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**Conditional Imitation: A new perspective of interpreting the fall of the
Past East Asian Hegemon, the Late Qing Empire**

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I. Statement of Problems and Research Questions

The European powers, after years of capital accumulation through the industrial revolution, are ambitious about extending their order and influence beyond the scope of Europe. In the nineteenth century, the European powers and the United States brought their new international order and culture to challenge the east Asian hegemon Qing Empire and its neighbor Japan. Confronting the threat of the western powers, the Qing Empire and Japan had no other choice but to imitate stronger powers to ensure their survival. They imitated in different ways, which later completely diverged the fate of these two empires. As a result, Japan was successfully westernized and made it equal to the other European powers, but the Qing dynasty continued to decline until it collapsed. Why Japan's imitation was successful, but Qing Empire's imitation unsuccessful? Imitation is indeed a shortcut for backward countries to ensure survival and acquire more power; however, the case of Japan and Late Qing shows that not all imitations help prevent a state from survival crisis. Successful imitation comes with preconditions, which have been rarely discussed in imitation literature. This research developed a new term, conditional imitation, using the case of the Qing Empire and Japan to explain why Japan succeeded in imitating and China failed by concluding the necessary preconditions for a successful imitation. The result indicates that those preconditions include 1) the progressive mindset of elites, 2) a stable domestic power structure, and 3) a comprehensive one-step reform.

II. Theoretical Framework

Overviews of the Theoretical Section

Why do states imitate others, and what helps countries imitate better or worse? International relation theories have different interpretations of why weak states imitate the

stronger states and why stronger states imitate each other. This theory section first lays out how different international relations theories interpret imitation. The balance of power theory in realism regards imitation as a way for states to survive and compete in the international system, whereas imitation in constructivism is more about a tool for socialization or for states to attain more identity and interests. The second part of this section introduces various strategies for imitation, which will later be used as tools to analyze the imitation policies for both Qing empire and Japan.

Realism on Why Imitation

From Waltz's balance of power theory that champions emulate between states. His theory stressed, "If some do relatively well, others will emulate them or fall by the wayside"¹ and "balances of power recurrently form, and states tend to emulate the successful policies of others."² More specifically, states will exhibit competitive tendencies, namely, that they will emulate one another and become socialized to their system.³ Security competition drives great powers to emulate the successful practices of their opponents. The international system is anarchic, so the international system operates in the shadow of violence. War could break out at any time and the state of nature is a state of war. Because some states may employ force at any time, all states must be prepared to do so; otherwise, they will be at the mercy of their militarily powerful neighbors. Based on anarchy and state of the nature, the international system is a self-help world. An adequately articulated balance-of-power theory starts with assumptions about states: they are unitary actors that, at the very least, seek their own survival and, at the very most, seek for universal dominance. States or leaders attempt to employ the available means rationally

¹ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 118-119.

² Waltz, 124.

³ Waltz, 128.

to attain the goals in mind through internal and external efforts. Internal efforts include improving economic competence and military strength and developing innovative strategies. External efforts include enlarging one's alliance or weakening and shrinking an opposing one. Those who do not help themselves or do so in a less effective manner than others, will fail to thrive, expose themselves to dangers, and suffer in a self-help system.⁴

The conclusion drawn from the balance of power theory could be linked immediately to why states imitate each other. First, based on the anarchy of the international system, the state of nature is war, so countries live in a self-help world. Gaining more power help countries to survive in such a system. Second, international politics is portrayed as a competitive realm. Each state's fate is determined by how it reacts to what other states do. Competition leads to a propensity for competitors to appear similar. Imitation is the product of competition, and imitation leads to a better prospect of survival. As a result of Bismarck' remarkable victories over Austria in 1866 and France in 1870, the major continental powers (and Japan) quickly imitated the Prussian military staff system. The contending governments imitated the military innovations devised by the country with the most excellent skill and ingenuity. As a result, prominent competitors' weapons, as well as their strategies, come to seem very similar all over the world.⁵

John Mearsheimer's book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* in offensive realism also related his theory to the fact that security competition led to the imitation of successful practices of rival great powers. The five bedrock assumptions: 1) International system is anarchy; there is no top ruler over the government. 2) all states have offensive military capabilities: the level of capabilities varies from state to state. 3) States can never be one hundred percent sure other

⁴ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 118.

⁵ Art, *The Influence of Foreign Policy on Seapower*, 16.

states' intentions and intentions are constantly changing. 4) Survival is a state's primary goal. 5) States strategically pursue their goal of survival because they are rational actors. Under an international anarchy system, the priority for any state is to survive, and states are always rational to strategically plan how to survive. These five assumptions cause three behaviors of the states. First, States fear each other; second, states realize this is a self-help world; third, states attempt to maximize their power.⁶ He also contends that imitation is overly narrowly defined and focused on copying defensive but not offensive behavior.⁷ Furthermore, great powers value innovation, which often entails devising innovative ways to increase power at the expense of competitor states. Indeed, states strongly desire to emulate the successful practices of other states in the system. Building on Waltz's theory, Mearsheimer argues that states imitate successful balancing behavior and successful aggressions.⁸ Nobutaka writes that the evidence suggests that war had a crucial role in Japan's modernizing process.⁹ Jack Snyder, a notable defensive realism, realizes that "from the Meiji restoration in 1868 until 1945, all Japan governments were expansionist."¹⁰

Constructivism on Why Imitation

Instead of connecting imitation to survival, constructivism used imitation as an evolution mechanism or what Waltz called "socialization." In his *Social Theory of International politics*, *Wendt states* that cultural selection, which includes imitation and social learning, is the dominant way for states to socialize. Imitation helps states to acquire identities and interests. Countries' identity and their corresponding interest are learned and fortified in reaction to how other

⁶ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 30–35.

⁷ Mearsheimer, 140.

⁸ Mearsheimer, 166.

⁹ Ike, "VI. War and Modernization," 189.

¹⁰ Snyder, *Myths of Empire*, 114.

significant actors treat others.¹¹ States will imitate those whom they perceive as “successful,” which such imitation makes humans more homogeneous. “Successful” has two kinds: “material” success means acquiring power or wealth, and “status” success means prestige. Therefore, in the perspective of constructivism, imitation is more relevant to the desire to be successful than others, either in terms of military capabilities and economic power or possessing the same prestige as those stronger powers, whereas imitation is less considered to survive. Using “status” in current research, Wood and Cox argue that some nation-states imitate other states to improve their status. Political elites experiencing “status deprivation”(a feeling that the state and the community they represent have insufficient status on global or regional scales) sometimes imitate other states that perceived to have this property.¹²

In the case of the Qing Empire and Japan, the difference in imitation between constructivism and realism is that the imitation of constructivism is spontaneous and active, while the imitation in realism is passive. Considering imitation from the survival perspective, realism is a better fit for this research since both Qing and Japan started to imitate the west when the west threatened their survival. Why does the differentiation matter between constructivism and realism? This study focuses on analyzing the preconditions of successful imitation in the case of Late Qing and Japan instead of generalizing the requisite preconditions for all imitation cases. Since the original purpose of imitations in these two theories differs, they need to be discussed separately. The overall difference between these two is 1. the success of imitation from a survival aspect has preconditions; 2. the success of imitation from a non-survival point of view has preconditions; This study mainly analyzes the former.

¹¹ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 324–27.

¹² Wood and Cox, “Status, Imitation, and Affective Dissonance in International Relations,” 635.

