Missed Opportunities: How the Taiping Rebellion and American Civil War Changed American Attitudes Towards the Chinese Empire and China, 1850-1865

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Abstract

This thesis is entitled Missed Opportunities: How the Taiping Rebellion and American Civil War Changed American Attitudes Towards the Chinese Empire and China, 1850-1865. It explores how American ideas about the rebellion in China drew on the disparate American understandings of citizenship, religion, revolution, violence, trade and war. By using an entangled history methodology, this thesis demonstrates how communication between the American community in Shanghai and the United States itself shaped the ways both Americans in China and Americans at home understood events in China. The multitudes of information which crossed the Pacific both ways meant Americans did not understand the Taiping Rebellion in isolation, but with reference to the world around them and especially the secession crisis and Civil War in the United States. This dissertation argues that, despite a host of different ideas and stances on the whether the Taiping rebels might be beneficial for both China and those Americans seeking to make money or spread the word of God in the early 1850s, Americans of all political, religious and sectional backgrounds had come to a broad consensus that the Taiping did not represent opportunity for the United States by 1865. This is because of a hardening in attitudes towards revolution and violence, as well as a growing belief that the rebellion in China was standing in the way of American merchants making money in China. Finally, we can learn from examining this subject that the Taiping Rebellion was such actually something that Americans could rally around at a time of disunity, and furthermore, explain that despite the instability within the United States, Americans of all backgrounds looked to China as a land of opportunity and perhaps even imperial ambition.

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<u>Introduction</u>

In 1853, the old imperial capital of China, Nanjing, was seized by the Taiping rebel movement which had emerged in 1850 from the mountains in Guangxi province and descended upon the Yangtze river valley.[1] The capture of Nanjing brought the civil war onto the doorstep of the Western presence in China. By 1853, a sizeable community of Westerners, including Americans, had become established in Chinese treaty ports such as Shanghai, and these Westerners would become embroiled in the Civil War which was unfolding in China.[2] The Taiping Rebellion was something that seemed deeply confusing to most Westerners when it first erupted, as little was known about it. It was led by Hong Xiuquan, a newly converted Christian who took advantage of the unrest in southern China by offering an alternative vision of society centred on ousting ethnically Manchu rulers from power and establishing a Christian Chinese state. In 1853, the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace (the official name of Taiping) began to implement its policies in the territory it controlled in the Yangtze river valley and beyond. Infighting amongst the leaders of the rebellion and strengthening of imperial forces meant that by 1856 momentum swung back to the official Chinese government. With the conclusion of the Second Opium War in 1860, the Qing government also received the help of British, French, and American mercenaries, as well as British and French troops defending Shanghai itself. By 1864, Nanjing had been retaken by Qing forces and the war was over, having claimed between 30 and 60 million lives.[3]

Throughout the 1850s and the 1860s, while the Taiping Rebellion was threatening to destroy the Qing Empire and drag Westerners in treaty ports into the war, across the Pacific Ocean another state was undergoing a series of crises which would also culminate in a Civil War. From the beginning, the United States had struggled over the question of the place of slavery in the American republic. Although the 1820 Missouri Compromise managed to suppress the division over slavery for a few decades, the victory of the United States in the Mexican-American War, and the new territories this brought, caused the question to put

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[1] Stephen R. Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, The West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012), xv-xvi.

[2] *Ibid.*, 9.

[3] Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 548-549.

pressure on the unity between the free North and slave-holding South. After a decade of worsening crises, the election of the anti-slavery president Abraham Lincoln in 1860 triggered most of the southern slave states to secede from the Union, and started the Civil War.[4] As the secession crisis and the American Civil War took place simultaneously with the Taiping Rebellion, both were important in shaping how Americans in Chinese treaty ports saw the world.

The impact of conflict on American attitudes toward China can best be explored through asking the following questions. Firstly, how did the circulation of information between the United States and China help shape beliefs about both the Taiping Rebellion specifically, as well as about China and the Chinese in general? Americans in Treaty Port China and at home were not forming opinions in isolation but by using domestic events, such as the secession crisis and the Civil War, and international events, such as the 1848 revolutions in Europe, as reference points. How much did events back home and further abroad help Americans in Treaty Port China to understand the events erupting around them, and vice-versa, how did Chinese events help Americans understand their own nation? Secondly, how did the way Americans conceptualised the Taiping Rebellion change over the course of the 1850s and 1860s? When the Taiping became established in Nanjing in the early 1850s, many Americans and Westerners were optimistic about the revolutionary movement which espoused Christian values and seemed to present an opportunity for greater market penetration for the Western powers. However, by the early to mid-1860s public opinion, both in Treaty Ports and back in Western metropoles, had largely swung against the rebel movement and the version of Christianity which they practiced. What caused this shift in public opinion about a rebellion on the other side of the Pacific Ocean? Thirdly, what can we learn about how American partisanship over the foreign relations of the United States? Do partisan differences shape the reporting on the Taiping Rebellion? Could Americans find common ground over their understandings of the Taiping Rebellion at a time they were at their most divided? Do these conversations taking place in newspapers reveal where Americans thought their place in the world was?

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[4] James M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: Vol. 1, The Coming of War* (2nd ed., New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993), 1-2. For more on the crisis of the 1850s see: Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978).

Methodology and Historiography

How the Taiping Rebellion was conceptualized by different people with divergent opinions in the USA is best explored via an entangled history framework. This approach examines how two societies become intertwined to the degree where developments in one society change how the other views itself. An entangled history is not concerned so much with the equal treatment of two nations in a comparative methodology, but with how 'mutually influencing' the two histories are. As Eliga Gould points out it is a variant on *histoire croisée* methodology.[5] *Histoire croisée* is the focus on the 'intercrossings' of histories and more specifically the study of how 'social, cultural, and political formations' at a national level are interconnected globally.[6]

Philip Katz's book *From Appomattox to Montmartre* explains how American 'interpretations [of the Paris Commune] were shaped by the recent Civil War at home, and how the Paris Commune in turn shaped American political culture in the 1870s and beyond.'[7] Katz's framework can be used to examine how their own domestic struggles shaped how Americans viewed China and the Taiping Rebellion and recognises how instability in the Chinese world helped change the worldview of Americans. Just as Katz uses Americans in the Paris Commune as a reference point to demonstrate Franco-American entanglement, the reference point for understanding the entanglement between the United States and China in the mid-nineteenth century is Americans in Treaty Port China. Those Americans who resided in treaty ports such as Shanghai in the mid-nineteenth century present an example of an intersection of histories where the United States meets China – and this study shall show how those Americans used their national context to understand the situations they found themselves in during the Taiping Rebellion and after. In turn, it shall show how these understandings affected wider American beliefs about China.

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[5] Eliga H. Gould, 'Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery', *American Historical Review* 112 (2007), 766.

[6] Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmerman, 'Beyond Comparision: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity', *History and Theory* 45 (2006), 30-32.

[7] Philip M. Katz, *From Appomattox to Montmartre: Americans and the Paris Commune* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 1.

The American Civil War and the Pacific World

Histories of American involvement in China during the mid-nineteenth century have largely treated American action as being isolated from events back in the continental United States. However, the secession crisis and the American Civil War had an impact on the thoughts Americans had about China during the Chinese mid-nineteenth century crisis. Therefore, it is important to tie the Pacific World, and China in particular, into the story of the American disunion crisis.

In the wider study of history there has been an increasing tendency to turn away from histories that are only national in their scope. Indeed, the re-evaluation of the nation state's place in history has defined the study of history in a globalising world. National histories are inadequate when considering the role that boundary-crossing – whether that be of humans or ideas – has played in a nation's history.[8] In the study of the history of the United States, transnational study has been focused on the 'Atlantic world' in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.[9] However, as W. Caleb McDaniel and Bethany L. Johnson point out, the Atlantic history lens could be used to study the American Civil War era as well.[10] As such, the first transnational studies of the American Civil War focused on the Atlantic perspective.[11]

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[8] David Thelen, 'The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History', *The Journal of American History* 86 (1999), 965-967.

[9] Some examples of early modern Atlantic History works include: Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), a statistical analysis of the distribution of slaves throughout the Atlantic World and the conclusions we can draw from this; Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic, 1675-1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), an examination of how the Atlantic served as a communication highway, rather than a barrier, that served to strengthen the ties between colony and metropole; John H. Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), a comparative history of the British and Spanish American empires and how domestic differences shaped the differing structures of the two empires, rather than the location of the colonies themselves shaping the ruling styles of the different imperial powers.

[10] W. Caleb McDonald, Bethany L. Johnson, 'New Approaches to Internationalizing the History of the Civil War Era: An Introduction', *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 2 (2012), 145-146.

[11] Early transnational studies of the Civil War include: Harold M. Hyman (ed.), *Heard Around the World: The Impact Abroad of the American Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 1969), a collection of six essays examining how the Civil War impacted the United Kingdom, France, Central Europe, Russia and Latin America. The collection leaves the impression that the American Civil War was a peripheral event to other nations, which needs challenging; Philip Van Doren Stern, *When the Guns Roared: World Aspects of the American Civil War* (New York: Doubleday, 1965), a study of the efforts by elites in both the Union and the Confederacy to persuade foreign governments to support their respective causes.

Some of the early studies of the international history of the American Civil War focused on the diplomatic and economic implications in the Atlantic world.[12] For example, Sven Beckert argues that the disruption to the production of cotton during the war caused a transformation of the global cotton production web, and with it a transformation of capitalism. Beckert points out that the destruction of slavery in the South had the paradoxical effect of hastening the spread of Western imperial control of large areas of the world, as these empires sought to secure a cotton supply that their economies so heavily relied upon.[13]

Other studies in the international aspects of the Civil War have used comparative methodology to correct misconceptions of American exceptionalism. By showing that the United States was influenced by similar historical processes as other nations, these studies demonstrate that America was not actually exceptional. Don Doyle's *Nations Divided* examined how both the United States and Italy struggled with similar problems of forming a nation, and dealing with a 'South' which did not conform to Northern ideas of what their nation was to be.[14] The worth of the comparative approach has been questioned. Comparative history of the American Civil War has been successful in making observations about how the Civil War was by no means a unique event in world history. However, despite describing how the Civil War was not unique, the comparative method struggles to explain why it is not.[15] Therefore, historians needed to take a different approach when trying to

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[12] An example of this kind of diplomatic study of the 'Atlantic' American Civil War is Howard Jones, *Union in Peril: The Crisis over British Intervention in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992). Jones explains that the reason why the United Kingdom did not intervene on behalf of the Confederacy, despite leaning towards doing so for humanitarian and economic reasons.

[13] Sven Beckert, 'Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the Worldwide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War', *American Historical Review* 109 (2004), 1405-1438. Other examples of global histories of the economic aspects of the Civil War include: Matthew Karp, 'King Cotton, Emperor Slavery: Antebellum Slaveholders and the World Economy' in David T. Gleeson and Simon Lewis (eds.), *The Civil War as Global Conflict: Transnational Meanings of the American Civil War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2014), 36-55, which argues that Southern confidence in the future of slavery and their own international position came from their interaction with the world economy.

[14] Don Doyle, *Nations Divided: America, Italy and the Southern Question* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002). Other works which use comparative methodology to deepen our understanding of the United States and Italy during the mid-nineteenth century see: Enrico Dal Lago, *Civil War and Agarian Unrest: The Confederate South and Southern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Enrico Dal Lago: *The Age of Lincoln and Cavour: Comparative Perspective on Nineteenth-Century American and Italian Nation Building* (New York: Palgrave, 2015); Enrico Dal Lago, *Agrarian Elites: American Slaveholders and Southern Italian Landowners, 1815-1861* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2005).

[15] Wayne Wei-Siang Hsieh, review of *Nations Divided: America, Italy and the Southern Question* – Don Doyle, *Civil War History* 52 (2006), 193-195. For more on the critiques of comparative history see: George M.

understand the global history of the American Civil War. David Gleeson and Simon Lewis conclude that while the works on diplomacy and the effect of the Civil War on individual countries such as Great Britain or Ireland have transnational elements, these approaches have not done enough to highlight issues such as 'ethnicity, national identity, gender and memory in the transnational context of the Civil War.' Only by broadening the transnational scope to include these issues would the study of the American Civil War become truly global in scope.[16]

With the limitations of diplomatic and comparative history well demonstrated, later work focused on the way that European liberals and conservatives utilised the war to make their own arguments about the suitability of democracy and liberalism for their own societies. Don Doyle's *The Cause of All Nations* illustrates just how the people of Europe debated the Civil War in the public sphere. For Doyle, this means examining the discussions taking place both in Europe's print media and in popular oration in meeting halls and parliaments to see how the 'American question' was received in differing circles. Furthermore, the public sphere in Europe served as another battleground for the Union and the Confederacy, as they both undertook efforts to shape European public opinion.[17] Importantly, European radicals, liberals and republicans seized the chance to re-engage in public debate about democracy. As Doyle puts it, 'in talking about America, they could talk about their own future. America's war became theirs, too.'[18] Doyle's work demonstrates how foreigners looked to the United States as a means to inform their understandings of their own societies. The next step from such work is to examine how Americans themselves looked abroad to understand their own society. Transnational studies of American history that only focus on how ideas about the United States were exported to the rest of the world run the risk of reinforcing ideas about America's exceptional place in history. Historians

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Frederickson, 'Giving a Comparative Dimension to American History: Problems and Opportunities', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 16 (1985), 107-110, Frederickson suggests that comparative histories would possibly reinforce a sense of American distinctiveness, but he says this is okay because in trying to fit all of human history into a universalist paradigm risks creating a false impression that all national histories are the same.

[16] David T. Gleeson and Simon Lewis, 'Introduction' in David Gleeson and Simon Lewis (eds.) *The Civil War as Global Conflict: Transnational Meanings of the American Civil War* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2014), 2.

[17] Don Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations: An International History of the American Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 1-4.

[18] *Ibid.*, 7.

must also look at how ideas were imported from abroad, and how this shaped the course of American history.[19]

Even with historians making attempts to broaden the scope of Atlantic history, it still suffers from the fundamental limitation of ignoring the rest of the world. The Civil War can provide a bridge between Atlantic histories and more global studies. The American Civil War era is entangled with histories of areas, regions and nations often not considered when thinking about the impact of the disintegration of the American republic, such as China.[20] Despite this push towards transnational history being a positive change in the academic field of history, the focus just on the Atlantic meant the rest of the world is neglected in studies of the Civil War. The Atlantic World perspective is limited, but it does show us that there are further global histories of the Civil War to be uncovered.[21]

Yet, historians have favoured linking the United States with Europe over Asia. While it makes sense to compare to similar units in comparative historical methodology, there is no need to consider similarity when attempting entangled histories. Historians of the American Civil War can still do more to further internationalise histories of the American mid-nineteenth century. One way to further the globalisation of American Civil War history is to include the Pacific world in this history. By examining the connections between the United States and Asian nations, we might learn different things about how American saw themselves and how they were influenced by other nations outside of Europe. For example, we can get a better understanding of how racism and orientalism influenced American understandings of their place in the world. Without expanding transnational histories beyond the Atlantic World, we would miss these perspectives.[22]

[19] Gregory P. Downs, *The Second American Revolution: The Civil War-Era Struggle over Cuba and the Rebirth of the American Republic* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 1-10.

[20] Douglas R. Egerton, 'Rethinking Atlantic Historiography in a Postcolonial Era: The Civil War in a Global Perspective', *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 1 (2011), 79-84.

[21] *Ibid.*, 91.

[22] Said suggests that while the Middle East represented the Orient for Britain and France, China and Japan were the focus of American orientalism. See: Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 1. For more on American Orientalism see: John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999); Mae M. Ngai, 'Review: American Orientalism', *Reviews in American History* 28 (2000), 408-415; Stuart Creighton Miller, *The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1785-1882* (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1969).

Histories exploring how Central America played a role in how citizens of the United States understood the Civil War and its aftermath demonstrate the viability of including the Pacific World, and especially China, in Civil War history. For example, Americans looked to other parts of the world to contextualise the instability their republic was going through. The instability in Mexico during the nineteenth century haunted the imaginations of Americans who believed their political system was being 'mexicanized'. The Mexicanization discourse surrounding the 1876 presidential election showed that contemporaries considered the United States anything but stable. Mexicanization was a discourse born in the events of the early 1860s, in which American public officials and journalists warned that Mexico served as both a warning and a means of understanding what was happening to the United States during the secession crisis. By 1876, when both the Democratic and Republican parties claimed to have won the election, many officials were concerned that the American republic was turning into Mexico, which had been gripped by political instability throughout the nineteenth century. This demonstrates that many contemporaries did not consider the United States as a stable nation, as later historians would.[23] The transnational lens enables us to understand the stability or instability of domestic politics in the United States to a much greater degree. Examining how different Americans reacted to events in China demonstrates how foreign events could also be used as an area of unity, rather than disunity, when the United States was at its most unstable.

Similarly, looking to Cuba as well as Mexico, helps establish that the American Civil War was part of a wave of revolutions in North America. The experience of Cuban planters with slave rebellions helped influence and incite American politicians over the slavery and secessions questions. Vice versa, Cuban and Spanish rebels used the experience of the Republican Party to guide their own revolutionary struggles, and even sought to forge alliances with Americans based on shared revolutionary traditions.[24] Employing a similar methodology to China can further help us understand what revolution meant to mid-nineteenth century Americans. Just like events in Cuba, revolutionary struggles in China were discussed in depth by American newspapers. Examining how these newspapers

[23] Gregory P. Downs, 'The Mexicanization of American Politics: The United States' Transnational Path from Civil War to Stabilization', *The American Historical Review* 117 (2012), 387-409.

[24] Downs, *The Second American Revolution*. Another work which puts Latin America into the story of the American Civil War is: Don Doyle (ed.) *American Civil Wars: The United States, Latin America, Europe, and the Crisis of the 1860s* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 2017).

discussed the Taiping's revolution helps us understand how the very idea of what a revolution is was a contested concept during America's disunity crisis. Extending the study of the American Civil War era to include Cuba and Mexico demonstrates the value of boundary-crossing history, by demonstrating that the American Civil War was a much more revolutionary event than national and regional studies of the Civil War have revealed before.[25] This approach can be built on by examining the discourse Americans used to discuss the Taiping Rebellion to reveal how they felt about their domestic situation.

Despite the turn towards an international or transnational history of the American Civil War, the Pacific world has been largely ignored in this story. For example, there is a need for greater inclusion of the Western United States in the story of the American Civil War. By including the West, we can no longer conclude that the Civil War was caused by conflict between the northern and southern regions of the United States only.[26] In 2003, Elliott West expanded on this idea beyond the Civil War to suggest that the period from 1846 to 1877 could actually be described as 'Greater Reconstruction'. West argues that expansion into Texas, Mexican territory, and Oregon unleashed a racial crisis that not only forced the United States to confront the slavery question, but also forced white Americans to consider the reconstruction of social and political structure of the United States as they came to terms with the inclusion of Native Americans, Hispanic-Americans and Asian-Americans into the body politic of the American republic.[27] West later noted that this Greater Reconstruction manifested itself in similarity in the efforts the white establishment went to 'civilising' Native Americans and the newly freed people by sending missionaries to spread Christianity, but also to 'educate' non-white peoples in how to conform to the standards require for American citizenship.[28] This idea can be extended to include those white Americans in Shanghai who responded in a similar manner to interactions with non-

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[25] Downs, 'The Mexicanization of American Politics: The United States' Transnational Path from Civil War to Stabilization', 387-409. Doyle, *The Second American Revolution*, 4.

[26] Stacey L. Smith, 'Beyond North and South: Putting the West in the Civil War and Reconstruction', *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 6 (2016), 566-591. See also: Kevin Waite, 'Jefferson Davis and Proslavery Visions of Empire in the Far West, *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 6 (2016), 536-565, an examination of how episodes in the Far West during the Civil War era, deemed peripheral by later historians, were actually central in American politics during the period.

[27] Elliott West, 'Reconstructing Race', *Western Historical Quarterly* 34 (2003), 6-26.

[28] Elliott West, 'Reconstruction in the West', *The Journal of the Civil War Era Forum*, [https://www.journalofthecivilwarera.org/forum-the-future-of-reconstruction-studies/reconstruction-in-the-west/#_edn1] accessed 20/08/19.

white peoples. The American missionaries in China, while not looking to make the Chinese suitable to be American citizens, were behaving in a way shaped by the Greater Reconstruction racial crisis. Using the Greater Reconstruction as a lens to examine Americans and the Taiping Rebellion shows how domestic trends deeply influenced American behaviour abroad, and perhaps highlights the need to consider how Shanghai became an extension of the American frontier in the mind of those Americans who resided in it. Beyond the United States, it is only the white settler colonies of New Zealand and Australia that receive any attention in the study of the global Civil War. For example, historians have shown how the people of New Zealand paid close attention to the Civil War, and New Zealand separatists used the horrors of the war to suggest that provinces within the colony that wanted to leave should be allowed to before their internal differences led to civil war.[29]

Asia is largely ignored. In the 1850s, increasingly Americans began to interact with China, an empire divided by rebellion. The Civil War affected how Americans thought about China. For example, the evolution of Northern nationalism during the Civil War into a more aggressive, expansive belief system helped spread the idea amongst some Americans that the United States could establish its own colony in China. The American Civil War, as an existential crisis for the Union, also changed how the United States acted in foreign affairs. The interplay between the Taiping Rebellion and the American Civil War helps us understand why the United States was the only major power not to take part in the Western carve-up of Chinese territory in the late-nineteenth century. Therefore, China needs to be brought into the story of the American Civil War. By bringing the international lens into this history, our understanding of the domestic events, as well as the behaviour of Americans in China is deepened.

American interactions with the Taiping Rebellion should not be ignored in the story of mid-nineteenth century Americans. Previous histories have only focused on the relations American missionaries and diplomats in China had with the rebels themselves, as well as hopes they had for the rebellion. Older works treat those Americans in Shanghai as isolated actors and do not seek to draw connections between events in the United States and attitudes towards the rebels. Furthermore, this body of work does not cover the domestic

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[29] Daniel B. Thorp, 'New Zealand and the American Civil War', *Pacific Historical Review* 80 (2011), 97-130.

reaction to the rebellion, and there is an absence of female voices in the source base of these works. Therefore, their conclusions are drawn only from male perspectives on the rebellion, despite there being plenty of women present in Shanghai who recorded and transmitted their thoughts and opinions about the rebellion.[30] Works that internationalize the American Civil War and have a gender perspective reveal the benefits of this approach. For example, by examining the impact of Florence Nightingale's story on American nurses during the American Civil War demonstrates to us how Nightingale inspired women to professionalise nursing, which created an opening for women to try an access the polity.[31] This thesis seeks to redress those problems and build on previous work to provide a more all-encompassing analysis of American involvement with the Taiping Rebellion.

<u>The United States, the Taiping Rebellion and Treaty-Port China</u>

Over the course of the twentieth century, the study of China's treaty ports gradually fell out of favour. As colonial empires, including foreign concessions in China, were dismantled in the decades after the Second World War, the study of Chinese history, both in China and the Western world, began to focus on the indigenous development in the history of modern China. In response to Cold War developmentalism, and the war in Vietnam, Western historians also began to shift towards a China-centred approach. These historians felt that the West's impact on China had been overemphasised and rejected the idea that the bridge between China's 'traditional' and 'modern' past was the intervention of Westerners. China-centric historians therefore aimed to show how China had changed independently from Western imperialism.[32] In more recent scholarship, however, there has been a move back towards re-internationalisation of Chinese history, and see how China was connected with the wider world. For example, following the establishment of 'Special Economic Zones' by the communist party of China in former treaty ports, such as Shanghai, historians within China began to rediscover the history of Treaty Port China. Yet, despite this resurgence of

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[30] Yuan-chung Teng, *Americans and the Taiping Rebellion: A Study of American-Chinese Relationship, 1847-1864* (Taipei: China Academy, 1982).

[31] Jane E. Schultz, 'Nurse as Icon: Florence Nightingale's Impact on Women in the American Civil War' in David T. Gleeson and Simon Lewis, *The Civil War as Global Conflict: Transnational Meanings of the American Civil War* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2014), 235-252.

[32] Paul A. Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (2nd ed., New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 1-9.

interest, colonialism has not been properly reintegrated into this field.[33] The introduction of social science methodology into the American historical study of China and East Asia in the aftermath of the Second World War led to the erasure of the idea that China had a colonial or semi-colonial past. These historical studies created an idea of China's past as non-colonial, stable and an othered culture, which presented American policymakers with an area of the world where they could test Cold War policies in a country which had not experienced colonialism. The problem with this is that the West's colonial or semi-colonial exploitation of China has been lost from the historiography of China's nineteenth and twentieth century past.[34]

One such endeavour to reintegrate colonialism into Chinese history is Robert Bicker's *Scramble for China,* which attempts to rectify this exclusion by providing a broad history of the Western exploitation of China and the entanglement of the foreign residents with the Chinese people across the nineteenth and early twentieth century as a means of trying to explain the 'modern mind' of China in the twenty-first century.[35] The need to reintegrate 'the West' into Chinese history has not just been for broader studies, but has made its impact on the study of the Taiping Rebellion as well. Stephen Platt's *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom* aimed to 'restore China to its proper place in the nineteenth-century world' by demonstrating that a civil war in China had global implications. *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom* was also meant to establish that global historical trends were also affecting China's domestic strife.[36] He notes that the American Civil War had an impact on the Taiping Rebellion, for example, because as the United States and China were Britain's largest economic markets, the British could not afford to lose both markets to internal struggles. Platt argues that British intervention in the Taiping Rebellion, to save one of these markets, meant that the British Empire did not interfere with the course of the American Civil War.[37] This study builds on this idea of restoring China to its 'proper place' in nineteenth-century history, by reinstating the United States into the history of China and by

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[33] Robert Bickers and Isabella Jackson, 'Introduction: Law, Land and Power: Treaty Ports and Concessions in Modern China' in Robert Bickers & Isabella Jackson (eds.) *Treaty Ports in Modern China: Law, Land and Power* (London: Routledge, 2016), 12-15.

[34] Tani E. Barlow, 'Colonialism's Career in Postwar China Studies', *Positions: Asia Critique* 1 (1993), 224-267.

[35] Robert Bickers, *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832-1914* (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 4-12.

[36] Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, xxiii.

[37] *Ibid.*, xxiii-xxiv.

deepening the examination of the entanglement between the Taiping Rebellion and the American Civil War.

The United States is often thought to have been steadfastly anti-imperialistic when it came to lands beyond the North American continent during the mid-nineteenth century. Instead, it is often asserted that American 'empire' was instead an informal one where missionaries could assert that they were protecting China from itself and others. This viewpoint argues that that the United States is therefore exceptional amongst the industrial Western nations that were involved in the treaty-port world across the nineteenth century.[38] Examining the interconnected history of the Sino-American mid-nineteenth century crises not only provides fresh insight into the study of the American Civil War, but also gives new perspectives into the role the United States played in the imperialistic exploitation of China in the nineteenth century through treaty ports. The Treaty Port is a space which, despite not being officially a colony, can be described as part of the colonial world.[39] Therefore, American involvement in these colonial spaces during the mid-nineteenth century casts doubt on the United States' exceptional anti-imperialism.

By examining American reactions to the Taiping Rebellion we can see that this exceptionalism does not quite hold up to further investigation. As Eileen Scully points out, the 'domestic anti-imperialism' of the United States allowed American individuals abroad to act in an imperialistic way, beyond federal control. This is because in the antebellum and Civil War era the federal government, wary of acting like an empire, did not prioritise the establishment and organisation of consular courts, allowing American citizens to act beyond the reach of the federal government.[40] However, this imperialism in China went beyond those actually in China who thought they could get away with it. For example, many Americans, led by the *New York Herald*, looked at the turmoil in China as an opportunity for American mercenary Frederick Townsend Ward to establish an American dynasty in China. Furthermore, the 'anti-imperialistic' United States was just as active as Great Britain, France, and Russia in extracting privileges through unequal treaties throughout the first half of the

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[38] Karen J. Leong, *The China Mystique: Pearl S. Buck, Anna May Wong, Mayling Soong and the Transformation of American Orientalism* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2005), 10-11.

[39] Bickers and Jackson, 'Introduction: Law, Land and Power: Treaty Ports and Concessions in Modern China', 6.

[40] Eileen P. Scully, *Bargaining With The State From Afar: American Citizenship in Treaty Port China, 1844-1942* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 49-50; 71-72.

nineteenth century. It was only the combination of the American Civil War and the failure of the Taiping Rebellion that caused a reorientation of American behaviour towards China. The move of historians towards demonstrating that the United States was not a benevolent, anti-imperialistic actor in China builds on Leonard H. D. Gordon's *Confrontation Over Taiwan* which shows that Americans, including both military and diplomatic figures, seriously considered trying to annex the island of Taiwan during the 1850s. The island could be used as a staging post for American trade with China, as well as serving as a military base enabling the projection of American power into East Asia, as Hong Kong did for the British Empire. Indeed the entire Taiwan annexation project was meant to enable the United States better compete with the British for trade and influence in this very profitable region of the world and was driven by a belief that it was the United States' 'manifest destiny' to expand beyond her current borders.[41] Expanding on this idea, by illustrating that Americans were very seriously supportive of a project to annex areas of China, or even seize control of the Chinese throne itself, shows that the United States was not exempt from the colonial and imperialistic spirit that gripped other Western nations.

<u>American Missionaries and the Taiping Rebellion</u>

Studying the American reaction to the Taiping Rebellion can also contribute to the historiography of missionaries in the nineteenth century. Missionaries made up a significant proportion of the Western community in China and had a lot to say about the Taiping Rebellion. Therefore, examining the reaction of American missionaries to the Taiping rebels not only provides insights into American history but also into the behaviour of missionaries and the impacts they had on the nineteenth century beyond China.

Nineteenth-century missionaries were concerned with the remaking of the bodies of the non-white peoples they attempted to 'civilise'. Tony Ballantyne asserts that the British missionaries who interacted with the Māori peoples of New Zealand were deeply concerned with the practices that were part of Māori life which affected their bodies. These missionaries sought to convince the Māori to eradicate slavery, polygamy, cannibalism, and tattooing from their societies, because the missionaries believed these practices were

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[41] Leonard H. D. Gordon, *Confrontation Over Taiwan: Nineteenth-Century China and the Powers* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2007), xix; 19-39.

evidence that Satan still held sway in New Zealand.[42] Western missionaries in China exhibited similar concerns about the practices that the Chinese continued to affect their own bodies with. Opium-smoking, slavery, foot-binding, and polygamy were just some of the concerns that Western missionaries sought to erase from Chinese life through the spread of Christianity.[43] The Taiping Rebellion represented an opportunity for the missionaries to achieve of their aim of regulating Chinese bodies because their revolutionary platform included outlawing the practices they found distasteful, such as opium-smoking and polygamy.[44]

While the American missionaries in China are engaged in a similar process of trying to shape 'native' bodies as the British missionaries in New Zealand that Tony Ballantyne examines, analysing the American missionaries and the Taiping rebels can build on this work. The American missionaries, while being partially responsible for the concepts that the Taiping built their ideology upon, were largely powerless to shape the remaking of Chinese bodies that the Taiping were undertaking themselves. Examining their reactions to the 'native's' attempts to remake themselves contributes to the historiography of the missionary enterprise because it demonstrates how not actually being able to be involved in the reshaping and controlling of native bodies can affect and frustrate a missionary's opinion. Furthermore, exploring missionary reactions to a war involving such cataclysmic violence gives us greater insight into how violence impacted the agenda of nineteenth-century missionaries. The American missionaries (as well as other Western missionaries) living in Shanghai and travelling around the Yangtze River Valley witnessed the maiming and killing of millions of Chinese bodies between 1850 and 1864, and by exploring this we can ascertain whether they believed their mission had changed in relation to the damage inflicted on Chinese bodies.

The examination of American reactions to and opinions on the Taiping Rebellion can also further incorporate female voices into the study of American involvement in the Pacific, the history of the missionary enterprise, and imperialism in China. As previously mentioned,

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[42] Tony Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire: Missionaries, Māori, and the Question of the Body* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2015), 6-7.

[43] Wayne Flynt & Gerald W. Berkley, *Taking Christianity to China: Alabama Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom, 1850-1950* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 6.

[44] Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, 120.

male voices have been prioritised in the study of Western involvement with the Taiping rebels (as they have been in the wider historical discipline). In fact, female voices, whether that be white or Chinese, have sometimes been excluded altogether.[45] This is a problem because it gives a narrower understanding of how Americans conceptualised China. Asian nations, including China, were orientalised as an exotic and immoral other by Europeans and Americans. As Karen J. Leong points out, this process of orientalising was partially informed by the American women who served as missionaries in China. Women, as an integral part of the family unit, became the moral centre of the United States. Therefore, women who became missionaries, or accompanied their missionary husbands to China were credited with an authority to speak on the 'morals' of the Chinese people. The images these women transmitted back to the United States had a large influence on how the Chinese were conceptualised.[46] While Leong was covering missionary women in the first half of the twentieth century, the examination of the influence of female missionaries needs to be extended to the mid-nineteenth century in China. American women were deeply involved in the missionary enterprise during the Taiping Rebellion and wrote extensively on their experiences and observations in China. Furthermore, these observations were not kept private but were often sent home to not only family and friends, but to newspapers where the ideas of these women would begin to shape domestic perception of the Chinese. The orientalisation of the Chinese in the American imagination does not begin with twentieth-century literature, and ignoring these voices severely diminishes our understanding of the influence that American missionaries had over the image that the Chinese gained in the American public sphere.

<u>The Circulation of Information</u>
The circulation of information between the United States and China demonstrates the entanglement between their two histories. Further exploring this will deepen understandings of these histories. In an era of global wars of unification and reunification, the upheaval in China has often been seen as not being connected to the Western world. Jürgen Osterhammel suggests that for large parts of the Taiping war, the Western world was

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[45] Teng, *Americans and the Taiping Rebellion*. Teng's monograph includes no female primary sources at all.
[46] Leong, *The China Mystique*, 1-11.

simply uninterested in events in China and knew little of what was really going on within China.[47] Though it is certainly true that Westerners struggled to understand what was happening in China during this period, it is incorrect to assume this meant a lack of interest. In both Europe and the United States, major newspapers and journals such as *The Economist*, *The New York Times*, and *The Times* discussed what the rebellion meant. Commentators as diverse as Karl Marx writing in the *New-York Daily Tribune* and the editors of the New Orleans-based pro-slavery mouthpiece the *Daily Picayune* wondered aloud what a rebellion across the Pacific ocean could mean for their worlds.[48] For example, in 1853 *The Economist* described the Taiping Rebellion as 'the very unfavourable commercial news just received from that quarter [China]' because it was having a negative impact on the cotton market.[49] Meanwhile, Karl Marx, serving as European correspondent for the *New York Daily Tribune*, considered the growing rebellion in China to be 'one formidable revolution'.[50] To understand where domestic newspapers and social commentators got their ideas about the direction of the Taiping rebellion and what that direction meant for the United States, we must understand just how American people in China comprehended their surroundings.

How the American community in China's ideas about the Chinese mid-century crisis shaped matters because these people were responsible for how domestic American society viewed the Chinese. Missionaries in particular were an important source of information for Americans of foreign lands, as they sent huge volumes of material back to the metropole that was often published by mission societies or circulated via newspapers, sermons, lectures, and exhibitions.[51] For example, Marquis Lafayette Wood, a Methodist missionary from North Carolina in China from 1860 to 1866, wrote reports for newspapers such as *The Greensboro Times* that informed readers that the 'present, corrupt dynasty is about to be overthrown.'[52] Wayne Flynt and Gerald W. Berkley assert that between 1850 and the Chinese Communist Revolution in 1949, the opinions that Americans held about China were

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[47] Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, 547-548.

[48] Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 10-12.

[49] 'Cotton', *The Economist*, June 25th 1853.

[50] Karl Marx, 'Revolution in China and Europe', *New York Daily Tribune*, June 14th 1853. This source is read in a similar manner in Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 10-11.

[51] David Arnold and Robert A. Bickers, 'Introduction' in Robert A. Bickers and Rosemary Seton (eds.) *Missionary Encounters: Sources and Issues* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996), 2.

[52] Marquis Lafayette Wood, 'From Our China Correspondent: A Few Gathered Fragments', *The Greensboro Times*, January 5th 1861.

drawn from ideas created by missionaries in China.[53] Missionaries produced knowledge that was sent back in reports to their respective mission societies as part of their remit for being in China, and this knowledge often made its way into wider public discourse through newspaper articles.[54] This view, while essentially correct, is too narrow. While Chinese-based American missionaries were a major force in shaping American opinion, we cannot discount the other Americans based in China who reported on their experiences when they returned to the United States. For example, former United States minister to China, John Elliott Ward, delivered a lecture in Savannah, Georgia, in 1868 which gave an account of his time in China including his opinions on the Chinese 'coolie' trade, whose victims he considered 'unfortunate creatures' and on his role in the Second Opium War.[55] Therefore, ideas about China in American society were created by all who were there, not just the missionaries.

Foreign settlement of Shanghai brought Americans, as well as the British and French residents of the Shanghai international settlement, into direct contact with the Civil War which raged in China between roughly 1850 and 1864. When the Taiping rebels captured Nanjing in 1853, they were only around two hundred miles up the Yangtze River from Shanghai.[56] This meant that the majority of Americans who lived or visited the Qing Empire in the mid-nineteenth century had contact with the rebellion, and any opinion formed on the Chinese and China would only be formed with the Taiping Civil War as a reference point. However, American ideas were also shaped in a crucible of British imperialism. The foreign community in Shanghai was dominated by the British presence in the city. Of the four thousand foreign people, both transient and permanent residents, present in Shanghai during the 1860s, most were British or French. The American community was fairly small compared to the Anglo-French presence in the city. American missionaries and merchants relied on military protection of the British authorities to reside in the city and go about their

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[53] Flynt & Berkley, *Taking Christianity to China*, 130.

[54] Robert F. McClellan, 'Missionary Influence on American Attitudes Toward China at the Turn of this Century', *Church History* 38 (1969), 475-476.

[55] John Elliot Ward, *China and the Chinese: A Lecture by John E. Ward at Savannah, Georgia*, March 5th 1868 (New York: WM. C. Martin, 1868) in David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

[56] Stephen R. Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012), 9.

work.[57] This means that when Americans formed ideas about the Taiping, the Qing dynasty and China in general, they were formed in relation to the Western community in general. This does not mean, however, that responses back home were uniform in the three major Western powers – Britain, France and the United States. For example, because French interests in China intrinsically linked to Catholic missionaries, who were largely hostile to the Taiping, French opinion tended to lean towards hostility towards the Taiping, more so than American opinion.[58] Therefore, while we need to bear in mind the commonalities in Western opinion, national differences had an impact on the opinions of different Western powers involved in Chinese affairs in this period.

Americans in China had their own imperial ambitions and were unwilling to remain subordinate to British interests and ideas. Americans had a cultural mission in China, where missionaries believed they could show the Chinese a better way of life through Christianity and Western science and medicine. This missionary impulse was separate from the other forms of Western imperialism.[59] This is evidenced by the loud opposition Anglo-American missionaries often had to the opium trade in China, yet as Paul Harris points out, this does not mean missionaries were not structurally part of the Western imperialistic venture in China. For example, American missionaries were influential in the Western push for the legalisation of the opium trade because they believed it would remove the lawless reputation Westerners had gained in China and aid their conversion mission.[60] Indeed, by trying to impress upon the Chinese the 'superiority' of Western civilization, American missionaries served a role that helped enable other forms of Western imperialism. For example, some missionaries tried to set up English-language schools, which were supported by Western diplomats and merchants because it would help collaboration between the Chinese and the Western imperial powers.[61]

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[57] This was not a situation unique to China. American missionaries relied on British imperialism to aid their religious mission around the world. See: Heather J. Sharkey, *American Evangelicals in Egypt: Missionary Encounters in an Age of Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

[58] S. Y. Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers: A Comprehensive Survey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) 202-205.

[59] Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., 'The Missionary Enterprise and Theories of Imperialism' in John K. Fairbank (ed.) *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 342.

[60] Michael C. Lazich, 'American Missionaries and the Opium Trade in Nineteenth Century China', *Journal of World History* 17 (2006), 197-223.

[61] Paul W. Harris, 'Cultural Imperialism and American Protestant Missionaries: Collaboration and Dependency in Mid-Nineteenth-Century China', *Pacific Historical Review* 60 (1991), 309-338.

Despite cultural aims, the United States also had an economic goal to tie Asia closer to the Americas, which was an idea that had grown out of the doctrine of Manifest Destiny.[62] In 1845, Democrat journalist John L. O'Sullivan argued that it was the nation's "manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole continent."[63] The phrase was understood to mean white Americans were the chosen 'race' to initiate rapid colonisation across the continent to civilize the 'wilderness' of the Americas, and those who lived in it.[64] By the end of the 1840s, the American republic had reached as far west as the Pacific, which brought Asia more sharply into American focus. Reginald Horsman argues in *Race and Manifest Destiny* that antebellum American people were obsessed with the 'limitless expansion of a superior American Anglo-Saxon race.'[65] This obsession with expansion also influenced American ideas about the Taiping Rebellion, which to some seemed to be an opportunity to establish an American colony overseas. In 1862, for example, *The New York Herald* suggested 'we should not be surprised to see, before many years, a Yankee, born beneath the Stars and Stripes, crowding the tottering Tartar dynasty from its ancient throne and usurping the supreme authority of the Celestial Empire.'[66] Therefore, American imperialist pretentions, as well as separate American cultural imperialist impulses, must also be considered alongside British imperialism when considering the response to Taiping Rebellion.

When these cosmopolitan ideas were transmitted back to the United States, the way they were interpreted by the domestic audience took on a distinctly American spin. Domestic events, such as the secession crisis and the Civil War, as well as international events such as the European revolutions of 1848, the Crimean War, and the Italian wars of unification, helped Americans understand the events in China. For example, in an article about the state of the world the South Carolina newspaper the *Camden Weekly Journal* suggested the Taiping Rebellion 'doubtless eclipses any similar event of the kind that has ever before happened since Adam was thrust from the Garden of Eden.' Yet to try explain

[62] Yuan-chung Teng, *Americans and the Taiping Rebellion: A Study of American-Chinese Relationship, 1847-1864* (Taipei, Taiwan: China Academy, 1982), 2-3.

[63] Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders,* 123.

[64] Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (London, 1981), 218-220.

[65] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[66] 'A Yankee Dynasty in China', *New York Herald*, October 13th 1862.

the character of the rebellion, the paper stated 'the majority of the Chinese, like the belligerents of Turkey and Russia, are engaged in what they consider a holy religious war.'[67] The conflict between the Ottoman Empire and Russia, out of which the Crimean War grew, had its roots in a clash between the two powers about the rights of Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire.[68] By drawing on the Crimean War, the *Camden Weekly Journal* demonstrates how Americans turned to the rest of the world to understand what was happening in China. Furthermore, these ideas filtered back to the Americans in China, shaping how they understood the traumatic war that was unfolding around them. Therefore, when trying to understand the multi-faceted American response to the Taiping Rebellion, we cannot divorce the Americans in China from their Western community, nor from their mother country.

Primary Sources

The primary source base for this thesis draws on an array of different sources. The personal papers of Americans who resided in Treaty Port China, especially their diaries and correspondence, form the spine of the section on Americans in China. The diaries of missionaries, merchants, diplomats and other Americans in China give an insight into how ideas about China and the Taiping Rebellion were formed privately and especially show how they drew on other events, such as the Civil War, to understand their situation in Shanghai. Another source of the private beliefs Americans held in China in this period is diplomatic correspondence. While largely not released to the public, this correspondence provides evidence of how American diplomats and sometimes businessmen saw the Taiping and what they felt the United States could gain, or stood to lose, from the rebellion.

However, because we are interested in the public opinion of Americans about the Taiping Rebellion and China, it is important to trace how the views formed in private were transmitted back to the United States. The main way of doing this is to examine the correspondence of those residing in China that was sent back to the United States. As previously mentioned, American missionaries sent reports back to the mission boards of their respective denominations, but all Americans sent letters home informing family,

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[67] 'An Era of Important Events – Bird's Eye Glance at the World', *The Camden Weekly Journal*, June 6th 1854.
[68] Orlando Figes, *Crimea: The Last Crusade* (London: Penguin Books, 2010) [eBook].

colleagues, and friends about what was happening which helped disseminate ideas forged in the crucible of the Treaty Port world. Others wrote directly to newspapers back home to give their opinion on the rebellion. Information was also transmitted to the American public via travel literature.

When examining how the information and opinions about the rebellion in China that were transmitted back were absorbed, rejected or tweaked by Americans back home, it is important to analyse newspapers. Benedict Anderson's seminal *Imagined Communities* defined the nation as 'an imagined political community' where members of the nation will never interact with the majority of their fellow-countrymen, 'yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.'[69] Newspapers were an important facet of the imagined community, especially in the Americas where citizens would be spread out across vast distances. The ability of newspapers to create an imagined community of people reading the same stories helped create a bond between Americans who would never meet.[70] The newspaper industry was the only mass media available in the nineteenth century, and consequently newspapers were the main way people learnt of the world beyond their immediate surroundings. Print journalism was the American public's way of accessing the big debates of the age, and consequently they were tools of American democracy during the nineteenth century. This meant editors had a substantial influence over how Americans understood events.[71] Historical enquiries which focus on the shaping of ideas and belief systems often make use of newspapers. For example, older studies of secession and Southern nationalism such as Avery Craven's *The Growth of Southern Nationalism* or Dwight Lowell Dumond's *The Secession Movement* made heavy use of newspapers.[72] As Craven puts it the newspaper is 'both an expression and a molder of public opinion.'[73] Especially when it came to news in China, the majority of public opinion in the United States itself was

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[69] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (2nd ed., London: Verso Publishing, 2006), 6.

[70] *Ibid.,* 61-64.

[71] Donald E. Reynolds, *Editors Make War: Southern Newspapers in the Secession Crisis* (2nd ed., Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009), xii-xiv. For more on the history of newspapers in the United States see: Wm. David Sloan, James G. Stovall and James D. Startt (eds.) *The Media in America: A History* (Worthington, OH: Publishing Horizons, Inc., 1989).

[72] Avery Craven, *The Growth of Southern Nationalism, 1848-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1953); Dwight Lowell Dumond, *The Secession Movement, 1860-1861* (New York: Octagon Books Inc., 1963).

[73] Craven, *The Growth of Southern Nationalism*, 408.

expressed through newspaper articles on events across the Pacific. Although this approach means we do not know just quite how well these ideas were received and taken on board, the flourishing newspaper industry in the mid-nineteenth century meant even international events such as the Taiping Rebellion were discussed at length and in depth. By examining this discussion in newspapers, we can see just how the ideas about China were understood in different sections and by supporters of different parties.

Structure

The following thesis will be divided into two main sections, further sub-divided into a number of chapters. The first section covers Americans in China and their relationship with the Taiping Rebellion from 1850 to 1864. The first chapter takes a look at the confusion Americans in China felt about what this rebellion actually was. Was this a revolution, or was it simply another peasant revolt? This chapter will demonstrate how China's American community looked back to the United States and to the rest of the world to answer this question. Chapter two builds on this and examines the opinion of American missionaries about whether the Taiping Rebellion would Christianize China. It shall examine how opinion about the faith of the rebels changed over time and was informed by their own denominational faith and their understandings of what Christianity actually was. Chapter three examines the ideas and beliefs Americans in the treaty ports had about the more tangible aspects of the rebellion, including their brushes with the violence of the war and whether the Taiping would be good for trade and diplomacy. Section two analyses how these ideas created by Americans in China were received, discussed and modified back home by the newspapers of the United States. Chapter four examines the newspaper discussion of the more immediate considerations that might affect American interests in China, such as the violence and the trading opportunities and disruptions that occurred during the war. This chapter explains how political leanings influenced how newspapers viewed the potential trading benefits or drawbacks of the Taiping being in charge of the Celestial Empire. Chapter five examines how the American press, led by the *New York Herald*, began to clamour for an American mercenary to seize territory in China. This chapter demonstrates how America's expansionist impulse was not just contained to the Americas. The final chapter, chapter six, concludes by explaining how the talk of revolution, race and religion in China was reported in the American press. This brings us round in a full

circle to demonstrate how the reports out of China, which were influenced by world events themselves, influenced reporting in the United States.

Throughout this thesis there are a number of recurrent themes which are important to note. How Americans responded to death in the mid-nineteenth century, and especially during the Taiping Rebellion is a running theme throughout this thesis. Related to this is the theme of violence, and how the Taiping Rebellion fitted into shifting understandings of violent behaviour. A theme which builds on both death and violence is the idea of civilisation through violence which runs through a lot of the discussion of the Taiping Rebellion by Americans. Other themes include the role of revolutions and American nationalism in predisposing Americans in China and the American press towards the Taiping during the 1850s; ideas around how the Second Coming of Jesus Christ informed many of the religious discussions about the Taiping's rebellion; the desire to further penetrate Chinese markets in order to sell American goods; and finally the sectional divide and partisanship form a current which flows through the latter half of the thesis. These themes form several pathways through this thesis which are to be kept in mind when thinking about America's complex relationship with the Taiping Rebellion.

Section One: Americans in China and the Taiping Rebellion, 1850-1864

Chapter One: Revolution or Rebellion?

On June 20th 1853, Minister to China Humphrey Marshall wrote to Reverend Issachar Jacox Roberts to inform him Marshall would 'consider your going to Nanking to preach to the

followers of Tienteh [Hong Xiuquan], as a violation of the neutrality the Government of the United States intends to observe in the pending contest among the Chinese'. Marshall told Roberts that travelling to aid the rebellion would be 'punishable by death'.[1] Marshall was later heard to have asked, 'why could not the infernal ass go without saying anything to me about it? Of course I had to tell him 'no'', stating that he would 'have been delighted to have him go and bring me back some report of the rebels' but his position would not allow him to say yes.[2] Robert's desperation to reach the rebels at Nanjing and Marshall's official reluctance but private interest represents a microcosm of the American reaction to the emergence of the Taiping rebels. In fact, Robert's involvement with the Taiping rebels serves as a way of demonstrating the general course of American opinion of the Taiping. While he had been generally optimistic about the Taiping Rebellion, his optimism turned to downright disgust once he came into greater contact with the rebels in the 1860s. Having once considered the Taiping to be the greatest opportunity to Christianise China, Roberts escaped from Nanjing in January 1862 claiming that the Taiping were not real Christians, and nor were they fit to rule in China.[3] Roberts would not be the only American in China to have his opinion of the Taiping Rebellion changed over the course of the 1850s and 1860s.

From 1850 to 1864, the American residents of the Yangtze river valley found themselves in the middle of China's mid-century crisis. [4] The crucible of conflict shaped how Americans viewed China, the Chinese and the future of the 'Celestial Empire' and these ideas were transmitted back to the United States, further influencing how the United States viewed China. This chapter shall examine the attempts of these Americans in China to understand what was happening around them, and how they came to perceive the rebellion. Americans tried to work out whether the Taiping Rebellion was merely a revolt sparked by discontentment at the Qing, or whether the Taiping were a movement which sought to revolutionise China. Many hoped the Taiping were a revolutionary movement in the mould of their Founding Fathers as this would confirm the world was indeed following the example of the American Revolution, instead of the examples of the French, Haitian and South

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[1] 'Humphrey Marshall to Reverend I. J. Roberts', June 20th 1853, *Humphrey Marshall Papers 1771-2002*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.
[2] *Papers of China Miscellany,* No. 1, Peabody Museum, cited in Yuan Chung Teng, 'Reverend Issachar Jacox Roberts and the Taiping Rebellion', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 23 (1963), 60.
[3] Teng, 'Reverend Isschar Jacox Roberts and the Taiping Rebellion', 65-66.
[4] For simplicity, English language spellings of Chinese cities and rivers shall be used.

American revolutionary upheavals. Furthermore, while the Taiping Rebellion was unfolding across China, Americans also kept an eye on their own political troubles and civil war. Their own domestic instability both affected how they viewed the Taiping Rebellion, and American policymakers' ability to exploit it.

To understand the world Americans in China found themselves in by 1850, we must first understand the broader context of European and American interaction with China. By the nineteenth century, China already had a long history of interaction with the Western world. Vasco da Gama's famous 1498 voyage around the Cape of Good Hope had opened up the possibility of maritime trade with Asia. However, before the British East India Company's conquest of Bengal in 1757, Western interaction with East Asia remained very limited.[5]

The Qing Empire represented a big economic opportunity for Western powers. By the eighteenth century, European trade with China was funnelled through the port of Canton on the Pearl River. Canton was the only port Western foreigners were allowed to trade in, and this remained the case until after the First Opium War was concluded in 1842.[6] The Qing were aware that by the eighteenth century, China was part of vast global trading networks beyond their control. The government therefore limited foreign trade to different frontier access points, as a means of retaining control and knowledge of what was imported and exported into China during this period. The 'one country, one frontier' policy allowed the Qing to have leverage over states such as Russia and the United Kingdom during disputes, as it allowed the government the ability to embargo trade much more effectively, without requiring a total restructuring of the bureaucracy of the empire.[7] Prior to the Opium War, the Western presence was limited to merchants in Canton and Macao.

