

History of Modern China (1840-1950) PYQ 2021

Q1. Critically analyse the views of California School on the Great Divergence debate in the context of China.

Ans. The California School, also known as the "Berkeley School" or the "World-Systems Analysis School," is a perspective within economic history that offers an alternative interpretation of the Great Divergence debate. The Great Divergence refers to the period of significant economic divergence between the West (Europe and North America) and the rest of the world, particularly Asia, during the early modern era. The California School, including scholars like Andre Gunder Frank, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Christopher Chase-Dunn, challenges conventional Eurocentric narratives by emphasizing the interconnectedness of world systems and questioning the Western-centric explanations for global economic disparities.

In the context of China, the views of the California School on the Great Divergence debate can be critically analyzed as follows:

1. Dependency Theory and Global Capitalism:

The California School draws from dependency theory to argue that the global capitalist system, rather than being a product of Western superiority, was shaped by interactions between different regions, including China. The School highlights the role of colonialism, imperialism, and unequal exchange in shaping global economic relations.

2. Core-Periphery Dynamics:

According to the California School, the emergence of core-periphery dynamics was not solely due to Western innovation and technological advancement. Instead, it attributes these dynamics to the integration of different regions into a world system characterized by exploitation and the extraction of resources from the periphery for the benefit of the core.

3. China's Role in Global Economy:

The California School challenges the notion that China was stagnant or disconnected from global trade networks before the modern era. It emphasizes China's historical role as a significant economic and cultural hub in the global system, with its products (such as silk and porcelain) having a substantial impact on international trade.

4. Unequal Exchange and Economic Integration:

The School argues that the unequal exchange between the West and other regions, including China, played a crucial role in shaping global economic disparities. China's production of luxury goods for Western consumption was often met with unequal returns, contributing to its economic decline in relation to the West.

5. Long-Term Perspective:

The California School encourages a long-term perspective on economic history, highlighting the continuity of global economic interactions over centuries. This perspective challenges the notion of a sudden Western economic takeoff and emphasizes the complex web of interactions that shaped the trajectory of different regions.

In summary, the California School's views on the Great Divergence debate challenge the conventional Western-centric explanations for global economic disparities. In the context of China, the School's emphasis on dependency theory, core-periphery dynamics, China's historical role in the global economy, unequal exchange, and long-term perspectives provides a critical alternative to the Eurocentric narratives that often dominate discussions about the Great Divergence.

Q2. "The crisis of the Opium wars began in 1840 merely in terms of Chinese stagnation and western dynamism". Do you agree? "

Ans. The statement that "The crisis of the Opium wars began in 1840 merely in terms of Chinese stagnation and western dynamism" presents a narrow and simplified view of the complex historical context that led to the Opium Wars between China and Western powers. While it is true that there were disparities between Western powers' economic and technological advancements and certain aspects of China's governance and economy, attributing the Opium Wars solely to Chinese stagnation and Western dynamism overlooks deeper factors at play. **A more comprehensive analysis is needed to understand the causes and consequences of the Opium Wars:**

1. Unequal Trade and Imbalance:

The Opium Wars were rooted in the opium trade, which caused serious social and economic issues in China. The statement overlooks the fact that Western powers, particularly Britain, were flooding China with opium, creating a public health crisis and leading to a severe trade imbalance that affected China's economy.

2. Opium Trade and Imperialism:

The Opium Wars were not just about Chinese stagnation and Western dynamism; they were a result of Western imperialism and expansionism. Western powers, including Britain, were using military force to protect their economic interests and force China to open up its markets to their goods.

3. Treaty of Nanking:

The Treaty of Nanking (1842), which marked the end of the First Opium War, was imposed on China by Western powers. It resulted in unequal treaties that ceded territories, imposed indemnities, and granted extraterritorial rights to foreign powers. These terms were not solely a result of Chinese stagnation but were forced through military coercion.

4. Social and Political Impact:

The Opium Wars had far-reaching social and political consequences for China. They exposed weaknesses in the Qing Dynasty's governance and contributed to social unrest, rebellions, and a loss of confidence in the imperial regime.