Strategies on Imitation

Imitation, if used well, can guarantee a country's survival and strengthen the country's national power. If not, imitation does not prevent an endangered empire from perishing.

Diffusion of technologies and advantage of backwardness explain how backward states could benefit from advanced states by imitating their technology. Institutional transfer and policy borrowing illustrate how elites decide to imitate the stronger states' social-political institutions and policies. Again, imitation consists of different parts such as technology and economic and social-political systems. As a backward state, ensuring its survival depends on how its rulers choose to imitate instead of imitation per se.

1). Diffusion of technologies and Advantage of backwardness

The military and economic practices of the dominating state have a history of being disseminated to other states in the system, particularly to ones on the periphery of the international system.¹³ That is, the dominating power loses the advantage on which its political, military, or economic success has been built through diffusion to other states. As a result, the dominant power helps to produce challenged powers. The diffusion of military and economic technology from more advanced to less advanced states is a critical component in international power redistribution. Although technology is costly and difficult to develop, once it is developed, it usually spreads quickly.¹⁴ The recipient society's capacity and willingness to learn determines whether diffusion occurs. It is difficult to define why the ability to learn from others differs significantly between societies. 1) Take medieval Muslim empires as an example; they never adopted artillery in any meaningful way. 2) Other societies (especially the late Chinese Empire,

¹³ Clough, *The Rise and Fall of Civilization*; Cipolla, *The Economic Decline of Empires*.

¹⁴ Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 176–77.

premodern Japan, and early modern Europe) have attempted deliberate strategies to avoid acquiring superior military skills, afraid that arming the lower social orders would disrupt their stratified social structures. When advanced weapons and military are introduced, the ruling class fears that these lower classes will use these weapons as tools to overthrow the ruling class. This is because, on the one hand, the lower class is advantageous in terms of the number of people; on the other hand, most of the soldiers and lower-ranking officers who maintain the current order are also from the lower class. 3) Some societies, such as the Romans and the Europeans, Americans, and Japanese in the modern age, have demonstrated exceptional capabilities to learn from others' mistakes and experiences. The enhanced learning capacity is typically linked to great powers' expansion and growth.¹⁵ The recipients' willingness to learn new technologies and economic structures may depend on whether their survival is challenged by those states with advanced military equipment and economic policies.

The advantage of backwardness is developed by Alexander Gerschenkron, saying that less developed countries can purportedly close the military-technological gap with their adversaries very cheaply and fast by freeriding on the most advanced countries' research and technology.¹⁶ Although societies differ in their ability to adapt and absorb military and productive technology, less developed societies frequently benefit from what Alexander Gerschenkron (1962) referred to as "backwardness's advantages." Thorstein Veblen noted in his classic work *Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution* (1939) that one advantage is that imitators with lower living standards and wasteful habits may utilize imported technology more efficiently. Backward countries can regularly outcompete more affluent modern societies

¹⁵ Gilpin, 178.

¹⁶ Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective*, 5–30.

economically or militarily due to reduced prices, undeveloped resources, and comparable technology.¹⁷

Rosato mentions in his *Intention in Great Power Politics* that if a great power wants to improve its security without threatening or using force, it has various possibilities. To begin, it can strengthen its deterrence and defensive capabilities by arming itself—increasing military spending, weapon manufacturing, and troop numbers—developing better military technology, techniques, and doctrines, or by emulating effective military practices of others. This type of conduct is quite prevalent.¹⁸ The benefits of imitation for the imitators is a more concrete explanation for the advantage of backwardness. Some weaker states in the capabilities to learn will try to imitate others' military innovations to outperform those stronger states. Imitation, under the right circumstances, can help some countries catch up in technology. First, by benefiting from innovators' research and technology, imitators can save money that would otherwise be spent developing state-of-the-art technologies from the beginning. Second, imitators can avoid repeating innovators' mistakes or embarking on technically unachievable undertakings, which is a distinct possibility when working with cutting-edge technologies. Third, imitators can put their extra resources to good use, potentially outperforming creators. In conclusion, imitators benefit when imitation is less expensive and faster than innovation.¹⁹ P.W. Singer states that imitating countries can 'free ride' on the early costs, imitate what works, and devote all their efforts and resources to improving on what the first mover has done.²⁰

¹⁷ Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 178–79.

¹⁸ Rosato, *Intentions in Great Power Politics*, 25–26.

¹⁹ Gilli and Gilli, “Why China Has Not Caught Up Yet,” 146.

²⁰ Singer, *Wired for War*, 239.

Both diffusions of technology and the advantage of backwardness illustrate the underlying benefits for the backward states to learn from the advanced states. However, given those advantages and benefits, not all countries have the capacity and willingness to imitate. Sometimes, backward states only imitate once their survival is challenged. Japan and China, back in the 19th, started to imitate western technology when the west threatened both. The Qing dynasty's self-strengthening movement imitated technologies from advanced states and benefited as a backward state. In contrast, the self-strengthen movement ended with a significant failure that did not make Qing a more powerful empire. Although backward states gain from technological imitation, other types of imitations are necessary.

2). Institutional Transfer

Wade Jacoby in his book *Redesigning Modern Germany Imitation and Politics* developed a typical way of imitation: institutional transfer. It necessitates three conditions. First, state elites refer explicitly to a model that is well-functioned elsewhere; second, they attempt to identify the foreign model's legal framework and the actors that help it function; third, these elites construct a replica of the entire or a portion of the model, either from the scratch or by reshaping local institutions to match the foreign model.²¹ Institutional transfer could be somewhat extended; it does not only mean the introduction and adoption of the entire foreign system; rather, any imitation by introducing part of a foreign model or merely enacting and implementing a new specific policy could be deemed a process of "institutional transfer," such as training the New Army after the Sino-Japanese War. Jacoby's core claim is that effective transfer is conducted by a well-organized society combined with a flexible state approach. "Without some prior organization of civil society, institutions that presume the exercise of social power become

²¹ Jacoby, *Imitation and Politics = Redesigning Modern Germany.*, 2.

dependent on state elites and often remain mere words on paper.” Flexibility is also necessary because establishing a power base often includes alliances among governors replicating a foreign system and specific organized groups. These partners may have substantial differences in critical policies of institutional design. Disagreements among partners are expected and sometimes may be beneficial because they may lead to inventive hybrid forms with the ability for further development. The flexibility seeded during the transfer process can be reaped later, because the institutions that emerge are not only accommodating to local socioeconomic realities and ideals about justice and fairness, but also could alter as those situations and ideas evolve.²²

3). Policy Borrowing

Policy elites may operate as "rational shoppers" to find and replicate advantageous foreign models. Policymakers misuse evidence and struggle to "fit" borrowed institutions into new social settings. Policymakers frequently manipulate foreign evidence to fit their needs. Furthermore, because a foreign "model" can refer to various institutional forms that vary geographically, borrowing elites may try to replicate an ideal type, the median form, or a specific variant. According to policy-borrowing models, borrowed policies may not "fit" the new society. As institutions operate within more extensive social and political settings, borrowed policies may not "fit" the new society.²³ Policy elites have frequently used foreign designs to address demands from their populace and external threats to their state's integrity. Citizens may perceive adopting foreign institutional models as an acknowledgment of home failure; hence policy elites rarely take open adoption of foreign institutional models lightly. Elites have used imitation in response to geopolitical rivalry, military occupation, integration into international regimes, and the

²² Jacoby, 3.