However, Western interaction with China had a detrimental effect on China's economy and society. By the start of the nineteenth century, the largest Western presence in China was the United Kingdom. Yet, Britain struggled to pay for the tea imports that the nation had come to rely on because China did not have need of any British goods. Tea had

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[5] John E. Wills Jr., 'Relations with Maritime Europeans, 1514-1662' in Denis C. Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote (eds.) *The Cambridge History of China: Vol. 8, The Ming Dynasty, Part 2: 1368-1644* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 333-375.
[6] Frederic Wakeman Jr., 'The Canton Trade and the Opium War', in John K. Fairbank (ed.) *The Cambridge History of China: Vol. 10, Late Ch'ing 1800-1911* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 163.
[7] Matthew W. Mosca, 'The Qing State and Its Awareness of Eurasian Interconnections, 1789-1806', *Eighteenth Century Studies* 47 (2014), 103-116.

become extremely important to the British government because of the 100 percent import tax that the treasury levied upon it. However, British merchants could only buy tea with silver which led to a significant trade imbalance.[8] At the turn of the nineteenth century, the British East India Company had started to rely upon exporting Indian opium to China to pay for the tea they needed to send back to the United Kingdom. The problem was, for China to maintain control, that trade had to be funnelled through Canton, which limited the amount of tea Britain could purchase, and the amount of opium that could be sold. The British newspaper *The Times* acknowledged this in 1833 when it reported that 'the laws of the country and the professions of the Government are opposed to the cultivation of any trading intercourse with foreign "barbarians" (and with them all foreigners are barbarians)' but the paper was convinced that 'the important facts have been ascertained that the people [of China] are everywhere most desirous of trade with the English, and that they are jealous its being possessed so exclusively by the natives of Canton.'[9] Clearly, the British commentariat believed that they could gain greater access to Chinese markets if they were to put more pressure on the Qing government. Therefore, British diplomats pressured the Chinese government to open up more ports, as a means of increasing the volume of opium and other goods that could be shipped to China.[10] China resisted because the Qing did not believe they needed foreign goods and did not want to relinquish further control to Western Powers. The Qianlong Emperor had stated this point in a letter to King George III in 1792, which explained to the British government that China allowed foreign nations to trade at Canton because foreigners needed 'essential goods' such as tea and silk. However, China had no need of foreign goods and furthermore, was unwilling to give more trade privileges to Great Britain because this would require them to extend these privileges to all other nations who traded with China.[11]

The stalemate between British requests and Chinese refusal led to some British people regarding China with increasing disdain throughout the early nineteenth century. *The Times* considered the Chinese government to be 'jealous and unsocial' when refusing to

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[8] W. Travis Hanes III and Frank Sanello, *The Opium Wars: The Addiction of One Empire and the Corruption of Another* (Naperville, Illinois: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2002), 19-21.
[9] *The Times*, October 9th 1833.
[10] Hanes III & Sanello, *The Opium Wars*, 22.
[11] Stephen Platt, *Imperial Twilight: The Opium War and End of China's Last Golden Age* (London: Atlantic Books, 2018), 38-39.

entertain the possibility of opening further ports to British trade.[12] So in 1839, when Chinese bureaucrat Lin Zexu seized 2 million pounds worth of opium and held British merchants and officials hostage in Canton, the British government took advantage of the situation, and responded by declaring war. The advanced steamer ships the British had in their fleet proved too much for the antiquated Chinese fleet. In the spring of 1842 a peace agreement was reached where the British crown would be paid 21 million dollars in reparations, as well as securing sovereignty over Hong Kong. Most importantly, five 'treaty ports' would be opened up to British trade and residence – Shanghai, Canton, Xiamen, Fuzhou and Ningbo. Sensing an opportunity, American and French warships carrying diplomats swooped in after the war's end, and both secured the same trading and residence rights as the British in 1843.[13]

The United States had long had its eyes on Chinese trade. Within a few months of the signing of the 1783 Treaty of Paris and the end of the War of Independence, American ships had already set sail for Canton in 1784. The need for a geographic advantage over European rivals for trading with China was one of the motivations which drove continental expansion westwards. Some of the earliest white American settlements of the Pacific coast were way stations for fur traders for the Chinese trade. The Pacific played a large role in the early history of the United States, and China seemed to represent the largest opportunity in the region.[14]

The United States followed the Anglo-Chinese 1842 Nanjing Treaty with their own treaty, which extended the same trading and residence rights that Great Britain got to the United States.[15] This meant the American presence in China swelled. By 1850, a sizeable presence of merchants was complemented by missionaries, government officials, members of the U.S. Navy, and mercenaries. In the 1850s and early 1860s, the majority of Americans in China would be concentrated in Shanghai, near to the Southern end of the Grand Canal which linked it to Beijing. This, as well as the maritime access to the great cities of the Yangtze and the crops grown in the fertile area surrounding them, gave Shanghai trading

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[12] *The Times*, January 30th 1834.
[13] Robert Bickers, *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832-1914* (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 77-89.
[14] Kariann Akemi Yokota, 'Transatlantic and Transpacific Connections in Early American History', *Pacific Historical Review* 83 (2014), 204-219.
[15] Bickers, *The Scramble for China,* 89.

advantages over Canton and made it attractive to Westerners because of its geographical location.[16] From foreign settlement in 1842 until the Communist Revolution in 1949, Shanghai was an area of 'transnational colonialism', where multiple foreign powers exercised shared dominion. The British dominated, but they did not have total control.[17] This unique situation proved attractive to other foreigners, including Americans, to take advantage of the colonial and trading opportunities which were available at Shanghai.

The opinions of Americans residing in China about the rebellion raging around them were not fixed, but were fluid and changed over time. They were shaped by the changing circumstance, but also by the backgrounds of those who held the opinions. Occupation was one of the biggest determinants of how an individual felt towards to the Taiping rebels. Furthermore, occupation determined proximity to the rebellion. American missionaries made up the majority of the American visits to rebel-held territory, which had an effect on how they perceived the rebels.[18] Missionaries were more likely to initially support the rebellion than merchants in the earliest days of the rebellion between 1850 and 1854. The possibility of a Christian-inspired insurgency taking control of the most populous nation on earth was a tantalising one to the people who made it their life's work to spread the word of God. However, opinion of the Taiping tended to follow a similar trajectory where early positivity had been fallen away after the missionary visits to Nanjing in the early to mid-1860s, when most had come to believe the Taiping rebels were little more than a rabble of blasphemous usurpers who could not stop fighting amongst themselves.

On the other hand, those with commercial interests in China often deplored the instability that the war created, especially when it meant the entirety of central China was cut off from trade.[19] In the earliest years of the rebellion, merchants struggled to sell in China as the import market in China collapsed, and Western merchants even struggled to sell opium by 1853.[20] Of course, there were some divergences from this rather binary division, especially from some merchants who viewed the Taiping rebellion as an

[16] *Ibid.*, 61-62.
[17] Isabella Jackson, *Shaping Modern Shanghai: Colonialism in China's Global City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1-22.
[18] Prescott Clarke and J. S. Gregory (eds.) *Western Reports on the Taiping: A Selection of Documents* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1982), xvii.
[19] Wayne Flynt & Gerald W. Berkley, *Taking Christianity to China: Alabama Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom, 1850-1950* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1997), 239.
[20] Teng, *Americans and the Taiping Rebellion*, 31.

opportunity for further Western penetration into Chinese markets, given the difficulties Western governments were having trying to force the Qing government to accept the outcome of the First Opium War.[21] Some merchants were willing to accept the short term setbacks in business because they believed that the Taiping would gain control over all of China, especially because some American businessmen believed the Taiping had popular support.[22] For example in 1856, Russell & Company, the largest American trading house in China at the time, reported to the State Department that 'public sentiment, both among Chinese and foreigners, has turned lately rather in favor of the insurgents.'[23] Yet, most of those merchants who had been optimistic about the potential trading opportunities that the Taiping seemed to represent in the 1850s, had turned against the rebels by the early 1860s.

These reactions, aside from being shaped by circumstance and personal background, were also affected by just how these Americans received their information about the rebellion. The Taiping Rebellion began before the idea of a 'war correspondent' became reality, when William Howard Russell covered the Crimean War (1854-1856) for *The Times*.[24] The only professional correspondent in China during this period was Thomas Bowlby, also of *The Times*. However, Bowlby only covered the allied expedition to Beijing during the Second Opium War. Bowlby became the first war correspondent to lose his life in a war zone when he was taken hostage by the imperial government and tortured to death, leading to British and French troops destroying the Emperor's Summer Palace in reprisal.[25] Instead, the 'war correspondents' for the Taiping Rebellion were amateurs, often missionaries and merchants who wrote letters to the *North China Herald*, and other English language newspapers in China, reporting what they had seen. The lack of professional coverage of these events meant Westerners relied on several different sources of information, often of varying degrees of reliability, about a rebellion only a few hundred miles away.

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[21] Robert Bickers, *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832-1914* (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 121-124.

[22] Teng, *Americans the Taiping Rebellion*, 35.

[23] Russell & Co., 'Advice Circular', September 4th 1856 in United States Department of State, *Message of the President of the United States: communicating, in compliance with a resolution of the Senate, the correspondence of Messrs. McLane and Parker, late commissioners to China, Volume 2* (Washington DC: W. A. Harris Printer, 1859), 937-940.

[24] Greg McLaughlin, *The War Correspondent* (London: Pluto Publishing, 2016), 1.

[25] Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 107-109.

These sources were rumour, information transmitted by Western officials and missionaries who had met with the Taiping, and the reports of Chinese officials to Westerners. Between 1853 and 1854, the British aboard the *HMS Hermes*, the American ship *Susquehanna* and the French steamer *Cassini* had visited the Taiping to establish contact with the rebels and emphasise Western neutrality. Westerners gleaned any information they could from these trips, because any prior information about the rebellion had been gathered from during the Taiping's earlier occupation of Yongan in the south of China and reached Shanghai via Chinese rumours which were often very vague.[26] Western contact with the Taiping fell away after the initial flurry of visits and between 1855 and 1859 it was rare for Westerners to have gain direct access to information about the war.

Yet any information about the war that Westerners did receive from the Chinese hinterland nearly always cast the Taiping as violent, savage aggressors. While rumours were an important source of news on the war creeping towards their safe haven in the treaty ports for Westerners, another source of information was from the mouth of the Qing state itself. During this period any intelligence gathered about the rebellion was from the *Peking Gazette,* which served as the official mouthpiece of the Qing government.[27] This dynamic is key, as the Qing government's propaganda against the rebels informed Westerners of Taiping crimes and violence, and this helped shape Western perceptions on just what kind of movement the Taiping really were. With Westerners able to make contact with the rebels after their freedom of movement was ratified in 1860, and with the Taiping taking the city of Suzhou near to Shanghai, many missionaries took their chance to visit the Taiping. They hoped that the promising signs about the religion and politics of the movement they had learnt of in the early 1850s had been acted upon.[28] Yet, these missionaries, and other Western visitors, were to be severely disappointed by the state of religious beliefs and the political shape of the movement. Some turned away with sorrow, others with anger that their confidence had been betrayed.[29] Their reports made their way back to Shanghai and informed the already emotionally weary British and American residents of the destruction, further colouring their opinions. In turn, the American residents transmitted their views

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[26] Jonathan Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996), 192-209.
[27] Clarke and Gregory (eds), *Western Reports on the Taiping*, 171-172.
[28] *Ibid.*, 225-226.
[29] *Ibid.*, 280.

back to the United States. Back home these ideas were discussed without the pressure of residing in the immediate warzone caused by the fighting between the Taiping and the Qing forces. The vague and often contradictory news about the rebellion meant that Westerners in China were consuming information about the Taiping in a more haphazard way, than if there had been professional reporters in the field. Rumour, emotion and circumstance were important in determining why most Americans came to view the Taiping Rebellion as a missed opportunity.

During the 1850s, opportunity was a common theme in the initial support or sympathy for the Taiping. Western businessmen, governments and mercenaries saw the chaos caused by the rebellion as an opportunity to make more money and gain access to Chinese markets and maybe even territory. The rebellion was also an opportunity for missionaries. Some believed that the Christianisation of China was a necessary step towards the Second Coming of Christ, but even those who did not entertain postmillennial beliefs recognised that a Christian-inspired rebellion presented an opportunity for them to spread Christianity throughout the whole of China, not just the Treaty Ports. Beyond opportunity, however, the initial enthusiasm for the Taiping Rebellion was based on a misunderstanding. America's own revolutionary past, plus the recent 1848 Revolutions in Europe, shaped the way Americans saw the rebellion. They saw the Taiping rebels through a Western lens which painted them as liberal revolutionaries seeking to Christianise their country and reform some of its worst social ills. When the rebels did not live up to their billing, the disappointment was palpable.

The start of the 1860s marked a noticeable turn away from any sympathy or support for 3the Taiping rebels. There had always been a sizeable proportion of those Americans who resided in China who had no sympathy for the rebellion. However, greater understanding of the rebel's aims, events in China, greater involvement of Westerners in the conflict, and changes in global politics influenced this negative turn away from the Taiping. By 1863 even some of the Taiping's most ardent supporters, such as American missionary Issachar Jacox Roberts, had revoked their support for the rebels, and Western support largely swung behind the Qing government. For Americans in China, the promise the Taiping showed now looked like a missed opportunity for revolutionary ideals to spread into China, as the last embers of rebellion were stamped out in 1864.

The opportunities that Americans in China felt the Taiping Rebellion missed out on were largely in matters of God and gold. Missionaries felt the Taiping, as a Christian-inspired rebellion, would aid them in their quest to covert the Chinese population to God. On the other hand, merchants and elements within the federal government's diplomatic presence saw the Taiping's rebellion as an opportunity to break beyond the limitations of the treaty system and throw open China's interior to trading with the United States. Most of this American community in China hoped that the Taiping were a revolutionary movement which would civilise China. Therefore, when it became clear that these American-defined opportunities were not going to be taken by the Taiping rebels, Americans of all occupations began to think that perhaps China, and themselves, had missed out on making more money, as well spreading God and civilisation.

It is important to note, therefore, that while occupational differences might have had an impact on a person's reaction to the rebellion, these differences were often marginal towards the end when the events of the war drove most Americans in China towards the same position. How did people of different backgrounds reach similar conclusions? It is important to examine the ways that a person's background intersected with the situation on the ground in treaty-port China over the course of the rebellion. For example, it can be asked whether missionaries, for example, had different reactions to violence than the merchants, diplomats and mercenaries acting within the same context? Are there any reoccurring themes within the reporting and discussion which transpire regardless of whether the author of the opinion was a missionary or merchant? Furthermore, it can be assumed that different aspects of the rebellion mean more to missionaries than they did to merchants. For example, did missionaries really care that the Taiping might disrupt American trade? Did they see this as a price worth paying for the salvation of Chinese souls? These questions shall be asked as a way of demonstrating that while missionaries, merchants, diplomats might have reacted differently to the rumours and reports they had of the rebels, as well as the interactions they would have when the rebellion threatened Shanghai itself, their differences intersected to create a common opinion held by most as the rebellion drew to a close.

Revolutionaries or Rebels?

When news of the Taiping's rebellion reached Shanghai American missionaries, merchants, and government officials tried to understand whether this was simply a rebellion sparked by discontentment, or whether it was a revolution which sought to drag China into the nineteenth century. However, to judge whether American people did conclude that the Taiping movement was a revolutionary one, we must understand what Americans judged to be a real revolution.

The definition of what revolutions actually are is a contested issue in modern scholarship. For example, Theda Skocpol argues that social revolutions are 'are rapid, basic transformations of a society's state and class structures' which are carried out from below. Social revolutions involve changes to both social and political structures, whereas rebellions, even when successful, do not change the structure of society.[30] On the other hand, Robert Synder defines revolution as 'the sudden, violent, and drastic substitution of one group governing a territorial political entity for another group formerly excluded from the government, and an assault on state and society for the purpose of radically transforming society.'[31] While this definition shares some similarities with Skocpol's, the emphasis on violence differentiates the two definitions. However, David Parker highlights the fallacy of trying to generalise what a revolution is. He argues that 'we may recognise revolution when we see one', but the point where a rebellion becomes a revolution is hardly clear.[32] The modern, academic debate about how to define a revolution demonstrates how difficult it is find a consensus on what a revolution is exactly. Furthermore, modern definitions of what a revolution is do not help us explain what nineteenth-century Americans believed a revolution was.

Modern definitions of revolution often focus on 'great' revolutions such as the French Revolution of 1789 and the Russian Revolution of 1917.Instead, there were two revolutions which fed into American thinking on revolutions – the American Revolution and the 1848 Revolutions. Both revolutions served as a reference point for Americans to understand the goings on in the world around them. For example, southern secessionists

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[30] Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 4.

[31] Robert Synder, 'End of Revolution?', *The Review of Politics* 61 (1999), 7.

[32] David Parker, *Revolutions and the Revolutionary Tradition: In the West 1560-1991* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2000), 7.

and Confederates drew on the language of the American Revolution to legitimise seceding from the United States, by arguing they were the true heirs to the revolution.[33] Furthermore, it was only natural for Americans to look for more examples that the rest of the world was following the example of American democracy.[34] The events of 1848, although largely resulting in failure, seemed to confirm to most Americans that their progressive, democratic path was indeed the correct one.[35] Yet, 1848 also proved to be a cautionary tale which would help Americans understand and evaluate other revolutions. As the revolution of 1848 in France, for example, lost its republican sparkle and descended into rioting and electoral failure for the moderates, Americans were reminded that revolution is not always a good thing.[36] The disappointment that American observers felt at the direction the 1848 European Revolutions was an important lesson. It would remain in American minds when they were evaluating the revolutionary credentials of the Taiping rebels.

The Taiping Rebellion erupted in a society that was firmly controlled by the *ancien régime* of the Chinese Empire. The Qing dynasty had been established in 1644 by a force of invading Manchu people who overthrew the ruling Ming dynasty.[37] The Manchu ruled through a doctrine of 'ethnic sovereignty' which emphasised the difference of their ethnicity from the Han Chinese, who made up the majority of their subject population. The emphasis on Manchu ethnicity amongst the ruling classes was meant to help maintain cohesion in the elite, but it also helped the Qing to deter rebellions because the Manchu were known for the martial ability and feared because of it. However, it also left the Qing vulnerable to charges that they were 'foreign rulers' or an 'other' who had no place ruling China. Rebel groups, including the Taiping, would often rely on this trope to rally their troops against the

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[33] Anne Sarah Rubin, 'Confederates Remember the American Revolution' in W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 86. For more on the American Revolution in American identity see: Jack P. Greene, 'The American Revolution', *American Historical Review* 105 (2000), 93-102; Downs, *The Second American Revolution*, 3. Downs argues that the Civil War has become mythologised as the war which preserved the first revolution of 1776, when actually it was seen by contemporaries as a war to correct the mistakes of the Founding Fathers. It was only after the American Civil War that the American Revolution became foundational to national identity for citizens of the United States.

[34] Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 792.

[35] Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, 546.

[36] Michael M. Morrison, 'American Reaction to European Revolutions, 1848-1852: Sectionalism, Memory, and the Revolutionary Heritage', *Civil War History* 49 (2003), 111-132.

[37] William T. Rowe, *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 1.

dynasty.[38] A few million Manchu ruled over 300 million Chinese subjects who were part of a society which was overwhelmingly agrarian and whose social structures were constructed so that they ensured the unity of China's vast empire. People were organised into familial groups where paternal authority reigned supreme, and the individual was completely subordinated to the family unit. Deference to paternal authority prepared Chinese peasants for the social deference to the gentry which their society required. The Chinese gentry was largely comprised of bureaucrats and landholders. By the nineteenth century, Chinese society could still be characterised as an 'agrarian-bureaucratic' one rather than the growing 'commercial-military' societies in Europe.[39] Regional and provincial officials were appointed by the central government, and they had real decision-making power within their jurisdiction.[40]

Despite the immense power of the Chinese state, Western observers of Chinese society considered Chinese society to be stagnant, according to William Rowe. Americans and Europeans especially considered the lack of technological innovation to be a sign of backwardness. Aside from the absence of technology, some Han Chinese were not considered 'free' and many people, such as prostitutes, were considered either debased or existed in servility (although of course, slavery was no stranger to Westerners). Women were often physically mutilated through the practice of foot-binding. This practice was meant to make a woman more 'worthy of marriage', but foot-binding was immensely painful and caused life-long disability. Prostitution was also an increasing phenomenon in mid-nineteenth century Shanghai.[41] China's most infamous social problem was a national

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[38] Mark C. Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 1-35. For more on Manchu ethnic identity in the late Qing empire see: Pamela Kyle Crossley*, Orphan Warriors: Three Manchu Generations and the End of the Qing World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

[39] John K. Fairbank, 'Introduction: The Old Order', in John K. Fairbank (ed.) *The Cambridge History of China: Vol. 10, Late Ch'ing 1800-1911* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 6-12. The Manchu population was probably only between 2 and 4% the size of the Han Chinese population. For an estimation of how many Manchu populated China see: Mark C. Elliot, Cameron Campbell, and James Lee, 'A Demographic Estimate of the Population of the Qing Eight Banners.' *Études Chinoises: Bulletin de l'Association Française D'études Chinoises* 35 (2016), 9-39.

[40] Rowe, *China's Last Empire*, 37-38.

[41] *Ibid.*, 90-109. For more on foot-binding see: Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding* (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 2005). Ko tries to restore the agency of Chinese women in the story of footbinding, rather than simply deriding the practice. For more on prostitution in nineteenth-century China see: Christian Heriot, *Prostitution and Sexuality in Shanghai: A Social History, 1849-1949*, trans. Noël Castelino (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

addiction to opium. Opium smoking had a long history in China, and its use stretched back to the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Even before the Opium War, its growing use, despite its prohibition, in Chinese society was described as a dangerous 'plague' by Chinese anti-opium campaigners. British traders, as well as Manchu, Chinese and Muslim smugglers continued to pump opium into China as demand grew, but both Chinese and Westerners in China denounced its use.[42] The *Chinese Repository*, an American-missionary run periodical in China stated that the use of opium 'never fails to terminate in death, if the evil habit' is continued.[43] On the dawn of the Taiping Rebellion, Americans and other Westerners saw Chinese governance and society as backward and deeply in need of rejuvenation, and to some the Taiping seemed to represent an opportunity for change.

In this light, the realisation that the Taiping had not lived up to their purported ideals would be immensely disappointing. In the beginning, the Taiping seemed to aim for the equality of women, property ownership reform, and social reforms such as outlawing opium and tobacco-smoking, prostitution, slavery, the consumption of alcohol, foot-binding and polygamy.[44] These reforms were often inspired by the faith of the Taiping. Prohibition of opium smoking was based on the Taiping belief that people could not live a God-worshipping life if they were under the influence of narcotics. However, prohibition had more practical applications, as the Taiping leadership also wished to keep their soldiers' minds clear for combat and focused on their revolutionary objectives.[45]

Regardless of Taiping intentions for their various social reforms, Westerners were often heartened to find out the steps they were taking to improve Chinese society, such as fighting against opium addiction. For example, in April 1853 missionary Catherine Ella Jones delightedly noted that '[the Taiping] have utterly abolished vices usually prevalent among

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[42] Julia Lovell, *The Opium War: Drugs, Dreams and the Making of Modern China* (New York: The Overlook Press, 2014), 17-38.

[43] *The Chinese Repository*, April 1837, p. 570. Source read similarly in Keith McMahon, *The Fall of the God of Money: Opium Smoking in Nineteenth-Century China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 76. See also: Frank Dikötter, Lars Peter Laaman, and Xun Xhou, *Narcotic Culture: A History of Drugs in China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). Dikötter et al. have argued that opium was seen widely perceived as a suitable alternative to alcohol in Western society until the late nineteenth century. Furthermore, they have argued that despite the common assumption that opium was harmful to health, archival records demonstrate that there is no evidence of long term health problems caused by opium use.

[44] Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, 120; Shih, *The Taiping Ideology*, 71-76.

[45] Kilcourse, *Taiping Theology*, 121-125.

the Chinese.'[46] American missionaries sensed early on that the Taiping's intent on revolutionising Chinese society was a threat to those who were involved in the opium trade. On 18 October 1853, Martha Crawford noted in her diary that 'the rebel within the walls [the Small Sword rebels who she believed aligned with the Taiping] have complained to our authorities that they have not maintained strict neutrality.' She went on to mention that 'he wishes an explanation of this before reporting himself to his master Ta' ping who he says is at the walls of Peking [Beijing]', and that the rebels had informed Westerners that 'the imperialists… cannot take Shanghai unless they receive foreign aid – even then their victory will be short lived for Ta' ping will soon send a force to aid [the Small Swords].' In Crawford's opinion, it was a 'disgraceful course that our officers have taken' in offering support to the imperialists to retake the city. She noted, however, that of the American officials acting on their behalf, 'one [was] an opium merchant – the other bought to opium interests.' 'We earnestly look for the new commissioner', she concluded.[47] Here she clearly denotes the Taiping as an anti-opium movement, hence why Westerners with interests in the opium trade would act to support the imperialist authorities in Shanghai.

Opium was a contentious issue amongst Westerners in China. In the 1850s, those arguing that the trade was immoral were steadily losing the argument to those who pointed to the immense profits that selling opium created. Between 1850 and 1860, the number of crates of opium sold increased from 50,000 to 85,000. Missionaries are traditionally thought to be firmly against the opium trade, and across the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries protestant missionaries in China made it their mission to end the trade in opium. Not only did they believe it to be a moral wrong, but they also believed the association of Westerners with the drug made their job of converting Chinese people to Christianity harder.[48] However, the opinion American missionaries had developed of the opium trade was quite complex by the 1850s. American missionaries had been resolutely against the opium trade throughout the early nineteenth century because of the devastating impact it had had on Chinese communities. By the mid-century, some American missionaries began

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[46] Jones, 'To Gen. Walter Jones', April 30th 1853.

[47] Martha F. Crawford, October 18th 1853, *Diary [typed copy], evaluation by Thomas E. Lafargue, 1853-1854*, Martha Foster Crawford diaries, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

[48] Kathleen L. Lodwick, *Crusaders Against Opium: Protestant Missionaries in China, 1874-1917* (Lexington, KT: University of Kentucky, 1996), 1-11.

to focus more on the damage that opium smuggling was doing to the reputation of missionaries. As Westerners, missionaries felt the lawlessness of smuggling opium reflected badly on them as well. Therefore, as Michael C. Lazich suggests, American missionaries, such as William A. P. Martin, began to believe that the legalisation of the opium trade would make the trade more respectable. By removing the association of Westerners with an illegal drug trade, some missionaries believed that they would find converting people to Christ easier.[49] Yet, as Martha Crawford demonstrates the Taiping provided an alternative to the legalisation of opium. The Taiping successfully tackling China's opium was, for Martha Crawford anyway, a preferable outcome to the legalisation of the trade.

The association of the Taiping with having social reforming aims caused Westerners to question what exactly was happening in China. Americans, especially initially, understood what was happening in China was a revolution, rather than a civil war or rebellion. According to Yung-chung Teng, the first use of the word 'revolution' to describe the Taiping Rebellion was in the private correspondence of the American official Peter Parker, who had first used the word in 1851.[50] Indeed, Parker continued to describe the Taiping as revolutionists or revolutionaries in his correspondence with the State Department across the 1850s. In March 1854, Shanghai-based Parker wrote to his boss, the American Commissioner for China Robert McLane, who was in Hong Kong. Parker highlighted the unprecedented nature of the Taiping's rebellion to McLane. 'Whilst recent unparalleled events in China have created corresponding interest in Western nations in the progress and probably issue of these changes', he informed McLane, 'your excellency must naturally be anxious to communicate everything of importance that transpires which may shed new light upon this great moral and political phenomenon… I therefore communicate a brief summary of what has recently come to my knowledge.' Parker then reported that it was 'generally received sentiment then entertained here [in February] was… that during the winter hostilities between the revolutionists and the imperialists would be in abeyance'. Parker stated that this was 'partially correct', although 'the revolutionists have not been

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[49] Michael C. Lazich, 'American Missionaries and the Opium Trade in Nineteenth-Century China', *Journal of World History* 17 (2006), 197-223. For a history of the growth of the American trade in opium see: Jacques M Downs, 'American Merchants and the China Opium Trade, 1800-1840', *The Business History Review* 42 (1968), 418-442. The opinions of American opium merchants to the rise of the Taiping are difficult to ascertain because the dubious legality of the trade meant opium merchants did not keep records of their role within it.
[50] Teng, *Americans and the Taiping Rebellion*, 16.

entirely quiet' because 'they have not only retained the positions they had taken in the autumn, but have successfully advanced [to the junction of the Grand Canal and the Yangtze River in Jiangsu] according to, apparently, a well devised plan.'[51] Parker's language, and discussion of the rebellion as a 'moral and political' phenomenon demonstrates how firmly the Taiping had become delineated as a revolutionary movement in the early 1850s.

Americans in China had become convinced of the Taiping's revolutionary credentials because they had a sense that the Nanjing rebels sought to institute regime change in China. Martha Crawford's diary entries demonstrate how the political aims of the Taiping rebels were understood by the Americans in Shanghai. In September 1853, Crawford wrote in her diary about the how the Small Sword uprising in Shanghai would help the Taiping. She noted that the Small Sword rebels 'seem to be different from the full blooded rebels… they do not tear down the idols, nor worship the True God, they worship Heaven and Earth. Still they aim at tearing down the present dynasty rather than plunder, and will thus work into the hands of the real rebels.' Furthermore, she was pleased that it had been said that 'some real long haired rebels are here and that all are in concert [together]'.[52] Here, Martha Crawford placed a sense of authenticity of the Taiping's rebellion. In Crawford's eyes, because the Taiping aimed to replace the current regime, rather than just hoping to plunder, they could be considered 'real rebels'. By stating this, she confers a sense of revolutionary legitimacy on to their struggle against the Qing. Beyond the Christian element of the Taiping rebels, the fact that they were perceived to be fighting a war of national liberation against a foreign elite engendered support from Westerners in China.[53]

Those in the American community in China who were interested in the Taiping used past revolutions to help them understand what was happening in China. Some drew on America's own revolution. As late as 1860, one commentator stated in the *North China Herald* that the 'principles which actuate the rebellion are universal and stand out as strong

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[51] 'Peter Parker to Robert McLane', 24th Match 1854 in United States Department of State, *Message of the President of the United States: communicating, in compliance with a resolution of the Senate, the correspondence of Messrs. McLane and Parker, late commissioners to China, Volume 1* (Washington DC: W. A. Harris Printer, 1859), 5-6. Peter Parker was an ordained Presbyterian minister, doctor and a senior official in the United States Diplomatic Mission to China, sometimes taking charge in absence of the Minister Plenipotentiary – G. Wright Doyle, 'Peter Parker', Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity (2018), http://bdcconline.net/en/stories/parker-peter, accessed 21/11/18.

[52] Crawford, September 8th 1853, *Diary*.

[53] Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 58.

from the Chinese outbreak as they did from the American Revolution.'[54] Others used more recent revolutions to help them understand. The revolutions which swept across Europe in 1848 caused a peak of interest in revolution in the mid-nineteenth century across the world. This meant that any concurrent rebellion was viewed through a lens where the 1848 revolutions served as a reference point. 1848 reminded Americans of their revolutionary past, and initially they were optimistic that European nations were following the republican path set out by the United States. By the summer of 1848, the revolutions in Europe took more radical turns. This caused the initial American unified enthusiasm to waver, but the interest in revolution remained. As Andre M. Fleche points out, over the course of the 1850s Americans learned to draw upon their observations of the 1848 revolutions to help them understand their own tumultuous political situation, as well as foreign events.[55] Americans continued to want evidence of whether the revolutionary spirit was spreading around the world, and newspapers searched fastidiously for evidence that it was. Patrick Kelly suggests that in 1856 when violence broke out in Kansas, anti-slavery politicians understood the violence in relation to what had transpired in 1848 Europe.[56] The same can be said of the Taiping Rebellion, which happened only a few years earlier, and seemed, to Westerners, to correspond with the features of the 1848 revolutions.[57] English-language papers in China reprinted European papers which declared as much. For example, the *North China Herald* ran an article from *The Times* which suggested 'the Chinese revolution is in all respects the greatest revolution the world has yet seen.'[58] In the early days of the Taiping uprising, Westerners were keen to discuss the events unfolding in China in relation to revolutions which had happened in Europe and the Americas. This was something which would not last as more became known about the character of the rebellion.

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[54] *North China Herald*, July 28th 1860. While acknowledging the revolutionary principles of the Taiping, the author also accused the Chinese of being 'the most blood-thirsty race now existing on earth'.

[55] Andre M. Fleche, *The Revolution of 1861: The American Civil War in the Age of Nationalist Conflict* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 11-38. For more on United States and 1848 see: Merle Curti, 'The Impact of the Revolutions of 1848 on American Thought', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 93 (1949), 209-215; Timothy M. Roberts and Daniel W. Howe, 'The United States and the Revolutions of 1848' in R. J. W. Evans and Hartmut Pogge Von Strandmann (eds.) *The Revolutions in Europe, 1848-1849: From Reform to Reaction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 157-180; Richard C. Rohrs, 'American Critics of the French Revolution of 1848', *Journal of the Early Republic* 14 (1994), 359-377.

[56] Patrick J. Kelly, 'The European Revolutions of 1848 and the Transnational Turn in Civil War History', *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 4 (2014), 431-443.

[57] Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 10-11.

[58] *North China Herald*, November 26th 1853.

American officials in China were cautiously optimistic in the early days of the rebellion, although this is possibly because the rebellion gave the United States leverage over the obstructive Qing authorities. In a letter from Peter Parker to Robert McLane, American Minister Plenipotentiary to China, where the two officials discussed the refusal of the Qing government to receive a letter from the President of the United States, Parker suggests that if the Qing authorities continue to act in such a discourteous manner then McLane would be within his rights to remind the Emperor that 'if "*Hëen Fung*" [the Emperor Xianfeng] will not receive you, "*Tae Ping*" probably will.'[59] Regardless of the motives behind the caution, the use of the term 'revolutionist' in the reports betrays how the popular belief that the Taiping were fighting a Western-style revolution had infiltrated official thinking.

Throughout the 1850s, all Western powers in China observed strict neutrality. The main Western powers in mid-nineteenth century China were Britain, France, the United States and Russia. Britain saw China as a potential area of economic importance, and this is why the Palmerston government dithered over whether to intervene in the rebellion during the 1850s. It was only of minor importance to the British economy at this stage, although many believed China would become much more important. In the end, the British opted to remain neutral in the 1850s, despite concern about the damage the Taiping could do to trade.[60] When considering intervention, the British sounded out the opinions of the other powers in China. France was willing to co-operate with Britain, but the United States and Russia were unwilling to get entangled in an internal Chinese conflict they did not know enough about.[61] Despite going to war with the Qing in 1856, the British and the French refused to recognise the Taiping as an independent government, while they extracted further trading concessions from the Qing. The Russians and the Americans stayed neutral in both conflicts in this period, but both benefited from Anglo-French aggression by getting access to the concessions the Qing made in 1860, including the right to station diplomats in Beijing and further treaty ports being opened up.[62] With the conclusion of the Second Opium War in 1860, British and French troops now intervened in the Taiping rebellion on

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[59] Peter Parker, 'Letter to Robert McLane', April 6th 1854, *Correspondence of Messrs. McLane and Parker, late commissioners to China, Volume 1* (Washington DC: W. A. Harris Printer, 1859), 20-21.
[60] J. S. Gregory, *Great Britain and the Taipings* (London: Routledge, 1969), vii-xvi.
[61] *Ibid.,*
[62] Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 25-29; 103. For more on the Second Opium War see: Douglas Hurd, *The Arrow War: An Anglo-Chinese Confusion, 1856-1860* (London: Collins, 1967).

behalf of the Chinese government to protect the commercial benefits they had extracted from the Qing. The British government was not unsympathetic towards the nationalist aspirations of the Taiping, but the British did not believe the Taiping would be able to give them any guarantees that they would honour the treaties drawn up between the Western powers and the Qing.[63] Throughout both the Second Opium War and the Taiping Rebellion, the United States remained neutral and forbade Americans in China to jeopardise American neutrality.[64] The federal government's desire for neutrality mirrors its response to American filibustering in Cuba and Central America during the antebellum era. Washington wanted American citizens to refrain from interfering in the affairs of other nations, but was ultimately powerless to stop private citizens from endangering this neutrality.[65]

Despite Washington's neutrality, some American officials in China, carried away by their understanding that the Taiping were trying to create a revolutionary Christian state, were pushing the metropole to recognise the Taiping government as independent from Qing China. In September 1856 Peter Parker informed the State Department that Western opinion in China had swung in favour of the Taiping because 'intelligence from Nanking [suggests] a character of order, leniency and wise policy on the part of the insurgents.' Parker told Secretary of State William Marcy that the Taiping respected both personal and property rights of both men and women, that 'local rulers are selected by the people', and furthermore that 'taxation is lighter than under the imperialists.' In light of this, Parker suggested that the United States 'shall not give umbrage to any future rulers of the empire.'[66] Parker's enthusiasm for the rebels appears to have been caused by a series of letters sent by missionary William A. P. Martin to Attorney General Caleb Cushing, who had experience in China, and which were also published in the *North China Herald*.[67] The

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[63] Gregory, *Great Britain and the Taipings*, 155-169. For more on diplomatic relations between Western governments and the Taiping see: S. Y. Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971). Teng's account arrives at a similar conclusion to Gregory, and both historians consider commercial interests as integral in explaining why the British and French intervened when the Taiping rebels moved towards taking Shanghai in the 1860s.

[64] Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 143.

[65] Robert E. May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld: Filibustering in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), xi-xiii.

[66] Peter Parker, 'Letter to His Excellency, Wm. L. Marcy, Secretary of State of the United States, Washington', September 5th 1856 in United States Department of State, *Message of the President of the United States: communicating, in compliance with a resolution of the Senate, the correspondence of Messrs. McLane and Parker, late commissioners to China, Volume 2* (Washington DC: W. A. Harris Printer, 1859), 920-923.

[67] Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers*, 191.

American missionary sent letters urging the federal government to recognise the Taiping, sensing that they represented an opportunity for the United States.[68] Martin exclaimed that the outcome of the Taiping rebellion put 'our common Christianity… at stake' and further claimed 'the success of the Insurgents would be rich in commercial results'.[69] He therefore hoped 'that all Christian powers will refrain from helping an illiberal, effete, pagan and foreign dynasty, to overcome its worthier rival, and that the first American treaty with China will be the last with its Tartar rulers.'[70] The early optimism of US officials on the ground in China was driven by the same factors that convinced other Americans in China that the Taiping regime was something to be optimistic about. Furthermore, the chaos it caused in China was an opportunity for the British and French to put more pressure on the Qing government for more concessions, from which the United States benefited also.[71]

Therefore, it was an immense disappointment to Americans in China to learn that these early attempts at social reform were largely ignored by the 1860s. It reinforced stereotypes that the Chinese were an uncivilised people who were prone to addiction and unable to live 'Christian' lives. This would have a profound impact on the image of the Chinese that was transmitted back to the United States during this period. The collapse of the image the Taiping had in American eyes has parallels with the movement to abolish slavery in the United States. The abolition movement came out of the Second Great Awakening, the large-scale Christian evangelical revival that occurred across the first half of the nineteenth century. Evangelicals often considered slavery a 'national sin' and believed the way for the American nation to rise above sin was to emancipate the slaves and abolish the practice of slavery. Although starting out with lofty goals that aimed to 'save the nation' (similar to the supposed goals of the Taiping in the early days), abolitionists were increasingly labelled as extremists or denounced for their 'ultraism' by the 1840s. By the late 1850s, abolitionist rhetoric had come to reflect their earlier criticisms as they

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[68] Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 26-27. William Alexander Parsons Martin was an evangelical Presbyterian minister who served as a secretary and interpreter to U.S. Representative on Lord Elgin's fleet that fought the Qing in the Second Opium War. See also: Martha Stockment, 'William Alexander Parsons Martin', Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity (2018), http://bdcconline.net/en/stories/martin-william-alexander-parsons, accessed 21/11/18.

[69] W. A. P. Martin, 'The State and Prospects of the Belligerent Parties in the Chinese Empire, considered in two letters to the *Hon.* Caleb Cushing, *Attorney-General of the United States*', *North China Herald*, June 7th 1856.

[70] *Ibid*.

[71] Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, 151-152.

increasingly predicted and called for the end of slavery through violent means.[72] In a similar manner, the fall of the Taiping from their lofty social reform goals to violence and losing sight of their original intentions helped discredit the Taiping in Western eyes.

By the early 1860s, the Taiping had largely lost this revolutionary image and almost the entire Western world largely considered the movement to stand for nothing but violence and a lust for power.[73] News that the leader of the Taiping himself, Hong Xiuquan now ran his 'royal court' as a harem and practiced polygamy disgusted foreign observers.[74] North Carolinian Methodist missionary Marquis Lafayette Wood reported that 'Polygamy is another dark feature of their system. Tien Wong [*Tian wang*, i.e. The Heavenly King] has married about thirty wives and has in his harem about a hundred women.'[75] Polygamy represented the degeneracy of the Taiping regime, and it confirmed to American observers that the Taiping rebels were not the revolutionary movement that they were once thought to be. Most Americans vehemently opposed the idea of polygamy as it went against their idea of how society should be organised. The family was the basic unit of social organisation in the mid-nineteenth century American republic, and the ideal family unit was comprised of one male and one female parent, where the male held the ultimate authority.[76] Yet, the male head of the household did not exercise his economic and political authority within the home, for the family was ruled by the mother's emotional power. The family was meant to be a 'launching pad' from which a mother steered her children into the wider world and morally equipped them for citizenship. The home was a sanctuary from the masculine, confrontational public sphere.[77] Consequently, the family was an important component of the American nation, and the concept of the ideal family became politicised. It was this belief which drove the Republican Party platform of 1856 to promise to eliminate Mormon polygamy, one of the 'twin relics of barbarism' alongside slavery. Mormonism was

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[72] David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 250-268.

[73] Platt, *Autumn in Heavenly Kingdom*, 281-282.

[74] Spence, *God's Chinese Son*, 150-151.

[75] Wood, 'Letter from Rev. M. L. Wood', *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, September 18th 1860 in Wood, *Diary, 1860*.

[76] Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract: Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in the Age of Slave Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 58.

[77] Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 232-234.

considered a danger to the United States because it was believed by middle-class Americans that monogamous families were the foundation of a stable nation.[78] In the 1850s when the Western community in China had learnt that the Taiping rebels had planned to eliminate polygamy, American observers had believed that the movement was truly revolutionary. Discovery that the very leadership, which had outlawed polygamy, was continuing the practice in private was very disappointing to the Anglo-American presence in China.[79] It reinforced a stereotype that the Chinese were unable to practice monogamy which raised questions about the suitability of Chinese immigrants for inclusion in American society. The most immediate effect, however, was to seriously undermine the revolutionary credentials of the Taiping rebels in the eyes of American observers.

Social reform-minded Americans were also disappointed to learn that earlier Taiping proclamations that outlawed opium usage were no longer enforced. Stephen Platt argues that the anti-opium stance of the Taiping was the reform that Westerners knew best, but also the least effective reform.[80] By the 1860s this had become abundantly clear. One commentator decried 'despicable foreigners' who traded only 'arms, ammunition, and opium' with the rebels.[81] Furthermore, the hypocrisy of the Taiping regime on the subject of opium use began to cause concern for Shanghai's Anglo-American community. For example, a *North China Herald* article, published on 12 November 1864, told of the Taiping's draconian approach to law and order. According to Patrick Nellis, a British soldier who had been captured by the Taiping, 'all offences received one punishment – death.' Nellis witnessed 'two boys… beheaded for smoking' because there were 'orders against the use of opium and tobacco'. He claimed that 'in spite of the orders against smoking, the chiefs were inveterate smokers.'[82] Newspaper reports such of these highlighted the hypocrisy of the regime and its failings to bring the opium under control. This would have been further

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[78] Steven Hahn,' Slave Emancipation, Indian Peoples, and the Projects of a New American Nation-State', *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 3 (2013), 311-313**.**

[79] British missionary opinion followed a similar trajectory to that of American missionaries, with less emphasis on polygamy. They still were disappointed that the rebellion 'breaks all social and domestic ties'. It appears that by the 1860s, the Taiping had offended mid-nineteenth century ideals of domesticity, family and masculinity across the Anglophonic community in China. See: John S. Gregory, *Great Britain and the Taipings* 133-139.

[80] Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 155.

[81]*North China Herald*, March 8th 1862.

[82] 'Statement Relative to the Condition of Hoochow, Before Its Capture' *North China Herald*, 12th November 1864.

evidence to American observers in China that the Taiping rebels were not the principled movement they were thought to be.

The failure of the Taiping to break the hold of opium addiction in the territory they controlled reinforced the stereotype that the Chinese were prone to addiction. In the late Qing period, stereotypes about opium addicts were prevalent in both fiction and society. Male opium smokers were often portrayed as lacking a libido, as well as shirking their familial responsibilities and becoming excessively passive. In short, they became 'less of a man'. Female users were often stereotyped as prostitutes who lacked interest in reproducing, undermining their femininity in the eyes of the Chinese prohibitionist. Importantly, these ideas in Chinese society were picked up on by Western observers, who concluded that widespread opium addiction in China meant the Chinese were 'heathens'.[83] The failure of the Taiping to break the stranglehold of opium addiction on China only contributed to this narrative. From 1850, large numbers of Chinese people began to migrate to the west coast of the United States. Chinese communities often contained opium dens or brothels where opium could be smoked. The Victorian attitudes of middle-class Americans in the mid to late nineteenth century led many to conclude that Chinese were incompatible with American society. Chinese men were already derided as 'feminine' because they wore their hair in queues and often took jobs in sectors that were often considered only suitable for women, such working in laundries. Their dependence on opium contributed to this, as Americans in China reported back to the United States about the devastating affect the drug had on Chinese masculinity.[84] This led to the prevailing stereotype in the United States that the Chinese were the epitome of the male addict, the complete opposite of what the idealised image of the nineteenth-century man was.[85] Americans believed opium damaged Chinese society by subverting gender-norms. Therefore, having put faith in the Taiping to

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[83] Keith McMahon, 'Opium and Sexuality in Late Qing Fiction', *Nan Nü* 2 (2002), 129-179. For more on the history of opium use in China see: Zheng Yangwen, *The Social Life of Opium in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Yangwen provides a social history of opium use in China where she points out that although the lower classes were attacked as the only opium users, the upper classes were prolific users of opium. Yangwen also attempts to explain just why opium became so popular in China.

[84] Diana L. Ahmad, *The Opium Debate and Chinese Exclusion Laws in the Nineteenth-Century American West* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada, 2007), 1-16. For more on how the association of opium with Chinese migrants contributed to exclusionary politics and the discrimination Chinese migrants in America faced see: Gregory Yee Mark, 'Opium in America and the Chinese' in Linda A. Revilla (ed.) et al., *Bearing Dreams, Shaping Visions: Asian Pacific American Perspective* (Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 1993), 5-13.

[85] Mara L. Keire, 'Dope Fiends and Degenerates: The Gendering of Addiction in Early Twentieth Century', *The Journal of Social History* (1998), 812.

halt the drug's poisonous infiltration of Chinese society, those Americans in China were disappointed to learn that the rebel group had not fulfilled their promise to end the proliferation of the drug in Chinese society.

The failure of the Taiping rebellion to revolutionise the territory under its control was seized upon by Western press in China as evidence that the Chinese were unable to change, and that China would forever be ruled by despotism. Issachar Jacox Roberts, the American missionary who had been one of the most vocal supporters of the Taiping regime wrote a stinging denunciation of the Taiping in 1862. Roberts told the *North China Herald* that Hong Xiuquan was 'a crazy man' who was 'entirely unfit, to rule without any organized government; nor is he, with his cooly kings, capable of organizing a government, of equal benefit to the people, of even the old imperial government.'[86] Furthermore, he criticised the Taiping regime for carrying out extra-judicial executions and ordering the deaths of people in Nanking for little more than trading in the city.[87] Two years later, the *North China Herald* reflected on the recently defeated rebellion. The author attributed the failure of the rebellion to 'the men who, in virtue of their office as kings, were looked on as prophets and priests' who in his eyes were driven by 'none of those pure and virtuous motives ascribed to them by too confiding or too fanatical missionaries.'[88] According to him, the failure of the Taiping rebellion 'opens up a view of character so essentially Chinese that we can recognise in it no regenerated elements. Thus from whatever point of view we may regard the movement, we shall find that, left to itself as it has been, the Rebellion would never, and, indeed, could never have led to the organisation of a new and enlightened system of Government.'[89] By the mid-1860s, Westerners in China considered the fall of the Taiping rebellion into yet another despotic regime in China as evidence that the Chinese were unable to take part in 'enlightened systems of government'. There was a sense that those sympathetic to the rebellion, especially missionaries, were too quick to accredit the Taiping as a revolutionary movement in the Western sense. Upon learning of the despotic and violent nature of the Taiping regime, many Westerners, Americans included, concluded that

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[86] Issachar Jacox Roberts, *North China Herald*, February 8th 1862 in J. A. G. Roberts, *China Through Western Eyes: The Nineteenth Century* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1991), 56-58.
[87] *Ibid.*
[88] *North China Herald*, November 12th 1864.
[89] *Ibid*.

the Chinese were unable to rule themselves through governments that were based upon the rule of law and self-government.[90]

The early optimism that the Taiping rebellion may have been a revolution with not just political, but social aims had waned by the 1860s amongst the Western community in China. The often-lofty reformist goals of the early Taiping leadership, such as ending polygamy and opium smoking, were forgotten as the war raged on. Westerners who had optimistically viewed the Taiping through a Western lens shaped by the recent revolutions of 1848, misjudged the Taiping rebellion. The Taiping would never live up to Western standards of revolution, which is precisely how the Western community in China judged them. This meant discovery of the Taiping regime's despotic nature created a profound sense of disappointment and led to the reinforcement of stereotypes about the nature of the Chinese in general. Americans in China came away with the idea that the Chinese had attempted to set up a regime based on Western ideals and had failed miserably. The failure of the Taiping seemed to confirm to Americans that China was backward and unable to modernise without outside help. Yet, American observers remained committed to the idea that China needed a revolution to fully 'civilize' China. As Marquis Lafayette Wood put it during a speech given around 1870, 'nothing furnishes any probability of the Christianization of China without an entire revolution in the whole structure social and political; without a complete breaking up the old basis, and the establishing a new.'[91] This was probably written after the Taiping's revolution had failed which highlights how the Taiping Rebellion came to be seen as not fulfilling its revolutionary potential. If China still needed a revolution to help Christianise it, then the Taiping Rebellion could not have been a 'proper' revolution.

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[90] *Ibid.*

[91] Marquis Lafayette Wood, *Is it Probable that China will be Christianized Without a Revolution? By Rev. M. L. Wood of Southern Methodist Missionary Read before the Conference*, Unknown date, Marquis Lafayette Wood Records and Papers, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. Unfortunately, the date for this sermon is unknown, however, one would assume it was delivered after he returned from his mission in China, which was in 1867.

Chapter Two: Taiping Christianity: One Step Closer to Christ's Kingdom on Earth or a Blasphemous Setback for China?

Christianity was a central part of Taiping ideology, and American understandings of what the Taiping believed shaped how they responded to the rebellion. The religious beliefs of American people informed their domestic political views in the mid-nineteenth century.[92] Religion pervaded every aspect of American society during this time. Even during the American Civil War, the idea of the Union as a 'redeemer nation' provided Americans the sense that the war was being fought on God's behalf.[93] Religious belief also affected how Americans in China, especially missionaries, responded to the Taiping Rebellion as well.[94]

Scholarship on the Taiping has often downplayed or ignored the role of Christianity in the rebellion. Chinese historians writing after the communist revolution in the latter half of the twentieth century sought to establish the Taiping as a 'proto-communist' rebellion, and therefore they have emphasised that the conflict had its roots in class conflict. As Marxist ideology considered religion as an oppressive 'opiate' of the masses, some Chinese historians have denied that Christianity could have had an invigorating effect on the rebels.[95] The religious essentialist viewpoints of the Western historians studying the Taiping's religion has also led to the importance of the Taiping's Christian beliefs being underestimated. Essentialism is where one attempts to define the very essence of a religious or cultural belief. The problem with this is that it leads to reinforcing power structures through othering groups of believers who do not conform exactly to what is the defined 'essence' of a religion.[96] Through using essentialist definitions of religion, earlier

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[92] Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), xiv-xx.

[93] James H. Moorhead, *American Apocalypse: Yankee Protestants and the Civil War, 1860-1869* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978).

[94] Other non-white populations that American missionaries interacted with included Native Americans. See: Michael C. Coleman, 'Race, Presbyterian Missionaries and American Indians in the Nineteenth Century', *OAH Magazine of History* 2 (1987), 42-45. Coleman argues that American missionaries were not willing to allow Christian beliefs to be expressed through Indian practices. This was similar to how Western missionaries came to view the Taiping's Sino-Christian expression.

[95] Carl S. Kilcourse, *Taiping Theology: The Localization of Christianity in China, 1843-1864* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 1-14. For discussions on a Marxist interpretation of revolution that erase the role of religion, see: Tamara Prosic, 'The 1917 Russian Revolution and Eastern Orthodox Christian Utopianism', *Utopian Studies* 28 (2017), 268-285.

[96] For definitions of Essentialism see: Dirk Ansorge, 'Is it Essentialism to Claim Some Religions Foster Violence – And Others Do Not?' in Heydar Shadi (ed.) *Islamic Peace Ethics: Legitimate and Illegitimate Violence in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2017), 37-54. For a critique of

Western historians, such as Eugene Boardman, have cast doubt on the Christian credentials of the Taiping. This viewpoint follows the criticisms that missionaries had levelled at the Taiping during the 1850s and 1860s, that the Taiping rebels did not follow a 'proper' version of Christianity. By uncritically relying on the understandings of Western missionaries in China, these historians have subscribed to an essentialist view of Christianity where the Taiping movement could only be considered truly Christian if its belief remained orthodox or pure. As such, these scholars have considered the religion of the Taiping to represent a distortion of Christianity because although the Taiping subscribed to the Ten Commandments and they had beliefs about Christ's sacrifice for the redemption of humanity, they did not engage in other areas of the religion such as teachings on love and charity, as well as completely misunderstanding what the New Testament meant.[97]

However, Carl Kilcourse suggests that the Taiping version was not a distortion of Christianity but was a reflection of 'true' Christianity situated within a Chinese context. Western missionaries, as agents of cultural imperialism, had tried to replace the Confucian (as well as Buddhist and Daoist) belief systems of Chinese society with a foreign religious belief system. To do this, Western missionaries had to translate their religious works in such a way that the tenets of Christianity could be understood in an alien society, leading to different linguistic and cultural understandings of the Christian texts. By disseminating these works, missionaries opened up the possibility that Chinese people drawn to the foreign religion could interpret it in a localised way that made it easier to conceptualise. In a process Kilcourse calls 'glocalization', the Taiping had therefore simply taken a global belief system and made it Chinese. Consequently, Taiping Christianity did not represent a distortion of Christianity.[98] It is important to remember, however, that while the missionaries themselves may have been wrong about Taiping distortions of Christianity by twenty-first century academic standards, the missionaries themselves considered the beliefs

essentialism see: Ronald Geaves, 'The Dangers of Essentialism: South Asian Communities in Britain and the 'World Religions' Approach to the Study of Religions', *Contemporary South Asia* 14 (2005), 75-90. Geaves' anthropological study of the British South Asian diaspora suggests that essentialising definitions of South Asian religions such as, Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism, can lead to reinforcing power structures and othering British Asian communities.

[97] Kilcourse, *Taiping Theology,* 1-14. For an example of the Essentialist Interpretation of Taiping Christianity see: Eugene P. Boardman, *The Christian Influence Upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851-1864* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1952). This influence of this interpretation can be seen in Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973).

[98] Kilcourse, *Taiping Theology*, 14-20.

of the Taiping to be a distortion of their religion. Their belief that the Taiping held distorted Christian beliefs significantly shaped their attitude to the rebels.