5. Cultural and Ethical Considerations:

Attributing the Opium Wars solely to Chinese stagnation and Western dynamism overlooks the ethical dimension of the opium trade. The British and other Western powers were actively engaged in a trade that was devastating to Chinese society, undermining traditional values and social cohesion.

6. Global Geopolitical Factors:

The Opium Wars took place in the context of global geopolitical dynamics and the competition for spheres of influence in Asia. Western powers were driven by a desire to expand their economic and political dominance in the region, which goes beyond the simplification of Western dynamism.

In conclusion, while it is important to recognize the economic and technological disparities between China and Western powers at the time of the Opium Wars, attributing the wars solely to Chinese stagnation and Western dynamism oversimplifies the complex factors that contributed to the conflict. The Opium Wars were a result of Western imperialism, economic interests, and geopolitical considerations, alongside issues within the Qing Dynasty's governance and the social impact of the opium trade.

Q3. Critically evaluate the main currents within the Taiping and Boxer movements with special reference to their popular character.

Ans. The Taiping and Boxer movements were significant rebellions that took place in China during the 19th and early 20th centuries, reflecting the social, political, and economic upheavals of the time. Both movements had distinct motivations, ideologies, and popular support, which played a crucial role in shaping their outcomes. **Let's critically evaluate the main currents within the Taiping and Boxer movements, focusing on their popular character:**

Taiping Movement:

Motivation and Ideology:

The Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) was led by Hong Xiuquan, who claimed to be the younger brother of Jesus Christ. The movement sought to establish a theocratic kingdom with the goal of overthrowing the Qing Dynasty. The Taiping ideology was rooted in a mixture of Christianity, Confucianism, and local beliefs, emphasizing social equality and land reforms.

Popular Support:

The Taiping movement garnered significant support among peasants and marginalized groups who were suffering from economic hardships, social inequality, and government corruption. The movement's promises of land redistribution and an end to the oppressive Qing rule resonated with the disenfranchised population.

Social and Economic Factors:

The Taiping movement was fueled by socio-economic factors, including rural discontent, landlessness, and hunger. The movement's land reform proposals attracted peasants who were struggling under the weight of heavy taxes and landlord exploitation.

Boxer Movement:

Motivation and Ideology:

The Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901) was a response to foreign imperialism and the influence of Christianity in China. The Boxers, known as the Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists, believed that their physical and spiritual practices made them invulnerable to bullets. They sought to expel foreigners and their perceived cultural influence.

Popular Support:

The Boxer movement gained support primarily from rural communities that were adversely affected by economic changes, foreign intervention, and missionary activities. The movement provided a sense of identity, purpose, and protection against perceived external threats.

Anti-Foreign and Anti-Christian Sentiment:

The Boxer movement was driven by anti-foreign and anti-Christian sentiments. Many Chinese saw foreigners as responsible for China's economic woes and viewed Christianity as a cultural threat. The Boxers believed that their spiritual practices would protect them from Western technologies and bullets.

Comparison of Popular Character:**Socio-Economic Discontent:**

Both movements were fueled by socio-economic discontent among China's rural population, who faced challenges such as poverty, exploitation, and displacement due to economic changes and foreign influence.

Resistance Against Authority:

Both the Taiping and Boxer movements were reactions against perceived oppressive authorities. The Taiping movement aimed to overthrow the Qing Dynasty, while the Boxer movement targeted foreign imperialists and their supporters.

Local Roots:

Both movements had local origins and often drew their support from specific regions within China. This localized nature contributed to their popular character and ability to mobilize local communities.

Cultural and Spiritual Elements:

Both movements incorporated elements of traditional Chinese culture and spirituality into their ideologies. The Taiping movement blended Christianity with local beliefs, while the Boxers practiced martial arts and believed in their invincibility.

In conclusion, while the Taiping and Boxer movements had distinct motivations and ideologies, both were responses to social, economic, and political challenges faced by China during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Their popular character was rooted in their ability to address the grievances of marginalized groups and offer a sense of identity, purpose, and resistance against perceived oppressors.

