

Essay on factors contributing to chinas economic decline

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China in the sixteenth century was more culturally, technologically and economically advanced than the other countries around it. However, as time passed the economy weakened and Europe surpassed the country in terms of economic growth. There are several factors that contributed to the turn of affairs. The Ming Dynasty ruled the country in the period 1368 to 1644C. E. First of all, the rulers prohibited or restricted trade between the foreigners and the merchants forcing them to engage in illegal trade. The merchants dialogued with the government to overturn the prohibition and in 1578, the merchants were allowed to trade with foreign countries that were not at war with China.

The country did not therefore maximise on the gains of overseas trade (Pattberg, 2007). The trade was crucial since the Japanese and European traders would pay for the Chinese exports using silver. There were also catastrophes or natural calamities that occurred in China that served to weaken its economy. The leaders did not step in to make things easier for the people. There were earthquakes and famines that affected the agricultural produce of the region. The rulers were unable to collect sufficient taxes resulting in deficits. The troops revolted. There were also revolts by the peasants who were facing a lot of pressures due to the calamities as they were unable to pay tax. The calamities also caused a lot of deaths leading to a decline of the working population.

The Qing Dynasty ruled the country in the period 1644 to 1912. The new leaders worsened the trade conditions as they limited the trade licences. The government also passed policies to clear the shoreline as there were a lot of attacks from overseas Ming supporters. Fewer people lived at the coast

therefore the foreign trade also decreased. The government was able to consolidate power in 1680 and political stability was restored.

As the Chinese governments grappled with these internal issues, there were technological and economic developments in the outside world. The European countries started to acquire territories with the aim of expanding their economic influence. China was an untapped market that the Europeans started to focus on with high interest. The Chinese government however was wary of foreign trade and influence. In 1793, the emperor declared that the country was not interested in purchasing European manufactured goods. Britain began smuggling opium into the country and when the Chinese government attempted to stop the trade, the British invaded the country. The British who had more advanced military weapons were able to defeat the Qing Dynasty. The Treaty of Nanjing was signed which allowed the Europeans to have unrestricted access to the country's ports and Hong Kong would now be under British rule. In 1854, the British negotiated the terms of the treaty, desiring to set up a British embassy in Beijing. The Chinese leaders resisted causing the Second Opium War where they were again defeated by the imperialists.

There were also a lot of resources consumed by the Chinese government under the Qing Dynasty to quell or suppress the revolts and rebellions by the Ming Dynasty supporters in the eighteenth century. The Taiping Rebellion lasted from 1850 to 1864 led by Hong Xiuquan was costly to the government and led to the death of over 20 million people during the fourteen years. The British government had to step in and help the Chinese government to overcome the rebel forces.

China was an influential state and it could have maintained its dominance had it known how to resolve internal conflicts and taken care of its people during the natural calamities. It would also have used foreign trade strategically rather than oppose it.

Works Cited

Pattberg, Philipp. "Conquest, Domination and Control: Europe's Mastery of Nature in Historic Perspective". *Journal of Political Ecology*, 14(2007): 1-9.