

Nature of the Tongzhi Restoration and Self-Strengthening Movement (1861-1894)

Topic

- Aims of Tongzhi Restoration and Self-Strengthening Movement: Revive the weakened Qing government and strengthen the empire against internal and external threats
- Modernise: The effective adoption of political, economic, social and military structures and systems of other modern states, particularly those in the West
- Final litmus test of China's failure to modernise: Sound defeat during the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895)

Political

Political system

- China's political system saw no significant reform; Qing government continued to rule over China
- **Hsu:** The reforms during the SSM merely served to strengthen the existing order rather than replace it
- However, the SSM served to accelerate the devolution of power away from the central government to the provincial officials
- Lack of a strong central government to coordinate the modernisation movement meant that provincial officials were responsible for China's development; gained increasing political clout
- Resumed imperial examinations and emphasised Confucian values

Zongli Yamen

- Prince Gong established the *Zongli Yamen* in 1861; served as a de facto foreign ministry to promote modern reforms; first of its kind
- Was criticised as slow; waned in influence after Prince Gong's decline in 1870

Socio-Economic

Tongwenguan

- Established the *Tongwenguan* in Beijing in 1862 for the teaching of foreign languages
- Similar institutions were started in Shanghai, Guangzhou and Fuzhou
- Marked the beginning of Western education in China

Agriculture

- Devastated agriculture areas were rehabilitated
- Agricultural taxes were reduced or remitted
- However, no reforms were implemented; peasants plagued with problems of massive overpopulation, landlordism and tenancy issues

Industry

- Industrial development mostly occurred on a provincial level due to the lack of coordination among reformers
- Li Hongzhang, Zuo Zongtang and Zhang Zhidong **launched** efforts to modernise their respective provinces through the *guandu shangban* enterprises
- Li Hongzhang founded the China Merchants' Steam Navigation Company in 1872 to compete with foreign shipping
- Company was mismanaged under Sheng Xuanhai; eventually lost out to Western steamship lines
- Also opened up the Kaiping Coal Mines in 1877 and the Shanghai Cotton Cloth Mill in 1878
- In 1883 coal production reached 75,000 tonnes and was rising rapidly
- The Mill produced 4 million yards of cloth in 1892
- However, the Coal Mine was plagued with the

Military

- Focused on development of military technology and modern weapons during the 1st period of SSM from 1861-72, and naval build-up during the 3rd period from 1885-95
- Seen in arsenal developments and modern dockyards; enabled China to produce armaments to emulate those produced by the West
- Li Hongzhang and Zeng Guofan built the Jiangnan arsenal in 1865 and the Tianjin arsenal in 1867
- Made breech-loading rifles; were costly and the Anwei army refused to use them
- Produced steamships which incorporated Western technology; was costly and slow
- Fuzhou dockyard was established by Zuo Zongtang in 1886
- Launched 15 ships by 1874; were costly and technologically obsolete
- Failed to modernise China's military; seen in its defeat during the First Sino-Japanese War

	problem of transportation; later fell into debt and taken over by foreigners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mill was destroyed by fire in 1892 	
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Successes

- However, to assert that the China's attempts at modernisation had failed in their entirety as a result of its defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War is inaccurate
- According to **Hsu**, Self-Strengthening had marked the beginning of industrialisation and sowed the seeds of modern capitalism in China
- For example, western technology such as electric lighting was introduced successfully in the Kaiping Coal Mines
- The Imperial Chinese Railway Administration, while hampered by geomantic considerations and shortage of capital, had managed to complete 270 miles of railway lines by 1897
- **Thomas L. Kennedy** argued that while the Jiangnan arsenal failed to achieve its primary aim of ridding China of foreign influence, the introduction of the steam engine and use of machine tools provided the technological infrastructure upon which China's light industry would develop
- The growth of industries and enterprises also contributed to the rise of a new working class and entrepreneurial class in China
- Thus, although China had failed to create a modern state by 1895, it does not mean that all its modernisation efforts had come to naught