Q4. Assess the role played by any four of the following in developing the revolutionary movement of 1911 in China: a) Bourgeoisie b) Gentry c) New Army d) Young women and girls e) Proletariat f) Students and Youth.

Ans. The revolutionary movement of 1911 in China, also known as the Xinhai Revolution, marked a significant turning point in Chinese history, leading to the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty and the establishment of the Republic of China. Various social groups played crucial roles in this movement,

each contributing in their own way to the overthrow of the imperial system. **Let's assess the roles played by four of the mentioned groups:**

a) Bourgeoisie:

The urban bourgeoisie, consisting of merchants, industrialists, and professionals, played a significant role in the revolutionary movement. They were motivated by the desire for modernization, political reforms, and economic development. The bourgeoisie provided financial support, established newspapers, and contributed to the spread of revolutionary ideas. They were critical in funding revolutionary activities and organizing protests against the Qing Dynasty.

b) Gentry:

The traditional gentry class, composed of landowners, scholars, and local elites, also played a role in the revolutionary movement. They were concerned about the decline of Confucian values, corruption in the imperial administration, and the weakening of the dynasty's authority. Many gentry members supported the revolutionary cause, participated in anti-Qing organizations, and helped organize uprisings in various regions.

c) New Army:

The New Army, a modernized military force under the control of the Qing government, played a significant role in the revolution. Many members of the New Army were exposed to nationalist and revolutionary ideas through modern education and exposure to foreign cultures. Soldiers and officers from the New Army were instrumental in launching uprisings, mutinies, and defections that weakened the Qing regime.

d) Students and Youth:

Students and young intellectuals were at the forefront of the revolutionary movement. They were inspired by democratic and nationalist ideas from abroad, and many studied in foreign countries. These students formed revolutionary organizations, published revolutionary literature, and organized protests and demonstrations. Their activism helped spread revolutionary ideals and created a sense of urgency for change among the youth.

Impact of Gentry and Bourgeoisie:

The gentry's intellectual influence and the bourgeoisie's financial support helped disseminate revolutionary ideas, leading to the formation of secret societies and revolutionary organizations. Both classes shared a common goal of political reform and the end of imperial rule.

Impact of New Army and Students:

The New Army, consisting of trained and modernized troops, contributed to the practical aspect of the revolution by participating in various uprisings and mutinies. Students and young intellectuals, on the other hand, were responsible for creating an intellectual foundation for the revolution by spreading nationalist and democratic ideals.

In conclusion, the roles played by these four groups (bourgeoisie, gentry, New Army, and students/youth) were essential in shaping the revolutionary movement of 1911 in China. Their collective efforts contributed to the spread of revolutionary ideas, the organization of uprisings, and the eventual overthrow of the Qing Dynasty, paving the way for the establishment of a republican form of government in China.

Q5. “The May Fourth Movement inaugurated a new age in the Chinese society”. Comment

Ans. The May Fourth Movement of 1919 in China indeed marked the beginning of a new age in Chinese society. The movement, characterized by its student-led protests, cultural awakening, and demand for political change, had profound and lasting effects on various aspects of Chinese society. **Here's a comment on how the May Fourth Movement inaugurated a new age in Chinese society:**

1. Intellectual Awakening:

The May Fourth Movement sparked an intellectual awakening that challenged traditional Confucian values and promoted new ideas rooted in democracy, science, and individualism. Chinese intellectuals, influenced by Western philosophy and political thought, began questioning the authority of the old regime and advocating for modernization and social reform.

2. Political Consciousness and Activism:

The movement ignited political consciousness among Chinese youth and the educated elite. Students and intellectuals played a pivotal role in organizing protests, advocating for democracy, and demanding political rights. This marked a shift from passive acceptance of imperial rule to active engagement in shaping the nation's destiny.

3. Gender Equality and Women's Liberation:

The May Fourth Movement also contributed to the advancement of gender equality and women's liberation. Female activists participated in protests, contributed to literature and journalism, and advocated for women's rights. The movement challenged traditional gender norms and highlighted the need for social change.