The 'glocalized' Christian beliefs emerged out of a series of visions the movement's leader, Hong Xiuquan, had in 1837 after failing to pass the provincial state examinations to become a government official. In these visions, Hong ascended to heaven and was instructed by a golden-bearded man to return to earth and cleanse China of the demons that controlled the Celestial Empire. Hong later interpreted the visions he had through a Chinese-language Christian text, *Good Words to Admonish the Age*, produced by Chinese convert Liang A-fa, under the instruction of British missionaries Robert Morrison and William Milne in 1832. Hong later met American missionary Issachar Jacox Roberts in 1847, when he may have been able to read the Bible for the first time.[99] However, until 1847 *Good Words* was the only information of Christianity that Hong possessed. The tract contained only a few of the doctrines of Christianity. It taught Hong about God's omnipotence, Christ's sacrifice to atone for the sins of man, the eternal nature of the soul, and the difference between the eternal salvation or damnation of the soul on Judgement day. *Good Words* was written in such a way that it managed to merge Western Christian and Chinese themes together, so that they could be understood easily in relation to Chinese society.[100]

Hong Xiuquan's interpretation of the information about Christianity he had received over the 1830s and 1840s led to a form of Christianity unique to the Taiping movement. After learning more about the Christian religion, Hong understood his visions to be evidence that he was the younger brother of Jesus Christ and that God had given him a divine mission to rid China of demons. Taiping beliefs were also built on the premise that China had once been a Christian kingdom, and that their movement was to restore the place of God in Chinese life. Religious idols (especially Buddhist) were considered by the Taiping to be the instruments of demons that were preventing the Chinese people from worshipping the true God, and by destroying them they would free the people from their evil influences. The Manchu, a minority ethnicity that made up China's ruling classes and dynasty, were seen by the Taiping as promoters of idolatry. According to Hong Xiuquan's theological philosophy,

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[99] Philip A. Kuhn, 'Origins of the Taiping Vision: Cross-Cultural Dimensions of a Chinese Rebellion', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 19 (1977), 350-353.
[100] *Ibid.*, 353-358.

because the Manchu were promoting the worship of idols, they were doing the work of the demons seeking to further divide Chinese people from God. Therefore, the war the Taiping raged against the Qing dynasty had a religious element, as for the Taiping, the Manchu, who were the agents of 'demons', had to be eradicated before God worshipping could return to China.[101]

Beyond beliefs that Hong Xiuquan was the Second Son of God and that he and his followers had a heavenly mandate to rid China of the Manchu and idolatry, Taiping religion was built around some core tenets of Protestant Christianity. The Taiping emphasised the doctrine of atonement, where God is willing to forgive sins, and they also believed Jesus had sacrificed himself for the redemption of human sin.[102] The followers of the Taiping underwent a form of baptism when joining the ranks of the rebels, and believers had to adhere to the Ten Commandments, observe the Sabbath on Sundays and pray every morning and evening, as well as before meals. Taiping Christianity had a heavy emphasis on Old Testament stories such as the story of Creation, the exodus of the Jews from Egypt, and Noah and the Great Flood.[103] Furthermore, Taiping Christianity had millenary aspects. The Taiping believed that should they rid China of idols and demons then the Kingdom of Heaven would be established on earth. This would provide the collective salvation of all Chinese Christians.[104]

The millenary aspects of the Taiping Rebellion had parallels with the pre and post-millennial ideas that had become influential in the Second Great Awakening – the evangelical revival of Christianity that took place in the United States in the early nineteenth century.[105] In the first half of the nineteenth century, the majority of American Protestants were postmillennialists and it was an idea which was influential in the 'mainstream'

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[101] Kilcourse, *Taiping Theology*, 45-59. There are parallels here with another mid-nineteenth century rebellion, the 1857 Indian Rebellion. For example: William Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006) argues that the rebellion was a war of religion by Muslims and Hindus to remove foreign, Christian rulers. This is not uncontested. Rajat Kanta Ray, *The Felt Community: Commonalty and Mentality before the Emergence of Indian Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) instead argues that a broader sense of national commonalty amongst Indian people helped motive the rebellion in 1857.

[102] *Ibid.*, 59-63.

[103] Eugene P. Boardman, 'Millenary Aspects of the Taiping Rebellion (1851-64) in Sylvia L. Thrupp (ed.) *Millennial Dreams in Action: Studies in Revolutionary Religious Movements* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), 73-77.

[104] Boardman, 'Millenary Aspects of the Taiping Rebellion (1851-64), 70-72.

[105] Douglas A. Sweeney, 'Evangelicals in American History' in Paul Harvey & Edward Blum (eds.) *The Columbia Guide to Religion in American History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 128.

denominations: Baptists, Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterian, the Disciples and Congregationalists.[106] Postmillennialism is built on the premise that for the Second Coming of Christ to occur, first there must be a thousand-year reign of the Kingdom of Christ on earth. After the thousand years of Christ's Kingdom on earth the final judgement would occur, and a new world would be ushered in. The Second Great Awakening, which swept across the United States between 1800 and the 1840s, caused many to believe that the Kingdom of Christ was near and further social reform would hasten its arrival. It is also acted as an inspiration for missionaries to go and spread the word of God across the world, as without the dominance of Christianity there could be no Kingdom of Christ.[107] In some respects, postmillennialist missionaries and the Taiping shared the same theological aim of establishing a Kingdom of Heaven on earth, although the Taiping did not believe that this Kingdom of Heaven would result in the Second Coming of Christ and the Last Judgement.[108] This did not mean that postmillennialist believers were the only missionaries who were initially taken with the rumours about a Chinese Christian rebel establishing a heavenly kingdom.

Premillennialism was also influential in antebellum American religious thought. Premillennialist Christians were optimistic about the Taiping as well. However, premillennialists disagreed with postmillennialists about the order of the Second Coming of Christ. Humans could do nothing to hasten the Christ's return and instead had to continue leading a Christian lifestyle until Christ rose and saved all 'true' Christian during the Last Judgement.[109] Despite not believing that Taiping Christianization of China would hasten the return of Christ, the opening of inland China to Protestant Christianity increased the number of people saved when the imminent apocalypse occurred. Both forms of millennialism would be influential in determining how missionaries reacted to the Taiping, who were also seeking to establish their own Heavenly Kingdom. It would underpin initial enthusiasm in the early 1850s, as well as latter disappointment in the 1860s when Westerners got a better

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[106] James Moorhead, *World Without End: Mainstream American Protestant Visions of the Last Things* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), xi-xvi.

[107] Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 285-289.

[108] Boardman, 'Millenary Aspects of the Taiping Rebellion (1851-64), 70; Kilcourse, *Taiping Theology*, 74.

[109] Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 808-812.

understanding of Taiping Christianity, and the movements unwillingness to conform to Anglo-American Protestantism.

In the early days of the rebellion between 1850 and 1854, Westerners who lived in China were not quite sure what to make of the reports of the Christian nature of rebellion. The rumours that the rebels were Christian certainly created a stir, especially amongst the missionary community. In 1854, Swedish missionary Theodore Hamberg, who had met Hong Xiuquan's cousin Hong Rengan in Hong Kong, published a book in English which provided Westerners in China with their earliest detailed knowledge of the uprising. Hong Rengan's astonishing revelation that his cousin was leading a Christian-inspired rebellion led Hamberg to publish his book from his base in Hong Kong to try to convince others that the Taiping were worth supporting.[110] However this book just reflected other missionaries' suspicions that the rebels were indeed Christian, hence the early support. Issachar Jacox Roberts, a Southern Baptist missionary wrote from Canton to *The Chinese and General Missionary Gleaner* in October 1852 to report that he had met Hong Xiuquan in 1846 and had given him religious instruction. To Roberts, it seemed that the rebels were not 'rebelling against the government, with a design of upsetting the dynasty, they seem rather struggling for religious liberty, and *are really upsetting idolatry!*' This meant Roberts would 'begin to sympathise with them in their struggle'.[111] Therefore, it seems missionaries such as Issachar Jacox Roberts were initially taken with what the Taiping Rebellion could mean for their mission to convert the Chinese Empire to God.

Baptists were amongst the American missionaries who subscribed to postmillennial ideas, and therefore initially viewed the Taiping Rebellion with great enthusiasm. Martha Foster Crawford was an Alabama-born Southern Baptist who had arrived in Shanghai with

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[110] Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 8-19. The book was called *The Visions of Hung-Siu-tshuen, and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection* and it was one of the first attempts by the Western community in China to try to understand the uprising.

[111] 'A Letter from the American Baptist Missionary Rev. I J Roberts', *The Chinese and General Missionary Gleaner*, February 1853, 67-69 in Prescott Clarke and J. S. Gregory (eds.) *Western Reports on the Taiping: A Selection of Documents* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1982), 19-22. Issachar Jacox Roberts, a Tennessee-born Southern Baptist, was actually the Western missionary who had converted Hong Xiuquan and Hong Rengan to Christianity. He spent much of the 1850s trying to persuade the West to support the rebellion. Roberts eventually was reunited with his former students in 1860, spending two years in Nanking amongst the rebels. He escaped the rebel capital in 1862 having become disillusioned with the heretical Christian faith the Taiping espoused and spent the rest of his time in China preaching that the Taiping should not be supported. See: Yuan Chung Teng, 'Reverend Issachar Jacox Roberts and the Taiping Rebellion', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 23 (1963), 55-67.

her husband Tarleton Perry Crawford in 1852. She kept an extensive diary during her time in China, in which she recorded her thoughts about the rebellion unfolding around her. The impact of the war on the spread of Christianity was a theme which she returned to many times. On January 16th 1853 Crawford asked 'what bearing is this rebellion to have upon the religious destiny of the empire?', and although she was not sure of the impact it would have, she wished for 'all these wars [to] work for the extension of our Master's kingdom.'[112] A month later she was more certain that the rebellion was helping spread Christianity, writing 'Emperor's forces deserting…God rules.'[113] By March of 1853, she was writing diary entries which began to suggest that the foreign presence in China should align with the rebellion both morally and via military or material support. In her eyes, the Qing already associated the Taiping with Westerners. So therefore, Crawford believed that perhaps Westerners in China should make more of an effort to support the Taiping in any way they could. On March 8th she recorded that 'foreigners are becoming associated in the minds of the people with Tien tuh wong [Hong Xiuquan], they recognize the same God taught by the two. Ruled by the same Jesus.' While concerned that 'our fate is linked in with that of Ting tuh wong', she was assured that 'God reigns and will take care of his own cause.'[114] Crawford's diary entries reveal that missionaries engaged in debate about whether the rebel religion was to be morally supported, or whether the movement's religion should be denounced as blasphemy. An entry on August 29th 1853 highlights that the majority of those who spoke at an evening discussion were in favour of giving the rebels the benefit of doubt. One missionary, recorded as Macantay by Crawford, believed that 'any religion, even the grossest idolatry, better than no language' and Issachar Jacox Roberts posed the question 'what would be the result if this T'a' Ping Wong [Hong Xiuquan] should gain the empire, scatter the idols, put down the priesthood and leave the nation so?'[115] Clearly, in the early 1850s Southern Baptists were cautiously supportive of the Taiping rebels, seeing them as a vehicle that would aid the spread of the word of God to a country with the largest

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[112] Martha F. Crawford, January 16th 1853, *Diary.*

[113] Crawford, February 22nd 1853, *Diary*.

[114] Crawford, March 8th 1853, *Diary*.

[115] Crawford, August 29th 1853, *Diary*.

population on earth. For them, Taiping victory would be a big step towards ushering in the millennium of the Kingdom of Christ.[116]

The evangelical missionaries of the Episcopalian Church were also enthusiastic about the rumours of the Christian beliefs held by the Taiping. Episcopalians belong to the Anglican branch of Protestantism, which is much closer to Catholicism in terms of doctrine and practice than other Protestant churches. While evangelicalism influenced the Episcopal Church, evangelical belief struggled with the Catholic-leaning High Church branch of the church. [117] Evangelicals in the Episcopalian Church often merged both pre and postmillennialist views together when thinking of the Second Coming. As such, they believed Christ's return was imminent, but his return could be set back by the growth of non-Protestant religious belief.[118] Therefore, Episcopalian missionaries such as Catherine Ella Jones may not have necessarily believed that the Taiping would hasten the Second Coming. However, like Baptists, they were still initially enthusiastic when first hearing about the rebellion between 1850 and 1854. Catherine Ella Jones, a native of Washington D.C. was also pleasantly surprised to learn that the rebels professed to be Christian. In a letter to her father in 1853 she outlined what she had learned about the rebellion from the British officers who had gone to visit the rebels. She told her father that 'the chief shows a considerable knowledge of the bible, particularly of the old testament, he insists upon his followers lending obedience to the ten commandments, they observe the Sabbath, say grace before meals, and have utterly abolished many vices usually prevalent among the Chinese'. However, she did acknowledge that 'there is evidentially much fanaticism mixed with all this good' as the Taiping leader [Hong Xiuquan] considered himself the younger brother of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, she considered it 'delightful to the Christian missionary to behold heathen temples destroyed, the idols thrown to the moles… while the

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[116] Between 1850-1854, British missionaries tended to vocalise similar beliefs about the Taiping as their American colleagues. They were largely optimistic that the Taiping's rebellion would lead to the Christianisation of China. Yet, some British missionaries found the fanatical approach to Christianity, plus their erroneous doctrines, quite distasteful, which made them wary of fully committing to being optimistic about the Taiping's rebellion. However, unlike their American brethren, British missionaries did not attempt to visit the rebels, or shape Taiping religion, until after the opening of China's interior after the Second Opium War. See: Gregory, *Great Britain and the Taipings*, 47-54.

[117] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 621-632.

[118] Diana Hochstedt Butler, *Standing Against the Whirlwind: Evangelical Episcopalians in Nineteenth Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 101-103.

only violence shown to priests is that they are obliged to seek a more useful vocation.'[119] The sentiment is clear. Despite not necessarily seeing Taiping victories as hastening the Second Coming, Episcopalian missionaries were still obviously gleeful at the spread of their religion. They saw themselves as saving souls by spreading the Bible, and the Taiping helped them do this by laying the foundations for Christian belief in China.[120]

Prior to the Taiping Rebellion, Protestant missionaries had only been able to influence Chinese people who were situated within the Treaty Ports that Westerners were allowed to reside in. Protestants were largely unwilling to put themselves and their families at risk to spread Christianity beyond the world they were allowed to exist within. On the other hand, Catholic missionaries, who were often unencumbered with families, were more likely to risk illicitly entering the Chinese interior. The Taiping leaders had got their ideas from Protestant missionaries based at Canton, before returning to the interior to spread the message they had learnt. Chinese converts were often given religious tracts, which they could interpret themselves, as well as then spreading what they had learnt to other Chinese converts. This led to a situation where beliefs were distorted via oral dissemination. Christian ideas, in the absence of Western teachers, took on a distinctly Chinese substance. This meant even non-postmillennial Protestants were excited about the Taiping because it allowed the Protestant form of Christianity to make headway into the Chinese interior, where they could not go.[121] The ideas pre- and postmillennial Protestants shaped exactly why Protestant missionaries believed the Taiping Rebellion would be good for China and the world. However, both of these theological positions pushed American missionaries towards the broad consensus on the matter. Therefore, while the path towards this conclusion was different for each denomination operating in China, there was a definite broad consensus amongst American missionaries about the merits of the Taiping in the early 1850s.

Indeed, in the earliest phase of the Taiping Rebellion between 1850 and 1854, Westerners showed a willingness to ignore the strangeness of some of the Taiping beliefs, believing that foreign missionaries would be able to correct these beliefs once the war was

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[119] Catherine Ella Jones, 'To Gen. Walter Jones', April 30th 1853.

[120] Flynt & Berkley, *Taking Christianity to China*, p. 239.

[121] Paul A. Cohen, 'Christian Missions and Their Impact to 1900' in John K. Fairbank (ed.) *The Cambridge History of China: Vol. 10, Late Ch'ing 1800-1911* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 550-552. For how Western missions influenced the Taiping through circulating tracts see: Kilcourse, *Taiping Theology*, 14-20.

won. The Taiping held some frankly blasphemous views, such as Hong Xiuquan considering himself to be Jesus Christ's brother and that God was an anthropomorphic being.[122] This was not particularly alarming to the Americans based in China at first. As early as 1853 missionaries, such as Catherine Ella Jones, had known that Hong Xiuquan was styling himself as Christ's younger brother, but they were willing to discount such oddities because they believed that the Taiping were doing God's work. For example, Jones told her father that 'the leader imagined himself the younger brother of the Lord Jesus Christ, [and] speaks of having received his commission from God himself'. She seemed willing to overlook Hong Xiuquan's blasphemous claim to be Christ's younger sibling because she believed 'all this however we would expect in such a movement as this.'[123] Missionaries such as Catherine Ella Jones clearly believed that the Taiping's war against Buddhist, Confucian and Taoist religions was more important than their own erroneous beliefs about Christianity.

These opinions of Catherine Ella Jones were shared by other American missionaries. Martha Crawford recorded the opinions of other Southern Baptist missionaries about the Taiping's religion in a diary entry written on 29 August 1853. 'The question for the evening discussion was one of great interest – the rebellion', wrote Crawford. According to her, several of the missionaries present were open-minded about accepting the Taiping's doctrinal differences, at least until Western missionaries could get amongst the rebels and correct their beliefs. One missionary, Asa Bruce Cabaniss, 'believed Gd [God] was in the rebellion – that prophecy pointed to a time not too distant from the present where should great events transpire – [it would be] great for Christ's kingdom.' Therefore, 'we must not judge that a man has no religion in his heart because he has much error, superstition and fanaticism… if Christians should wait for governments to open the door they never would preach the gospel to the nations of the earth.'[124] Cabaniss, like other Southern Baptists, believed that the Taiping Rebellion would help usher in the Kingdom of Christ on earth. It did not matter that the Taiping rebels held erroneous beliefs because they were Christians at heart. In his opinion, the American missionaries in China would not need to wait for the Qing to open the inland to them because the Taiping were already doing God's work and

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[122] Vincent Y. C. Shih, *The Taiping Ideology: Its Sources, Interpretations, and Influences* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967), 3-30.
[123] Jones, 'To Gen. Walter Jones', April 30th 1853.
[124] Crawford, August 29th 1853, *Diary.*

spreading the word of Christ. Only through this would the humanity progress towards the Second Coming.

American missionaries were not overly concerned about the 'mistakes' in Hong Xiuquan and the Taiping rebels' Christian belief system was because they believed Western missionaries would eventually be able to correct these errors. Theodore Hamburg, whose book had informed the Western community about the belief system of the Taiping noted that the Taiping made burning lamps and tea ceremonies part of the religious service and practiced animal sacrifice on special occasions. He wrote in a footnote that 'it is to be hoped that these and other rites inconsistent with the pure Christian worship of God… [were] introduced… either from misunderstanding the truth, or to comply with long established customs of the Chinese, which he found difficult at once to abolish, may gradually be corrected.'[125] At this point the majority of those concerned with the spread of Christianity in China were willing to allow doctrinal oddities so long as once Christianity had been established the Taiping leaders corrected their beliefs to conform to Western, Protestant Christianity.[126]

As the Taiping government became more entrenched in the city of Nanjing in the latter half of the 1850s, and after the ratification of the Peking Convention in 1860, which allowed Westerners access to China's hinterland, foreign missionaries were able to visit and assess the Christian beliefs the rebels professed to hold, and at first Western missionaries were very optimistic about what they had observed.[127] Matthew T. Yates reported to the Southern Baptist Missionary Board what had been learned from interacting with the rebels at their stronghold of Suzhou on 1 August 1860. 'The religious element of the rebellion is as promising as it ever was', he told the board. 'The Assistant King [Hong Rengan]… extended an invitation to Missionaries to go to Soo-chow [Suzhou] and to Nanking [Nanjing]', wrote Yates, who also reported that, 'when the whole country is subdued and the idols all destroyed, the Boohist [Buddhist] Priests be sent home to get married' then Hong Rengan

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[125] Theodore Hamburg, *The Visions of Hung-Siu-tshuen, and Origin of the Kwang-si Insurrection* (Hong Kong: The China Mail Office, 1854), 35-36.

[126] The Taiping's version of Christianity is not the only historical example of an unorthodox, localised version of the religion. An example of a study which demonstrates how a universalistic religion interacted with local cultures to create an unorthodox version of a religion is: Lawrence J. Taylor, *Occasions of Faith: An Anthropology of Irish Catholics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

[127] Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 77-84.

had stated that 'the temples & temple lands [were] to be converted into churches and consecrated to the worship of the true God… Missionaries are to go & dwell unmolested in every part of the Empire.' In his eyes, 'the old exclusive policy of the Imperial government is bound to yield before the Allies [Britain and France] and the Insurgents – very soon, and we shall want men for the whole of China.'[128] Yates had only been back in China for six months at the time of writing the letter after returning home in 1858, yet he was optimistic about the future of Christianity in China under Taiping leadership.

This optimism had disappeared two weeks later. A letter dated 29 August 1860, which was sent to the Southern Baptist Missionary by Matthew Yates, detailed how wrong the missionaries had been about the Taiping's impact on Christianity in China. Yates first registered his disappointment in the Taiping's dealings with Westerners in Shanghai. 'By the last mail (two weeks ago) you were informed that the Nankin Insurgents [Taiping] were approaching Shanghai, wrote Yates. 'No one knew their feelings towards foreigners', he continued, but 'to those who had visited "Soo-Chow" [Suzhou], they expressed themselves as very friendly towards all foreigners. They, however, knew that the City of Shanghai was in the hands of the Allies… [and] with this knowledge, they came against the City on Saturday.' This attack had acquainted Yates with a more intimate understanding of the horrors of this civil war in China. 'The wanton cruelty of this large Insurgent army is most shocking. While in this vicinity, more than 800 unoffending men, women and children were either put to the sword or forced into deep water, where they perished', he wrote to the board, adding that the 'the taking of such a city as Shanghai, usually involves the loss of from ten to twenty thousand lives. In an unsuccessful attack upon "Hang-Chow" [Hangzhou] a few months ago, it is said, more than 80,000 lives were lost.' 'O what a sad thought that so many millions of this people are thus suddenly hurried into eternity without a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ!' he lamented. This led him to the conclusion that 'the cruelty of the rebels does not speak well for the religion'. 'In fact', he wrote, 'their religion, [though] they have adopted the Bible as their religious creed, and profess to worship the God of the Bible, is the greatest abomination of the age. Indeed they seem to have no correct idea of God.' Instead, 'they have materialized the persons of God… Casting out the Holy Spirit and substituting in his

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[128] Brother Matthew T. Yates to Rev. A. M. Poindexter', 1st August 1860, Matthew Tyson Yates Papers, International Missionary Board, Richmond, VA.

stead the rebel Chief [Hong Xiuquan]'.[129] In the space of a few weeks, Yates had gone from believing the Taiping's religious movement had 'great promise' to being the 'greatest abomination of the age'. The sudden close proximity partially accounted for the reversal of his opinion on the rebellion's religion. However, the return of other missionaries from Nanjing had given Westerners, including Yates, greater insight into the Taiping's theological beliefs. Yates informed his missionary board, that 'Bro. Holms [sic], who has just returned from Nankin [Nanjing] will give you the particulars' on the inner workings of Taiping Christianity.[130] It was this combination of seeing Taiping violence up close and visiting rebel strongholds that really began to turn American missionaries off the Taiping rebels from 1860 onwards.

The reports of missionaries who had visited rebel-held cities had a dramatic effect on how the rebels were seen by Westerners. In August 1860, Reverend J. L. Holmes followed in the footsteps of other Western missionaries, including Issachar Roberts and Tarleton Crawford, who had visited Taiping territory and went to the Taiping capital of Nanjing. His trip to Nanjing was meant to reaffirm his belief that the Taiping were spreading God's word in China. However, he was severely disappointed by what he found. During his visit, Hong Xiuquan issued an edict which called Western powers 'outer tribes' and his observation of the Taiping Sabbath service, which included making a sacrifice to God, left him disillusioned. The Taiping had made little progress with their understanding of Christianity since Westerners had first visited them, and Holmes's disappointment with their Christianity was to be influential.[131] On September 1st 1860, the *North China Herald* printed a letter from Holmes. The Southern Baptist reported that he had found to his 'sorrow, nothing of Christianity but its names, falsely applied – applied to a system of revolting idolatry [sic]'.[132] In the preamble to the letter, the editors of the paper expressed sorrow that 'all our hopes with regard to the Christianity of the Taiping insurgents are thus rudely shaken almost to the ground.'[133]

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[129] Brother Matthew T. Yates to Reverend J. B. Taylor', 29th August 1860.

[130] *Ibid.*

[131] Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers*, 194-195.

[132] 'To the Editor of the North China Herald', *North China Herald*, September 1st 1860.

[133] *North China Herald*, September 1st 1860.

The disappointment many missionaries felt after visiting the rebels, or reading reports from those who had visited them, is noticeable in the writings of that they transmitted back to the United States. Writing for the *North Carolina Advocate*, Marquis Lafayette Wood, acting as a conduit for information to reach the United States, explained what he had learnt from his colleague Mr. Holmes to his audience back home. 'Mr. Holmes says; "I went to Nanking predisposed to receive a favorable impression; indeed, the favorable impressions of a previous visit to Suchan [Suzhou] led me to undertake this journey. I came away with my views very materially changed' reported Wood, who went on to explain the reason why Holmes had changed his mind was because 'their idea of God is distorted until it is inferior, if possible, to that entertained by other Chinese idolaters… They have changed the truth of God a lie, and they worship the creature more than the Creator.'[134] His article went on to state:

> we are really to conclude that they surpass the old religious systems of China in idolatry; that they are more blasphemous, *if possible*, in their assumptions than Popery; that they are more sensual and revolting, in their teachings, than Mohamedanism; that they are more lustful and shameful, in their acts, than Mormonism. Though honoring God in their creed, they dethrone him in their doings.[135]

Protestant dislike of idolatry was a common theme in nineteenth-century America, and this drew on the latent anti-Catholicism, which had been a feature of nativist discourse in the 1840s and 1850s. Anti-Catholicism was stoked by the large influx of largely Catholic immigrants to the United States during this period, which had worried nativist Protestants because these immigrants seemed to threaten very fabric of American society. The Know-Nothing Party had been formed in the early 1850s as a response to the perceived Catholic domination of politics, and it sought to limit Catholic influence.[136] Wood himself had been influenced by the Know-Nothings, and he even voted for their candidate Millard Fillmore in

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[134] Wood, 'Letter from Rev. M. L. Wood', *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, September 18th 1860 in Wood, *Diary, 1860*.
[135] *Ibid.*
[136] Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders*, 170-173.

the Presidential election of 1856. This suggests his dislike of Catholicism shaped his worldview.[137] It is no surprise therefore that idolatry was something he could not stomach, as idolatry was one of the key reasons why Protestants disagreed with Catholics on a doctrinal level, as it represented the 'medieval superstition' of the Catholic church which so many American Protestants were opposed to.[138] Therefore, when Wood stated that Taiping Christianity was even 'more blasphemous' than Catholicism, it was an implicit suggestion that the Taiping were not to be lent Western moral or military support because China could not be allowed to be controlled by a blasphemous form of Christianity.[139]

The American distaste for the supposed idolatry of the Taiping form of Christianity may reflect the immense divide between the American protestant and Taiping doctrine, but it also demonstrates how American Protestant missionaries compared Taiping beliefs to Catholicism, which coloured the way Americans understood Taiping beliefs. John Gregory suggests that British missionaries struggled to view the Taiping's religion outside of the Protestantism versus Catholicism paradigm, and their failure to view as purely a Chinese Christian movement led to their disappointment with the movement.[140] The same argument can be applied to American missionaries, who also could not see beyond Western versions of Christianity when assessing the Taiping's religious beliefs. Vincent Shih points out that the Taiping were vehemently against idolatry and they considered Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism mere idol-worshipping cults. Furthermore, they went out their way to destroy idols and temples which held idols.[141] Taiping Christianity, because it did not conform to Protestant standard of worship, was decried as idol-worshipping, much like Catholicism. However, obviously the Taiping rebels themselves did not see it this way, and they continued their war on idols until the very end. Yet, it is because the Taiping did not conform to a Protestant standard of religion that meant the rebellion would always end up disappointing Americans concerned with the spread of Christianity. Americans, and other

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[137] Marquis Lafayette Wood, *Marquis Lafayette Diary, 1856*, November 4th 1856, Marquis Lafayette Wood Records and Papers, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

[138] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 556.

[139] Wood, *Diary*, November 4th 1856.

[140] Gregory, *Great Britain and the Taipings,* 51-52.

[141] Shih, *The Taiping Ideology*, 23-29.

Westerners, naively believed that missionaries would be able to correct the doctrinal oddities of Taiping worship.

The flurry of missionary visitations to Nanjing and Taiping-held territory between 1860 and 1862 yielded disappointing results, and as tensions between missionaries and the Taiping became too high, the missionaries left and never returned.[142] Visits, such as that of J. L. Holmes and Issachar Jacox Roberts to Nanjing, plus the Taiping's attacks on Shanghai between 1860 and 1862, caused a rapid transformation of public opinion. Until this point, what Americans knew about the Taiping had come from rumours and from Chinese sources. Missionaries were able to hold onto the hope that when they were able to interact with the Taiping, they would be able to either confirm that the Taiping followed their religion properly. If they could not confirm this, they hoped that they would be able to 'correct' their religious beliefs. Instead, they found a rebel movement who had created a localised version of Christianity, which they were unwilling to change to please Western nations. When American missionaries found the majority of the Taiping ideologues unwilling to adopt a Western style of religion, they were left profoundly disappointed, and they condemned the rebels as blasphemous idolaters. Missionaries, in particular, were no longer willing to tolerate what they had formerly believed was a primitive belief system which would fall into line with education. Resistance to Western doctrine left missionaries feeling bitterly disappointed in the Taiping. Those belonging to denominations which held postmillennialist beliefs no longer believed that victory for the Taiping meant the world would be a step closer to the Second Coming of Christ, and those who did not hold those beliefs were regardless no longer sure that the spread of Taiping Christianity was a good thing.

Moreover, many Americans were disappointed by the infiltration of the Taiping rebellion by those who were not concerned about Christianity at all. The initial surge of support for the Taiping was from ethnically different Hakka peoples.[143] Yet as the rebellion rumbled on and the Taiping swallowed up more territory, they tried to expand their appeal to others who were against the Manchu government, acknowledging that this ran the risk of including non-believers in the ranks.[144] American observers picked up on this phenomenon. The idea the Taiping were just 'bandits', 'barbarians', and 'plunders' was becoming quite

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[142] Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 257-258.
[143] Spence, *God's Chinese Son*, 25; 87-88.
[144] *Ibid.*, 160-163.

widespread by the 1860s. By using the term bandits, Americans in China were, therefore, conveying a sense of illegitimacy on the rebellion by downgrading it to little more than criminal behaviour. This was a view expressed both privately and publicly by Americans. On February 5th 1862, for example, missionary Matthew T. Yates referred to the 'whole insurgent movement' as 'nothing less than an organized band of robbers, that ought to be exterminated by the foreign powers.'[145] Furthermore, the *North China Herald*, reprinted a translation from the Qing government's mouthpiece the *Peking Gazette* lauding General Frederick Townsend Ward for 'destroying the barbarians in their thousands.'[146] Reporting on the second major Taiping attack on Shanghai, the paper reported the 'peace and quiet of Shanghai disturbed by the approach of armed marauders: again are the hungry bands of rebellious "wolves clad in sheep's clothing"'.[147] It was an idea that became influential in turning people against the Taiping. Wing Yung, the first Chinese person to graduate from Yale University and a naturalised American citizen, took part in the Western expedition to learn about the Taiping as an interpreter. In a 1909 book, he reflected upon his impressions of the Taiping rebels. He noted that at first the Taiping rebellion had differed from the countless other rebellions in Chinese history because of its Christian inspiration.[148] In his eyes, their failure as a movement was caused by the need to replenish their armed forces with people from the provinces they had first captured. These people 'were the riffraff and scum of their populations… They knew no discipline, and had no restraining religious power to keep them from pillage, plunder and indiscriminate destruction.'[149] Westerners in China had realised that the Taiping movement had absorbed people who were less concerned about Christianity and more about fighting their Qing rulers. This convinced them that the Taiping were less about spreading the word of God and more about seizing power.

The longer the missionaries stayed in Nanjing, and the more the Taiping advanced on Shanghai, the further early optimism waned. When those missionaries returned to the international community, they brought with them disappointing information. It was only

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[145] 'Matthew T. Yates to Brother Wortham', 5th February 1862.

[146] 'Translation of Extracts from the Peking Gazette', *North China Herald*, April 19th 1862.

[147] *North China Herald*, January 18th 1862.

[148] Wing Yung, *My Life in China and America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1909), 113. Wing Yung wrote this autobiography near the end of his life to demonstrate how his 'occidental education' had strengthened his love for his native country through sympathy.

[149] Ibid., 121.

after missionaries tried to educate the Taiping leaders about the error of their beliefs, and failed, that the sense of disappointment began to creep in. Taiping refusal to adhere to Protestant beliefs, as well as evidence that the rebels were not concerned with enforcing Christian social reforms turned the missionaries, as well as other Americans and Westerners, away from the Taiping. By the winter of 1862, the only missionary left in Nanjing was Issachar Jacox Roberts, and even he left after a scandal involving the alleged murder of his servant. Roberts had escaped after an incident where he alleged Hong Rengan had murdered Roberts' servant, who had been accused of criminal activity but had been protected by Roberts' status. According to Roberts, tensions between him and Hong Rengan had deteriorated so much that Hong had murdered his servant in anger. This later transpired to be a false allegation, and Roberts' servant had not been murdered at the hands of Hong Rengan. However, the alleged murder was a useful story that Roberts could use to convince other Westerners in China how immoral the Taiping leadership were.[150] Refusal of the Taiping to modify their doctrine to align with Protestant teachings left them with no sympathy from Westerners.[151] By the mid-1860s, the Taiping rebels were seen as little more than blasphemous rebels, rather than Christian revolutionaries, and this was important in shaping the image of the Chinese in the United States later in the century.

Roberts' denunciation of the Taiping and subsequent escape from Nanjing further convinced American missionaries that the Taiping rebels were not helping them convert China to Christianity. Missionary Matthew T. Yates sent a report about the Roberts episode to his missionary board on February 5th 1862. 'Roberts has been grossly insulted by one of the kings at Nanking [Nanjing]', wrote Yates, who informed the board that, 'he is out in a strong letter against the rebels. [He] says the Chief is deranged and the whole insurgent movement is nothing less than an organized band of robbers, that out to be exterminated by the foreign powers.' Yates noted that 'the whole surrounding country has been infested by the rebels, who are… hostile to foreigners.' According to Yates this, 'greatly interfered with the successful prosecution of missionary work', and this meant, 'the prospect for the speedy conversion of this great people, is dark!' He concluded that 'we have no hope that anything good will come out of the insurgent movement.'[152] Yates had already come to the

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[150] Teng, 'Reverend Issachar Jacox Roberts and the Taiping Rebellion', 65-66.

[151] Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 257-259.

[152] 'Matthew T. Yates to Brother Wortham', 5th February 1862.

conclusion that the Taiping rebels were harming the prospects of Christianity in China in 1860. However, Roberts' dramatic return had further convinced missionaries such as Yates that they could not rely on the rebels to help them Christianise China.

For many sympathetic American and European observers of the Taiping uprising in the 1850s, the key reason they were so optimistic about the rebels was their adherence to Christianity. Others were more cynical about the beliefs the rebels held. They saw the doctrinal differences with Western Protestantism as a sign that the Taiping were not really Christian, and therefore not to be supported. This was an argument that continued throughout the 1850s, but in the end it is clear that the cynical view won over most Americans, as demonstrated by the abandonment of missionary attempts to engage with the Taiping and the denunciations that followed.[153] Those who had been optimistic about the future of the rebellion were convinced that Western missionaries would be able to educate the Taiping leadership about the errors in their belief. Yet by the 1860s, the Taiping had still not allowed missionaries to 'correct' their errant religious beliefs. This created a profound sense of disappointment and led those who had been initially optimistic about the rebellion's chances of victory to become disenchanted. Now it seemed, even if the rebels were to win the war, China would be controlled by a heretical form of Christianity. This idea was reinforced by observations of the demographic change of the Taiping movement. The initial uprising was led by people who truly believed in the doctrine that the Taiping leadership espoused. However, as the rebellion gained traction, it drew support from a large, diverse base.[154] Most of these new supporters were less concerned with Christianity, and more concerned with improving their own lot in life. Anglo-American observers noted this and for them this further validated their growing disenchantment with the Taiping movement. It no longer seemed to be the zealous Christian revolutionary movement to transform Chinese society, but simply an insurgency to seize power of the Chinese throne.

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[153] Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 258.

[154] Spence, *God's Chinese Son*, 25; 87-88.

Chapter Three: The Impact of the Taiping Rebellion on the Lives of Americans Living in China

The Taiping Rebellion affected the lives of the American community living in China across the 1850s and 1860s. They feared for their lives and property every time the rebels marched on Shanghai and other Chinese cities with a Western presence. They worried about their ability to make money as trade routes into the Chinese interior were cut off. And they struggled to cope with the refugee crisis that was caused by the millions fleeing the horrors of war for the relative safety of the international community at Shanghai. Previous chapters discussed how Americans tried to understand what the Taiping Rebellion was. This chapter shall examine why it was so important to understand the rebellion that threatened to swallow up Americans in China, and how the emotional impact of this influenced how the rebellion was understand by the American community.

How Exposure to the Violence of the War Affected American Opinion

The Taiping Rebellion was extraordinarily violent. Around 20 to 30 million people died throughout the war, a number which dwarfed the number of deaths of other wars which occurred at the same time. The Crimean War, fought between an Anglo-French alliance and the Russian empire between 1853 and 1856, cost an estimated 750,000 combatants' lives and was in some respects fought in a manner similar to the Napoleonic Wars of the early nineteenth century.[1] The American Civil War, which was fought between 1861 and 1865, killed an estimated 620,000 soldiers and around 50,000 non-combatants.[2] Despite the obvious horror of warfare that nineteenth-century Americans caught up in the fighting experienced, there has been some debate about whether the violence of the Civil War had much impact on a society already intimate with death. Nicholas Marshall argues that given the already high death rates from disease and poor living conditions in antebellum America,

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[1] Orlando Figes, *Crimea: The Last Crusade* (London: Penguin, 2010).

[2] Tobie Meyer-Fong, *What Remains: Coming to Terms with Civil War in 19th Century China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 1.

the Civil War did not have a large impact on the demographic shape of the population of the United States, and by extension did not cause the kind of mass emotional or psychological trauma one might expect after a major violent conflict. This is because while not desensitised to death and violence, Americans were equipped emotionally to cope with it.[3] David Hacker refuted this. While accepting that Marshall made valid points about demographic impact, Hacker suggests that Marshall focused too much on the urban world of the antebellum United States, when the majority came from rural communities that were unused to the scale of death, either from violence or disease that the Civil War brought. Furthermore, the fact that the war caused a dramatic decrease in the traditionally healthiest cohort of the American population, men between the ages of 15 and 44, which was a shock to a society not used to these people dying in such numbers.[4]

Moreover, the type of the violence during the American Civil War was shocking to Americans, regardless of whether they were used to death or not. There were massacres and instances of non-combatants being killed. However, there was also an emphasis on restraining the violence on both sides. Both the Union and Confederacy sought to limit the violence of their troops, even if they were not always successful. This was unusual for the time, as most wars were conducted without regard for restraint, but Americans on both sides wished to practice the war with honour. This is because both sides considered themselves a civilised, modern democracy and excessive violence was not befitting of such a nation.[5] Therefore, lack of restraint in warfare represented a lack of civility to American people, and atrocities in the American Civil War certainly shocked observers and combatants alike.

The American experience of the fighting towards the end of Taiping Rebellion, a war that far outstripped the American Civil War in its sheer violence, further backs the idea that

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[3] Nicholas Marshall, 'The Great Exaggeration: Death and the Civil War', *The Journal of the Civil War Era*, 4 (March 2014), 3-27.

[4] David Hacker, "Has the Demographic Impact of Civil War Deaths Been Exaggerated?", *Civil War History*, 60 (2014) 453-458.

[5] Aaron Sheehan-Dean, *The Calculus of Violence: How Americans Fought the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018) 1-11. See also: Robert V. Wells, *Facing the "King of Terrors": Death and Society in an American Community, 1750-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Wells suggests that early to mid-nineteenth century-Americans were well acquainted with death. They were not shocked by even violent deaths because death was a phenomena which families and communities dealt with together as a community. With the professionalisation of death in the 1880s and 1890s, death became culturally distance and more of a phenomena which caused dread and anxiety.

the unrestrained warfare of the mid-nineteenth century was immensely shocking to Americans, and this shock helped convince Americans of the 'uncivilised' nature of the Chinese. This stands in stark contrast with the attitudes of Americans towards the beginning of the rebellion. The American community in China initially believed that the violence could redeem China's population, and help China become Christian. The idea of redemptive violence was applied by Americans to other non-white peoples, such as Native Americans, and initially Americans believed that violence was justified in China as it would help civilise another non-white race. Yet, as the war got physically closer to the Western settlements on the coast of China during the 1860s, Americans perhaps realised that war was not redemptive, and instead they understood that the suffering was unnecessary and actually potentially harmful to their lives and interests. Furthermore, it offered a window into what warfare on the American continent could turn into. Indeed, the Taiping Rebellion was shocking. Tobie Meyer-Fong argues that the Taiping Rebellion could be labelled an unprecedented war in Chinese history, because of how both sides sought to exterminate soldiers and civilian supporters of both sides and the immense destruction the rebellion caused across the Yangtze River basin. For example, the Taiping deliberately sought to eradicate all civilians caught living in Manchu garrisons. And in places such as Wuxi, a city near Shanghai, 80 percent of the residences were destroyed. The Taiping rebellion was a bitterly fought civil war which pitted neighbours against one another. Territory changed hands regularly and reprisals were carried out against those who had supported the rebels or the government, depending on who retook control of an area. The immense disruption caused severe famine in provinces such as Anhui, where people resorted to cannibalism to survive.[6] The colossal violence of this war had a profound impact on all those involved. Americans, who were largely just observers rather than victims of this violence, were left disappointed and shaken by the violence they had witnessed. Although initially supportive of Taiping violence in the 1850s while it was far away from Shanghai and the other Treaty Ports, the close encounters with the horrors of war in the 1860s repulsed Americans. This led to disenchantment with the Taiping movement and helped shape how Americans evaluated the character of the Chinese.

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[6] Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 4-12.

Throughout the 1850s the majority of that fighting was in China's heartlands in the Upper and Central Yangtze River valley, allowing Americans to form opinions on the violence of the rebellion from the safety of their concessions several hundred miles away.[7] Although Shanghai had actually been taken over in late 1853 by a Taiping-sympathetic secret society called the Small Sword Society, the violence near the foreign community had largely been avoided aside from a skirmish between the British and Imperial soldiers who the British deemed were endangering the foreign community by camping too close. According to Martha Crawford, two foreigners were killed in the fighting, as well as over 300 imperial soldiers and a woman killed by British cannon fire which had landed near her house.[8] Aside from these skirmishes, however, the Small Sword Uprising did not bring large-scale violence to the foreign community of Shanghai. After the French helped the Qing take the city back in 1855, the war was largely absent from around Shanghai until 1860.

Distance from the conflict allowed some Americans to view the violence as righteous and necessary. During this period Americans, and missionaries in particular, had been supportive of the violence because they saw it as God's work. In March 1853, American missionary Catherine Ella Jones noted with glee that wherever 'the chief of this revolution' went 'he burns the temples' and 'puts the [Confucian] priests to death'. She hoped he would focus on not simply aspiring to the throne but would continue 'the furtherance of the Gospel.'[9] The attitude of Americans in China towards the early violence inflicted by the Taiping on the armies of the Qing and their supporters, bears some similarity with the attitude of Americans towards Native Americans in this period. Since the United States had been established, white Americans had struggled with how to destroy Indian culture, which seemed at odds with 'white civilization'. Violence was a tool which was used to bring 'civilization' to the tribes of the Trans-Mississippi area of the United States during the nineteenth century.[10] A similar dynamic occurred in China.

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[7] *North China Herald*, September 15th 1860.

[8] Crawford, *Diary*, April 4th 1854.

[9] Catherine Ella Jones, 'Letter to Miss Fanny Lee Jones', March 12th 1853, *China Through Western Eyes: Manuscript Records of Traders, Travellers, Missionaries & Diplomats, 1792-1942, Reel 20: Letters of Catherine Ella Jones*, Duke University Archives, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University.

[10] Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier, 1846-1890* (2nd ed., Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 27-64. For more on White-Native American Violence in the nineteenth century see: Gary C. Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing and the Indian: The Crime That Should Haunt America* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014). Anderson seeks to place the violence that took place between Native Americans and White

Indeed, Americans sometimes consciously connected the Chinese with Native Americans. In his book *Five Years in China* published in 1860, Methodist missionary Dr Charles Taylor recalled his journey to meet the Taiping rebels after they had seized Nanjing in 1853. Taylor noted that the 'three brave fellows' who escorted him out of Nanjing reminded him of 'some fine specimens of our North American Indians' because the chief of these men 'boasted of his native tribe, the *Miau-tsz* having never been subject to the Tartar rule and having never adopted their custom of shaving the head.' Taylor took great interest in the chief's appearance, whom he described as 'a noble looking young man, tall, straight and muscular, with prominent cheek bones and an eye like an eagle.'[11] Taylor's comparison of the Chinese with Native American people shines a light on just how continental expansion on the North American continent provided a reference point for Americans in the Pacific world during this period. In some respects, Shanghai and other Chinese treaty ports with an American presence became an extension of the Western frontier in the American mind. This is not to say that Americans consciously considered Shanghai part of the American frontier, but that they often applied the same thoughts and beliefs to both situations. The Chinese were caught up in the increasingly racialized mid-nineteenth century ideas about expansion, which argued non-white races would 'disappear' under white pressure.[12] For example, in 1850, the *Democratic Review* even drew a comparison between the trials that Native Americans and Chinese faced, claiming that:

> the extinction of the red race upon this continent may be said to be almost consummated; and China, which by a sort of instinct, excluded the whites for thousands of years, is now open to a similar influence, and a crisis is reached in the history of the dark species of man.[13]

It is in this context that many Americans in China callously praised the violence gripping the Chinese interior, because they believed that violence was necessary to redeem Chinese

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Americans in a wider context by comparing it with the holocaust and measuring the violence against the UN's definition of genocide.

[11] Charles Taylor, *Five Years in China* (Nashville: J. B. McFerrin, Publisher, 1860), 356-357.

[12] Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny,* 156.

[13] *Democratic Review* 26 (April 1850), 345, quoted in Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 156.

people from their 'uncivilised' ways, similar to how violence was necessary to civilise American Indians. Across the early nineteenth century, Americans had tried to justify the violence through referring to biblical evidence such as passages in Genesis and Psalms which were interpreted as giving 'civilised' peoples licence to eradicate 'heathens' in the name of spreading a Christian, civilised society.[14] Ideas of redemption were quite common in the United States during the antebellum era, and redemption could come through violence.[15] Americans were quite willing to overlook the violence of the rebellion if it brought about 'Christian civilization' showing how American continental expansion, informed American understandings of conflicts in foreign fields.

This was an easy stance to take in the international community of Shanghai, far from the frontline, but it did not last when the horrors of war arrived in the Yangtze river delta.[16] The Anglo-American community in Shanghai even acknowledged this, with the *North China Herald* stating, 'sympathy may be legitimately expressed, while they keep a long distance from us, [but] such sympathy would receive a rude check had they taken the city of Shanghai.' Even as late as March 1860, some Americans were still of the opinion that the violence of the rebellion was a force for good. Reverend Matthew Yates, a Southern Baptist missionary who had arrived in Shanghai on March 10th 1860 informed the Southern Baptist Missionary Board that the 'rebels too are moving in this direction… We and the native church may be called upon to pass through some severe trials, but I feel quite sure that God will bring good out of all these conflicting elements.'[17] Americans such as Yates, especially missionaries, believed that the violence had to have a purpose and their faith in God allowed them to assume that from the ashes, a better, more Christian China would rise.

However, the Taiping's new strategy of attempting to control the Lower Yangtze was about to change this. In 1860 the Taiping leadership decided that they should try and take control of the Yangtze delta to try to reduce their reliance on maintaining control of the

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[14] Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 25.

[15] Carole Emberton, *Beyond Redemption: Race, Violence, and the American South after the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 4.

[16] Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 78.

[17] 'Matthew T. Yates to Rev. J. B. Taylor', February 10th 1860, *Matthew Tyson Yates Papers*, International Missionary Board, Richmond, Virginia.

Upper Yangtze, and also to seek access to Western steamships.[18] On August 19th and 20th 1860, a small Taiping force attacked Shanghai and was repulsed. However, by January 1862 the war had begun to swing away from the rebels. Several times between January and July 1862 a force of 50,000 rebels tried to take Shanghai out of desperation and continually clashed with Anglo-French forces defending a 30-mile radius around Shanghai.[19] This brought the war right to the doorstep of Shanghai and the Americans who resided there throughout this two-year period. Suddenly, having noted the savagery with some glee across the 1850s, the approach of the Taiping towards Shanghai caused the Western community some concern and spurred them to prepare properly. Tarleton Perry Crawford, Martha's missionary husband, wrote to the Southern Baptist Missionary Board telling them that 'in the event of an alarm, which will be made known by the quick ringing of the Church bells, detachments of troops will be sent to the various quarters of the Settlement… the streets will be defended by the members of the volunteer force.'[20] The approach of the rebels in 1860 caused an immense amount of panic in the city, leading to many deaths of Chinese people, who resided in the walled city of Shanghai. Marquis Lafayette Wood, a North Carolinian Southern Methodist missionary who had arrived in Shanghai in July 1860, noted in his journal the news:

> that the Rebels were coming... produced great excitement and alarm. Several deaths occurred in the frantic [panic]. Quite a number were drowned in the [river]. Women, rushing for the boats would throw their children in so they could easier get in themselves. Others would throw children in the river, then plunge in themselves.[21]

For the first time the war had truly began to impact the lives of the Westerners who lived in Shanghai.

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[18] Philip A. Kuhn, 'The Taiping Rebellion' in John K. Fairbank (ed.) *The Cambridge History of China: Vol. 10, Late Ch'ing 1800-1911* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 297.

[19] Kuhn, 'The Taiping Rebellion', 303-306.

[20] 'Tarleton P. Crawford to Brother Taylor', August 7th 1860, Tarleton Perry Crawford Papers, International Missionary Board, Richmond, VA.

[21] Marquis Lafayette Wood, *Marquis Lafayette Diary, 1860*, July 17th 1860, Marquis Lafayette Wood Records and Papers, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

Wood's distaste for the violence caused by the rebels shaped his opinion of them. His focus on Taiping violence reflects how information reached the Western community in Shanghai, and other Western settlements such as Hong Kong. As previously mentioned, between 1855 and 1860 the main sources of information for Westerners about the Taiping Rebellion was through the *Peking Gazette* which, as a publication of the Qing government, was ferociously anti-Taiping or through information gleaned from Western expeditions to the Taiping.[22] Therefore, Americans trying to understand the rebellion would focus on the violence of the rebels due to this information. For example, in September 1860 Wood lamented 'oh! What desolation and distress they cause wherever they [the rebels] go.'[23] Rebel violence persuaded him that he should try and convince others that the rebels were not to be supported. In a newspaper article Wood published in the *North Carolina Christian Advocate* on September 18th 1860, he launched a thunderous attack on the violence committed by the rebels. He stated that:

> '…while they profess to have received a direct commission from Heaven to destroy the imps (Tartars) have they not shown themselves, *full grown devils*? All, who adhere to the Manchee dynasty, that they can catch, are put to death without mercy; they burn all unsubmissive towns and villages. However, it is said by Chinese that most, nearly all, of the depredations they commit, are committed without the knowledge and approbation of their leaders.'[24]

It is clear that Wood did not consider the Taiping worthy of Western support due to the violence they had committed, and by taking steps to send his opinion back to the United States, he helped convince those back home come to the same conclusion. Privately, he also worried that the rebellion was pushing more Chinese people away from Christianity. In his words, '[the Chinese god of the Earth has] never had more worshippers in China than today because of the great disturbance of the Rebels… How I longed to tell them of their

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[22] Clarke and Gregory (eds), *Western Reports on the Taiping*, 171-172.

[23] Wood, *Diary*, September 12th 1860.

[24] Marquis Lafayette Wood, 'Letter from Rev. M. L. Wood', *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, September 18th 1860 in Wood, *Diary, 1860*. Wood attached newspaper clippings of articles he had authored in the back of his diary.

destructive error.'[25] In Wood's eyes, the immense destruction of the war had pushed people away from Christianity. This undermined the most important reason why many missionaries had been supportive of the rebellion.

However, Wood's dislike of the violence went beyond seeing it as a tactical mistake costing Christianity support. He genuinely believed that the extreme violence of the Taiping rebellion proved its belligerents were not civilised peoples and perhaps even lacking in humanity. Again, the American experience of war against Native Americans perhaps informed this mindset. The legacy of King Philip's War in the 1670s had created the idea that brutal violence committed by the Native Americans had transgressed civilised norms and attacked the colonist's Englishness itself. This became the template for understanding later English or American wars against indigenous peoples. By dragging the English colonists into brutalised war practices, such as burning farmland, decapitating bodies and maiming livestock, the Native Americans had 'Indianized' the English. Of course, the English were just as violent towards Native Americans, but they were convinced that their violence was justified, and that they attacked with civility. The legacy of this war helped later Americans believe that certain types of violence degraded the perpetrator into barbarism. [26] The reports of the violence committed by the rebels, therefore, made it easy for Americans to conclude that the Taiping lacked civility. This criticism was not limited just to the Taiping; he was also disgusted by the violence committed by French forces defending Shanghai. 'It is reported that the French have committed great depredations, or rather plundered and murdered, while the burning was going on' wrote Wood, going on to say 'they have shown themselves to be worse than the Chinese. More destitute of humanity.'[27] Wood's anger at what the French had done is clear. Importantly, however, he also reveals that he also considers the Chinese to be also 'destitute of humanity'. The tone of surprise that the French had gone beyond the Chinese in their savagery does not mask his insinuation that the Chinese were also lacking in humanity. Considering Wood's extensive chronicling of

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[25] Wood, *Diary,* September 14th 1860.

[26] Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Random House 1999), 71-79. For more on how war can be seen as the ultimate antithesis to civilisation see: Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

[27] Wood, *Diary*, August 21st 1860.

violence committed by the Taiping, and their imperial enemies, this is perhaps not a surprise. The Taiping's War appeared to be dragging everyone into its barbarising vortex.

Wood was not the only missionary to be disappointed by the violence of the rebels. In contrast to her earlier enthusiasm for the Taiping, Catherine Ella Jones was also concerned by the violence by the 1860s. Jones demonstrated how the fear of rebel violence had caused her to fear for the safety of herself and her property in her correspondence. In an 1860 letter to her sister she discussed at length how the captain of an American ship docked at Shanghai had offered all the American women in Shanghai a place on board should the city be attacked. She wrote to her sister telling her that she would 'send on board [the] ship to go home all my clothing of every kind and description… and then, if our houses should be burned [Jones underlined 'should be burned'] I will not be so much inconvenienced.'[28] Whether it was out of outright disgust at the violence, a fear that the violence was damaging the prospects of spreading Christianity in China, or out of a pure fear for their own property and life, American missionaries were increasingly turned away from the Taiping.

Recent arrival Matthew T. Yates was another missionary who had expressed previous optimism about the Taiping's violent efforts to remake China into a Christian nation. However, once witnessing the violence after their August 1860 attack, Yates was left distraught by what he saw. 'The wanton cruelty of this large Insurgent army is Most Shocking', Yates reported back home on August 29th 1860, adding that, 'while in this vicinity, more than 800 unoffending men, women and children were either put to the sword or forced into deep water, where they perished.'[29] Having come face to face with the savagery of this war, Yates was more aware of the astronomical loss of life occurring around him and the impact this would have. 'In an unsuccessful attack upon "Hang-Chow" a few months ago', he wrote, 'it is said, more than 80,000 lives were lost… O what a sad thought that so many millions of this people are thus suddenly hurried into eternity without a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ! The cruelty of the rebels does not speak well for their religion'.[30] Although despite disgust at the scale of violence, Yates was not particularly concerned for

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[28] Catherine Ella Jones, 'Letter to Miss Fanny Lee Jones', July 15th 1860.
[29] 'Matthew T. Yates to Rev. J. B. Taylor', August 29th 1860.
[30] *Ibid.*

his safety, adding 'No one need have any fears for our safety. Indeed I do not believe the rebels would disturb the Missionaries, if we were to fall into their hands.'[31]

Pessimism continued to grow among missionaries into the 1860s. Another of the Taiping's early missionary cheerleaders, Martha Crawford now seemed to be very pessimistic. On September 25th 1861, she lamented the way the rebels acted and posed several questions such as 'they say they worship him, but do they obey him? He says thou shalt not kill, do they not kill innocent as well as guilty. God says "thou shalt not steal; do they not plunder when they go?"'[32] In another entry in January 1862, she wrote an entry about how China was called '" land of the Buddha" all their gods could not save them from the hands of the destroying rebels...'[33] The dripping sarcasm showed just how she considered the rebels a destructive force and something not to be supported.