²³ Jacoby, 9–10.

conditionality of international financial institutions.²⁴ Three final distinctions within the concept of institutional transfer are required, roughly corresponding to the breadth, depth, and intensity of imitation. The first distinction is between wholesale and piecemeal transmission, the second is between accurate transfer and the functional equivalent approach, and the third is between continuous engagement and single-moment transfer. The functional equivalent approach does not aim to replicate institutional forms exactly. Instead, policymakers abstract from a foreign institution a functional duty that, in their opinion, is not fully or adequately performed in their society.²⁵

III. Historical Background: Japan

Meiji Restoration and Modernization (1868-1889)

1853-1890 was the period of transition from a feudal society to a capitalist society in Japan. Shortly after the European nations had entered China, Japan had its first contact with the European International Society. Four American ships arrived at the Japanese port of Uraga in July 1853. They were under the direction of Commodore Perry, who demanded that Japan sign a treaty with the US. After 15 years of debate, political unrest, assassinations, and wars, the Meiji Restoration took place, and Japan began its path toward modernity and imperialism. Until 1853, Japan had been ruled by a form of governance known as centralized feudalism for 250 years.²⁶ The Japanese political elite became more aware that the new, western-dominated international order could seriously threaten Japan after the Opium War of 1840–1842 and China's subsequent loss.

²⁴ Jacoby, 23.

²⁵ Jacoby, 34–36.

²⁶ Craig, *Chōshū in the Meiji Restoration*, 3.

Through Meiji Restoration, Japan had developed a good transportation and communication infrastructure, a highly educated populace free from feudal class limitations, a well-established and quickly expanding economic sector based on cutting-edge technology, a strong army and navy, and a highly centralized, bureaucratic government. The abolishing of the han system (haihan-chiken) in 1869 consolidated the centralization: All daimyos (feudal lords) were required to cede their power and land to Emperor Meiji. The process was carried out in phases, creating a new centralized government for Meiji Japan and a new oligarchy in place of the previous feudal system.²⁷ The confiscation of the power of local feudal aristocrats built a centralized 'European-style' state in Japan, centralized power.²⁸ Economically, the Meiji restoration promoted fiscal unification to stabilize the country's finances that were heavily indebted in the post-Edo period; Japan achieved industrialization through the acquisition of new technologies through colonization, which led to a significant increase in productivity. Education was also reformed on a large scale, and the westernization of values laid the groundwork for future political and economic changes. A constitution was enacted, and a parliamentary system was formalized. A national army was formed, and Japan constructed several transportation and communication systems. The Meiji government also abolished the hierarchy of the Edo shogunate period and promoted the equality of the four classes of people (Scholar, farmer, artisan, and merchant). Elites found the use of patriotism. Fukuzawa presented the French military experience to the large Japanese armies that Napoleon made all people participate in the war and established laws requiring them to defend their nation; he treasured the troops and officers and lavishly rewarded them. As a result, the populace developed feelings of nationalism

²⁷ Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire*, 124.

²⁸ Suzuki, 120.

and lost their concern about death.²⁹ The Restoration, which took place between the end of the Edo period and the start of the Meiji era, when Japan quickly industrialized and embraced Western ideas and production techniques, resulted in significant changes to the country's political and social structure.

IV. Historical Background: Qing Empire

Opium Wars and the Taiping Rebellion: Survival Crisis Looming Large

1840-1842 First Opium war

The first opium war originated in Lin Zexu, a local governor who confiscated and destroyed British imported opium. Industrialized countries in the 19th century were intended to export more goods in exchange for more wealth.³⁰ The British Empire, after its industrialization, needed a place to export products; China then turned into the target for British goods. Tea, silk, and porcelain in the 18th century were prevalent in the west; the Qing court therefore accumulated abundant wealth from exporting its goods to other countries. Qing dynasty was a self-sufficient economy, and it did not rely on imports and export earnings. The continuous large number of exports and negligible imports caused a trade deficit in Britain. From many foreign merchants' experiences in China, they surprisingly found Opium are upper-class good and could make large profits by trading them. Britain then started to establish the opium industry in the East India Company. From Britain's perspective, exporting opium to China was a very effective way of resolving the chronic trade deficit it had suffered from trade with China.³¹ Qianlong Emperor contained selling Opium in China, but it turned out ineffective. The importation of

²⁹ Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire*, 120–31.

³⁰ Shogo Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire: China and Japan's Encounter with European International Society*, New International Relations (London ; New York: Routledge, 2009), 57.

³¹ Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire*, 57.

Opium increased dramatically in later decades, which means the outflow of the national wealth. Qing court found out Opium decreased its assets and weakened its people. So, emperor Daoguang decided to stop the opium trade in 1838. He assigned Fujian official Lin Zexu (Lin) to crackdown and ended the opium trade.

By 1839, British and American opium traders surrendered 20,283 chests and 200 sacks of Opium, publicly destroyed on a beach outside Guangzhou.³² Lin maintained his prohibitionist policy in the following months. At the same time, in Britain, English merchants whose interests were affected by the blockade and opium seizures started to pressure parliament to take retaliatory action, such as a declaration of war. William Jardine, a wealthy opium merchant, traveled back to Britain to raise his voice.³³ On October 1st, 1839, the British declared war. In April 1840, the British army sent troops to Guangzhou. Qing did not have a unified navy and was unable to against British steam-powered ships and firepower. From southern Guangzhou to Nanjing (a city near Shanghai), Qing's naval was defeated several times. The Qing emperor then had no other choice but to negotiate with Britain; the Qing court could not sustain any further losses. The Treaty of Nanking was signed in August 1842 to end the first opium war. This treaty contained the following: (1) Cession of Hong Kong (2) Compensation for the destroyed Opium and military expense (3) Opening five ports to trade and residence of British merchants and consuls (4) a fixed tariff (5) allowing British merchants trading in China.³⁴

1856-1860 The Second Opium War

After the first opium war, the west expected to fully open the Chinese market and gain profit through trade. Unfortunately, the self-sufficient nature of the Chinese economy upset the

³² Grasso, *Modernization and Revolution in China*, 38.

³³ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 153.

³⁴ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 190.

west, although the western merchants thought opening more ports for commerce could make more profits. In addition, Beijing did not treat the western official representatives in an acceptable manner which triggered dissatisfaction among western diplomats. Many foreign governments requested a revision of the treaties, but China refused their demand. In the autumn of 1856, the west used the seizure of a British-registered ship and the murder of one French missionary to force treaty revision. China did not apologize, so Britain and the French military under Lord Elgin and Baron Gros were dispatched to Tianjin. After Tianjin was immense by the Anglo-French troops, the Qing government was obliged to sign the Treaties of Tianjin in 1858. China, Britain, the United States, Russia, and France signed the treaty, including opening 11 new ports, toleration for missionaries, legalization of the opium trade, foreign navigation, and commerce on the Yangzi River.³⁵ However, the Qing court refused to ratify these treaties in Beijing. The British-French forces pushed toward Beijing with greater vengeance confronting the Chinese resistance. British and French forces burned the Imperial Palace in Beijing; the emperor and his court fled Beijing for their safety. The palace repositis tribute gifts and Chinese treasures collected over the centuries. French packaged 300 wagons of the treasure, the left which could not be carried were smashed and fired. The destruction of the palace and subsequent occupation of the capital forced China to guarantee British diplomatic representation in Beijing; China must further compensate the west, and Tianjin was opened for residency.

