

# Boxer Rebellion as a Turning Point (1900-1901)

## Introduction

Turning Point: Event that changed the course of China's history irrevocably and precipitated more changes than continuities

Political	<p><b>Topic Sentence</b></p> <p>While the Boxer Rebellion finally convinced the Qing government to undertake significant reforms, it not a turning point as it merely accelerated the Qing's decline into political moribundity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prior to 1901, the Qing government was virulently averse to change, especially from conservative Manchus such as Express Dowager Cixi</li><li>• Opposition by the clique of conservatives had repeatedly led to the failure of attempts to modernise the nation, such as the Self-Strengthening Movement from 1861-94 and the Hundred Days Reforms of 1898</li><li>• Following the Boxer Rebellion and Protocol, many of the conservative elements in the court had been removed or executed, which turned it in the direction of reform</li><li>• Moreover, the failure of armed resistance to foreign imperialism, as well as the need to restore the legitimacy of the Court, finally convinced Cixi and other reactionaries of the need to adopt the Late Qing Reforms to revitalise the ailing Manchu dynasty</li><li>• <b>Mary Wright:</b> The Boxer Rebellion made it clear of the need to undergo reform or result in national disintegration</li><li>• During the Late Qing Reforms, Cixi announced her conversion to constitutionalism, setting forth a nine-year calendar of tutelage</li><li>• Provincial assemblies would be set up in 1909 and a provisional national assembly in 1910</li><li>• In 1901, Cixi also abolished the "eight-legged essay" and established national school system</li><li>• However, all powers were still vested in the Emperor and the assemblies were only advisory bodies</li><li>• This represented a continuation of the Qing's political power in China</li><li>• Moreover, this was not the first time the Qing dynasty implemented reform</li></ul> <p><u>Warlordism</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In addition, the Boxer Rebellion merely exacerbated the decentralisation of power of the Qing and the growth of regionalism, which became a precursor to the warlord period</li><li>• By the end of the Self-Strengthening Movement in 1894, there was a clear divide between the central Qing government and provincial leaders</li><li>• There was a lack of coordination in modernisation efforts among provincial leaders, who undertook reforms only within the confines of their provinces</li><li>• Strengthened the tendency for regionalism</li><li>• During the Boxer Rebellion, power provincial leaders such as Li Hongzhang, Zhang Zhidong and Yuan Shikai ignored Cixi's declaration of war on foreign imperialist powers, and even protected them while under siege</li><li>• Moreover, the Qing court fled from Beijing and left the negotiation and signing of the Boxer Protocol to provincial leaders, thus according them greater political power and</li></ul>
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	<p>indicating the declining authority of the Qing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would foreshadow the chaotic warlord era</li> <li>• However, this was not the first time whereby provincial authorities such as Li Hongzhang and Yuan Shikai acted independently and were not loyal towards the Qing Emperor</li> <li>• Li Hongzhang was responsibly for signing the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895, while Yuan betrayed Emperor Guangxu during the Hundred Days Reforms</li> <li>• Moreover, warlordism could be traced due to the direct actions of Yuan Shikai rather than the decentralization of power</li> </ul>
<b>International</b>	<p><b>Topic Sentence</b> The Boxer Rebellion greatly humiliated China and marked a nadir in its international position, however China's prestige had already been on the decline since the Opium Wars</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Boxer Protocol signed by 12 foreign powers infringed tremendously on its sovereignty and left it unable to assert its influence in the face of foreign humiliation</li> <li>• The Western powers insisted on the destruction of the Dagu forts, stationing of foreign troops in Beijing and the punishment and exile of high officials who had participated in the rebellion such as Prince Chun</li> <li>• Moreover, the entire elite class of would-be officials were punished by suspending the civil service examination for 5 years in 45 cities, greatly humiliating the gentry-bureaucrats</li> <li>• China was also forced to pay an indemnity of 450 million taels</li> <li>• Represented the complete erosion of the Qing's authority in the international arena</li> <li>• However, this was not the first time China had signed humiliating treaties with foreign powers</li> <li>• During the Opium Wars in the 1840s, China was forced into signing the unequal treaties and subordinate its interests to those of Britain and other Western powers including France, Germany and USA</li> <li>• Other treaties included the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki following China's defeat during the Sino-Japanese War, with China being forced to pay an indemnity of 200 million taels and territorial concessions</li> </ul>
<b>Economic</b>	<p><b>Topic Sentence</b> Economically, the Boxer Rebellion was an enormous price to pay for China, however it was not a turning point.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apart from the human and infrastructural costs inflicted upon China by the Boxers and the foreign powers, the Qing government was forced to pay reparations of 450 million taels to the Western powers under the Boxer Protocol, which hampered its ability to progress economically</li> <li>• Factoring interest rates, the total indemnity amounted to 1 billion taels, a sum truly staggering since annual government revenue was only 250 million taels</li> <li>• Greatly incapacitated the Qing's ability to develop a modern economy as valuable revenue was used for the repayment of foreign debt</li> <li>• While significant, it was not a new phenomenon as China had been forced to pay massive indemnities to the Western powers previously under the unequal treaties such as the Treaty of Tianjin and Treaty of Nanjing</li> <li>• China was arguably already in an economic crisis since the Taiping era</li> <li>• Therefore from an economic perspective, it was not a turning point</li> </ul>