While missionaries wrote extensively about the savagery of the Taiping rebels in the 1860s, they were not the only people to display concern about the way the Taiping carried out the war. American diplomats, while being forced to reach agreement with the rebels over protecting American citizens, were increasingly concerned by the conduct of the insurgent forces. In a December 24th 1861 despatch to Secretary of State William Seward, Anson Burlingame, U.S. Minister to China, outlined his actions towards the rebels. Burlingame, and the other Western consuls came together to issue a warning that 'the Consuls held an attitude of neutrality and warned the rebels against any injury to their countrymen [British, French and American]', which supposedly 'the rebels cordially accepted their views and guaranteed the safety of the property and lives of the foreigners.' Burlingame was adamant, however, that 'we cannot recognise the rebels without a violation of our treaty obligations' demonstrating his firm commitment to supporting the Qing, even if he was forced to deal with the rebels.[34] However, Burlingame's commitment to upholding the United States' treaty with the Qing government was not purely about the honour of upholding the treaty. Burlingame was deeply concerned about the manner in which the rebels behaved. Underneath his statement that the United States could not recognise the

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[31] *ibid.*

[32] Martha F. Crawford, September 25th 1861, *Diary, 1860-1864*, Martha Foster Crawford diaries, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

[33] Crawford, January 1862, *Diary*.

[34] 'Anson Burlingame to William H. Seward', December 24th 1861.

Taiping, he advised Secretary of State Seward that 'the rebels, so far from preserving order, are robbing and killing in the most barbarous manner.'[35] A follow up despatch on January 23rd 1862 reported about a joint Anglo-American fact finding mission to rebel-held Ningbo and his return through rebel held territory near Shanghai:

> We found the Rebels, in possession of the city [Ningbo]… As in all places taken by them there was presented a scene of utter desolation for they destroy everything and conserve nothing. I saw heads and bodies of the dead lying unburied in the streets. The inhabitants who could had fled, and those who remained were terror stricken. The foreign settlement was menaced and only saved from slaughter by the presence of the English war vessels the *Scout* and *Kestrel* and the French war vessel *Confucius*… they are the very incarnation of destruction. They take a place "loot it", kill the old and young and force the strong men to join them and to wear their mark in such a way as never to be able to return to their old allegiance.[36]

Burlingame was very explicit in his distaste for the slaughter of the inhabitants of the settlements they took, and the fact he took time to detail the violence of the rebels to the Secretary of State demonstrates how important he considered it. This apprehension with the way the Taiping prosecuted the war reflects the wider concern of the federal government with the way war was carried out. Burlingame's despatches of December 1861 and January 1862 came in the early phases of the American Civil War. Throughout the Civil War, the federal government had been concerned with the lawful conducting of war, including trying to limit the use of violence against non-combatants. Eventually, this would be codified in the Lieber code, which essentially put into law the unwritten, moral philosophy of war which Western nations liked to believe they were subject to.[37] In a sense, Burlingame was offering a vision to Secretary Seward of what war, without proper 'guidelines' could look like, and perhaps a lesson to learn from the Taiping Rebellion. Moreover, it was evidence for the federal government that the rebels were not to be dealt with. They had once offered a prospective alternative trading partner in China, but this

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[35] *Ibid.*

[36] 'Anson Burlingame to William H. Seward', January 23rd 1862.

[37] Sheehan-Dean, *The Calculus of Violence*, 180-181.

surely could not be the case if they conducted themselves in such an uncivilized manner. Despite the problems of conducing trade with the Qing government, the evidence Burlingame presented to his superiors reminded them that it was better to stick with the devil they knew.

The sense that the Taiping were uncivilised, savage insurgents was a view that was increasingly being reflected in the public culture of the Western community in China. On January 18th 1862, the *North China Herald* printed a letter, most likely from a British resident of Shanghai, which confirmed this was becoming the dominant view. The author stated that:

> The career of the Taipings for the last few years has alienated nearly all their former supporters among foreigners. The misery and destruction which have marked their paths, and the apparently blasphemous character of their professed Christianity, have caused many, who were formerly inclined to regard them with favour, to condemn them, as in the cause both of humanity, and of religion.[38]

The author went on to warn readers not to be too hasty in their judgment, citing that no revolution has been without bloodshed.[39] Nevertheless, the article reveals that revulsion to the violence of the Taiping was not just limited to a couple of American missionaries but was widespread across the Western community. For many, the excessive violence dehumanised the Taiping, who began to be painted as little more than mindless animals, rather than Christian crusaders. The *North China Herald* continued to report similar stories across the 1860s. For example, there was an awareness in the Western press that rebel violence disproportionally affected the vulnerable, including women. In 1860 the *North China Herald* declared 'they [the Taiping] burn, rob, and maltreat wherever they go… large numbers of women who had either suffered from rebel licence or feared to suffer, had committed suicide by drowning, opium, or throat-cutting.'[40] In 1865, the paper reported a massacre in Chênping where 1600 people were killed by the rebels, now desperate for survival after the loss of Nanjing in 1864. 'The blood curdles at the recital of so disgraceful a

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[38] 'The Taiping Rebel Question', *North China Herald*, January 18th 1862.
[39] *Ibid.*
[40] 'Rebels', *North China Herald*, July 7th 1860.

butchery,' wrote the author, who noted that 'the sympathy which might have been felt for a people nominally striving to emancipate itself from a foreign thrall is changed into deep disgust coupled with hope that movement may quickly be crushed'.[41] The sense that the extreme violence of the Taiping turned American (and British) sympathisers away from supporting the rebellion is a common theme in negative coverage of the Taiping.

The impact the flare of violence near Shanghai had on Westerners in China had parallels with the secession crisis in the United States. The rebel violence near Shanghai caused anxiety and disenchantment with the rebel cause. John Brown's 1859 raid on the United States armoury at Harpers Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia) had a similar effect on popular opinion in the United States. The anti-slavery activist John Brown was a veteran of the low-level civil war which had raged in Kansas over the issue of whether the state would be admitted to the United States as a slave or free state. He believed that a slave uprising could have been sparked by raids on plantations from Appalachian hideouts, but they first needed weapons. His attack on the armoury was a failure with most of his men killed or captured by U.S. troops under Robert E. Lee. Two months later those captured were hanged.[42] While there were Northern radicals who approved of Brown's actions, the majority of Northerners including abolitionist newspapers such as William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator* attempted to distance themselves from the violence in the earliest days after the failure of the raid.[43] There is a clear parallel with how supporters of the Taiping, especially missionaries, attempted to distance themselves from the rebels once the violence became 'real' for them. While the two events are not linked, it does suggest that there is a common cultural reaction to violence.

Paradoxically, however, despite disillusionment with the violence of the Taiping, American observers often charged their Qing enemies with being cowards in the face of it. Shanghai had become increasingly seen as a theatre of conflict because Qing General Zeng Guofan's reorganised Hunan Army had forced the Taiping out of the city of Anking, which was a few hundred miles upstream from Shanghai. Faced with the prospect of being forced

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[41] 'The Statement of George Baffey', *North China Herald*, November 11th 1865.

[42] Hahn, *A Nation Without* Borders, 207-209.

[43] Charles Joyner, '"Guilty of the Holiest Crime": The Passion of John Brown', 103-138 in Charles Joyner, *Shared Traditions: Southern History and Folk Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 110.

surrounded, the Taiping shifted their strategy towards securing the coast of central China.[44] This was aided by the Taiping breaking the Qing siege of Nanjing in early 1860, which allowed their armies to take cities and territory in the west.[45] In August 1860, a small force of 3000 Taiping rebels under Li Xiucheng, the Loyal King, attacked Shanghai. Despite assurance from the Taiping that they would not harm Westerners Anglo-French troops and seamen stationed in Shanghai pushed back the rebels.[46] Wood's reports back to North Carolina in 1860 carried scathing indictments of the bravery of Chinese people. He bitterly reported that the Qing Lieutenant Governor of the province had falsely claimed that the repulse of the rebel attack on Shanghai was entirely due to Chinese troops who were loyal to the Qing. Wood charged that 'while the English and French were defending Shanghai, this *brave* man had chartered a steamer to take him away should the Rebels get in the city; and he would scarcely have made resistance had there been no foreign forces here', and Wood concluded that 'the Chinese in arranging a battle-field, consider the most important thing to be regarded, is good running ground.'[47] His sweeping generalisation that the Chinese showed cowardice in the face of violence cast doubt on their masculinity as a race, and this idea would have lasting implications.

Violence turned people away from the Taiping rebellion. Despite atrocities on both sides of the conflict, Americans tended to focus on how the Taiping conducted their war. Two factors led to this focus. Firstly, the information they received about the war came from either Qing authorities, who obviously would focus on the behaviour of their enemies, or from the reports of Westerners who had visited the Taiping rebels. These Westerners had gone with high hopes that the Taiping represented a new beginning for China but were disappointed to find that the rebellion was increasingly violent and unprincipled, which coloured the reports that they sent back to Western communities in the treaty ports. The absence of expeditions to Qing held territory was purely because Westerners were already familiar with the Qing, who they had been dealing with for centuries. Therefore, Western

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[44] Kuhn, 'The Taiping Rebellion', 298-300.

[45] Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 5.

[46] Kuhn, 'The Taiping Rebellion', 301. A couple of days later, Anglo-French troops would attack the Taku forts belonging to the Qing government which defended the water route to Beijing. This demonstrates the complicated position Westerners found themselves in in China.

[47] Marquis Lafayette Wood, 'Letter from Rev. M. L. Wood', *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, October 1860 in Wood, *Diary, 1860*.

reports on the war focused solely on the rebels, not just out of disappointment, but also because there was no 'need' for reports on the Qing. Secondly, during the early years of the war, Westerners could either ignore the violence, because it was not 'real' for them, and instead they could focus on trying to work out whether they supported the aims, ideology and religion of the rebels. Or they drew on the white American experience of violence against Native Americans and saw Taiping violence as redemptive and necessary to civilise China. When the war arrived on their doorstep, driven there by Taiping military advances, Americans in China could hide from it no longer. They were disgusted by the killing of innocents, destruction of property, devastation of agricultural land, and the increased threat to their own lives. Most importantly, they blamed the Taiping for it being in their lives, and increasingly lost hope in the idea of the Taiping as a civilising force.

Americans were largely witnesses to the violence, rather than victims. Regardless of their concern about endangerment, the majority of American residents in China were not at risk from Taiping violence because of their location in international communities, protected by the military force of the British and French empires. Yet the suffering that occurred in the areas they lived deeply affected them. Nineteenth-century Americans were used to death and violence, which was a common occurrence in their lives, but they largely believed that violence against non-whites would have a civilising effect, as they believed it did against Native American tribes in the Americas. American responses to the Taiping Rebellion demonstrate how their proximity to the war showed them that violence and warfare did not 'civilise' the Chinese people, as they believed it would. Understanding their responses to the Taiping Rebellion, therefore, helps us understand the shifting relationship that Americans had with violence and warfare during the mid-nineteenth century.

The Taiping Rebellion reached an unprecedented level of violence, which Americans viewed both from afar and up close, and the scale and quality of the violence profoundly affected American people in China. It was a window into what warfare could be without the restraint that white Americans were meant to show (although, of course, white Americans did not always show restraint during violent conflict, especially when inflicting violence upon non-white people). To them the excessive violence suggested the Taiping were less than human, and furthermore it undermined the Taiping claim that they were fighting a war in the name of Christ. This was a view that was held by both British and American residents in China and became especially prominent in missionary circles. American distaste for

Chinese violence would have a profound impact on national thinking. Americans who were disenchanted by Taiping violence would help spread the idea that the Chinese were prone to episodes of cowardly violence and less than human. Indeed, the quality of the violence further helped undermine the public image of the Taiping rebels. The burning cities and executing their entire populations, by both sides, convinced Americans that the Chinese were deeply uncivilised, and unable to conduct warfare in a civilised manner. Yet, the disgust at this violence is mainly levelled at the rebels, rather than the Qing government despite Americans knowing the government also committed their fair share of atrocities. A lot of the information Americans and Europeans received about the war came from either the Qing government or Western expeditions to see the Taiping. The Qing reports, for obvious reasons, projected the image of the Taiping as committing the worst atrocities. Yet, American disillusionment with Taiping violence went beyond just believing what the Qing had told them. They had once believed Taiping violence was useful and redeeming. As it turned out, Taiping violence was not helpful for civilising China, and they disappointed and shocked by the scale of the violence. Furthermore, the violence that affected the Westerners in China was largely caused by the Taiping, who tried to take Shanghai, which housed the principle Western settlement in China, therefore bringing the war to the doorsteps of Westerners. Consequently, Americans had been completely disheartened by Taiping violence by the mid-1860s. From having hoped that the war would have a redemptive impact on China in the early 1850s, Americans came to understand the war as a savage, uncivilised affair that had no redeeming qualities. This added to the growing discontent amongst the Western community towards the Taiping rebels. The rejection of Taiping violence demonstrates how wider American understandings of violence, especially in their own Civil War and their encounters with Native Americans, shaped how Americans saw China and the Chinese.

The Refugee Crisis: Why Did Americans Blame the Taiping?

The changing nature of war in the mid-nineteenth century created huge refugee crises and movement of people.[48] The Crimean War, the American Civil War and the Taiping Rebellion

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[48] For literature on 20th and 21st century refugee crises see Sarah Kenyon Lischer, *Dangerous Sanctuaries: Refugee Camps, Civil War, and the Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005);

all witnessed massive displacement of many differing peoples, who all had differing, but often traumatic experiences while seeking refuge. The white Americans and Europeans sheltering in Shanghai were not refugees, although they did sometimes consider fleeing the city should the Taiping look likely to succeed in taking Shanghai. However, they did find themselves in the midst of one of the worst refugee crises of the mid-nineteenth century in the 1860s. The surge in population of both the old walled city and the new Western concessions situated next to it caused food prices to soar which, coupled with a terrible winter in 1862, caused many refugees to die in the streets.

Americans in China became familiar with death and hardship, much like their compatriots fleeing the war back home. The American Civil War saw numerous groups of people leave their homes to escape further north or further south. White unionists and African-Americans escaping slavery fled to Union lines, while Confederate sympathisers and slaveholders took their slaves with them deeper into the Confederacy to avoid the advancing Union armies. Few foresaw the scale of the refugee crisis when hostilities commenced in 1861, and most responses to the crisis were inadequate. This prompted a revaluation of the role that governments should play in alleviating people's suffering. David Silkenat asserts that understanding North Carolina's refugee crisis can help historians understand the Southern home front, and even the Confederacy itself.[49] A similar approach can be taken to American reactions to the Shanghai refugee crisis of the early 1860s. Understanding how Americans were both physically and emotionally affected by the suffering around them furthers understanding of the American community in China in general. The refugee crisis further deepened the growing American animosity towards the Taiping rebels. Therefore it is key to understand exactly why the blame was shouldered by the Taiping in the eyes of American citizens.

The Taiping Rebellion devastated vast areas of farmland and urban areas in nearly three-quarters of the provinces in China, but particularly in the Yangtze river delta which is the most fertile area of China and an important rice producing region. The crisis got worse in 1860 when the Taiping armies broke through the Jiangnan encampment, which had been

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Roberta Cohen and Francis M. Deng, *Masses in Flight: The Global Crisis of Internal Displacement* (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 1998.

[49] David Silkenat, *Driven From Home: North Carolina's Civil War Refugee Crisis* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2016), 6-9.

keeping their armies inside of Nanjing prior to this. After breaking free of the Qing grip, Taiping armies spread across the lower Yangtze river delta and the fighting between them, and the Hunan Army led to widespread devastation. This created a refugee crisis which had an impact on the personal lives of American people living in Shanghai, as many of the people fleeing the countryside sought residence in the International Settlement because of foreign protection from both the Qing and the Taiping.[50] The refugee crisis caused by the Taiping Rebellion was one of largely internal displacement, as people sought to shelter in the foreign community at Shanghai as a safe haven. Internally displaced people are amongst the world's most vulnerable people, and historically the mortality rates for internal refugees are significantly higher than other forms of humanitarian crises.[51] This was certainly the case in Shanghai as starvation and cold caused many to perish. Despite both sides of the war committing many savage acts and inflicting grievous violence on the Yangtze River valley, Americans tended to blame the Taiping for the refugee crisis, because the refugees were fleeing from the rebel violence caused by their desperate advances to the Chinese coast between 1860 and 1862. Tarleton Crawford informed his missionary board that 'we have had a rather hard time this winter. The Rebels have been round about Shanghai for a month or more, burning the villages, robbing and killing the people. Thousands of them have fled to Shanghai.'[52] It was not Qing violence which caused thousands to flee to Shanghai, which was a Qing-held city, backed up by Western military power, but Taiping. This, combined with the disenchantment caused by seeing the human suffering by the Taiping with their own eyes also contributed to the Western turn away from the rebels.

Federal officials on the ground agreed with the conclusion that the refugee crisis was almost entirely caused by the Taiping. Reporting to Secretary of State William Seward on January 23rd 1862, Anson Burlingame stated that 'the Chinese proper, seem to be perfectly impotent in their [the Taiping's] presence and are crowding, by the hundred thousand, into Shanghai, seeking the protection of foreigners.'[53] Two things are significant in this statement. The first is the distinction between the Taiping and the 'Chinese proper'. Burlingame clearly considered the Taiping to be a different sort of Chinese person than

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[50] Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 4-5.

[51] Cohen and Deng, *Masses in Flight*, 2.

[52] 'Tarleton Crawford to Brother Taylor', February 6th 1862.

[53] 'Anson Burlingame to William H. Seward', January 23rd 1862.

those who were neutral or aligned with the Qing. This seems to hark back to the distinction that white Americans made between the 'good native' and the 'bad native' when interacting with Native Americans during the colonial and antebellum eras.[54] As Burlingame's understanding of the refugee crisis draws on this idea of the 'good' and 'bad' native, the fact that the Taiping were considered the 'bad' native here suggests that the stock of the Taiping had fallen very low. Secondly, the situation of the Chinese people fleeing to an urban area where they were protected by an armed force was very similar to what was happening across the Pacific in the United States at this time. The Burnside invasion of North Carolina, which resulted in the coast of North Carolina being under Union control, created safe havens such as New Bern for fugitive slaves escaping Confederate lines.[55] And the situation where Chinese people fled from Taiping lines to the foreign settlements was very similar, as both fugitive slaves and Chinese refugees sought a safe environment. Given the similarities between the two situations, both involving white Americans maintaining the safe havens, one would expect similar responses to both refugee crises. White Northern aid workers descended on the Union safe havens in North Carolina to provide help to the refugees there, yet they focused on providing education to freedmen rather than provide food and shelter to refugees struggling to survive. Handouts, they believed, would encourage dependency in the aftermath of slavery.[56]

Yet, in China the American community did not shy away from providing material aid to Chinese refugees sheltering in the safe zones Westerners had inadvertently created. Some missionaries took refugees into their home. As the Taiping made a serious thrust at Shanghai in January 1862, the Crawford family took in Chinese peasants who had been forced from their homes in the countryside surrounding Shanghai by the violence of the rebels. Martha Crawford recorded how 'all our spare room has been refuge for many', and that she was sad how she could not house all who were 'suffering from cold and hunger.'[57] Western paper, the *North China Herald* reported in August 1862 that $275.68 was donated by their readers, demonstrating the concern the Western community had for the refugees

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[54] Lepore, *The Name of War,* 71-79.

[55] Silkenat, *Driven From Home*, 11-12.

[56] *Ibid.*, 74-75.

[57] Crawford, *Diary*, January 1862.

suffering at the hands of the rebels.[58] Unlike in North Carolina, the Shanghai-based Americans, some of whom were Confederate sympathisers, were more than willing to try and help non-white refugees by providing economic charity and shelter for them.

The refugee crisis had an emotional impact of those Americans trying to alleviate the suffering. The war now had an impact on Crawford's everyday life and contributed to the attitude she developed towards the rebels over the 1860s. Between January and May 1862, the Crawford household hosted refugees, and this made Crawford's everyday life difficult as the house became crowded. She wrote in May 1862, 'the refugees after remaining five months, giving us every conceivable annoyance had to be [delivered] from our premises. Most of them might go home as the rebels had left their region, but they preferred being here…'[59] The fact that the war had made her personal life a lot more difficult is likely to be a contributing factor to her growing disenchantment with the rebels in the 1860s. Aside from the inconvenience that taking people in had caused Martha Crawford, the refugee crisis weighed heavily on her mind and it is reasonable to assume that this contributed to her increasing disenchantment with the rebellion. In 1894 she wrote a memoir for the Tennessee-based *Baptist and Reflector* which recalled that the population of Shanghai had swelled by 200,000 people during the rebellion, and 'about 20,000 of them were Nankin people, who, seven years previously, had fled to Suchow before the rebels, and now on its capture, to Shanghai… Their miseries were beyond expression or power of relief, and they died like sheep.'[60] The prevalence of death, caused largely by famine and disease, in the once peaceful International Community of Shanghai deeply affected Crawford, who remembered coffins left in the open and even worse was the 'hundreds of the victims who could not afford even this covering were cast out to be devoured by gangs of hungry dogs. This daily familiarity with the dying and the dead was harrowing in the extreme.'[61]

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[58] 'Reminisce of an Evening Ride in the Vicinity of Shanghai', *North China Herald*, August 23rd 1862.

[59] Crawford, *Diary*, May 1862, *Diary*.

[60] 'Forty Odd Years in China, VIII', *Baptist and Reflector*, January 4, 1894, Baptist History Homepage (2002), http://baptisthistoryhomepage.com/crawford.m.f.china.8.1894.html, accessed 03.12.18.

[61] *ibid.* Again the response by white Americans during the Civil War is different to those of the Americans in China. Jim Downs suggests that the immense public health crisis in the American South amongst African-Americans was made worse by bureaucratic incompetence and a racist lack of care which led to many preventable deaths. This stands as a stark contrast to the ostensible care that these Americans showed towards Chinese refugees in Shanghai. See: Jim Downs, *Sick From Freedom: African-American Illness and Suffering during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

This emotional distress that Martha Crawford felt was shared by her husband Tarleton Crawford at the time. In February 1862 Tarleton sent several letters to the Southern Baptist Missionary Board containing detail on the unfolding refugee crisis. On February 11th, Tarleton wrote another letter to Brother Taylor which reported that 'great numbers of them have either starved or frozen to death…provisions are almost at famine prices.'[62] Since Tarleton felt the suffering was worth reporting back to the missionary board, we can assume he was somewhat affected by what was happening around him. Furthermore, the fact that the refugee crisis still weighed heavily on the mind of the Crawfords in the 1890s when Martha wrote her memoir, hints that the Crawford family were deeply affected by it at the time. Despite the refugee crisis having been caused by the conflict between both sides, the growing anti-Taiping stance of the Western community, informed by Qing propaganda over the 1850s, led the blame to be largely placed with the Taiping, as the refugees were only in Shanghai to flee their advance towards the coast. The Crawford family, like other Southern Baptists in China, had once believed the rebels were doing God's work by spreading Christianity, but in the face of the consequences of their violence she seemed unable to be enthusiastic about the idea that their deaths were providential.

Even Americans who had not taken in refugees were emotionally affected by the war. Marquis Lafayette Wood noted in his diary that:

> West of here the Rebels have been for several days burning towns and villages, leaving thousands homeless, if not breadless. Hundreds rushed into the foreign community today. And for several days they have been going to the city and especially to foreign community, or wherever they can find a lodging place.[63]

His lament that the rebels caused 'desolation and distress' wherever they went was prompted by the Taiping burning villages and towns near Shanghai, causing people to flee.[64] For these missionaries the barbarity of the Taiping violence was made even clearer to them when the main victims of this violence were so visible in their everyday lives. This perhaps

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[62] 'Tarleton Crawford to Brother Taylor', February 11th 1862.
[63] Wood, *Diary*, August 20th 1860.
[64] Wood, *Diary*, September 12th 1860.

explains why the Taiping received the brunt of the blame for violent excesses of the war. The majority of those that fled to Shanghai during the war had been fleeing from the conquering armies of the Taiping, rather than from the largely defensive armies of the Qing authorities. While there is no doubt that Qing military action contributed to the refugee crisis, the Americans in China only really saw the results of Taiping violence as people fled to the safe haven that Westerners had created, through imperial force, in Shanghai.

It was a belief shared among the Western community by the press. In August 1862, the *North China Herald* reported on the conditions that Shanghai's refugees lived in. 'Many have died from cholera, of fever, and starvation… some may still be seen in that listless helpless state from inanition with swollen dropsied limbs, and vacant idiotic stare and their emaciated faces resembling the famine-stricken residents of the west and south-west of Ireland during the Great Famine'.[65] This concern contributed to the surging disdain for the Taiping rebels, which was beginning to reach its peak in 1862. Although Americans could not blame the Taiping for the spread of cholera directly, the only reason why the city was overcrowded, and under-fed was because of Taiping military action in the areas around Shanghai. In this environment, it would have been hard to remain enthusiastic about the idea of a westward facing Taiping China while so many perished as an indirect result of their military campaigns.

Aside from the suffering, the American missionaries lamented the refugee's reluctance to accept the word of God, and they believed the Taiping's thrust towards Shanghai actually hampered their attempts to Christianise China. Matthew Yates wrote to his missionary board to inform the Southern Baptists back home of the unfolding crisis. 'Our city (with its million of population, since the population of the country towns and villages have been driven in) may be said to be invested by them [the rebels]', wrote Yates, adding that 'consequently every article of food is selling at fabulous prices. These commotions, have greatly interfered with the successful prosecution of the Missionary work… The prospect for the speedy conversion of this great people, is dark! We have no hope that anything good will come out of the Insurgent movement.'[66] A year later in 1863, Yates returned to this theme as he reported that 'among the great mass of the people, of this now

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[65] 'Reminisce of an Evening Ride in the Vicinity of Shanghai', *North China Herald*, August 23rd 1862.
[66] 'Matthew T. Yates to Brother Wortham', February 5th 1862.

densely populated city, there is but little interest manifested in the message we bring. The Civil War [in China] and its horrors, absorbs every other theme.'[67] It is noteworthy that Yates saw fit to blame the refugee crisis and the Taiping Rebellion for the slow progress that the Southern Baptists were making in converting Chinese people to Christianity because it highlights the growing frustration with the Taiping within the once so enthusiastic missionary community. Tarleton Crawford reported the same lack of progress in spreading Christ to refugees in May 1862. 'The people from all the surrounding cities have fled to Shanghai and provisions are at famine prices. There is much sickness among the escapees' he noted to Brother Pointdexter adding, 'there is a perfect and stolid indifference to the gospel.'[68] Both Southern Baptist missionaries seemed to link the refugee crisis to a lack of interest in their Christian message. They had perhaps hoped that since they had not been able to travel further into the Chinese interior, because of both treaty restrictions throughout the 1850s and the presence of the war, that they would be able to make some significant progress in their mission aims. As very pious men, who believed in the sanctity of their mission, they would have found it difficult to accept that maybe their message fell on deaf ears because the Chinese population of Shanghai, including the refugees, were simply uninterested in their message. Clearly most Chinese people were uninterested, as by 1870 only an estimated 5000 Chinese people had been converted by all Protestant missionaries, of all nationalities.[69] Therefore, it is telling that the missionaries blamed the Taiping for their woes in converting more. It suggests that the refugee crisis was somewhat of a disappointment to the missionaries, who despite all the suffering will have seen it as fertile ground for conversion. The lack of receptiveness to their message was blamed on the violence of the Taiping, who presented a tarnished Christian message to the Chinese who had to flee their homes, in the eyes of the missionaries.

The refugee crisis compounded American anxieties about the violence of the Taiping. Coming face to face with the innocent victims of the rebellion for the first time had a dramatic impact on the mentalities of those who had initially supported the rebellion. It contributed to the growing sense that the Taiping were not to be supported because all they did was cause death and destruction everywhere they went. The personal distress

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[67] Matthew T. Yates to Brother Wortham' July 1863.
[68] 'Tarleton P. Crawford to Brother Pointdexter', May 3rd 1862.
[69] Flynt and Berkley, *Taking Christianity to China*, 7.

caused by seeing bodies piling up in the streets, as well as the emotional strain some went through in taking in some refugees during the worst period of the crisis turned Westerners away from the Taiping. Especially given the growing questions about what the rebels stood for; the war seemed to have descended into senseless barbarism that had its biggest impact on the innocent. The crisis would cause the American community in China to question just how savage the rebels were, and these questions would have an impact on American understandings of the 'Chinese race'.

The Influence of the American Civil War

The American Civil War broke out around the same time that the opinions of those Americans living in China began to turn away from any support they had once held for the Taiping rebels. While the American Civil War did not have any major effect on how Americans viewed the Taiping, Americans certainly drew parallels between the two conflicts and the concurrence between the two wars further undermined the position of Americans in China, leading to greater anxiety. This concurrence did not go unnoticed in the United States itself. In 1864, *The New York Herald* called the American Civil War a 'war of democracy' and suggested that 'by a dim, mysterious sympathy, the far off lands which lie in the shadow of barbarism are beginning to enter into a corresponding conflict… the battles now fought by the armies of the Potomac, the Tennessee and the Shenandoah… will soon be fought by the almond-eyed denizens of populous China'. Even though the article was written after the Taiping had been crushed, the news had clearly not made it back to the offices of the *Herald* who believed 'the great rebellion in China is by no means in its last days.'[70] That the *Herald*, the most read paper in the United States, drew parallels between the Taiping Rebellion and American Civil War suggests that this was a common idea. And furthermore, the attempt of the *Herald* to recast the Taiping Rebellion as a 'war of democracy', similar to the American Civil War shows the pervasive influence of the American Civil War in shaping the world view of Americans in the 1860s.

For Americans in China, the eruption of a civil war in both their temporary home and their native country presented a challenging to both their physical and emotional wellbeing.

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[70] 'The Dawn in the East – The Example of the American War', *The New York Herald,* December 12th 1864.

Native Kentuckian Tarleton Crawford wrote to his missionary board in January 1863 asking them to 'please include some extracts from this not if possible so that our friends may hear that we are all alive and well and able to live here notwithstanding the wars in China and America.'[71] The Crawford's position in Shanghai had been made tenuous because the money that they were sent by the missionary board had dried up, leading Tarleton Crawford to write in May 1862 that they only 'have funds to last this year and two months of next by using all of the house money and the Japan appropriation.'[72] This meant that by January 1863 the Crawford family only had two months of funds left, with money from the United States unable to reach them because of the war. Furthermore, Kentucky, Crawford's home state, was a Border South state. This meant the state was the site of some of the most bitter fighting of the American Civil War, largely because the population, including within families themselves, was so divided between loyalties to the Union or Confederacy.[73] Crawford, was a Confederate sympathiser who believed that 'the southern people can never be subdued', but regretted that 'their hearts and interests will be cemented by blood. The blood of many of the best men on earth.'[74] He clearly recognised that the war would be a violent affair and would likely have been concerned about family and friends left back in Kentucky. This worry, combined with the lack of funding from home, would have made living through the Taiping advances on Shanghai in the early 1860s even harder, and further contributed to the misery of living in a city that was under the threat of violence constantly, as well as experiencing death on a daily basis as people died on the streets from starvation and cold. The relief that Tarleton Crawford felt in October 1863 when he finally heard back from his missionary board demonstrates this. 'We were greatly delighted to see your familiar hand' replied Crawford on October 12th 1863, adding they were moved 'that you and the dear brethren of our native land had not forgotten us, and the cause of mission in these troublous [sic] times.'[75] Clearly, the Crawford's had suffered throughout 1862 and 1863, primarily because of the Taiping Rebellion and American Civil War.

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[71] 'Tarleton Crawford to Brother Taylor', January 8th 1863.

[72] 'Tarleton Crawford to Brother Bindexter', May 3rd 1862. The Japan Appropriation was money sent by the Southern Baptist Missionary Board with the intention of sending a missionary to Japan.

[73] James M. McPherson, *Ordeal By Fire: Volume 2, The Civil War* (2nd ed., New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1993), 157.

[74] 'Tarleton Crawford to Brother Taylor', February 10th 1862.

[75] 'Tarleton Crawford to Brother Taylor', October 12th 1863.

Both Northerners and Southerners backed away from the Taiping, but for different reasons. Northerners such as US diplomat Anson Burlingame, used the concurrent civil wars to foster closer relations with the Qing government.[76] Southerners also saw the parallels, but they saw them as insulting. The growing image of the Taiping as a violent, blasphemous movement meant those who were sympathetic towards the Confederacy were quick to distance themselves from the Taiping. The American Civil War therefore exacerbated the image problem that the Taiping had in the American community in Shanghai by the 1860s.

The Qing government saw parallels between the two rebellions, and they used this to try to foster better relations between the United States and China. Prince Gong, Regent of the Chinese Empire, readily accepted American Minister to China Anson Burlingame's request that China close her ports to the Confederate ship *CSS Alabama*, noting that the two countries were both burdened by similar rebellions.[77] Burlingame's wife Jane found this very amusing. In a letter to her father in 1864 she snidely wondered 'what the "Southern Chivalry" will say to being put on par with the "Taepings!"'[78] It was clear that supporters and officials of the Union in China were found the parallels between the Confederacy both apt and a useful insult towards the Confederacy.

It was not an insult that Confederate sympathisers in China took particularly well. Marquis Lafayette Wood, a native North Carolinian, was deeply sympathetic to the Confederacy.[79] Upon hearing the news of Burlingame's deal with the Qing government over the CSS *Alabama*, Wood wrote, 'Mr. Burlingame in applying to the Emperor for the proclamation, disgustingly represented the Southerners to be such a people as the Taipings; and the Emperor in reply sympathised with him and his country, saying he had rebels in China.'[80] His view that this comparison was disgusting betrays just how desperate Confederate sympathisers were to distance themselves from the Taiping by the mid-1860s.

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[76] Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 319-320.

[77] *Ibid.*

[78] Jane Burlingame, 'Letter to her Father', March 28th 1864, Anson Burlingame Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, in *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom,* 320.

[79] This is perhaps not surprising since a younger brother had died during the conflict, although his death was caused by falling of horse rather than actually fighting the Union. See: Marquis Lafayette Wood, *Marquis Lafayette Diary, 1864*, April 21st 1864, Marquis Lafayette Wood Records and Papers, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

[80] Wood, *Diary, 1864*, April 20th 1864.

Some of the impetus from Confederate sympathisers residing in China during the American Civil War to prove their dislike of the Taiping rebels came from the idea of a Confederate religion. During the Civil War, part of the Confederate legitimising myth had rested on the idea that their war against the North had holy dimensions. The North represented an unholy foe that was waging an unchristian war against the South, and therefore the Confederate war effort was a divine effort.[81] Wood certainly thought of the war in religious terms. For example, he considered the 'southern people… [were] fighting for all that is dear and sacred upon earth.'[82] Furthermore, he believed that Confederate General Thomas 'Stonewall' Jackson would 'long be held up as an example of a Christian hero.'[83] Given the emphasis on the divine mission the Confederacy was on, China-based Confederate sympathisers did not want to be considered similar to the Taiping, whose Christian credentials had been largely discounted by the 1860s. If the Taiping were not carrying out God's work as once thought, then Confederates could not tolerate comparison with their cause because they believed they were carrying out God's work.

Furthermore, the American Civil War led to a war scare with Great Britain. This was a source of great anxiety for Americans residing in the international community of Shanghai. Britain dominated Shanghai (and the Western presence in China in general) and American business and missionary interests were reliant on British military protection for the most part. Therefore, the possibility that the United States might go to war with the very power that provided stability for Americans in China caused anxiety. The tension reached its peak in the winter of 1861 and 1862 in the aftermath of the *Trent* affair when the U.S. Navy boarded a British ship an arrested two Confederate diplomats. British officials in China stood ready to seize all Americans assets in the case of war and this put Americans in China in a precarious position.[84] William Minns Tileston, a merchant from New York, believed war meant American 'business will be entirely broken up' and those residing in China would

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[81] W. Scott Poole, *Never Surrender: Confederate Memory and Conservatism in the South Carolina Upcountry* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2004), 44-50.

[82] Marquis Lafayette Wood, *Marquis Lafayette Diary, 1863,* July 16th 1863, Marquis Lafayette Wood Records and Papers, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

[83] Wood, *Diary, 1863*, December 19th 1863.

[84] Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 262-263.

'make tracks for San Francisco.'[85] For Tileston this was especially pressing because the English were the largest portion of the population in the international settlement, and they made 'some very unpleasant remarks' to the Americans in the settlement. However, Americans were 'dependent on them for protection and in fact their gun boats on the river Yang tsze [sic] where there are Rebels and Pirates, protect commerce.'[86] The tension in the Anglo-American community contributed to the increased anxiety felt by Americans in Shanghai. This crisis took place when the Taiping made their most serious assault on Shanghai, and it exacerbated the already growing negative opinion of the Taiping. In the 1850s, the American community in China was living in a largely stable area where they could safely hold sympathies for the Taiping rebels without it affecting their own lives. By winter of 1862, this was on the edge of falling apart as their more powerful English neighbours and protectors seemed to be on the verge of war with their mother country. It was in this atmosphere that the arguments against the Taiping were formed. Taiping violence, their poor revolutionary credentials, their blasphemous belief system and the threat to stability they posed seemed even worse in the light of the war scare with Great Britain. While the *Trent* affair did not directly interact with the Taiping rebellion, the pessimistic atmosphere it created hastened the turn away from optimism about the Taiping.

As the American Civil War rumbled in the background of the last days of the Taiping rebellion, it indirectly helped change American opinion in China about China's instability. Northerners were now even more likely to sympathise with the Qing authorities, even if they represented an undemocratic autocracy, because they both struggled with Southern rebels. Southerners found the comparisons with the Taiping insulting, especially in light of how they considered their war one of a divine mission to protect their way of life. Comparison with the blasphemous Taiping rebels was insulting, and Southerners residing in the United States increasingly backed away from any prior support. All this took place against a war scare which threatened the very existence of the American community in China. War with Great Britain would have been disastrous for Americans who lived side by side with British people in Shanghai and other Treaty Ports. In this unstable world, the

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[85] William Minns Tileston, 'Letter to his Mother', March 5th 1862, William Minns Tileston Letters, Massachusetts Historical Society. This source is read in a similar manner in Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 263.

[86] Tileston, 'Letter to his Mother', April 2nd 1862.

Taiping were just another destabilising force for the American presence in China and they were increasingly seen in a negative light.

Obstacles rather than Opportunities: Americans, Trade and the Taiping

Americans representing business interests were, perhaps understandably, cooler in their initial response to the rebellion because of the instability it caused. However, some businessmen also perceived the rebellion as an opportunity to further open markets in China, especially due to the Qing authorities' refusal to bend to Western pressure. Furthermore, the war presented Western firms an opportunity to profit from dealing arms and supplies to the rebels. Throughout the 1850s, both American businessmen and government officials had kept a close eye on the Taiping because they represented an alternative to the Qing government who were seen as obstructive to Western trade interests.[87] Yet with the conclusion of the Second Opium War between the British and French and the Qing in 1860, the Western powers now had a vested interest in ensuring the survival of the Qing regime which had given them greater access to Chinese markets in the treaties concluding the war.[88] The Taiping no longer represented an opportunity to the West, but an obstacle. Fear they would damage trade meant businessmen, government officials and even some missionaries were no longer remotely sympathetic.

Following the creation of the Treaty Port system foreign trade was still largely restricted and Western movement and buying was subject to Qing and Chinese control. For Americans in 1850, the system worked via the stipulations set out in the 1844 Treaty of Wanghsia. American merchants were limited to five treaty ports where they were allowed to trade freely. They had to pay both import and export duties at the point of unloading or loading goods onto the cargo vessel. American cargo ships also had to pay a tonnage duty on arrival in one of the five treaty ports.[89] From 1853, native and foreign merchants also started to pay an internal transit tax known as the *Likin* which was an *ad valorem* tax levied on goods in transit or on items such as tea at their place of production. The tax was instituted by local authorities in order to raise the revenue necessary to create new armies

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[87] Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 26-29; Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, 121-124.
[88] Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, 136.
[89] *Treaty of Wangshia*, May 18th 1844, on *University of South California US-China Institute*, https://china.usc.edu/treaty-wangxia-treaty-wang-hsia-may-18-1844 [accessed 03/09/20].

to fight the Taiping.[90] The tariffs and taxes levied by the Qing government were not popular amongst Western merchants. When the Small Sword rebels (who were aligned with but not allied with the Taiping) seized control of Shanghai in 1853, they destroyed the customs house. Rather than taking the opportunity to avoid paying the Qing the duties British and American merchants legally owed, the Anglo-American consuls created a system of collection in order to pay what was due to the Qing while they could not collect it themselves. The consuls did this so that they would not jeopardise the trading rights Westerners had extracted from China. However, both British and American merchants were deeply unhappy with paying dues for a government that could not even collect revenue itself.[91]

Figure 1: 'Map Illustrating Where Chinese Goods Were Produced' in Eric Jay Dolin, *When America First Met China.*

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[90] Kuhn, 'The Taiping Rebellion', 289.

[91] Gregory, *Great Britain and the Taiping*, 27.

The opening of treaty ports in the 1840s also shifted the centre of American trade from Canton to Shanghai. The distribution of goods production in figure 1. demonstrates why Shanghai became the preeminent treaty port in nineteenth-century China. The position of Shanghai at the mouth of Yangtze was perfect for Western merchants, as the river acted as a kind of highway for goods from the Chinese interior. However, the focal point of the rebellion was in the Yangtze River basin. This presented a number of production and transportation issues. Firstly, the widespread devastation caused by the war led to disruption of producing goods, such as tea and silk. Secondly, even when production was not disrupted, producers faced transportation problems. The war was centred around the Yangtze, the main 'highway' for tea and silk to reach Shanghai, which meant it became very risky to moved goods this way. Silk was less of a problem because it was mainly grown in areas north of the Yangtze. This meant silk bales could be diverted north via the Grand Canal to be taken to Shanghai. However, tea was mostly grown south of the river with no obvious alternative to get to Shanghai. So producers either had to send the tea to Canton in the South or risk sending the goods through the warzone. The increased physical difficulties in trading caused by the war meant even the most optimistic merchants were uneasy about their profits.

Even before the Small Sword Rebellion in late 1853, which Westerners confused with the Taiping Rebellion itself, erupted in Shanghai, some American merchants and diplomats were deeply concerned about the effect the war would have on their trade, property and the value of that property. The United States Minister for China between 1852 and 1854 was Humphrey Marshall, a former Whig Congressman for Kentucky who would go on to become a Confederate general.[92] Marshall was already concerned by the potential for economic disruption in May 1853, prior to insurrection erupting in Shanghai, after receiving a letter from American merchants based in Shanghai. Writing to U.S. Minister Marshall on May 7th 1853, representatives of Russell & Company, Wetmore & Company, Augustine Heard & Company, Bull, Nye and Company, and Smith King and Company stated that they had heard a rumour that Commodore Matthew Perry intended to 'withdraw all the

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[92] 'Humphrey Marshall', Biographical Directory of the United States Congress [http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=M000154], [accessed 27.08.2019].

American ships of war from this port [Shanghai]' and requested that Marshall stop the navy from withdrawing. This consortium of American merchants stated that Commodore Perry had not taken 'into consideration of the extent of the danger which threatens foreign interests at this time', adding that, 'the disturbed state of the country sufficient warrants us in expecting and asking from the authorities of our country, protection for our property, which, we may mention, amounts at a fair valuation to 1,000,000 or 1,200,000 dollars, now at risk in the port.'[93] Given the estimated value of property that would be placed at risk if the rumours turned out to be true, their reaction, while premature, is understandable.

The merchants' concern was clearly shared by the federal official present. U.S. Minister Marshall agreed with the merchants and sought to get in touch with the commander of the U.S. Navy in East Asia to resolve the situation. Writing to Commodore Matthew Perry, commander of the United States Navy East Indies squadron, on May 11th 1853, Marshall informed Perry that he had a letter that disclosed 'a large property belonging to American owners now exposed to risque [sic]'. Marshall continued by stating that 'the condition of China renders at present all property now at this place [Shanghai] insecure, for though no danger seems to threaten Shanghai at this moment, the occupation of the country around Nanking by hostile armies, may bring the forces of either party to Shanghai' and he suggested that Perry decide 'upon the relative importance of protesting American interests at Shanghai by the presence of a ship or ships of war'.[94] Clearly it was not only merchants who were concerned about the news from the Chinese interior, but also a representative of the federal government.

The American military was not as quite concerned about the impact on American trade in 1853. Humphrey Marshall's request to Commodore Perry did not persuade Perry of the need to leave a warship in Shanghai, and Perry had concerns it would impact his ability to undertake his expedition to Japan, which aimed to open the Japanese ports to American trade, because it would weaken his naval squadron.[95] Writing on May 16th 1853, Perry told Marshall that he had a 'sincere desire to do that which will best conduce to the honor and

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[93] 'Russell & Co. et. al. to Humphrey Marshall', May 7th 1853, Humphrey Marshall Papers, 1771-2002, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

[94] 'Humphrey Marshall to Matthew Perry', May 11th 1853.

[95] For more on the Perry Expedition to 'open' Japan see: Peter Booth Wiley, *Yankees in the Land of the Gods: Commodore Perry and the Opening of Japan* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1990).

interests of the United States', and therefore he was 'reluctantly constrained to say that I cannot see myself justified in employing one of the four vessels of war at present at my disposal in the manner you propose'.[96] Marshall, dismayed by the Commodore's reply wrote to an officer under Perry's command to ascertain exactly what orders he had given. Commander John Kelly of the U.S.S. *Plymouth* replied that a summary of his orders were that Perry 'cannot anticipate any probable move of the Insurgents towards this city' and therefore had decided to leave the *Plymouth* behind only with Commander Kelly left to decide when to re-join his expedition to Japan.[97] While Commodore relented from his position of not leaving any ships at all, he clearly did not take the threat of the rebellion disrupting trade as seriously as some of the diplomatic and mercantile interests in China did in the early phases of the Taiping Rebellion.

However, while there was some anxiety over the possible disruption to Western trade in Shanghai, there was also a discussion of whether the Taiping might actually be better for Western trade than the Qing government. Despite the signing of the Treaty of Wanghsia in 1844 between the United States and the Qing Empire, which gave Americans the right to trade in designated treaty ports, the trading relationship between the Qing and the Western powers had been uneasy and furthermore, the United States was importing more from China then it was exporting there, meaning American merchants were relying on British credit to trade there. So despite the disruption to trade in 1852 and 1853, many merchants saw the initial willingness of the Taiping as a sign that should the Taiping overthrow the Qing, they might manage to achieve a more favourable trade balance in China.[98] The Anglo-American newspaper *North China Herald* stated on May 7th 1853 that 'the existence of a common religious belief disposed them [the Taiping] to regard their "foreign brethren" with a frank friendliness which past experience renders it difficult to comprehend in a Chinese', but the *Herald* would 'earnestly trust every effort will be made to cultivate and establish in their minds', because 'it would, to speak of nothing else, do more for our commercial interests, should the Insurgents succeed, than hundreds of shops and regiments.'[99] In the aftermath of the Short Sword Rebellion, Qing officials complained to

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[96] 'Matthew Perry to Humphrey Marshall', May 16th 1853.
[97] 'John Kelly to Humphrey Marshall', May 18th 1853.
[98] Teng, *Americans and the Taiping Rebellion*, 27-35.
[99] *North China Herald*, May 7th 1853 in Clarke and Gregory (eds.) *Western Reports on the Taiping*, 53-56.

American officials that foreign merchants had been openly sympathetic to the city's rebel occupiers. A July 27th 1854 letter from U.S. Minister to China Robert McLane to Secretary of State William Marcy reported that the Qing governor-general of Liangjiang had made a 'compliant, that the presence of the foreign merchants adjacent to the walls of the city, and their active and undisguised sympathy with the rebels within, had been the main and only real obstacle to the imperial troops in their operations against it.'[100] Even though some merchants were beginning to be concerned about the Taiping's impact on their ability to make money, Shanghai's American merchants looked on the Short Sword movement favourably because they had destroyed the customs house. Even though the United States government required merchants to pay the duties they owed to the Qing government, American merchants saw the destruction of the customs house as an opportunity to try and avoid duty payments.[101] Clearly, merchants were not steadfastly opposed to the Taiping and their Short Sword imitators because they explored the possibility of trading with both in the earliest period of the rebellion. Even if there was disruption and some short-term losses, some merchants seemed more open to the idea of trading with the supposedly pro-Western Taiping than the United States government were.

Despite the economic losses caused by the outbreak of the Taiping Rebellion, many merchants and diplomats remained optimistic about their business prospects with the Taiping as the 1860s began. Yet by the start of 1863, the majority of the Americans in China did not believe the Taiping were the key to unlocking the full potential of the trade with China. So what changed from the 1850s? The first Taiping advance on Shanghai in 1860 had prompted much discussion within the city's Western community about whether it was right for the British and French authorities to have intervened in the war to defend Shanghai.[102] An editorial in the *North China Herald* declared 'we believe, we are right in asserting that the Foreign ministers were induced to take the step at the wish of a large majority of the wealth and intelligence of this place'.[103] The paper asserted that had the Europeans not

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[100] 'Robert M. McLane to William L. Marcy', July 27th 1854 in United States Department of State, *Message of the President of the United States: communicating, in compliance with a resolution of the Senate, the correspondence of Messrs. McLane and Parker, late commissioners to China*, Volume 1 (Washington DC: W. A. Harris Printer, 1859), 119.

[101] Gregory, *Great Britain and the Taiping*, 27.
[102] Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 141-145.
[103] *North China Herald*, September 15th 1860.

defended the city then 'trade would most certainly have been put an end to with the delivery of the city to a body of Rebels with whom the mercantile people have certainly no common feeling.'[104] Indeed the idea that trade would be affected by Taiping control was reinforced by reports of trade having been destroyed in the cities they controlled. Marquis Lafayette Wood noted that all the silk weavers in Shanghai were Suzhou refugees, writing in his diary that 'one man told me that before the Rebels took Suchau [Suzhou] there were in that city one hundred thousand Silk-weavers; but now there are not one thousand.'[105] If the silk weavers were displaced and unable to produce silk for export, then Westerners would be deprived of an opportunity to make money off selling silks. This was more evidence that the Taiping, despite the idea they would be good for Western trade, were bad for Americans wishing to make money.

Yet even in 1860, when some Americans were beginning to turn against the Taiping, some Westerners were still taking advantage of the rebellion to make money. Smuggling was a concern for all the representatives of Western nations present in China, because they worried that their relations with the Qing would suffer. The British envoy Sir Frederick Bruce, for example, responded to Qing concerns about British ships by warning would-be smugglers that the Royal Navy would not protect them.[106] A similar problem plagued the American minister to China, John Ward. The U.S. consul to Poochow informed Ward that there was 'no law which authorises you to require the citizens of the U.S. to register their houseboats, or upon their failure to do so to forbid the use of the American flag, nor do I believe such an order calculated to prevent smuggling', adding that he 'cannot see how the use of the flag will… prevent smuggling.' However, he added 'should any smuggling be attempted… with or without flags, they should at once be seized and punished.'[107] Another letter, dated December 15th 1860 added that the Poochow consul had seen in the *Hong Kong Daily News* a letter from Issachar Roberts, who was now with rebels. Robert's letter informed the consul that 'The flowery flag (U.S. flag) is quite popular up this way. Most of the vessels trading with the Revolutionists carry it.' The consul added to Ward that 'you

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[104] *Ibid.*

[105] Wood, *Diary, 1863*, February 10th 1863. Wood refers to Suzhou as Suchau.

[106] Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 212-213.

[107] 'Paul L. Governar to John E. Ward', November 10th 1860, *Despatches From U.S. Ministers to China, 1843-1906*, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

undoubtedly are aware as well as I, what trading with the Revolutionists means. Selling arms and ammunition, and our flag is used when we as a nation are at peace with China.'[108] The conversation about stopping smuggling reveals that there were some Americans who were attempting to exploit the money-making opportunity that the Taiping presented by smuggling weapons to them, and also further demonstrates that the American government itself was firmly committed by 1860 to the Qing authorities, having discounted that the Taiping were a better long term prospect than the Qing were for trade.

Throughout 1861, the entrenched position of the Taiping rebels across the Yangtze river was causing American diplomats a headache. 'The importance of the trade upon the Yangtze, has already induced some of our merchants to send vessels up the river', reported the Chargé d'Affaire C. K. Stribling to Secretary of State Black, 'but', he added, 'they do it at considerable risk, as we have had no understanding with the Insurgent Chiefs.'[109] In April 1861, an expedition was sent to Nanjing by Stribling with the intention of securing the same right of passage up the Yangtze that the British had managed to secure.[110] American diplomats submitted a request that 'in the event of the Taipings taking any place where Americans citizens are engaged in trade, they are expected to protect such persons, their property, and those in their employment and permit them to continue their business'.[111] The Taiping, with the war going badly, were forced to try to rescue their reputation in the eyes of Westerners. As such, the Taiping authorities responded to the American request by saying 'we look up to the light of your friendly sentiments, and it seems indeed as if we were one family… Should therefore your honorable country's merchant vessels be passing (Nanking)… they will be allowed to proceed.'[112] Therefore, by mid-1861 it seemed that the United States had reached an accommodation with the Taiping, who were willing to allow trade to pass through Yangtze. So why did both the American diplomatic presence in China and other merchants and missionaries continue to argue that the Taiping rebels were bad for trade?

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[108] 'Paul L. Governar to John E. Ward', December 15th 1860.
[109] 'C. K. Stribling to Secretary of State Black', March 27th 1861.
[110] Teng, *Americans and the Taiping*, 176-182.
[111] D. B. McCartee, 'Points to be Submitted to the Taiping Authorities at Nanking for Their Acceptance', May 24th 1861.
[112] D.B. McCartee, 'Despatch No. 2', May 24th 1861.

They continued to believe the Taiping did not represent a commercial opportunity because Taiping promises of unhindered trade were not kept. This became especially apparent when the rebels took Ningbo in December 1861. Not long after the Taiping had seized control of Ningbo, U.S. Minister to China Anson Burlingame went on a fact-finding mission to the city and was left concerned by what he found. 'As to trade', he informed Secretary Seward, 'they wish to buy only arms and opium and men are trading with them in these articles to the great injury of legal commerce. There is great anxiety touching the future. If the rebels continue to hold Ningpo [Ningbo] the whole system by which duties are collected, which has been settled with infinite trouble, will be menaced.'[113] It troubled Burlingame that the only form of commerce that seemed to profit out of Taiping occupation of a territory or city was illegal or immoral commerce. This distinction between illegal and legal commerce had been an underlying theme throughout the Taiping's war with the Qing, as clearly many Western merchants were willing to transgress both their own nation's laws and the Qing's laws to make themselves money. With the capture of Ningbo in late 1861, it became abundantly clear to the American official presence, which had tried to keep a reasonably open mind to the idea that the Taiping could be better for trade, that the Taiping only benefited illegal or immoral trade.

