed against rebel-held areas. It will also be the responsibility of the two generals to coordinate with imperial advisers and ensure that they do not simply destroy any peasants in their way. Defeating the Taiping is highly possible; the challenge lies in reducing collateral damage in one of human history's deadliest wars.

11. **Adviser on Suppression and Rebellion:** As chief adviser on suppression and rebellion to the emperor, intelligence is your quintessential tool in stopping the Taiping. This adviser will be able to place covert imperial agents anywhere within Qing territory, as long as that area has at least a tangential degree of imperial governance. Any actions by the Taiping committee which overlap these agents will be directly reported to the adviser on suppression and rebellion, making the placement of these agents (of which there is a limited number) vital to any Qing operations. Additionally, this adviser will have the ability to correspond with foreign powers as long as the subject of inquiry is intelligence. This is not to say that foreign powers will hand over intelligence willingly every time, but dilligent diplomacy on the part of the entire committee can drastically increase the intelligence capabilities of the adviser on suppression and rebellion



Possible Crises:

1. **Foreigners and the Second Opium War:** At the outset of the Taiping Rebellion, foreign powers had enclaves throughout China and were influential (to the chagrin of the Qing) in Chinese policy. Without their support, the Taiping Rebellion may have ended in a Qing defeat, and without the First Opium War the Rebellion may have never broken out. This committee will have to find a balance between conceding to foreign powers for the sake of victory and becoming a giant melon to be carved up after the war. The Second Opium War, which started in 1856, will be a part of the committee depending on whether China spurns the British in their attempts to legalize opium, or finds some kind of meaningful compromise.

2. **The Nian Rebellion (1851-1868):** Widespread famine as a result of natural disasters in Northern China quickly metastasized into the Nian Rebellion when the Yellow River flooded without any effective aid from the Qing. Made up of criminal gangs and various sectarian cults, the Nian were anti-Qing but held no particular agenda. Whether the Nian poses a significant enough threat to warrant action will be a major question for the committee, as they run the risk of spreading themselves too thin while fighting the Taiping. Coordination among members will be the key to reducing the threat posed by the Nian Rebellion, as the Taiping grow stronger and stronger. It is also possible that effective disaster prevention and aid will prevent the rebellion in the first place, giving the Qing an advantage against the Taiping that could change the entire logistics of the war.

3. **Collateral Damage:** With a huge peasant population that proved to be loyal only to their own lives and well-being, territories occupied by the Taiping were often purged by a Scorched Earth policy. "Dissenters" would be identified by their shaved heads, a sign of Taiping occupation, and famine became widespread and severe. Insurgencies by actual Taiping followers made it difficult to know whether an area had been truly occupied, and their crude weaponry and numbers allowed them to reassemble almost on a moment's notice. As such, it will always be possible to wipe out the Taiping entirely. However, setting the stage for China's future in a prudent way will require the committee to rethink military and humanitarian strategies in order to preserve the greatest proportion of the populous.

4. **Training and Military:** A great deal of this committee will be focused on military strategy. Reading maps will feature greatly into the Emperor's grand strategy. With multiple armies of varying skill and size, it will be up to the committee to effectively use its vast manpower to re stabilize China. This will rely on open communications between committee members, and an awareness of the limitations that burden each army. The ultimate goal will be to achieve Qing supremacy in all of China, with a secondary goal of preserving human life. However, this second goal can help accelerate the first, and it will prove wise to come up with creative solutions to reducing collateral damage.

5. **The Economy:** The Qing found itself at one of its poorest moments when the Taiping Rebellion broke out. Faced with multiple demands and offers from foreign powers, the Qing were often unable to negotiate effectively. The result was that the Qing was weaker than ever at the end of the war, making it the precursor to an era of warlords that would follow the fall of the Qing. The committee will be forced to weigh sacrifices against the rewards given by foreign powers and domestic merchants and gentry. This will require diligent diplomacy by multiple members with non-committee characters, and an awareness of China's history with foreign powers. For example, while trade agreements with England may prove advantageous in the short-term, they may lead to unexpected and devastating results in the age of imperialism. Taking money from merchants and gentry poses its own risks, as they represent the interests of merchant elitism and Confucianism, respectively. Therefore, attention should be paid to the leanings of each region (given to the Adviser on Morals) before deciding on financing.

Parliamentary Procedure:

This committee will reflect the slow pace of Chinese bureaucracy during the Taiping Rebellion, but will otherwise follow standard parliamentary procedures for Model UN. There are two exceptions to this. Firstly, directives will be referred to as edicts, and will be issued in the emperors name (although delegates will still sign directives if they contributed appropriately). Additionally, each new crisis will be followed by an automatic unmoderated caucus, during which the advisers can subdivide into appropriate groups (detailed in the description of each role) for creating policy. **NO EDICTS MAY BE PROPOSED AT THIS TIME, THOUGH THEY MAY BE WRITTEN.** At the end of the unmoderated caucus, each adviser will give their personal opinion of the situation based on their role. After these sessions, the advisers may decide whether to propose directives or enter moderated caucus according to the Emperor's discretion and standard Model UN procedure (most chaotic proposals are voted on first).

List of Resources:

Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom – Stephen Platt

Provincial Patriots – Stephen Platt

God's Chinese Son – Jonathan Spence

The History of the Taiping Rebellion – Augustus Lindley

