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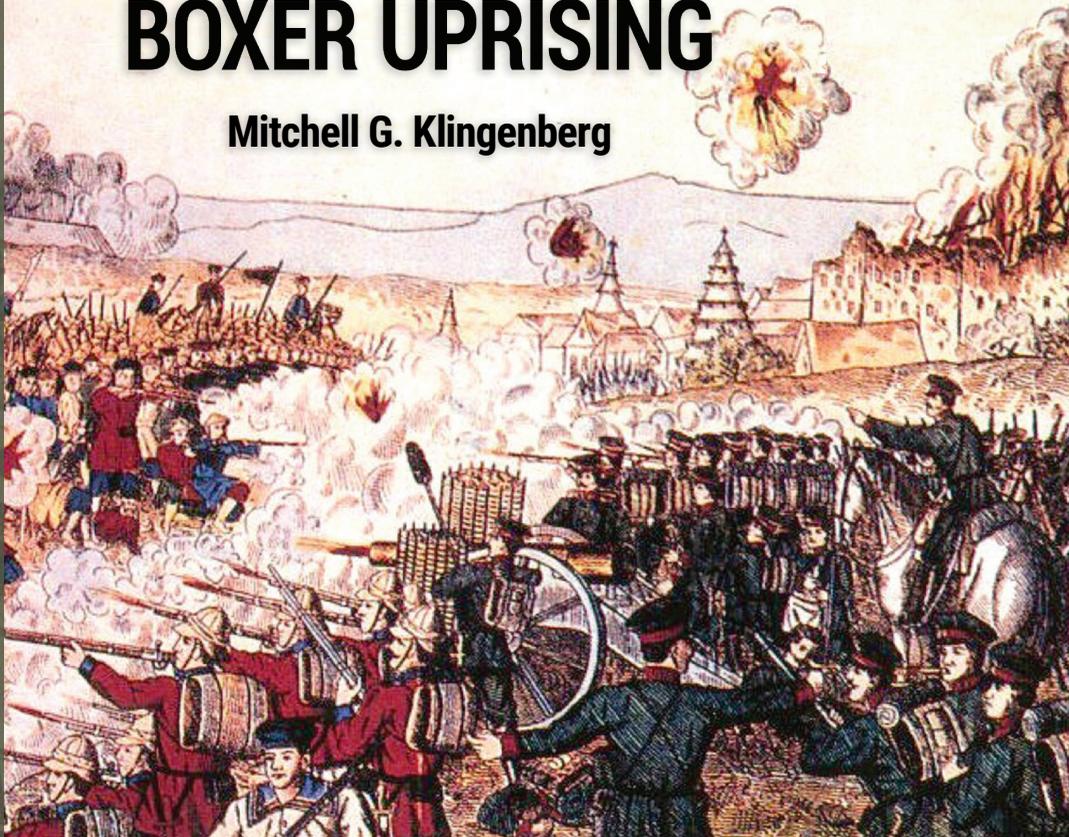
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AMERICANS AND THE DRAGON



LESSONS IN COALITION WARFIGHTING FROM THE BOXER UPRISING

Mitchell G. Klingenberg



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Foreword

In 2023, as the interests of the United States and the People's Republic of China are increasingly at odds, the US Army is focused on implementing the *National Defense Strategy*, with an emphasis on preventing conflict in the Indo-Pacific theater. Building a multi-domain-capable force by 2030 that can prevail in large-scale combat operations animates the preponderance of the Army's efforts. Yet, the Army must simultaneously contribute to operations that fall short of armed conflict to advance national security interests and respond to unforeseen contingencies.

Dr. Mitchell Klingenberg's examination of the China Relief Expedition of 1900 superbly highlights and elucidates key implications defense leaders, strategic Joint warfighters, and senior Army professionals must contend with when considering the full range of possible military operations. In this monograph, he expertly narrates the campaign and demonstrates how the Army wrestled with its identity and concepts as the service integrated new technology and tested new organizing principles between the American Civil War and World War I. During the China Relief Expedition, the Army had to expand its strategic reach to keep pace with the expansion of US interests in the wake of the Spanish-American War. In this little-remembered campaign, the Army launched an overseas, joint, multinational contingency operation below the level of major war with no planning or preparation to secure national security interests in Asia.

Beyond helping Joint warfighters and senior leaders think about the use of Army forces short of large-scale war, this monograph fills in important gaps in our historical understanding of US-China relations—a pertinent topic worthy of study, especially as the United States seeks to develop a Joint Force that can outpace the People's Republic of China and forge an effective deterrence. Beyond the importance of the topic, this monograph stands out for its use of previously unused sources and its engaging prose. Anyone interested in understanding the risks and opportunities of Army forces in Joint and multinational campaigns in Asia will benefit from this informative, engaging, and helpful study.

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Executive Summary

Generally neglected in historical scholarship and, with few notable exceptions, overlooked by military professionals, the China Relief Expedition of 1900 provided warfighters with valuable lessons soldiers, sailors, and marines used to strengthen their profession of arms. Operations in China also provided Americans with a firsthand look at the military capabilities and organizations of nations that later fought in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05) and World War I (1914–18). As a result, participation in this multinational coalition afforded US service personnel opportunities for critical self-reflection, and American soldiers wrote detailed analyses in national outlets that rated the capabilities of their armed forces against the qualities of armies put into the field by their partners and competitors.

Indeed, articles describing the China experiences of American servicemembers in such venues as the *Journal of the United States Cavalry Association*, *Military Engineer*, *North American Review*, *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, *Quartermaster Review*, and *United States Army and Navy Journal and Gazette of the Regular and Volunteer Forces* are instructive for how the articles illustrate the inventive, practical, and scientific turn of mind that characterized the officer corps of the US military in the early years of the twentieth century. These commentaries signal a maturing force in an era of American warfighting falsely noted for gradual advances in military thought and a distinctly antiquarian character.

Lessons learned from the American military experience in China for warfighters in the twenty-first century are several and descend from the highest levels of policy to the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war. If the Joint Force adapts and builds for future peer-on-peer conflicts that feature primarily state actors and belligerents, still, US ground forces must retain impressions of the kind of violence that results from religiously motivated, nonstate actors. To whatever extent the human element of warfare constitutes an actual domain of warfighting, the land domain is the realm where military power is waged against and felt by ordinary people seeking to build communities and governments. Absent cultural sensitivity, adapting to future operational environments in which religiously motivated actors exert considerable influence on political affairs will be difficult for US forces.

Military professionals seeking to understand the history of armed conflict in China may also draw lessons from the political history of China at the turn of the twentieth century. Histories of China that emphasize the nation's authoritarian turn and military modernization obscure the tension between political centralization and local autonomy in China that varies with its geographical expanse. In 1900, the Boxers enjoyed popular and imperial support in northern China but found a cooler reception in southern and central China at the provincial levels; this pattern is suggestive of the ancient kingdom's diversity and unpredictability. As military professionals consider possibilities and limits to international competition with China and prepare for the contingency of high-intensity, peer-on-peer war, they should remember political volatility will exert considerable, if unpredictable, influence on the course of future military operations.

At the operational and tactical levels of war, force protection emerged as one of the more salient issues during the China Relief Expedition. The well-documented sufferings of sailors and US marines who participated in British Admiral Sir Edward Seymour's failed expedition in June 1900 also testify to the importance of force protection, as do the physical challenges endured by American servicemembers during the march from Tientsin to Peking (present-day Beijing). Such environmental challenges are natural and inherent in all military operations, but the urgency of the diplomatic crisis in Peking presented American commanders with few good options for moving American artillery, cavalry, and infantry to China and, once there, fewer options still for the employment of these resources in the theater of operations. The campaign to relieve the legations put American servicemembers under severe physical strain, but US forces managed well, made the most of a difficult environment, and drew from a logistical and supply network that made the American force the most well-equipped member of the multinational coalition. Above all, American commanders' willingness to accept risk—potential harm to their forces and threats to the campaign itself—in the face of danger enabled mission success.

Introduction

In its time the subject of much fascination, the China Relief Expedition of 1900 is today forgotten. As the US Army's first contingency, joint, expeditionary operation of the twentieth century, and as a multinational effort in which the United States did not assume the lead role, the China campaign offers a fascinating example of American participation in armed conflict that required global sustainment below the threshold of high-intensity war.

Begun in the summer of 1900 to save endangered American civilians in Tientsin and Peking (present-day Beijing) from the Boxer Uprising, the China Relief Expedition has often been understood as a humanitarian undertaking. The corpus of contemporaneous writings that emerged from the conflict, especially from the perspectives of diplomats and missionaries, reinforced this sense. Patterns of immigration from China that dated to the 1850s had long stoked American antipathy toward foreigners, even into the Gilded Age, prompting federal restrictions on the influx of Chinese nationals and the much-maligned Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. As a result, accounts of missionaries' experiences during the Boxer Uprising and gruesome accounts detailing the slaughter of Westerners and Chinese Christians found wide circulation in the United States. Though it fascinated contemporaries, the China Relief Expedition has attracted, with few exceptions, little analysis among military practitioners or historians in professional military education.¹ This monograph fills a gap in that professional literature.

Author's Note: This monograph employs the contemporaneous names and transliterations of Chinese places used by American and coalition servicemembers in, and in the wake of, the China Relief Expedition. The author made this choice deliberately, believing it is most faithful to the original sources.

1. Mitchell G. Klingenberg, "In the Character of Their Material, Animate and Inanimate, the Troops of the United States Excelled: American Theatre-Level Logistics and Supply in the China Relief Expedition of 1900," *International Journal of Military History and Historiography* (website), February 21, 2022, <https://brill.com/downloadpdf/journals/ijmh/aop/article-10.1163-24683302-bja10028/article-10.1163-24683302-bja10028.xml>; Mitchell G. Klingenberg, "Americans and the Dragon: Coalition Warfare from the Boxer Rebellion to the Future Battlefield," Modern War Institute at West Point (website), July 29, 2021, <https://mwi.usma.edu/americans-and-the-dragon-coalition-warfare-from-the-boxer-rebellion-to-the-future-battlefield/>; Umio Otsuka, "Coalition Coordination during the Boxer Rebellion: How Twenty-Seven 'Councils of Senior Naval Commanders' Contributed to the Conduct of Operations," *Naval War College Review* 71, no. 4 (Autumn 2018): 111–30; Andrew J. Birtle, *US Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1860–1941* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 2009); Alan C. Lowe, "Foreign Devils and Boxers: A Concise History of Combined Interoperability during the Boxer Rebellion" (thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2000); and William C. Harlow, "Logistical Support of the China Relief Expedition" (thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1991).

In chronological terms, the China Relief Expedition occupies a proverbial middle ground in the broader sweep of nineteenth- and twentieth-century American warfare. The expedition's place in American warfare is apparent in one sense when one considers several of the personalities involved: Colonel Robert Meade—a nephew of Major General George Gordon Meade, who commanded the venerable Army of the Potomac in the American Civil War—commanded marines in China. In command of the American land force in China was Major General Adna Romanza Chaffee, US Volunteers. In 1861, Chaffee enlisted in the Regular Army. Wounded in the Gettysburg campaign, Chaffee later fought Comanche Indians in Texas and was stationed extensively in the American Southwest. In 1898, Chaffee served in the Santiago campaign. By 1900, his record of Army service was as diverse, extensive, and impressive as any in the United States. In 1904, he became chief of staff of the Army, the second general officer to serve in this role.² In time, Chaffee's son, Adna Romanza Chaffee Jr., would attain the rank of major general and emerge as an architect of armored forces in the Army.³ In China, a cousin of Calvin Coolidge, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Coolidge, rose to the command of the Ninth US Infantry Regiment when its commander fell at Tientsin. Lieutenant Charles Pelot Summerall, whose three-inch artillery piece blasted open the gates to the Imperial City at Peking, rose in rank and, later, in 1918, attained command of Fifth Army Corps, First Army, American Expeditionary Force in France.⁴ Like Chaffee, Summerall would ultimately serve as chief of staff of the Army.⁵ Enduring the siege at Tientsin in June 1900 at his residence was future president of the United States Herbert Hoover, who kept a careful chronicle of the Boxer siege of Tientsin.⁶

In yet more meaningful ways for the American profession of arms, the China Relief Expedition represented a modest advance in the character of war. Military technology and weapons in 1900 demonstrated a distinct progression beyond those of the American Civil War era.

2. H. P. McCain to Elihu Root, 12 January 1915, box one, folder two, Chaffee Family Papers, US Army Heritage and Education Center (USAHEC); and William G. Bell, *Commanding Generals and Chiefs of Staff, 1775–2013: Portraits and Biographical Sketches* (Washington, DC: CMH, 2013), 100.

3. George F. Hofmann, *Through Mobility We Conquer: The Mechanization of US Cavalry* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006); Robert S. Cameron, *Mobility, Shock, and Firepower: The Emergence of the US Army's Armor Branch, 1917–1945* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 2008); and Matthew Darlington Morton, *Men on Iron Ponies: The Death and Rebirth of the Modern US Cavalry* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009).

4. Charles Pelot Summerall, *The Way of Duty, Honor, Country: The Memoir of General Charles Pelot Summerall*, ed. Timothy K. Nenninger (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 3.

5. Bell, *Commanding Generals*, 120.

6. Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1951), 1:51.

Changes in infantry tactics were incremental from 1865 to 1900, though, in the new century, infantrymen received routine training in marksmanship and demonstrated greater competency with shoulder arms. Still, elements of Napoleonic warfare lingered: Elements of the Sixth US Cavalry Regiment, for example, made a mounted charge against Chinese forces—evidence of the conflict’s nineteenth-century character.⁷

Despite these nineteenth-century aspects, the Army demonstrated, by 1900, real signs of modernization. General William T. Sherman’s creation of the Infantry and Cavalry School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1881 contributed to the maturation of the American field staff by offering company-level instruction to officers in administration, logistics, and management. This period was also marked by a flourishing of professional military literature. Army officers of the era, in the memorable telling of Matthew Forney Steele, “made their weight felt” through memoirs, works of history, military art, and even fiction.⁸ At the highest administrative levels, the Army would not undergo structural change until Secretary of War Elihu Root and the US Congress implemented reforms in 1901 that resulted in the organization of a general staff in the European tradition, even as it created a chief of staff of the Army whose authority was to supervise all American soldiers and advise civil authorities, not to command the line.⁹ Another result was the creation of a national war college “devoted to increasing the efficiency of an army for wars.”¹⁰ The experiences of the Army in Cuba and the Philippines played no small part in prompting these reforms.

And yet, the United States was more prepared for international conflict at the turn of the twentieth century than some have supposed.¹¹ As Russell Weigley has noted, the Army conducted full regimental drills in the 1880s and 1890s, resuming a practice not performed since 1869.¹² The adoption

7. William W. Forsyth, “The American Cavalry in China,” *Journal of the United States Cavalry Association* 14, no. 49 (July 1903): 11; and Klingenberg, “In the Character,” 31.

8. Matthew Forney Steele, “The Regular Army in the History of the United States” (lecture, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, n.d.), box 25, Matthew Forney Steele Papers, USAHEC.

9. J. P. Clark, *Preparing for War: The Emergence of the Modern US Army, 1815–1917* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 194; and Robert Wooster, *The United States Army and the Making of America: From Confederation to Empire, 1775–1903* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2021), 275.

10. Elihu Root, “The Army War College,” in *The Military and Colonial Policy of the United States: Addresses and Reports*, ed. Robert Bacon and James Brown Scott (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), 127.

11. David F. Trask, *The War with Spain in 1898* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1981), 72–107; and Clark, *Preparing for War*, 163–82.

12. Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 290.

of the Krag-Jørgensen rifle increased rates of fire and accuracy on the firing line, thus augmenting the combat power of American infantry formations. Increased instruction and drill for artilleryists at Fort Riley, Kansas, encouraged precision with field artillery and nurtured scientific experimentation with such technologies as steel carriages, hydraulic recoil dampeners, and new sighting mechanisms.¹³ The Board of Ordnance and Fortification experimented in 1900 with new, three-inch field guns in an attempt to modernize the Army's field artillery.¹⁴ Thus, viewing the China Relief Expedition in the wider sweep of American military operations as the proverbial twilight of the nineteenth-century Army is appropriate: Soldiers who participated in the expedition were leaning into the institutional reforms and technological innovations of later years, even as they manifested qualities of the force and operated within a command structure that had more or less endured since its first wave of professionalization that spanned the Jacksonian and Civil War eras.¹⁵ The Army did this as the nation eclipsed Europe's aged empires in industry and achieved global dominance in fossil fuels and as statesmen engaged in spirited public debate about the United States' future in the world and commitments to democratic republicanism abroad.¹⁶

But more useful for practitioners of war are the complexities of the expedition that confronted American soldiers, sailors, and marines. Useful too are the myriad ways warfighters overcame these challenges to project military force in an age of steam power and telegraphic communications. American occupation of the Philippine Islands in 1898, which demonstrated the arrival of US naval power around the world, required the dissolution of Eighth Army Corps—and brigades attached to the corps—stationed there and the creation of the Military Division of the Philippines, which was tasked with administering and governing the expansive archipelago as well as commanding US Army and Navy forces.¹⁷

13. Weigley, *History*, 290–91.

14. *Army Navy Journal: Gazette of the Regular and Volunteer Forces* 38, no. 1 (September 1, 1900): 7.

15. Samuel J. Watson, *Jackson's Sword: The Army Officer Corps on the American Frontier, 1810–1821* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012); Samuel J. Watson, *Peacekeepers and Conquerors: The Army Officer Corps on the American Frontier, 1821–1846* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013); Wayne Wei-Siang Hsieh, *West Pointers and the Civil War: The Old Army in War and Peace* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); and William B. Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms: The Army Officer Corps, 1784–1861* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993).

16. James L. Huston, *The Sinews of War: Army Logistics, 1775–1953* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1997), 273; and Benjamin Harrison, "Musings upon Current Topics," *North American Review* 172, no. 531 (February 1901): 177–90.

17. Brian McAllister Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899–1902* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 198.

The manpower and matériel in the Military Division of the Philippines, most of which were assigned to pacifying indigenous populations, suppressing guerrilla fighters, and compelling obedience to martial law, in turn required established sea lanes and lines of communication that made possible American operations in China.¹⁸

For American forces on campaign in China, success on the ground depended upon skillful cooperation with the military forces of partner nations who, in local instances, shared American humanitarian concerns but whose political and strategic interests diverged. (The empires and nation states of Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Russia, and the United States together constituted this informal, eight-nation alliance.) Indeed, certain members of the informal, eight-nation coalition found themselves at war with one another in 1904 and, again, in 1914. (The Empire of Japan and Russia went to war famously in 1904, an event with serious ramifications that led both Germany and Austria-Hungary to underestimate Russian military preparedness in 1914.) Strategic competition trickled down to competition at the lowest tactical echelons between nations—even to individual soldiers. This competition was, on one level, professional—American servicemembers were keen to document the structure, organization, and capabilities of partner militaries—and, on another level, ethical because combatants observed the military capabilities of their rivals and noted the oftentimes barbaric treatment their competitors directed toward Boxers, Chinese imperial troops, and innocents.¹⁹

Although it may seem antiquated to students of war who insist the character of armed conflict has changed fundamentally since 1900, the China Relief Expedition occurred in another era of great-power competition. Operations in China provided Americans with a firsthand look at the military capabilities of nations that later fought as allies and adversaries in World War I from 1914 to 1918. Participation in this multinational coalition afforded US service personnel opportunities for constructive and critical self-reflection, and American soldiers wrote detailed analyses in national outlets that rated the capabilities of their armed forces against the qualities of armies put into the field by their partners and competitors.

