Module 6 Lecture

China

China emerged from the Second World War with some serious issues.  First, it had suffered through the war.  Remember, the Japanese invaded China in 1937. Secondly, it had already been fighting a Civil War for many years. From 1912 until the Japanese invaded in 1937, China had been suffering with a good deal of internal strife. Once the Emperor had been deposed, China had been trying to create a cohesive state. However, due to the ravages of Colonialism and poor governmental policies for about 100 years, instead of segueing into a western style democracy such as Japan (Dr. Sun Yat Sen’s dream), there was a corrupt **crony capitalism** with a somewhat democratic leadership, that had to deal with extreme poverty, and regional warlords.

Mao Zedong & Joseph Stalin

While trying to make order out of this chaos, this government was then presented with a growing Communist party threat.  Under the leadership of Mao Zedong, the Chinese Communists were a new breed.  Mocked by the Russians because even Stalin believed that you couldn’t have a communist revolution in such a poor, peasant, non-industrial society, Mao was undeterred and began a decades-long campaign to “win the hearts and minds of the people” – mostly the peasants. This was the beginning of what we now call **4th generation warfare** (guerrilla warfare, small bands attacking targets, terrorism). Mao befriended villages, won their hearts, attacked the Chinese Nationalists and then disappeared into the villages. This “war” went on for about 10 years until the Japanese invaded – in fact, it was one reason that the Japanese were able to attack China so successfully.

During the Second World War, the Communists and the Nationalists made an uneasy truce called the **United Front**. The idea was to team up to defeat the Japanese and then figure out the government. Mao greatly benefited from this truce. He managed to get the Nationalists to stop attacking him, and to concentrate on the Japanese. Meanwhile, he spent very little effort at attacking the Japanese but continued building up his strength and winning over new converts. Thus by 1945, when the Japanese were defeated, Mao was in a very strong position from a large majority of popular support.

History and Geography

China is one of the oldest civilizations on earth. The land area is roughly equivalent to the U.S, but there are about 1.4 billion residents. It is bordered on the north with Mongolia and Russia (the Soviet Union during almost all of the Twentieth Century), on the west with India, Nepal and Myanmar (Burma), on the south-west with Vietnam, Laos, on the south with the China Sea and the Philippines and Taiwan in the China Sea, on the Northeast with Korea, on the east with the East China Sea and Yellow Sea with Japan in the Yellow Sea (across from Korea).

Economically, China was the engine that drove world growth at least until the 17th century. Many historians believe that the strength of the Chinese economy lasted until the second industrial revolution in England. The steam engine and the improved weapons and navies of the early 19th century were the real threat to the growth of the Chinese economy.

Keep this in Mind

What were the early European explorers searching for? They were looking for spices from India and Indonesia and goods made in China, such as porcelain (even today good porcelain is called “China”) and silk.

Thus the economic power of China from the Middle Ages until the Industrial Revolution was one of the reasons that Europe sent out explorers – and indeed, may even be one reason that America was discovered!

When Europeans began exploring the world and eventually mastering trade routes to India and China, they also began creating trading posts or “treaty ports” that eventually led to colonization throughout Asia. Mostly, they had strongholds in port cities, but they were able to take control of many different countries. China, however, was too strong to control from much of that period (the 1600s to mid-1800s). When the second industrial revolution occurred though, the European countries finally had enough strength to semi-colonialize China. Mostly they created “treaty ports” where they had free reign and Chinese law didn’t apply to foreigners and had little influence on commerce. The most famous of these ports, such as Shanghai were multicultural, multinational centers of world commerce. These treaty ports were mostly created after the British won two wars with China known as the **Opium Wars**.