When the Taiping made their second, more serious, attack on Shanghai in the 1862, American commerce was disrupted even more. In a correspondence between American merchants Charles E. Hill and J. Howard Nichols, Hill wrote to Nichols that his ship was delayed on its journey because of 'holidays, bad weather and rebel troubles.'[114] The fact it was a reason given for the disruption of business is worthy of note because it shows that the Taiping were having a real impact on the ability of American merchants to make money, and this helped further discredit the rebellion in the eyes of Americans who had once hoped the Taiping would help further their trading interests, rather than obstruct them. Anson Burlingame noted the detrimental effect the Taiping's siege of Shanghai was having on his countrymen's business. 'The misfortune', he informed Secretary Seward, 'is that the Rebels destroy trade now, and the hope of it here after, and that this city whose export trade in

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[113] 'Anson Burlingame to William Seward', December 24th 1861. Opium was legalised in 1858 through the Treaty of Tientsin, but was controversial. Arms dealing remained illegal.
[114] 'Charles E. Hill to J. Howard Nichols', February 19th 1862 in J. Howard Nichols Papers, Baker Library Special Collections, Baker Library, Harvard University.

favorable times is nearly as great as the export trade of the Russian Empire will be very much injured.'[115] Burlingame's inclusion of just how valuable exports coming out of Shanghai were for American businesses operating in the city demonstrates why the idea that the Taiping represented an opportunity for American merchants was beginning to run out of steam. If the Taiping's desperate lunge for China's coastal cities was so damaging to such a potent source of income for American businesses, why would the federal government abandon the Qing and recognise and support the Taiping?

Even missionaries, who had once believed and argued that the rebels were innately predisposed towards trading with Western foreigners because they shared a religion, no longer believed the Taiping represented a better business opportunity than the Qing government. Issachar Roberts split with the Taiping leadership in the winter of 1862, seemed to inform other missionaries who had remained in Shanghai about the commercial prospects of the Taiping. Issachar Jacox Roberts's denunciation of the Taiping had also included allusions to the threat that the Taiping posed to trading and commerce. 'He [Hong Xiuquan] is opposed to commerce', wrote Roberts who went on to claim the Taiping had 'had more than a dozen of his own people murdered since I have been here, for no other crime than trading in the city.'[116] Given that most Westerners in China were there in the pursuit of the riches to be gained by trading in China, this was unnerving information. Against this wealth of evidence, the American community in China concluded that the Taiping were not the opportunity they once were seen as. Writing to the Southern Baptist Missionary Board, Tarleton Crawford wrote, 'by the way Mr Roberts has fallen, he fled from Nanking for his life... he has turned against the Rebels with all his might, and says his old "Pupil" is crazy, and no good politically, commercially, or religiously'.[117] It seems that since Roberts, who had come to occupy a position of intellectual authority on the Taiping, had decried the Taiping's poor attitude towards commerce, the other missionaries followed his lead and began to accept that the Taiping were not good for American commerce, as well as the spreading of Christ.

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[115] 'Anson Burlingame to William H. Seward', January 23rd 1862.
[116] Issachar Jacox Roberts, *North China Herald*, February 8th 1862 in J. A. G. Roberts, *China Through Western Eyes: The Nineteenth Century* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1991), 56-58.
[117] 'Tarleton Crawford to Brother Taylor', February 11th 1862.

With the conclusion of the Second Opium War, Great Britain and France increasingly intervened on behalf of the Qing government against the Taiping. The Anglo-French intervention was to protect the concessions they had extracted out of the Qing government. Americans in China had little choice but to go along with the new political order as their own government had little time to concern itself with China while the secession crisis was reaching its zenith. Even with this political reality, many Americans believed that the Taiping were anti-trade and that their presence in the Yangtze region was damaging to their interests.

Section Two: The Taiping Rebellion in the American

Newspapers, 1850-1864

Chapter Four: How Did Americans Back Home Understand How the Taiping Rebellion Affected American Trade and the Lives of Their Compatriots

While the American discussion about the Taiping Rebellion often treated the rebellion as merely an interesting global event which was worthy of discussion, American newspapers also debated how the United States might benefit from the rebellion. Opportunity was a key theme of the coverage of the Taiping Rebellion. Some suggested the rebellion presented an opportunity to the United States, as Americans would benefit from Taiping victory because the Taiping were open to allowing the United States and other Western powers greater trade access to Chinese markets. Others argued that the Taiping were actually blocking American opportunities in China that had been gained over the course of the 1840s and 1850s. They pointed to the downturn in trading fortunes in the cities they had captured as evidence that the Taiping's rebellion would get in the war of money making. It was better to stick with the devil you know, from their perspective. These Americans contended that the Qing's survival would be better for American interests in East Asia. These opinions on the opportunity the Taiping Rebellion presented to the United States filled newspaper columns over the course of the rebellion's life span and would be informed by the political stances of those covering the Taiping's rebellion.

Trade

In many regards, trade was the *raison d'être* for America's relationship with China. The Western world's desire to trade with China led to the discovery of the Americas in 1492, when Christopher Columbus discovered the Bahamas while searching for a Western passage to Asia.[1] The desire to trade with China drove westward expansion across the continent towards the Pacific. Reaching the Pacific to enable greater trade with China was America's 'manifest destiny under the invisible hand of divine providence.'[2] Historians have underestimated how important China was in encouraging American expansion westward, rather than an ideological belief in Manifest Destiny.[3] Those historians saw Manifest Destiny as a sea-to-sea process and lost sight of the commercial and imperial reasons for expanding across the American continent – reaching China. It is easy to see why trade with China was so important. By 1800, China accounted for over a third of global economic production on its own. By comparison, all of Europe, including Russia, contributed 28% of worldwide economic output.[4] Europeans and Americans knew that trade with China represented an opportunity for the enrichment of their own nations, but the sheer distance to China from ports such as Bristol, Liverpool, New York, and Boston physically limited the importance that China played in Western commerce. Americans believed that the Pacific coast of the continent their new nation was founded upon represented a golden opportunity to seize control of a gateway to East Asia. By controlling that gateway, the United States would fulfil its destiny to become the 'world's new Middle Kingdom of commerce' and assume vast importance as the conduit that linked east and west.[5]

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[1] Gordon H. Chang, *Fateful Ties: A History of America's Preoccupation with China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 2.

[2] John K. Fairbank, 'Introduction: Patterns and Problems' in Ernest R. May & John K. Fairbank (eds.) *America's China Trade in Historical Perspective: The Chinese and American Performance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 2. See also: Thomas J. McCormick, *China Market: America's Quest for Informal Empire, 1893-1901* (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1967), McCormick suggests America's rapid post-1840s industrial growth meant constant expansionism in the search of new markets beyond the American continent. The sheer volume of goods the USA needed to sell meant Americans opposed the European carve up of China at the turn of the twentieth century because each sphere of influence was a limited share of the vast Chinese market. This demonstrates a commitment to free trade with China which went beyond the antebellum and Civil War era.

[3] Michael Block, 'The Importance of the China Trade in American Exploration and Conquest of the Pacific, 1830-1850', in Paul A. Van Dyke (ed.) *Americans and Macao: Trade, Smuggling and Diplomacy on the South China Coast* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), 95-103.

[4] Chang, *Fateful Ties*, 2.

[5] Kendall A. Johnson, *The New Middle Kingdom: China and the Early American Romance of Free Trade* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2017), 8.

Indeed, across the nineteenth century China was seen as integral to the fate of the new American republic. Gordan Chang suggests that Americans inherited a 'China mystique' from Europe. As American newspapers became obsessed with the idea of being able to reach China, China itself became vital to the identity that the young United States was developing. Across the nineteenth century, China was part of the reason why Americans had set out to seize the entire American continent. American actions, such as the diplomatic clashes with the British over Oregon, as well the Mexican-American war and the purchase of Alaska were all undertaken under the influence of the lure of China and the immense riches that Americans believed awaited those who could access Asia from the Pacific coast.[6] The attraction of China to nineteenth century Americans is demonstrated by an article published in May 1848 by the *Buffalo Commercial*, which outlined the benefits of trade with China. 'China, [has] now become open to trade with other nations', wrote the *Commercial*, which continued on to say that this opening offered:

> a field in many respects promising a more lucrative harvest – especially to the
> inhabitants of this country, to which it is geographically nearer than to any other
> country inhabited by the white race, and whose productions and inhabitants are
> such as to warrant the assertion, that our commerce with it will ultimately exceed
> that of any other people.[7]

Americans felt that their geographical location, as well as the character of their nation's inhabitants meant it was destiny that the United States would gain the most out of the Western world's trade with China. This early enthusiasm for American involvement seems to run contrary to George Washington's warnings about foreign entanglements which set the tone for early American foreign policy.[8] However, this decision to stay independent

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[6] Chang, *Fateful Ties*, 3. See also: Caroline Frank, *Objectifying China, Imagining America: Chinese Commodities in Early America* (Berkley, CA: University of California, 2011). Frank argues that the imagination of colonial Americans was not just limited to the Atlantic world, and that China was an important component of early American understandings of their own world.

[7] 'China and the Sandwich Islands', *The Buffalo Commercial*, 17th May 1848.

[8] Samuel Flagg Bemis, 'Washington's Farewell Address: A Foreign Policy of Independence', *American Historical Review* 39 (1934), 250-268. See also: Christopher J. Young, 'Connecting the President and the People: Washington's Neutrality, Genet's Challenge, and Hamilton's Fight for Public Support', *Journal of the Early Republic* 31 (2011), 435-466.

from international politics only applied to nations that the United States saw as equal. China, as a nation which Americans saw as a racially inferior, was neither seen as a peer or competitor to the United States. Therefore, Americans did not believe they needed to keep out of Chinese entanglements.

Despite Americans believing that China was the key to the young republic's future success, there was one considerable obstacle to the American (and European) desire to access Chinese markets – China was simply uninterested in large scale trade with the West. While Chinese goods, such as tea and silks, were extremely valuable to Western nations, American and European goods were unwanted by the Chinese population, and the Qing authorities especially. While the United States and the European powers were economically reliant on trading, China was largely self-sufficient. In the first half of the nineteenth century, China did not rely on outsiders for food, raw materials, or manufactured goods. Therefore, foreign trade made up only a small percentage of China's economic product and was considered unimportant to the Qing.[9] Furthermore, the imperial dynasty instituted a system of limited access to Chinese trade by Westerners as a means of control. It allowed the Qing government to have leverage over other nations, as funnelling trade with European and North American countries through Canton created a chokepoint for Western trade. Separate trading chokepoints were set up for Russian and Central Asian trade on China's land border and seafaring Asian nations used separate ports to European and American traders. Should any nation attempt to exploit the Chinese for their immense wealth, the government only had to shut down one port or frontier crossing. Through this the Qing kept hold of the power over Western nations.[10] This presented a problem to the Western powers, such as Britain and the United States, whose political and economic elite believed China was extremely important to their economies' future growth. The sheer size of China's population meant that American merchants believed market penetration of the country would lead to huge profits. For example, despite nearly 45 percent of Chinese households producing cotton products by 1850, American cotton merchants wished to see Chinese tariffs dismantled so they could flood the market with their surplus cotton products

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[9] Chang, Fateful Ties, 11-12. See also: Eric Jay Dolin, *When America First Met China: An Exotic History of Tea, Drugs and Money in the Age of Sail* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2012).

[10] Matthew W. Mosca, 'The Qing State and Its Awareness of Eurasian Interconnections, 1789-1806', *Eighteenth Century Studies* 47 (2014), 103-116.

in case production outstripped global demand.[11] The eighteenth-century trading system, known as the Canton Trade, was unsatisfactory to all Western trading powers in China because it had led to a trading imbalance. For example, the British East India Company imported goods worth an average of $7 million per annum from China into Britain, while the company's exports into China were only valued at an average of $3.5 million per annum. The shortfall was made up by silver payments, one of the few products that China had to rely on foreign trade for.[12] This situation was deemed insufficient by Western merchants, who sought ways around the obstacles that China had constructed to limit Western trade.

The British overcame this obstacle through aggressive gunboat diplomacy. The Opium War, fought between 1839 and 1842, completely changed the dynamic between China and the Western nations. The humiliation dealt out to China by the British was a symbolic moment as it signalled to the West that China was weak enough to be exploited.[13] The balance of power tilted towards the Western nations in the aftermath of the first Opium War. The British secured the opening of Canton, Xiamen, Ningbo, Fuzhou, and most importantly, Shanghai to Western trade. Furthermore, they forced the Chinese to give the British control of Hong Kong, and received a guarantee of extraterritoriality for British citizens, meaning Chinese law did not apply to them. On 3 July 1844, the American emissary Caleb Cushing signed a treaty with Qing authorities giving the United States the same access, as well as more a definitive guarantee of extraterritoriality, in lieu of not demanding an American version of Britain's Hong Kong in the treaty.[14]

Yet despite this, the West wanted more. Westerners demanded full free trade with China, believing that China's trade restrictions stood in the way of merchant's profits, and by extension, Western governments' tax revenue.[15] Whilst the British were the most aggressive proponents of this view in the 1840s, Americans also wished to see the introduction of free trade in China. For example, the *Washington Union* published an article on 12 April 1850 which, while acknowledging the benefits of the Treaty System for the

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[11] Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A New History of Global Capitalism* (London: Penguin, 2014), 413.

[12] Frederic Wakeman Jr., 'The Canton trade and the Opium War' in John K. Fairbank (ed.) *The Cambridge History of China: Vol. 10 Late Ch'ing 1800-1911, Part 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 164.

[13] Stephen Platt, *Imperial Twilight: The Opium War and End of China's Last Golden Age* (London: Atlantic Books, 2018), xxi-xxiii.

[14] John K. Fairbank, 'The Creation of the Treaty System' in John K. Fairbank (ed.) *The Cambridge History of China: Vol. 10 Late Ch'ing 1800-1911, Part 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 224.

[15] *Ibid.*, 232.

United States, wished to see more free trade in China. The *Union* recognised that 'so long as mankind are fond of fine silks, porcelain, and teas, so long the China trade will be considered one of the richest jewels in the diadem of commerce.'[16] The Washingtonian newspaper argued that should a freer trade be introduced to China, then it would be 'impossible to estimate the extent of this trade'. The author argued, however, that 'with an enlarged free trade bottomed upon our own resources, with an unshackled commerce, and free from restrictive duties… this traffic will increase as rapidly as commerce can be made to advance.'[17] Therefore, China became seen as an important source of luxury goods that could not be produced in the United States. Some Americans, especially Northern free-traders, came to see the ability to consume luxury items as the right of the American citizen-consumer and as a reflection of the growing economic power of the United States. This was at odds with the vision of a self-sufficient American political economy that some, such as manufacturers had, but China was represented an opportunity for the United States to acquire and consume the sort of goods America's middle class increasingly expected to be available for their consumption.[18] The problem facing both the British and Americans was that the Chinese did not believe in free trade, and that it would take a revolution to shift attitude towards viewing free trade in a positive light.[19] Luckily for those Anglo-Americans who wished to see freer trade in China at the dawn of the 1850s, a revolution was around the corner.

In the period between 1850 and 1854, Americans struggled to decide whether the Taiping Rebellion would be beneficial for America's trading relationship with China. Some Americans believed that the Taiping rebels were open to a free trading relationship with the Western world, which would be advantageous for the United States by allowing Americans greater access to Chinese markets. Others, however, argued that the victory of the Taiping rebels was not going to improve the prospects of American trade in China. They argued that, while the Qing were certainly not the ideal trading partners, it was better to stick with the entity Americans already knew rather than gamble on the Taiping. This division in the

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[16] 'Cotton Trade and Manufacture' *The Washingtonian Union*, 1st April 1850.
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] Joanna Cohen, *Luxurious Citizens: The Politics of Consumption in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).
[19] Fairbank, 'The Creation of the Treaty System', 232.

United States over the prospects of trading with the Taiping's China reflects the other debates about the Taiping that Americans had. Yet discussions about trade were different. For example, when Americans talked about the Taiping's revolutionary credentials or their violence, they discussed it in abstract terms of whether the Taiping would be simply 'better' than the Qing at running China. However, when Americans discussed the Taiping's impact on trading with China, they were assessing whether the rebellion's success would have tangible benefits for the United States. Given the emphasis American's placed on the importance of trading with China for the future of the United States, this discussion was grounded much more in American self-interest.

Although the 1850s was a time where the value of American trade in China was growing, Americans still wished for a greater balance between imports and exports with China. The new treaty system, which had emerged out of the 1840s, caused the centre of American trade in China to shift from Canton to Shanghai, where American merchants enjoyed more commercial success. This success is demonstrated by the amount of property in Shanghai that Americans had bought. For example, in 1853 the value of Shanghai's American property was $1,200,000. In 1854, the value of American property in Shanghai had increased to $2,000,000. Merchants enjoyed commercial success because China had valuable goods for them to purchase for sale back home in the United States. The main American imports from China were tea and silk, while the main exports to China were cotton and manufactured goods.[20] In 1845, the total of trade between China and the United States was worth $9,500,000, with value increasing every year after until 1853. Yet, despite this the trade was largely unfavourable to the United States. The value of imports from China in 1845 was $7,286,000, while the American exports into China were only worth $2,276,000.[21] The imbalance of trade was a sincere concern for many Americans interested in their future trading relationship with China. Therefore, when news of the Taiping Rebellion emerged from the Chinese interior, Americans scrambled to understand if these rebels would aid them in their mission to redress the imbalance of trade.

At the beginning of the 1850s, American politicians and business interests were optimistic about America's future trading relationship with China because of the Taiping

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[20] Teng, *Americans and the Taiping Rebellion*, 30-34.

[21] Yuan Chung Teng, 'American China-Trade, American-Chinese Relations and the Taiping Rebellion, 1853-1858', *Journal of Asian History* 3 (1969), 94-95.

Rebellion. This optimism extended all the way to the White House. In the 1853 State of the Union Presidential Address, President Franklin Pierce alluded to the possibility of greater commercial penetration because of the Taiping Rebellion. President Pierce told Congress:

> The condition of China at this time renders it probable that some important changes will occur in that vast Empire which will lead to a more unrestricted intercourse with it. The commissioner to that country who has been recently appointed is instructed to avail himself of all occasions to open and extend our commercial relations, not only with the Empire of China, but with other Asiatic nations.[22]

President Pierce clearly alluded to the Taiping Rebellion when stating that China's condition increased the possibility of more free trade with the United States. As shown in a previous chapter, the American diplomatic presence in China sent regular updates about political and economic developments to the State Department. Therefore, Pierce would have been influenced by the optimism of those diplomats, who had reported their belief that the Taiping were open to free trade with the Western world.

Pierce's allusion to the Taiping Rebellion and trade in his State of the Union address reveals the importance of free trade to him and a splintered Democratic Party at this time. Franklin Pierce was considered the unity candidate for the fractured Democratic Party, and his Presidency was marred by trying to reconcile the differing agendas of the factions within the party.[23] One of the wings of the Democratic Party, which had emerged in the post-Jacksonian era of the party, had a different relationship with the concept of free trade than previous Democrats had once had. Young America expansionist Democrats were ardent supporters of free trade. Jacksonian Democrats had supported free trade because it was a means to an end. They believed it was a way of preventing special interest groups, like manufacturers, gaining an unfair advantage in society. However, the new Young America Democrats were committed to free trade because they believed the United States' future prosperity relied upon unrestricted commerce with the rest of the world. These Democrats,

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[22] Franklin Pierce, 'State of the Union Address', 5th December 1853. Retrieved from *American History: From Revolution to Reconstruction and Beyond*, http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/presidents/franklin-pierce/state-of-the-union-1853.php, [accessed 21/02/20].

[23] Michael F. Holt, *Franklin Pierce: The American President Series: The 14th President, 1853-1857* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2010), 2-3.

who also believed in American expansionism, but for the sake of trade rather than for agriculture, foresaw the United States as an empire which was focused on trading. Young America Democrats believed the federal government had a role to promote American prosperity, and to do this they believed the government should dismantle trade barriers at home, and encourage others to do so abroad.[24] Therefore, when looking to China and the Taiping Rebellion, the Young America Democrats who believed that the Taiping rebels were also advocates of free trade, were very supportive of the rebellion, as they believed that both China and the United States would benefit from unrestricted trade.

Indeed, newspapers which supported Franklin Pierce in the 1852 election, and leant towards the Young America wing of the Democratic Party, tended to be very optimistic about the future of America's China trade if the Taiping were to be victorious. For example, the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, which in December 1853 described the Young America movement as 'noble, pure and divine', was enthusiastic about the prospects of American trade should the Taiping win.[25] Writing on September 3rd 1853, the *Tribune* reported a correspondent in San Francisco believed that 'should the rebels succeed, the probable effect will be to open all parts of China to world… Three cheers for Gen. Tai-ping!'[26] And the reason why Young America Democrats were enthusiastic about the potential Taiping 'opening' of Chinese markets was because they had a vision about America's future relationship with China. The Young America Democrat faction's biggest mouthpiece was the *Democratic Review* journal. In the January 1853 edition of the journal, the authors discussed Commodore Matthew Perry's expedition to 'open' Japan.[27] 'We fancy we can peer down the vista of the future', wrote the *Democratic Review*, imagining that they could see:

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[24] Yonatan Eyal, *The Young America Movement and the Transformation of the Democratic Party, 1828-1861* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 37-43. See also: Jon Grinspan, *The Virgin Vote: How Young Americans Made Democracy Social, Politics Personal, and Voting Popular in the Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2016), 114-115.

[25] 'Mr. Curtis' Lecture Before The Young Men's Association "Young America"', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 14th December 1853.

[26] 'A Letter Writer At San Francisco Relates the Following in Relation to the Chinese Revolution', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3rd September 1853.

[27] One of the key figures within the Young America or New Democrat faction was August Belmont, who was made chairman of the Democratic Party in 1860. Belmont was also Matthew Perry's son-in-law, perhaps hinting at why East Asian trade became significant within Young America Democratic circles. Eyal, *The Young America Movement and the Transformation of the Democratic Party, 1828-1861*, 36-39.

millions upon millions of American wares will crowd the bazaars of Nankin [Nanjing] and Hoang-choo [Hangzhou]. American cottons, American hardware, American glass, American manufactures of luxury, will figure in every shop-window, and furnish the home of every citizen. Under the shadow of the stars and stripes, the blessings of civilization will penetrate to the heart of the celestial empire, and elevate the tone of the manly feeling in China…[28]

Young America Democrats foresaw the future infiltration of Chinese market of American goods and believed that this economic hegemony would lead to China being 'civilised'. Furthermore, the United States would become wealthier from this arrangement. In their eyes, both China and United States would benefit from the opening of the Chinese economy. This vision explains why Young America-leaning newspapers were excited by the prospect of Taiping victory. If, as they were led to believe, the Taiping wished to integrate China further into a free-trading global economy, then the United States would be one of the primary beneficiaries.

Despite the factional differences within the Democratic Party, there was no significant difference in how other, non-Young America, Democrats reacted to the news of the rebellion in China. The older, Jacksonian Democrats had always been pro-free trade, just as their Young America factional rivals were, but the difference was that for Jacksonian Democrats opposition to tariffs was less about making more money, and more about preventing the protection of special interest groups.[29] Even so, newspapers that represented the more established Jacksonian wing of Democratic Party also reported to their readership that the rebellion occurring across the Pacific would be beneficial for American trade with China. The *Washington Union*, for example, reported its opinion on the news they had read in the English-language Chinese newspapers brought to the United States from China in June 1853. 'The [North China] Herald, which represents the views of British residents in China, is not in favor of the interference of the English government on behalf of the Emperor', wrote the *Union*, explaining that 'the prevalent feeling is, among foreigners of other nations as well as England, that the Chinese government is wrong, and

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[28] 'The Japan Expedition and its Results', *United States Democratic Review* 32 (January 1853), 79.

[29] Eyal, *The Young America Movement and the Transformation of the Democratic Party, 1828-1861*, 40.

the rebels are right, and next to certain success.' Should Western governments interfere on behalf of the Qing, the *Union* argued, then they would 'risk the future opportunity – that will in all probability ere long arise – of mediating effectually, and for the benefit of the world at large, by the extension of facilities for commercial and general intercourse with the Chinese throughout the vast empire.'[30] The *Union*'s interpretation of the information it had received here is clear – should Americans wish to gain greater access, they better hope that Western governments did not intervene on the side of the Qing government.

The *Washington Union* also carried speeches that 'old fogey' Democratic politicians, such as future President James Buchanan, which discussed the future prospects for American trade in China if the Taiping won the war.[31] The *Washington Union* reported on a speech Buchanan delivered to United States legation to Great Britain on 5 September 1853, during which Buchanan discussed Anglo-American trading prospects with China. Buchanan argued that the 'unsettled [diplomatic] questions known to exist between Great Britain and China' should be settled so that Britain and America could take advantage of events in China. Buchanan described the Taiping Rebellion to his audience as 'the greatest revolution, so far as the interest of commerce and manufactures is concerned, which has ever been commenced amongst men is that now in apparently successful progress in China.' Buchanan, who was often inclined to be Anglophobic, believed that the United States and Britain should set aside their differences because 'should this terminate in opening a free access to that vast empire of 300,000,000 of human beings, the United States and Great Britain will have a harvest presented before them, which… they will scarcely be able to reap.' The rewards, should those two powers be able to work together in the Chinese markets, would 'promote the cause of Christianity, civilization, and freedom among this ancient and strange people.'[32] Just like the *Chicago Tribune* and the Young America movement within the Democratic Party, 'old fogey' newspapers like the *Washington Union* and politicians like James Buchanan were firm in their assessment that the Taiping rebels were definitely in favour of freer trade with the rest of the world. Why would these wings of

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[30] 'China', *The Washington Union*, 5th June 1853.

[31] Eyal, *The Young America Movement and the Transformation of the Democratic Party, 1828-1861*, 209, 214, characterises Buchanan as an 'old fogey'. Frederick Moore Binder, 'James Buchanan: Jacksonian Expansionist', *The Historian 55* (1992), 69-84, places Buchanan firmly within the Jacksonian wing of the Democratic Party and attributes to him staunch expansionist views.

[32] 'Mr. Buchanan in England', *The Washington Union*, 5th October 1853.

the Democratic Party be so convinced that the Taiping were so favourable to trading with the Western world?

An article which appeared later that June in the *Washington Union* indicates that the Democratic newspapers were following the lead of the Western foreigners in China when assessing whether the Taiping were more open to trade with the Western world. On 24 June 1853, the *Union* printed an article containing a letter from Bayard Taylor, celebrated American poet and travel writer, to the *New York Tribune*. Despite the letter being written to a Whig newspaper, the *Union* stated in its editorial notes that this was 'the clearest, as well as one of the latest, accounts which we have seen of the state of things in China.' The letter told the *Union's* audience that 'the sympathies of the foreign merchants here [Shanghai] appear to be with the insurgents, who are everywhere popular among the natives', which the article acknowledged that 'this popularity no doubt gives rather too favorable a color to the rumours which reach us.' While suggesting that perhaps the information which Westerners received was predisposed favourably towards the Taiping, the article went on to say that:

> the course of the rebels, where they have been victorious, has hitherto been most politic and humane. The people have not been disturbed in their employments, private property has been respected and the internal commerce interfered with as little as possible. Only against the Tartar mandarins and their defenders have the insurgents adopted a sanguinary course. It is rumoured that, if successful, they will observe a most liberal policy towards foreigners, but this can hardly be more than surmise.[33]

The letter which the *Union* informed their readership about argued that the information gathered by people with access to the Chinese interior hinted that the rebels were a modernising force within China, who treated the Chinese population in their territory well. Therefore, the foreign interpretation of the Taiping rebels was that they were more likely to

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[33] 'China – Success of the Rebels – Nankin Besieged and Probably Taken – Soo-Chow Threatened', *The Washington Union*, 24th June 1853.

be favourable towards Westerners, which Democratic newspapers like the *Washington Union* relayed to their readership.

Yet, the article goes on to reveal that the war was having a negative impact on commerce within China, and by extension trade with the United States. While discussing the capture of the city of Suzhou, the *Washington Union* reported that 'the inhabitants of that city are in the greatest alarm, and all business, except the mere local commerce in the necessities of life, is at an end.' They worried that soon the surrounding province would 'feel keenly the cessation of the trade, in which depends the very existence of thousands of the laboring poor.' And the article in the *Union* noted that 'Shanghai already feels most sensibly the effects of the paralyzation of trade and industry in the interior. Business has totally ceased. The native merchants have buried their silver and the foreign residents have barely enough to pay their household expenses.' The article also noted that 'four or five thousand junks lie in the river, but scarcely a pound of tea or a yard of silk is brought in.'[34] Indeed, the commercial situation in Shanghai between 1853 and 1854 was troublesome for American merchants during this period. As the war raged across the interior of China it became difficult for merchants to get hold of the staple goods, such as tea, that China exported to the United States, and the goods that did arrive in Shanghai were available at an inflated price. This was because Chinese brokers bought the goods from producers, and then transported those goods to the treaty ports in order to sell to foreign merchants. The increased risk to the brokers meant that the goods that did make it to Shanghai were more expensive. The result of all this was that the sheer volume of goods shipped out of Shanghai to the United States drastically fell. For example, the amount of tea exported to the United States from Shanghai between July 1852 and July 1853 was 40,578,000 pounds. A year later, the amount of tea exported from Shanghai dropped to 16,702,400 pounds, which was a significant reduction in the amount American merchants could buy to sell back home.[35] Even worse for Americans was that their imports into China through Shanghai were significantly hampered because Chinese merchants were unwilling to buy when the markets were so unstable. In the period between the end of June 1852 and June 1853, American merchants sold $3,737,000 worth of manufactured goods to merchants in China. By June

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[34] *Ibid.*

[35] Teng, *Americans and the Taiping Rebellion*, 32.

1854, the amount sold had fallen to $1,398,000.[36] This made the problem of the imbalance of trade between the United States and China even worse. Given the obvious economic damage the war was doing to American mercantile interests in China, it is perhaps surprising that Democratic newspapers, who were firm believers in free trade and pushed for further American penetration of Chinese markets, should be so enthusiastic about their success in the initial years of the war.

Yet, Democrats remained unperturbed by the news of the economic damage the war was doing to American business interests in China, not only because of their commitment to free trade, but also because the war did not only have negative repercussions for trading in Shanghai. While purchasing tea was difficult for American merchants in Shanghai, the exports of silk from Shanghai to the United States actually increased in the early years of the war. Between June 1852 and June 1853 there were 534 bales of silk sold to American merchants in Shanghai, but between June 1853 and June 1854 the number of bales exported to the United States had roughly doubled to 1074 bales. This increase in sales through Shanghai, which had become the base of American commerce in China by the 1850s, was because the war prevented silk, which was produced in north Western China, from reaching Canton, the former principal silk exporting port, because it would require transit through the middle of the war. Shanghai was reachable via the Yellow River and Grand Canal, which made it the alternative place to sell silks to foreign merchants.[37] This was reflected in the coverage of the Chinese commerce during that war by Democratic newspapers, like the *Washington Union*. While discussing the impact on the Canton trade, the *Union* noted that trading 'operations are checked in the present uncertainty of affairs north. Rice is becoming dearer. The transactions have been small in tea and silk. Exchange has advanced to 4s. 11d.' In contrast, the news from Shanghai was that the price of 'silk remained without alteration.'[38] It can be assumed that if there was no price hike for buying silk, then American merchants were not struggling to get hold of the product. Therefore, despite the obvious downturn in the economic fortunes of America's China trade during the initial years of the war, it was not all bad news. Consequently, Democrats had the combination of an ideological commitment to free trade and American expansionism, as

[36] *Ibid.*, 33-34.
[37] *Ibid.*, 33.
[38] 'Latest from China – Progress of the Revolution', *The Washington Union*, 1st June 1853.

well as a tendency to believe the Taiping rebels shared their belief in the benefits of China embracing free trade, and an understanding that despite trading setbacks, there was still money to be made during this crisis. This led Democrats to look beyond the short-term setbacks and be optimistic about America's future trading relationship with China, should the Taiping overcome their Qing enemies, who were cast as the opponents to America's economic penetration of China.

While Democrat politicians, newspapers and their supporters largely were enthusiastic about the prospects of American trade with a Taiping-led China, Whigs were a lot more pessimistic about, or even downright hostile to the idea that Taiping victory would be good for America's mercantile interests. Whig newspapers, especially those that were conservative-leaning, were much less convinced about the idea that the Taiping rebels would 'open' China. In fact, Whigs were not committed to the idea of free trade or American commercial expansion. Whigs believed that the United States would benefit from higher tariffs, because it would protect America's manufacturing sector and prevent the trading balance between imports and exports being tilted towards imports. Whigs feared that if imports outstripped exports, then specie would be depleted, and credit would be limited. However, the prosperity which the United States was experiencing due to Democratic laissez-faire economic policies rendered Whig protectionist stance outdated, and some Whigs moved closer to the Democratic Party's platform of free trade.[39] However, the historically protectionist stance has perhaps informed Whig newspapers opinion on the potential further opening of China under Taiping rule. Whigs tended to be less inclined to believe that the Taiping were able to steer China towards a free trading future and perhaps did not even think this would benefit China or the United States.

The *New York Times* was one of the conservative-leaning newspapers which was sceptical that Taiping victory over the Qing would benefit the United States' trading relationship with China. This was mainly because the *New York Times* doubted that the Taiping were actually more open to trading with Westerners. In an article published on July 12th 1853, the *Times* relayed information which it had gleaned from the Hong Kong-based newspaper *China Mail*. 'Is its [the rebellion] success desirable?', asked the article, answering that

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[39] Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 684-689.

In my opinion, it is far from it. My reasons are briefly as follows: the great objects desired by foreigners: are freedom of intercourse with this nation; commerce placed upon a favorable and stable basis; such a degree of wealth and affluence as will enable the Chinese to consume large quantities of foreign manufactures; such a state of internal peace and quietness as will favor the transit of goods.[40]

And the reason why the success of the rebellion was not desirable was because in their opinion 'the Chinese are much more opposed to foreign intercourse than the Manchus' who were 'the most enlightened, illustrious race of kings that ever say on the throne of the "Middle Kingdom"' according to the author. 'What reasonable expectation then can be entertained of increased facilities of intercourse' asked the *Times*, 'if the races of Emperors and the class of people most favorable to it expelled, and native race of princes is established; and especially when the rebellion is headed by Cantonese, the most bitter enemies of foreigners in all China.'[41] To make the case against the idea that the Taiping's success would throw open China to Western trade, the *New York Times,* via the British-owned *China Mail*, drew on Western understandings of the racial landscape of China. The article in the *Times* painted a picture of the Han Chinese as xenophobic, inward looking group that were not interested in trade. The Whiggish understandings of Chinese politics through an ethnic lens possibly came from Whig newspapers transposing the American political map onto China. Conservative Whigs often opposed immigration from Catholic nations into the United States because they were worried about an ethnically different underclass having too much power and were using this power to support the Democrats during elections.[42] This anti-Irish mindset perhaps helped give conservative Whigs sympathy for the Manchu, who seemed, to these Whigs, to be dealing with their own ethnic power struggles. By placing the rebellion within this racial framework of Chinese people versus Manchu rulers, the *New York Times* perhaps makes the case that the Taiping were not going to help American commerce. Because the Taiping Rebellion was a Chinese rebellion against

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[40] 'Late Intelligence from China. Nankin in Possession of the Rebels', *The New York Times*, 12th July 1853.
[41] *Ibid.* The assertion that the rebellion was led by Cantonese is not totally incorrect as Hong Xiuquan and most of his inner circle were Hakka people from a village near Guangzhou.
[42] Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, p. 190.

their supposedly more commercially open Manchu rulers, their victory would actually lead to the inhibition of trade between China and the Western powers.

This scepticism about the supposed potential positive effect of Taiping victory on China's trade with Western nations found in the *New York Times* was shared by other Whig newspapers. Another conservative Whig newspaper, *The National Intelligencer*, also had reservations about the Taiping's impact on Western trade. The *Intelligencer* received a lot of its information on the Taiping from the *China Mail*, a Hong Kong-based newspaper which was steadfastly against the rebellion throughout the 1850s and 1860s.[43] In a June 1853 article, the *Intelligencer* reprinted a *China Mail* article which reported that the economic situation was bleak. Firstly, the article stated that in 'Shanghai there was a general panic; bankers' and merchants' houses were shut up and an entire stoppage to trade. Money was so scarce that the duties of exports had to be arranged by giving security in bills and other property to the consul.' The article then looked to the long-term damage the war could do to Western trade (although because it originated in a British-owned Chinese newspaper, it focused mainly on the interests of the British Empire). The article noted that the main theatre of war was around the Yangtze River and China's southern provinces, which the *China Mail* claimed the 'the interests of the British Empire [and by extension, the interests of all Western nations] are most materially concerned.' The author then went on to suggest that 'whether this… permanently affect a trade depending upon the personal propensities of the people may be a matter of doubt; but there is no such uncertainty respecting the trade in tea.' The article explained this by stating that 'if the provinces producing this plant continue to be, as they now are, the scene of a ferocious conflict, it is impossible to doubt that the cultivation and the exports of this staple must be greatly diminished' and the *China Mail* argued that this was bad because 'our most recent financial theories have been based not only upon the maintenance, but the expansibility of this very trade.' Yet this could not happen 'if… the empire at large and the tea districts in particular are distracted by civil war and revolution, it is evident that our anticipations in these respects are destined to disappointment.'[44] And according to the article this disappointment was that 'the supply of tea is more likely to fall off than to increase and it is not probably that a demand for

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[43] Gregory, *Great Britain and the Taipings*, 54.

[44] 'Latest from China', *The Weekly National Intelligencer*, 4th June 1853.

European goods can be created at a period of internal disturbance.' The article finished by stating:

> we cannot tell in the case before us on which side our interest or our duties may lie – whether insurrection is justifiable or unjustifiable, promising or unpromising; whether the feelings of the people are involved in it or not, or whether its success would bring a change for the better or worse, or any change at all, in our own relations with the Chinese. It may be said, perhaps, that we have a prima facie alliance with the established Government, and undoubtedly, if the rebellion were of the character assigned to it by the imperial officers in their edicts, it might be desirable that we should aid in the restoration of order.[45]

Although this was an article intended for a British audience, the audience of the Whig-supporting *National Intelligencer* would have understood that the issues facing British trade in China, would also apply to American interests. By choosing to publish this information from the *China Mail*, the *Intelligencer* told its readers that, at a time where the United States was looking to expand into Chinese markets, the Taiping Rebellion would seriously hamper foreign trade. And like their British audience counterparts, perhaps they would seriously consider whether foreign powers should intervene on behalf of the Qing to stabilise China and protect their profits.

It was not only conservative Whigs who were concerned about the impact of the Taiping's rebellion. Some liberal-leaning Whiggish newspapers also believed that the war would damage American business interests in China. On November 17th 1854, the *New York Tribune* reported that a correspondent in Hong Kong had stated that 'contrary to the published opinion of some persons, intellectual and moral progress are not apparently connected in any way with the rebellion in this country, yet the war in its results is likely to affect materially the whole commercial world.' In their eyes, 'it would be greatly for the interest of this people [the Chinese] and all others who trade with them that the war should be speedily terminated.' The article went onto detail the damage that the war was doing to foreign trade with China. For example, it explained that 'at Canton the rebels still hold the

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[45] *Ibid.*

position they have held for the last month around the city, occasionally strengthening their forces by additions of men and arms, so that they now prevent the carrying of all provisions, teas, and China goods into the city.' It went on to explain that 'in consequence of this, provisions have greatly risen in price, and ships expecting cargoes at Canton are obliged to go up the coast and seek them or return home empty.' And 'at Shanghai, the Rebels still hold possession but the vexed question of duties, and the payment of promissory notes previously given for duties is not yet settled.'[46] The *Tribune's* stance was that Taiping's prosecution of the war had prevented goods reaching ports, caused a hike in prices, and overall had caused uncertainty which undermined American trading prospects with China. However, this position was largely at odds with the *Tribune's* viewpoints on other aspects of the rebellion, where it had argued that it was a revolutionary movement which would benefit China and the Chinese people. When it came to the impact that the rebellion would have on American trade, Whig newspapers were likely to be concerned about their future trading relationship with China regardless of how liberal or conservative the newspaper was, and indeed, on how they viewed other aspects of the Taiping as a revolutionary movement.

It is notable that when Northern newspapers and Washington DC newspapers reported on the Taiping Rebellion's impact on American trade with China between 1850 and 1854, there was to be a definite partisan divide between Whigs and Democrats. Democrats, who were ideologically committed to free trade, were more likely to be convinced that the Taiping rebels would open China to the rest of the world. This, they believed, would help the United States become the world's preeminent trading power, due to its unique geographical advantages for trading with China and the rest of the world. On the other hand, Whigs, who normally leaned towards protectionist trade policies but were increasingly accepting of free trade, were much less inclined to believe the Taiping would be good for American trade. Whig newspapers tended to focus on bleak economic news and argued that it was better to honour their trade agreement with the Qing government, rather than hedge their bets on hoping that the Taiping rebels might one day rule China and remove all Qing trading restrictions. Yet, while it can be argued there was a definite partisan divide between Northern newspapers, the question of sectional differences remains.

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[46] 'China: Progress of the Rebellion- Commodore Perry's Squadron', *New York Tribune*, 17th November 1854.

However, at a time when the relationship between North and South was reaching breaking point, the issue of how the Taiping Rebellion would affect American trade was a point of unity. Southern Democratic newspapers tended to broadly reflect their Northern counterparts in their opinions on the Taiping's impact on American trade, but by no means does this mean there was a uniform view across sectional lines. One of the South's flagship Democratic-supporting newspapers was the *Daily Picayune*, based in New Orleans. The Louisianan newspaper, like its Northern counterparts, was not entirely convinced that the rebellion would destroy American trade. However, the *Daily Picayune* did not really argue that the Taiping would be helpful for expanding American trade. On 6 June 1853, the *Daily Picayune* reported on the situation in China. 'At Shanghae [sic]; there was a general panic; banking and mercantile houses shut up; trade quite at a stand-still, and money so scare that the duties on exports had to be arranged by giving security in bills and other property to the Consul.' While this may sound bleak, the *Picayune* gave those invested in the Sino-American trade reason to be optimistic by stating that 'there were reports that a portion of the rebel force had gone north; if true, internal trade may perhaps be resumed sooner than the present position of affairs would lead one to expect.'[47] Unlike Northern Democrats, who tended to argue that Taiping victory would lead to the resumption and expansion of normal American trade with China, the *Daily Picayune* suggested that the war would move north quickly, and economic production and transportation would return to normal. Unlike Northern Democrats, who were optimistic about the future of the China trade if the Taiping won the war, the *Picayune* was instead more optimistic that once the Taiping marched north on Beijing, trade in the Yangtze river valley would go back to normal.

Other Southern Democrat-supporting newspapers, such as the *Charleston Daily Courier*, had a more nuanced opinion on the trading situation in China. For example, while noting the short-term trading issues caused by the war, the *Courier* told its readers that in the long-term Taiping victory would be beneficial for American merchants. An August 1853 edition of the *Charleston Daily Courier* outlined such an opinion across several articles. The first article which told the *Courier's* audience of the news brought to the United States via a cargo ship named the *Humboldt*. It reported that the advices from one of the foreign trading outposts, Xiamen, told Americans that the result of the conflict between the rebels and

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[47] 'China', *The Daily Picayune*, 6th June 1853.

government forces had resulted in 'no system of government organized by the rebels, and trade in the meantime was at a standstill.' Yet, it reassured its readers that 'foreigners were not molested in any way.'[48] Another article in the same edition carried trading advices from Russell & Company, the largest American trading house in China. South Carolinians, via Russell & Company were advised that 'it is much to be feared that the country is rapidly approaching a state of anarchy, a condition of things most detrimental to trade… imports will be to a great extent unsaleable, and the amount of produce must be largely curtailed.' Russell & Company's anxiety about the situation was made clear to the *Courier's* audience through the report that 'the U. S. ship "Plymouth" leaves to-morrow to join Commodore Perry at Japan, and American interests in China remain entirely undefended, at this critical period.' Yet, the *Courier's* article was not entirely pessimistic about the future of American trade in China. When the article reported on the price of goods in China, it stated that the tea 'crop is likely to be a fine one, and prices to rule low at the interior marts, owing to want of funds, which are not sent for fear of loss in transit.'[49] Therefore, while it was risky, the article was still reporting that there was profit to be made from trading in such tumultuous times. Furthermore, with an eye to the long-term future of American trade in China, despite the uncertainty in the then current market, the advices from Russell & Company still wished to see Taiping victory. 'The ultimate result', stated the authors, 'is a question only to be decided by time; but the superior organization, poor as it is, of the Christian rebels, and their more determined spirit, may justly give us some hope that in the end they may prevail over their competitors for the empire.'[50] While the article gives no reasoning for why they hoped the Taiping would seize power from the Qing, it could possibly be inferred by the reader that since a American merchant house in China wanted the Taiping to win the war, American trade would be better off under the potentially new rulers. The information being reported by this Southern Democratic newspaper is, therefore, broadly in line with Northern Democratic newspapers. While there was short-term uncertainty in trade, it would benefit the United States in the long run.

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[48] 'Further News By the Humboldt', *The Charleston Daily Courier*, 20th August 1853.

[49] For more on the effect of the Taiping Rebellion on the economy of China see: Nan Li, 'Legacy of War: The Long-term Effect of Taiping Rebellion on Economic Development in Modern China' (2015) in *Workshop for History and Economic Development, https://ssrn.com/abstract=3220756* [accessed 15/12/20].

[50] 'Further Advices from China', *The Charleston Daily Courier,* 20th August 1853.

Southern Whigs also tended to mirror their Northern counterparts when it came to reporting on American trade with China. Southern Whigs tended to be pessimistic about the impact of the war on America's mercantile interests and focus largely on the problems merchants were facing in China. Conservative Southern Whig newspaper, *the Richmond Dispatch*, carried reports of the damage the war was doing to trade in China. On 3 June 1853 it told its audience that 'the native bankers and merchants were removing their money and effects into Shanghai from the surrounding towns as fast they possibly could. The Viceroy of Soo-chau [Suzhou], in his communication to the Consuls, says that unless the rebellion can be stopped, trade must entirely cease.' If the threat of the cessation of trade was not enough to concern the *Dispatch's* readership, the newspaper believed it was 'no less important' to report of the 'alleged destruction of the tea crop by the rebels'. Although, they did add that this was 'doubted by some of our exchanges, who appear to think it a statement manufactured by those who have large quantities of tea to sell.'[51] Given the focus on the Taiping deliberately destroying important commodities such as tea, as well emphasising the general obstacle the war was to American trade in China, it can be assumed that the readers of the *Richmond Dispatch's* article would likely not have concluded that the Taiping's war against the Qing represented an opportunity for American merchants to make more money.

The reason why Southern newspapers did not tend to have different opinions to their Northern colleagues is that China was of negligible importance to Southern trading interests. This was for two reasons. The first was that the logistics of shipping bulky raw cotton to China from southern ports was difficult prior to the construction of the Panama Canal. Secondly, there was not a huge Chinese cotton manufacturing sector requiring American cotton. Instead, the majority of China's imported cotton came from Indian producers, rather than from southern fields.[52] Instead, the destination for the majority of the South's raw cotton was Great Britain, the Northern United States, and continental

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[51] 'The Rebellion in China', *The Richmond Dispatch*, 3rd June 1853.

[52] Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, 226. For more on the trading interests of southern merchants see: Harold D. Woodman, *King Cotton and his Retainers: Financing and Marketing the Cotton Crop of the South, 1800-1925* (Washington, D.C.: BeardBooks, 1990); Scott P. Marler,, *New Orleans and the Political Economy of the Nineteenth-Century South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Europe.[53] However, China was flooded with cloth from Britain and the Northern United States after the Treaty of Nanking in 1842.[54] Therefore, the Southern merchants, who handled the exports of the heavily Democratic-supporting plantation owners, stood to lose nothing from the disruption of Chinese markets by the Taiping Rebellion because they were not selling much there anyway. Consequently, like their Northern counterparts, Southern Democrats were much more optimistic that the rebellion would lead to a further opening of Chinese markets. Southern Whigs were also not materially affected by the war in China, as they were not producing anything to be sold in China. Subsequently, the Southern wings of the Democratic and Whig parties did not have particularly strong objections to the opinions of their Northern counterparts on the Taiping Rebellion. In an increasingly fraught and divided United States, the Taiping Rebellion served as an issue where there was sectional unity.

Therefore, between 1850 and 1854 the American response to the impact the Taiping Rebellion was having on Sino-American trade followed a broadly uniform pattern. Whigs and Democrats were split along partisan lines. Both Northern and Southern Democrats, of all wings of the party, were fairly optimistic about the future of American trade under the Taiping, should the rebellion succeed. Democratic newspapers tended to argue that short-term losses were acceptable because Taiping victory would be better for American trade in the long term. They believed the Taiping rebels, as a supposed Christianising, revolutionary force, would be as committed to the idea of free trade as they were, and therefore predicted that the whole of China would be thrown open to American trade sooner than if the Qing were to remain in power. Furthermore, Democrats tended to try to focus on the positives of the then current trading situation, and emphasised that despite the difficulties, there was still money to be made in China. Whigs, both Southern and Northern, as well as both conservative and liberal, tended to be more pessimistic about the trading situations. Conservative Whigs, who were fairly hostile to the Taiping's rebellion anyway, were emphatic in their belief that should the Taiping win their war, Western trade in China would

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[53] Matthew Brown Hammond, *The Cotton Industry: An Essay in American Economic History, Part 1. The Cotton Culture and the Cotton Trade* (New York: Macmillan, 1897), 243-278.

[54] Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, 325; Hammond, *The Cotton Industry*, 244. For more on the attempts of American cotton merchants to break into other markets see: Brian Schoen, *The Fragile Fabric of Union: Cotton, Federal Politics, and the Global Origins of the Civil War* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2009).

suffer for it. Liberal Whigs, who were often much more receptive to the idea of a revolutionary movement in China, were still pessimistic about the prospects for American merchants in China. They were concerned that the war would be mean there was no market for both American exports and imports from China and tended to focus on this rather than on the long-term future of American trade in China. This difference of opinion can largely be explained by each party's relationship with ideas about free trade. The free-trading Democrats were much more positive about the Taiping and trade than their Whig counterparts, who were only just starting to reluctantly part with their protectionist worldview by the 1850s. Therefore, a myriad of political alignments and pressures impacted how the Taiping were perceived and, consequently, the opinions on the rebellion that American newspapers published in the early 1850s. There was not a unified American response to the Taiping Rebellion because of the amount of different political influences on the American polity at this time. As the Taiping's rebellion continued into the late 1850s and early 1860s, however, there emerged a broader consensus on how beneficial the Taiping would be for American trade, despite the growing disunion crisis.

After 1854 there was a brief hiatus of Taiping Rebellion news in the American press, as Westerners in China lost contact with the rebellion. Yet, while the situation in China remained elusive to Americans, the United States was going through a tumultuous period of political instability. The fractious political situation in the United States, culminating in the Civil War in 1861, would naturally influence how Americans viewed the rest of the world and specifically the Taiping Rebellion when the war in China filled the columns of American newspapers again from the 1860s. As the first wave of interest in the Taiping's rebellion in China began to subside in the American press in 1854, tensions between slavery and anti-slavery forces within the United States were ramped up with the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. The act repealed the 1820 Missouri Compromise which had outlawed slavery north of the 36°30' parallel. Instead, the new territories would decide for themselves whether slavery would be legal within their borders. This act of Congress set in motion a number of events which would, in turn, contribute to the start of the American Civil War.[55] The decision to allow the status of slavery in Kansas to be settled via popular sovereignty meant supporters of slavery and its abolition poured into state which sparked off a low-level

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[55] David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1976), 158-167.

civil war. The violence peaked between May 21st 1856 and May 24th 1856 when pro-slavery supporters sacked the town of Lawrence and abolitionists led by John Brown retaliated by killing five men in an incident known as the Pottawatomie Massacre.[56] On May 22nd 1856, the growing violence between the pro- and anti-slavery factions in the United States was played out on the floor of the Senate when Representative Preston Brooks brutally beat Senator Charles Sumner for a perceived slight on his family's honour during Sumner's speech on the situation in Kansas.[57] The increasing chasm between North and South was exacerbated by John Brown's failed raid on the United States Armoury at Harper's Ferry in 1859. Brown's subsequent trail led to an outpouring of sympathy for him and his cause from Northerners . In turn, this alienated the South who believed that Northerners were lionizing his attempt to bring violence into the South.[58] By 1860, America had clearly lost hope in the possibility of reform. On the eve of Lincoln's election the mood of the nation was not hopeful for the future. Therefore, when Americans started to receive news that the Taiping Rebellion was flaring up again near to Western enclaves the press was much less optimistic.

By the 1860s, the divergent American opinions on the Taiping Rebellion and American trade had changed from the spectrum of opinion which had been expressed in the early 1850s. Yet, one of the main reasons why opinion had shifted so much was actually nothing to do with the Taiping Rebellion at all. In 1856, hostilities between an Anglo-French alliance and the Qing government broke out. This conflict became known as the Second Opium War, and it provided the perfect opportunity for Western nations to force China into further opening her borders. When a British-flagged ship named the *Arrow* was seized by Chinese authorities, the British government decided upon a course of violent retribution which ended with the Qing's Summer Palace being burnt to the ground by Anglo-French forces in 1860. A peace treaty was signed between the belligerent powers, as well as the United States and Russia, in 1858, but it took two more years of fighting until it was ratified in 1860.[59] The new treaty expanded upon the concessions that Western powers had

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[56] Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders*, 181-183.

[57] *Ibid.*, 184.

[58] Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861*, 356-384.

[59] J. Y. Wong, *Deadly Dreams: Opium, Imperialism, and the Arrow War (1856-1860) in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Wong argues that the cause for the Second Opium War was imperialism but suggests this is too simple. The imperialism of Western nations was by no means uniform – there was a multitude of motivations for wanting to open China which can be gathered under the broad umbrella of imperialism; Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, 135-149, Bickers suggests that Western faith in the Taiping

extracted out of China after the First Opium war in 1842. The treaty drawn up at Tientsin in June 1858 increased the number of treaty ports, mainly on the Yangtze River including Nanjing and Hankou (part of modern-day Wuhan), open to Westerners; foreigners were allowed to establish a diplomatic presence at Beijing; American, British, French and Russian citizens were allowed to enter the Chinese interior; foreigners were allowed to access the Yangtze River; legalised opium; and finally, reparations were made to both Britain and France. Even though these concessions were difficult for the Qing court to accept, those who favoured compromise with Western powers hoped that since most of the new treaty ports were held by the Taiping rebels at the time of signing, then foreign powers would have a vested interest in aiding to destroy the rebellion.[60] Indeed, after the news of the treaty reached the United States, Americans began to re-evaluate their opinions on the how the Taiping's war was affecting, and would affect, their trading interests in China.

The news of the Treaty of Tientsin was received favourably by American newspapers of all political persuasions, who heralded the treaty as ushering in a new era of greater commercial intercourse between China and the United States. In 1858, the Democratic-supporting *Richmond Enquirer* stated that of the news it had received via London, 'the most important, however, in political and commercial importance is that which left London on the 25th instant and reached here on the 26th, announcing that peace had been concluded between the allies and the Emperor of China'. This was important, the *Enquirer* believed, because 'the increased commercial intercourse promised under the new arrangement, must prove highly beneficial to the trade of the United States.' The *Enquirer* predicted that the geographical position of the USA would give Americans the advantage in the global China trade, arguing that, 'the population of Empire of China is estimated by recent writers at 400,000,000. This vast population with that of Japan, is nearer to our Pacific coast, than to the Atlantic, hence this they will arrive, when the China trade will center, probably in California, and pass over Rail Road to the Eastern States for distribution.'[61] The enthusiasm Democrat newspapers showed for the treaty was shared by the once Whig-leaning, now Republican-supporting newspapers, such as the *New York Times.* In an article about the

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Rebellion had waned by the mid-1850s and instead they looked for an opportunity to extract further concessions out of the Qing.