18. Klingenberg, “In the Character,” 6–9.

19. James Harrison Wilson, *Under the Old Flag: Recollections of Military Operations in the War for the Union, the Spanish War, the Boxer Rebellion, Etc.* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1912), 2:522–23; and Diary Entry for July 29th, 1900, Calvin P. Titus Diary, Calvin Pearl Titus Papers, Archives and Special Collections, United States Military Academy at West Point (USMA).

In 1900, joint military doctrine was in its infancy. Although officers in the War Department and the Navy Department, at the order of both departmental secretaries, convened a board in 1903 to examine interservice cooperation, 17 years would transpire before the Joint Board would publish its first guidance concerning coastal defense operations, and not until 1927 did the first *Joint Action of the Army and the Navy* appear in print.²⁰ Nevertheless, in 1900, American military forces did not lack the capacity and capability for joint integration, the origins of which some scholars have located in the Army and Navy experience of the American Civil War, and soldiers and sailors showed interest in the future of combined Army and Navy operations, about which servicemembers theorized with thoughtfulness in the wake of the China expedition.²¹

From a coalition perspective, military cooperation in China was predicated entirely upon the convergence of national strategic or humanitarian interests, mutual trust, and good will. Predictably, these dynamics yielded mixed results on the battlefield. Commands operated autonomously. Frequent councils of war, upon water and upon land, were necessary to achieve unity of action. Throughout the campaign, complete unity of action was elusive. In China, the somewhat unorthodox arrangement of sailors and US Marines attempted to sustain land operations and consolidate gains early in the campaign, despite being removed from littorals and absent infantry, cavalry, and artillery support from the Army. Combined, these conditions presented problems at all levels of war.

But in the end, and despite considerable challenges, the allied coalition broke the Boxer and Chinese siege of the Legation Quarter in Peking and saved legation personnel. A successful military occupation ensued.²² The resultant Boxer Protocol, finalized in September 1901, was formally accepted by the imperial regime in July 1902.²³ The protocol obliged the Chinese government

20. Ray S. Cline, *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1951), 2:44; Joint Army-Navy Board, *Joint Army and Navy Action in Coast Defense* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1920); and Joint Army-Navy Board, *Joint Action of the Army and the Navy* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1927).

21. Benjamin Franklin Cooling, "Andrew Hull Foote and Grant: The Forging of Joint Army-Navy Operations," in *Grant's Lieutenants: From Cairo to Vicksburg*, ed. Steven E. Woodworth (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 91–108; Gary D. Joiner, *Mr. Lincoln's Brownwater Navy: The Mississippi Squadron* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); and John P. Wisser, "Combined Army and Navy Operations," *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States* 31, no. 119 (September 1902): 637–45.

22. Michael H. Hunt, "The Forgotten Occupation: Peking, 1900–1901," *Pacific Historical Review* 48, no. 4 (November 1979): 501–29.

23. Jesse D. Cope, "American Troops in China: Their Mission," *Cavalry Journal* 40 (March and April 1931): 28.

to pay the Americans and the European powers an indemnity of \$332 million; much of the American share was returned to the Chinese government for the purposes of educating its people.²⁴ Article nine of the protocol provided enforcement for Secretary of State John Hay's Open Door policy, forbidding Chinese imperial forces from moving within six miles of Peking and within six miles of American property at Tientsin. A critical provision, too, held allied armies could garrison troops along the Peking-Tientsin railway, which ensured unhindered access to Peking from the sea and, in turn, protected merchants and missionaries whose activity in China would continue after the Boxer War.²⁵

Not unlike other armed conflicts in which the United States has been engaged, but certainly in unique ways, the China Relief Expedition functioned as a meaningful laboratory of military science from which American soldiers, sailors, and marines took important practical lessons about their profession and theorized about its future. Articles describing the China experiences of American servicemembers in such venues as the *Journal of the United States Cavalry Association*, the *Military Engineer*, the *North American Review*, the *Proceedings* of the US Naval Institute, the *Quartermaster Review*, and the *United States Army and Navy Journal and Gazette of the Regular and Volunteer Forces* offer rich detail and are instructive for how they illustrate the inventive, practical, and scientific turn of mind that characterized the officer corps of the US military in the early years of the twentieth century. Articles in these journals encompass a variety of topics, ranging from the tactical to the strategic. The articles include commentaries on the revolver in cavalry engagements; the utility of the Krag-Jørgensen rifle; the capabilities of machine guns; the damage inflicted on human flesh by modern, small-caliber shoulder arms compared to similar wounds suffered in previous conflicts and inflicted by older technologies; the design and utility of coastal fortifications; germ theory; equine nutrition; the importance of logistics and transportation for sustaining combat operations; and combined—or joint—operations. Such commentaries matter for they signal a maturing force in an era of American warfighting wrongly noted for gradual (if not glacial) advances in military thought and science.²⁶ For these reasons, in addition to its historical merits, the China Relief Expedition warrants careful study.

24. Eileen Scully, "China Relief Expedition," in *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*, ed. John Whiteclay Chambers II (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 118.

25. Cope, "American Troops in China," 27–28.

26. Clark, *Preparing for War*, 129–62.

The usual caveats apply: The world of the twenty-first century bears little resemblance to the world of 1900 in most outward appearances, and practitioners should be careful not to draw lessons from the expedition the historical record does not offer. The problem of scope applies here. Warfighters considering future combat operations in peer-on-peer conflict will observe the scale of US military operations in the China Relief Expedition pales in comparison to that of later wars. Critics may claim few (if any) lessons about military jointness are to be derived from the land and sea operations in China. After all, coalition partners enjoyed superiority upon the waters and never faced serious opposition from Chinese naval forces, ensuring the security of maritime shipping lanes, ports of entry, and basing operations.²⁷ American use of aircraft in military operations would not occur until the Mexican Punitive Expedition in 1916, a year that also witnessed the first Army ground attack featuring motorized vehicles.²⁸ Although officers and enlisted personnel in the US Army Signal Corps accompanied the American advance to Peking, building some 90 miles of telegraph wire and capabilities along the way, the average American serviceman in China probably did not comprehend an extraterrestrial domain or an electromagnetic spectrum in which nations might someday conduct nonkinetic and cyber operations.²⁹ As in the Mexican-American War, the American Civil War, and the Spanish-American War, the China Relief Expedition's definitive military features were almost exclusively in the land and maritime domains.

Even so, students of war should see through disparities that appear to separate warfighting in 1900 from the historical present and resist the allure of presentism—a belief, as one soldier has written, that “privileges the observed present over the experience of the past” and assumes, as a result, military problems of the here and now are exponentially more complex than those of previous conflicts.³⁰ No less a soldier than William T. Sherman understood this allure and the immutable

27. W. C. Davidson, “Operations in North China,” *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute* 26, no. 1 (March 1900): 646.

28. Jon B. Mikolashek, *Blood, Guts, and Grease: George S. Patton in World War I* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2019), 9.

29. Rebecca Robbins Raines, *Getting the Message through: A Branch History of the US Army Signal Corps* (Washington, DC: CMH, 2011), 102.

30. Paul Barnes, “Learning the Wrong Lessons: Biases, the Rejection of History, and Single-Issue Zealotry in Modern Military Thought,” Modern War Institute at West Point (website), February 4, 2022, <https://mwi.usma.edu/learning-the-wrong-lessons-biases-the-rejection-of-history-and-single-issue-zealotry-in-modern-military-thought/>.

nature of war when, in 1879, he told a group of graduates although new wars gave rise to more destructive weaponry and increasingly elaborate military works, “the standard principles which underlie the sciences of war change as little as the principles of law, medicine, mechanics, or architecture.”³¹ Modern war, Sherman continued, was “the application of *old* principles to a *new* state of facts” (emphasis in original).³²

No different than their twenty-first-century heirs, American soldiers, sailors, and marines in China experienced great uncertainty in pursuing their objectives in 1900. The servicemembers’ efforts required boldness—that virtue, as the Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz has written, so greatly to be prized in the soldier and the officer, and yet so often diminishing in measure as the officer advances in rank—sound coordination, tremendous endurance, sustainment, and sound phasing in a harsh operational environment.³³ In China, the operating environment required commanders to devote considerable energy to force protection. When Peking fell in August, the Americans consolidated their gains and engaged in stability operations throughout the winter. In all of these endeavors, the Americans and their coalition partners proved successful.

If European powers, in the lead-up to World War I, generally ignored or took little interest in the military lessons of the American Civil War, then suggesting the Central Powers of 1914 also did not fully internalize the lessons of the Spanish-American War, the Philippine War, and the China Relief Expedition seems worthwhile.³⁴ In these conflicts, the United States demonstrated an impressive capability for global sustainment, in spite of limited organization and an underdeveloped military bureaucracy. This demonstration of capability is especially striking when one considers German forces participated, if only in limited ways, in the informal eight-nation coalition and had opportunities to observe American forces and capabilities in the field.³⁵

31. William T. Sherman, “Address of General W. T. Sherman to the Graduating Class of the Michigan Military Academy, at Orchard Lake, June 19, 1879” (commencement address, Michigan Military Academy, Orchard Lake Village, MI, June 19, 1879).

32. Sherman, “Address,” 6.

33. Carl Philipp Gottfried von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 223–26.

34. Jay Luvaas, *The Military Legacy of the Civil War: The European Inheritance* (1959; repr., Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1988).

35. Harley B. Ferguson, *Report of the Engineer Equipment of the Allied Troops Serving with the China Relief Expedition, 1900–1901*, Professional Papers of the Corps of Engineers of the US Army no. 30 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1901), 28–30.

Finally, this monograph encourages careful, historically informed thinking on the application of military power in a critical geographic theater. As military professionals consider the relationship of the United States to China in historical context, clear and sober judgments pertinent to the application of military power in the Indo-Pacific region are more urgent than ever before. As the liberal, rules-based international consensus that emerged from the Cold War era erodes; as diplomatic, economic, and military limits to American hegemony make themselves felt; and as the US military takes the measure of a pacing threat growing in strength, the need for historical understanding of how Americans first practiced coalition warfighting in the modern era is critical if American forces are to continue to advance national interests in East Asia.

— PART ONE —

The Strategic Setting

China has long fascinated and puzzled Westerners. “Oh, this strange, strange old country,” mused Sarah Conger, the wife of American foreign minister Edwin H. Conger, in an 1898 letter to her niece: “[I]ts hidden meaning I cannot find.”³⁶ Although the letters of Sarah Conger might strike contemporary readers as highly romanticized, such descriptions of China were common. Journalists and cultural critics writing in an age of trans-Pacific, telegraphic communications often wrote of China in exotic terms.³⁷ Brokers of American and European foreign policy had long fantasized about making the ancient kingdom open for industry and commerce. Political observers portended struggle with the inexorable increase of European and Asian spheres of influence in China, as lines of demarcation between foreign powers blurred, and as questions of competing sovereignties came into sharper relief.³⁸ Whether Western European nations truly possessed the power to liberalize China or to nurture its modernization seemed doubtful to discerning observers in 1900. Herbert Hoover, reflecting in later years on his business enterprises in China and the future of commercial, cultural, and institutional exchange between the United States and the ancient Chinese kingdom, cautioned China could not be made “occidental.”³⁹

Nevertheless, the United States and the powers of Europe would not abandon efforts to modernize China and profit from its resources through trade or coercion. Western interests in China were immense and marked a dramatic increase from those of the British royal East India Company in China in the eighteenth century.⁴⁰ British victory over the Qing dynasty (which reigned from 1644 to 1912) in the first Opium War (1839–42) and, later, in the Arrow War (1856–60) demonstrated both the

36. Sarah Pike Conger, *Letters from China: With Particular Reference to the Empress Dowager and the Women of China* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Company, 1909), 35; and “Edwin H. Conger Dies at Pasadena after Long Illness,” *San Francisco Call*, May 19, 1907.

37. Alexis Sidney Krausse, *China in Decay: The Story of a Disappearing Empire*, 3rd ed. (London: George Bell and Sons, 1900).

38. “The Break-Up of China, and Our Interest in It,” *Atlantic Monthly* 84 (August 1899): 279; and Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860–1898*, 35th anniversary ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

39. Herbert Hoover, “Engineering in China, 1899–1902,” in *Memoirs*, 1:72.

40. Peter Worthing, *A Military History of Modern China: From the Manchu Conquest to Tian’anmen Square* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2007), 32.

superiority of Western military technology over the aged dynasty and the dominance of commercial, industrial, and international influences that, in the words of Henry Kissinger, had long operated beyond the “bounds and conceptual apparatus of the traditional Chinese world order.”⁴¹ On the heels of Great Britain, the United States entered into diplomatic relations with China when, in 1844, envoys of President John Tyler secured, like their British counterparts, “Most Favored Nation” status (a provision whereby China would offer to the United States the same economic options offered to any rival power).⁴² This development proved the primogenitor of Secretary of State John Hay’s Open Door policy that animated and gave definition to American and European interests at the turn of the twentieth century, a critical development in the progression of American foreign policy and one that signaled a broadening of American interests beyond the Western Hemisphere.⁴³

Attempts to open China—by means of coercion, if necessary—were not exclusively the result of Anglo-American policy. American and British interests in China are conspicuous in historical context because they did not result in extensive territorial acquisitions. When France defeated China in the Sino-French War (1884–85), the former opened the proverbial door to French colonialism in Annam (present-day Vietnam), which long had functioned as a source of royal tribute for the Qing dynasty.⁴⁴ Chinese defeat in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894–95) initially resulted in the Japanese acquisition of the Liaotung peninsula, a development that startled Western nations jockeying for a foothold in the ancient kingdom.⁴⁵ Although France, Germany, and Russia succeeded in convincing Japan to relinquish the Liaotung territory through their “triple intervention,” an important precedent had been set, and China was demonstrated to have been vulnerable.⁴⁶ In 1896, Russia began expanding its Trans-Siberian Railroad into Manchuria; in 1898, Russia negotiated a 25-year lease on Port Arthur, a coastal

41. Henry A. Kissinger, *On China* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 33.

42. “The Opening to China Part I: The First Opium War, the United States, and the Treaty of Wangxia, 1839–1844,” Office of the Historian (website), n.d., <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1830-1860/china-1>.

43. Kissinger, *On China*, 54; and Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), 246.

44. Bruce A. Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare, 1795–1989* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 82–93.

45. Ralph L. Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), 90.

46. Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 117.

installation at the outermost edge of the Liaotung peninsula.⁴⁷ Germany, too, intensified Western interest in China by demanding in 1898 almost 100 years of control over Kiaochow Bay and the vital port city of Tsingtao (which it would hold until World War I) as well as acquiring other concessions in the Shantung province.⁴⁸

In 1899, the US Bureau of Statistics described American trade with China, begun in 1784 and formalized in 1844, as almost limitless.⁴⁹ Trade in China flowed through 28 state-sanctioned treaty ports (only 13 of which lay on the Chinese coast) and was conducted, in some places, as far as three thousand miles inland.⁵⁰ A short rail network linked Peking, the capital, with Tientsin, then regarded as the most important treaty port in northern China and a city bustling with commercial and missionary activity.⁵¹ A burgeoning network of railroads (financed by the United States and various European powers—especially, Belgium and Russia) across China's vast, four-million-square-mile territorial expanse promised access to the iron and coal regions of northwestern China, believed to be the richest in the world.⁵² By 1900, the Chinese government granted Western powers greater access to China's waterways. Opening the Yangtze and West Rivers increased commercial activity in a land where roads were of inferior quality to European ones constructed at the height of the Roman Empire.⁵³

With increased commercial activity came religion. Western Christians had, by 1900, achieved some success in ministering to indigenous Chinese. British triumphs in the Opium Wars were in no small measure responsible for this success because the resultant treaties increased foreign access to China through Hong Kong and additional port cities in which Western powers were permitted to build churches.⁵⁴ Extraterritoriality provisions in these treaties also made missionaries

47. Powell, *Chinese Military Power*, 90.

48. Powell, *Chinese Military Power*, 90; and Hew Strachan, *The First World War* (New York: Penguin, 2013), 73–75.

49. Bureau of Statistics, *Commercial China in 1899: Area, Population, Production, Railways, Telegraphs, Transportation Routes, Foreign Commerce, and Commerce of the United States with China* (Washington, DC: Department of the Treasury, 1899), 2178.

50. Bureau of Statistics, *Commercial China*, 2181.

51. Bureau of Statistics, *Commercial China*, 2181.

52. Bureau of Statistics, *Commercial China*, 2182.

53. Bureau of Statistics, *Commercial China*, 2184.

54. Paul A. Cohen, "Christian Missions and Their Impact to 1900," in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. John K. Fairbank (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 10.1:550.

exempt from Chinese civil law, a serious consideration because missionaries were thus able to travel with greater freedom and, if questioned by local authorities, simply made to return to their respective port cities.⁵⁵ Thus, American and European missionaries in China—Catholic and Protestant—were legion. Generally, the missionaries were regarded by indigenous populations with greater suspicion than Western merchants and financiers.⁵⁶

But missionary activity in China predated the formation of the United States: Italian Catholics traveled to China in the 1580s; Russia established an Orthodox mission in Peking in 1715; and British Protestants conducted missions to China as early as 1807.⁵⁷ Religious awakenings in the Atlantic world, coupled with the fruits of the first and second Industrial Revolutions, reinvigorated Anglo-American Protestant activity in China such that by 1900, American and European missions resulted in a Chinese Christian population (Catholic as well as Protestant) of almost one million persons.⁵⁸ Although this number is significant, it ought to be viewed in broader demographic and historical context. The population of China grew exponentially in the nineteenth century and was greater numerically in 1850 than the population of the United States in 2021.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, because Western Christianity represented a clash of spiritual forms with ancient Confucianism (Kissinger described the broader collision of Western cultural, political, and religious ideals with Eastern intellectual norms as a “philosophical assault”), missionaries engendered resentment that ultimately climaxed in the effort of Boxers to extirpate all Christians—Chinese and foreign born—in 1900.⁶⁰ Anti-Western animus also resulted from agricultural and environmental calamities that locals interpreted as spiritual curses associated with Christianity itself. Droughts resulted in crop

55. Cohen, “Christian Missions,” 550.

56. Cohen, “Christian Missions,” 543; and Arthur Henderson Smith, *China in Convulsion* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1901), 1:77.

57. Cohen, “Christian Missions,” 557–58; and Kissinger, *On China*, 35.

58. Cohen, “Christian Missions,” 557–58.

59. Susan Mann Jones and Philip A. Kuhn, “Dynastic Decline and the Roots of Rebellion,” in *Cambridge History of China*, 10.1:109.