Taiping Rebellion 1850-1864

As the western countries planned to encroach on Chinese territory and gain partial control over the Chinese economy, the Qing empire was confronted with a more serious internal

³⁵ Grasso, *Modernization and Revolution in China*, 42.

problem.³⁶ The Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) was an immediate threat to the Manchu social and political order, triggering one of the most destructive wars in history. The casualties are possibly more than in World War I. Taiping originated in the southern province of Guangxi, two regions that were physically far from Beijing's powerful central government. These places had experienced severe economic problems brought by the Opium War and the subsequent change in trading activity as more northern ports opened. The Qing government heavily taxed the peasantry to pay reparations for wars and financial deficit caused by the massive import of opium. The Taiping Revolution was a massive rebellion from the peasantry and civil war between the Qing dynasty led by Manchu and the Han, Hakka-led Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. The founder of Taiping was Hong Xiuqan, who converted to Christianity after facing indignity failure in the civil service examinations four times. His object was to replace the entire Confucian system with a pseudo-Christian society.³⁷ The Taipings were destroyed by decentralized, provincial troops like the Xiang Army, led and organized by Zeng Guofan, who had significantly weakened them due to internal strife, an attempted coup, and the failure of the siege of Beijing.

Self-Strengthening Movement 1860 - 1895

Elites' perception and purposes for reforms

After Anglo-French forces' pillage of the Summer Palace, Prince Gong and statesman Wenxiang learned the following lessons: they realized the Western troops and armies were way above Chinese military power. The Westerners were not only willing to sell weapons to China but also pass their military training and manufacturing methods. Prince Gong and Wenxiang thought the West was not a group with an audacious ambition to annex China; instead, they

³⁶ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 221.

³⁷ Grasso, *Modernization and Revolution in China*, 48.

obeyed the rules. Britain could continue to invade Beijing and the Qing government, but Britain retreated from Beijing and returned the capital to the Qing government after signing the Beijing Treaty. From these lessons, Prince Gong decides to use western weapons to tackle the western invasion.³⁸ Besides Prince Gong in the capital, elites outside the capital, such as Guo Pan Zeng, Hongzhang Li, Zongtang Zuo, and Linyi Hu, learned the same lesson. Hu once said, “Riding horse to the river, suddenly saw two western steamers. Their speed was as fast as the horse and the wind.” Zeng used to ask the best blacksmiths and carpenters to build steamers in Hangzhou, while the ship they built was unmovable. Li, in his article, realized the differences between China and the West. Li wrote several letters to Zeng and Prince Gong about the necessity to learn western manufacturing. His letter in 1864 realized Japan's rapid change and the importance of learning western science to survive. In the letter, he mentioned that Japan, as a minor state, understands the importance of learning from the west, but Qing lacks foresight. Li had a clear sense of the era, so he became one of the main characters of the self-strengthen movement.³⁹

From 1840 to 1860, the available recourses indicate there is only one scholar who wrote in 1844 that the advent of western symbolled a great turning point.⁴⁰ At least 43 individuals from 1861 to 1900 commented on the significance of the great change. Li stated in 1872 that the western invasion was the biggest change to take place in three thousand years. Wang Tao, in 1864, wrote: “The foreigners, coming from all corners of the earth, are now convergent on China. This is an unprecedented event - an enormous *pien-chu* (a changed situation) under the heaven.” He later stated that this change would continue until the world became a large,

³⁸ Tsiang, *Zhongguo Jin Dai Shi*, 82.

³⁹ Tsiang, 86.

⁴⁰ Twitchett, Loewe, and Fairbank, *The Cambridge History of China*, 156.

congenial community.⁴¹ Guo Songtao said, “ In order to accommodate the change, we must understand the foreigners; in order to seize the opportunity, we must study the foreign methods.”⁴²

After 1860, many elites were aware of a “changed situation” and realized the necessity of strengthening oneself to tackle the problems created by foreigners and dynastic weakness. These circumstances could be altered by utilizing barbarian strengths and western technology to create the power and wealth to protect China.⁴³ Some elites have thought about the new European international system and observed that competition for survival was the rule.⁴⁴ Xue Fucheng realized that the western states “relied on intelligence and energy to compete with one another.”⁴⁵ Feng Guifen noted that “the Western world had a highly zero-sum nature, where the barbarians worried that if one country became strong, then that would translate into the weakness of their own country”.⁴⁶ From elites’ awareness to actual strengthening, a specific form of institutional reforms was inevitable. The western power posed an unprecedented threat to China with their superior technology, military, and industrial power.⁴⁷ Especially after the first and second opium wars, China appeared incapable of defending itself and attaining parity with the European powers. The result was a call for reforms to strengthen itself.

Reform Contents

⁴¹ Twitchett, Loewe, and Fairbank, 157.

⁴² Twitchett, Loewe, and Fairbank, 161.

⁴³ Grasso, *Modernization and Revolution in China*, 53.

⁴⁴ Grasso, 61.

⁴⁵ Teng, *China’s Response to the West*, 142.

⁴⁶ Feng, *Jiao Bin Lu Kang Yi*, 53.

⁴⁷ Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire*, 89.

Self-strengthening movement was the work of a few high officials rather than of the Qing government.⁴⁸ The slogan of the reform was “Self-strengthening (Zi qiang)” and “Becoming wealthy (Qiufu)”. The ideology of the self-strengthening movement was “Chinese learning for essential principles, western learning for practical application.” This means the tradition of Confucianism still serves the principles of Western learning for practical uses. Prince Gong says, “If we can strengthen ourselves, we [and the Europeans] can live with each other in peace, and we can quietly subdue their ambitious schemes against us.”⁴⁹ Li would strengthen China against rebellions by building shipyards, factories, and arsenals. The drawback is that Li was seen as a severe threat to the conservatives in the court and other regional leaders who discouraged his modernization progress. Again, reformists in the self-strengthening movement attempted to use western technologies to uphold the Qing dynasty's rule. To concrete on policies. There are three phases of self-strengthening movement. From 1861 to 1872, the first phase focused on adopting Western machines, scientific knowledge, and firearms, training technicians and diplomatists through newly established bureaus and schools. Many students were sent abroad to learn western sciences. ZongliYamen, an office for the general management of foreign affairs, was introduced to maintain good relations with western powers.⁵⁰

The Chinese strategy is “to learn the superior techniques of the barbarians to control the barbarians”; nothing else is expected to learn from the west. After the first phase, there was a recognition of the importance of wealth as the basis of power. Modern defense is far more costly than traditional defense. The military modernization had to be supported by better industries, communication systems, and enterprises. In the September of 1876, Li announced: “China’s

⁴⁸ Chesneau, Bastid, and Bergère, *China from the Opium Wars to the 1911 Revolution*, 201.

⁴⁹ Grasso, *Modernization and Revolution in China*, 53.

⁵⁰ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 212.

chronic weakness stems from poverty.” Thus, from 1872 to 1885, the second phase focused on developing profit-oriented enterprises such as railways, mining, shipping, and telegraph while remaining a chief occupation in defense industries.⁵¹ From 1885 to 1895, the third phase, the movement continued the emphasis on naval and military build-up. The board of admiralty and the Beiyang fleet was established in 1885 and 1888. The light industry also enriches the nation through the third phase; textile and cotton-weaving riches momentum.