[60] Fairbank, *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 10: Late Ch'ing 1800-1911, Part 1*, 243-263.

[61] 'Letter from New York', *Richmond Enquirer*, 3rd September 1858.

overland mail between California and the East Coast, the *Times* argued 'our Pacific possessions are constantly becoming more important. Even in California itself, the natural resources of the country are but beginning to be developed, and if we need a railroad now, how much more necessary will it be when the China trade centres at San Francisco.' For the *Times*, 'it is impossible to overestimate the commercial importance of recent events in China', by which the paper meant the new treaty signed by Western powers with the Qing granting further trading concessions. It was commercially important because 'that vast Empire, where nearly half the wealth and population of the world have so long been shut in, is henceforth to be open to the rest of mankind.' And the *Times* especially believed 'our own country will be among the most favored in respect to the tragic of the Celestial Empire, and from her situation California must be its American dépôt [sic]. Whatever enterprise or improvement facilities the intercourse between our Atlantic States and the Pacific seaboard, cannot cost more than it will be worth, and cannot be realized too soon.'[62] This optimism that both Democrats and Republicans were showing for the new treaty with the Qing government would have a knock-on effect on America's opinions on the Taiping Rebellion.

Indeed, now that the Qing had been forced to further open China's borders to Western trade, most Americans now had less faith that Taiping victory in the war over the Qing would actually help their trading prospects in China. This became especially pertinent between 1860 and 1862, when the Taiping Rebellion returned to the pages of American newspapers. As previously discussed, at the start of the 1860s the Taiping rebels were forced to march towards the Chinese coast, which brought them into direct conflict with the foreigners at Shanghai. Conflict so close to Shanghai was bound to have a detrimental effect on conducting trade in and around Shanghai. Furthermore, the new found ability of Westerners to freely navigate the Yangtze meant that some more enterprising Americans had tried to promote trade with the Taiping, and found the rebels unwilling to engage in trade with them.[63] News of these Taiping obstacles to trade made their way back to the United States, where Americans who already had been optimistic about their new trading

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[62] 'Mr. Butterfield's Overland Mail', *The New York Times*, 3rd November 1858. The literature on the race to build railroads across the American continent does not mention the Taiping Rebellion. For example, Waite, 'Jefferson Davis and Proslavery Visions of Empire in the Far West', *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 4 (2016), 536-565. For histories on railroad construction see: David Haward Bain, *Empire Express: Building the First Transcontinental Railroad* (New York: Penguin, 1999).

[63] Teng, *Americans and the Taiping Rebellion*, 198.

relationship with the Qing, began to be more hostile to the Taiping who were jeopardising both current and future trade.

Just like in the early 1850s, news of the damage that the Taiping's war was doing to American and Western commerce filtered back to the United States. On November 1st 1861, U.S. Minister to China Anson Burlingame reported to Secretary of State William Seward that there was 'some apprehension that the Rebels may try to capture Shanghai' and, amongst the 'feverish apprehension', Burlingame suggested that 'our [American] commerce is suffering.'[64] The suggestions that the Taiping were damaging American trade in China were also disseminated in the United States. A book published in 1863 by a former United States Consul in Shanghai, William L. G. Smith, reported to its audience the damage that the war was doing to American trade. It also laid the blame solely at the feet of the Taiping. In *China and the Chinese*, Smith wrote 'the distracted condition of the country (caused by the Taiping) has been very injurious to commerce. There has been much risk and difficulty in introducing foreign merchandise into the interior and transporting the teas and silk to the seaboard.' Smith suggested that 'acres of mulberry, whose leaves feed the silk worm have been devastated, as well as tea. The amount of production has been less and less year after year.'[65] Smith unambiguously informed his reader that the state of affairs in China had made trade difficult, and furthermore made it clear the Taiping were to blame. Reports such as these informed Americans that any previous faith that the Taiping would be beneficial for American trade was sincerely misplaced.

Newspaper reports on the Taiping's rebellion between 1860 and 1864 also highlighted the significant economic damage the war was doing to American trade. Republican newspapers, such as the *New York Times*, had already been scathing about the Taiping rebellion's impact on American trade in China, and this continued into the 1860s. In August 1861, the *Times* carried a story reporting that American officials in China had come to an agreement with the Taiping rebels to ensure safe passage of American vessels through Taiping held stretches of the Yangtze River. While the *Times* commented that 'this is the most important arrangement, and will add greatly, if properly improved, to the extent of

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[64] 'Anson Burlingame to William H. Seward', November 1st 1861, *Despatches From U.S. Ministers to China, 1843-1906, November 1st 1861 – September 19th 1862*, United States National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

[65] William L. G. Smith, *China and the Chinese* (New York: Carleton Publisher, 1863), 105-106. This source was read in a similar manner in Teng, *Americans and the Taiping Rebellion*, 197.

our trade in the East', the rest of the article was still pessimistic about the future of American trade, while Taiping were operating in the Yangtze River valley. Information from the *USS Saginaw*, which had visited the rebels at Nanjing in May 1861, informed this pessimism. The officers on the *Saginaw* reported that the city of Ching-Kiang [Zhenjiang] had suffered greatly under Taiping rule stating that 'it has been retaken from the rebels… [and] A great portion of it has been destroyed, and that which remains is squalid and filthy in the extreme. No trade has been restored, and the people seem to be in the greatest possible destitution and misery.' Furthermore, their intelligence from the rebels' capital of Nanjing made for no better reading. The *Times* reported that the officers of the *Saginaw* believed 'the condition of the city is most peculiar. No trade or work is allowed within the walls… The rebels are robbers, not producers, and it is said that Nanking [Nanjing] still contains an immense deal of wealth, which has been brought from Loo-Chow [Luzhou] and other plundered cities.'[66] The insinuation was clear, if the Taiping rebels were not interested in trade or producing goods, but stealing them from others, then how could Americans hope to have a thriving commercial relationship with China under their rule? The *New York Times* concluded 'that the opening of the Yang-tse [Yangtze] will prove to be an event of great importance to the China trade seems likely', yet the newspaper believed that 'the distracted state of the country, the ruin and desolation that inevitably result from civil war, will interfere materially for a long time with the successful prosecution of commercial enterprises.'[67] Again the message was clear. While the trading concessions won from the recent agreements with both the Qing and the Taiping were likely to benefit the United States, no money was to be made while the Taiping continued to rebel against the Qing.

By the 1860s, Democrats had begun to change their opinion on how America could gain more from the China Trade. In the early 1850s, newspapers that supported the Democratic Party had been enthusiastic about the prospect of a Taiping victory, as they predicted the Taiping were more open to trade. By the 1860s, those who leaned towards the Democratic Party had reversed their position and now preferred the Qing regime, who they now believed represented the best opportunity for Americans to gain greater access to Chinese markets. The Treaty of Tientsin gave Western merchants the right to trade with

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[66] 'Affairs in China: Result of the Visit of the American Squadron to Hankow', *The New York* Times, 18th August 1861.
[67] *Ibid.*

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ports on the Yangtze River. However, the treaty stipulated that the opening of Yangtze ports would not come into effect while large sections of the river were in the hands of the Taiping.[68] British officials were not willing to allow the rebellion to stand in the way of opening the Yangtze to trade. Therefore, the British admiral Rear-Admiral Hope led an expedition in February 1861 to come to an agreement with officials at the river ports in the upper Yangtze, such as at Jiujiang (known as Kiukiang to nineteenth-century Westerners). The result of this expedition was that an agreement was reached where British, and by extension all Western ships, could trade freely on the Yangtze and furthermore, only be stopped for inspection to check vessels for arms smuggling. The British reached a separate agreement with the Taiping which agreed that Western trade could pass through rebel-held territory without interference. They also accepted that the British could station a warship at Nanjing to protect Western trade.[69] While the Taiping were willing to work with Western nations to promote trade on the Yangtze, to Western observers the impetus in trade had passed to the Qing, who were clearly willing to be flexible to allow Western trade on the Yangtze.

This impetus change was reflected in the coverage of trade in China in the Democratic press. For example, the *Detroit Free Press* published an article, which it had taken from the Republican *Philadelphia North American*, about the Prince Regent of the Qing's Empire, Prince Gong (often known as Prince Kung by English-language newspapers). Prince Gong had been influential in pushing the Qing to provide concessions to Western powers following the Second Opium War, and had seized power alongside the Empress Dowager Cixi, following the death of the Xianfeng Emperor in 1861.[70] The *Detroit Free Press*' February 1862 article declared that 'the happiness of China will now depend upon Prince Kung [Gong]. He has declared himself favorable to liberal measures and throwing open trade to foreign nations; but he will have to overcome the traditional prejudices of the Chinese'. The article further noted that the British 'will probably thrash the rebels this time, instead of the Imperialists.' However, the author of the article was annoyed by the idea that the journalist working for the *North China Herald* disapproved of this saying:

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[68] Gregory, Great Britain and the Taipings, *79.*
[69] *Ibid.,* 94-98.
[70] Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, 189.

the North China *Herald* says that there can be hardly any doubt that he [Prince

Gong] is another Richard III, who will murder his kinsman to gain the throne for

himself; that unless England takes the person of the infant Emperor under her

protection, this crime will soon be committed and that, other horrors being in

prospect, the duty of foreign governments is to cease holding diplomatic relations

with the Chinese government. Is it another Chinese war that the *Herald* is anxious

for?[71]

The tone of the article very much suggests that the author believed the future of Western trade with China was brightest under the regency of Prince Gong. Although it did not outright compare the Qing with the Taiping on trading with the West, the article did note that 'Prince Kung [Gong] has already modified the treaty of Tien-tsing [Tientsin] as regards the English, by decreeing that duties on British goods shall not to be paid between Shanghai and Han-kow [Hangzhou] on the Yang-tse-kiang [Yangtze]', but it suggested that, 'as part of the river is in possession of the Tae-pings [Taipings], who have established a custom-house there, we shall soon hear of more fighting on the part of the English.'[72] The implication was clear – while Prince Gong was dismantling trading barriers, the Taiping were erecting them, which would lead to more conflict with the British. The provisions of the American Treaty of Tientsin, signed in 1858, stated that American merchants had to pay both import and export duties on goods bought and sold at ports open to foreign trade. Furthermore, American vessels were required to pay a tonnage duty on arrival at a treaty port. Once paid, the vessel would be able to trade at other treaty ports without paying further tonnage duties until leaving Chinese waters.[73] Therefore, if the Taiping were allegedly requiring Western ships on the Yangtze to pay further duties when passing through rebel-held stretches of the river, then it would be understandable that American merchants would feel aggrieved by having to pay further tariffs than they were legally required to do so. This grievance amongst Western merchants clearly filtered back to imperial metropoles, as American newspapers reflected their discontent with having to pay further tariffs. Significantly, this was an article

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[71] 'Coup d'état at Pekin – Civilized Way of Doing Things', *Detroit Free Press*, 15th February 1862.

[72] *Ibid.*

[73] Article XV & Article XVI, *Treaty of Tientsin*, June 1858 in *University of Southern California US-China Institute*, https://china.usc.edu/treaty-tianjin-tien-tsin-1858 [accessed 29/08/20].

that had originated in a Republican-supporting newspaper but was published without comment in a staunchly Democrat-paper. This can perhaps be seen as evidence that Republicans and Democrats were coalescing around the same position on the China trade – the Qing represented the future for American trade in China, not the Taiping.

Indeed, Democratic newspapers had not only shifted towards the Qing regime, but had also actively started to comment on the damage the Taiping rebels were doing to Western trade. In August 1860, a Baltimore newspaper, *The Daily Exchange*, printed the thoughts of a Shanghai correspondent, who claimed that while 'everybody has heard of the Chinese rebellion, and of the Chinese rebels', they doubted, 'whether any foreigners know anything satisfactory of this strange movement.' In the correspondent's point of view, however, the movement seemed 'more like an aggregation of all the worst elements of human society to overthrow order and introduce anarchy, confusion and terror.' This was a problem because these 'rebels now have possession of a large territory, embracing many large and populous cities. The country itself bordering as it does upon the grand canal, and the "great river" as the Yang-tze-kiang [Yangtze] is called, is immensely populous, and is said to embrace the richest silk-growing district of the empire.' The article went on to describe the 'state of panic' which was 'pitiable to behold' at Shanghai, Hangzhou and Suzhou. The correspondent predicted that 'this state of affairs bids fair to seriously interrupt trade between the tea and silk districts and the coast.' This was because the 'great thoroughfares leading from these districts to Shanghai are… in the hands of rebels, so that communication is nearly interrupted. This, too, just as the wheat harvest is approaching… seems to threaten the poorer with starvation, and the traders and tea and silk merchants with ruin.'[74] The implication is very clear. If silk and tea could not reach Shanghai, then America's main imports from China could not be bought by American merchants. And if American merchants could not buy in China, then it was unlikely that they would be able to sell American manufactured goods and cotton goods as well. This gloomy outlook on the prospects for commerce in China stands in direct contrast with the optimistic point of view on the Taiping and American trade in China that Democratic newspapers had taken in the early 1850s. No longer did the Taiping represent America's best opportunity to expand into

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[74] 'The War in China', *The Daily Exchange*, 22nd August 1860.

Chinese markets and make more profit. Instead, while Prince Gong and the Qing regime seemed more open to foreign trade, while the Taiping did their best to disrupt it.

Despite the onset of war between the Confederacy and the Union in 1861, some Southern newspapers tended to reflect their Northern counterparts in their analysis of the Taiping rebellion's impact on Western trade. Having been fairly optimistic that the Taiping Rebellion would not disrupt American trade in the 1850s, the New Orleans-based *Daily Picayune*, was now concerned about preventing Shanghai from falling into Taiping hands. An August 1862 article noted that 'the importance and wealth of Shanghai are very great. A large trade has grown up there, and it is the depository of an enormous amount of goods and products. The trade [in and out of Shanghai] has risen from £7,500,000 in 1855, to more than £29,000,000 in 1861'. However, the *Picayune* was not so encouraged about the 'prospect of exemption [of Shanghai] from the cost of new wars [between Anglo-French forces and the Taiping]' because 'the Taepings with whom there had been agreements for neutrality, and who had engaged to respect the neutral ports, are constantly faithless in their promises, and make incessant encroachments, accompanied by acts of great barbarity on the Chinese who fall into their power.'[75] Evidently, the *Daily Picayune* no longer believed the Taiping 'problem' would just resolve itself, as they ended up supporting the Anglo-French attacks on Taiping positions around Shanghai. Therefore, the Louisianan newspaper clearly had shifted from its more optimistic position a decade prior.

For the most part, however, the Taiping Rebellion was barely covered by Southern newspapers. The pressures of war, including skyrocketing production costs, shortages of ink and paper and growing inaccessibility of printing presses, meant that there was a limit to what news could be covered by the Southern press.[76] The civil war with the Northern states of the United States understandably dominated news and only in places like New Orleans, which was in Northern hands from May 1862, did the events in China receive much coverage. When China received coverage in Southern newspapers during this time, it was often short statements. For example, the *Baton Rouge Tri-Weekly Gazette and Comet* printed a short article in October 1863, which stated 'business in the Chinese ports was

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[75] 'The English Troubles in China', *The Daily Picayune*, 29th August 1862.

[76] J. Cutler Andrews, *South Reports the Civil War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), 41-44.

generally prostrate' but did not elaborate on whether the rebellion was going to make that better or worse.[77]

By the mid-1860s, then, the Taiping Rebellion had lost the commercial allure it had once held for American newspapers, both Northern and Southern, who saw it as their opportunity to further break into Chinese markets. The Democrats who had once believed the Taiping were the key to unlocking their vision of a free-trading China dominated by American goods, now believed that the Treaty of Tientsin with the Qing government represented a better way of prising China open to American trade. Republicans, on the other hand, tended to feel vindicated in their evaluation that the Taiping were not good for American trade. And despite fighting against the North, when Southerners did look at China, they found little reason for optimism about Western trade in China, as long as the Taiping threat remained. For Americans, the Taiping represented a missed opportunity. To some, especially Democrats, the Taiping rebels had seemed like they would help, by adopting a 'liberal' trading policy, to propel the United States towards her destiny as the pre-eminent trading nation in the China trade. Yet, as the war raged on into the 1860s, and the Qing began to present new opportunities to the Western world, the Taiping no longer had the commercial allure they once had.

Trade was not the only facet of the Taiping Rebellion that American newspapers covered. The press in the United States were also interested in the violence of the rebellion. They wanted to know how the war was being conducted by the rebels, whether the violence was justifiable and how the fighting would affect their compatriots living in and around Shanghai.

'Ruffians' and 'Plunders': The Reaction to 'Unprincipled' Taiping Violence Against Civilians in the American Press

Revolutions and rebellions tend to be a violent affair, and the legitimacy of the use of force by those rising up against governments is often a contentious issue. During the course of the Taiping Rebellion, American newspapers constantly assessed whether the violence employed by the Taiping rebels was justified. At first, certain newspapers expressed the view that the Taiping were justified in employing the sort of violence, such as destruction of

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[77] 'From China – San Francisco', *Baton Rouge Tri-Weekly Gazette and Comet*, 17th October 1863.

property and the slaughtering of civilians, against the Qing. However, as the Taiping rebellion raged on, American newspapers became much less enthusiastic about the revolutionary potential of the Taiping rebels because of the growth of, what was seen as, unprincipled violence. Throughout the nineteenth century, American newspapers had often taken sides when covering the intermittent independence conflicts occurring around the world, based on which side they perceived as employing justified and principled violence and vice versa. For example, Karine Walther argues that when covering the Greek War of Independence, American newspapers almost exclusively focused on 'Muslim abuses' of the Ottoman rulers, and ignored the atrocities of Greek freedom fighters, including the slaughter of Jewish inhabitants of Greece, whom they considered allies of the Ottomans. This coverage was one sided because the editors and journalists covering the Greek rebellion wanted to portray the Greeks as revolutionaries, rather than unprincipled rebels, because they agreed with their cause.[78] In American coverage of Chinese news, the Taiping took on the role of the unprincipled rebel, rather than revolutionary because of how Americans evaluated whether they were justified in using the types of violence they did.

In the early 1850s, when American newspapers assessed whether the Taiping were justified in using violence against civilians, they employed racial understandings to help them understand. For example, the Whig newspaper *Daily Republic*, based in Washington DC, suggested on June 14th 1853 that the Taiping violence against innocents was justified in by their larger goal to overthrow the Qing dynasty. Reacting to the rumours that an allied British, French and American fleet had 'arrested the progress of the insurgents' to protect Shanghai, the *Daily Republic* stated, 'the insurgents deserved better.' The paper noted that the Taiping had 'razed cities, violated women, murdered infants… [and their actions have] taken the shape of brigandage upon the highways… like those of the Italian bandits'. The author suggested that 'in spite of what we are told of the violence which has accompanied their victories – violence justified in some sort by the rude and savage manners of the country – we confess that they have enlisted our sympathies.'[79] For the *Daily Republic*, the Taiping were justified in using violence because they were operating in what was perceived as an uncivilised country. Therefore, because the newspaper had a racialised notion of what

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[78] Walther, *Sacred Interests*, 37-38.

[79] 'Revolution in China', *The Daily Republic*, June 14th 1853.

China was, the Taiping rebels were essentially allowed to act savagely.[80] In this environment, savage Taiping violence was justified. However, the *Daily Republic* did not only believe the Taiping were justified in using violence because they saw the world through a white supremacist lens. In fact, the *Daily Republic* asserted that Taiping violence was acceptable because the rebels 'had on their side the question of nationality and the oppression of a foreign dynasty; they had on their side success and the good wishes of the country.'[81] So while on the one hand the Washingtonian newspaper believed the violence against non-combatants was justified because of a racialised view of China, on the other they suggested that the Taiping had popular support to wage the war against the Qing. Furthermore, because they were fighting to overthrow a perceived foreign dynasty, the Taiping were justified, in the eyes of the *Daily Republic*, in using violence by fighting for the liberal nationalism which Western liberals tended to believe in. Racism and liberal nationalism were working hand in glove here. This paradox perhaps explains why Taiping violence later became seen as unjustified and unprincipled. Because China was seen as an uncivilised country, the Taiping were often, at first, seen as the modernising force. While they were at first cut some slack in terms of how they carried out the war, American frustration at a perceived lack of progress in civilising China meant they later saw Taiping violence as pointless and unnecessary.

The letters that Americans in China sent to newspapers helped create the narrative that violence was acceptable when trying to revolutionise an uncivilised country. Southern Baptist Martha Crawford sent a letter to the religious newspaper *Biblical Recorder* which discussed the violent qualities of the Taiping's rebellion, amongst other things. 'We daily hear of atrocious acts of heathenish barbarity that make our hearts sick', she told the North Carolina newspaper, continuing on to say, 'all the horrors of heathen warfare are at our

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[80] When Europeans and Americans mentally constructed Africa, Asia, and South America as savage spaces, they came to expect savagery from the indigenous population, and the white people who also inhabited these spaces. See: Michael T. Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986). Mary Louise Pratt suggests that a process of transculturation between Europe and colonial spaces led to Europeans defining colonial spaces, and being redefined by colonial spaces themselves. This can be seen in the way Americans viewed China as well. They created an idea of China as a racialised space, which in turn defined how Americans viewed themselves against this. See: Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).
[81] 'Revolution in China', *The Daily Republic*, June 14th 1853.

doors, and how long to continue we know not.'[82] For Crawford however, this was a price worth paying because she felt that violence 'may be one of the great means used to awake them from their sleep of ages.'[83] Clearly, the early ideas about the Taiping fighting a war in an uncivilised manner being acceptable because it would bring about progress were coming from the Americans living in China themselves. Therefore, the racialised ideas about Chinese rebels fighting savagely but for a liberal nationalist future took on some authority because they were coming from people on the ground. Since the knowledge of the Taiping's violence came from those living in Shanghai, the opinions of the American public about this violence followed a very similar trajectory.

Indeed, by the late 1850s and early 1860s, letters from missionaries began to be published in major American newspapers detailing the destruction of property and slaughter of civilians. On October 18th 1860, the *New York Herald* published a letter sent to *The Times* of London by a British missionary, Rev. Joseph Edkins. In this letter, Edkins told Western audiences of the scenes he witnessed on his visit to Nanjing. Edkins outlined how one of the towns on his route to Nanjing presented 'a painful spectacle' as 'those parts of the town which it is inconvenient to defend have been burnt… while the bodies of those killed, to the number of sixty or seventy, had floated down the canal, and were met by us on our approach.'[84] Later on, while recounting his visit to Suzhou, Edkins told of the 'short but inexpressibly painful interval of time' witnessing the moat 'choked up with the ruins of fallen houses and the unburied dead.' In describing the scene inside Suzhou, Edkins recalled that 'these suburbs, once so flourishing and populous, were smoking in vast heaps on each side of us. A crowd of their once gay and active inhabitants were laying in the embrace of death on the waters round us.' Witnessing this disturbing sight made Edkins question 'how could we but sympathize deeply with the countless victims, most of them suicides seized with despair, of this terrible civil war?'[85] The penultimate paragraph of his letter made it clear that Edkins was disillusioned by how much the war was affecting non-combatants. He had seen 'burning suburbs, deserted streets, fields of corn left to perish uncut, hundreds of unburied dead, [and] here and there an abandoned infant.' Edkins was deeply affected by

[82] 'Letter of Mrs. M. F. Crawford', *The Biblical Recorder*, April 7th 1854.

[83] *Ibid.*

[84] 'The Revolution in China: Narrative of a Visit to the Taipings', *New York Herald*, October 18th 1860.

[85] *Ibid.*

this and he wrote that it 'touches the heart to see the misery to which those not engaged in the great revolutionary struggle are exposed.'[86] The letter did not try justify this violence to the intended audience. The appearance of these sorts of letters in the American press signal a shift away from newspapers arguing that the war in China would be redemptive for the Chinese people. Instead, they focus more on the suffering caused by war.

Furthermore, American newspapers began to question whether the Taiping rebels were fighting for anything other than power, just as Americans in China had. In November 1860, a letter published in the *Boston Daily Advertiser* argued that 'the army in rank and file is an unmitigated collection of ruffians, who have no cohesion but by plunder; and I cannot believe in the progress and success of a revolutionary movement which fights under such an entire absence of principles and ideas.'[87] As a Republican newspaper, the focus on the 'unmitigated collection of ruffians' explains why Whigs turned away from the seeing the Taiping rebellion as a revolution, as this paralleled Whig reaction to the European 1848 revolutions.

The use of the word 'ruffian' has parallels in the discourse surrounding the 'Bleeding Kansas' controversy. Kansas became a battleground between proponents of free-soil and slave-holding in 1856. The pro-slavery migrants were known as 'Border Ruffians' and they used paramilitary intimidation tactics to keep abolitionists away from the polls.[88] In a similar manner to the *Boston Daily Advertiser* admonishing the Taiping as ruffians, the Republican newspaper *The National Era* lamented that the United States had been 'dishonored by the infamous deeds of Border ruffianism'.[89] The use of the term 'ruffian' to describe the Taiping shows how the secession crisis influenced how events in the rest of the world were viewed. Border Ruffians represented an ideology and behaviour that Northern Republican newspapers disliked. The conflation of the Taiping rebels with Border Ruffians demonstrates how the initial supporters of the Taiping had come to dislike their violent behaviour, which reminded them too much of problems at home.

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[86] *Ibid.*

[87] 'The Rebels in China', *Boston Daily Advertiser*, November 19th 1860.

[88] Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders*, 154-160.

[89] 'The Cossacks in the Free States', *National Era*, September 8th 1855.

Despite Whig or Republican sympathy for revolutionary agendas of social reform, the mob rule evident after European revolutions in 1848 scared middle-class Whigs.[90] Similarly, after the initial enthusiasm for the Taiping amongst Whig and Republican papers, as the war dragged on and the Taiping descended into more mindless exploitative violence where buildings were destroyed and innocents maimed and slaughtered, this reminded the former Whigs, now Republicans, of the mob rule of 1848. The Republican supporting *New York Tribune*, for example, argued that the instability in China was caused by Britain and France sacking Beijing. Moreover, the Taiping Rebellion raging in Southern China, made the New York paper felt that a 'revolution is certain' in China. In the *Tribune's* eyes this would lead to 'disaster and utter ruin upon China in any event, and no one acquainted with the country can fail to anticipate fearful scenes of anarchy and bloodshed when even the present imperfect Government is overthrown.'[91] 'Even now', wrote the paper:

> the southern and western provinces are in uproar. In every direction, armed bands of robbers are collecting, some claiming to belong to the Tae-ping-wang rebellion, and some fighting for only for plunder. Every day brings news of villages plundered and burnt… and crowds of starving Chinese come pouring in, having lost all but their lives.[92]

By conjuring images of armed bands, burning villages and refugees crowding into Chinese villages, the *Tribune* drew on the idea that revolutions descend into mindless violence without any end goal, as Whiggish and Republican leaning papers had reported on during 1848 and other European revolutions. For example, although more conservative than the *New York Tribune*, the *New York Times* stated that there was 'anarchy following the revolution of 1848' and argued that it was better that 'freedom, instead of being left to the control of the masses, and under the direction of demagogues, was regulated and carried out by the upper portion of that middle class' in France after 1848.[93] Although not outright referencing violence, the *New York Times* demonstrates how Republicans in the mid-

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[90] Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 793-794.
[91] 'China: Correspondence of The N. Y. Tribune', *New York Tribune*, August 6th 1860.
[92] *Ibid.*
[93] 'Memoirs of M. Guizot', *New York Times*, September 26th 1861.

nineteenth century preferred revolutions remain in the hands of the middle class, rather than in the hands of the 'mob'. American newspapers often made allusions to the Taiping rebels being a lower class or peasant rebellion. The *New York Herald*, for example, referred to Taiping soldiers as 'rough looking men in incongruous finery' who looked out of place compared to the 'comfortable citizens' who had resided in the city of Suzhou before them.[94] Therefore, when the *Tribune* warned of plundering, robbing and burning, they were drawing on the broad Republican anathema to popular, social revolutions which to them were inherently violent. The Taiping, a lower class rebellion who plundered from the wealthy, were ultimately terrifying to Republican newspapers.

Supporters of the Democratic Party were also disconcerted by the violence. The Democrat *Daily Ohio Statesman* echoed similar sentiments while reporting on the fall of Nanjing in 1864. The author of the article wrote:

> I have the honor to inform you that the city of Nankin [sic], so long the center [sic] of dissatisfaction in China, and the point from which so many bands of ruthless plunderers have started on their raids on the peaceful and wealthy cities of Central China, has been captured by the imperialist army...[95]

Democrats had saluted the arrival of the European revolutions because it seemed to represent the overthrow of authoritarian regimes in Europe.[96] They had had a similar enthusiasm for the overthrow of the Qing dynasty, so to see the Taiping descend into despotism themselves convinced Democrats that they were not the revolutionary movement that had seemed to be in the earlier years. It is clear that as the Taiping rebellion began to fail, American newspapers began to focus on the raiding of Taiping rebels, rather than the revolutionary potential that the movement had.

The growing discontentment in the American press about the way the Taiping armies conducted themselves on and off the battlefield, such as slaughtering innocents and destroying property, drew on the disappointment and fear Americans in China were feeling. With their military campaign against the Qing regime faltering in 1861, the Taiping rebels

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[94] 'The Revolution in China: Narrative of a Visit to the Taipings', *New York Herald*, October 18th 1860.

[95] 'Capture of Nankin – The Taiping Leader Chung-Wang Taken', *The Daily Ohio Statesman*, 24th October 1864.

[96] Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy*, 611.

were forced to try to control the coast of China. This brought them into greater conflict with Westerners residing in China's treaty ports, including Shanghai.[97] Stories about this growing threat to Shanghai began to filter back to the United States. Significantly, these stories no longer looked for excuses for the way the Taiping prosecuted the war. Marquis Lafayette Wood, a Methodist missionary wrote to the *North Carolinian Advocate* to inform them that 'while they profess to have received a direct commission from Heaven to destroy the imps (Tartars) have they not shown themselves, *full grown devils*? All, who adhere to the Manchee [sic] dynasty, that they can catch, are put to death without mercy; they burn all unsubmissive towns and villages'.[98] It is clear that part of the reason why American newspapers began to view the Taiping rebels as practicing unprincipled violence was because of the information they were receiving from Americans in China, as well as through European newspapers who also received similar information from their own citizens in China.

However, while the information that people in the United States received helped convince them that the rebels were not the principled revolutionaries they thought they were, change in attitudes towards violence also helped turn Americans against the Taiping rebels. Across the 1850s and 1860s, war troubled the North American continent. From the U.S.-Mexico War, to the mini-civil war in Kansas and finally the American Civil War, American citizens came face to face with violence more and more. This caused a revaluation of what meant death for American society.[99]

This distaste for unprincipled violence had flared up during the U.S.-Mexico war, which was concluded two years prior to the Taiping rebellion occurring in 1850. Paul Foos argues that the violent, unethical behaviour of some American troops in Mexico convinced other soldiers that their expansion into Mexico was not actually conducive to the spread of Anglo-Saxon democracy, and this informed anti-expansionist views.[100] It is clear that unprincipled violence gave some American citizens pause for thought about whether the

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[97] Philip A. Kuhn, 'The Taiping Rebellion' in John K. Fairbank (ed.) *The Cambridge History of China: Vol. 10, Late Ch'ing 1800-1911* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 303.

[98] 'Letter From Rev. M. L. Wood', *North Carolina Advocate*, September 18th 1860. Newspaper clipping found at the back of his 1860 diary.

[99] Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), xi.

[100] Paul Foos, *A Short, Offhand, Killing Affair: Soldiers and Social Conflict During the Mexican-American War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 3-12.

U.S.-Mexico war was justifiable. A similar process occurred in the American observation of the Taiping rebellion. Many had believed the Taiping rebels were practicing a justified war at the start of the rebellion, but news of the brutality of the war made Americans rethink whether the war was justifiable.

However, while the U.S.-Mexico War started this process of re-evaluating death and violence in American society, the American Civil War truly changed how citizens of the United States (and Confederacy) approached death, conflict and violence. As mentioned in Chapter Three, some historians, such as Nicholas Marshall, downplay the impact the Civil War had on the attitudes American society had to death. They claim that given the prevalence of death caused by disease and inadequate living conditions, Americans were already used to death and that the civil war would not have changed how they reacted to violence and the premature ending of a person's life.[101] Yet, as Drew Faust points out, while it is correct to suggest that Americans were familiar with death, the majority of those deaths were caused by child mortality rates being so high. Once someone made it past childhood, however, they could expect to live until what we consider middle age. The war changed that. Young men were slaughtered in unprecedented numbers on the battlefield or taken by disease in field hospitals or filthy encampments. The violence shocked Americans on all sides of the war, but especially in the South where most would mourn the loss of someone close to them. Drew Faust calls this the 'republic of suffering' - a United States which was forced to come to terms with violent conflict did to a nation and its citizenry. Even the very idea of what happened after death was shattered. Images of destroyed bodies on battlefields such as Antietam circulated the United States made it hard to believe that 'corporeal resurrection and restoration would accompany the Day of Judgement', as Faust puts it.[102] It was into this world that stories of the brutality of the Taiping Rebellion were delivered.

In the early 1850s, the majority of American commentators on the rebellion had been remarkably blasé about the stories of violence they heard. Although the Taiping were cast as the aggressors in the information they received, many believed it was for the greater good, and that the Taiping's violence was necessary to create a new, better China.

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[101] Nicholas Marshall, 'The Great Exaggeration: Death and the Civil War', *The Journal of the Civil War Era*, 4 (March 2014), 3-27.
[102] Faust, *The Republic of Suffering*, xi-xviii.

Americans in China became more disconcerted with Taiping violence as the rebel armies approached Shanghai. This shaped the reports being sent back to the United States at a time when American reactions to violence are extremely complicated. In both China and the United States, Americans who were used to observing conflict from a safe distance were suddenly thrust into the middle of wars. Perhaps the nearness of war to Americans on both sides of the Pacific explains the move away from viewing war and violence as a glorious thing. While wars did not put most (white) American lives at risk it was easier to view the violence as a civilising force. Yet when news of the destruction caused by Taiping armies reached the United States, it arrived at a time when understandings of violence and war were shifting constantly. American society was used to violence being meted out to natives and slaves. Now that violence affected white people on such a mass scale the American press paused to reflect. No longer was it so easy to see the war in China in a positive light.

Therefore, when the Taiping rebels were seen as acting similarly to the Ottomans, pro-slavery paramilitaries and unruly American soldiers fighting in Mexico, the initial enthusiasm shown towards them waned. Furthermore, the American Civil War helped changed how Americans viewed and reacted to death, which complicated the understandings that Americans had of violence and warfare. And because the Taiping rebels were almost universally cast as the aggressors in the information Americans and Europeans received about the rebellion, they were also blamed for the descent into the unprincipled violent prosecution of the war that was being reported in American newspapers. While American journalists of all political persuasions had been initially been enthusiastic about the revolutionary potential of the Taiping uprising, evident in the labelling of the movement as 'revolutionaries' or 'revolutionists', the decline of the Taiping into plundering and unprincipled violence convinced both Whigs and Republicans, as well as Democrats, that the Taiping Rebellion was not revolutionary, nor justifiable, at all.

Chapter Five: The Taiping Rebellion and American Imperial Ambitions in China:
Frederick Townsend Ward, *The New York Herald* and The Colony That Never
Existed, 1860-1862

On 22 September 1862, Salem-born soldier of fortune Frederick Townsend Ward was killed
by a sniper's bullet while leading his Ever-Victorious Army (EVA). The EVA was a small army
of around 5000 Chinese soldiers, led by American and European officers with Ward at its
head. Carrying the news of Ward's death, the *New York Herald* suggested that 'no one
would have been surprised to hear at any time that Ward had usurped the Imperial Throne
and established a Yankee dynasty in China.' Ward's China 'would have been a live nation,
reclaimed to civilization and doing its proper share in the great work of the world' yet since
he had died 'it is now doubtful whether China will again relapse into its former isolated
barbarism.'[1] How could the death of an American mercenary could lead the *New York
Herald*, the most popular paper in the mid-nineteenth century United States, to lament the
demise of an alleged plan to seize Chinese territory under the American flag? American
expansionism explains this. Having seized control of large portions of the North American
continent, expansionism was channelled into new areas. While most American

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[1] 'The Death of Mandarin Ward', *The New York Daily Herald*, November 26th 1862. For more on the editorial
decisions of the *Herald* see: Douglas Fermer, *James Gordon Bennett and the New York Herald: A Study of
Editorial Opinion in the Civil War Era* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986).

expansionism in the 1850s was focused on Central America and the Caribbean, the *New York Herald* looked to China and General Ward and saw another opportunity for the United States to expand into.[2]

Throughout the duration of the Taiping Rebellion, American observers had watched the rebellion with the hope that it might provide opportunity for the United States and its citizens to take advantage of. For most Americans observing the rebellion, both in China and from the United States, the opportunity the Taiping seemed to represent was more favourable trade relations. For others, mostly missionaries, the rebellion represented a chance for Christianity to be gain a real foothold in the world's most populous country. Yet, for some Americans the chaos of the civil war in China represented an opportunity for American filibusterers to establish a 'Yankee dynasty' in China.

In the nineteenth century, the American republic underwent a period of rapid and aggressive expansion across the North American continent. The original Thirteen Colonies first crept across the natural boundary of the Appalachian Mountains in the immediate aftermath of the Revolutionary War, slowly increasing the territory the new republic held through piecemeal white settler incursions in the land controlled by various Native American tribes. However, in 1803 the Jefferson administration almost doubled the size of

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[2] On American Empire: Walter Nugent, *Habits of Empire: A History of American Expansion* (New York: Knopf, 2008), Nugent argues that there have been three American empires, and that following the first stage of empire between the American Revolution and end of the Mexican-American War, the second stage started immediately as Americans looked to move into the Caribbean and Pacific using the 'habits of empire' they had learnt during continental expansion. Eric T. Love, *Race Over Empire: Racism and U.S. Imperialism, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), Love argues that in the postbellum period, American imperialists actually avoided using white supremacy as an argument for empire, as it allowed anti-imperialists to employ racist arguments about the 'dangers' of bringing non-white people into the United States through annexing non-white territories. James A. Field Jr., 'American Imperialism: The Worst Chapter in Almost Any Book', *American Historical Review* 83 (1978), 644-668, Field argues that the chapter covering imperialism in histories of America is the worst because often tends to be an 'inverted Whig history' which treats American Empire as a monolithic, planned empire, rather than an accident of history which emerged out of the conflicting and confused motivations different Americans abroad. For more on attempted expansion into Central America and the Caribbean in the mid-nineteenth century: John C. Pinheiro, '"Religion without Restriction": Anti-Catholicism, All Mexico, and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo', *Journal of the Early Republic* 23 (2003), 69-96., Nicholas Guyatt, 'America's Conservatory: Race, Reconstruction, and the Santo Domingo Debate', *Journal of American History* 97 (2011), 974-1000., Robert E. May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld: Filibustering in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), May's investigation of the filibustering attempts reveals how well received private attempts of American expansion were received in the American press back home. For more on American expansion into the Pacific see: Barry Rigby, 'The Origins of American Expansion into Hawaii and Samoa, 1865-1900', *International History Review* 10 (1988), 221-237, Rigby argues that expansion into Hawaii and Samoa was driven more by 'men on the ground' than by policymakers. Dan O'Donell, 'The Pacific Guano Islands: The Stirring of American Empire in the Pacific Ocean', *Pacific Studies* 16, 43-66.

the United States through the Louisiana Purchase. This territorial acquisition brought the American republic into contact with Mexico and intensified a dispute with the British Empire over Oregon. When the Mexican province of Tejas, which had been increasingly populated by American citizens over the course of the early nineteenth century, declared independence in 1836 the United States stood poised to annex it. In 1845, President James Polk signed an agreement with Great Britain to solve the Oregon Territory dispute and also annexed the Republic of Texas, a move which aimed to provoke Mexico into war. Conflict broke out in 1846 after further American provocation caused Mexican troops to retaliate. For the federal government, the war was an opportunity to seize vast portions of Mexican territory, which it did when the war drew to a close in 1848. The United States annexed all Mexican land north of the Rio Grande, including the Mexican province of California, which gave the United States unfettered access to the Pacific coast and natural harbours such as San Francisco bay. In nearly 50 years, the United States had broken free of the Appalachians to conquer a territory which now stretched across the entire continent.[3]

The rapid expansion of the American republic across the continent was driven by a belief that the 'manifest destiny' of the American 'race' to conquer and develop North America. Furthermore, it was seen as the duty of the American people to spread their 'unique' form of civilization across all 'uncivilized' spaces.[4] Throughout the expansionist period, debates about the spread of the American republic drew on an idea that it was the 'destiny' of the United States to spread progress across the continent. However, by the mid-nineteenth century the debates had taken on a racial aspect. Anglo-Saxonism, a belief that the Anglo-Saxon race were the pre-eminent and most superior race on earth, helped proponents of continental expansion convince others that it was America's destiny to civilize the world.[5] Race, however, proved a controversial aspect of state-led expansion. For example, the All-Mexico movement, which demanded the annexation of the entirety of

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[3] Steven Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders: The United States and its World in an Age of Civil Wars* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 141-143. For more on continental expansion see: Thomas R. Hietala, *Manifest Design: American Exceptionalism and Empire* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2003). Robert W. Johannsen, et. al., *Manifest Destiny and Empire: American Antebellum Expansionism* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008).

[4] Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996) xi-xii.

[5] Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 1-2.

Mexico during the U.S.-Mexico war stumbled over the problem of incorporating large numbers of non-white people.[6] The end of the war with Mexico drew to a close state-driven expansionism prior to the American Civil War. Yet, the spirit of 'Manifest Destiny' continued into the 1850s.

In the aftermath of the U.S.-Mexico war, numerous Americans engaged in an activity known as 'filibustering'. Filibustering can be defined as a private military expedition by American citizens operating on their own behalf, to invade, or conquer, a foreign country of which the United States is at peace with. The expedition took place without federal government approval, which means state-sponsored privateering does not count. Furthermore, a revolution by Americans, who already residing in a territory, is not considered filibustering because it does not have the 'invasion' element.[7] Therefore uprisings such as the 1836 Texas Revolution, which was led by American settlers, do not count. However, Filibusterers often expected that eventually the United States would annex the territory that American citizens had seized for them. Filibusterers are different to mercenaries because soldiers of fortune do not aim to seize a territory or power for themselves, but instead work for rewards from the faction they work for.

Filibustering was intrinsically linked to the idea that it was the United States' 'manifest destiny' to expand. Amy Greenberg argues that after the U.S.-Mexico war, antebellum expansionism continued to exist. Rather than being state-sponsored, expansionism was continued through private military ventures led by American citizens. While illegal, these filibustering episodes often led to outbursts of enthusiasm from the public and especially in the press.[8] Greenberg contends that the 'martial masculinity' of the mid-nineteenth century - where predominantly working-class men rejected the morality of 'gentlemen' who believed in 'restrained manhood' in favour of an aggressive masculinity emphasising physical strength and sometimes violence – helped drive the expansionist spirit of the age. Filibustering was another way for martial men to demonstrate their manhood

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[6] Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation* (2nd ed., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 191-192.

[7] Robert E. May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld: Filibustering in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), XV.

[8] Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 4-5.

and American men signed up to these expeditions in their droves.[9] The most infamous of these filibustering episodes was William Walker's seizure of Nicaragua in Central America. Walker's filibustering career had started with an invasion of Sonora and Baja California, where despite seizing the settlement of La Paz and proclaiming a slave-holding republic, he was eventually dislodged and fled back to the United States.[10] Walker returned to filibustering in 1855 when he took control of the Nicaraguan government by force and proclaimed himself President. He was eventually dislodged and surrendered to the U.S. Navy in 1857, but his exploits made him famous back home. He was eventually executed in Honduras in 1860.[11] Walker's career encapsulates what we consider the 'typical' filibusterer because his area of operation was in Latin America and he sought to extend the amount of slave-holding territory in the United States. Latin America was the centre of filibustering activities in the antebellum era. Brady Harrison argues that in the 1840s, an imperialistic attitude had taken hold of American public discourse which suggested that Latin American countries were morally bankrupt and backward, and many believed an American at the helm was required to bring those countries into modernity.[12] This provided the justification necessary for expansion and helps explain the popularity of filibustering back in the United States. However, it was also an idea that was applied to other areas of the globe, which are not traditionally thought of as filibustering arenas.

While most American proponents of overseas expansion focused on territory in Latin American and the Caribbean that could be seized in the name of the United States, some looked further afield across the Pacific to China. In 1838, Whig newspaper editor Morton McMichael (who would later become Mayor of Philadelphia) channelled the spirit of 'manifest destiny' when he lauded the 'roving spirit' of the American people. McMichael declared that 'when our borders, wide as they may be, shall no longer be sufficient... it is not an improbable conjecture, that after conquering the isles of the Indian Ocean, they may penetrate the eastern settlements of Asia, and plant our national standard in the capital of

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[9] *Ibid.* 11-17.

[10] May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld*, 40-42.

[11] Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire*, 135. For more on Walker's life see: Albert Z. Carr, *The World and William Walker* (New York: Evanston, 1963).

[12] Brady Harrison, *Agent of Empire: William Walker and the Imperial Self in American Literature* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 1.

celestial empire [China].'[13] McMichael declared his belief that the United States would have colonies in East Asia long before the United States had fully conquered the American continent, demonstrating that the imperial impulse of certain Americans had long coveted Chinese territory.

In the 1850s, the call for annexation of Chinese territory grew louder. The island of Taiwan, then known as Formosa, attracted significant attention as a potential colony from both Americans in China and from the mainland United States itself. Taiwan was attractive because the Taiping Rebellion had slowed down the flow of goods from the Chinese hinterland, and furthermore key figures such as Commodore Matthew C. Perry, who had 'opened' Japan through gunboat diplomacy, believed that the United States needed to control islands throughout the Pacific to use as ports if East Asian governments were unwilling to open themselves fully. Taiwan represented both a new market and potential port for the United States. From 1855 to 1857, American merchants William M. Robinet and Gideon Nye managed to disingenuously convince US Commissioner to China, Peter Parker, that American sailors who were shipwrecked in Taiwan were cruelly treated by the natives of the island and that the United States needed to annex the island to protect them. More importantly, Robinet and Nye, who already had a monopoly on foreign trade going into Taiwan, stood to make a fortune from investments made in the island if the United States annexed it. Their urgency in pushing Parker to ask Washington for permission to annex the island came from a fear that the British would annex it and remove their monopoly in favour of a British company. The scheme to annex Taiwan came to an end in 1857 when President Buchanan replaced Parker with William B. Reed.[14]

While ultimately coming to nothing, the annexation scheme did prompt discussion in the American press about seizing Chinese territory. Reprinting a letter from a correspondent of the *New York Times*, the *Daily Milwaukee News* tried to convince its readers of the merits of annexing Taiwan. The editor told its audience that 'the Chinese who live on the island are

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[13] Joseph R. Chandler and Morton M'Michael, *Orations Delivered Before the Northern Lyceum of the City and County of Philadelphia, at their Anniversaries in 1837-8* (Philadelphia: J. Perry, Printer, Cor. Of Second and Market Sts, 1839), 37. For more about Morton McMichael see: Robert L. Bloom, 'Morton McMichael's "North American"', *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 77 (1953), 164-180. E. Digby Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen: The Making of a National Upper Class* (London: Transaction Publishing, 2011), 138.
[14] Thomas H. Cox, 'Harbingers of Change: American Merchants and the Formosa Annexation Scheme', *Pacific Historical Review* 42 (1973), 163-184.

generally of bad character, as Formosa [Taiwan] has been used for a long time as a sort of penal colony'. The article went on to use the *Times* correspondents letter to make the case for annexation by arguing that 'should we seek territorial acquisitions in this part of the world, no more desirable portion of the Chinese Empire could be seized upon than Formosa' noting that its mineral and agricultural wealth made it a 'coveted spot with the maritime nations of the world.' Having noted its immense potential, the article stated that Taiwan 'only needs developing to make it invaluable.'[15] The spirit of manifest destiny is prevalent throughout the article. By noting the immense wealth of the natural resources on the island and suggesting that the native people were of bad character and unable to develop the island properly, the article posits that Americans were needed to develop the island's wealth. However, not all American newspapers were so carried away with the idea of annexing land thousands of miles away from the continental United States. The radical Republican newspaper the *New-York Daily Tribune* blasted the idea of annexing Taiwan as 'rather ridiculous.' Referencing the expansionist spirit gripping the United States, the *Tribune* stated 'had it been worth taking, the Dutch, who once had posts on the coast till they were driven off by Chinese filibusters, or the English, would have taken possession long ago. Strong as the spirit of annexation is at Washington, we doubt if it has yet extended to Formosa. What do the slaveholders want of Formosa?'[16] Whilst casting doubt on the actual worth of Taiwan, the *Tribune* also drew on national debates when opposing American expansion abroad. In the late 1850s, the secessionist crisis was beginning to reach its final crescendo. The spirit of expansion also infected slaveholders and many Southern 'fire-eaters', such as J. D. B. DeBow, who was the owner of the pro-slavery journal *DeBow's Review*, envisaged a slave-holding empire and were encouraged by attempts and plans to seize territory in Latin America and the Caribbean.[17] The potential introduction of slavery into these new territories made new colonies dangerous to Northerners who wished to

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[15] 'U.S. Seizure of Formosa', *The Daily Milwaukee News*, August 23rd 1857. While the Qing did use exile as a punishment for criminal behaviour, they sent convicts to Xinjiang rather than Taiwan, see: Joanna Waley-Cohen , *Exile in Mid-Qing China: Banishment to Xinjiang, 1758-1820* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press). For more on how Westerners misinterpreted Qing crime and punishment see: Timothy Brook, Jérôme Bourgon and Gregory Blue, *Death by a Thousand Cuts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

[16] *New-York Daily Tribune*, 19th August 1857. Slaveholders were integral to directing American foreign policy in the antebellum era. For more see: Matthew Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

[17] Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders,* 202-204.

preserve the balance of political power in the union. Therefore, while the Taiwan annexation scheme had had nothing to do with slaveholders, radical Republican newspapers such as the *New-York Daily Tribune* drew on national debates to discredit the scheme, demonstrating how the Pacific world also played into fears about expanding the United States too far. Furthermore, the use of the word filibusterers in the article when discussing Han Chinese expansion on to Taiwan demonstrates just how much Americans projected their own political experiences onto other countries to help them understand global events.

It only took a couple of years after the plans to annex Taiwan subsided for the annexationist impulse in the United States to get excited about the prospect of Chinese territory again. This time the Taiping Rebellion was directly relevant in providing an opportunity for expansion. In 1860, Frederick Townsend Ward landed in Shanghai with a plan to form his own mercenary band. Ward and his Ever-Victorious Army do not quite meet Robert May's filibuster definition, because he landed in China on his own and after failing to create a successful fighting force out of Westerners, he recruited native Chinese people, officered by Westerners, with Chinese financial backing.[18]

Yet, his biographers and some contemporaries considered General Ward to be a filibusterer. In Ward's formative years, he had served with William Walker, the infamous American filibuster. In 1853, Ward joined Walker's filibustering expedition to seize land from Mexico for Walker's Republic of Sonora. Yet, after learning of Walker's plans to add his new 'republic' to the United States as a slave state, Ward, a New Englander with no sympathy for slavery, abandoned the venture.[19] This, apparently, did not mean Ward had no territorial ambitions. When Ward arrived in China to offer his military services, he allegedly had another goal for setting up an army in China. According to one biographer, Hallett Abend, General Ward had originally planned to fight for the Taiping because missionary 'misrepresentations' had made him more favourable towards the rebels. Apparently, this soon changed once he had arrived (probably because he was able to find loyalist Chinese financial backers in Shanghai).[20] Regardless of who he intended to fight for,

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[18] Caleb Carr, *The Devil Soldier: The American Soldier of Fortune Who Became a God in China* (New York: Random House, 1992), 3.

[19] Carr, *The Devil Soldier*, 57-59.

[20] Hallett Abend, *The God from the West: A Biography of Frederick Townsend Ward* (Garden City, NY: The Country Life Press: 1947), 67-68. Abend's biography of Ward forms the majority of the source material on Ward. Very few personal records remain because his family, ashamed to have a mercenary for a descendent,

however, Ward came to fight in China allegedly for one thing only – territory. Furthermore, his background led many to label Ward as a filibusterer. For example, when the London *Daily News* reported on a joint attack by Anglo-French forces and Ward's army against the Taiping, it stated that 'skirmishes have been frequent between the allied British and French force, assisted by the Taoutai's levies under the filibuster Ward on the one side, and the Taepings [sic] on the other.'[21] Since Ward's contemporaries considered him a filibusterer, and he did have a background in it, we shall characterise him as a filibuster, rather than a normal mercenary. Furthermore, there is no way to verify this because most of Ward's papers were destroyed by his family out of shame and by the Japanese Empire when invading Shanghai in the Second World War.[22] However, both Abend and Caleb Carr, biographers of Ward, note that some claimed that General Ward aimed to carve out his own personal fiefdom in China in the name of the United States. By fighting for the imperial government, some alleged that Ward hoped to be rewarded with a principality.[23] Ward's death by sniper fire, and the destruction of his personal papers, mean we will never know if he did intend this. Regardless, his actual intention is unimportant. What is important is that American newspapers believed Ward's intention was to carve out an American colony in China. Even if Ward himself only intended to act as a mercenary, the experience of American filibustering over the previous decades meant that this venture was understood as another episode of filibustering.

In the United States, newspapers carried the news that Ward presented another opportunity for an American colony in China. On October 13th 1862, the *New York Herald* printed a letter they had received from their unnamed Shanghai correspondent about General Ward. A separate editorial stated that:

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destroyed his personal papers in 1940. Furthermore, source material relevant to Ward in the archives of the American Embassy in Beijing and Consulate in Shanghai was destroyed at the outbreak of war between the USA and Japan in 1941. Abend had written the majority of his manuscript prior to this and had access to the source material.

[21] 'China', *The Daily News*, May 26th 1862.

[22] Abend, *The God from the West*, 5; Carr, *The Devil Soldier*, 3-5. Since the majority of Ward's papers have been lost to history, this thesis will make use of the biographies to reconstruct his life and intentions.

[23] Carr, *The Devil Soldier*, 6. Carr casts doubt on the idea that Ward actually intended to seize Chinese territory, citing his defence of Chinese political integrity. See also, Abend, *The God from the West*, 67.

At certain periods of their history nations seem to lose the capacity of supplying their own rulers. Then some foreigner steps in and is elevated to power, or forcibly seizes the reins of government from the weak hands which tremble while holding them… Even China, whose emperors are relatives of the sun and moon, is not exempt from this great law of nations; and, from present indications, we should not be surprised to see, before many years, a Yankee, born beneath the Stars and Stripes, crowding the tottering Tartar dynasty from its ancient throne and usurping the supreme authority of the Celestial Empire.[24]

In the above excerpt, the *Herald* is implying that it is the natural course of history for nations to be conquered by a foreign ruler. In the case of China, the paper is convinced that an American will be the one to 'save' China from ruin. Moreover, the editor seemed to be in favour of an American colony in China when asking 'why should not Ward end his career as the Emperor of China?'[25] The public support for an episode of filibustering in China by the biggest paper in the United States casts further light on the nature of filibustering in the mid-nineteenth century United States. Historians of filibustering writing in the mid-twentieth century, such as Rollin G. Osterweis, tended to view filibustering as a product of Southern desire to seize more land in which they could export slavery into.[26] The implicit approval by the *New York Herald* of such a venture by a Northerner adds further weight to Tom Chaffin's argument that filibustering was a product of American nationalism, rather than Southern sectionalism.[27] Even in the midst of the American Civil War, American nationalism was still finding ways to express itself through interest in overseas expansion. The editorial makes it clear that it is in favour of an American citizen seizing Chinese territory and this demonstrates the pervasive influence of the manifest destiny spirit, even when considering events on the other side of the Pacific Ocean.