60. Kissinger, *On China*, 64; and Smith, *China in Convulsion*, 1:77–82.

failures, and, in June, observers feared environmental crises would lead to wider provocations.⁶¹

From the Chinese perspective, and beyond the more immediate concerns posed by Christianity and lost subsistence, a century of international conflict meant the empire was not postured in 1900 to deter any serious employment of Western military force. The first and second Opium Wars revealed to the Manchu court it had been in the proverbial dark as military revolutions galvanized the West in the eighteenth century and beyond; defeats in these conflicts severely hamstrung Qing authority and emboldened European powers to pursue more expansive trade operations in China. If the brutal Taiping Rebellion (1850–64) heightened Qing sensitivities to rival religious ideologies, it also had the more dramatic effect of weakening the dynasty and killing more human life than any other conflict in history—a dark statistical distinction that endured until 1945.⁶²

Although China underwent military reforms modeled on Western programs of modernization in the second half of the nineteenth century, the fabled Hundred Days of Reform (decreed from June to September 1898) were incapable of reversing in months an imperial culture that had held sway for centuries.⁶³ And though the kingdom placed more robust emphasis on Western-styled weapons and even sought to implement universal (and more professional) military training, China lacked the industrial infrastructure to equip, organize, and move a vast army of well-trained imperial troops. Furthermore, the Hundred Days of Reform suffered critical defeat as reactionaries in the Manchu court ousted the forward-thinking emperor

61. Rear Admiral Louis Kempff to Secretary of War Elihu Root, telegram, received 3 June 1900, in *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain and Conditions Growing Out of the Same, Including the Insurrection in the Philippine Islands and the China Relief Expedition, between the Adjutant-General of the Army and Military Commanders in the United States, Cuba, Porto Rico, China, and the Philippine Islands, from April 15, 1898, to July 30, 1902*, comp. Adjutant-General's Office (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1993), 1:409; Aaron Simon Daggett, *America in the China Relief Expedition: An Account of the Brilliant Part Taken by the United States Troops in That Memorable Campaign in the Summer of 1900, for the Relief of the Beleaguered Legations in Peking, China* (Kansas City, MO: Hudson Kimberly Publishing Company, 1908), 8; W. A. P. Martin, *The Siege in Peking: China against the World* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1900), 67; and Richard S. Horowitz, "Beyond the Marble Boat: The Transformation of the Chinese Military, 1850–1911," in *A Military History of China*, ed. David A. Graff and Robin Higham, updated ed. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 164.

62. Maochun Yu, "The Taiping Rebellion: A Military Assessment of Revolution and Counterrevolution," in *Military History of China*, 135–51; Worthing, *Military History of Modern China*, 46–47; and Neils Eichhorn, "A 'Century of Peace' That Was Not: War in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Military History* 84, no. 4 (October 2020): 1054.

63. Powell, *Chinese Military Power*, 91–98.

in September 1898.⁶⁴ Combined with military defeat at the hands of France in the Sino-French War and of Japan in the first Sino-Japanese War, the failure of these reforms at the political level “revealed the limits of China’s attempts to build its military into a modern force.”⁶⁵

Such limitations show when taking stock of the mixed capabilities of the imperial military units and assessing Chinese force structure on the eve of the Boxer conflict. A British admiral who traveled to China in 1898 and inspected various military garrisons and almost all Chinese armies was underwhelmed.⁶⁶ Imperial forces lacked modern equipage; though Western-styled shoulder arms could be found in some arsenals (the Chinese employed 14 types of rifles, ranging from Winchester repeaters to Mausers to more antiquated muzzleloaders), Chinese infantry had not received competent training in using the arms.⁶⁷

Westerners were also in the proverbial dark in 1900 as to the precise numerical strength of imperial forces. Although British assertions not even Chinese leadership knew the full strength of its forces probably underrated the administrative and recordkeeping abilities of Manchu officials, a lack of awareness reflected the wider truth that estimates of Chinese troop strength varied.⁶⁸ In 1898, the imperial Board of War and Board of Revenue tabulated Chinese troop strength at an approximate 360,000.⁶⁹ The Russian General Staff posited a more conservative estimate of 205,000 soldiers who could be fielded in the event of war.⁷⁰

But contemporary assessments of those troops who could be mobilized into the theater of operations for the immediate defense of Peking were more precise and presented considerable risk to the allies. Contemporaneous data suggest at the close of May 1900, the imperial court could reliably count the trained regulars of the Hwai and Lien armies (20,750 men); the “irregularly armed” units of Tung Fu-hsiang (12,000 men); 10,000 well-armed imperial bodyguards at Peking, consisting of Chinese and Manchu fighters; 19,000 men under Yüan Shik’ai (these German-drilled troops were, in the estimation of one historian,

64. Powell, *Chinese Military Power*, 97.

65. Worthing, *Military History of Modern China*, 73.

66. Powell, *Chinese Military Power*, 105.

67. Powell, *Chinese Military Power*, 105.

68. Powell, *Chinese Military Power*, 107.

69. Powell, *Chinese Military Power*, 107.

70. Powell, *Chinese Military Power*, 107.

the best available to the Manchu court); and an assortment of other units, totaling some 130,000 men.⁷¹ Edward Harper Parker writes the vast majority of these units were armed with modern, magazine-fed rifles and garrisoned in “well-chosen, well-constructed forts” equipped with the latest artillery pieces—an assessment borne out by later inspections of the Taku garrisons.⁷²

In sum, if the eighteenth century had marked the zenith of Qing military might, the nineteenth century—especially, the military defeats at the hands of Great Britain, France, and Japan—is remembered by Chinese historians as a century of embarrassment, humiliation, and shame, the legacy of which still animates Chinese ambitions.⁷³ On the world stage, in spring 1900, China appeared a “loser” in the great economic sorting of the century: Railways were built in China by Westerners or Russians; unlike in other parts of the world, no communications or technological revolution had galvanized modernization.⁷⁴ Attempts in preceding years to model the Chinese military in the likeness of Western forces met fierce resistance in the Manchu court and were substituted for conservative attempts deemed more compatible with ancient Confucian norms.⁷⁵ No less than Henry Kissinger wrote the sum of these failures, by 1900, meant “the Chinese world order was totally out of joint.”⁷⁶ Events of that year proved, from the Chinese perspective, no regime incapable of preventing the military occupation of its imperial capital could legitimately claim the ancient mandate of heaven.⁷⁷

Nevertheless, despite its fragile position on the global stage, China possessed a modest capability to defend the imperial seat of the Manchu court and the withering Qing dynasty in June 1900. Several factors accounted for this capability. First, China maintained imperial forces

71. Edward Harper Parker, *China: Her History, Diplomacy, and Commerce, from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: John Murray, 1901), 253–54.

72. Parker, *China*, 254; and W. E. Craighill, “Sea-Coast Forts in North China in the Campaign of 1900,” *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States* 31 (Summer and Autumn 1902): 647–65.

73. Worthing, *Military History of Modern China*, 30, 45; and Howard W. French, *Everything under the Heavens: How the Past Helps Shape China's Push for Global Power* (New York: Vintage, 2018), 9, 20.

74. Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony: The World Order since 1500* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 132.

75. Powell, *Chinese Military Power*, 105.

76. Kissinger, *On China*, 86–87.

77. Kissinger, *On China*, 87.

armed with some Western weapons (albeit of mixed capabilities). Second, the support Boxers enjoyed in northern China among local Chinese meant any conflict in the Shantung or Chihli provinces would risk disrupting and radicalizing a native population that vastly outnumbered coalition forces that, of necessity, would operate in rural areas and urban centers along extended lines of communications and supply. Third, the harsh environment threatened to limit the reach and tempo of prospective military operations in northern China, and the Manchus doubtless understood a land campaign to relieve Tientsin and Peking would be a difficult undertaking. Fourth, the Boxers deployed irregular tactics that made them difficult to contain. Combined, these factors posed unique problems for the allied expedition and worked to mitigate advantages in organization and weapons coalition forces could use to attain overmatch in the theater of operations.

When Boxer violence erupted across northern China in 1900, American diplomatic, military, and economic objectives came into clearer focus. From a diplomatic and political point of view, the United States government hoped, like its coalition partners, to preserve the legitimacy and political viability of the Qing dynasty. This political element would enable the United States to continue trade on its own terms in China because the Manchu court was powerless to resist Western overtures. But despite the economic self-interest inherent in this diplomatic posture, the United States was eager to preserve the territorial integrity of China and to deter other nations from acquiring Chinese lands. Still, these considerations paled in comparison to the immediate military objective, which was the suppression of the Boxers and the relief of endangered Americans in China.

— PART TWO —

The Boxers

The Boxers, known in the Chinese lexicon as *Yihequan* (“Fists United in Righteousness”), originated politically in China’s Shantung province.⁷⁸ On this mysterious group, an American naval cadet wrote the Boxers “were a patriotic organization” that existed to drive all foreigners out of China.⁷⁹ In this cadet’s accounting, Boxers believed foreigners had caused economic and political instability.⁸⁰ An American soldier described the Boxers and the economic and political environment in which they operated in similar terms: “The sufferings of the Chinese people,” he wrote, “at large from famine and from the oppressions of their rulers placed the masses in a state of mind favorable to any movement which would alleviate their condition”; thus, native Chinese “were more easily persuaded that the extinction of ‘foreign devils’ was a necessary step to secure the favor of their gods and obtain relief.”⁸¹ Abetted by the Empress Dowager Cixi, the Boxers gained a considerable following. The Boxers’ teachings—which required rigorous physical training, a command of martial arts, and the use of bladed weapons (all to make adherents invincible to Western military technology)—found willing acceptance among the poor and even the educated.⁸² Another infantryman confirmed the almost ubiquitous belief among Boxers they were “invulnerable” to foreign weapons and protected by spirits.⁸³ An American sailor gave expression to the suspicion, corroborated by contemporaneous evidence, the empress dowager and local authorities had “instigated” the Boxer Uprising in the northern provinces of China in May and June of 1900.⁸⁴ A minister attached to British expeditionary forces in their intelligence department described Boxers as “anti-dynastic, anti-progressive, anti-modern, anti-Christian, and anti-foreign.”⁸⁵

78. Worthing, *Military History of Modern China*, 75–76.

79. J. K. Taussig, “Experiences during the Boxer Rebellion,” *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* 53, no. 4 (April 1927): 406.

80. Taussig, “Experiences,” 406.

81. Charles R. Noyes, “The Services of Graduates in China, 1900–1901,” in *The Centennial of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, 1802–1902*, ed. Edward S. Holden and W. L. Ostrander (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1904), 1:795.

82. Noyes, “Services of Graduates,” 1:795.

83. Cope, “American Troops in China,” 24.

84. Davidson, “Operations in North China,” 637.

85. Frederick Brown, *From Tientsin to Peking with the Allied Forces* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1902), 10.

Such assessments may strike modern readers as jingoistic, parochial, and perhaps even racialized expressions of Anglo-American exceptionalism, but they have endured in scholarly assessments of the Boxer movement and Chinese history. Henry Kissinger described the Boxers as adherents to “a form of ancient mysticism” who claimed special “immunity to foreign bullets” and theorized the empress dowager embraced the radical movement because her government lacked the centralized power to command its loyalty and subordination.⁸⁶ A historian of Chinese military modernization has written the precipitous uptick of Occidental influence in the ultimate decade of the nineteenth century had aroused the suspicion and animosity of native populations; anti-Western sentiment found acute expression in the “mystic society” of the Boxers.⁸⁷ One historian has traced the origins of the Boxer movement to the secret society of “Yihe Chuan”—the “Righteous and Harmonious Fists”—which, in 1808, claimed membership across numerous provinces in China.⁸⁸ Bruce A. Elleman contends, “[T]he most important characteristic of the Boxers was their belief in magic, which was strengthened with spiritual forms through Taoist burnt offerings and sacrifices to various military gods, and conditioned bodily by means of intense self-flagellation.”⁸⁹ Boxers who adopted the “Armor of the Golden Bell” would perform the recitation of spells, swallow mystical amulets, and have their bodies beaten with bladed weapons and bricks to develop (imagined) invulnerability to Western firearms and ordnance.⁹⁰ Still another prominent scholar of Chinese military history, citing their ritualistic practice and professed invincibility to Western weapons, has written Boxers drew from popular culture and folk theater in addition to their ancient mysticism to attract adherents.⁹¹ Max Boot has likened the Boxers to “other millennial movements elsewhere” (such as the Sudanese Mahdists and the Sioux Ghost Dancers of the late nineteenth century) “whose traditional way of life was crumbling before the onslaught of modernity.”⁹² Recent assessments that regard the Boxers as an antforeign, antimodern paramilitary organization

86. Kissinger, *On China*, 86.

87. Powell, *Chinese Military Power*, 110.

88. Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 119.

89. Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 119.

90. Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 119.

91. Worthing, *Military History of Modern China*, 75–76.

92. Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 72.

that practiced odd spiritual forms thus track with firsthand impressions of the movement in 1900.⁹³

Although some scholars have strained to locate a political connection between the Boxers and other secret societies in China that sought the overthrow of their Manchu rulers (most Chinese were ethnically Han), the Boxers were primarily an antforeigner militia. By 1900, the Boxers boasted memberships in various provinces throughout the empire. Because of the highly decentralized nature of Qing dynastic rule, provincial governors enjoyed considerable latitude in governing local societies and militias. Boxer support generally varied geographically, with more fervent adherents in the Chihli province; provincial governors in central and southern China were more ambivalent about the Boxers as a political organization and the strategic possibilities of anti-Western violence.⁹⁴ After her coup d'état in September 1898, the Empress Dowager Cixi courted Boxer support to consolidate imperial power and posture China to expel foreigners once and for all. In the nearly two-year span from the rise of the empress dowager to the Boxer Uprising in the spring of 1900, conservative (or "reactionary") elements in the royal court sought to forge close ties with Boxer leadership.⁹⁵ In May 1900, Manchu officials invited Boxers to Peking, where members of the militia performed for the high court. Impressed and possibly convinced of their claims to spiritual possession and invincibility, the empress dowager ordered court officials to adopt Boxer practices.⁹⁶

Though anti-Christian violence was widespread throughout the late Qing dynasty, Boxer activity against foreign missionaries and native converts, whose Christianity clashed with traditional Confucianism and mystical spiritual forms, reached a crescendo in the northern provinces of Chihli and Shantung at the turn of the century. (One scholar has counted several hundred instances of anti-Christian conflict in China from 1860 to 1900 "that required top-level diplomatic handling"; estimates of violence against Christians that required local resolution at the provincial or municipal levels numbered in the thousands.)⁹⁷

93. Richard S. Horowitz, "Beyond the Marble Boat: The Transformation of the Chinese Military, 1850–1911," in *Military History of China*, 164.

94. Powell, *Chinese Military Power*, 110, 112.

95. Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 116.

96. Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 116.

97. Cohen, "Christian Missions," 569.

Boot has described foreign missionaries in China as a “profoundly disturbing influence” and as purveyors of serious injuries against indigenous Chinese.⁹⁸ Boxers first targeted native Chinese who embraced Roman Catholic or Protestant sects of Christianity. In the words of one contemporary, they “perpetrated upon some of the noblest womanhood of the century atrocities that it would be hard to parallel in history.”⁹⁹ These horrors invited comparisons to the sufferings of such Christians in the ancient world as Saints James, Paul the Apostle, Polycarp, and Irenaeus and all “the noble army of martyrs” of early Christianity.¹⁰⁰ The fates of Chinese converts suffered at the hands of Boxers and the government were of great concern to the American legation in Peking, which urged a more liberal humanitarianism but was bound to respect Chinese law.¹⁰¹ Predictably, murders of Western missionaries provoked international outrage. A prominent English missionary was murdered in 1899.¹⁰² Two German clerics suffered the same fate in 1900.¹⁰³ In May, Boxers attacked a Catholic village 80 miles from Peking and killed approximately 70 religionists.¹⁰⁴ Come summer, murders became indiscriminate, and patience with the imperial court in the American legation waned.¹⁰⁵ June 13 was especially bloody as Boxers paraded through the streets of Peking and set fire to churches.¹⁰⁶ Boxer atrocities against Westerners in urban centers and the countryside cannot be quantified with complete accuracy, but the approximate figures are galling. One scholar estimates the “Boxer holocaust” brought gruesome deaths to over 200 foreign missionaries (not counting their families) and some 30 thousand Chinese Roman Catholic converts, thus marking “a high-water mark in xenophobia-powered opposition to Christian missions.”¹⁰⁷ Coalition forces encountered evidence of Boxer atrocities during military operations.¹⁰⁸

98. Boot, *Savage Wars*, 71.

99. Brown, *From Tientsin to Peking*, 10, 14.

100. Brown, *From Tientsin to Peking*, 10, 14.

101. Sarah Pike Conger, *Letters from China: With Particular Reference to the Empress Dowager and the Women of China* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Company, 1909), 93.

102. Noyes, “Services of Graduates,” 1:796.

103. Brown, *From Tientsin to Peking*, 14.

104. Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 123.

105. Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 123; and Conger, *Letters from China*, 106.

106. Boot, *Savage Wars*, 75.

107. Cohen, “Christian Missions,” 590.

108. Taussig, “Experiences,” 410.

May hostilities prompted the diplomatic corps in Peking to request guards in the capital for protection. On June 9, the legations requested additional units, prompting the first expeditionary effort to relieve Peking. As in all conflicts, friction and chance exerted considerable influence on the course of operations. The June attack of coalition forces against the Taku forts—a small network of three fortifications that guarded the mouth of the Pei-Ho River garrisoned by imperial Chinese troops—altered the strategic environment in China.¹⁰⁹ Before the attack, Boxers functioned as a militia sanctioned by the empress dowager and possessed her clandestine support to harass allied soldiers. But after the fall of the forts, Boxers engaged in active cooperation with imperial troops to resist coalition forces. A formal declaration of war issued by the Manchu court shortly thereafter ensured imperial military forces and Boxers alike would bear the brunt of coalition efforts to relieve their diplomatic corps in Peking. These attacks, too, intensified sieges of other Western elements in Peking and Tientsin. Although the relief of the American legations in Peking ultimately became synonymous with the China campaign, Boxer violence against Westerners extended throughout the summer and was widespread in Chihli province.

The Boxer capability to inflict devastating or inordinately lethal military force against Westerners was not problematic for the allies throughout the China Relief Expedition, but the Boxers having morphed from a rabble of nonstate bandits into a legitimate, state-sponsored militia was. The Boxers' political relationship with the Manchu court was sometimes ambiguous to Western observers and required careful diplomatic and military approaches. Also problematic was the Boxers enjoyed political support from reactionary elements in the Manchu court and, therefore, a free hand in Chinese towns and provinces in the theater of military operations.¹¹⁰ Local provincial and municipal governments sometimes viewed the Boxers as bandits and condemned their brutality outwardly; at other times, these governments treated the Boxers as a legitimate paramilitary organization and even championed their activity in the name of the empress dowager, thus complicating the organization's position as an instrument of imperial diplomacy and state military power.¹¹¹ In such a complex political arrangement, whether Boxers enjoyed official backing in the high court or whether—as the empress dowager had professed until the seizure

109. Craighill, "Sea-Coast Forts," 647–65.

110. Elbridge Colby, "Tientsin and the Boxer Rebellion," *Military Engineer* 29, no. 165 (May-June 1937): 191; and Cope, "American Troops in China," 24.

111. Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 121.

of the Taku forts in June—the Qing dynasty condemned Boxer depredations was often unclear to coalition soldiers on the ground in the earliest phase of the campaign.¹¹² Indeed, imperial condemnations of Boxer attacks were merely symbolic. In an abrupt departure from its previous policy to create political separation from the excesses of Boxer violence against missionaries from the West, and absent a strong imperial army with which to suppress the Boxers and satisfy Western governments, the Manchu court granted legal recognition to the Boxers and embraced their organization in a final effort to drive out foreign influences.¹¹³ Not until the battle for Tientsin—and after it, when the march to Peking got underway—did the reluctance of the central and southern Chinese provincial governors to support the Boxer movement reveal a sharp divide within the Chinese political class about how best to resist (or not) the foreign intervention.¹¹⁴ In the early phase of military operations in China, such ambiguity made discriminating friend from foe and ascertaining how best to protect American interests where most threatened difficult for American forces.

Despite their informal military hierarchy and their lack of a developed command structure (Boot has written the Boxers possessed few leaders of stature and constituted little more than a “spontaneous peasant uprising”) and despite chauvinistic descriptions of their capabilities, the Boxers presented unique challenges to coalition forces.¹¹⁵ These challenges were apparent first during the failed attempt to relieve Peking mounted by British Admiral Sir Edward Seymour and his expeditionary brigade of sailors and marines in June 1900. Boxers resorted to destroying railways and disrupting communications to isolate coalition forces of the eight-nation alliance from their supplies along the coast. In the early phase of the campaign, such activity severely limited the operational reach of coalition forces and almost resulted in the destruction of Seymour’s force.

Boxers also employed irregular tactics to combat foreigners. Although they donned red banners and sashes and presented a unique appearance when dressed for battle, Boxers could easily melt away into surrounding peasant villages and countryside from which they

112. Noyes, “Services of Graduates,” 1:798.

113. Noyes, “Services of Graduates,” 1:796; Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 121–23; and Worthing, *Military History of Modern China*, 76.

114. Powell, *Chinese Military Power*, 112.

115. Boot, *Savage Wars*, 74; Worthing, *Military History of Modern China*, 75–76; and Cope, “American Troops in China,” 25.

had emerged to harass allied soldiers and sabotage rail networks. Related to this challenge was Boxers enjoyed widespread support among indigenous Chinese, who sheltered and fed friendly militia. This difficulty compelled one participant in the China campaign to describe the Boxers and their hosts as “enigmatical” and the environment in which they operated as an almost inscrutable one, in which “friend [was] scarcely distinguishable from foe.”¹¹⁶ That Boxers often avoided open confrontations with American and allied troops is borne out in the postwar reminiscences of American soldiers, who recalled few if any direct encounters with Boxers but noted the unreliable (and poorly led) imperial Chinese infantry that opposed them at such places as Tientsin, Yangtsun, and Peking.¹¹⁷

When armed confrontations occurred, they typically resulted in the slaughter of Boxer attackers. In a 1927 issue of the US Naval Institute *Proceedings*, J. K. Taussig recalled how, as a cadet accompanying Seymour’s expedition in June 1900, American bluejackets and marines faced their first Boxer attack near Lofa Station some 35 miles north of Tientsin. When scouts sighted Boxers approaching, Taussig and the Americans manned their armored railway cars and formed a skirmish line. The numerically insignificant Boxer platoon approached slowly and steadily.¹¹⁸ Taussig considered them a “picturesque group,” but the Boxers were armed merely with long knives and spears, evincing their “superstitious” belief “their peculiar movements turned the missiles aside giving them nothing to fear.”¹¹⁹ This attack went no better than one might reasonably expect: When Americans opened fire, the Boxers “had no time to appreciate the fallacy of their belief.”¹²⁰ A similar account appears in the reminiscence of W. T. Kendall Brown, who served aboard the USS *Monocacy* and participated in a firefight with Boxers near Tientsin.¹²¹ Such encounters confirmed to American servicemembers they possessed military superiority over their foes and probably reinforced whatever sense of Anglo-American cultural supremacy they possessed. Not until the

116. Colby, “Tientsin,” 191.

117. Survey Response of Frank L. Brown, questions 17–19, Spanish-American War, Philippine Insurrection, and Boxer Rebellion Veterans Research Project, box 51, folder 3, Spanish-American War Veterans Survey Collection, USAHEC.

118. Taussig, “Experiences,” 410.

119. Taussig, “Experiences,” 410.

120. Taussig, “Experiences,” 410.

121. W. T. Kendall Brown, “The *Monocacy* at Tientsin, June, 1900,” *Military Engineer* 24, no. 135 (May-June 1932): 252–53.

Battle of Tientsin in July did Americans encounter Boxers and imperial Chinese armed with modern rifles.¹²²

While the attack recalled by Taussig may strike twenty-first-century sensibilities as fantastic, one should remember in spite of increases in rifle range training and marksmanship in the US Army and Navy in the era of the Spanish-American War and the China Relief Expedition, training infantry for close-quarter and hand-to-hand combat against adversaries bearing bladed weapons remained difficult.¹²³ Taussig's account suggests Westerners feared Boxers, who often staged attacks at night with fearsome prospects. Writes Taussig, giving expression to later theories of social scientists who have examined the psychology of killing in combat, "It had been our experience in previous campaigning in the Philippines" (a theater conspicuous for its guerrilla and irregular activity) "that the men could face a rifle with much more equanimity than a knife. This is especially so at night."¹²⁴ With good reason, those guarding Seymour's expedition at night were often "very quick on the trigger."¹²⁵

To take stock, the Boxers had engaged in the widespread murder of Western diplomats and missionaries in the spring and summer of 1900 and destroyed European and American property in northern China, sometimes with impunity. In June, abetted by imperial forces, the Boxers threatened to overrun and massacre the legations in Peking. Although their primitive tactics and fanatical mysticism made Boxers alien and inscrutable to Westerners, Boxers nevertheless presented more than a modest threat to American, European, Japanese, and Russian civilians and forces. With local support, the Boxers possessed, in the campaign's earliest phase, the capability to limit allied land operations by rail and over land. Boxer disruptions of railways and communications disoriented coalition forces, hindered their efforts, and greatly limited their operational reach in June. And in all of these events, the Manchu court, eager to safeguard its legitimacy even as its ability to control the empire disintegrated, took political opportunity to weaponize the Boxers.

122. Report of Major Littleton W. T. Waller, US Marine Corps, Tientsin, China, 2 July 1900, in *Annual Reports of the Navy Department for the Year 1900*, comp. Navy Department (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 1900), 1154.

123. Report of Brigadier General Charles Heywood, US Marine Corps, "Target Practice," in *Annual Reports of the Navy*, 1132–33; and Perry D. Jamieson, *Crossing the Deadly Ground: United States Army Tactics, 1865–1899* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994).

124. Taussig, "Experiences," 411.

125. Taussig, "Experiences," 411.

— PART THREE —

Military Operations from Taku to Tientsin

Military operations in China in the summer of 1900 that climaxed with the relief of the legations in Peking on August 14 were months in the making. American marines landed in China in May. Seymour's ill-fated relief effort, the first organized operation constituted of British sailors as well as American marines and bluejackets, to relieve the Peking legations commenced on June 10 but left Tientsin vulnerable to siege. Allied efforts to secure critical decisive points—the Taku forts, the railway depot at Tongku, and Tientsin—brought mixed results in the short term but attained success in July. The success of these operations made possible the augmentation of the multinational relief force that would march on Peking in August.

What follows is an assessment of military operations in China from the landing of marine and naval forces in May to the capture of Tientsin in July, by which time US Army regulars, ordered from the Philippine Islands on May 16, had entered the fight. Despite considerable logistical challenges and the difficulty of supplying military operations from across the globe, these operations ultimately evidenced capable synchronization and phasing; were directed properly toward critical vulnerabilities and decisive points; and reflected land commanders' realizations absent careful force protection, sustainment, and tempo, any effort to relieve Peking would be destroyed.¹²⁶

Seymour's Failed Expeditionary Column

In May, in response to heightening tensions as well as the Boxers' destruction of critical rail depots near Peking and to protect foreign nationals in the Legation Quarter, British, Japanese, and Russian forces landed on the Chinese mainland. Rear Admiral Louis Kempff, who commanded a squadron of US Navy vessels in Chinese waters, wired John D. Long, secretary of the Navy, to inform him 100 US marines were landed on May 28 and sent to Tientsin.¹²⁷ Some of these marines were sent to Peking with an international guard consisting of soldiers

126. Klingenberg, "In the Character"; and Harlow, "Logistical Support."

127. Louis Kempff to John D. Long, telegram, 29 May 1900, in *Correspondence Relating to the War*, 1:409.

from Great Britain, Russia, Japan, France, and Italy.¹²⁸ Although Kempff indicated to Long in another telegram injuries to American interests in Peking appeared slight, he nevertheless rated the likelihood of conflict “very probable.”¹²⁹ By June 3, the situation was “most critical”; Kempff notified Washington he had landed an additional force of 50 sailors, and he requested an additional light-draughted warship as well as a battalion of marines.¹³⁰ The secretary of the Navy wasted no time in ordering the USS *Helena* to join Kempff from Manila. But the *Helena* was unfit for service, so 100 marines were sent aboard the USS *Solace* to Taku, and the cruiser *Monacacy* was also dispatched from the Philippines. Long directed Kempff to coordinate immediate relief efforts with Edwin Conger, the American foreign minister.¹³¹ Danger seemed all the more imminent when Boxers severed the railway to Peking.¹³²

Already, Kempff had resolved to “act in concert” with foreign navies at Taku “for the protection of American interests should it become necessary.”¹³³ On the fifth of June, Kempff reiterated his telegrams of the past several days in one succinct message to present a full picture to the secretary of the Navy. Kempff informed Washington he would meet with the senior foreign naval officers and arrange for combined military operations if necessary.¹³⁴ Significantly, the council of war aboard the HMS *Centurion*, which represented, as one scholar writes, “the very outset of the formation of a coalition,” was the first in “a series of twenty-seven Councils of Senior Naval Commanders” that planned and executed coalition strategy and military operations.¹³⁵ Present in the gulf off the shores of Taku were elements of the Austrian, British, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Russian, and American navies; ashore already were some 900 men; and assembled at the mouth of the Pei-Ho River were 25 warships

128. Report of Secretary of the Navy John D. Long, “Operations in the East,” in *Annual Reports of the Navy*, 3–4; Trevor K. Plante, “US Marines in the Boxer Rebellion,” *Prologue* 31, no. 4 (Winter 1999); and Cope, “American Troops in China,” 25.

129. Kempff to Long, 3 June 1900, in *Correspondence Relating to the War*, 1:409.

130. Kempff to Long, 3 June 1900, in *Correspondence Relating to the War*, 1:409.

131. John D. Long to Louis Kempff, telegram, 5 June 1900, in *Correspondence Relating to the War*, 1:409; and George C. Remy to John D. Long, telegram, received 6 June 1900, in *Correspondence Relating to the War*, 1:410.

132. Louis Kempff to John D. Long, telegram, received 7 June 1900, in *Correspondence Relating to the War*, 1:410; and John D. Long to George C. Remy, telegram, 11 June 1900, in *Correspondence Relating to the War*, 1:411.

133. Kempff to Long, 7 June 1900, in *Correspondence Relating to the War*, 1:410.

134. Otsuka, “Coalition Coordination,” 114; and Edward Hobart Seymour, *My Naval Career and Travels* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1911), 342–43.

135. Otsuka, “Coalition Coordination,” 114–15.

from the American and European powers.¹³⁶ Given the extraordinary difficulty of communicating across hemispheres by telegraphic wires—events developed more rapidly than civilian authorities abroad could comprehend and thus dictated military commanders in the theater make diplomatic, strategic, and tactical decisions as contingencies required—the Council of Senior Naval Commanders “was considered the supreme decision-making body among the powers fighting against the Boxers in the theater.”¹³⁷ Diplomats in the besieged Legation Quarter understood both the council wielded this authority and the situation demanded swift action from coalition navies.¹³⁸

By June 11, Boxer attacks against the legations had increased, and the situation was perilous. Kempff reported to the Department of the Navy the Americans in China would not be able to relieve American citizens in Peking if communications failed. A battalion of marines, Kempff stressed, “has been urgently requested.”¹³⁹ At British headquarters, Seymour received word from the royal legation relief was urgent; if delayed, it would arrive too late.¹⁴⁰

Wasting no time, Seymour, “in good old British fashion,” took a landing force ashore and set out for Tientsin from Taku, whence the force departed for Peking at 0930 hours on June 10.¹⁴¹ Under Seymour’s command were 2,066 troops, consisting of naval and marine forces that spanned the breadth of the coalition.¹⁴² Lacking guidance from London, Seymour went forward “without any home authority” but justified military action in retrospect by asserting, “England nearly always approves an officer who has evidently done his best.”¹⁴³ Seymour’s memoir presents his decision to move on Peking in a humanitarian light, but his calculation to set off on June 10 likely included serious strategic considerations that reflected the vigorous geopolitical competition between coalition nations jockeying

136. Kempff to Long, 7 June 1900, in *Correspondence Relating to the War*, 1:410.

137. Otsuka, “Coalition Coordination,” 116–17.

138. Otsuka, “Coalition Coordination,” 117.

139. Louis Kempff to John D. Long, telegram, received 11 June 1900, in *Correspondence Relating to the War*, 1:411.

140. Seymour, *My Naval Career*, 343.

141. Otsuka, “Coalition Coordination,” 116; and Cope, “American Troops in China,” 26.

142. Cope, “American Troops in China,” 26; Kempff to Long, 11 June 1900, in *Correspondence Relating to the War*, 1:411; Long, “Operations in the East,” 4–5; and Plante, “Marines.”

143. Seymour, *My Naval Career*, 343–44.

to consolidate their influence in China.¹⁴⁴ As one scholar has observed, Seymour did not communicate his intentions to the Russians at Taku, and, tellingly, he notified only the Japanese of his decision to land troops and to assume command of naval and marine forces, suggesting the British admiral hoped to “forestall Russian occupation of the territory around Peking, as well as the railway in northern China.”¹⁴⁵ Whatever Seymour’s intentions, willpower and devotion to flag could not sustain his column, which culminated on its sixth day at the Langfang railway depot 40 miles to the north and west of Tientsin.¹⁴⁶

J. K. Taussig, an American naval cadet who marched with Seymour and kept a diary of the expedition that he later revised for publication in the US Naval Institute *Proceedings*, described the efforts of landed sailors and marines as unique in the annals of war. Americans joined Seymour’s column with six days’ rations, one three-inch field gun, and one Colt automatic. The country through which the expedition passed by rail was arid, “sun baked,” and inhospitable; grounds not zoned into rice patties and lined with mud walls were dotted with burial mounds and small villages that provided cover for attacking Boxers.¹⁴⁷ The Americans quickly grasped the precariousness of their situation. No matter its superiority in firepower, Seymour’s column lacked sufficient endurance and resources to continue its advance to Peking. The scarcity of drinking water was especially debilitating.¹⁴⁸ As Boxer resistance increased, burning the villages that harbored Boxers became necessary.¹⁴⁹ Once the advance to Peking culminated, and the retreat toward Tientsin began in earnest, the contingent of Americans grasped the supreme value of time and the imperative for alacrity in the retreat.¹⁵⁰

The failure of Seymour’s relief column is attributable to several important facts. First, although the urgency of the expedition made good sense in the moment, by electing for tactical—not operational—mobility, Seymour did not accumulate nor provide for sufficient supplies to sustain his men in the field and thus maintain the intended tempo and reach

144. Seymour, *My Naval Career*, 343.

145. Otsuka, “Coalition Coordination,” 116.

146. Seymour, *My Naval Career*, 346.

147. Taussig, “Experiences,” 409.

148. Taussig, “Experiences,” 411.

149. Taussig, “Experiences,” 413.

150. Taussig, “Experiences,” 415–16.

of the advance. Second, the expeditionary force did not possess the requisite capabilities and materials to repair the railway between Tientsin and Peking, a foundational problem because Seymour proposed to reach Peking by rail.¹⁵¹ Third, because of these conditions, the manpower, ordnance, and supply Seymour could muster bound his forces to the rail network absent other means of ground transport.¹⁵² Fourth, even if Seymour's men possessed a clear and unimpeded path to Peking by rail, they most likely would not have been able to protect an extended line of supply by which to evacuate dead and wounded, to say nothing of providing necessary protection for the foreign nationals whom the expedition had set out to rescue. Indeed, by the time the column had limped back to Tientsin, "practically all the able bodied men . . . were required to carry the large number of [their own] wounded, as there were over a hundred stretcher cases."¹⁵³ As Umio Otsuka has observed, Seymour underrated the risk inherent in a movement to Peking, and he failed to appreciate the vital importance of Tientsin as a base of supply and a communications hub for a campaign to relieve the legations.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, because his effort required most of the coalition troops then garrisoned at Tientsin, Seymour's failure compromised the security of that place when his forces departed Tientsin for Peking and then stalled.¹⁵⁵

From the failed Seymour expedition, coalition partners ascertained the imperial court was sanctioning Boxer aggression and had become overtly hostile to their interests. Although suggesting Americans and their coalition partners undertook military operations in China ignorant of their attendant material demands would be an overstatement, nevertheless, the failure of Seymour's effort underscored important logistical and supply considerations that theretofore had occurred to US officers only in theory. As one American officer wrote, Seymour's experience "upset the fallacy that almost any well organized foreign force, no matter how small, could march through China from end to end without effective opposition by the Chinese."¹⁵⁶ Seymour's expedition demonstrated future deployments to Peking would be accomplished

151. Harlow, "Logistical Support," 107.

152. Harlow, "Logistical Support," 108; and Taussig, "Experiences," 413.

153. Robert Leonhard, *The China Relief Expedition: Joint Coalition Warfare in China, Summer 1900* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, n.d.), 11; and Taussig, "Experiences," 420.