Limitation

All these attempts seem impressive and could make China a stronger country, while they are very superficial plans for modernization. The scope of reform was limited to firearms, machines, communications, and industries; there was no assimilation of western cultures, institutions, and philosophy. China barely scratches the core of modernization and intimate the surface of western countries. The self-strengthen movement thus had not achieved a breakthrough in industrialization. However, it at least marked the beginning of industrialization and contributed to establishing the sense of modern capitalism. First, the building of arsenals, dockyards, factories, enterprises, and schools contribute to the development of modern metropolises. Secondly, certain populations transformed from agricultural to industrial workers and laborers, leading to a new working class.⁵² In the end, the Chinese did not go beyond bringing western technology and weapons.

1894 Sino Japanese War

As the leading tributary state for centuries, Korea was grateful and respectful toward China because it modeled Chinese culture and political institutions.⁵³ From 1637, it had almost

⁵¹ Hsü, 285.

⁵² Hsü, 291.

⁵³ Ch'oe, “Sino-Korean Relations, 1866-1876,” 90–111.

no foreign intercourse with other countries other than being a tributary state with China and occasional delegations to Japan. The west regards Korea as the Hermit Kingdom.⁵⁴ By the 1880s, Japan had accomplished its modernization after the Meiji restoration and adopted imperial expansion toward its neighbors as an island country with scarce natural resources. A rebel uprising in the Korean peninsula in 1894 provided Japan with a pretext to initiate war with China, and they declared war on each other by August 1894.⁵⁵ Within a few months, Japan ultimately defeated China, symbolled the failure of the Chinese military modernization.

There are roughly four causes for China's defeat. First, modernized Japan had nationalistic consciousness that bounded the whole nation into one unity. Back then, China still applied medieval political systems with decentralized government and people. The Sino-Japanese war could be seen as a war between Japan and Li's regional forces, Beiyang and Huai armies. The war had hardly affected other Chinese. Secondly, corruption in court and among Beiyang armies doomed the defeat of China. The empress dowager misuses the naval funds to build Summer Palace. China, before the war, neglected the British advisor's recommendation to buy two fast ships. However, Japan purchased these two ships. One of them, called Yoshino, made a significant contribution to the naval war. Among the Beiyang army, irregulating and corruption were rampant. Li selected his subordinates based on loyalty rather than their ability. Thirdly, China's defeat is unalienable with Li's misunderstanding of modern international politics and diplomacy.⁵⁶ The treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895 concluded the Sino-Japanese war. China admitted Korea's complete independence and autonomy and ended the tributary relations

⁵⁴ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 332.

⁵⁵ Grasso, *Modernization and Revolution in China*, 57.

⁵⁶ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 343.

with Korea. Taiwan and the Liaodong Peninsula were ceded to Japan while making significant compensation to Japan.

Hundred-Days' Reform 1898

Background

1898 for the Qing empire was a turning point in history: a successful reform might stave off the collapse, while the failure of the reform could only signal the extinction of the dynasty.⁵⁷ China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese war in 1895 marked the failure of the Self-strengthen Movement. Its value of "Chinese learning should remain the essence, but Western learning be used for practical development" is no longer applicable.⁵⁸ Scholars, officials, emperors, and even the powerholder, the empress dowager, realized the necessity for a more extensive reform, although they differed on the question of the reform's leadership, scope, and nature.⁵⁹

Kang Youwei, a young philosopher, and his student Liang Qichao advocated dramatic institutional changes after the humiliating loss in the Sino-Japanese war in 1895, reaffirming the urgent to reform. Kang Youwei had sent a series of memorials to Emperor Guangxu from 1888 to 1898, expressing his reform ideologies and opinions based on the international situations. Kang compared reforms in different countries and concluded that only imitating western thoughts could save China. Kang provided theoretical foundations for the hundred days reform by analyzing the problem in a larger context. He presented potential models from Japanese Meiji reformers to Napoleon Bonaparte and Peter the Great to the Guangxu emperor, giving examples of countries like Poland, Turkey, and India, which had been partitioned, economically ruined,

⁵⁷ Hsü, 355.

⁵⁸ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 217.

⁵⁹ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 355.

and politically subjugated as mirrors.⁶⁰ Kang abandoned the old conservative view of Westerners as barbarians; instead, he adopted worldwide perspectives to understand China's situation. He realized that different countries form the world; China is only part of the international system. He mentioned in his memorials that countries which annexed by the west were intentionally secluded from the outside world, possessed high self-esteem, and refused to change.⁶¹ Kang used extensive historical examples (*A study of the political reforms in Meiji Japan, An account of the reforms of Peter of Russia*) to convince the emperor that reforms were the only way to survive and China had advantages in terms of territory, population, and natural resources to make reform complete faster.⁶² On the one hand, the Guangxu emperor appreciated Kang's progressive and radical advice about reforms; on the other hand, he feared being the last emperor of China, so he stood by Kang and initiated the Hundred Days Reform on June 11, 1898.⁶³

Guangxu emperor appointed Kang as the secretary of the Zongli Yamen and the right to address memorials directly to the emperor. However, the path to reform was not easy. The empress dowager Cixi officially announced her retirement in 1889, but she continued to hold enormous power and pull the strings. All the court memorials had to be sent to the empress dowager's palace. She allowed the incumbent emperor Guangxu to handle day-to-day administration, but she maintained the decision power on important issues. Besides, most high officials in the Qing court were loyal to the empress dowager since they received their positions through her patronage.⁶⁴ The Qing court was divided into a conservative group formed by many senior officials and a progressive group led by the Guangxu emperor and Kang. The dividing line

⁶⁰ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 220.

⁶¹ Wang and Shang, *Wu Xu Wei Xin Yu Qing Mo Xin Zheng*, 47.

⁶² Wang and Shang, 47.

⁶³ Hu, *Cong ya pian zhan zheng dao wu si yun dong*, 550.

⁶⁴ Twitchett, Loewe, and Fairbank, *The Cambridge History of China*, 319.

between these two groups was not as clearly drawn as it came after the spring of 1898. The scattered pro-emperor sentiments gradually crystallized into a fully-fledged faction until the spring and summer of 1898. The faction rivalry eventually polarized the court around the issue of radical and moderate reform (conservative).⁶⁵ The conservative officials opposed the emperor's reform and saw it as detrimental to China's inner values and destructive to the long-term good of China. Guangxu naively thought Cixi would support his reform; conversely, she saw the radical reform threaten her supremacy and threw tremendous authority against it.⁶⁶ On September 21, the empress dowager Cixi forced the Guangxu emperor into solitary seclusion and arrested six of his radical advisers. On the same day, she issued an edict purporting that the emperor asked her to return to power.⁶⁷

Reform Content

On June 11, 1898, the Guangxu Emperor announced an edict about "decision on national affairs," which marked the beginning of the Hundred Days Reform. The reform lasted for 103 days until September 16, 1898. Forty to fifty reform decrees were initiated to bring about a revolution from above, concentrating on education, political administration, economics, and international cultural exchange.⁶⁸ Kang's reform proposals were ambitious, and he tried to force the reform unprecedentedly. Most of the decrees dealt with the military, economic, and cultural-educational spheres until late August. These decrees also intensified the self-strengthening movement in economic and military spheres, while the cultural-educational innovations went significantly beyond the self-strengthening movement.⁶⁹ He abolished the structured exams to

⁶⁵ Twitchett, Loewe, and Fairbank, 321.

⁶⁶ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 355.

⁶⁷ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 221.

⁶⁸ Grasso, *Modernization and Revolution in China*, 60.