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[24] 'A Yankee Dynasty in China', *The New-York Daily Herald*, October 13th 1862.

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld*, xiii. See also: Rollin G. Osterweis, *Romanticism and Nationalism in the Old South* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1949); John Hope Franklin, *The Militant South, 1800-1861* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956). Both historians make the case that Southerners led the way in expansionism abroad.

[27] Tom Chaffin, *Fatal Glory: Narciso López and the First Clandestine U.S. War against Cuba* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1996).

Furthermore, the *New York Herald* editorial also demonstrates how the American Civil War was used by Americans in the North to understand the Taiping Rebellion and Ward's role in it. To try to explain to the readers exactly what Ward was doing, the editorial stated that:

> To fully understand this exploit, imagine that during our civil war the rebels at Richmond threatened Washington, which we, having no McClellan in the field, supposed would be captured. Imagine, then, that Young Hyson, or some other Chinaman, landed on our coasts, with no property but his pigtail, and offered to capture Richmond for fifty thousand dollars. Imagine, also, that Young Hyson's offer was accepted, that he gathered together all the stray Celestials, who vend segars [sic] in our streets, and with these as his main force marched upon and defeated the rebels, restored Richmond to our government and pocketed his wages. That is precisely what Ward did in China…[28]

By relying so heavily on the civil war to explain events across the Pacific, the *Herald* demonstrates just how the American Civil War was shaping the worldview of Americans, and how it helped them make sense of complex international affairs. Furthermore, the excitement of the *New York Herald* in the prospect of an American seizing control of territory in China reveals something about the surging nationalism of the North in the civil war. The editorial claimed Ward's leadership would 'benefit the Celestial Empire and the World by reconstructing the Chinese government, regenerating the Chinese nation, and advancing civilization and Christianity in the East, through a Yankee dynasty in China.'[29] The use of the word 'Yankee' rather than 'American' suggests that the *Herald's* believed that Ward's potential benefit for China would come from being a New Englander, rather than an American. On the eve of the American Civil War, many Northerners believed in the protestant, entrepreneurial spirit of the North represented the future driving force of American society.[30] The war provided the North to impose their way of life through force on

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[28] 'A Yankee Dynasty in China', *The New-York Daily Herald*, October 13th 1862.
[29] *Ibid.*
[30] Bruce Collins, 'The Ideology of the Ante-bellum Northern Democrats', *Journal of American Studies* 11 (1977), 103.

the South, which had come to represent the antithesis of the 'virtuous' Northern nationalism, and this imposition would only serve to construct an improved American nation.[31] Given that self-confident Northerners believed the imposition of their society on the South would improve the Confederate states once they were brought back into the fold, then we can see why they would feel the same about China. The self-confidence that they had cultivated throughout the antebellum era and into the civil war meant that when observing a 'Yankee' allegedly seeking to seize power in China, Northerners naturally assumed that this would be for the benefit of China, just as a Yankee society in the South would be beneficial as well.

On the next page of the October 13th 1862 edition of the *New York Herald*, the actual letter the editorial was referring to was printed. Entitled 'A live Yankee in China', the article does not actually contain any evidence that Ward intended to seize power in China, despite a by-line before the main body of the article stating, 'the rebellion to be crushed and the Tartar Dynasty Americanized'. If the letter did not mention anything about Ward seizing power in China, why did the *New York Herald* decide that this was likely to happen? The answer lies in the picture that the letter painted of Ward, and by extension, the supposed superiority of people from the north of the United States. For example, the letter did provide information about Ward's military prowess. Recounting how Ward initially made a name for himself, the letter stated, 'the rebels were pinching Shangae [Shanghai] sadly, and the imperialists couldn't help themselves.' To relieve the pressure on the city from the Taipings, the imperialists needed to re-take the city of 'Soonkong' [Songjiang] which was thirty miles from Shanghai. Noting that the Chinese Green Standard (regular imperial troops) had failed to take the city, the letter told the story of how 'Ward entered into a contract with them, and promised to take the city for forty thousand taels' and then 'he, in a company with eighty Manilamen [Filipino mercenaries], surprised the city of seven thousand rebels, took it by storm, and then very quietly pocketed his forty thousand taels, receiving hardly a scratch in the encounter.'[32] The letter went on to tell its readers of how Ward's army grew to include native Chinese people, stating that 'Ward's Chinamen were placed alongside the English and French forces, and they didn't disgrace themselves. They

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[31] Susan-Mary Grant, *North Over South: Northern Nationalism and American Identity in the Antebellum Era* (Lawrence, KA: University of Kansas Press, 2000), 153-159.

[32] 'A Live Yankee in China', *The New-York Daily Herald*, October 13th 1862.

fought as well as any troops can fight, showing that good soldiers can be made even of Chinamen.'[33] The tone of surprise that an effective fighting force, capable of fighting alongside Western troops, could be made 'even of Chinamen' is implicitly put down to Ward's leadership ability. Western newspapers, observing both the Taiping Rebellion and Second Opium War, consistently cast doubt upon the ability of Chinese people to fight. For example, in 1854 while commenting on news of the Taiping Rebellion, *The Tennessean* reminded its readers to 'bear in mind the Chinese character, their notorious cowardice, and their ignorance of all implements, appliances and tactics of modern warfare'.[34] Considering alleged Chinese cowardice was 'notorious', Ward's ability to turn an army of Chinese people into an effective fighting force would have been surprising to American people who largely believed the racialized notion that the Chinese race could not fight with valour. Therefore, despite the letter not actually stating that Ward was poised, or even intended to, turn on his imperial financiers and try to seize the Chinese throne for himself, the *New York Herald* read this letter telling of Ward's military prowess and ability to get the Chinese to fight, and decided that was exactly was going to happen. To them Ward represented everything 'right' with Northern societies and his ability to lead meant that he would definitely take the chance to take control. The editorial response to this letter demonstrates just how the imperialist and nationalist spirit of the Union states was pervasive across the 1850s and during the civil war itself. Had the North not believed in its own superiority, then we would not see the same response to this letter from Shanghai.

Regardless of whether Ward intended to seize Chinese territory or not, the *New York Herald's* belief that he would sit on the 'celestial throne' gained traction with other newspapers across the north. In New Jersey, the *Monmouth Democrat*, largely copying verbatim the *Herald's* letter wondered aloud 'why should not Ward finish his career as the Emperor of China, as Napoleon reached the climax of his glories as Emperor of France?'[35] The comparison to Napoleon Bonaparte demonstrates how Napoleonic rhetoric shaped how Americans viewed expansionism. Throughout the continental expansion of the antebellum period Americans had used Bonaparte as a reference point to either argue for, or against, an enlarged republic. However, expansionists managed to separate the image of

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[33] *Ibid.*

[34] 'China – The Rebels and Imperialists', *The Tennessean*, August 19th 1854.

[35] 'A Yankee Dynasty in China', *Monmouth Democrat*, November 6th 1862.

Napoleon as a tyrannical despot from the romanticised image of the Little Corporal as a democratic, military hero. By the 1850s, therefore, the belief that the United States had inherited Napoleon's mission to create an empire of liberty was a popular one. The search for an American Bonaparte continued into the start of the American Civil War when the press asked if officers, such as General McClellan and General Beauregard, were the spiritual heir to the former Emperor of France.[36] Therefore, it is telling that the Napoleonic language used to understand American expansion was deployed in conversations about an American officer fighting for the Qing Empire in China. It suggests that Americans considered China a legitimate place for American expansion and shows that the American press believed that Ward was not simply in China to fight for a wage. Instead, he must be a conqueror – the next American Napoleon.

Meanwhile, in Ohio the *Ashatabula Weekly Telegraph* also used the *Herald's* letter to inform its readers of Ward's exploits in China. After relaying the 'jealousy' of the English and French troops around Shanghai, the *Weekly Telegraph* told how 'then the rebels came down in a furious demonstration against Shanghai. Ward repulsed them handsomely with his Chinese army and forthwith he was promoted to a General and made a still higher Mandarin [by the imperial authorities]'.[37] While making no mention of Ward's territorial ambitions, his next move, according to the *Weekly Telegraph,* was 'to put down the entire Chinese rebellion, for which he wants ten millions of dollars.' 'If this isn't Yankee enterprise and audacity', the paper asked, 'what would be?'[38] For the *Weekly Telegraph*, Ward's ambition came from his 'nationality' but specifically, from being from the North. Ward's adventure in China was just another piece of evidence that Northerners needed to reinforce their belief in the superiority of their way of life, especially when compared to the South. Furthermore, the *Weekly Telegraph* celebrated this foreign military adventurism because it was an example of the entrepreneurialism that Northerners had come to believe represented the zenith of American nationality.

This latest episode of enthusiasm for a 'Yankee dynasty in China' did not last very long. By the time the letter from Shanghai, which was written in July 1862, reached the *New*

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[36] Mark Ehler, 'Bonaparte's Dream: Napoleon and the Rhetoric of American Expansion, 1800-1850 (PhD Diss., Louisiana State University, 2017), 1-20, 208-217.

[37] 'Adventures of a live Yankee in China', *Ashtabula Weekly Telegraph*, November 15th 1862.

[38] *ibid.*

York Herald it was October 1862. Ward, who was killed in action in September 1862, was already dead before the *Herald* began to laud his potential seizure of the Chinese throne. The news of Ward's death reached the United States on November 26th 1862 and again it was the *New York Herald* which broke the news. 'Among the important items of news received from Europe yesterday was a brief telegraphic announcement of the death of Mandarin Ward' announced the *Herald*. In their eyes, 'this event will probably change the future of the Chinese empire; and is a new and remarkable illustration of the slenderness of that thread upon which hang the destinies of nations.'[39] As previously mentioned, the *Herald* had decided from previous intelligence from Shanghai that Ward's death had ended China's chance to modernize along Western lines. 'Only those who can appreciate the Chinese character', suggested the *Herald*, 'can fully understand the immense reforms inaugurated by the commingling of natives and foreigners in the imperial armies, and by the introduction of modern inventions in the art of war in the place of the barbarous usages of the uncivilised Celestials.'[40] Even in Ward's death, the *Herald* found ways to emphasise the impact his Yankee nationality had on his potential rule in China. In their eyes, his rule would have seen China 'reclaimed to civilization', no doubt assuming that extending the Northern way of life to China would benefit the Chinese greatly. However, it was not to be because for the *Herald* 'the battle of Rungpoo has ended all those plans by the death of Ward, and it is now doubtful whether China will again relapse for a time into its former isolated barbarism, or whether one of Ward's officers will adopt and complete his schemes.'[41] Ward's death shows how the *New York Herald* was informed by a two-pronged worldview when it came to China. The first prong was that the Chinese were not capable of improving their situation themselves. In the *Herald's* eyes the Chinese were a backwards race, incapable of fighting with bravery and modernising their own empire. The second prong was Northern nationalism. It was not an 'American dynasty' in China that the *Herald* believed would be installed for the betterment of China, but a 'Yankee' one. In the midst of the American Civil War, the *Herald* espoused a belief in the capability of the imposition of Northern society on both the South and China to improve them. Ward's death was a serious blow to this belief for China, but the paper hoped that one of his American officers would

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[39] 'The Death of Mandarin Ward', *The New York Daily Herald*, November 26th 1862.
[40] *Ibid.*
[41] *ibid.*

step up and continue working towards his alleged dream of seizing the Chinese throne after crushing the Taiping.

As before, other Northern newspapers followed the *Herald's* lead and reported his death as a blow not only to the imperialist war effort against the Taiping, but also as a blow to Yankee imperial ambitions in China. On December 14th 1862, the *Detroit Free Press* told its readers that Ward 'died as a soldier loves to die – watching the retreat of the defeated enemy.' It went on to report that 'Colonel Forrester [sic], who succeeds Ward in command, is also a New Yorker, we believe, and we trust that he may have the skill and ability to follow up Ward's successes, and complete the establishment of a Yankee dynasty in China.'[42] In reporting that Ward's successor was a New Yorker gave the *Free Press* renewed hope that a Northerner could establish a Yankee colony in China. Colonel Edward Forester was one of Ward's lieutenants who took command following his death on September 22nd 1862.[43] Forester had been the subject of an article in the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* on August 6th 1862 describing the 'unprecedented career in that country [China] of a young American', Edward Forester'. The *Advertiser* described Forester's role in defending Songjiang and, possibly confusing Ward and Forester, how Forester was going to be made Military Governor of Jingfu. It also reported the Forester 'predicts the removal or deposing of the so-called Heavenly Emperor [Hong Xiuquan] within a year… such is the brief and brilliant career in the East of a genuine specimen of Young America.'[44] By invoking 'Young America', the *Advertiser* drew on an ideology which had taken hold in the Democratic party in the antebellum period. The Young America movement, which was largely centred in New York during the 1840s, drew inspiration from Young European movements which were nationalist and often revolutionary in character. The most vocal proponents of expansionism in the 1850s were adherents to the Young America movement. Those Young Americans who believed in expansionism reconciled the apparent contradiction of conquering other people's land for American gain by imagining that they were going to improve the lives of those they conquered. As such, they were some of the most committed

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[42] 'Mandarin Ward and His Successor', *Detroit Free Press*, December 14th 1862.
[43] Carr, *The Devil Soldier*, 296.
[44] 'Remarkable Romance in Real Life', *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, August 6th 1862.

expansionists.[45] Therefore, by lauding Forester as a prime example of 'Young America', the *Advertiser* demonstrates how this ideology was applied to ideas about American expansion into China and the Pacific, and not just to Latin America.

Despite the early enthusiasm about Forester on December 26th 1862, the *New York Herald* reported that the Russian Empire was going to take over the role that Ward's Ever-Victorious Army had played against the rebels, citing Forester's inability to match Ward's leadership ability. 'An unlucky bullet… put an end to his career', stated the *Herald* who lamented that his replacement Forster was 'an untried person, who may turn out quite unfit to succeed the valorous Ward.' Ward's death left an opportunity for Russia crush 'the rebellion now threatening to the throne of China's Emperor' and once this was complete the *Herald* believed that 'as surely and resistlessly [sic] as the incoming tide of the ocean sweeps over the sandy beach, so surely will the Muscovites rule in China.'[46] A few months later, in May 1863, the *New York Herald* announced that Forester was leaving China. His departure, the paper noted, left a 'distinguished American military organization' under the 'control of English officers in the service of the Chinese Emperor.'[47] The Ever-Victorious Army was taken over by an English Royal Engineer, Major Charles Gordon, meaning that the instrument which could potentially deliver an American dynasty in China was in British hands.[48] With the EVA in British hands and the Taiping on the back foot, another opportunity for an American to create an unofficial overseas empire slipped away.

This episode demonstrates just how United States expansionism was not confined to the Americas in the antebellum era. Whether or not Ward genuinely was a filibusterer intending to turn on his Chinese employers for territorial gain will be forever unknown.

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[45] Brady Harrison, 'The Young Americans: Emerson, Walker and the Early Literature of American Empire', *American Studies* 40 (1999), 75-77.

[46] 'The Rebellion in China to be Crushed by the Aid of Russia', *New York Daily Herald*, December 26th 1862. For more about the Western rivalry with Russia in Asia see: Kees Van Dijk, 'Great Britain, Russia and the Central Asian Question', in Kees Van Dijk, *Pacific Strife: The Great Powers and their Political and Economic Rivalries in Asia and the Western Pacific, 1870-1914* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015). Despite it seeming that the *New York Herald* would be disappointed at Russia seizing control of China, American public opinion was largely favourable towards Russia during this time, as evidenced in the American public opinion about the Alaska Purchase: Richard E. Welch Jr., 'American Public Opinion and the Purchase of Russian America', *The American Slavic and East European Review* 17 (1958), 481-494. For more on Russia-America relationship during the nineteenth century see: Norman E. Saul, *Distant Friends: The United States and Russia, 1763-1867* (Lawrence, KA: University Press of Kansas, 1991).

[47] 'European News', *New York Daily Herald*, May 16th 1863.

[48] Carr, *The Devil Soldier*, 310.

However, this is almost unimportant. What is important is that the *New York Herald*, acting on information passed from a correspondent in Shanghai considered Ward a heroic filibustering American Napoleon who would conquer Chinese land and administer it under the Stars and Stripes. Given that the newspaper with the largest circulation in the United States was heavily in favour of such a plan shows just how deep the expansionist spirit had taken hold in the United States. Yet, American expansion in China was only the dream of private individuals. The federal government believed, as expressed by Anson Burlingame, that 'the interests of this country [the United States in China], so far as I understand them, are identical with, those of the two other nations (England and France) I have mentioned'.[49] And at this point, Anglo-French interests were to protect the trading concessions they had extracted from the Qing government, rather than to pursue territorial conquest in China. Yet the fact remains, some Americans wanted to see the stars and stripes flying over territory in China. Perhaps, this can be explained because this episode took place during the Civil War, how Northerners understood it was informed by Union or Northern nationalism.[50] Belief in the superiority of the Northern way of life meant Northerners believed its imposition on other areas of the world, such as the South or China, would improve them. As a 'Yankee' the *New York Herald* believed General Ward's rule over China would benefit the Chinese, and furthermore they considered Ward's military prowess as further evidence of Northern superiority. Finally, the Ward episode helped spread myths about the courage and fighting ability of Chinese people during the Taiping Rebellion, as well as reinforcing white supremacy. The stories about the EVA often compared the Green Standard Chinese troops to the Chinese soldiers led by Ward, and concluded that Chinese 'cowardice' and 'ill-discipline' could be fixed by being led by a white man. Given that on the west coast of the United States about the possibility of Chinese railroad workers forming a voting bloc under the sway of a white demagogue, news from China about the loyalty and subservience of Chinese soldiers to a white General would have reinforced this fear. Therefore, the Ward episode demonstrates how American, and Northern, expansionism and nationalism could be exported overseas. It further demonstrates how the Taiping Rebellion was continued to

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[49] 'Anson Burlingame to Frederick Bruce', July 10th 1862, in *Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs, Accompanying the Annual Message of the president to the Third Session Thirty-Seventh Congress*, Foreign Relations of the United States, Office of the Historian, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1862/d678 [accessed 06/04/20].

[50] Grant, *North Over South: Northern Nationalism and American Identity in the Antebellum Era*.

be seen as an opportunity for some Americans in the 1860s. Those writing for the *New York Herald* about Frederick Townsend Ward believed, regardless of Ward's actual intentions, that the rebellion in China was the perfect opportunity for American expansion overseas. And therefore, Ward's death marked yet another missed opportunity for Americans to benefit out of this war.

In their relationship with China, many Americans often wondered how they could get more out of the Celestial Empire. Their experience of the Taiping Rebellion was no different. Americans believed the Taiping Rebellion represented an opportunity. Firstly, for some it was an opportunity to possibly gain greater access to Chinese markets, helping realise America's destiny to be the world's most important trading nation. Secondly, it was seen as an opportunity for an enterprising individual to try to carve out an American colony in China. Neither of these things happened. On the one hand, the Taiping rebels did not live up to the hopes that some Americans had for them. They had hindered, rather than helped trade and they gave Westerners no reason to believe that they believed in opening China to the rest of the world. With the Qing being forced into providing further trading concessions to Western nations after the Second Opium War, most Americans began to believe see the Taiping as a missed opportunity, and instead saw the Qing as the new hope for American commercial hopes in China. On the other hand, Colonel Ward's imagined filibustering adventure for territory in China never came to fruition. A sniper's bullet ended any hopes that newspapers such as the *New York Herald* had for Ward's expeditions in China. It was yet another missed opportunity for Americans to gain out of the Taiping Rebellion. Overall, the Taiping Rebellion was a time of opportunity for in the American imagination, but after the rebellion's last gasp, it would be remembered as a missed opportunity.

Chapter Six: What did American Newspapers Make of the Revolutionary and Christian Credentials of the Taiping Rebellion?

While discussing what the Taiping Rebellion meant for American trading and imperial interests in China, American newspapers also tried to understand what the rebellion actually was, and what it could mean for the world. These debates about what the Taiping Rebellion could mean for the United States, China, and the world in general were often informed by those Americans in China who had sent letters home, including to newspapers and journals. However, while there were significant continuities in opinion because of this, the ideas about the Taiping Rebellion in American newspapers were sometimes different, or applied to different areas such as slavery or empire which were not discussed in the American communities in China. This shows how ideas are dynamic and can be affected by the location within the communication network. The discussions about the Taiping Rebellion evolved as they were transmitted across the Pacific and debated in the newspapers of places such as New Orleans, New York and Washington DC and would have a profound impact on ideas towards China and the Chinese at that time.

To understand what this rebellion was exactly, Americans searched for reference points, both at home and abroad, to help them comprehend precisely what was happening in China. As Paul Connerton suggests, humans understand their 'present world in a context

which is causally connected with past events and objects'.[1] Over the course of the 1850s and 1860s, Americans would look to the recent and more distance past, such as the 1848 Revolutions or American Revolution, as well as the concurrent events, such as the American Civil War, to truly try to understand and evaluate what was happening in China.

A Revolution Like Their Own?

People within the United States took great interest in the character of the rebellion and most importantly, whether it was a revolution. The revolutions which swept across Europe in 1848 caused a peak of interest in revolution in the mid-nineteenth century across the world. This meant that any concurrent rebellion would be viewed through a lens where the 1848 revolutions would be a reference point. During and after 1848 Revolutions, Americans saw evidence of the revolutionary spirit spreading around the world. For example, Patrick Kelly suggests that in 1856 when violence broke out in Kansas, anti-slavery politicians understood the violence in relation to what had transpired in 1848 Europe.[2] Revolution and revolutionary violence was clearly a theme in American understandings of the world, and we can see this in the coverage of the Taiping Rebellion. Americans were interested in whether Nanjing was a revolutionary centre like Paris, Naples or Budapest. However, to judge whether American newspapers did conclude that the Taiping movement was a revolutionary one, we must understand what Americans judged to be a real revolution.

At the dawn of the 1860s Americans did not have to look far to see revolution. As the secession crisis peaked, the American public began to ask whether the events taking place in South Carolina at Fort Sumter constituted the start of a revolution. In fact, both Unionists and Confederates latched onto the question of whether the American Civil War was a revolution. Confederates argued that they had a revolutionary right to self-determination, while Unionists insisted that they were the revolutionaries who were fighting against the aristocratic power of the South. Both sides looked to 1848 and the American Revolution as they strove to prove their revolutionary legitimacy.[3] As such the

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[1] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 2.

[2] Kelly, 'The European Revolutions of 1848 and the Transnational Turn in Civil War History', 431-443.

[3] Fleche, *Revolution of 1861*, 1-11. For more on the role of Europe's 1848 Revolutions in American political thinking in the mid-nineteenth century see: Timothy Roberts, *Distant Revolutions: 1848 and the Challenge to American Exceptionalism* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2009), Roberts argues that Americans were initially optimistic about the revolutionary activities across the Atlantic. However, the belief

'revolution question' became a vogue subject in American public discourse. For example, the *New York Herald* published an article entitled 'The Great Question of the Day – Is Secession Revolution or Not?' on 27 December 1860. The article concluded that 'it is not true that the United States constitutes a mere temporary league, which can be lawfully and constitutionally broken up at any time…' therefore concluding that 'the act of cancelling it [the bond of union] is an act of revolution.'[4] Clearly, what we concluded was a 'civil war' after the fact was not so clear at the time, with many considering the secession crisis and outbreak of war to be a revolution.

There are parallels between American public discourse about whether the Taiping Rebellion constituted a revolution, and whether the American Civil War constituted a revolution. This is not to suggest that Americans were looking to China to understand their own situation per se, but instead shows that the mid-nineteenth century was a time for Americans when the idea of revolution was contested and in flux. Whether Americans concluded that the Taiping Rebellion was a revolution or not was important because it demonstrates the interconnectedness of two conflicts that are not traditionally seen as part of the 'age of nationalist uprisings'.

The Rhetoric of Revolution

Examining the language used by Americans discussing the civil war in China is helpful in revealing whether the American public considered the Taiping Rebellion a revolution. The use of the word 'patriot' hints at how American newspapers viewed the Taiping rebels in the earliest years of the Taiping Rebellion, between 1850 and 1854. By suggesting that the Taiping rebels were the 'patriots', they clearly delineated the Taiping as revolutionaries. Furthermore, the 'patriot vs imperialist' narrative which was often deployed by American newspapers when discussing the Taiping Rebellion did not come from American sources in

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that events in Europe were tainted by revolution violence and radicalism turned Americans off from having any support for revolutionary movements. The temporal distance from their own revolution allowed Americans to believe they had claimed independence from the British in a peaceful and orderly manner. This allowed Americans to wrongly believe only Americans had the successful ingredients for revolution to work. Therefore, the disorder around Bleeding Kansas convinced some Americans that Europe's revolutionary violence had been imported to the USA; Daniel W. Howe and Timothy Roberts, 'The United States and the Revolutions of 1848', in Robert J. W. Evans and Harmut Pogge von Strandmann, *The Revolutions in Europe, 1848-1849: From Reform to Reaction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 157-181.

[4] 'The Great Question of the Day – Is Secession Revolution or Not?', *New York Herald*, December 27th 1860.

Shanghai. Americans in China did not describe the Taiping as patriots, although they did use the word 'imperialist' sometimes to describe the Qing regime.[5] So why did the word 'patriot' catch on when describing the Taiping rebels in the early 1850s?

The term 'patriot' had been used by the American media over the course of the nineteenth century when observing internal conflicts across the world. For example, in 1821, the Greek provinces erupted into rebellion against the Ottoman Empire. Their cause was rapturously supported by Americans and Europeans who admired the Greeks and their ancient history and disliked that they were oppressed by non-Christian rulers.[6] In the coverage of the Greek war of independence American newspapers routinely referred to the Greek rebels as 'patriots'. In October 1822, *The Hillsborough Recorder* wrote of the 'glorious triumph of the Greek patriots over their barbarian oppressors'.[7] Similarly, *The American Watchman and Delaware Advertiser* noted that during a naval battle between the Greek and Ottoman navies in 1824 that the 'barbarians… after being so roughly treated by the patriots… thought it prudent to abandon the project and shearer off.'[8] The use of the word 'patriot' to describe the Greeks is contrasted against the use of 'barbarian' to describe the Ottomans. This suggests that the American journalists viewing the war of independence were firmly on the side of the Greeks who they considered civilised because of their religion and republican history, unlike their non-white, Muslim rulers.[9] As the 'patriots' in this situation, Greek freedom fighters were cast as revolutionaries by the American press.

Similar rhetoric was applied to the Taiping rebellion, where the Christian rebels were initially considered positively and clearly delineated as revolutionaries. In the early years of the rebellion, several papers used the term 'patriots' to describe the Hong Xiuquan's Taiping forces and referred to the Chinese government as the 'imperialists'. For example, in December 1853 the *Daily National Intelligencer* reported on how the Triads in Shanghai, who initially aligned themselves with the Taiping, had hijacked the rebellion for their own ends (this is now known as the Small Sword Rebellion). The paper reported that 'what had begun by a small band of patriots promises to be consummated by a power combination

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[5] Imperialist continues to be a by-word for the Qing after the Taiping Rebellion.

[6] Karine V. Walther, *Sacred Interests: The United States and the Islamic World, 1821-1921* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2015), 31-42.

[7] 'Confirmation of the splendid Victory of the Greeks', *The Hillsborough Recorder*, 30th October 1822.

[8] 'Greece', *The American Watchman and Delaware Advertiser*, 7th December 1824.

[9] Walther, *Sacred Interests*, 31-36.

known as the Triad association' clearly referring to the Taiping rebels as the patriots.[10] In contrast, the *Daily National Intelligencer* referred to the Chinese government as the 'imperialists'. On 16th November 1853 while reporting on the on-going fighting in Amoy, the paper stated 'later in the day the patriots had captured thirty-three of the Imperialists, who speedily met the same fate which had been meted to the patriots'.[11] The discourse of the word 'patriot' includes a dialectical relationship with the word 'imperialist', and this highlights why the Taiping rebellion resonated with American observers. The rebellion seemed to mirror the American Revolution, which was the very foundation of American national identity and therefore a symbol from which to measure world events against. The fact that the revolution was also a civil war within the colonies, as well as a revolutionary war of independence, had parallels with events in China as well.[12]

By labelling the Taiping the 'patriots' in this situation, American commentators showed support for the Taiping and furthermore, an acceptance that what was occurring in China was a revolution. During the secession crisis the language of patriotism drew on the revolution to justify both Northern and Southern stances. According to Anne Sarah Rubin, Confederates drew on their revolutionary past when arguing that 'they were not rebels, but patriots' seeking to preserve the revolutionary tradition that the North had abandoned.[13] Likewise, Northerners drew on their revolutionary past to justify military action against secession.[14] For example, the *New York Herald* ran a story about the Italian nationalist Giuseppe Garibaldi being invited to the United States 'to present himself with ten thousand men to take part in the war against the secessionists' by 'patriots who have written to Garibaldi'.[15] It is clear that the word 'patriot' took on a special resonance in American public discourse, as it was used to legitimise a conflict. Both Northerners and Southerners claimed to be patriots to legitimise their position during the secession crisis, and American newspapers similarly labelled the Taiping rebels patriots to legitimise their struggle against

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[10] 'Latest Foreign Intelligence', *Daily National Intelligencer*, 1st December 1853.

[11] 'China – Fighting at Amoy', *Daily National Intelligencer*, 16th November 1853.

[12] Susan-Mary Grant, *North Over South: Northern Nationalism and American Identity in the Antebellum Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 24-25.

[13] Rubin, 'Confederates Remember the American Revolution', 86.

[14] Grant, *North Over South*, 160-161.

[15] 'The News', *New York Herald*, 19th September 1861.

the Qing dynasty, because they saw it as yet more evidence that the rest of the world was following the liberal democratic example set by the American Revolution.

A more obvious indication of whether American newspapers considered the Taiping rebellion as a revolution is whether newspapers referred to the Taiping 'revolutionaries', as opposed to 'rebels'. Again American newspapers, across the political spectrum, were more likely to label the Taiping a revolutionary movement in the earlier years of the conflict. In November 1853, the Whig-supporting Massachusetts paper the *Barre Gazette* described the Taiping as the 'revolutionary party'.[16] The abolitionist paper, the *National-Anti-Slavery Standard* agreed in September 1853 as it labelled the events in China as 'the greatest revolution the world has yet seen', highlighting the spread of Christianity and likening the overthrow of Manchu rulers to the fall of Rome. It argued that 'this mighty change has come so fast on us that we have not yet realized its consequences.'[17] In the early stages of the rebellion, it is clear that the majority of the American people interested in the events in China, considered the Taiping rebels to be revolutionary.

Some American newspapers made links between the Taiping rebels and revolutionary or modernising movements both in the United States and in Europe. The *New York Times* believed the Taiping rebellion was a revolution which had 'its origin with a *Young China* party' which was 'successful everywhere, guided by able, resolute and politic leaders, sustained almost universally by the people, and likely to end in the overthrow of the Imperial Government.'[18] The reference to Young China links the Taiping uprising to the movement for Irish independence known as the Young Ireland movement, who had led a failed rebelled against British rule in Ireland in 1848.[19] As the Young Ireland rebellion had taken place during the wave of popular revolutions across Europe, Americans tended to be positively predisposed towards them, as the 1848 revolutions seemed to confirm that the rest of the world was following the progressive, democratic example they had set.[20] The reference also invoked the Young America movement which had become influential in American politics during the 1840s. The movement aimed to capture the essence of

[16] 'Important from China', *Barre Gazette*, 4th November 1853.

[17] *National-Anti-Slavery Standard*, 24th September 1853.

[18] 'The Chinese Revolution', *The New York Times*, September 21st 1853.

[19] Bryan McGovern, 'Young Ireland and Southern Nationalism', *Irish Studies South* 1 (2016), 45-60.

[20] Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 792.

America's youthful population and channel it into refreshing the American polity and modernising the nation.[21] Therefore, by tying the revolution in China into a wider global nationalist-revolutionary or modernising wave, the *New York Times* could only be demonstrating that the Taiping were indeed a revolutionary movement.

<u>Revolution – A Good Thing?</u>

While the majority of American newspapers, regardless of political outlook, considered the Taiping uprising to be a revolution, they were not united until the mid-1860s when it came to deciding whether a Chinese revolution was actually a good thing. Between 1850 and 1855, some newspapers sang the praises of the Taiping's potential revolutionary transformation of China, but others lampooned the progress of the revolution. Furthermore, some were in downright opposition to the revolution and saw it as dangerous. What caused this difference of opinion in American public discourse? Was political affiliation the driver of whether the revolution was considered a good thing or was it a sectional difference?

The *Washington Sentinel*, a Democratic newspaper based in the American capital city was one such newspaper which mocked the progress of the Taiping Rebellion. 'The revolution in China drags its slow length along', wrote the paper in August 1854, sneering that 'it is perhaps the slowest, most lethargic, the most protracted revolution that ever occurred. It may end in three years or at the day of judgement. It is more likely to continue until the latter, than to be perfected within the former period.'[22] The obsession with the speed and duration of the conflict was born out of the American desire to understand whether this war was a revolution, or whether it was the sort of ongoing disorder that Americans expected from so-called uncivilised countries. Therefore, the perceived lethargy of the Taiping's struggle diminished their revolutionary credentials. The reason for this 'lack of progress' according to the *Sentinel* was obvious. 'When we bear in mind the Chinese character, their notorious cowardice, their ignorance of all the implements, appliances, and tactics of modern warfare, the vast extent of that empire, and its immense population, it is not wonderful that the progress of the rebels should be so slow' argued the author.[23] While

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[21] Grinspan, *The Virgin Vote*, 114-115.

[22] 'China – The Rebels and Imperialists', *The Washington Sentinel*, August 12th 1854.

[23] *Ibid.*

the paper did not particularly favour the Qing, writing that the Anglo-American attack to remove the Qing soldiers from the vicinity of Shanghai's international concession had 'had a most happy effect', they were not sold on the Taiping either. To the *Sentinel* the Taiping's attempts to demonstrate their devotion to Christianity were the 'most pompous and ludicrously solemn exhibition of their religious zeal.' This was a position which stood at stark contrast with the position of American missionaries in China, who were almost uniformly in favour of the rebel's religious credentials in 1854. Therefore, when stating that 'the China revolution, like the Washington monument, will not be finished for some time to come', the author of the article in the *Sentinel* was really trying to suggest that the Chinese were simply unable to carry out a successful revolution.[24] The multiple references to the ineptitude of the Chinese in combat, as well as scornful attitude towards the Taiping's religious and political zeal suggests that this Democratic paper was unable to see beyond race when judging the progress of the Taiping Rebellion in the early years of the 1850s.

Not all Democrat papers were so stridently against a revolution in China. The mid-Western *Detroit Free Press*, far from being derogatory about the Taiping's attempted revolution, was very sympathetic towards it. Indeed, when discussing new information gathered by the British vessel *HMS Hermes* about the Taiping which had arrived from China in August 1853. The *Free Press* believed that all foreigners in China were sympathetic towards them, stating that 'this intelligence invests the revolution with a new and peculiar interest, calculated to arrest the attention of all Christendom. The sympathy of every enlightened nation has been from the start been with the revolutionists.' However, the paper believed that 'since the Christian religion is an element… it will be strange if the insurgents do not receive aid from "the rest of mankind"… the time may be prolonged, but many months will not elapse before the "brother of the Sun and Moon" will be a Christian King.'[25] This statement of support for a 'revolution' which would put a Christian king on the Chinese throne stands in direct contrast to the *Washington Sentinel's* sceptical outlook about their religion and how long their revolution was taking. Why is there such a difference in the stances of two Democrat supporting papers? Perhaps it is because a newspaper printed in the Midwest, traditionally home to many German refugees who fled the German

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[24] *Ibid.*

[25] 'The Revolution in China', *Detroit Free Press*, August 9th 1853.

states after the failure of their 1848 uprisings, would be more sympathetic towards revolutionaries.[26] Meanwhile, a newspaper printed in the more conservative-leaning Border South region will not have had such a strong influence of European revolutionaries upon its reporting on the rest of the world. This is reflected in the editorial lines of these respective newspapers on the revolutions that spread across Europe in 1848. The *Detroit Free Press* considered events in France to be a 'glorious revolution' which would spread 'republican principles all over Europe'.[27] On the other hand, the *Washington Sentinel* was much less enthusiastic when stating 'a revolution must be a sensible, well considered, and conservative revolution – or it will end in barren bloodshed, and fixed despotism.'[28] Yet again, the mid-Western paper was much more fervent in its support for revolution than the Washingtonian newspaper. This, perhaps, underlines the importance of section when understanding how different Americans reacted to the Taiping Rebellion.

While some Democratic Party leaning newspapers tended to treat the Taiping's revolution with some derision, Whig newspapers were more favourable towards the Taiping and their attempt to revolutionise China. Whig papers across the United States followed the lead of the *New York Tribune*, a paper influential in Whig and Republican circles across the mid-nineteenth century. For example, the *Portage Sentinel* of Ravenna, Ohio reprinted a *Tribune* article about the Taiping Rebellion on May 25th 1853. The editors of the *Sentinel* commented before printing the Tribune's article that 'revolution is still the order of the day. Reports say that a bona fide revolution has already commenced in the Celestial Empire; that by some means or other some of our rat-eating brethren have ascertained that there is such a thing as living without an Emperor. Strange hallucination!'[29] While there are obviously racist tropes in the editor's comments, the insinuation is that it was a good thing that the Chinese had 'finally' realised that they did not have to live under a monarch. The *Tribune* article printed underneath was more explicit in its approval of the Taiping's mission. 'We know not what would be gained by the success of the present Government', wrote the *Tribune*, 'but we cannot help feeling a sympathy with every thing that looks like movement

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[26] For more on German refugees and the mid-West see: Carl Wittke, *Refugees of Revolution: The German Forty-Eighters in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1952).

[27] 'French Revolution – Sympathy of the American People – Patriotic Speech of Gen. Cass', *Detroit Free Press*, April 14th 1848.

[28] 'Victor Hugo's Speech – French and American Ideas of Liberty', *Washington Sentinel*, March 25th 1855.

[29] 'Revolution in China', *The Portage Sentinel*, 25th May 1853.

among the stagnant waters of Chinese history' it continued. The *Tribune's* favourability was largely because 'the revolutionists thus aim, professedly, at bettering the condition of the people… we are not aware that he or his followers profess republican sentiments or propose to inaugurate the rule of the People in the event of success. This would be too much to expect.'[30] However, despite not believing that the Taiping rebels were a republican movement, the *Tribune* asserted the Taiping's movement was still a positive for China because:

> a change in the head of the government from one claiming to the descendant of the Sun and the brother of the Moon, to a man elevated from the common mass of humanity by the exertions of ordinary flesh and blood, and Chinese at that, would be a change looking in the direction of responsible and Republican government, by no means to be despised. On the whole we confess, therefore, that our sympathies are with the Revolutionists of China.[31]

Both the *Portage Sentinel* and *New York Tribune* were largely sympathetic towards the Taiping Rebellion in the early 1850s because they believed that dismantling Qing regime, who believed they had a divine right to rule, was a good thing because it was a step towards a republican government. This corresponds with how the *New York Tribune* reacted to the 1848 revolutions initially. As a part of the humanitarian, progressive reform wing of the Whig Party, the *Tribune* had felt solidarity with the liberal republicans of Europe.[32] Progress Whigs clearly felt the Taiping presented a Chinese version of those European liberal revolutionaries of 1848, and therefore, they were people to show solidarity with.

As well as being optimistic about the presumed republicanism of the Taiping movement, Whiggish and Republican newspapers were guided by their attachment to liberal nationalism when assessing whether the Taiping Rebellion was a good thing. The Washington DC newspaper *The Daily Republic* was one such newspaper that found the idea of a nationalistic Taiping movement endearing. An article published on June 14th 1853 stated that 'if we had a motive to assign to the Chinese revolution, we should found it in the

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[30] *Ibid.*
[31] *Ibid.*
[32] Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 793.

noblest of sentiments – the sentiment of nationality; in the most legitimate of resistances – the resistance to oppression.' The paper believed the Chinese to be oppressed because 'we know, in fact, that the present dynasty [the Qing], like the dynasties which oppress Italy and France, is a foreign dynasty. It only succeeded the conquest of China by the Tartars.' In their opinion, China had 'never ceased to murmur against the foreign yoke' and 'today… they have rallied under a common standard – the standard of their country; they fight for their nationality, their independence'. 'Who', asked the *Daily Republic*, 'will refuse to join them in their efforts?' The paper also suggested that 'the insurgents deserve better' when they heard 'with a painful emotion... news of an intervention on the part of the united fleets of England, France and America for the purpose of arresting the progress of the insurgents and protecting the ports of Shanghai and Nankin [sic]'.[33]

Although discussions about the Taiping was dominated by the Whig (later Republican) and Democrat newspapers, people and newspapers who believed in political ideologies that did not quite fit in those political parties also discussed the Taiping Rebellion in the American public sphere. A prominent example is Karl Marx. Although not American himself, Marx wrote about the Taiping Rebellion as part of his role as the London-based correspondent for the *New York Tribune*, which employed him between 1852 and 1862.[34] While the *Tribune* was clearly not a socialist newspaper, and not all of the articles in the *Tribune* about the Taiping were by Marx, the articles that were by him were obviously shaped by Marx's socialist views. Therefore his contribution to the public discussion in the United States about the Taiping Rebellion's revolutionary potential presents the opportunity to analyse how a socialist view of the Taiping Rebellion differed from that of the mainstream in mid-nineteenth century America.

Despite his socialist views, there are similarities in how Marx saw the revolution, and how Whigs and Democrats saw the Taiping's movement. For example, his June 14th 1853 article in the *New York Tribune* suggested that the Taiping Rebellion was a 'formidable rebellion' which had been 'afforded by the English cannon forcing upon China that soporific drug called opium.'[35] Marx was hardly alone in suggesting that the revolution had been

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[33] 'Revolution in China', *The Daily Republic*, June 14th 1853.
[34] James Ledbetter (ed.) *Karl Marx: Dispatches for the New York Tribune: Selected Journalism of Karl Marx* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), xv-xvi.
[35] 'Revolution in China and Europe', *New York Tribune*, June 14th 1853.

caused by Western interference, despite his more explicit condemnation of imperialism in China. However, Marx was one of the few who consciously predicted (and hoped) that the revolution in China would have a knock on effect on Europe and Britain in particular. Marx explained that British manufacturing needed constant extension of markets to keep pace with rapidly expanding production, otherwise there would be a significant economic crash. With the loss of the Chinese market for British goods to the revolution, Marx suggested the 'Chinese revolution will throw the spark into the overloaded mine of the present industrial system and cause the explosion of the long-prepared general crisis, which, spreading abroad, will be closely followed by political revolutions on the Continent.'[36] Furthermore, he linked this revolution sparked by a financial crash caused by the Taiping Rebellion to the recent history of revolution by arguing that 'since the commencement of the eighteenth century there has been no serious revolution in Europe which had not been preceded by a commercial and financial crisis. This applies no less to the revolution of 1789 than to that of 1848.'[37] By doing this in the *Tribune*, one of America's most widely circulated newspapers, Marx joined others in making 1848 an obvious reference point from which to understand the Taiping Rebellion.

Not only did the Taiping's rebellion remind radicals of 1848, but it also gave them hope that the global revolutionary wave was not over. Marx noted the irony of the Taiping's revolution coming back to haunt the West by saying 'it would be a curious spectacle, that of China sending disorder into the Western World while the Western powers, by English, French and American war-steamers, are conveying "order" to Shanghai, Nanking and the mouths of the Great Canal.'[38] The inclusion of the United States as part of the Western powers helping fan the flames of revolution in China suggests to the reader that America is not immune from the potential revolutionary backlash. While someone like Marx obviously wished to see revolution throughout Europe and the United States, Marx's suggestion that the Taiping's revolution could lead to revolution in the West might have contributed to the reticence felt by other, more mainstream, views about the Taiping. With the platform the *Tribune* gave to someone like Marx, such suggestions could well have served to put others off the Taiping Rebellion. Herein lies the significance of Marx's contribution to the American

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[36] *Ibid.*
[37] *Ibid.*
[38] *Ibid.*

public discourse about the Taiping Rebellion. There was not a significant difference between how radicals, such as Marx, understood the causes and character of the Taiping's revolutionary movement. Yet, Marx's suggestion that the Taiping Rebellion was part of a global revolutionary wave helped contribute to the image problem that the Taiping had amongst certain Americans during the 1850s and 1860s.

Indeed, by the late 1850s and early 1860s, any sympathy felt towards the Taiping Rebellion from either Democratic or Republican leaning newspapers was beginning to ebb away. For example, in Ohio both Republican and Democratic papers published articles that suggest public opinion had swung against the Taiping rebels. For example, the Republican *Cleveland Daily Leader* noted with some disbelief in October 1860 that 'revolution in China is a slow business, for it is now something like a dozen years since the rebels in the Celestial Empire began their aggressions on the Imperialists. The revolution may be completed in the next dozen, perhaps not in the present century.'[39] By suggesting, with some sarcasm implied, that the revolution might not be completed until the twentieth century, the *Leader* demonstrates that they thought the revolution in China was not making satisfactory progress, especially if it wanted to be taken seriously. Americans considered the rate at which a revolution was progressing to be important. Should the conflict descend into a stalemate, as the Taiping's revolution had, then American newspapers lost belief that this war was anything other than low-level disorder. This increasing disillusion with the Taiping mirrored the reaction of the American community in China, who began to see the Taiping as a hinderance, rather than a help to their interests by the 1860s.

Other Ohio newspapers echoed the sense that the Taiping's rebellion was not a benevolent revolution. The ostensibly independent, but Republican-leaning *Cincinnati Daily Press* reported that 'the capture of the wealthy city of Soochow by the Chinese rebels, has created the deepest consternation at Shanghai'. The paper reported that when the Taiping capture a town it is 'followed by indiscriminate massacre, general pillage, a ruthless destruction of property, and the most terrible atrocities which it is possible for human beings to perpetuate.'[40] The destructive imagery which the newspaper reported seemed to confirm other reports that the Taiping's supposed revolution was nothing more than

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[39] 'The Christian Rebels of China', *Cleveland Daily Leader*, October 25th 1860.
[40] 'The Chinese Rebellion – The Capture of Soochow by the Rebels', *Cincinnati Daily Press*, September 3rd 1860.

disorder which was achieving nothing but destroying lives and property. The title of this article 'The Chinese Rebellion' confirms that the *Daily Press* did not consider the Taiping's war to be revolutionary. Articles, such as these, which focus on the devastation caused by the war and use the word 'rebellion' exclusively demonstrate that in the 1860s, Republican Ohioans did not consider the Taiping's movement to be revolutionary.

Democratic papers in Ohio also took a firm stance against the Taiping. The *Jeffersonian Democrat* of Chardon, Ohio was more explicitly against the Taiping rebellion. 'A revolution is now in progress in China', wrote the *Democrat* on September 7th 1860, adding it was 'attended with terrible destruction of human life.'[41] Considering that American papers had carried stories about the Taiping Rebellion for over a decade it seems unlikely that the *Democrat* would be only just learning of 'a revolution now in progress in China'. Instead, it is more likely that the author of the article is likening the Taiping Rebellion to a violent social revolution, rather than the kind of political revolution that Western liberals sympathised with. Indeed, Democratic supporting newspapers had been largely favourable to the European Revolutions of 1848, and they favoured the establishment of new republics across the world.[42] So why was the Taiping's revolution different? Since the *Jeffersonian Democrat* focuses almost exclusively on the violence of rebellion, it can be assumed that they were indeed affronted by the news they had received via the *New York Times* correspondent in Shanghai. According to the *Democrat*, the correspondent gave 'an interesting account of the progress of the rebellion in the interior of China…[and] the details of some of the butcheries of men, women and children are almost too revolting for belief'. Furthermore, the article states that in the city of Hangzhou 'it is estimated that from 50,000 to 80,000 lives were sacrificed, and the city was left in a state of desolation almost impossible to conceive. The utmost consternation exists among the Chinese population of Shanghai, who live in constant dread of a descent by the rebels on that city.'[43] The evidence that was provided by the *Times* correspondent to other American newspapers, including the *Jeffersonian Democrat*, convinced the *Democrat* that the Taiping's rebellion was a radical, populist revolution which was inherently violent. The tone of the newspaper's article suggests that, given the evidence provided, the *Democrat* could not understand how

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[41] 'Revolution in China', *The Jeffersonian Democrat*, September 7th 1860.

[42] Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 793.

[43] *Ibid.*

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anyone could sympathise with such a violent affair. The marked difference with coverage of the 1848 revolutions demonstrates how the preconceptions that American newspapers had about non-white countries meant they could not imagine that political liberalism could guide a revolution in China. Instead, they focused on the violence which accompanied the struggle.

While many Northern papers, both Republican and Democrat had begun to turn against the Taiping Rebellion in their articles at the beginning of the 1860s, others remained steadfast in their approval. The *New York Herald* was one such newspaper which continued to believe the Taiping's revolution was a positive one. This is significant because at this point the *Herald* was the most widely circulated paper in the United States. So despite many American papers being against the Taiping by the dawn of the 1860s, a significant and influential paper went against the contemporary zeitgeist.[44]   On January 27th 1861, the *Herald* posted an article about the state of the revolution in China, which analysed what they had read from information passed to them by the American missionary Issachar Jacox Roberts, who had was living with the rebels at that time. While noting that 'to promote the cause of these men, it is maintained, would be to shed the blood of thousands, perhaps millions of Chinese, victims to the wrath of the victorious rebels, who, to the ordinary horrors of war, would contribute the fiendish cruelties which ever attended religious wars', the *Herald* stated that 'all we know at present of them [the Taiping] is highly favorable to the interests of foreigners and foreign trade in China.'[45] The *Herald* continued on saying that it was 'evident that Western civilization was making itself powerfully felt in the East' and insinuated that Taiping victory would 'speedily sweep away the old landmarks of Oriental exclusiveness, and by inducing an assimilation of tastes on the part of the people, foster our commercial relations, promote the welfare of all nations, and widen the realm of civilization.'[46] As noted above, other Northern newspapers, regardless of political persuasion, were largely unfavourable in their analysis of the revolution. So what made the *New York Herald* different? Perhaps what made the *Herald* so remarkably different was, what historian James Crouthamel calls, its 'editorial jingoism'. This refers to the editorial

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[44] James L. Crouthamel, *Bennett's New York Herald and the Rise of the Popular Press* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1989), ix.
[45] 'Christianity and Revolution in the Chinese Empire', *New York Herald*, January 27th 1861.
[46] *Ibid.*

leadership of James Gordon Bennett, the founder of the *New York Herald*, who was known for the pioneering sensationalism that the *Herald* became known for. Bennett had vehemently supported American expansion, especially during the U.S.-Mexico War and was a firm believer that the republicanism of the United States should be exported to other, what he saw as, 'less civilised' peoples.[47] Perhaps, therefore, the reason why the *Herald* saw the Taiping as China's so called 'better option' when most other newspapers were turning against them, was because the *Herald*'s editorial leadership were so determined to see Western civilisation spread around the world, whatever the costs. The governments of the imperial powers, including the United States, had come to the conclusion that the Qing were better suited to serving Western interests. The *Herald* was much more belligerent in its attitude towards China, and saw the on-going disorder as an opportunity to further deepen American involvement in China. Furthermore, it is clear that they see the Taiping's revolution as an opportunity for the United States. This is why they make such a case for Taiping victory being better for American commerce. The *Herald's* sniffing out American opportunity in China would become most apparent in its jingoistic advocacy of an American dynasty in China. In general, the *Herald's* analysis that the Taiping's revolution was beneficial for China was driven by the belief that it presented an opportunity for American commerce and Western belief systems to gain a bigger foothold in China, than an analysis of what was actually happening on the ground, as other Northern papers were doing.

There was also a lack of sympathy towards the Taiping's revolution in Southern newspapers around the beginning of the 1860s. In May 1859, The *Baton Rouge Tri-Weekly Gazette and Comet*, a newspaper which would counsel against Louisiana seceding from the Union, put out an article containing information about the 'Taiping Manifesto' it had gained from the *China Mail*, a British owned newspaper based in Hong Kong. According to the *Gazette* 'this Tae-ping revolution is the result of foreign intercourse with China, this blasphemous manifesto a result of Christianity preached to its people! Truly we cannot pride ourselves over such results.' To the newspaper, the Taiping rebellion was a symptom that 'China is falling beyond redemption; the revolution is not a purifying agent, as other revolutions have been, but is a mere fungus growing out of and feeding on the extreme

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[47] Crouthamel, *Bennett's New York Herald and the Rise of the Popular Press*, 56-57.

rottenness of the empire. It will die out and do no good.'[48] The *Gazette*, via the *China Mail*, clearly lays the blame for the substance of the rebellion on the influence China's foreign community had had on the religious and political makeup of the rebellion. Arguably, the reason why the *Gazette* would say that foreigners were culpable for the failings of the Taiping Rebellion is because of the obvious Western influences on the rebellion, such as its Christian underpinning. However, the Taiping's interpretation of the Western ideas which had influenced their rebellion were deemed unacceptable to Americans back home. Therefore, Westerners were deemed to have failed to correct these erroneous beliefs. The missionaries, diplomats, and soldiers who visited the Taiping were clearly unable to get the rebels to listen to them about how to practice Christianity or modernise China, and therefore were to blame for the character of the revolution.

Newspapers in the border South region, where significant amounts of the fighting in the American Civil War took place, also published anti-Taiping articles during the 1860s. Although Kentucky was a state in the border South region which did not ultimately secede from the Union, the state was hopelessly divided between Unionist and Confederate support. Furthermore, it was a state where much fierce fighting took place, from pitched battles to guerrilla style raids, and as such Kentuckians had become well aware of the costs of internal conflicts, such as the Taiping Rebellion in China. The *Louisville Journal* was a pro-Union newspaper during the American Civil War, which also discussed the state of affairs in China. In October 1864, the *Journal* wrote of the fall of Nanjing which signalled the end of the Taiping rebellion. 'The Taepings, proceeding from bad to worse with a rapidity scarcely equalled by their growth in power', wrote the paper, 'have suffered a defeat which will do much towards restoring power of the empire to legitimate hands.'[49] The *Journal* claimed that 'the revolution in China has been viewed with very different feelings by civilized nations since it broke forth.' After describing how the rebellion had been seen across the 1850s and early 1860s, the author discredited the Taiping as something that had to be 'considered as nothing more than a grand disturbance of uneasy spirits with no higher incentive than a lust for power. It has destroyed much and constructed nothing. The Kingdom has been upturned and desolated; its internal and foreign commerce almost annihilated, and not one good

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[48] 'The Rebels in China', *Baton Rouge Tri-Weekly Gazette and Comet*, May 29th 1859.