4. Vernacular Literature and Cultural Revival:

The movement encouraged a revival of vernacular literature and culture. Writers and intellectuals abandoned classical Chinese in favor of the vernacular, making literature more accessible to the general public. This cultural shift promoted a shared national identity and a sense of belonging.

5. Nationalism and Anti-Imperialism:

The May Fourth Movement fostered a sense of nationalism and anti-imperialism among Chinese citizens. The rejection of the Treaty of Versailles and the transfer of German concessions to Japan led to widespread outrage and protests against foreign dominance. The movement united people against external exploitation.

6. Seeds of Political Change:

The May Fourth Movement laid the groundwork for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its eventual rise to power. Many intellectuals who were part of the movement later joined the CCP and contributed to its ideology and leadership.

In conclusion, the May Fourth Movement was a transformative period in Chinese history that inaugurated a new age in the country's society. It awakened intellectual curiosity, challenged traditional norms, inspired political activism, promoted cultural revival, and sowed the seeds for significant social and political changes that would shape China's trajectory in the 20th century and

beyond. The movement's legacy continues to resonate in contemporary Chinese society as a symbol of national pride, progress, and resilience.

Q6. What were the political compulsions that brought the KMT and CCP together in 1924? Why did they drift apart?

Ans. In 1924, the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang or KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) formed an uneasy alliance known as the First United Front to counter the dominance of warlords and foreign imperialists in China. This alliance was primarily driven by political compulsions and shared objectives, but it eventually unraveled due to ideological differences and power struggles. **Let's examine the political compulsions that brought the KMT and CCP together in 1924 and the reasons for their subsequent drift:**

Political Compulsions for Alliance (1924):

- 1. Anti-Warlord Sentiment:** China was fragmented and controlled by warlords, causing chaos and instability. Both the KMT and CCP sought to unify China and eliminate the warlord threat, leading them to collaborate against a common enemy.
- 2. Anti-Imperialism:** Both parties were opposed to foreign imperialist influence and the unequal treaties imposed on China. They aimed to regain national sovereignty and assert China's independence on the international stage.
- 3. Desire for Modernization:** Both the KMT and CCP recognized the need to modernize China's political and economic systems to catch up with the West. This shared goal led to their collaboration in advocating for modernization reforms.
- 4. Overcoming Factionalism:** The KMT and CCP had internal divisions and factionalism. Forming an alliance allowed them to consolidate their support base and present a united front against internal and external threats.

Reasons for Drift (Ideological Differences and Power Struggles):

- 1. Ideological Differences:** The fundamental ideological differences between the KMT and CCP became increasingly apparent over time. The KMT, led by Chiang Kai-shek, followed a more nationalist and right-leaning ideology, while the CCP advocated for socialism and a class struggle approach.
- 2. Northern Expedition and Shanghai Massacre:** The KMT's Northern Expedition, aimed at unifying China under its rule, resulted in conflicts with CCP-aligned forces in certain regions. The subsequent Shanghai Massacre in 1927, orchestrated by Chiang Kai-shek, led to a brutal crackdown on communists within the KMT.
- 3. Power Struggles:** The KMT's dominance and Chiang Kai-shek's quest for centralized power within the party led to a power struggle between the two parties. The CCP was marginalized within the KMT, further straining their relationship.
- 4. Massacre of Communists:** The Shanghai Massacre and subsequent anti-communist purges within the KMT marked a turning point. The KMT's violent suppression of communists and leftist elements created deep mistrust and severed the fragile alliance.
- 5. Loss of Northern Expedition's Objective:** The KMT's successful Northern Expedition achieved the goal of defeating warlords, but as the KMT established its own power base, its willingness to continue collaborating with the CCP waned.

In conclusion, the KMT and CCP came together in 1924 due to shared political compulsions against warlords, imperialism, and the desire for modernization. However, their ideological differences, power struggles, and violent confrontations ultimately led to their drift. The Shanghai Massacre and the KMT's shift towards authoritarian rule marked the end of their alliance and set the stage for their future conflicts and the Chinese Civil War.