⁶⁹ Twitchett, Loewe, and Fairbank, *The Cambridge History of China*, 326.

reform China's examination system, the eight-legged essay used for centuries. In addition, he established modern schools in provinces that offered both Chinese and Western studies, upgraded medical schools, and opened vocational institutes for mining, industry, and railways study.⁷⁰ The emperor assigned local officials to promote agricultural, industrial, and commercial developments in the broader economic development area. The reform also promoted railway construction and encouraged inventions.⁷¹ Politically, (1) Kang abolished sinecure and unnecessary offices; He also hoped to improve administrative efficiency by eliminating delays, and by developing (2) Kang encouraged suggestions from private citizens to be forwarded by government offices on the day they are received. In terms of cultural exchanges, Kang protected missionaries and allowed a tour of foreign countries by high officials.⁷²

Causes of the Failure

The reform failed for various reasons: the inexperience of the reformers and their immature strategy, the influential conservative opposition, and the empress dowager's reluctance to give up her power.⁷³ The reform had little support within the society. Reform leaders had further reduced their support by abolishing numerous scholars' careers through overly autocratic measures.⁷⁴ Nor could the regional strongmen be expected to support Kang's proposals since reform limited their local autonomy and corruption by concentrating the emperor's power.⁷⁵ In addition, the reformer neglected the ordinary people almost entirely and concentrated on the elite class. The reformers did nothing to end the foreign encroachments; the scramble for concessions

⁷⁰ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 375.

⁷¹ Grasso, *Modernization and Revolution in China*, 60.

⁷² Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 376.

⁷³ Hsü, 380.

⁷⁴ Chesneaux, Bastid, and Bergère, *China from the Opium Wars to the 1911 Revolution*, 323.

⁷⁵ Grasso, *Modernization and Revolution in China*, 60.

even intensified during the summer of 1898. Kang was an idealist instead of a practical statesman. He relied on the emperor to impose the reforms, whereas the real imperial power was in the hands of the Empress dowager.⁷⁶ Kang was also impatient in achieving quick results, hardly considering the effect of decrees on others, immortally though the emperor had the power to overcome all the difficulties. It was the reaction rather than the reform per se that failed. The reform introduced many western ideologies and institutions that could facilitate China's westernization. Although many problems existed with reforms, the new ideologies and political institutions could contribute to China's social progress. Unfortunately, this reform was interrupted by the empress dowager and her conservative party.

New Deal 1901 - 1911

The Boxer and the Siege of the International Legations 1900

The Boxer rebellion was a direct excuse for the foreigners to tear up China again in 1900. By the late 1890s, the profound and pervasive anti-foreign feeling had been sparked throughout China due to the constant invasions of traders, diplomats, and missionaries. Chinese officials were particularly irritated by the activities of Christian proselytizers who had been granted freedom of movement within China under the terms of the Treaty of Tianjin. This incensed people as armies of Bible peddlers destroyed ancestral tables and temples and erected churches. The traditional order was viewed as being threatened by Christianity.⁷⁷ The Chinese and the foreigners soon had grown highly distrustful of each other. Tensions were rising, with increasing individual acts of violence, particularly against communities of Christian converts. The aftermath of the 1894 Sino-Japanese War also led to poor harvests, economic disruptions, and banditry,

⁷⁶ Chesneaux, Bastid, and Bergère, *China from the Opium Wars to the 1911 Revolution*, 323.

⁷⁷ Grasso, *Modernization and Revolution in China*, 62.

which led to more civil unrest. The mass had no means to live through profound economic upheavals compounded by the escalating hostility between Chinese people and Christian missionaries, and the western industrial products made China's indigenous products less competitive.⁷⁸ Therefore, several secret organizations emerged in northern China during the last decade of the 19th century. With a strong emphasis on physical exercise and mysticism, along with the anti-foreign and anti-Christian sentiment. These groups later developed into a group named “the boxers,” which conveyed a similar impression of the Chinese people as a group that needed to unite to survive.⁷⁹ As a result, the boxers started killing Chinese converts or people with foreign objects. They also killed French and Belgian engineers and English missionaries, destroyed railway tracks, burned stations, and ruined telephone lines.

By June 1900, the movement had reached Peking, and foreign embassies needed a special international military mission (2,100-man "Seymour Expedition") to protect them from the Boxers setting fire to Western churches, raiding foreign homes, and killing Chinese Christians. In response to this, foreign troops attempted to march on Beijing. On June 21, 1900, the empress dowager declared war against the foreign powers. The siege began when a Chinese guard assassinated the German minister on his way to the Royal Court to discuss the order, prompting the foreign legations to fortify their enclosure. Unsurprisingly, the Box rebellion ended by Qing Empire's defeat by signing the unequal treaty “Boxer Protocol” between the Qing Empire and the Eight-Nation Alliance on September 7th, 1901 (Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, United Kingdom, Italy, Japan, Russia, and the United States, Belgium, Spain, and the Netherland). As a result, poor China was forced to pay 450 million taels and silver over 40 years as indemnity.

⁷⁸ Grasso, 63.

⁷⁹ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 222.

Anti-foreign societies were banned on pain of the dead foreigners, and importing armies was forbidden.⁸⁰

The late-Qing Reforms

The boxer disaster was a traumatic event. The Qing empire had its last attempt to revive the Qing dynasty: the emperor dowager Cixi allowed the Qing government to initiate Reform, namely, the late-Qing Reform that proposed to imitate the Japanese model of constitutional monarchy. In April 1901, the Qing government established the Superintendency of Political Affairs to make a detailed plan for comprehensive Reform. Prince Qing, Rong Lu, and Li Hongzhang were appointed directors, whereas Zhang Zhidong and Liu Kunyi were appointed associates. From 1901-1905, only three concrete improvements were made in the dowager's Reform: (1) abolished the civil service examinations; (2) established modern schools that study western history, geography, politics, science, and technology; and (3) sending students abroad. In addition, essential appointments such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the superintendency of Political Affairs, and the Bureau of Military Training were all given to Manchus. In this case, the Reform hardly succeeded because the fundamental purpose was to consolidate the rule of the Qing government.

In 1905, Japan, a tiny island country, successfully defeated one of the great powers of Europe, Russia. Japan's victory further indicates the effectiveness of constitutionalism, and Russia is moving in the direction of constitutionalism via the Duma. The Chinese believed that they had found a new way to survive. On July 16, 1905, the emperor Guangxu sent five ministers abroad to study foreign politics. Three of them visited Japan, Britain, France, and Belgium, while the two others traveled to the United States, Germany, Austria, and Italy. The delegation

⁸⁰ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 404–5.

expressed favorable opinions of the British and German political systems but concluded that the Japanese constitution was most suitable for China because of the similarities both countries share. The Manchu leader of the mission proposed to adopt the constitution within five years. He implies that a well-crafted constitution could be used as a tool of executive power, giving the federal government a centralized leadership structure. On September 1, 1906, the dowager supported the recommendation, which a royal commission had approved. Nevertheless, she cleverly omitted to include the promulgation date.

Different political factions in the government held varying opinions about the constitution. The dowager saw it as a practical way to appease the populace without truly eroding her own authority. The Manchus regarded it as an opportunity to consolidate government power, keep the Chinese out of inner layers, and seize control from the largely Chinese province governors-general. As a result, constitutionalism evolved into an anti-Chinese ideology. It offered hope for freedom from unfair, repressive Manchu dominance. In August 1908, the Qing government issued the “*The Outline of the Imperial Constitution*” and “*List of Annual Preparatory Work*”. Emperor Guangxu and Empress Dowager Cixi died two days apart in succession in November 1908. The first Cabinet was established in 1911. However, Manchus from the royal clan made up more than half of its members. The constitutionalist camp's detractors dubbed it the "Royal Cabinet." The Qing dynasty, in the opinion of the constitutionalists, had no actual intention of establishing a constitutional government, which left them disillusioned. Gradually, they developed sympathies for and a tendency toward revolution. The Xinhai Revolution started on August 19 of the same year.⁸¹

⁸¹ Hsü, 408–17.