The most interesting thing about the Opium Wars was that despite an economic decline that had lasted almost 200 years, even as late as 1800, China had very little interest in European goods. The British finally found something that the Chinese did like – and that was incredibly addictive – opium (the base drug of heroin). When the Chinese government began passing anti-drug laws to prevent the addition of their people, the British invaded and forced China to allow the British importation of opium (which they grew in India). They fought these wars in the 1840s and China had no match for the steam-powered gunboats that the British had. The unequal treaties that the Chinese signed with all of the major European powers, and the U.S., prevented the real economic growth that the other nations had. Although China was never completely colonized, there was enough outside interference (and domestic government incompetence) changing the world.

Sun Yat-sen

Politically, China eventually became aware that it needed to reform, and eventually, in 1912, the emperor was deposed. However, the leader of these changes, Dr. Sun Yat Sen was unable to keep a new democratic China cohesive. Very quickly, regional warlords took over and there was a period of about 20 years of Civil War.  This left China vulnerable to an attack by Japan.

Chiang Kai-shek

The Second World War was brutal to China.  After the Japanese were defeated, the Civil War, between the Nationalists and the Communists, resumed. Before Japan invaded China, the Nationalists had the Communists on the run. The Communists had to evade the Nationalists and did so through the **Long March** during 1934 and 1935.  They were nearly destroyed during the retreat that lasted over one year and reportedly 8000 miles (Communist claim, may have been much shorter).

However, before the Nationalists were able to catch up to and defeat the Communists, the Japanese invaded and the **truce** allowed Mao to regroup and expand his influence. After World War II, the Communists rejoined the fight against the Nationalists and proved unstoppable. There are several reasons for this. Mao had spent the 8 years of the war-winning the hearts and minds of the peasants. Chaing Kai-Shek, leader of the Nationalists was notoriously corrupt.  Also, there were many who blamed him for the Japanese attack, asserting that he did not fight hard enough against the Japanese early on, because he was too obsessed with the Communists.

In 1949, the Communists took control.  This was a very bloody end to a violently bloody struggle.  Between 1 and 3 million **counterrevolutionaries** were executed.  They set up prison camps to re-educate the people, especially the **bourgeois** peasants. Originally Mao followed the Soviet Union’s economic model with collective farming, nationalized industry and centralized planning.

The Communists also had to remake Chinese society.  Remember, China has one of the oldest civilizations in the world. Many Chinese traditions were quite ancient. Some of the traditions that the Communists put an end to include:

* Foot binding
* Concubinage
* Infant marriage and forced marriage
* Discouraging ancestor worship
* Discouraging Confucianism

Revolutions, in general, create chaos and reordering of the “norms”.  The communists, like previous revolutionaries, had a vision for a “modern” China that did not include these vestiges of the past.  Some of these issues were changed because they didn’t fit in with a modern image, i.e., foot binding, while other issues, such as Confucianism didn’t fit in with Communist ideology.

Other issues that the Communists tackled were allowing divorce and severely punishing drug abuse (to break the opium addiction of the past 100 years).  
Birth control was another issue that the Communists have tried to address throughout their tenure. They actively encouraged birth control in the 1950s to help bring down the number of starving peasants, then eased up again in the 1960s, then re-encouraged it in the 1970s, continuing through today, with mixed success. The limits on children have created a shortage of women, and a large number of “non-existent” people. However, their population growth has slowed to a level that their population numbers will probably be overtaken by India within the next 50 years.

Government in Communist China

Mao’s government was set up similar to the Soviet model in the early 1950s.  There was a Central Committee and a **Politburo**. Mao was chairman of both. The army was called the **PLA (People's Liberation Army)** – the army of the communists during the Civil War. There were elections, but there was only one name on the ballot.

Great Leap Forward, 1958—1962

In 1958, China’s ties with the Soviet Union began to dissolve. Mao saw the Soviets as corrupt as if they were not true communists or true revolutionarie.. One thing to remember about Mao: he was a “true revolutionary.”  Mao decided that China must move forward into a new model, which he called the **Great Leap Forward**.