<p><b>Social</b></p>	<p><b>Topic Sentence</b> For society, the Boxer Rebellion was responsible for the growth of anti-Manchu nationalism and revolutionary activities, which would precipitate the downfall of the Qing during the 1911 Revolution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a result of the Boxer Rebellion, the widespread upsurge of anti-foreign nationalism was transformed into anti-Qing nationalism</li> <li>• Having failed to resist the foreign imperialists by force, many began to concentrate the blame on the Manchus for their inability to defend and rule China</li> <li>• China's humiliation under the Boxer Protocol, as well as the Qing court's inept leadership during the rebellion, intensified disillusionment with the regime and accelerated demands for reform and revolution</li> <li>• <b>Mary Wright:</b> Many Chinese saw no hope in the Qing court and turned to revolution as the only hope for their country</li> <li>• As the first large-scale national movement against the West, the Boxer Movement seemed to indicate the potential of harnessing masses of people for national objectives and the power of ordinary citizens to bring about change</li> <li>• It was in this atmosphere of discontent and resentment of the Qing that Sun Yixian's revolutionary activities began to gain increasing sympathy and support</li> <li>• Eventually foreshadowing the 1911 Revolution, which resulted in the fall of the Manchus and the establishment of the Republic of China</li> <li>• However, it must be noted that anti-Qing feelings had already existed in China pre-1900, such as the Taiping Rebellion of 1854-64 whereby frustration from the Han Chinese was directed against the Qing</li> <li>• Sun Yixian had established the Revive China Society in 1895, which aim was to "expel the Manchus, restore the Chinese rule, and establish a federal republic"</li> <li>• In addition, the Boxer Movement was limited to northern China and other parts of the country were uninvolved in the Rebellion</li> <li>• Most women and children did not participate; thus the Boxer Rebellion was not an encompassing social movement</li> <li>• Hence, socially it was not a turning point</li> </ul>
<p><b>Rise of Japan and the Intensification of International Rivalry (consequences for the region)</b></p>	<p><b>Topic Sentence</b> The Boxer Rebellion raised Japan's international prestige, and increased international rivalry in East Asia, which ultimately led to the Russo-Japanese War from 1904-1905.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Japan's international position was greatly elevated during the Boxer Rebellion</li> <li>• Sent 10,000 troops to China to join the multinational force to quash the Movement; was the largest single national contingent</li> <li>• Was treated as an equal to the Western powers and led the peacekeeping force in Beijing</li> <li>• As the balance of power shifted towards Japan, Britain saw Japan as a useful ally against her traditional rival, Russia</li> <li>• Led to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902, which bound Britain and Japan to assist one another in safeguarding their interests in East Asia</li> <li>• With a colony in Taiwan, troops in Beijing, and an alliance with the British, Japan had secured a place as one of Asia's imperial powers</li> <li>• Japan's status as a regional power only served to heighten the imperial rivalry between Russia and Japan over Manchuria</li> <li>• Russia's refusal to withdraw its troops in Manchuria on the pretext of protecting the</li> </ul>

	<p>region from Boxer disorder was one of the reasons for the Russo-Japanese War from 1904-1905</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Japan's victory assured its dominance over North and East Asia, and eventually prompted it to annex Korea in 1910</li></ul>
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