V. Why did Qing Empire and Japan try to Imitate?

Before the invasion of the western countries, China and Japan were two isolated territories and barely cared about the “success” of the West, materially or in terms of reputation. China, in particular, as the hegemon of East Asia, arrogantly thought of itself as the center and most powerful empire in the world. It also considered itself the most successful and wealthy empire, and all other places were barbarians. Besides, these two places were self-sufficient economies, which supported why there was little necessity to contact the outside world since they did not rely on trade for wealth. The Western powers had put a knife to the necks of these two empires that they had to start imitating for survival. Western countries opened the doors to Japan and the Qing Empire, forcing them to trade with the Western powers and sign unequal treaties. If they did not start to imitate, they would have been oppressed by the West until both collapsed. The Qing Empire paid a heavy price after the two Opium Wars and could no longer compete with the West. Japan had little power and ability to resist the West directly and had no choice but to obey the West. So, both the Qing Empire and Japan were facing a severe survival crisis. Imitation is the most cost-effective way to ensure their survival and gain power.

This research is preferably aligned with the imitation extracted from the balance of power theory in realism rather than adopting constructivism which regards imitation as a dominant way for states to socialize and pursue prestige. Constructivism's explanation of imitation does not apply to the late Qing Empire and Japan case because it explains that imitation happens when states find other states have better "material" or "status" success. It can be argued that the later period of Japanese and Qings' imitation may attribute to what constructivism calls the pursuit of "material" and "status." For example, Japan's decision to join the Western international order could consider a desire to acquire "status." Japan's desire to have more wealth and military power

to conquer its neighbors, Korea and Manchuria, could be seen as a quest for both "material" and "status." However, in the case of the Qing Empire and Japan, their primary reason for imitation was not to pursue "material" and "status" but for survival. Japan's later shift to pursuing prestige does not mean that Japan abandoned the survival issue. Instead, prestige is an add-on to survival, so this research still aligns with realism.

VI. Why was Japan's Imitation Successful and Qing Empire's not?

Preconditions for Successful Imitation

Japan and Qing Empire had survival issues, so both were forced to learn advanced military practices from the West. The advantage of backwardness suggests that less developed countries Japan and the Qing Empire can close the military-technological gap with the West via imitation very cheaply and fast by freeriding the West's technologies. Imitation is indeed a way and a shortcut for a country to gain power and guarantee its survival, but not all imitations accomplish such things. Why did Japan's imitation transform it into a powerful modern nation-state successfully? Why did the Qing Empire's imitation fail to prevent it from perishing? Successful imitation comes with preconditions. Conditional imitation is a term this research develops. The selected Qing Empire and Japan cases show that imitation can guarantee survival and gain more power only when states reach certain premises (Similar to applying for college, the admissions will only give chances to those students who meet the qualifications). The following section concluded the three preconditions for successful imitations in the case of Japan and the Qing Empire: the progressive mindset of elites, a stable domestic power structure, and a comprehensive one-step reform.

1) Progressive Mindset of Elites

Elites having a progressive vision is crucial to successful imitation. Japanese elites had an avant-garde mindset. They realized the gap between their country and the West as early as when the Perry Expedition, a diplomatic and military mission from the United States, forced Japan to open its door. The Japanese elites immediately noticed the transition of power in the international system in the early stage and the necessity of the power to survive. One of the important figures in the Meiji leadership, Yamagata Aritomo, asserted that all states now stand equally. They are in charge of defending their own defined territory. Their soldiers cannot retain their independence if they are weak.⁸² Japan had positive integration into the international system and was actively involved in international affairs. Japanese government leaders decided to compete economically and militarily with the West.⁸³ They aim to make Japan be able to compete with great European powers and endeavor to establish Japanese hegemony. Inoue Kaoru, former minister for foreign affairs of Japan, says, “We must make our empire a European-style empire; make our people a European-style people, create a new European-style empire in the Orient. Only by doing so can our empire climb to an equal position in treaties with the Occidental states.”⁸⁴ Iwakura Tomomi expressed this vision of the new international order in a famous memorial written in 1869: although it can be argued that all states overseas keep in touch with one another, ultimately, all states overseas are our country's adversaries. These days, all foreign nations study, develop their technologies, and strive to become powerful and wealthy.

The Qing elites, on the other hand, realized the importance of imitating the West only after the defeat of the two Opium Wars. Imitations were choices made by the elite and ruler's

⁸² Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire*, 66.

⁸³ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 172.

⁸⁴ Suzuki, 114.

perception of the world order and the realization of the disadvantages of their own countries. If some elites are lagging in their awareness or have arrogance about their own country or want to maintain their ruling power, then it is likely that the elites will be unwilling to imitate what should be imitated and lead the country to further chaos. Even though the Qing elites later noticed its weaknesses, they did not make up their minds to bring China into the Western world order as the Japanese elites did. They just felt that the Qing Empire fall behind because of the backwardness of technology and weapons. Lihong Zhang was a brilliant leader, but even a brilliant leader could not be successful. He wanted western technology and military equipment to preserve the bases of Chinese civilization while using western technology, which was ineffective. The trouble was that western technology tended to evade the Chinese base and transform China.

The self-strengthening movement is an obvious example of the elites' lack of a progressive mindset. This movement is the first reform of the Qing empire initiated after the second opium war and the invasion of the summer palace by the Anglo-French. The slogans of this reform are "Chinese learning for essential principles, west learning for practical uses," "Self-strengthening and Becoming Wealthy," and "to learn the superior techniques of the barbarians to control the barbarians." The concentration of the reform indicates that the Qing elites and leaders were only interested in material imitation and had little interest in the ideology of the western states and their new international orders. The Qing elites thought imitation in technology was sufficient to make them defend those western powers, which seemed plausible. However, even simply learning the advanced technology of the West was also obstructed. The superficial technology learning caused the defeat of the First Sino-Japanese war.

The self-strengthening movement was the work of several elites rather than the Qing government. The conservative party, another group of the Qing court elites, was against the reform and wanted to insist on the original closed-door policy. According to the policy borrowing models, the Qing policymakers manipulated evidence about foreign models and intentionally shaped foreign evidence to suit their purposes. The equivalent functional approach in policy borrowing was what the Late Qing rulers employed to safeguard their power and the fate of the empire. Empress Dowager Cixi arrested the Guangxu Emperor after the Hundred Days Reform's start and terminated this reform to preserve her power. Because if the Hundred Days Reform were successful, the Qing Dynasty ruled by the Manchus would gradually be ruled by both Manchus and the Han Chinese. Cixi did not want the Han Chinese to participate in ruling her empire.