154. Otsuka, "Coalition Coordination," 116; Harlow, "Logistical Support," 111; and Colby, "Tientsin," 191.

155. Colby, "Tientsin," 199.

156. Cope, "American Troops in China," 26.

by forces along railways, roads, and waterways over flat but difficult terrain, with thousands of troops necessary to secure the line of operations from Taku to Tientsin and on to Peking because ground forces simultaneously fighting pitched battles, consolidating gains, maintaining operational tempo, and pacifying local populations on the way would be impossible. Of similar importance, Seymour's failure demonstrated to American soldiers any effort to relieve Peking would require a robust sustainment effort, with Tientsin as a base of operations. Tientsin was the critical decisive point for allied efforts in China, without which any attempt to relieve Peking would fail.¹⁵⁷

Predictably, authorities in Washington were anxious because events in China were accelerating beyond their ability to ascertain facts in real time. On June 15, while Seymour's expedition was in full retreat, the Department of the Navy was inquiring nervously after the situation and requested to know whether Kempff needed additional men.¹⁵⁸ Meanwhile, Major General Henry Clark Corbin, adjutant-general, wired Major General Arthur MacArthur in the Philippines about the possibility of detaching a regiment of infantry on moment's notice for China.¹⁵⁹ MacArthur expressed firm reluctance to send forces from the archipelago but prepared to dispatch the Ninth US Infantry Regiment.¹⁶⁰ On June 25, Corbin telegraphed MacArthur again, acknowledging the Philippine commander's concerns but directing the embarkation of the Ninth US Infantry.¹⁶¹

Capture of the Taku Forts

As Seymour's column retreated toward Tientsin, Boxers moved against his line of supply to sever the rail line from Tientsin to Tongku. This movement threatened to cut off the allied naval forces on the land from their warships and presented a dilemma to the council of naval

157. Harlow, "Logistical Support," 116; Colby, "Tientsin," 191; and W. B. Banister, "Surgical Notes on the China Relief Expedition," *Journal of the United States Cavalry Association* 13, no. 48 (April 1903): 618.

158. John D. Long to Louis Kempff, telegram, 15 June 1900, in *Correspondence Relating to the War*, 1:412.

159. Henry Clark Corbin to Arthur MacArthur, telegram, 14 June 1900, in *Correspondence Relating to the War*, 1:411.

160. Arthur MacArthur to Henry Clark Corbin, telegram, 16 June 1900, in *Correspondence Relating to the War*, 1:412.

161. Henry Clark Corbin to Arthur MacArthur, telegram, 25 June 1900, in *Correspondence Relating to the War*, 1:417.

commanders in the bay.¹⁶² This dilemma became more acute when Russian Vice Admiral Hildebrandt received intelligence Boxers were in the vicinity of Taku and intended to occupy its rail station and destroy the railroad there. Additionally, Chinese forces intended to mine the mouth of the Pei-Ho, imperiling any approach to Peking by river.¹⁶³

Nestled near the mouth of the Pei-Ho River and the Gulf of Chihli, the Taku forts guarded the rail depot at Tongku and all communications and supplies by rail, road, and water that ran from the gulf to Tientsin and farther northward to Peking. This path constituted the main line of operations for allied forces from the gulf to the Imperial City.¹⁶⁴ Possession of the Taku forts, as one Army captain in the Corps of Engineers observed in 1902, was critical for the coalition's effort to relieve the besieged Peking legations.¹⁶⁵ Contra the impression of an American naval officer, who regarded the forts as little more than "dismal" mounds of mud with antiquated capabilities, the Taku garrisons were "all modern in their character," having successfully defended, initially, against British attacks by water in 1859 during the second Opium War.¹⁶⁶ In 1860, Anglo-French attacks over land from a network of Chinese forts to the north at Pei Tang ultimately compelled the surrender of the Taku works, the northern ramparts of which the Manchus fortified after that conflict for fear of future assault along the same line of attack.¹⁶⁷ Mounted in the forts were breech-loading artillery pieces and numerous rapid-fire guns, all shielded as well as supported by a garrison of approximately two thousand "well armed" imperial Chinese troops.¹⁶⁸ Guarding the forts along the Pei-Ho were newly christened imperial destroyers armed with torpedoes.¹⁶⁹

These forts presented an operational problem and a broader strategic complication for coalition forces in China. So long as the forts remained in Chinese control, they threatened all coalition efforts to establish a base of supply. If coalition forces sought merely to bypass the forts, any campaign over land to Peking would have to contend with enemy

162. Otsuka, "Coalition Coordination," 117.

163. Otsuka, "Coalition Coordination," 117.

164. G. Crowe, *From Portsmouth to Peking Via Ladysmith with a Naval Brigade* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Daily Press Office, 1901), 103.

165. Craighill, "Sea-Coast Forts," 647.

166. Taussig, "Experiences," 405; and Craighill, "Sea-Coast Forts," 655.

167. Crowe, *From Portsmouth to Peking*, 103-4.

168. Davidson, "Operations in North China," 639.

169. Davidson, "Operations in North China," 639.

garrisons to the rear that would invariably enable and sustain Boxer efforts to antagonize the campaign. Absent contact with Seymour's force and with the success of his expedition in doubt, a fifth council of naval commanders convened aboard the *Russia* and determined to seize the Taku forts if defenders would not evacuate the garrisons.¹⁷⁰ Kempff demurred from this decision and refused to sign the council minutes for fear of committing the United States to war.¹⁷¹

The council of naval commanders issued an ultimatum to the Taku garrisons, demanding a surrender of the forts not later than 0200 hours on June 17.¹⁷² British, German, Japanese, and Russian forces made dispositions for their assaults, and one thousand troops were sent to Taku to participate in the attacks over land.¹⁷³ The Chinese garrisons signaled their refusal of the ultimatum with artillery fire shortly after midnight.¹⁷⁴ Coalition members commenced their attacks in the early morning, and by 0200 hours, "the battle [had become] general."¹⁷⁵ British Commander Christopher Cradock, captain of HMS *Alacrity*, coordinated the allied ground forces on the shore.¹⁷⁶ British, French, German, and Russian steamship gunboats already within the Pei-Ho River bombarded the northern fort before fixing their sights on the southern Taku garrison (heavier destroyers could not cross the bar at the mouth of the bay).¹⁷⁷ Chinese destroyers moored alongside the naval yard in the Pei-Ho surrendered to their British counterparts, which had executed "a clever maneuver" and used their guns to "driv[e]" the Chinese crews "overboard or below hatches."¹⁷⁸ With considerable skill, the British and German vessels were able to slip the moorings of the Chinese destroyers, and tugs moved the captured vessels upriver and out of the general engagement.¹⁷⁹ Chinese gun crews in the forts fired on coalition vessels with little to no effect, which the British attributed to poor artillery

170. Otsuka, "Coalition Coordination," 117.

171. Otsuka, "Coalition Coordination," 117.

172. Crowe, *From Portsmouth to Peking*, 104.

173. Crowe, *From Portsmouth to Peking*, 104.

174. Crowe, *From Portsmouth to Peking*, 104.

175. Crowe, *From Portsmouth to Peking*, 104.

176. Crowe, *From Portsmouth to Peking*, 104.

177. Crowe, *From Portsmouth to Peking*, 105; and Craighill, "Sea-Coast Forts," 657, 659.

178. Crowe, *From Portsmouth to Peking*, 105.

179. Crowe, *From Portsmouth to Peking*, 105.

training and inexperience in nocturnal engagements.¹⁸⁰ But with the breaking of the dawn came an increase in the intensity of Chinese fires, and the renewed vigor of the imperial defenders—combined with the improving accuracy of gun crews at first light—caused problems for coalition vessels.¹⁸¹ A German destroyer and its Russian counterpart took direct hits in their boiler and magazine, respectively, and were immobilized in the shallow harbor, though both gun crews fought on.¹⁸² The USS *Monocacy*, a steel vessel with side-wheel propulsion displacing 1,365 tons, also took a direct hit and retired upriver.¹⁸³ A large magazine exploded in the South Fort shortly after 0600 hours, and, at dawn, coalition land forces captured the North-West Fort.¹⁸⁴ Coalition assaults of the Taku forts resulted in 64 killed and 89 wounded; of the coalition partners, Russia suffered most, with Germany and Japan sustaining casualties in equal measure.¹⁸⁵ Chinese losses approximated 500 killed.¹⁸⁶ The successful capture of the Taku forts (which Seymour later endorsed) gave the allies access to the Pei-Ho River and a lifeline to Tientsin.¹⁸⁷

Capture of the Taku forts and the successful occupation of the rail depot at Tongku secured the infrastructure and terminus for future military operations in China. But seizure of the forts came, too, with diplomatic consequences that altered the strategic environment and influenced the course of future events. As one contemporary observed, capture of the forts “might have been, locally, a mere incident. . . . But over northern China, the effect was electric.”¹⁸⁸ Predictably, the empress dowager issued a declaration of war against the coalition governments. What began from the coalition perspective as an effort to suppress violent nonstate actors with the sanction of the imperial court had become, at least from the perspective of Peking, an international war.¹⁸⁹ The assaults also prompted the empress dowager to issue an edict demanding all foreign ministers

180. Crowe, *From Portsmouth to Peking*, 105.

181. Crowe, *From Portsmouth to Peking*, 105.

182. Crowe, *From Portsmouth to Peking*, 106.

183. Brown, “*Monocacy* at Tientsin,” 250; and Colby, “Tientsin,” 192.

184. Craighill, “Sea-Coast Forts,” 656; and Crowe, *From Portsmouth to Peking*, 106.

185. Cope, “American Troops in China,” 26; and Crowe, *From Portsmouth to Peking*, 107.

186. Craighill, “Sea-Coast Forts,” 657.

187. Seymour, *My Naval Career*, 347–48.

188. Colby, “Tientsin,” 192.

189. Otsuka, “Coalition Coordination,” 119.

leave Peking.¹⁹⁰ Because the safety and security of these ministers, their families, and the legations had prompted Seymour's relief column in the first place, any prospective expulsion of these legations from Peking increased the odds American and European diplomats would be met with lethal violence.

In like manner, foreign concessions outside historic Tientsin came under increased attack from Boxers and local Chinese who, if previously indifferent to the presence of American or other international troops before the attack on the forts, had since become radicalized when the forts surrendered.¹⁹¹ Soon, the European concessions outside the walls of historic Tientsin were besieged by Boxers and an estimated 25 thousand foreign-trained imperial Chinese soldiers.¹⁹² So terrible was the violence, fire consumed the French Roman Catholic cathedral and other various buildings in the French settlement.¹⁹³ In Tientsin, Herbert Hoover organized local Americans and Chinese to erect fortifications and barricades of sacked sugar, peanuts, rice, and other grains.¹⁹⁴ Luckily, this team captured a dairy herd from surrounding pastures that provided meat and milk for the wounded, who increased in number as a result of relentless sniping and artillery fire. Hoover estimated Chinese artillery fired 60 thousand shells into the foreign concessions at Tientsin throughout the month-long siege.¹⁹⁵ The concession garrisons of 700 marines and volunteers were hardly adequate for the defense of Tientsin; defenders scrapped plans to evacuate their women and children and made what preparations they could for a protracted siege.¹⁹⁶ A Russian attempt to reestablish communications with the coast by an armored railcar proved futile.¹⁹⁷ Hoover recalled during the month-long siege, "most of us made it a business not to think or discuss the possibilities [of annihilation and destruction]. We did have one dreadful person who periodically wanted to know if I intended to shoot my wife first if they closed in on us."¹⁹⁸ Tientsin was a hotbed of Boxer activity;

190. Sarah Pike Conger, *Letters from China: With Particular Reference to the Empress Dowager and the Women of China* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Company, 1910), 108; and Leonhard, *China Relief Expedition*, 16.

191. Colby, "Tientsin," 193.

192. Hoover, *Memoirs*, 1:48.

193. Colby, "Tientsin," 193.

194. Hoover, *Memoirs*, 1:49.

195. Hoover, *Memoirs*, 1:49; and Colby, "Tientsin," 193.

196. Colby, "Tientsin," 193.

197. Colby, "Tientsin," 193.

198. Hoover, *Memoirs*, 1:52.

European zones that lay beyond its walls were on the brink of ruin. A Russian force of 1,700 troops that arrived after Seymour's departure from Tientsin barely held the rail station and concession barricades.¹⁹⁹

Military efforts to break the siege at Tientsin and secure a line of operation to Peking got underway in earnest. American marines from the Philippine Islands arrived at Taku aboard the USS *Newark* on June 18.²⁰⁰ Under the command of Major Littleton W. T. Waller, these marines—as well as a small detachment that had sailed aboard the USS *Nashville* from the naval station at Cavite, Philippine Islands—disembarked the next day.²⁰¹ With a force of some 400 Russians, these marines moved first by train from Tongku and then marched on Tientsin. Equipped with one three-inch gun and two Colt automatic guns, the marines met fierce resistance.²⁰² The marines' three-inch piece was faulty and ultimately discarded; one of the Colt automatics jammed and was subsequently disabled and abandoned.²⁰³ Forced to retreat, the marines returned, having marched 30 miles and been engaged, on the move, for five hours.²⁰⁴ Reinforced with additional Russian troops; a British contingent; as well as German, Italian, and Japanese soldiers and supplied by rail with cars full of fresh water tanks and “small utensils” of drinking water, Waller's marines renewed their effort to reach Tientsin on June 22 and pressed forward again the next morning at 0400 hours.²⁰⁵ The force moved by two columns, with the American marines leading the British on the right. On June 24, after striking the enemy and driving him “steadily,” the allied troops entered the foreign concessions to the southeast of Tientsin.²⁰⁶ Americans outside the walls of Tientsin rejoiced at the sight of “the khaki of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, the helmets of the British marines, and the lean, striding American marines from the Philippines” approaching; to lift the spirits of their beleaguered countrymen, marine buglers performed “There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old

199. Colby, “Tientsin,” 193.

200. Report of Chief of the Bureau of Navigation A. S. Crowninshield, Washington, DC, 1 October 1900, in *Annual Reports of the Navy*, 449; and Long, “Operations in the East,” 5.

201. Report of Major Littleton W. T. Waller, US Marine Corps, Tientsin, China, 28 June 1900, in *Annual Reports of the Navy*, 1150.

202. Report of Waller, 28 June 1900, in *Annual Reports of the Navy*, 1150.

203. Report of Waller, 28 June 1900, in *Annual Reports of the Navy*, 1150.

204. Report of Waller, 28 June 1900, in *Annual Reports of the Navy*, 1150; and Report of F. M. Wise, Tongku, China, 22 June 1900, in *Annual Reports of the Navy*, 1150.

205. Report of Wise, 22 June 1900, in *Annual Reports of the Navy*, 1149.

206. Report of Waller, 28 June 1900, in *Annual Reports of the Navy*, 1151.

Town Tonight.”²⁰⁷ On June 25, the Russians fought to relieve Seymour’s expedition at the Great Hsi-Ku Arsenal to the north of the city, achieved success, and evacuated the expedition under the cover of darkness.²⁰⁸

Augmenting the Expeditionary Force and the Capture of Tientsin

From June 25 to the second week of July, coalition forces worked to consolidate their gains, secure lines of communication and supply to the coast, and stabilize the front. These efforts proved challenging. Although an allied column had successfully relieved the foreign concessions at Tientsin, Boxer and Chinese attacks against the concessions intensified and strengthened, amounting to a second siege.²⁰⁹ Artillery fire from the Black Fort, upstream from Tientsin on the western bank of the Pei-Ho River, and various field pieces with Chinese units especially threatened the concessions.²¹⁰ The concentration of the allies’ forces against Tientsin and the occupation of the walled city, wherefrom they could stage the ultimate relief of Peking, became critical.

The urgency to capture Tientsin, the imperative to stockpile ordnance and supplies, and the drive for self-preservation ensured cooperation among the various nationalities and forces gaining strength along the Pei-Ho, though, as Seymour noted, the seniority of naval commanders on the ground complicated questions of rank inherent in joint operations because “a sailor is not supposed to command soldiers on the shore.”²¹¹ British naval artillery pieces transported inland successfully degraded the Chinese arsenal to the west of Tientsin.²¹² Led by Russian forces, combined tactical actions against the Chinese East Arsenal (located two miles east of the city) “free[d] the local threat to the railway line to the sea,” which enabled the evacuation of children, women, and wounded service personnel to naval vessels.²¹³ Still, the walled city of Tientsin

207. Colby, “Tientsin,” 194; and Hoover, *Memoirs*, 1:52.

208. Seymour, *My Naval Career*, 353–54.

209. Colby, “Tientsin,” 195.

210. Report of Waller, 2 July 1900, in *Annual Reports of the Navy*, 1153; and Colby, “Tientsin,” 195.

211. Seymour, *My Naval Career*, 357.

212. Colby, “Tientsin,” 194.

213. Order of Major General Anatoli Stessel, Russian Army, camp near Tientsin, China, 28 June 1900, in *Annual Reports of the Navy*, 1155; Report of Waller, 28 June 1900, in *Annual Reports of the Navy*, 1151; Colby, “Tientsin,” 195; and Seymour, *My Naval Career*, 359.

remained problematic, as did neighboring villages, which equally afforded Boxer snipers ample protection from which to harass the allies; indeed, the intensity of sharpshooting around Tientsin compelled American marines to set fire to neighboring homes.²¹⁴ Though it had been reduced, the Chinese arsenal to the west of Tientsin and the cover the arsenal afforded infantry still threatened the flank of any prospective attack on Tientsin from the south.

By July 8, a sufficient concentration of allied troops enabled the council of ground commanders of the American, British, French, German, and Russian forces to formulate attack plans. (One chronicler of the campaign observed from the end of June to the second week of July, “the local ‘foreign’ force was growing stronger every day. Daily, the supply and communication arrangements with Taku were bettered. Organization was perfected.”)²¹⁵ At the beginning of the month, the allies could claim a combined force of some 10 thousand troops, with still another 10 thousand garrisoned near Taku. But of these troops, only an estimated six thousand were deemed combat ready and possessed sufficient training to participate in any coordinated attack.²¹⁶ The allied expeditionary force also boasted some 28 pieces of artillery—with guns moved from the Taku forts and British naval vessels—and an “excellent 12-pounder.”²¹⁷ Nevertheless, incessant Chinese artillery fire, combined with frequent attacks on the rail depot at Tientsin, disrupted attack plans.²¹⁸ On July 9, a combined action of American, British, Japanese, and Russian forces to clear Chinese forces from the western plain of the city attained success, but the attack was not coordinated with a move against Tientsin; rather, the attack simply degraded the enemy’s capability to enfilade the foreign concessions to the south of Tientsin.²¹⁹ But commanders of coalition forces realized such actions wasted manpower, supplies, and time. Moreover, the British, Japanese, and Russian commanders arrived at the conclusion the native city of Tientsin must fall to secure their line of operations to Peking.²²⁰ The council of allied ground commanders formulated plans to capture

214. Report of Waller, 2 July 1900, in *Annual Reports of the Navy*, 1153.

215. Colby, “Tientsin,” 195.

216. Leonhard, *China Relief Expedition*, 26.

217. Noyes, “Services of Graduates,” 1:808; and Colby, “Tientsin,” 195.

218. Leonhard, *China Relief Expedition*, 27.

219. Colby, “Tientsin,” 196.

220. Colby, “Tientsin,” 196.

Tientsin on July 11 but postponed the attack to July 13 because of delayed Russian pontoon bridges.²²¹

Therefore, as an Army officer who participated in the attack at Tientsin recalled, “[T]he Navy and the Marine Corps had borne the share of the burden which fell to the United States in the efforts of the nations to sustain their rights and relieve their beleaguered citizens in China.”²²² But additional American forces that had deployed from Manila in the Philippine Islands in June arrived in time to participate in the planned July 13 attack. Marines under the command of Colonel Robert L. Meade arrived aboard the USS *Brooklyn* on July 12 and numbered 18 officers and 300 enlisted men (Meade was then the senior marine officer); the Ninth US Infantry Regiment, under the command of Colonel Emerson H. Liscum, had arrived on July 6 aboard transports *Logan* and *Port Albert*, thus marking the entry of the US Army into the campaign in northern China.²²³ The arrival of the *Logan*, wrote an officer of the Ninth US Infantry, “loaded with United States soldiers . . . gave an impression of the readiness of the United States to participate in affairs in the Far East.”²²⁴ Despite inadequate landing facilities; shallow waters; an extensive sand bar that compelled all transports and heavy vessels to anchor eight to 10 miles from shore; and strong winds that swept the muddy, greenish-yellow expanse of the Bay of Pechihli, US marines and soldiers of the Ninth Infantry were transported by lighters and tugs across the bay to Tongku and then up the Pei-Ho River.²²⁵ Supplies were also moved toward Tientsin via the rail depot at Tongku, now firmly under coalition control.²²⁶

Preparations for the attack were coordinated by the senior ground commanders of the various coalition members at a council of war on July 11, including the British commander, General Arthur Dordard; Japan’s General Fukushima Yasumasa; and the Russian commander,

221. Colby, “Tientsin,” 196; and Noyes, “Services of Graduates,” 1:806.

222. Noyes, “Services of Graduates,” 1:800.

223. Report of Brigadier General Charles Heywood, Commandant, US Marine Corps, Washington, DC, 29 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the Navy*, 1121; Dagggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 23; and “The March to Peking 1900: With Comments by an Officer Who Served with the China Relief Expedition,” *Quartermaster Review* 11, no. 5 (March-April 1932): 34.

