

# The first opium war 1 question

Law



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The First Opium War The First Opium War (1839-1842) was a tussle between the British and the Chinese governments over their divergent opinions on international relations and trade. In their bid to terminate the spread of opium, the Chinese officers seized opium from British merchants. The British government responded to China's move to regulate imports by attacking China to seek remedy violently. In 1842, the treaty of Nanking offered Britain indemnity ended the trade monopoly of Canton System by establishing five treaty ports. However, the Nanjing Treaty could never fulfill the trade and diplomatic ties as desired by the British, thus giving birth to the Second Opium War (1856-1860). This paper explores the first opium war and the role of the Western powers in spreading and controlling the use of opium in China and other regions in the period.

“ During the nineteenth century Great Britain led the Western powers in ‘ opening’ China to trade and Christian proselytizing” (Tyner, 2006, p. 25). The trade inequity between the two nations favored China. Britain bought enormous quantities of tea from China, but offered less woolens to the Chinese. This led the Chinese to require transactions to be settled in silver bullion. In a bid to overturn the trade imbalance, Britain started importing opium into China. By 1817, Britain was trading opium for tea in order to offset their trade deficit with China. The Qing government initially permitted the importation of opium by Britain because it encouraged more export of tea from China to England, while creating an indirect tax for the Chinese citizens. Opium was grown in Indian cotton growing regions under the control of British East India Company (Bengal), which traded opium for tea, in China (Ramirez-Faria, 2007). Britain began trading in opium in 1781 with their opium trade growing immensely between 1821 and 1837.

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The British facilitated the influx of opium in China and other regions by importing large quantities of the commodity to China. In 1834, Free Trade revolutionists ended the monopoly of the British East India Company, which shifted trade into the hands of private merchants and entrepreneurs (Perdue, 2010). Americans brought in Turkish opium, which was of poor quality but cheaper. As such, there was price war leading to low price, but higher sales of opium. Consequently, the Chinese officials stepped in to intercept the transportation of the commodity into China (Tyner, 2006). In order to stop opium from flooding China, a Chinese officer, Lin Zexu, appointed in 1839“ confiscated and destroyed thousands of chests of opium stored in the English merchants’ warehouses in Canton” (Tyner, 2006, p. 25).

In their response to Li Zexu’s action, British lodged an attack on the coastal metropolis of China, which triggered off the first opium war (1839-1842). In order to bar British ships from using the Tomas Coutts, Charles Elliot commanded the obstruction of Pearl River (Perdue, 2010). Lord Palmerstone waged the first opium war as a retaliatory action for the destroyed opium. The war was criticized by William Ewart Gladstone, which evoked public outcry, in both United States and the United Kingdom, against the British interest on protecting opium trade.

After the first opium war, a treaty was created in Nanjing in 1842, in which the Britain government compelled the Qing administration to consent to a chain of unjust and unequal treaty agreements. The British gained control over the Hong Kong Island and obtained the indemnity to trade at five treaty ports. This meant that the entire trade was to be regulated by Britain. Britain became the most advantaged and all English nationals were accorded the freedom of extraterritoriality. The signing the Nanjing treaty of 1842, <https://assignbuster.com/the-first-opium-war-1-question/>

brought the first opium war to and end.

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