2) Stable Domestic Power Structure

The second precondition for successful imitation is the stable domestic power structure, which consists of a concentration of power in the hands of reformists and a stable social environment. The previous section discussed the progressive elite's mindset but having those elites are not enough. They must have solid power in hand to make their progressive ideas come true. Meiji restoration was a top-down and a revolution restoration led by the very young progressive people who nonetheless managed to present themselves as conservative. Japan's progressive elites hold power so that they can initiate comprehensive reforms, making their blueprints come true. The Meiji Restoration leaders successfully concentrated their power in the hands of reformists, attributing to the rapid fall of the conservative political forces, confiscation of the power of local feudal aristocrats (Abolition of the han system), and the solid rule of the reformists, such as Kido Takayoshi, Ōkubo Toshimichi, and Ito Hirobumi.

In contrast, many reform initiators in the Qing Empire had no real power. The real power was in the hands of the empress dowager Cixi and the conservative parties. Institutional transfer as a means of imitation was adopted in reforms of the late Qing Empire, especially the Hundred Days Reform and the Late Qing Reform, but both reforms failed to some degree. Cixi and the conservative party stopped the Hundred Days Reform before it could even be fully implemented. There are internal conflicts caused by the uneven distribution of power between the Qing court. Meanwhile, the Late Qing government's flexibility is another issue worth debating. During the reign of Prince Regent Zhaifeng between 1908 and 1911, the Beijing authorities seemed to have little flexibility in state strategy because the Manchu aristocrats sought to concentrate political power in their hands and exclude Han ministers and officials from the power caucus. These could be part of the failure of the Late Qing elites' effort to imitate the successful experience of foreign reforms. Japan and the Qing Empire were both beneficiaries of the advantage of backwardness because they were both backward states and could increase their overall power by imitating the advanced technology from the West. However, Japan took more advantages than the Qing empire because Japan faced less opposition to the reform, and the conservative faction in the Qing court hampered half of the reform. Therefore, the self-strengthening movement was met with more resistance than in Japan.

In addition, a stable domestic social and political environment was a crucial precondition in imitation. A successful institutional transfer requires a stable social and political environment and a compliant citizenry as a foundation. Japan had relatively stable domestic politics since it had a civil war in the 1840s before the Meiji restoration, which inaugurated decades of relative peace. In contrast, late Qing was by no means a civil society; thus, there was no organized society for transfer. Besides the obstruction of the conservatives in the Qing court, China had

two massive domestic uprisings and conflicts between the Manchu and Han Chinese among the civilian population. The Taiping Rebellion and the Boxer Rebellion resulted in brutal deaths, famine, and social unrest. It had the collapse of order throughout most of the country and the rise of militias in the local areas to protect the local people, and Qing Empire never really succeeded in pacifying the country. Therefore, late Qing is difficult to imitate in such conditions.

3) A Comprehensive One-step Reform

The third necessary precondition for successful imitation is the implementation of comprehensive and integrated imitation. Japan did a holistic imitation of the west, the Meiji Restoration, through one comprehensive reform, while the Qing dynasty only partially emulated the west through several intermittent piecemeal reforms. In the historical context, none of the late Qing reforms was comprehensive in categories, namely politics, economy and culture, and subjects, namely elites and masses. Some of the reforms centered on economy and modernization, and some concentrated—on politics and culture— there was no comprehensive unitary reform including all the categories mentioned above at the same time. In terms of the subjects, reforms never reach the bottom and the ordinary people. Instead, they focused only on the upper classes, including the emperor and the Qing court elites. The Qing Empire did not implement a holistic, top-down reform because the late Qing court merely realized the importance of survival but not the necessity of joining a new international order. Longing to maintain the old international order and preserve the court's reign, Qing rarely performs thorough reforms. The focus of the self-strengthening movement was on the accumulation of wealth and upgrading technologies. After the movement's failure, some elites and the emperor launched the Hundred Days Reform, which advocated political, cultural, and economic reforms but was halted by Cixi and the conservatives. The subsequent New Deal of the late Qing Dynasty, which

focused on politics and planned to study German constitutionalism, was also unsuccessful because the Qing Dynasty was already on the verge of collapse during the New Deal. It is worth noting that all the reforms are intermittent and not integrated, and the reforms are only at the elite level but never reach the mass. On the contrary, the Japanese Meiji Restoration was a top-down reform that implemented fundamental changes in the economy, culture, and politics. A comprehensive reform can upgrade a country, abandoning inadequate and backward systems, and absorbing advanced technology and policies. As a result, it helps improve the efficiency and productivity of the whole society and creates a stronger state. Lack of a comprehensive one-step imitation was another factor that Japan had successful imitations, but Qing Empire was not.

VII. Discussion and Conclusion

International Dimension

The international environment at that time was also a factor that affected the success of imitation. However, the influence of the international environment was not as significant as the domestic factors to be the main reason for the failure of the Qing Empire's imitation. Japan has much more freedom than the Qing Empire; it has a breeding space within the international system. In contrast, the Qing Empire had imperial power over the place, Britain, German, French, America, and Japan later. It is like somebody trying to fight back has been hauled down by several different powers. Japan had unequal treaties, but they were freer to act on their own to modernize. Another perspective is the Qing Empire's relationship with the west international system, basically the western international system. Japanese elites adapted to the new international order quickly, but the Qing Empire had thousands of years of its world order. The Qing elites tried to reassert Chinese power in Korea. Yuan ShiKai came to Korea in the 1880s and set up a commandry but was a reassertion for the first time, a reassertion of Chinese military

power on the Korean peninsula that lasted until the Sino-Japanese war. The Qing Empire had a much bigger problem than Japan. Japan had been in seclusion for 2500 years, whereas China still thought of itself as the middle kingdom and the leader of the no world; anything else was considered barbarians. China was simultaneously modernizing and keeping the country together and fending off the western international system that was trying to replace the Chinese-style international system. So, Japan's problems were much less than China's.

Conclusion

This research revolved around two questions: 1) Why did the Qing Empire and Japan try to imitate? 2) why was Japan successfully imitated but the Qing Empire unsuccessful? The answer to the first question is obvious. The Qing Empire and Japan had adopted close-door policies for centuries but chose to imitate because solid Western warships and advanced cannons threatened their survival. Although Japan subsequently began to pursue prestige and status, it does not mean that the survival went away; Japan just added prestige to survival. So, survival remains the ultimate reason to imitate. However, the imitation results diverged for these two empires. Japan succeeded in imitating, and the Qing Empire failed. This research analyzed the Meiji Restoration and the reforms implemented in the late Qing Empire, which finds that imitation is a shortcut to rescue a state when survival is threatened, but imitation only succeeds when certain preconditions are reached. In the case of Japan and the late Qing Empire, successful imitation is based on the following preconditions: 1) progressive mindset of elites. The elites of the Qing Empire were late in realizing the survival crisis and finding ways to implement reforms, whereas the Japanese elites realized early on that the international order was changing, and the new European-centered world order replaced the East Asian hegemon Qing Empire. After realizing the change, Japanese elites immediately prepared reform to guarantee its survival and

enhance national power. 2) A stable domestic power structure consists of a concentration of power in the hands of reformists and a stable social environment. The Hundred Days Reform was rich in content and was a comprehensive reform on paper, but Empress Dowager Cixi stopped the reform since the reformists had little power concentrated in their hands. In addition, due to the Taiping Rebellion and the Boxer uprising, the Qing Empire also had to divert its concentration to suppress the social unrest, which further negatively affected the implementation of reforms. 3) A comprehensive and systematic imitation. The Meiji Restoration was a top-down reform of Japanese society from the political, military, economic, and educational standpoints. The imitation of the Qing Empire was several piecemeal imitations, and the Qing Empire did not successfully carry out comprehensive top-down reforms as Japan did.

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