224. Noyes, “Services of Graduates,” 1:804.

225. Dagggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 25; Noyes, “Services of Graduates,” 1:804; and Taussig, “Experiences,” 404.

226. Noyes, “Services of Graduates,” 1:804.

General Anatoly Stoessel.²²⁷ Neither Colonel Liscum nor Colonel Meade were admitted to the councils of the coalition commanders until plans had been formed.²²⁸ Two battalions of the Ninth US Infantry Regiment arrived at the front in time for the joint attack with the assembled Austrian, British, French, Japanese, and Russian forces.²²⁹ Two companies were dispatched to hold the railroad depot and to guard regimental property at Tientsin.²³⁰ As the senior American officer at the front, Meade superseded Liscum of the Ninth Infantry Regiment and organized the American forces, which fought under the command of the British.²³¹ Plans called for a pincer envelopment of Chinese defenders: an attack from the East Arsenal toward the eastern wall of Tienstin to consist of combined German sailors and marines as well as Russian infantry, supported by British and French artillery, and an attack from the south end of the foreign concessions by columns in the direction of the West Arsenal and the southwestern edge of Tientsin to consist of Japanese, British, Austrian, American, and French infantry, supported by field artillery attached to the various coalition forces.²³² Japanese forces would lead the left (or southern) wing of the attack.²³³ Officers of the Ninth US Infantry spent the evening of July 12 in a mortuary filled with coffins, some containing the bodies of dead Chinese soldiers. These conditions, a surgeon recalled, were “rather suggestive to men going into battle the next morning.”²³⁴ Soldiers formed for the attack at 0300 hours.²³⁵

The southern attack moved forward over difficult ground in the morning and afternoon hours of July 13, and the Americans took significant casualties. Command and control in the attack was difficult because the Japanese command could not communicate with its counterparts

227. Colby, “Tientsin,” 196.

228. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 26.

229. Report of Lieutenant Colonel Charles A. Coolidge, Headquarters, Ninth US Infantry, Tientsin, China, 25 July 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1900: Report of the Lieutenant-General Commanding the Army*, comp. War Department (Washington, DC: GPO, 1900), 7:17.

230. Report of Coolidge, 25 July 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:17.

231. Report of Captain C. R. Noyes, Ninth US Infantry Hospital, Tientsin, China, 16 July 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:22; and Colby, “Tientsin,” 196.

232. Report of Major J. M. Lee, Tientsin, China, 21 July 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:21; Noyes, “Services of Graduates,” 1:807; Colby, “Tientsin,” 196; and Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 28.

233. Noyes, “Services of Graduates,” 1:807.

234. Banister, “Surgical Notes,” 621.

235. Report of Lee, 21 July 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:20.

absent translators.²³⁶ French and Japanese units collapsed into one another in the center, and elements of the Ninth US Infantry, situated at the extreme right of the attack, could not even see the US marines engaged to the left of their position.²³⁷ The ground between the West Arsenal and Tientsin featured many dikes, ditches, ponds, and trenches that varied in depth from three to eight feet.²³⁸ The proverbial fog of battle made for difficult communication between British staff officers and American regimental aides. Compounding problems, Liscum, notified of the plan of attack late in the afternoon the day before, had lacked sufficient daylight on July 12 with which to make a thorough reconnaissance.²³⁹ Liscum fell mortally wounded in the attack around 0900.²⁴⁰ The American attack culminated near 1000 hours. Unable to advance farther than their position because of a pond to their front and under heavy, enfilading, small-arms fire from nearby huts as well as frontal artillery fire from the walls of Tientsin, the infantry awaited relief in ditches and canals.²⁴¹ Like their Army counterparts, US marines made little progress under such withering fire. So intense was the small-arms and artillery fire on the field outside of Tientsin, Army medical personnel made no attempt to evacuate wounded until nightfall.²⁴² At the Battle of Tientsin, 22.8 percent of the Ninth US Infantry that entered the fight (first and second battalions) suffered wounds; in the estimation of its surgeon, nearly all of the regiment would have been needed to remove wounded from the field. More marines suffered wounds from artillery than soldiers in the Ninth Infantry, though their casualty rate was considerably lower at 7.7 percent.²⁴³ An American regimental officer who arrived in China after the Battle of Tientsin concluded had more formidable soldiers defended the Chinese position, the attacking column would have been utterly annihilated.²⁴⁴

236. Colby, "Tientsin," 198.

237. Colby, "Tientsin," 198; and Banister, "Surgical Notes," 622.

238. Noyes, "Services of Graduates," 1:808; Report of Lee, 21 July 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:20; Report of Noyes, 16 July 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:23; and Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 28.

239. Colby, "Tientsin," 198; and Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 26–27.

240. Report of Lee, 21 July 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:20.

241. Report of Lee, 21 July 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:20; and Report of Noyes, 16 July 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:23.

242. Banister, "Surgical Notes," 624.

243. Banister, "Surgical Notes," 626.

244. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 28.

Beyond some of the morbid results it produced on July 13, the left wing of the attack demonstrated the difficulty inherent in combined operations as well as problems of tactical command and control in the China campaign. American willingness to press an attack over ground that had not been reconnoitered and under the command of a British officer was met with criticism that contained notes of bitterness toward coalition ground commanders for having squandered American life. Colonel Aaron Simon Daggett of the 14th US Infantry Regiment wrote the following:

Under the circumstances, [Meade and Liscum] might have said that they represented a separate command; that this command was larger than that of two of the Allies, the French and German; that the lives of their men and the honor of their country were in their keeping; that they must have time and opportunity to bring to bear their experience in attacking positions; and that they could not take the risk of hazarding the honor of their flag by making a leap in the dark. Thoughtful military men, I think, would have justified them in asking for a postponement of the movement for one day for the purpose of giving them an opportunity to prepare for an intelligent participation in it.²⁴⁵

Daggett continued as follows:

[The American] command would have been strengthened by the arrival of the third battalion of the Ninth Infantry. It is altogether probable that further inspection of the ground over which the allied forces were to move, especially with the aid of these experienced American colonels, would have prevented the faulty dispositions which caused unnecessary loss of life. . . . As delay could have given no advantage to the enemy, and much to the Allies, that would seem to have been the wise course. But these officers trusted in the wisdom of their seniors—not superiors—and entered earnestly into all their plans.²⁴⁶

Although this assessment is somewhat truthful, it neglects to acknowledge coalition ground commanders needed to balance the exigencies of military operations carefully with a narrowing window of opportunity to attain

245. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 26.

246. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 27.

the strategic objective. From the perspective of coalition general officers, delaying an attack to allow for the movement of one additional American battalion of infantry to the front, which would require more preparations, would have compromised operational tempo unnecessarily.

Tientsin fell to coalition forces on July 14. Japanese engineers blew open the south gate, allowing their forces and those of the British and French to rush in and sweep the city's ramparts of resistance.²⁴⁷ Although Tientsin evidenced signs of intense artillery fire and endured minor looting, the city's capture made possible the augmentation of supplies for the final phase of the campaign to relieve Peking.²⁴⁸ One soldier-scholar has remarked the fall of Tientsin "broke the will of the Chinese Army and the Boxers."²⁴⁹ But another chronicler of operations declared the relief of the Legation Quarter in Peking was "over-rated" by contemporaries and subsequent writers and paled in comparison to the significance of the action at Tientsin: The capture of Peking, he writes, "has thrown into the shade by comparison, the true intensity, the interest, the tactical richness, and the lessons involved in a consideration of the operations at Tientsin."²⁵⁰ Whatever historical truth such a statement contains, China's center of gravity and the entire political as well as strategic object of the campaign remained Peking, and in Peking, the salvation of the besieged legations. Significantly, too, the fall of Tientsin portended greater resistance in the days and weeks to come. If the Chinese had offered such a stiff defense far beyond the walls of their imperial center, then they might present much more, coalition leaders reasoned, at the imperial gates. Additionally, the troops who liberated Tientsin were in no condition to march on Peking in the aftermath of their July 14 victory. Eager to avoid a second, Seymour-styled setback, the allies bolstered their forces for a final struggle.²⁵¹ The occupation of Tientsin by coalition forces also necessitated the subdivision of the city into quarters, each administered by American, British, French, and Japanese forces.²⁵²

247. Colby, "Tientsin," 198.

248. Noyes, "Services of Graduates," 1:811.

249. Harlow, "Logistical Support," 138.

250. Colby, "Tientsin," 199.

251. Harlow, "Logistical Support," 141.

252. Colby, "Tientsin," 199.

— PART FOUR —

Military Operations from Tientsin to Peking: The China Relief Expedition

On July 8, the 14th US Infantry received its orders in Manila for China. Regimental headquarters, along with six companies, boarded the Army transports USS *Indiana* and *Flintshire*, along with Light Battery F of the Fifth US Artillery, on July 14. The next day, regimental headquarters departed for China. Transport *Wyefield* followed several days later with horses, mules, and supplies.²⁵³ After coaling at Nagasaki, these units arrived off the coast of Taku on July 26, where the infantry on deck witnessed the grand spectacle of the combined coalition fleet—some 50 men-of-war in addition to transport vessels—at anchor in the stiff July breeze.²⁵⁴ The “monster battleships” made an impression on the commander of the 14th Infantry, Colonel Daggett, who marveled at what great “reserve power was stored behind those walls of steel! . . . China little knew or realized that they represented the mighty enginery of war that those nations could throw against Peking itself.”²⁵⁵ Regimental headquarters, two companies, and supplies loaded onto a lighter in the bay on July 27 and reached the rail depot at Tongku at 0500 hours, where men of the regiment encountered Russian soldiers who operated the railway to Tientsin for the first time.²⁵⁶

Like the Ninth US Infantry, elements of the 14th Infantry and Fifth Artillery arrived in China before the arrival of Major General, Adna R. Chaffee, US Volunteers, who had sailed from San Francisco for China on July 3 with elements of the Sixth US Cavalry under orders from the secretary of war to assemble an independent command there.²⁵⁷ The lexicon of the era did not employ the term, but Chaffee was to function in China as the American land component commander for planned joint land and maritime operations. On July 30, Chaffee arrived

253. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 46–47.

254. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 50.

255. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 50.

256. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 51.

257. Report of Major General Adna R. Chaffee, Headquarters, China Relief Expedition, Peking, China, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:31; Henry Clark Corbin to Adna R. Chaffee, telegram, 26 June 1900, in *Correspondence Relating to the War*, 1:418; and Henry Clark Corbin to Adna R. Chaffee, telegram, 30 June 1900, in *Correspondence Relating to the War*, 1:420.

at Tientsin with two officers: his adjutant-general and an aide-de-camp.²⁵⁸ Shortly thereafter, Chaffee completed his divisional and personal staffs. The divisional staff included an adjutant-general, an inspector general, a chief signal officer, a surgeon, a chief of ordnance, a chief commissary officer, and a chief engineering officer, and serving on Chaffee's personal staff were a primary and two acting aides-de-camp.²⁵⁹ Various officers attached to headquarters served as runners and provided other means of assistance.²⁶⁰

Chaffee assumed command of an American contingent that was fatigued, ill, below full strength, and without adequate ground transportation.²⁶¹ In addition to its casualties suffered at the Battle of Tientsin on July 13, the Ninth US Infantry counted some 200 men on its sick roll. Diarrhea was rampant, affecting enlisted men and officers alike. Major Jesse M. Lee of the Ninth US Infantry, who served as acting inspector general on Chaffee's staff for the expedition, was sick with diarrhea and nearly incapacitated from July 24 to 31.²⁶² The commanding officer of the 14th US Infantry noted the particularly poor shape of the Ninth, which, at the end of the month, "was still recovering from the effects of the battle of July 13th" and was "physically in bad condition," having endured the Philippines and suffered casualties at Tientsin that reminded the officer "of Civil War losses."²⁶³ The wounded of the Ninth US Infantry were removed to Japan by July 24, but the sick remained, and the combat strength of the regiment was severely degraded as a result.²⁶⁴ Problematic, too, was a lack of ground transportation. The Americans possessed only wagons from the Ninth US Infantry on July 30; transportation for the 14th Infantry, which was delayed, arrived at Taku after the combined ground force began its push toward the imperial capital; in addition, horses for the Sixth US Cavalry had not yet arrived.²⁶⁵ The strongest unit in the American command was doubtless Light Battery F of the Fifth US Artillery, which counted three officers, 146 enlisted men,

258. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 55; and Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:32.

259. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:43.

260. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:43.

261. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:33.

262. Journal of Major Jesse M. Lee, box 51, folder 20, Spanish-American War Veterans Survey Collection, USAHEC.

263. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 52.

264. Banister, "Surgical Notes," 626.

265. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:33–34.

96 horses, eight mules, six three-inch guns, nine caissons, one battery wagon, and three escort wagons.²⁶⁶ But coalition strength was robust as July turned to August. Combined, forces amounted to 20 thousand, with the Japanese commanding the largest contingent at eight thousand; the Russians counting some 5,000 troops; the British, approximately 3,000; the American forces numbering approximately 2,500; and Austrian, French, and Italian forces contributing the remaining units.²⁶⁷

Chaffee immediately sought out the senior ground commanders of the coalition at Tientsin, and a council of war convened on August 1 to determine whether the assembled armies possessed the strength and readiness to begin the next phase of the campaign.²⁶⁸ As at the Battle of Tientsin and during its subsequent occupation, when American officers struggled to communicate with coalition partners, so, too, at his council of war, Chaffee required the services of a marine translator well versed in French and was accompanied to the council by this officer and his two-member staff.²⁶⁹ Intelligence at the council was furnished by the Japanese, whose force in China featured the greatest balance across the three combat arms, boasted the most organized and efficient staff, and demonstrated the greatest capability for skillful reconnaissance.²⁷⁰

Several important outcomes resulted from this council. First, the ground commanders determined to move promptly against Peking. Second, these general officers determined to act in concert to achieve unity of action, but the officers did not wish to do so under a unified command structure; the various contingents would retain tactical independence and freedom of action.²⁷¹ This arrangement produced mixed results. In practice, as one of Chaffee's subordinates later remarked, the arrangement meant the British, Japanese, and Americans enjoyed greater degrees of cooperation and interoperability, but the French and Russians tended to act in concert to the exclusion of their Anglo-

266. A. R. Ginsburgh, "Rolling Along with Reilly," *Field Artillery Journal* 23, no. 1 (January-February 1933): 13.

267. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:33; Noyes, "Services of Graduates," 1:814; William Crozier, "Some Observations on the Peking Relief Expedition," *North American Review* 172, no. 531 (February 1901): 225; and Banister, "Surgical Notes," 627.

268. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:33; and Journal of Major Jesse M. Lee.

269. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:33; and Journal of Major Jesse M. Lee.

270. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:33; and Crozier, "Some Observations," 226.

271. Crozier, "Some Observations," 225.

American and Japanese counterparts.²⁷² Third, the council of war planned its initial attack at Pietsang, where a Japanese reconnaissance in force had encountered Chinese troops, for August 5, with the Japanese assuming the lead position in the assault and British and American units in support.²⁷³

The China Relief Expedition departed Tientsin for Peking on August 4 at approximately 1500 hours, moving north and west along a road adjacent the Pei-Ho River in the direction of Pietsang. American troops followed the British in the order of march and experienced delays because of the slower force to their front.²⁷⁴ The 14th US Infantry led the American formation; second place in the American column fell to Light Battery F of the Fifth US Artillery; in third position was the battalion from the First Regiment, US Marine Corps; and the Ninth US Infantry brought up the rear.²⁷⁵ Approximately 125 men of the Ninth US Infantry were unfit for the march, and Chaffee was compelled to leave the Sixth US Cavalry at Tientsin because horses were unavailable.²⁷⁶ Transportation for the march, wrote Chaffee, “was very limited” and amounted to 18 four-mule Army light wagons and one pack-mule train.²⁷⁷ Duty for arranging transportation fell to Captain Frank De W. Ramsey, Ninth US Infantry, who served as chief commissary officer.²⁷⁸ Infantry carried one day’s rations; four days’ rations were put into the wagons; and 10 days’ rations were stored on the junks and moved by water.²⁷⁹ Major Waller, First Marine Regiment, shrewdly requisitioned Chinese carts and packs for the transportation of rations for the battalion of marines.²⁸⁰ The Americans relied upon the labors of Chinese coolies to carry their kitchen and water utensils over land to maximize ammunition and medical stores in the wagons and the pack-mule train.²⁸¹ Coolies, too, poled junks up the Pei-Ho, which floated the bulk of American supplies.²⁸² Drawing from a lesson learned in the Civil War, American forces opted for the more efficient

272. Crozier, “Some Observations,” 225.

273. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:33.

274. Journal of Major Jesse M. Lee.

275. Ginsburgh, “Rolling Along with Reilly,” 16.

276. Journal of Major Jesse M. Lee; and Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:34.

277. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:34.

278. Noyes, “Services of Graduates,” 1:815.

279. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:34.

280. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:34.

281. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:34.