[49] 'The Chinese Rebellion', *Louisville Journal*, October 27th 1864.

thing has been produced.' Finally, the *Journal* believed that 'for the welfare of China, we may hope that the success won at Nankin may be continued everywhere until the Taepings, no better than destroyers and murderers, are eventually wiped out.'[50] While the author of the article about the fall of Nanjing in the *Louisville Journal* does not explicitly mention the American Civil War, it is not too much of a stretch to perhaps see the war as a reference point here. Having coped with three years of a war of their own in Kentucky, the *Journal* perhaps used the Taiping Rebellion as a warning that the South's 'revolution' would end in the same way as the Taiping's and furthermore would achieve precisely nothing.

Furthermore, when discussing the Taiping Rebellion during the 1860s, Southern newspapers sought to position themselves in opposition to whatever they perceived Northern newspapers were saying about the Taiping rebels. On September 3rd 1862, the *Times-Picayune* of New Orleans took aim at the stance of the *New York Tribune* on the Taiping Rebellion. It stated that 'the New York Tribune is very warmly on the side of the Taepings of China, against the Imperial Government. It treats the success of these insurgents as the only hope for the regeneration of that "wretched" country.'[51] By contrast, the *Times-Picayune* asserts that rather than listening to what those in New York were writing about the rebellion, Southerners interested in Chinese affairs should be listening to English and French reports instead. The paper had learned from its European sources 'that so far from being willing to be guided by the laws and practices of civilized communities, the Taipings neither understand nor follow them.' And according to the Anglo-French reports on the Taiping, the *Times-Picayune* stated that the Taiping were a 'mass of disorderly men, united together by no other tie than that of a common appetite for plunder; who have no social organization or idea of policy, or theories of government, and no principle of cohesion. They are described as in the lowest state of morals – cruel, licentious and faithless.'[52] While the *Times-Picayune* does admit 'which of these pictures is nearer the truth, it would be difficult to pronounce', it argues that even if the *New York Tribune's* beliefs about the Taiping were true, the New Orleans newspaper asserted 'if the best that can be said of the Taepings be true, still it is a deplorable account.' In their opinion, however, it was the truth that 'indeed, society and government there-in seem to be in a

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[50] *Ibid.*

[51] 'The Taepings', *The Times-Picayune*, September 3rd 1862.

[52] *Ibid.*

state of rapid disintegration, without the presence of any vital element in the mass out of which revival and reconstruction may be hoped for.'[53] It is clear that the *Times-Picayune*, while coming to the conclusion that the Taiping's revolution was a complete failure, their evaluation of the Taiping's revolution was done through the lens of American sectionalism. It is significant that the *Times-Picayune* did not just evaluate the different opinions on the health of the Taipings' revolution on their own. Instead, the Louisiana paper juxtaposed its own position, that the revolution was detrimental to China's future, against the *New York Tribune's* position that the Taiping were the only hope that China had. It implies that there was a 'Union' opinion and a 'Confederate' opinion about the Taiping rebellion, and that the Confederate opinion aligned with the opinions of the European nations involved in China. In this way we can see how the American Civil War was fought in the realm of ideas, and that significant global and Pacific events were not free from the crisis engulfing the American republic.

Furthermore, the American Civil War was sometimes used as a reference point to help a newspaper's audience understand the Taiping's revolution. However, by doing so the Taiping Rebellion was also used as a way of criticising those on the other side of the American Civil War. For example, in 1863 the *Daily Delta* was being published in Union army held New Orleans. Prior to the North's capture of New Orleans in April 1862, the *Delta* had been in favour of Louisiana's secession from the Union. However, by January 1863 the paper seemed to have turned against the Confederacy and used its coverage of the Taiping rebellion to make this point. An article published on January 6th 1863 claimed that Hong Xiuquan 'appears to have rebelled for much the same reason which led Jeff. Davis and other Southern demagogues into rebellion against the Union, namely: defeat in an attempt to gain office.'[54] On the one hand, clearly the *Delta* was following the majority of American newspapers in casting doubt upon the revolutionary credentials of the Taiping by suggesting the rebellion's leaders only cared about seizing power. On the other, the Taiping was used as means to argue that the Confederacy was also not a legitimate revolutionary secession from the United States of America. Clearly debates about the character of the Taiping's

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[53] *Ibid.*
[54] 'The Chief of the Chinese Rebels: The Taepings and their Leader', *The Daily Delta*, January 6th 1863.

revolution were clearly often also discussions about the state of the United States and Confederacy in the age of the Civil War.

Despite the majority of the American press starting to turn away from the belief that the Taiping Rebellion was a 'good' revolution, some newspapers kept their faith in the revolution. Religious newspapers were especially keen to cling onto the idea that the Taiping's revolution was a positive development for China and the world at large. Not being on the frontline of the Taiping's war in China allowed Christian papers back home to stay more optimistic about the future of the Taiping's religion than the missionaries in China were able to. *The Advocate* of Buffalo, New York was one such newspaper which continued to see the Taiping Rebellion as a revolutionary force for good in the 1860s. On June 6th 1861, *The Advocate* published an article reassuring its readers that the American Civil War was part of God's plan. In what was to be the last edition of the *Advocate* under that editor, who informed his readers he was to serve as the chaplain for the Twenty First Buffalo Regiment of the Union army, the paper wrote that a

> fierce war rages between sections heretofore united by ties of interest, brotherhood, patriotism, and religion. It is scarcely possible to realize the dreadful fact. The scene appears like a horrid dream, like a nightmare; and it is only when we attempt to arise and shake off the seeming delusion we become conscious that we have to be with a dire reality.[55]

Yet, in the face of this adversity, the newspaper tried to reassure its readers. 'But how terrible are the way[s] of God! On what a vast scale does he mete out his judgements…' wrote *The Advocate*, adding '[but] there are some important lessons which the people of God are to learn in these times'. These lessons were that 'God is opening the barriers in the way of churches progress… Look at China when a revolution is making progress which demolishes idolatry as it advances, and promulgates the Decalogue: whose prime minister has been the pupil of an English missionary, and is well schooled in systematic theology.'[56] The fact that the *Advocate* pointed to the Taiping's revolution as an example to Americans

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[55] 'The Times', *The Advocate*, June 6th 1861.
[56] *Ibid.*

suggests that the newspaper believed that through adversity, America could become better. For *The Advocate*, the United States would become better because 'we believe the slavery will receive its death blow – that henceforth it will gradually wane until the clanking of the oppressors chain shall be heard no more in our borders, and in the end we shall be a united and happy people.' Finally, the paper added that despite all the hardship 'it is a glorious privilege to live in these times'.[57] Clearly, the Taiping Rebellion was seen as a positive, because for the *Advocate* it was an example of how war could bring a better world. Firm in the belief that the Taiping Rebellion was making China better, *The Advocate* believed that war would make the United States better.

Analysing how the American press discussed the merits and problems of the Taiping rebels as a revolutionary movement demonstrates just how politics, religion and section influenced how Americans saw the rest of the world. The trajectory of opinion about the Taiping rebellion as a revolution followed a similar course in the continental United States as it did amongst Americans living in China. Of course, the reason the trajectories were similar was partially because Americans in China were feeding information about the rebellion back home across the course of the Taiping's lifespan. Despite this however, the way different Americans back home came to similar conclusions about the Taiping's revolution was also informed by the particular context that they were situated in at home. For example, at the beginning of the 1850s Whigs, merging into Republicans, tended to be supportive of the Taiping's attempt to remove the Qing dynasty because they believed the rebels would institute a republican form of government in China, following the liberal nationalism that American liberal Whigs and Republicans believed was appropriate for the world. Democrats, on the other hand, were more divided at the start of the 1850s. Northern Democrats, like the Whigs or Republicans, were more sympathetic towards the Taiping. They believed the rebel's revolution would lead to a Christianised China, which was good for all civilised nations. Southern Democrats were not necessarily as enamoured with the Taiping, and some lampooned the progress of the revolution, attributing the lack of revolutionary success to racialised criticism of Chinese people. By the 1860s, the divergent opinions about the Taiping had largely become one monolithic opinion – the Taiping's revolution was not good for China.   Yet, how Northern Republican unionists and Southern

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[57] *Ibid.*

Democrat Confederates arrived at this similar position reflects their wider outlooks on the world. Northerners argued that the revolution had not made satisfactory progress, while suggesting that it had degenerated into a violent, social revolution rather than the liberal, nationalist revolution it was supposed to have been. Southern Unionists saw the Taiping rebellion as a warning about their own rebellion erupting around them in the South. Southern Confederate sympathisers saw the Taiping as just another arena to fight the civil war in. Papers like the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* positioned themselves against what they saw as Northern approval of the Taiping's revolution, and therefore vehemently argued against it. Therefore, it is clear that we understand the worldview of different Americans in the mid-nineteenth century better through understanding how they came to the conclusion that the Taiping rebellion was indeed, not good.

The Taiping Revolution – A Race War?

As a society built on slavery, the United States was riven with racial tensions. This was especially apparent in the South where most of America's four million slaves were kept in bondage. However, white supremacy crossed the Mason-Dixon Line into the North as well. All sections of the United States had tendency to understand global through the lens of the American experience of race and slavery. Therefore, when Americans tried to understand what exactly the Taiping Rebellion was they tried to map their own racial geography on to China.

The antebellum South was a slave-holding society gripped with paranoia that their slaves would rebel against their masters. White Southern society was built on a paternalistic fiction that slavery was the natural order of things, and that slaveholders had a duty to look after their slaves. Eugene Genovese argues that paternalism provided an outlet that allowed slaves and masters to live together by allowing the reconciliation of racial and class differences.[58] Yet, this was a fiction which did not reflect the reality of Southern society. The sheer number of slaves who ran away from being chattel, which was around 100,000 people over the antebellum period, reflected a different reality.[59] The desire of so many slaves to

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[58] Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 3-7. For more see: Jordan D. Winthrop, *Tumult and Silence at Second Creek: An Inquiry into a Civil War Slave Conspiracy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993); David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 205-231.

[59] This estimate appears in: Renford Reese, 'Canada: The Promised Land for U.S. Slaves', *Western Journal of Black Studies* 35 (2011), 208.

escape from bondage severely undermined the paternalistic fiction which the foundations of their society were built on, and furthermore it made slave owners question the loyalty of their slaves.[60] So the masters lived in fear of those they had enslaved. One slave owner of Natchez, Mississippi wrote to another that he had 'great apprehension that we will one day have our throats cut in this county. We have 5 blacks to one white; and within 4 hours march of Natchez there are 2200 able-bodied slaves.'[61] Plantation owners were obsessed with signs and rumours of slave revolts. For example, fear of Christmas Day slave insurrections made Christmas a time of deep insecurity for many slave owners, who believed that slaves would use the holiday as a marker for an uprising. This fear saw security around slaveholding communities tighten around Christmas.[62] Even as slavery was on its last legs in 1865, Christmas Day rumours symbolised just how fragile white Southerners were. As December 1865 approached, the Southern elite were convinced that a race war would be launched, and white people would be slaughtered and the federal government, in the midst of waging war against the South, would seize their land.[63] The Christmas Day fears demonstrate just how insecure the Old South was. It was a society built on racial oppression via chattel slavery, and therefore one that was built on deeply instable foundations. However, slaveholders denied the agency of the slaves themselves when observing unrest. Instead, they blamed the insidious influence of outsider abolitionists for the problems they faced with their workforces.[64] Slave owners looked at the rest of the world they saw evidence that abolitionists and others who opposed their interests were stirring up racial discontent around the globe. In light of this, slave owners were extremely sensitive to worldwide currents of racial struggle.

Indeed, anxiety over slave rebellions in the antebellum South had global roots. Historians such as Edward Rugemer have emphasised the transatlantic nature of the

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[60] Ira Berlin, *The Long Emancipation: The Demise of Slavery in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 14-16. For more on the destruction of slavery see: James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States* (New York : W. W. Norton & Co, 2013).

[61] Stephen Duncan, 'Stephen Duncan to Thomas', October 4th 1831, in Winthrop, *Tumult and Silence at Second Creek,* 1.

[62] Shauna Bigham & Robert E. May, 'The Time O' All Times? Masters, Slaves, and Christmas in the Old South', *The Journal of the Early Republic* 18 (1998), 282-284.

[63] Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 128.

[64] Winthrop, *Tumult and Silence at Second Creek*, 56-57.

disunion crisis. Slave rebellions in the British Caribbean preceded emancipation in British colonies in 1833. Slave owners looked to the events in the Caribbean with trepidation. They feared that American abolitionists would use British emancipation as a blueprint for how to destroy slavery in the South. They worried that abolitionists would see that slave rebellions had pushed the British government towards emancipation, and try to agitate slaves into rebelling, so the same aim could be achieved in the South.[65] In particular, the spectre of the Haitian Revolution raised the prospect of racial warfare in the minds of America's white slaveowners. In 1791, the slaves and free blacks in the richest colony in the French Empire, Saint Domingue, were inspired by the French revolution to rise up against their masters. The following revolution totally subverted Haitian – Haiti being the revolutionary name of Saint Domingue – society, with slaves becoming citizens of a black republic and plantations being seized from white masters.[66] The revolution was extraordinarily bloody with all factions committing atrocities, however the victory of the slaves and free blacks led to a genocide of the white occupants of the islands in 1804. By 1805, almost none of the 30,000 white inhabitants of Haiti were left on the island.[67] The brutal violence had a profound legacy far beyond the Caribbean. In the United States, slave owners saw the Haitian Revolution as a fearful lesson that their slaves would seize their freedom through violent means, if agitated to do so. Furthermore, it encouraged antebellum Southerners to resist abolition by all means necessary. Plantation owners worried that emancipation would lead to an explosion of racial warfare in the South, as had happened after the demise of slavery in Haiti.[68] By studying the role of Caribbean emancipation in the secession crisis, historians have demonstrated that the antebellum South was tied into an Atlantic world.

Southern planters also drew upon Western experience in Asia to understand their own slave society. In 1857, a Sepoy mutiny in the British-controlled Bengal Army over religious grievances triggered an India-wide revolt that threatened the very existence of the

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[65] Edward B. Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation: The Caribbean Roots of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 1-16. For more on the relationship between emancipation in the American South and the Caribbean see: Eric Foner, *Nothing but Freedom: Emancipation and its Legacy* (Baton Rouge, Lousiana State University Press, 2007).

[66] Franklin W. Knight, 'The Haitian Revolution', *American Historical Review* 105 (2000), 104-105.

[67] Philippe R. Girard, 'Caribbean Genocide: Racial War in Haiti, 1802-1804', *Patterns of Prejudice* 39 (2005), 138-140.

[68] Matthew J. Clavin, *Toussaint Louverture and the American Civil War: The Promise and Peril of a Second Haitian Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2010), 3-5.

British Raj and pitted Indian colonial subjects against their white colonial overlords.[69] For Southerners, coverage of the Indian Rebellion raised the spectre of a non-white population rising up against white elites. This was precisely what slave owners feared the most. The Indian Rebellion would serve as a reference point when Southerners viewed racial tension in their own society. For example, John Brown's attempted raid on Harper's Ferry was likened to the Siege of Lucknow – with American's imagining the excessive violence at Lucknow had been what Brown was aiming for. Even when Southern elites were sympathetic towards the Sepoys, they could not escape how slavery shaped their actions. For example, abolitionists routinely pointed out the hypocrisy of slaveholder sympathy towards Indians who wished to free themselves from British control, while denying the freedom of their own black slaves.[70] The Indian Mutiny episode demonstrated just how events across the world could affect domestic struggles within the United States, and how domestic struggles affected how Americans saw the world. The Sepoy Rebellion further demonstrated to some Southern elites that subjugated peoples were willing to violently rebel against their masters. Even when slave owners were sympathetic, abolitionists used this sympathy to further undermine the rationale behind slavery. Despite the turn towards a more global history of American slavery and the slide towards disunion, China has often been ignored in this story.[71]

The Taiping Rebellion was a different proposition to the other racially charged uprisings that Southern elites viewed fearfully in the mid-nineteenth century because both sides were non-white. Yet while, Americans had some knowledge with the racial geography of China, since missionaries and other Westerners had had enough contact with China over the preceding centuries to understand that the Manchu were the ruling ethnic group in China, they tended to interpret China's ethnic and racial make-up through the racial understandings of their own country. In 1854, the *Richmond Dispatch* told its readers that aside for the previous two hundred years, China had always 'been ruled by native princes', meaning previous dynasties like the Ming, and it was no surprise that an attempt to 'expel

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[69] Barbara D. Metcalf & Thomas R. Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India* (2nd edn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 92-122.

[70] Nikhil Bilwakesh, '"Their faces were like so many of the same sort at home": American Responses to the Indian Rebellion of 1857', *American Periodicals* 21 (2011), 1-23.

[71] Stephen R. Platt alludes to the role slavery played in the understanding of the Taiping Rebellion by American slave owners, but does not develop the idea more. See: Platt, *Autumn in Heavenly Kingdom*, 11-12.

their haughty conquerors' had been made after the power of the Manchu had been undermined by losing the Opium War to the British.[72] Ten years later, the *Chicago Tribune* reported in 1864 that 'the Tartars are a race who at different times have conquered China. The leading and dominant race in China, are the Mongol Tartar' and furthermore the paper told Americans that slavery was a 'prominent feature of social condition of China' where slaves were 'not composed of persons of color, but are men and women sold for debt, and sometimes this slavery is hereditary.'[73] It is clear that throughout the 1850 and 1860s, the American public knew that the Chinese were ruled by a foreign 'race'. Despite being a non-white race, Southerners might have drawn an analogy with the supposedly slave-holding Manchus.

Southern planters and elites viewed the Taiping Rebellion through a racial lens which affected how they understood the rebellion's revolutionary potential. The New Orleans-based *Daily Picayune*, a vocal proponent of slavery, told its readers that 'the Chinese revolution has a present and national interest for Americans' because of the potential impact on commercial relations between the United States and China. However, the *Picayune* clearly had slavery in mind as well when it reported that the 'ruling race in China is the Mantchoo Tartars' who had ruled over the Chinese for two centuries and 'the two races [Manchus and Chinese] have not amalgamated…' in this time. The paper especially drew upon the South's own experience of race relations when telling its readers about the 'quite, patient, laboring millions' who had 'submitted to their masters mostly with exemplary gentleness, except in the mountainous regions, whose inhabitants are proverbially impatient of all kinds of tyranny.'[74] The lesson the *Daily Picayune* was suggesting the Taiping Rebellion offered Southern elites was that subjugated races would cause no problems for the ruling race unless they were agitated by outside influences. This was a similar lesson to the one slavers took away from other global events such as the

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[72] 'The Civil War in China', *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, July 27th 1853.

[73] 'China and the Chinese', *Chicago Tribune*, January 19th 1864. Despite what Americans thought slavery was not a prominent feature of Chinese society. The population of slaves in China was much smaller than America's population of slaves, relative to the total population sizes of each respective nation. Chinese slavery was not based on racial identities like slavery in the Americas. For more see: Pamela Crossley, 'Slavery in Early Modern China', in David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, *The Cambridge World History of Slavery Vol. 3, AD 1420-AD 1804* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 186-213. Furthermore, Mongols and Manchu are distinct ethnic groups, despite what nineteenth-century Americans thought.

[74] 'The Revolution in China', *The Daily Picayune*, May 22nd 1853. This source is read in a similar manner in Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 11-12.

Haitian Revolution, emancipation in the British Caribbean, and the Indian Rebellion, where Southerners believed that non-white rebels had been provoked into rebelling by agitators. Southern newspapers carried proclamations issued by the Taiping rebels for their readers, which further heightened their concern about the Taiping being a racial uprising.

The longer the rebellion raged on, the more negative Western views became, both in China and abroad. American missionaries reported back home just how violent the Taiping rebellion had been. Marquis Lafayette Wood, the North Carolinian Southern Methodist who had arrived in China in 1860, wrote back to the *The Greensboro Times* telling them that 'the Manchu dynasty was set up in blood, and present indications are that it will end in blood.'[75] Wood was no advocate of the rebellion after experiencing it in China, however it is unlikely he was thinking of analogies with Southern slavery when he informed Southern newspapers about the likely bloody end of the Manchu. Yet, given the proximity of his report to the climax of the secession crisis, it is possible that such information would be considered in such a light by the readers. Slavery would have to be enforced and protected from Northern agitation, otherwise a similar bloody ending would come to Southern slave owners. In fact, as the American Civil War began, some Southerners, looking for evidence that war could have benefits for Confederate society, looked to China. The *Richmond Daily Dispatch* saw in China evidence that a warrior like society could be beneficial for the Confederacy, noting that the 'warlike Tartars are certainly a nobler race than the sordid Chinese.'[76] This implicit comparison between the South and the Manchu rulers of China drew on previous analogies of racial war in China. Southerners used news of the Taiping Rebellion to denigrate the North by comparing Northerners to the Chinese.

As the war raged on Southern papers often drew on their understandings of China to denigrate the North. In August 1861, the abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator* reported on how the Southern press was discussing the war, by reprinting several articles from the *Richmond Whig*. In one article, the paper told its readers that:

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[75] Marquis Lafayette Wood, 'From Our China Correspondent: A Few Gathered Fragments', *The Greensboro Times*, January 5th 1861.

[76] 'Honorable War Not to Be Deplored', *The Richmond Daily Dispatch*, May 18th 1861. This source is read similarly in Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, 378-379.

as England and France knew that there would be no stable peace with the treacherous, knavish, cowardly and cruel Chinese, short of Pekin, so we know that there can be no lasting peace with the *Chinese counterparts* on this continent until Confederate cannon overawe New York, and Confederate legions *bivouac* on Boston Common… Our true goal is *Pekin* – the headquarters of the genuine Tartar horde, with their gongs and stink-guns. The military occupation of the Yankee capital can alone give indemnity for the past and security for the future.[77]

In a second reprinted article from the *Richmond Whig*, the paper also declared that:

the fact is, the Yankees are very little better than the Chinese. They lay the same stress on the jingle of their dollars that the Celestials do on the noise of their gongs… they are swollen with conceit, and fancied that they were fit for empire… the break-down of the Yankees, their utter unfitness for empire, forces dominion upon us of the South.[78]

While drawing on the Second Opium War, and conflating both the Chinese and Manchu ethnic groups, the *Richmond Whig* drew on ideas that had arisen in Southern coverage of the Taiping Rebellion. The allusion that the Chinese, who had 'fancied themselves fit for empire', were actually unfit for governance likely draws on Southern observations of the Taiping Rebellion, as well as the Second Opium War.[79] The South had watched the Chinese race try to overthrow their Manchu rulers, and by August 1861 they seemed unlikely to succeed. While one might think the natural place for Southern sympathy to lie would be with the Taiping, who themselves were trying to break free of Northern rule, the *Richmond Whig* was actually likening the North to the Taiping rebels. This demonstrates that over the

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[77] 'The Southern Press on the War', *The Liberator*, August 30th 1861.

[78] 'The Ruling Race', *The Liberator*, August 30th 1861.

[79] This judgement that the Chinese were 'unfit for governance' echoes American observations of Mexicans during the Mexican-American war. For example, Americans tried to convince Mexicans living in Northern Mexico that Americans would be better rulers than their current 'incompetent villain' leaders in Mexico City. See: Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S-Mexican War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 262-263.

previous decade, the underlying fear of slave rebellion had coloured Southern opinion about the Taiping. Many Southerners saw the Chinese as a cowardly race, rising up against a more noble Manchu elite, and they saw themselves as the American equivalent of the Manchu. This meant that when drawing on China to understand the American Civil War, Southerners twisted the narrative to cast the North as the Chinese, rather than the Manchu overlords. A global history of American slavery, the secession crisis and the American Civil War reveals that events in the Pacific world, as well as the Atlantic world, had a real impact on the thinking of plantation owners. The perception that the Taiping Rebellion was similar to a slave uprising increased slaveholder's anxiety and provided evidence that their society was extremely volatile. Events in China were further proof to Southern elites that societies built on racial subjugation would explode into racial war, if sparked by outside influence.

A Revolution for Christianity?

The Americans in China, and especially the missionary community, had been willing to accept that the Taiping's rebellion was a revolution in the early 1850. Yet, by the 1860s the perceived lack of revolutionary progress made by the Taiping rebels meant the majority of the American community in China no longer considered the rebellion a revolution. Similarly, early enthusiasm for the Christianity of the Taiping waned as the war raged on and American newspapers learnt more about the religion followed by the rebels. The mid-nineteenth century was a time when the Second Great Awakening was having significant influence on public life. Many Americans believed that the Kingdom of Jesus Christ on Earth was nearing fruition and therefore many dedicated themselves to pushing for social reform as a means of hastening Christ's arrival.[80] This belief that the Second Coming was near also caused Americans to look for signs that they were right. Postmillennialist Christians, who believed the entire earth had to be Christian before the Second Coming, were especially keen to see signs of Christianity's advance across the world. However, most Christian Americans were keen to see world Christianised, regardless of their beliefs about the Second Coming, so many were deeply interested in assessing whether the Taiping were 'true' Christians (by Western standards anyway). There was a feeling within the United States in the nineteenth century that Americans had been granted by God a special mission

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[80] Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 285-289.

to civilise the world.[81] Part of this, some felt, was to spread Christianity to 'pagan' areas of the globe. Therefore, all were deeply interested in whether the Taiping would aid American missionaries with their mission. They asked questions about whether the Taiping kept their Sabbath, whether they followed the Ten Commandments and read from the Bible. Most importantly, they asked whether the rebels were to be a catalyst for the Christianisation of the entirety of China. Through asking these questions over the course of the 1850s and 1860s, the American public would become disappointed as it became clear the Taiping were not about to conform to Western standards of religion, and even worse, were having a negative effect on the work of American missionaries in the region.

At first, American newspapers of all political persuasions were enthusiastic about the arrival of the Taiping rebels on the scene because they were convinced of their Christian credentials. In the early parts of the 1850s, many newspapers convinced that part of what made the Taiping Rebellion so 'revolutionary' and significant was because it would lead to the Christianisation of China. In February 1854, the democratic supporting Massachusetts newspaper the *Pittsfield Sun ran* a story about how the Taiping had 'embraced the Christian religion, [and] destroyed every sign of idolatry', later suggesting that 'the present rebellion in China, viewed either in a civil or religious point of view… is without a parallel in the history of the world.'[82] Similar enthusiasm was found in the South. In Natchez, Mississippi, the *Daily Courier* reprinted an article on February 6th 1853 from the *London Gazette* which suggested that the revolution in China would 'eventually end in a religious revolution amongst that people.' The story clearly sympathised with the Chinese people when it stated 'no people were more wretched, endured more sufferings, or had more precarious means of subsistence, than the lower, and of course the most numerous, class of Chinese people' and most importantly, it suggested the Taiping rebellion was evidence of the end of China's isolationism, allowing for 'the emancipation of so many millions of mankind.'[83] In both the North and South, newspapers were initially not that concerned about the substance of the Taiping's Christianity. Instead they were simply blown away by the idea of a Chinese

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[81] William Earl Weeks, *Building the Continental Empire: American Expansion From the Revolution to the Civil War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee Publishing, 1996), 61. For more on America's sense of mission: Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History* (2nd edn., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).
[82] 'Origin of the China Rebellion', *The Pittsfield Sun*, 9th February 1854.
[83] 'The Extraordinary Chinese Revolution', *Natchez Daily Courier*, February 6th 1853.

Christian movement, and believed it well for the future of the Christian religion. This helps account for the initial surge of enthusiasm across the American press for the rebellion.

Eventually, however, American newspapers began to ask exactly what the Taiping's beliefs were. As with other aspects of the Taiping Rebellion, the newspaper discussion about the Taiping's Christianity took the lead from what Americans in China were saying about the rebel's religion. In November 1855, the *Tri-Weekly Commercial* of Wilmington, North Carolina printed extracts from a letter that Issachar Jacox Roberts, the missionary who was the Baptist missionary credited with giving Hong Xiuquan his only formal Christian education. Roberts would go on to be one of the rebellion's biggest cheerleaders both in the American press and back amongst Americans and Europeans in Shanghai. On the religion of the rebels, Roberts told the American press that 'all [Taiping leaders] concur in destroying idols, in obeying the Ten Commandments, and in worshipping the one true and living God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, though with some errors, for the want of instruction.'[84] However despite noting the doctrinal errors, the paper assured Americans that the Taiping were willing to correct their errors by saying they had 'invited Mr. Roberts to the capital [Nanjing] to instruct them more fully in the Christian religion; and he attempted to go, but was stopped by the blockade of the Imperialists.'[85] It is interesting to note that the *Tri-Weekly Commercial* points out that the reason why Roberts could not reach the rebels was specifically the fault of the Imperialists. By doing so, the article implicitly paints the Qing authorities as an antagonist in the rebellion because they were stopping the Taiping from receiving religious education, and therefore, by extension, blocking the Christianisation of China. This was unacceptable to Roberts who predicted that should the rebellion be successful the 'probable results' would be 'a universal change in religion throughout the nation; the promulgation of the Gospel and the salvation of their souls.'[86] The suggestion that the victory of the rebels would lead to the salvation of Chinese was a powerful one for country where many of its population were actively looking for evidence of the spread of Christianity, bringing the world closer to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Other newspapers were willing to overlook the strange doctrines of the rebels because they were so enthusiastic about it otherwise. The Democratic Party supporting

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[84] 'The Chinese Revolution', *The Tri-Weekly Commercial*, November 22nd 1855.
[85] *Ibid.*
[86] *Ibid.*

Washington Sentinel declared in April 1854 that 'the revolution is a stupendous affair'. However, the author of the article pointed out that:

> so far as I am able to judge, favors more of Mohammedanism than Christianity, in this sense – that is, Tae-ping who is the Messiah of these fanatics, and it is in him they believe rather than in the crucified Saviour. They have no organized church or ministry, and their worship altogether seems composed of the repetition of certain prayers three times a day.[87]

Despite this, the *Sentinel* was not willing to write the Taiping off entirely. Instead, they suggested the rebels presented an opportunity for change in China, which was exciting to them. 'One cannot but feel interested in the *denouement*', stated the *Sentinel*, 'but, in case of final triumph, whether foreigners will benefit by the change of masters in China is a question which time alone can solve.'[88] Clearly, despite the acknowledgement that the Taiping's religion was closer to Islam than Christianity, the *Sentinel* was still optimistic that something good could come from the rebellion.

However, this acceptance of the Taiping's religious doctrine was not universal. In 1855, the staunchly conservative Whiggish *Daily National Intelligencer* reprinted a letter from *The Times* which claimed that missionaries present in China 'had the courage to endeavor to stem the delusion by exposing the movement as a libel upon Christianity.'[89] The delusion the author mentioned was the idea that reached Europe and the United States in 1853 that the rebels were a Christian movement, and Europe 'rang with the sound of these great tidings and America echoed it back.'[90] However, the author made it clear that in his opinion 'the rebel leaders neither knew nor desired to comprehend the doctrines of Christianity.'[91] The evangelical Protestants within the Whig party over the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s had railed against groups that they believed went against their evangelical beliefs. Disgust at the 'pagan rituals' of Freemasonry and idolatry of the Roman Catholic church led

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[87] 'Latest from China', *The Washington Sentinel*, April 5th 1854.

[88] *Ibid.*

[89] 'The Rebellion in China', *Daily National Intelligencer*, 20th January 1855.

[90] *Ibid.*

[91] *ibid.*

Whigs to strongly oppose those who did not follow their form of evangelical Protestantism.[92] The fact that the conservative wing of the Whig Party was so deeply concerned with Catholicism they were abandoning the Whigs en masse for the nativist Know Nothing Party by the mid-1850s demonstrates just why they would be intolerant of the Taiping.[93] As the doctrinal differences of Taiping Christianity were heavily reported during the early 1850s, the context of anti-Catholicism is important. As large portions of the American populace were intolerant of Catholicism, it is no surprise that other variants of Christianity that did not conform to their Protestant worldview were deemed unacceptable by conservative Whigs who tended to lean towards anti-Catholicism. Therefore, as the Republican supporting *Farmer's Cabinet* stated in November 1860 the 'curious graft of Christian ideas upon their own ancestral worship' convinced American Whig newspapers that the Taiping were not proper Christians.[94] It seems that while many American papers were therefore initially enthusiastic about the revolutionary spread of Christianity across China in the early years of the Taiping uprising, some dissented from the mainstream stance on the Taiping's embrace of Christianity. A significant undercurrent of American public opinion, driven by anti-Catholicism and scepticism of non-Protestant Christianity, rejected the idea that the Taiping's supposed revolution would save the souls of Chinese people.

This disappointment became more entrenched in American public opinion as the 1860s progressed. As a clearer picture of what the rebels truly believed in became clearer in the United States itself, American papers of all political sympathies tended to change their stance on the Taiping rebels. The Republican-supporting *Cleveland Daily Leader* suggested the American people might have a change of heart towards the Taiping on October 25th 1860 when reading in *The Times* what missionaries had found when visiting the Taiping at Suzhou earlier that year. The *Leader* noted 'there is a certain sympathy felt in this country for the rebels' because 'they are said to be Christians'. However, 'the Rev. Mr. Edkins, who in June last, with four other missionaries, visited rebel stronghold, and has since furnished

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[92] Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 30-31.

[93] *Ibid.*, 909-910.

[94] 'Extract of a Letter Dated Hong Kong Sept. 11th 1860', *Farmer's Cabinet*, 30th November 1860.

the London *Times* with the result of his inquiries, and puts a somewhat view on the subject.'[95] The Ohio paper stated that:

> From Mr. Edkin's narrative we gather that the rebels of China have a general idea of Christianity, marred, however, by very erroneous ideas. Of the abstruse dogmas of our faith they know little or nothing; nor can the originators of the rebellion definitely state whence they received their first ideas of faith with which they are now so identified.[96]

Furthermore, the paper added 'It must be confessed, also, that the sentiments they profess are practically denied by the cruelty they manifest towards the defenceless people they subject on their way to the heart of Chinese imperialism.'[97] It became clear to those reporting on the Taiping Rebellion in the *Cleveland Daily Leader* that, by their own standards of American Christianity, the Taiping neither knew much about Christianity nor were acting in a Christian manner. Furthermore, the role that missionaries in China played in the shaping of American opinion about the rebellion is clear here. This demonstrates, yet again, that while American newspapers followed the lead of Americans in China, especially missionaries, when formulating opinions about the Taiping and their religion.

The *Cleveland Daily Leader* was not the only American newspaper in the 1860s that believed that perhaps American sympathy for the Taiping rebels might need revaluating. In the South as well, the newspapers began to report on the lack of progress that the Taiping had made in correcting the mistakes in their interpretation of Christianity. On January 6th 1863, the *Daily Delta* of New Orleans published a report based on a book published by British author Commander Lindsay Bruce about the Taiping's leadership. On Hong Xiuquan's interpretation of Christianity the *Delta* reported that 'as a heretic, Tien wang [Hong Xiuquan] is the most incorrigible self-willed one I ever heard of.' Hong Xiuquan was an irredeemable heretic because 'he has been talked to, written to, written at, memorialized

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[95] 'The Christian Rebels of China', *Cleveland Daily Leader*, October 25th 1860. Rev. Joseph Edkins was British protestant missionary and Tarleton Crawford was one of the missionaries who accompanied him on the expedition to Suzhou [Soochow].
[96] *Ibid.*
[97] *Ibid.*

and addressed in all shapes and forms about the truths of Christianity, and he remains as stubborn as ever… The Pope would have had him burnt long ago.' [98] The reason why his blasphemy was considered so galling was because of Hong Xiuquan naming himself as Jesus Christ's younger brother, which particularly offended the *Daily Delta*. 'He is equal to the Son according to his older documents', wrote the paper, 'but he always makes the Father, Son, Himself and the Young Lord all equal. He has dismissed the Third Person of the Trinity, after vainly deavoring [sic] to incarnate it in the person of Tung-wang [Yang Xiuqing, the Taiping's East King], the most blood thirsty of all the Kings.'[99] In the eyes of the *Daily Delta*, the blasphemy of the Taiping was so breathtakingly outrageous that it was actually laughable. It seems that as the 1860s dragged on, Americans from all areas of the United States were less willing to accept the doctrinal oddities of the Taiping's religion then they had been in the early 1850s. There had been an expectation that once missionaries were able to reach the Taiping rebels in Nanjing the irregularities of their Christian belief would be straightened out. However, when American papers learnt that the Taiping's leadership were unwilling to listen to what foreign missionaries were telling them about Christianity, and change accordingly, it became apparent that the Taiping would not save the souls of China's population.

In fact, some newspapers did not just believe that the Taiping would not be able to Christianise China, but also that the rebellion was actively harmful for the spreading of the Gospel in China. Some missionaries began to suggest this to their respective missionary boards in the letters they sent back to the United States. Tarleton Perry Crawford had suggested to the Southern Baptist Missionary Board in May 1862 that the Taiping's advance of Shanghai had led to 'a perfect and stolid indifference to the gospel.'[100] This was an idea that was also perpetuated by American newspapers, such as the widely-read *New York Tribune*. Whilst discussing the chaos befalling China because of the Taiping's rebellion and the Second Opium War, the *Tribune* stated on August 6th 1860 that 'if famine is to be added to war and bloodshed, truly the Chinese will have cause to remember what some piously call the "throwing open of China to the Gospel" this year.'[101] The assertion is clear here –

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[98] 'The Chief of the Chinese Rebels: The Taepings and Their Leader', *The Daily Delta*, January 6th 1863.
[99] *Ibid.*
[100] 'Tarleton P. Crawford to Brother Pointdexter', May 3rd 1862.
[101] 'China: Correspondence of The N. Y. Tribune', *New York Tribune*, August 6th 1860.

people who optimistically believed the Taiping would lead to the Christianisation of China are going to be sorely disappointed. Instead, suggested the *Tribune*, a rebellion fought in the name of Christianity which was destroying lives and homes in Southern and Central China was not going to aid the cause of Christianity in China. Instead, it was going to harm it.

As with discussions about the Taiping as a revolutionary movement and the Taiping's use of violence, the debate in the American public sphere about whether the Taiping were going to Christianise China or not followed a similar trajectory to that of the debates amongst Americans in China. At first, Americans were convinced that the rebel movement in China with the odd but recognisably Christian beliefs were a sign that the Kingdom of Christ on Earth was nearing, and failing that at least Chinese souls would be saved. The doctrinal oddities were overlooked because there was a firm belief that once missionaries were able to instruct the Taiping about Christianity, the rebels would listen and accept a protestant form of Christianity. However, when it became clear that the rebels were unwilling to listen to missionaries, public opinion turned against them. Furthermore, some began to argue that the Taiping were actively harming the cause of God in China. While political stances had less of an effect on whether one was enthusiastic about the prospects for the Taiping's Christian rebellion or not, there were still differences. For example the conservative Whigs, who also embraced anti-Catholicism, were much more sceptical about the authenticity of the Taiping's belief system from the start than others. Yet by the rebellions end in 1864, most had given up any hope that the Taiping were the answer to the salvation of the world's largest non-Christian country.

The Trajectory of Opinion, 1850-1864

Therefore, we can see that American newspapers were initially convinced that China was following a revolutionary path. In the early years of the rebellion, American newspapers of all political persuasions were quick to label the Taiping as patriots and revolutionaries, believing that they were following the United States in overthrowing an authoritarian, foreign ruler and establishing a liberal, Christian regime. However, as the war raged on it soon became apparent that the Taiping were not the revolutionary Christians, at least not to American standards, that journalists had once reported they were. Instead, the Taiping were considered by Americans to be unprincipled warlords wreaking havoc across China, and worse, they were not adhering to the evangelical protestant form of Christianity. And

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by projecting United States' racial geography onto China, some Americans convinced themselves that the Taiping's rebellion contained elements of a race war, which reminded white American newspapers of their own fears of racial uprisings. In light of this, American newspapers stopped describing the Taiping as revolutionaries, and the Taiping rebellion was no longer considered a revolution.

This downfall of the Taiping in American newspaper opinion followed a very similar trajectory to that of the opinion of Americans in China about the rebellion. This demonstrates just how interconnected the United States was with its expatriate community of missionaries, merchants, diplomats and mercenaries in China. As the primary source of information on what was going on China's civil war, the American community in China, and especially it's missionaries, had a significant influence over public opinion about China in the United States. However, once news had reached the continental United States it had a life of its own. Newspapers put their own spin on what was happening in China based on their own predispositions in life. For example political allegiance, geographical location, and religious denomination were just some of the things that influenced the way the Taiping Rebellion was interpreted by different Americans. This proves that the way information is understood in a transnational world is not static. Instead, understanding is a dynamic process and the reference points to help one understand and interpret events such as wars and revolution change depending on context.

The prime example of this is the obsession with understanding whether the Taiping Rebellion was a revolution and if so, what kind of revolution it was. Aside from diplomats, Americans in China rarely, if ever, conceptualised the Taiping Rebellion as anything other than a rebellion. Yet, the American press almost exclusively referred to it as a revolution, despite receiving a lot of their information from Americans in China. In doing so, they reveal the influence that 1848 and revolutionary rhetoric surrounding the American Civil War had on the way all Americans saw the rest of the world. Furthermore, this demonstrates just how divergent understandings of one event can be because of different contexts.

This perhaps reveals the real benefit of analysing American reactions to the Taiping Rebellion. The different reactions to the Taiping - their revolution, their violence and their religion – give us a deeper understanding of the worldviews of Americans in a society divided by a myriad number of opinions, stances and allegiances. Understanding just why

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different Americans reacted to a rebellion on the other side of the Pacific in the way they did gives us greater insight into a divided republic in the mid-nineteenth century.

Conclusion: The View from 1864

In the summer of 1864, most eyes in the United States were on Atlanta where General William T. Sherman's successful siege seemed to mark the beginning of the end for the Confederacy.[1] Yet, as most Americans were focused on the beginning of the end of one civil war, the American community in China were witnessing the very end of another. On July 19th 1864, the Heavenly Kingdom's capital, Nanjing, was captured by the Qing government. By the end of November the ringleaders of the rebellion had been captured and executed. With the end of the rebellion, a sense of stability returned to China.

The Taiping rebels disappeared from newspaper columns very quickly after their demise. With Western powers firmly committed to the treaties signed with the Qing rulers of China, Americans lost interest in the idea that other factions within China were better placed to modernise the Celestial Empire. The Qing seemed to be the most likely to open their nation's markets and souls to America's goods and religious exports. Meanwhile the Taiping's rebellion was had become seen as a missed opportunity for China, and America's interests in China.

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[1] Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders*, 295-296.

For Americans in China, the Taiping rebellion had been a period of immense regret. Many Americans, especially missionaries, had been optimistic about the rebels. They seemed to represent a modernizing revolution which sought to cure China's social ailments and most importantly to some, Christianise the Celestial Empire. At a time when the current Manchu rulers of China were desperately trying to stop foreign encroachment on their economy and territory, the Taiping seemed like an opportunity to gain better access to China's markets. They were to be bitterly disappointed. As the war's destructive presence made itself known to the American community in Shanghai, many were utterly disillusioned with how the war had gone. The indiscriminate violence was carried out by both the Taiping and the Imperialist Qing armies, but the Taiping were thought to represent something different, better than the Manchu regime. Their violence was meant to civilise the Chinese people through forging a new Chinese nation in line with Western values. Yet, as the war crept towards Western sanctuaries on the Chinese coast, Americans saw evidence of Taiping armies slaughtering innocents, burning dwellings, and destroying farmland without seeing any progress towards civilization. On top of this, the misery caused by the refugee crisis in Shanghai compounded Anglo-American disillusionment with the rebels and their cause. In this environment, Americans in China re-evaluated their opinions on whether violence was redemptive for non-white peoples.

The more Americans in China knew about the rebel's revolutionary movement, the more they disliked it. The social reforms that many lauded the Taiping for turned out to be little more than a sham, with the leadership hypocritically carrying on acts, such as polygamy and alcohol consumption, which they had outlawed in the first place. Additionally, it appeared to American observers that the Taiping's leadership did not wish to see liberal reforms instituted in China, but instead wanted to seize power for themselves and rule as the Qing did. The failure of the Taiping to live up to the revolutionary ideals that Americans mapped onto them helped Americans believe that Chinese people were unfit for governing through the rule of law. Instead, they were destined to despotic government.

Furthermore, as Westerners learned more of Taiping Christianity, its doctrinal oddities and Taiping refusal to be corrected by Anglo-American missionaries, the greater this disenchantment became. Missionaries, who had believed that Hong Xiuquan's drive to take the Chinese throne would aid their mission to spread the word of God, had become disillusioned by the 1860s because the Taiping leadership were resistant to Westerners

trying to shape the doctrines of their Christianity. Americans began to see the religion of the rebels as a heretical form of Christianity, and believed that the rebellion's victory would leave them no closer to converting China to their Protestant faith than before. Instead, it was better to use their newly won rights from the Qing to spread the word themselves in the Chinese hinterland.

While many American merchants in the early 1850s had been optimistic that a Taiping victory would allow them to make more money, many others were concerned that the rebellion would ultimately obstruct trade. In the end, the latter view became the dominant one. In the 1860s, merchants found that in the cities that the Taiping controlled trade was hindered and their ability to make money was impinged upon. Furthermore, the Treaty of Tientsin signed between the Qing and the United States further opened up Chinese markets to American traders, which undermined the need for the Taiping to 'open' China to the West.

Finally, the American Civil War heightened the instability in China for Americans residing there. The threat of war with Britain threatened the very existence of the American community and many saw the Taiping as just another contributor to their periled existence. Additionally, both those of Northern and Southern origin had their reasons to dislike the Taiping. For Northerners , the parallels between the Taiping and the Confederacy drew them closer to the Qing regime. For Southerners, the embarrassment of these parallels meant they went to great lengths to distance themselves from the rebels. In this environment, sympathy for the Taiping could not survive for long.

The American community in China had held many differing and conflicting views on the different aspects of the Taiping Rebellion as it emerged and began to reach its climax. However, as the rebellion began to fall apart in the 1860s, these divergent opinions largely collapsed into one broad church. To Americans in China, the Taiping's rebellion was a disappointment. In American eyes, they refused to heed the advice of Western Protestant missionaries over their religious doctrines; their leaders were not the principled revolutionaries Americans had hoped they were; their social reforms proved to be a shambles which could not break the grip of vices such as opium-smoking on their subjects; and they ultimately failed to be a better alternative to American merchants than the Qing authorities were. With this in mind, and with a future full of colonial, economic and religious

opportunity opened up by the treaties signed by Western powers after the Second Opium War, Americans in China quickly moved on from the Taiping and their rebellion.

The press in the United States learnt of the war largely through the letters and reports of Americans in China. A vast communication network enabled information to travel across the Pacific in both directions. Without this neither Americans in China nor the American press, would have the tools necessary to help them understand what was happening in China. Yet, once the information on the Taiping Rebellion reached the United States it took on a life of its own. The partisan and sectional differences in the American press meant that newspapers put their own spin on the information they were reporting upon from China. And yet, just like in China itself, the American press started out with numerous differing positions on the rebellion in the 1850s, but by the 1860s, when American was at its most divided, the commentariat of the United States had reached a broad consensus on the Taiping.

Members of the press were most concerned about the affairs of their compatriots in China, and the ability of Americans to make money in China. In the 1850s, there was a noticeable split between Democrats and Whigs over their opinion on Taiping's potential influence over the American trade in China. Democrats believed the Taiping would be more receptive to further opening China to Western trade. While Whigs (becoming Republicans) felt that the Taiping would just stand in the way of further trading, and cause American merchants to lose money. In the end, it was the Republican's position that most American papers took up in the 1860s, following the lead of Americans in China. Notably, there was no real difference between Northern and Southern commentators over America's mercantile future in China. Southerners, who did not have a big stake in the China trade in the mid-nineteenth century, were often content to follow the lead of the North on this issue, despite being at war with them.

Responses to the violence of the Taiping Rebellion by American newspapers tended to follow the explanations of the missionary letters they published which explained what was happening. Racialised understandings of China helped cast the Taiping as the modernising force, who had to act savagely to push China towards 'civilisation' in the early phase of the rebellion. However, by the 1860s the news from China cast the Taiping as villains. Newspapers saw in the rebels' the spectre of the mobs from Europe in 1848 and the 'ruffians' in the disorder in Kansas. The descent of the American republic into its own civil

war meant the information which arrived in the United States on the plundering, burning, and slaughtering by the armies of the Taiping was received at a time when understandings of violence and war were shifting and had become more complex. It was in the atmosphere that the war was reconceptualised in American thought from being a war to civilise China, to one where the suffering of those caught up in it was for nothing more than a transfer of power. This disappointed American commentators, and helped the wider turn away from being enthusiastic about the Taiping rebels.

The one episode which truly highlights how the information transmitted back to the United States by Americans in China could take on a life of its own in the press was the *New York Herald's* support for an American empire in China. There had been no serious calls by the American community in China for Frederick Townsend Ward to carve out an American colony while fighting the Taiping, and yet the New York paper was convinced that was what was going to happen. Buoyed by the flourishing Northern nationalism and expansionism at the start of the American Civil War, the *New York Herald* encouraged its audience to believe that Ward's army in China encapsulated everything that made the north exceptional. This was a different kind of missed opportunity. Instead of the Ward episode being an opportunity that the failure of the Taiping's rebellion allowed to slip by, the chance to seize hold of the opportunity presented by the chaos in China was ended by a sniper's bullet. With the ending of Ward's came the end of the *Herald's* desire for an American colony in China.

Discussions in the American press about revolution and Christianity during the Taiping Rebellion perhaps highlight the way in which communication networks are dynamic. While the overall trajectory of opinion remained the same in the American press as it did in the American community in China, there were significant differences in how American newspapers viewed the Taiping Rebellion. Newspapers in the United States tended to almost universally understand that the war in China was in fact a revolution, while their compatriots based in China were not so definitive in their understanding. This perhaps highlights how ideas about revolution underpinned a lot of the thinking about foreign and domestic events during the 1850s and 1860s in the United States itself. Yet, as mentioned previously, American editors and journalists still tended to follow the lead of Americans in China. They largely went from being excited about the prospect of a liberal revolution, which would also allow the spread of Christianity in China, to being disillusioned at the

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progress of the Taiping's 'revolution' and their refusal to listen to American missionaries about the correct doctrines of Protestant Christianity.

American interest in the Taiping Rebellion had been already waning before the execution of the Taiping's last remaining leaders. The failure of the Taiping's final attack on Shanghai in May 1862 marked the beginning of the end of American discussions about the rebellion. In the aftermath of the collapse of the rebellion, neither Americans in China nor the American press stopped to reflect on what had happened. This might seem strange, but given that American observers had been losing interest for two years prior to the end it is to be expected. The outcome of the Second Opium War gave Westerners most of the things that Americans had hoped would come out of the Taiping Rebellion. They were given greater access to China's markets inland, and allowed to spread Christianity in the interior, rather than being limited to the coast. Westerners, including Americans, felt confident of their ability to extract even more concessions out of the Qing government following the conclusion of the Second Opium War. There was simply no need for a revolutionary movement, like the Taiping, to remove the Qing obstacle to American interests anymore. And therefore, no need to discuss what had gone wrong for the Taiping rebels. Furthermore, the columns of American newspapers were filled up with news and discussions about the final months of the American Civil War. In the year following the collapse of the Taiping Rebellion, Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, the Confederacy surrendered, and slavery was constitutionally dismantled. It is perhaps no surprise that a failed rebellion across the Pacific received scant attention from the American press.

Despite the Taiping Rebellion not leaving an enduring legacy on American thinking about China, this episode gives us a fascinating insight into the historical relationship between China and the United States which remains relevant today. For example, at the time of writing, the United States is politically divided following the aftermath of the Trump Presidency. Yet, like in the mid-nineteenth century, China offers a point of unity between Democrats and Republicans as President Biden enjoys bipartisan support for a more hawkish approach to China.[2] Understanding America's involvement with the Taiping Rebellion helps put modern Sino-American thinking into historical perspective.

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[2] Demetri Sevastopulo, 'Biden Shows His Hawkish Side on China', *Financial Times*, January 31st 2021, https://www.ft.com/content/1f5b1cde-2164-406c-8535-368a624cca62 [accessed 22/02/21].

Aside from providing historical context to help us understand the present day Sino-American entanglement, to come back to the research questions posed in the introduction, the value of exploring American responses to the Taiping Rebellion lies in what the episode demonstrates to us about the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. Firstly, the way information is circulated in the mid-nineteenth century shaped the beliefs of Americans on both sides of the Pacific. For the Americans living in Shanghai and the other treaty ports, the news reports reaching them from the United States equipped them with the conceptual tools to understand what was happening in China. For the American press, the letters and reports sent home by their compatriots who lived in China formed the backbone of the information that they learnt of the Taiping Rebellion from. Yet, in both China and the United States the information they had received across transnational communication networks took on localised meanings. For example, there is significant difference in how Americans in China and the American press viewed the Taiping as a revolutionary movement. By examining American observation of the Taiping Rebellion, we can see just how dynamic communication networks are during the mid-nineteenth century.

American involvement in the Taiping Rebellion also demonstrates how myriad opinions can collapse into a consensus. In the 1850s, when the news of the Taiping's rebellion in China broke there were many differing opinions on what the rebellion meant for China and for American interests there. Many held positive beliefs that saw the rebellion as an opportunity to spread the word of God, or as a chance to break into Chinese markets. Others saw the war as a further obstacle to trading in China, and some viewed the Taiping's take on Christianity as troubling. Yet, the dominant American opinions about the Taiping in the early 1850s were the ones which viewed the Taiping Rebellion as an opportunity for both China and American interests in China. In fact, Americans often saw the two things as intertwined. Assessments of the moral legitimacy of the Taiping's rebellion against the Qing often coincided with assessments of what would be in America's material interests. For example, Americans who believed that the potential Taiping opening of the Chinese interior was morally right because it would allow missionaries to further spread Christianity, were not blind to the potential money-making opportunities as well. Yet, while there had been many different opinions on the Taiping Rebellion in the early 1850s, many of them positive, by the 1860s nearly all opinions expressed about the Taiping were negative. The consensus was that the war was preventing money being made, and that the rebels were nothing more

than blasphemers who were not fighting for the soul of China, but merely for the throne. A combination of closer proximity to the war, running out of patience with the rebels, and extracting favourable terms out of the Qing in the aftermath of the Second Opium War contributed to this collapse into consensus.

Finally, the Taiping Rebellion episode shows how partisanship could be overcome in conversations over where Americans thought their place in the world was. At their most divided Americans found common ground in their belief that the Taiping did not represent what was best for American interests in China, nor did they represent what was morally right. How they reached these positions was still often guided by their partisan worldviews. For example, Whigs (becoming Republicans) throughout the rebellion were often more concerned about how the devastation of war would become an obstacle for American traders trying to get hold of goods such as tea or silk to sell in the United States. Democrats, on the other hand, were of the opinion in the early 1850s that the Taiping would be more open to trading with the West than the Qing. However, following Allied victory in the Second Opium War, Democrats now saw the Qing as the better option for American trade. How supporters of both parties arrived at the conclusion that Taiping victory was not in American trading interests was completely different, but the final product was the same. The unity which Americans found over their attitude towards the Taiping Rebellion shows where Americans thought their place was in the world in the mid-nineteenth century. This was an America which was confident in its ability to take advantage of the economic and religious potential in China. Never did Americans ever wonder if they would not achieve their goals to spread God and make even more money out of China. They were so self-confident about their place in the world that even in the midst of the American Civil War, one of the biggest newspapers in the United States, the *New York Herald*, saw the Taiping Rebellion as an opportunity for imperial expansion. Even when the Republic was tearing itself apart, there was a confidence in America's place in the world.

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