

The Dynamic of The Uprising

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The Battle of Peking, or the Relief of Peking, from the perspective of the Boxers and Chinese Imperial Guards

Can you ever justify a war? Can you ever sacrifice someone's life for your own interests? In the early 20th century, the Boxers ruled the sacrifice necessary. The Boxers were a group of Chinese peasants who were insistent on driving the foreign powers of the UK, US, Russia, Germany, Italy, Japan, and Austria-Hungary out of China along with any cultural influence they brought with them. Alone, a band of peasants with large ideas of toppling the combined power of eight international powerhouses may not seem like a threat, but they had something most rebellions don't- the support of their own government. The Chinese government deemed the casualties a justified loss to take the Western influence out of China. At the time, the Boxer Rebellion was supported by the Chinese government, however it cost China many innocent lives, foreigners and citizens alike. Additionally, even with the government's support, the prospect of victory was so far fetched, that it was hardly a viable war to fight. Because of the lives that were lost and the fact that it was a hopeless war to fight, I do not believe that the Boxer Rebellion was justified.

The Boxers attacked innocent foreign civilians who were doing nothing but living in the city made especially for the foreigners, called Peking. During the long 55 day siege of the city, around 2,500 foreign citizens died, their lives taken away by disease, starvation, or Boxer weaponry. Those in Peking were mostly traders, soldiers, and simply average citizens. John T. Myers, an American Commander stationed in Peking during the siege, highlighted the hopelessness they all felt. He stated that they could do nothing but "await the hour of execution."

The Boxers ceaseless attacks were not only directed at those from other countries, but also at China's own citizens as well. The number one source of casualties on the side of the foreigners were the Chinese Christians, who were murdered simply for converting to a Western religion. The Boxers were so determined to remove the foreign influence from China that about 32,000 Chinese Christians lost their lives. In fact, some historians depict the Boxers' bloody movement as "a violent anti-foreign, anti-colonial, anti-Christian uprising." This stresses the intensity of the Boxers. For emphasis, one firsthand account of the siege stated, "This forenoon, ten Americans and twenty Russians went to the south cathedral, where the Boxers were looting, burning, and killing..." This quote showcases the fury of the Boxer army, even when up against their own people.

From a strategic point of view, the Boxer Rebellion was like a cornered animal's last stand. It was basically a suicide mission. With the Qing dynasty weak, vulnerable, and trapped, the fantastical idea that they were going to topple the world's top powerhouses wasn't very viable. The Qing Dynasty had been struggling for a very long time, due to the Opium Wars in the mid-1800s, the Shanxi drought of 1892-1894 that had threatened famine for Chinese peasants, and general unemployment, overpopulation, high taxes, corrupt government, foreign influence, high crime rate, and poverty. All of these issues had brought the Qing Dynasty to its knees. In China, they believed that all members of the royal family had the "Mandate of Heaven" or the approval of the Gods. When the Gods no longer approved of those in power, disaster would be sent their way until they were removed

from power. So in the Chinese's eyes, the Qing Dynasty no longer had the Mandate of Heaven, and power over the country should be turned over to the next dynasty, or in this case, Republic. The Boxers original motto was "Overthrow the Qing, destroy the foreigners." It's a miracle that the empress, Empress Dowager, managed to get the Boxers on her side. Therefore, the attack wasn't as much of a strategic battle to actually remove foreign influence from China, but more of the Qing Dynasty fighting like a cornered tiger. The Qing Dynasty knew it was finished, but it just wanted to go down swinging. Sure enough, a mere eleven years after the attack, on January 1, 1912, the Republic of China was established.

By the end of the rebellion, the Boxers had accomplished nothing. The Boxers and Chinese government's combined powers had sacrificed the lives of innocent civilians, both foreign and native. What for? Even after joining forces, they stood no chance against eight of the world's biggest economic and militant powerhouses. The Chinese government, although patriotic, had been plagued by natural disaster and was already teetering on the brink of collapse. The Boxer Rebellion may not have succeeded, but it definitely marked the last stand of the Qing Dynasty. The Rebellion would lead the way for China to convert into a Republic and turn to Western ideas. While the rebellion may not do the lives that were lost justice, its legacy is clear. The Boxer Rebellion served as China's wake up call. If they didn't begin using Western technology, medicine, and aspects of its culture, they would be a mere small, weak, easily conquered country.

China vs. The World

Torrien Nelson

By the late 1890s a secret group of Boxers started a rebellion, which was called the Boxer Rebellion. This organization was called the Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists, which started a movement called the Boxer Rebellion. The Boxer Rebellion took place in Northern China. The Boxers, a group of Chinese peasants, fought against the combined power of the Western world and Japan, eight countries in total. Throughout the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, the Boxers targeted both Chinese Christians and foreign missionaries, who the Boxers believed were attempting to colonize and take over China. Part of the reason for the Boxers Rebellion was because of the humiliation that the Qing Dynasty had suffered dating back to the 1830 and 1840s due to constant natural disasters.

The Boxers felt that the Westerners were taking over. The Boxers' way of solving the problem of Western influence was to torture or even kill innocent people to stop them from converting to Christianity, which in their eyes, was a bad, Western idea. Initially, Qing troops suppressed the Boxers but, in January of 1900, the Empress ordered that the Boxers would be known as bandits.

When the Boxers reached the Beijing Foreign Legations in the spring of 1900, more violence was unleashed against foreigners. They burned Christian churches, killed Chinese Christians, and violently intimidated any Chinese official who attempted to suppress their revolt. The violence continued to escalate into what is known today as the "Siege of the Peking," or the occupation of foreign embassies. The Siege of Peking was one of the most famous battles that was waged during the Boxers Rebellion, which carried on from June to

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August in the year 1900. During the 55 day siege, the foreigners were trapped in Peking until backup troops from the eight nations arrived. After fighting its way through Northern China, an international force of approximately 20,000 troops from Eight Nation Alliance arrived to take Peking and rescue the foreigners and Chinese Christians trapped inside. After the battle that ended the rebellion, the Boxer army was smothered by the foreign troops.

Then the Boxers Rebellion formally ended in 1901 with the signing of the Boxer Protocol. The Protocol said that China had to pay \$330 million to the countries as repercussions, their forts would be burned, all officials who supported the Rebellion would be severely punished, the foreign armies could station troops in the capital city, and China could not import any firearms for two years. Eventually, the Boxer Rebellion would mark the end of Qing Dynasty, which fell and was replaced by the People's Republic of China a few years later, in 1912.