282. Noyes, “Services of Graduates,” 1:815; and “March to Peking,” 35.

waterborne transportation of supplies, as opposed to supplies being moved over land or by rail, whenever and wherever possible.²⁸³ Combined, the wagon and supply trains for the march presented a sight that “beggared description.” Road traffic was voluminous; “everything on wheels had been impressed into the transport service.”²⁸⁴ Nevertheless, each coalition partner in the expeditionary column “was hampered by the inadequacy of the means for moving its most necessary supplies.”²⁸⁵ The enormity of the logistical effort on the advance to Peking reflected “the principal concern of each general,” which was “to keep his troops supplied and to get them into efficient condition through the hardships of the trying march.”²⁸⁶ The American force marched five miles in as many hours on August 4, through cornfields for much of the way, and bivouacked at the Great Hsi-Ku Arsenal, where Seymour and his men had taken refuge only weeks before.²⁸⁷

Concern among commanders for the movement of troops emerges as salient features of the march to relieve Peking. Regimental and general officers needed to march men and supplies along roads, over difficult ground, and through intense heat with limited water supply. The experience of commanders moving field armies in the American Civil War and managing their vast wagon trains and impedimenta provided the dominant frame of reference for military operations in China. In his memoirs, General Sherman—regarded as “the consummate logistician among Civil War generals” by a leading historian of that conflict—outlined precise requirements for moving Army corps in the Civil War and offered analysis so descriptive, it informed how future generations of officers conceptualized military operations.²⁸⁸ This influence is apparent even among officers at the regimental echelon in China. Daggett, in his history of the China campaign, without making explicit reference to Sherman’s *Memoirs*, evidenced a certain familiarity with the lessons of the Civil War

283. Klingenberg, “In the Character”; Earl J. Hess, *Civil War Logistics: A Study of Military Transportation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017); Earl J. Hess, *Civil War Supply and Strategy: Feeding Men and Moving Armies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2020); Phillip R. Kemmerly, “Logistics of U.S. Grant’s 1863 Mississippi Campaign: From the Amphibious Landing at Bruinsburg to the Siege of Vicksburg,” *Journal of Military History* 86, no. 3 (July 2022): 573–611; and Phillip R. Kemmerly, “Rivers, Rails, and Rebels: Logistics and Struggle to Supply US Army Depot at Nashville, 1862–1865,” *Journal of Military History* 84, no. 3 (July 2020): 713–46.

284. “March to Peking,” 35.

285. “March to Peking,” 35.

286. Crozier, “Some Observations,” 225–26.

287. Journal of Major Jesse M. Lee.

288. Hess, *Civil War Logistics*, 241; and William T. Sherman, *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman*, 2nd ed. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1886), 2:184, 2:388–89.

as they pertained to the movement of troops on campaign. Without stating so explicitly, Daggett indicated the combined strength of the Japanese, Russian, British, American, and French contingent exceeded that of a large federal Army corps in the Civil War context and more closely approximated the ideal corps size imagined by Sherman for future military operations in his *Memoirs*. “Those who are not accustomed to seeing troops and trains on the march are little aware of the length of road it requires to straighten out a column,” he wrote.²⁸⁹ Generally, “a column of infantry with its trains will occupy about half a mile of road per thousand men. The Army of the Potomac occupied from fifty to sixty miles of road on the march.”²⁹⁰ Of course, marching “large bodies of troops” on parallel roads “as far as practicable” was important, and if, as in China, insufficient roads existed to move an entire force, “the trains take the roads and the troops march across the country. . . . Cavalry and artillery increase the length of a column enormously.”²⁹¹ The Americans, due to their rear position in the order of march to Peking, sometimes marched three hours later than the start of the coalition column, putting them squarely in sunlight during the hottest hours of the day and degrading their strength.²⁹²

The Japanese force, always in the lead and falling “naturally into a position of initiative,” drove entrenched imperial Chinese troops from their position at Pietsang (estimates of Chinese strength varied from 10,000 to 12,000) and into the Pei-Ho River on the morning of August 5.²⁹³ The Japanese achieved a “complete victory” by 1200 hours, suffering casualties of 60 killed and 240 wounded.²⁹⁴ “It was Japanese day,” Daggett recalled, “and splendidly had they borne their part.”²⁹⁵ Russian forces sustained minor losses, as did British troops, but American forces did not engage the enemy and bivouacked at Tao-Wa-She, a remote village west and north of Pietsang.²⁹⁶

289. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 70.

290. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 70.

291. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 70.

292. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 70; and “A Terrible Strain of Marching,” *United States Army and Navy Journal and Gazette of the Regular and Volunteer Forces* 38, no. 1 (September 1, 1900): 7.

293. Crozier, “Some Observations,” 226; Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 58; and Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:34–35.

294. Journal of Major Jesse M. Lee; and Noyes, “Services of Graduates,” 1:815.

295. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 58.

296. Noyes, “Services of Graduates,” 1:815; and Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:35.

Movement from Pietsang to Yangtsun, a village approximately 12 miles to the northwest that was believed to be one of the few remaining Chinese strongholds between Peking and Tientsin, began at 0400 hours on August 6.²⁹⁷ American, British, French, and Russian forces crossed the Pei-Ho River to its eastern bank on Japanese-built pontoon bridges and began the move northward. East of the river, the Americans marched on the embankment of the imperial railroad that followed a direct, northwesterly course toward Yangtsun. To obtain this line of march, the Americans crossed corn and sweet potato fields and soil that was poorly cultivated, teeming with weeds; because it was soft, this ground “impeded the progress of the movement, and, worst of all, exhausted the men.” The sun, recalled Daggett, “was scorching,” and “seemed to have more power to prostrate men than I had witnessed in our Southern States or Cuba or the Philippines.”²⁹⁸ French, Russian, and British forces (with the British contingent in the advance) moved along the interior line offered by the road, though this route proved a slightly greater distance in actual mileage.²⁹⁹ Japanese forces remained west of the river and advanced toward Yangtsun, using pontoons to cross flooded ditches and canals. Such delays retarded coalition progress, and forces east of the river slowed their tempo to maintain coordination.³⁰⁰

American infantry encountered Chinese opposition at Yangtsun at approximately 1100 hours, having endured “a very hot and exhausting march” over “generally level country,” and went from column into line in millet fields with no drinking water.³⁰¹ Light Battery F of the Fifth US Artillery—six guns strong, operating from within the sea of millet, and requiring observation from atop limber chests and neighboring rooftops—nevertheless executed well against Chinese positions.³⁰² Occasionally, the guns of Light Battery F concentrated their fires; more often, individual guns engaged distinct Chinese targets.³⁰³ A charge of the 14th US Infantry, which anchored the left of the American line and connected with the British force, broke the Chinese position and

297. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 59.

298. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 60.

299. Noyes, “Services of Graduates,” 1:816; and Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:35.

300. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 59–60.

301. Noyes, “Services of Graduates,” 1:816; and Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:36.

302. Ginsburgh, “Rolling Along with Reilly,” 16.

303. Ginsburgh, “Rolling Along with Reilly,” 16.

succeeded in capturing the railroad station and, then, the village of Yangtsun.³⁰⁴ As at the Battle of Tientsin, American forces sustained considerable casualties, with seven men killed and 59 wounded.³⁰⁵ Most likely, the Americans suffered more from friendly artillery fire than from Chinese shrapnel, as indicated by medical analysis of wounds.³⁰⁶ One infantryman dropped dead during the fight, his heart having failed on account of dehydration and heat.³⁰⁷ Not until the fighting at Peking did Americans suffer additional combat losses.³⁰⁸

Pursuant to the coalition land commanders' plan, finalized in Tientsin, to bivouac in Yangtsun on the evening of August 7, forces rested after the hard fight and prepared to press onward.³⁰⁹ Coalition commanders convened a second council of war in the forenoon of August 7 to plan the expeditionary force's move as far as Tungchow and decided a third council should convene there to plot the final phase of the movement to Peking.³¹⁰ Captain Henry J. Reilly's battery was augmented after midnight by the arrival of a handful of men from the Philippines.³¹¹ Coalition forces continued their movement on August 8 and 9. From Yangtsun to Peking, the expeditionary force encountered only meager resistance, though the scorching climate made the final marches to the imperial seat as insufferable as the movements endured to Yangtsun theretofore.³¹² The Americans marched 12 miles on August 10, which Daggett described as "oppressively hot."³¹³ The road over which the Americans moved generally lay between one-fourth and three-fourths of a mile away from the river, which made water difficult, if not impossible, to reach. The intervening ground was filled with cornfields 10 to 15 feet in height. Corn obstructed the breeze, and men keeled over in the hundreds. Well water along the route of the march was "generally good and cold

304. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 62–64; Noyes, "Services of Graduates," 1:817; and Banister, "Surgical Notes," 629.

305. Banister, "Surgical Notes," 628.

306. Banister, "Surgical Notes," 629.

307. Banister, "Surgical Notes," 628.

308. Banister, "Surgical Notes," 628.

309. Noyes, "Services of Graduates," 1:817.

310. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:37.

311. Charles Pelot Summerall, "The Land of the Dragon," in *Way of Duty*, 50; and Noyes, "Services of Graduates," 1:817.

312. Cope, "American Troops in China," 27; and Ginsburgh, "Rolling Along with Reilly," 16.

313. Journal Entry for 10 August 1900, Journal of Major Jesse M. Lee; and Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 71.

enough to be refreshing,” but the column of Japanese and Russian troops in front of the Americans had taken liberal quantities of water, which “severely tested” the wells, and many ran dry.³¹⁴ Morale was generally strong, though some men displayed a “want of vigor and proper spirit.”³¹⁵ Even so, remarked a member of Chaffee’s staff, hardships endured on the march were “of unusual severity.”³¹⁶ Every two to three days, the Americans bivouacked near the Pei-Ho and received supplies by junks.³¹⁷

Aside from the natural environment and climate that compounded the difficulty of troop movements, the final phase of the march to Peking brought its own horrors and spectacles. Taking the initiative in leading the column and clearing Chinese villages, the Japanese showed no quarter to their ancient Han enemies. Evidence of atrocities committed by Russo-Japanese forces against indigenous Chinese resulted in profound American sympathy for noncombatants. Further to the rear in the order of march, the Americans passed heads of dead Chinese mounted on spikes, saw bodies of Chinese civilians floating in the Pei-Ho River, and encountered the remains of murdered Chinese women and children in the intervening villages between Yangtsun and Peking.³¹⁸ “Nothing living was left,” recalled Lieutenant Charles Summerall of Light Battery F, Fifth US Artillery.³¹⁹ Evidence of such wanton atrocities struck the Americans “with disgust and contempt, especially for the Russians, who were the lowest class of brutes.”³²⁰ Summerall observed Chinese women fleeing Russian forces and drowning themselves in canals.³²¹ Most of the Chinese villages along the route of march were deserted, recalled Daggett, but for the occasional Chinese man or woman “crouching in some hidden corner, expecting to be killed every moment.”³²² Noncombatants were “shot down like beasts,” almost always by Russian and Japanese troops.³²³ A member of Chaffee’s staff witnessed one Russian soldier kick a Chinese

314. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 71–72.

315. Journal Entry for 10 August 1900, Journal of Major Jesse M. Lee.

316. Journal Entry for 10 August 1900, Journal of Major Jesse M. Lee.

317. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 71.

318. Summerall, “Land of the Dragon,” 50.

319. Summerall, “Land of the Dragon,” 50.

320. Summerall, “Land of the Dragon,” 50.

321. Summerall, “Land of the Dragon,” 50.

322. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 73.

323. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 73.

boy, not eight years old, then kick him a second time in the face and into a cornfield (“the assault was murderous”), all of which was done for sport.³²⁴ Indeed, Russian atrocities at Tungchow were rampant.³²⁵ “During the entire advance,” wrote William Crozier in the *North American Review*, “dead bodies of coolies floating in the river and lying about in odd places gave evidence of killing which must have been unjustifiable.”³²⁶ If the Russians and Japanese committed war crimes against noncombatants—the diary of Medal of Honor recipient Calvin Pearl Titus in particular describes Russian soldiers as brutes who killed and raped indiscriminately—the Americans tolerated no such offenses.³²⁷ One American enlisted soldier was brought to trial, convicted, and sentenced to 20 years imprisonment for crimes against a woman.³²⁸ Some Chinese, displaying a certain measure of trust, mustered the confidence to interact with the Americans, even venturing out to see American troops on the march. “Perhaps some of them knew the flag,” Daggett speculated, hoping, with noble optimism, the American flag would always “stand for the protection of life, not its destruction.”³²⁹

After six days of marching, having bivouacked in several Chinese villages along the Tientsin-Peking road and the Pei-Ho River, experienced only minor brushes with the Chinese rear guard in retreat toward Peking, and detached various companies to guard the line of communications and supply from Tientsin to Peking, coalition forces made their final stop on August 12 in preparation for the attack against the imperial capital.³³⁰ The weather on August 12 was blessedly cool and overcast, allowing the troops to move with minimal distress.³³¹ Coalition commanders determined to devote August 13 to reconnaissance, and each force bore responsibility for scouting various roads that terminated at Peking. Chaffee made a reconnaissance in force with elements of the 14th US Infantry, Reilly’s battery, and the

324. Crozier, “Some Observations,” 238.

325. Crozier, “Some Observations,” 238.

326. Crozier, “Some Observations,” 238.

327. Diary Entry for July 29, 1900, Calvin P. Titus Diary.

328. Crozier, “Some Observations,” 238.

329. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 73.

330. Journal Entries for 7 August to 13 August 1900, Journal of Major Jesse M. Lee; Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 73–75; Summerall, “Land of the Dragon,” 50; and Noyes, “Services of Graduates,” 1:817.

331. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:38.

Sixth US Cavalry. Encountering light enemy resistance, Chaffee ordered the weight of the American force to concentrate forward.³³² Coalition leaders determined to convene another council on the evening of August 14 to plan future operations.³³³

Coordination with Russian forces deteriorated in the 48 hours leading up to the attack at Peking. On August 12, while at Tungchow, Russian General Nikolai Petrovitch Linievitch hoped to halt the general advance there, citing the need to rest his troops, a motion his coalition partners overruled.³³⁴ But on the evening of August 13 and in the early morning hours of August 14, the Russians increased their operational tempo and attempted to seize the initiative by attacking Peking alone. Chaffee, who mistook the artillery barrage and small-arms fire from Peking for a final attempt to overrun the besieged legations, was oblivious to Russian movements.³³⁵ So, too, were Japanese forces.³³⁶

In 1900, Peking was oriented spatially in almost a perfect square of approximately 16 square miles and divided into two sections. The larger northern section, the Tartar City, contained within its massive walls the Imperial City proper, and within the walls of the Imperial City lay the Forbidden City, the formal residence of the emperor and empress.³³⁷ To the south of the Tartar City but joined by the southernmost wall lay the more rectangular Chinese City. The Tartar City walls featured 11 gates; of these, three southern gates divided the Chinese City from the Tartar City.³³⁸ The American and European legations, situated between the southern wall of the Tartar City and the southern wall of the Imperial City, could be reached most directly by, first, taking the eastern wall of the Chinese City, and then proceeding into the Tartar City by its southern gates.³³⁹ This path constituted the line of tactical actions on August 14.

332. Journal Entry for 13 August 1900, Journal of Major Jesse M. Lee; and Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:38–39.

333. Journal Entry for 14 August 1900, Journal of Major Jesse M. Lee; and Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:38.

334. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:38.

335. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:38; and Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 76.

336. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:38–39.

337. Map of Lieutenant H. B. Ferguson, sheet no. 6, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*.

338. Map of Lieutenant H. B. Ferguson.

339. Map of Lieutenant H. B. Ferguson.

American infantry and artillery deployed at 0700 across rolling hills to attack the northeastern corner of the Chinese City.³⁴⁰ The infantry and artillery benefited from the night attack of the Russians, who had secured the Tung-Pien Gate located there and thus opened the Chinese City to coalition forces. Once inside, two guns of Light Battery F deployed to enfilade the southern wall of the Tartar City with shrapnel; Company E of the 14th US Infantry, led by bugler Calvin Titus, famously scaled the Tartar Wall without any means of ascent and unfurled the national colors in the gentle breeze.³⁴¹ Still another company of American infantry scaled the Tartar Wall further to the east.³⁴² Combined, the infantry and artillery swept the southern wall of the Tartar City of Chinese defenders, moving westward until the infantry and artillery controlled the ramparts.³⁴³ The Ninth US Infantry followed this general movement and went into position near the southern gate of the Tartar City, while the battalion of American marines protected the supply train.³⁴⁴ British forces entered the Chinese City by the Sha-Huo Gate, maneuvered to the Tartar Wall, and were the first to enter the legation compound.³⁴⁵ At 1500 hours, the American advance had moved into position just opposite the legations, separated by the Tartar Wall, and US marines attached to the legation guard, long besieged, opened the Chien-Men Gate to coalition troops from within, consummating the rescue.³⁴⁶ Chaffee established contact with the American minister Edwin Conger in the afternoon.³⁴⁷

On August 15, Lieutenant Summerall received orders to blow open the outermost gate leading to the Imperial City. Summerall achieved this objective with good effect, despite the immense weight of the doors, by ordering one of his guns to fire high-explosive thorite shells through

340. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 79; and Summerall, "Land of the Dragon," 50.

341. Diary Entry for 14 August 1900, Calvin P. Titus Diary; War Department, "Background Information," General Order No. 86, Calvin Pearl Titus Papers, Archives and Special Collections, USMA; Lieutenant Colonel Calvin P. Titus, interview by Colonel James G. Chestnut, March 1962; and Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 81-82.

342. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 83.

343. Summerall, "Land of the Dragon," 51; and Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:40.

344. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:40.

345. Journal Entry for 14 August 1900, Journal of Major Jesse M. Lee; and Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 91.

346. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:40.

347. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:40.

the center of the gate to sever its locking bars at close range.³⁴⁸ In like manner, Summerall's guns opened the gates through a series of two additional walls within the Imperial City, with the 14th US Infantry providing covering fire. In this action on August 15, Captain Reilly, the commander of Light Battery F, was killed.³⁴⁹ That evening, under the cover of darkness, Chinese troops and the Manchu court fled the Forbidden City, leaving all of Peking under coalition military control.³⁵⁰ Coalition partners divided Peking into zones of military occupation. Having rescued the besieged legations and the approximate 800 foreigners (to say nothing of the three thousand native Chinese converts in the legation compound), coalition forces achieved a complete victory in a daring military campaign and humanitarian undertaking.³⁵¹

The fates of the American and European diplomatic legations in Peking during the siege had understandably aroused considerable excitement and intense concern in the United States and around the world. Coalition forces immediately recognized the situation in Peking had been dire. "Appearances," recalled Daggett, "gave sufficient evidence of the severity of the siege."³⁵² Daggett described buildings in the Legation Quarter riddled with "hundreds of thousands of bullet-marks."³⁵³ Some histories in the aftermath of the expedition—even contemporaneous newspaper coverage—suggested the severity of the siege was overstated and those in the Legation Quarter fared much better than was generally supposed. But, undoubtedly, the Americans and their European counterparts in Peking faced probable extermination had coalition forces failed to reach them and had the American and European defenses failed.³⁵⁴

Considering the skillful provisions the besieged legations made for their own defense apart from the operations conducted to relieve them is worthwhile. Close examination suggests American soldiers and marines executed a desperate but skillful defense of their position. Upon entering Peking, Chaffee reported the following:

348. Summerall, "Land of the Dragon," 52.

349. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:41; and Summerall, "Land of the Dragon," 53.