He created massive communes. Agricultural communes were formed; all small peasants and small communes were removed to these giant communes. He also formed industrial communes and decided that large industries, such as steel could be created throughout the countryside. Former peasants who knew nothing besides farming were suddenly forced to work in steel mills.

Mao ended up destroying the economy. Steel and other industrial production was a complete bust. Worse, agricultural production was severely affected - often crops sat unharvested until they rotted because the farmer has been moved into a steel making commune. This led to an enormous famine in 1959-1960, where there may have been as many as 40 million people who died as a result.

The Great Leap Forward was such a disaster that Mao was pushed aside.  Mao was called “the Great Helmsman,” and moved to a much more ceremonial position.  This is an example of the ongoing conflict that exists between radicals and pragmatists during revolutions. For example, after the French Revolution, there was an extreme period, a moderate period, a more extreme period (the Reign of Terror!), followed by a very conservative backlash (Napoleon). A similar conflict occurred during and following the Russian Revolution. Leaders of Revolutions need conflict and chaos in order to lead, but in general, most people get worn out from chaos after a few years and then revert to much more moderate and pragmatic leaders.

Mao was very unhappy to be pushed aside and truly believed that there was more potential for real revolution. He believed that he was being treated like a “dead ancestor” and therefore, he regained control by creating the Cultural Revolution of 1966.

The Cultural Revolution

The Cultural Revolution was an economic and educational disaster.  It is the image most people have of the Chinese Communists: Chairman Mao and the little red book.  (As a reference listen to [“Revolution” (Links to an external site.)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Beatles_revolution_1.ogg) by the Beatles).

Mao appealed to young people with the Cultural Revolution.  He encouraged the young to turn in: intellectuals, “exploiting bourgeoisie,” etc. Anyone with a gripe could turn in a neighbor, friend, acquaintance, rival, ex-lover, etc. He was encouraging chaos.

The main features of the Cultural Revolution were:

* Red Guards
* Purges
* Closed Universities
* Went after scientists, specialists, teachers – all were sent to “re-education” camps

When the Red Guard finally got out of control, Mao had to call in the army.

**Factions in the Cultural Revolution**

* **Allies**
  + The masses (workers)
  + The army
  + The students
* **Opponents**
  + Enemy classes
  + Exploiting bourgeoisie
  + Counterrevolutionary
  + Revisionists
  + Intellectuals

The biggest problem of the Cultural Revolution was that it discouraged education – education itself was suspicious. Followers were only encouraged to read Mao’s Little Red Book. All other knowledge was considered useless. However, it is very difficult to build an economy with workers who are ignorant. In addition to foregoing education of the youth, anyone who already was educated – such as professors, doctors, scientists, etc. – were considered enemies of the revolution and sent to re-education camps, or sometimes executed.

Zhou Enlai

More importantly, there were border spats between the Soviets and China in 1969. The Chinese had to be more aware of international issues and end the Cultural Revolution. The Soviets believed that Mao was as dangerous as Hitler, and had more army divisions along the Chinese border than the German border. Zhou Enlai, Mao’s second in command since the early days of the Chinese Communist Party eased Mao aside. They disbanded the Red Guards and most of them were sent to work in the countryside. Zhou was more of a moderate and pragmatist than Mao, but he had a HUGE dilemma. As long as Mao was alive, no one could truly challenge his legacy. They were stuck with him, even though the party realized that he was dangerous.

The Cultural Revolution did not come to a complete end until the death of Mao in 1976. However, it had gotten so out of control, that by 1969 the PLA had been brought in to take control of the Red Guards. The Red Guards were more or less broken up, and for the most part, sent to the countryside where they were less dangerous. In 1972, Mao was forced to look to his more “pragmatic” leaders – Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping – as his successors. This occurred after his latest prodigy died (suspiciously after a Mao assassination plot had been revealed). **The Gang Of Four** (Mao’s wife and three other cohorts) continued to try to restart the Cultural Revolution, but there was no longer any popular support. After Zhou Enlai died in early 1976, the country was moved to tears. Mao died a few months later, and the Cultural Revolution had to come to a final end.  Shortly after Deng Xiaoping was made a leader, the Gang of Four was arrested and tried for Anti-Party Activities.

Deng had been a pragmatic reformer and although a Mao supporter, Mao was constantly suspicious of Deng. So much so, that Deng had been sent to a re-education camp during the Cultural Revolution. Although, there were other leaders of the Chinese Communist Party that Mao had executed, so, in that light, a re-education camp seems not so bad.

* Deng Xiaoping
* Deng declared that Maoism was “wrong in its theories, policies, and slogans.”
* Pragmatic reforms provided opportunity and incentive
* Emphasis on education, science, technology
* Came up with “Socialism with Chinese characteristics” – in other words, socialism, i.e., the Communist Party would own “the means of production”, but would allow small forms of capitalism, and would allow the market to determine prices.
* Weakened the command planning structure.

Some of Deng’s pragmatic reforms, 1978-1997:

* Decontrolled commodities, 1978
* Farms leased to families
* Profits permitted
* Kept nationalized industries
* Kept “iron rice bowl” (i.e., a worker’s safety net – but today that safety net is much weaker, especially among the peasants)

Great Boom

Jiang Zemin

Deng’s reforms created a “market based” economy, more or less, and the result was overwhelming economic growth, especially from about 1985 on through to the present. The success was so amazing, Deng’s successor, expanded the “capitalism” model. His successor was Jiang Zemin and his political/economic philosophy was called the **Three Represents**. The Three Represents covers economic, political and cultural beliefs, but is so vague as to be incomprehensible. It intimates a move towards more political freedom, but that has not happened.

Jiang Zemin retired from the Presidency in 2003 and his successor is Hu Jin Tao. Although there has been a demonstrable move away from economic communism practiced in China today, the Chinese Communist Party is still in power and controls the economy. Moreover, they have tried to disguise the capitalist movement as being part of a Marxist thought. This is why the political philosophy of “Socialism with Chinese characteristics” and “the Three Represents” are so convoluted. In reality, China is a mostly capitalist society, in theory, however, they are holding to communist philosophy. Moreover, politically, they are not an open democratic society.  It is still controlled by a strong one-party rule.

The problems that China will need to address in the near future include:

Hu Jintao

* Population growth
* Unrest in the countryside
* Growing gaps between the wealthy and the poor – especially the poor in the countryside
* Urban issues versus Rural issues
* Religious problems, especially the Falun Gong and the rise of Islam
* Environmental pressures – the water tables are dropping, desertification, extreme air, and water pollution
* Tibet – a province that is mostly Buddhist and follows the Dalai Lama, they have argued for independence for many years
* Xingjiang (Chinese Turkestan) – an area with the highest HIV rate in the country, many different ethnicities, including many Muslims and it borders Tibet
* Falun Gong

Current Affairs

Currently, China is the #2 economy in the world and its military might is growing.  It is supportive of North Korea and Burma (Myanmar).  It is the largest export economy in the world  The U.S. is its largest single-country trading partner (the EU is its overall largest partner, but that comprises 27 countries).  The climate between the U.S. and China has gotten much  tenser during the last economic crisis, partly because the U.S. now sees China as an economic threat, and yet it still relies on Chinese goods and trade (as well as loans).  The biggest issues between the two countries are the value of the Chinese currency (they have tended to undervalue it relative to the dollar, making Chinese goods cheaper than they should be), U.S. imports, intellectual piracy, human rights, and the internet.  Google made headlines a little while ago when it pulled out of China and stopped doing business there due to conflicts over internet freedom and Google's email accounts being hacked.  
  
Although the two countries rely on each other, they have very different goals and interests and as China's power in the world grows it will change the dynamic between the two countries.  
  
[Inside China  (Links to an external site.)](http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/1999/china.50/inside.china/)