350. Summerall, "Land of the Dragon," 54; and Cope, "American Troops in China," 27.

351. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 92.

352. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 90.

353. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 90.

354. Colby, "Tientsin," 199.

Buildings, walls, streets, alleys, entrances, etc., showed every evidence of a confining siege. Barricades were built everywhere and of every sort of material, native brick being largely used for their construction, topped with sand bags made from every conceivable sort of cloth—from sheets and pillowcases to dress materials and brocaded curtains. Many of the legations were in ruins, and the English, Russian, and American, though standing and occupied, were filled with bullet holes from small arms, and often having larger apertures made by shell. The children presented a pitiable sight, white and wan for lack of proper food. . . . They were living on short rations, a portion of which consisted of a very small piece of horse or mule meat daily. The Christian Chinese were being fed upon whatever could be secured, and were often reduced to killing dogs for meat.³⁵⁵

Despite the intensity of the siege, the Americans had mounted a sound urban defense at their legation, evidence of which derives from analysis of gunshot wounds and munition expenditures. An aide to Chaffee noted after the capture of Peking, Americans suffered comparatively few deaths during the siege, many wounds were suffered in the head, and the American defenders managed to conserve 1,500 rounds of small-arms ammunition from their original store of 10,000.³⁵⁶ These observations suggest “the best possible dispositions were made” for the defense of the Legation Quarter throughout the two-and-a-half-month siege.³⁵⁷ American servicemembers noted Chinese defenses, “considering the possibilities of the case,” were, in contrast, quite weak.³⁵⁸

355. Report of Chaffee, 1 September 1900, quoted in Report of Secretary of War Elihu Root, Washington, DC, 30 November 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:13.

356. Report of First Lieutenant J. R. Lindsey, Peking, China, November 1900, in *Reports on Military Operations in South Africa and China*, comp. Adjutant-General's Office (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1901), 459.

357. Report of Lindsey, November 1900, in *Reports on Military Operations*, 459.

358. “Terrible Strain of Marching,” 7.

— TAKING STOCK —

Military Lessons

Military operations in China turned on the sense, reinforced by all communications and intelligence then available, time was running out for the besieged American and European legations in Peking. As one American officer put the matter following the capture of the Imperial City, “[H]arrowing accounts of massacre and torture had given impulse to the advancing army.”³⁵⁹ More than any other condition that shaped military action, a sense time was fleeting accelerated the tempo of operations. This sense countenanced operations against Boxers before coalition forces could properly set the theater, augment their strength, and establish an organized, joint command structure. The capture of the Taku forts in June, perceived as an act of war by the Manchu court, was perhaps necessary to sustain a campaign, but the capture transformed the conflict from a rescue expedition against irregular, nonstate actors into an armed conflict of state actors. This tactical action at once broadened the scope of the coalition effort and transformed the character of the conflict. The seizure of the Taku forts resulted in an intense siege of allied concessions at Tientsin and ensured a pitched battle would be fought for the city’s capture. Tientsin proved the most critical decisive point from which operations against Peking, the enemy’s true center of gravity, could be pursued. Coalition efforts to sustain initiative and link tactical actions in time, space, and purpose to achieve strategic ends floundered in the earliest phase of the campaign, further exacerbating the sense of military urgency and adding to the fear time was running out. But ultimately, coalition forces managed to secure advanced bases of supply, organize a combined relief effort, and field forces at or near corps echelon that possessed sufficient combat power to take Peking. Properly sustained in the field and with a sound line of operation that drew supplies from road, river, and rail, the multinational coalition attained its operational and strategic ends. The legations were saved.

Lauded by military observers as “a notable achievement” in its time, the multinational expeditionary effort furnished important lessons for the Army, Marine Corps, and Navy.³⁶⁰ Participants in the China Relief Expedition drew informed perspectives from their involvement overseas

359. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 92.

360. “Terrible Strain of Marching,” 7.

from which to advance their profession of arms. Indeed, participants published extensively—on a wide range of subjects—in journals and national outlets about their China experience, comparing the capabilities of their force against those of coalition partners. Not since the American Revolution had the United States engaged in military operations with coalition partners; thus, the China Relief Expedition functioned as an important laboratory of military science for the force as it entered a new century. In some instances, American capabilities seemed wanting. But in many respects, the Americans performed on par with their peer coalition partners and, in several critical aspects, surpassed them.

American observations were several. Some observers marveled at the energy and proficiency of the Japanese force, which demonstrated the flexibility and combat power of a well-supplied and coordinated division in the field of military operations. The Japanese force had a “properly organized staff” that, because of its sound balance across the combat arms of artillery, cavalry, and infantry, “lacked nothing necessary for independent action.”³⁶¹ These forces manifested robust discipline.³⁶² Possessed of “the greater endurance,” Japanese cavalry “seemed never to rest” and kept “constant contact with the enemy.”³⁶³ These conditions enabled Japan to command the initiative, dictate operational tempo, and seize every tactical advantage. In contrast, the Americans were “dependent on others for information,” numerically inferior, imbalanced, and compelled “to fall in with the plans which were made for them.”³⁶⁴ Japan’s forces demonstrated great flexibility in conventional and urban military operations; the country’s troops routinely cleared Chinese villages as coalition forces marched from Tientsin to Peking.

French, German, and Italian forces appeared less impressive to American observers. But the French drew praise for their clerks and orderlies, who performed important administrative details for the field staff, as well as for their corps of transportation officers who moved subsistence and ordnance. Combined, these functions maximized the proficiency of the numerically inferior French contingent. The functions enabled line officers to look to the combat readiness of their units,

361. Crozier, “Some Observations,” 226.

362. Report of Charles H. Muir, “Report on Japanese Troops in North China,” in *Reports on Military Operations*, 361.

363. “Terrible Strain of Marching,” 7.

364. Crozier, “Some Observations,” 226.

whereas in the American force, line officers were often detached from their units for staff and clerical duties.³⁶⁵ Apart from meticulous accounts of German equipage across the various combat arms and a standard assessment of German engineers and engineering capabilities, observations of the German force in China offer little of note.³⁶⁶ German troops marched well, officers seemed to American observers well educated, and the German troops were well disciplined.³⁶⁷

British colonial possessions in India enabled the deployment of a robust force for military operations in China in the summer of 1900. Of the various participants in the coalition, the British land component presented the most intriguing subject of study for American soldiers, invited extensive observation, and produced some of the most detailed comparative analyses. In equipage, the British force was excellent; it was constituted almost entirely of native Indian soldiers, and inherent in this composition were class as well as caste distinctions largely inscrutable to Americans. In terms of supply, the British force fared well. Great Britain's force structure prioritized an agile, light-footed infantryman who relied upon pack mules in the field of operations for sustainment. British troops took meticulous care of themselves and their animals. An observer remarked, critically, the Britons exhibit many signs "showing that they are experienced campaigners. The readiness with which they put up small flags on buildings, carts, and stores of all kinds; their skill in finding the supplies and valuables of the enemy; the posting of signs and guideposts—these, and many other details," concluded the observer, "show an experience in which American troops are deficient."³⁶⁸ General Sir Alfred Gaselee, commander of the British force, brought with him a highly trained staff of 17 officers, all of the line, excluding transport and communications officers. Shown in the same light, this unit made its American counterpart appear disorganized and inefficient, which was keenly felt by an officer Chaffee dispatched to the British force as a liaison.³⁶⁹

365. Report of W. E. Craighill, "Report on the French Troops in North China," in *Reports on Military Operations*, 372.

366. Ferguson, *Report of the Engineer Equipment*, 28–30.

367. Report of J. T. Dickman, "Report on the German Troops in North China," in *Reports on Military Operations*, 382–83.

368. Report of J. T. Dickman, "Report on the British Troops in North China," in *Reports on Military Operations*, 411–13, 415.

369. S. M. Mills, "Observations on Equipments, Supplies, Etc., of the Foreign Detachments of the Expeditionary Army in North China," in *Reports on Military Operations*, 436.

American officers who served in China with Chaffee also drew the conclusion staff capabilities of the various departments lagged those of rival nations.³⁷⁰ William Crozier, who served as chief ordnance officer on Chaffee's staff (and, later, as president of the US Army War College from 1912 to 1913), put the matter in no uncertain terms.

It was again proved that our staff departments are of inadequate numbers. General Chaffee had to take his Adjutant-General from one of his line regiments, his Inspector-General from another, also his Chief Quartermaster of the expedition, as well as other officers for various staff duties; thus robbing the line, as we always do at the time when it can least spare its officers, depleted as it now is also by the officers required for the volunteer army.³⁷¹

From the beginning of the campaign in May, the American effort in China was piecemeal. Other nations, Crozier noted, deployed units that showed "evidence of preparedness and readiness"; they possessed adequate and independent transportation and were well administered by "drilled auxiliaries and staff assistants," all of whom were organized and "accustomed to [acting] together."³⁷² Even more damning was Crozier's observation the Army as an institution possessed "no organized staff for purely military purposes disconnected from supply, such as collecting and disseminating information, arranging the details of movements, supervision of the condition of the forces, etc."³⁷³ In this assessment, Crozier echoed the clamor, so in vogue during this era, for more complete field general staffs and a higher, centralized general staff cast in the European mold.

American officers criticized freely the limitations of their organization and staff structure, but the officers praised the supply and sustainment efforts that had enabled the ultimate success of the expedition.³⁷⁴ The leather shoes supplied to American soldiers were of a superior

370. Klingenberg, "Americans and the Dragon."

371. George S. Pappas, *Prudens Futuri: The US Army War College, 1901-1967* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College Alumni Association, 1967), 73; and Crozier, "Some Observations," 232.

372. Crozier, "Some Observations," 232.

373. Crozier, "Some Observations," 232.

374. Klingenberg, "In the Character."

quality.³⁷⁵ The Americans enjoyed abundance in the quality and quantity of medical supplies and established hospitals at Tientsin, Tungchow, Peking, and Nagasaki. In addition, transports and hospital ships provided for additional beds, and medical personnel rated favorably against those of coalition partners.³⁷⁶ The chief surgeon of the expedition attached to Chaffee's staff wrote with pride, "[T]he American army had by far the best field litter amongst the allies, and it attracted considerable attention."³⁷⁷ Comparative to their coalition partners, the Americans ate well and enjoyed rations at their bases of supply and in the field that exceeded the quality of their rivals.³⁷⁸ In the field of operations and in terms of weapons and ordnance, the Americans deployed some of the best artillery.³⁷⁹

Lessons learned from the American military experience in China for warfighters in the twenty-first century are several and descend from the highest levels of policy to the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war. As for the cultural and political considerations that were most immediately responsible for conflict in the first place, the Boxers having been intent on committing violence against foreigners and Western Christians suggests the problem of radical, religious extremism is perennial. If the Joint Force adapts and builds for future peer-on-peer conflicts that feature (primarily) state actors and belligerents, US ground forces should still retain strong impressions of the kind of violence often perpetrated by religiously motivated, nonstate actors. To whatever extent the human element of warfare constitutes a domain of warfighting, the land domain is the realm where military power is waged against and felt by ordinary people seeking to build communities and governments. The Boxer Uprising and the China Relief Expedition that resulted should remind American servicemembers various communities throughout the world have, throughout history, approached the nature and cultural importance of religious belief quite differently. Absent careful cultural sensitivity, US forces will have difficulty understanding and adapting to future operational

375. Mills, "Observations on Equipments," 445.

376. Report of Root, 30 November 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:7; W. B. Banister, "Report on the Medical Departments of the Allied Forces in North China," in *Reports on Military Operations*, 416–34; and Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 128.

377. Banister, "Surgical Notes," 630.

378. Crozier, "Some Observations," 227.

379. Mills, "Observations on Equipments," 441; and Klingenberg, "In the Character."

environments in which religiously motivated actors play prominent—if not dominant—roles and exert considerable influence on political affairs.³⁸⁰

If war is a qualitatively unique extension of politics, then military professionals seeking to understand the history of armed conflict in China should seek to draw lessons from the political history of China at the turn of the twentieth century. Histories of China that underscore the nation's authoritarian turn in later years and its recent military modernization obscure another political truth, illumined by the Boxer Uprising and the China campaign of 1900: A tension exists in Chinese history between political centralization and local autonomy that varies with its geographical expanse. Boxers enjoyed popular and imperial support in northern China but found a cooler reception in southern and central China at the provincial levels, a pattern suggestive of the ancient kingdom's diversity and unpredictability.³⁸¹ The efforts of local leaders in south and central China to suppress Boxer activity in exchange for guarantees from coalition powers no coalition forces would enter their provinces were critical in confining military operations to northern China.³⁸² As Ralph Powell wrote, the actions of provincial officials contributed to preventing the Boxer Uprising from erupting into a large-scale war.³⁸³ As military professionals consider policy options for and limits to international competition with China and prepare for high-intensity, peer-on-peer conflict, the professionals should remember political volatility will exert considerable, if unpredictable, influence on the course of future military operations.

At the operational and tactical levels of war, force protection emerged as one of the more salient issues during the China Relief Expedition. Combined with the demanding physical nature of counterinsurgency operations there, the humid and tropical climate of the Philippine Islands in springtime took its toll on the strength and vitality of American troops even before they arrived in China to conduct operations. Major W. B. Banister, chief surgeon on Chaffee's staff, recalled the Ninth US Infantry Regiment "had been in the Philippines about eighteen months and their service had been very arduous."³⁸⁴ The regiment,

380. Graeme Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants," *Atlantic* (website), March 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>.

381. Powell, *Chinese Military Power*, 112–13.

382. Powell, *Chinese Military Power*, 112–13.

383. Powell, *Chinese Military Power*, 112–13.

384. Banister, "Surgical Notes," 618.

Banister noted, was in poor physical condition to begin a new campaign, and some soldiers had prematurely secured their returns to active duty from the hospital to accompany the regiment to its next theater of operations. These soldiers brought with them malarial cachexia and dysentery.³⁸⁵ The well-documented sufferings of sailors and marines who participated in the failed Seymour relief expedition in June also testify to the importance of force protection, as do the physical challenges endured by American servicemembers during the march from Tientsin to Peking. After-action reports across echelons are replete with references to dehydration, heat exhaustion, and sunstroke that significantly degraded the combat effectiveness of the force.³⁸⁶ The brutal march to Peking emerged almost universally as a noted feature of the campaign.³⁸⁷ Such environmental challenges are natural and inherent in all military operations, but the urgency of the diplomatic crisis in Peking presented American commanders with few options for moving American artillery, cavalry, and infantry to China, and, once there, fewer options still for their employment in the theater of operations. Though the campaign to relieve the legations put American servicemembers under severe physical strain, US forces managed well, made the most of a difficult natural environment, and drew from a logistical and supply network that ultimately made the American force in China the most well equipped of the multinational coalition.³⁸⁸

Future commanders, especially those on the ground, from the Joint Force land component commander to commissioned and noncommissioned officers at the lowest echelons must remember the

385. Banister, "Surgical Notes," 618.

386. Report of Colonel A. S. Daggett, Headquarters, Yangtsun, China, 7 August 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:44; Report of Captain Frank F. Eastman, Yangtsun, China, 7 August 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:45; Report of Captain A. Hasbrouck Jr., near Yangtsun, China, 7 August 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:46; Report of Captain J. C. F. Tillson, Yangtsun, China, 7 August 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:46–47; Report of First Lieutenant Joseph F. Gohn, Yangtsun, China, 7 August 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:47; Report of Captain John R. M. Taylor, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:49; Report of First Lieutenant W. A. Burnside, Yangtsun, China, 7 August 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:49; Report of Captain C. H. Martin, 7 August 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:50; Report of Lieutenant Colonel Charles A. Coolidge, Peking, China, 20 August 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:52; Report of Major Morris C. Foote, Peking, China, 18 August 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:52; Report of Captain F. L. Palmer, Peking, China, 18 August 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:54–55; Report of Captain John M. Sigworth, Peking, China, 19 August 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:57; and Report of First Lieutenant J. B. Schoeffel, Peking, China, 19 August 1900, in *Annual Reports of the War Department*, 7:58.

387. "Terrible Strain of Marching," 7.

388. Klingenberg, "In the Character."

lesson of supply and logistics in China: No matter how the weight of superiority in supplies and crucial subsistence registers on the balance sheet, in the end, the ability to move essential supplies to troops when they are most needed (and when transportation is most difficult to procure) is the most vital. Sustainment and force protection bear directly on other doctrinal warfighting functions because human endurance is finite, and the physical condition of troops in the field enhances or degrades their combat effectiveness.³⁸⁹ Colonel Daggett, who commanded the 14th US Infantry in China and experienced this lesson firsthand, put the matter thus:

There is no more important acquisition for an army officer than the knowledge of how to march troops. Soldiers may be ever so well disciplined and skillful riflemen; if they can not be at the right place at the right time, or, if there, so exhausted as to be unable to render service, they are useless; they might as well have never been enlisted. The knowledge of what men can endure is acquired by long experience in marching troops and close observation. To understand thoroughly what men can endure, the officers must have had experience in marching with them. Some officers can march a column of troops to the designated point with the loss of only the feeblest; others will exhaust and disintegrate their commands during the first hours of the march, and the few that may reach their destination will be unable to render much, if any, service.³⁹⁰

This lesson was similarly grasped in later years by such luminaries as George C. Marshall and George S. Patton Jr., who observed and noted the importance of provisions, fitness, and cleanliness for soldiers in World War I.³⁹¹ Although the character of land and Joint operations in the twenty-first century little resembles American operations in China, the fundamental tenets of this lesson endure, and commanders should look to maximize supply while blending force protection and tempo to achieve tactical, operational, and strategic success.

389. Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Operations*, Army Doctrine Publication 3-0 (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, July 2019).

390. Daggett, *China Relief Expedition*, 64.

391. George C. Marshall, "Profiting by War Experiences," *Infantry Journal* 18, no. 1 (January 1921): 35; George C. Marshall, *Memoirs of My Services in the World War, 1917-1918* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976); and Mikolashek, *Blood, Guts, and Grease*, 3.

Military action in China appeared to American servicemembers in 1900 as a comparatively manageable and straightforward affair. How simple the campaign seems now, more than 100 years removed from the actual event. And yet, on the ground, and for those who experienced it, the China campaign presented considerable difficulties. The legations nearly perished. Despite the Americans' superiority in industry and manufactures; remarkable success in moving marines, sailors, and soldiers to the theater of military operations; impressive work to supply these personnel in the field; and tactical overmatch, the Americans and their coalition partners took time to organize a combined force. This force struggled in the early phase of the campaign. The superior military capabilities of the coalition forces in the Boxer Uprising are not remarkable in retrospect; rather, the success of the China Relief Expedition never having been a foregone conclusion, even with such capabilities, is remarkable. This observation illuminates a foundational truth of military operations that has endured throughout the ages and will last so long as the nature of warfare is immutable: Complexity, friction, and uncertainty are fixtures of armed conflict.

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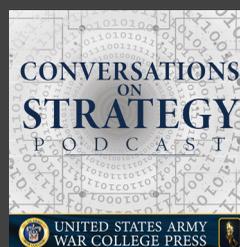
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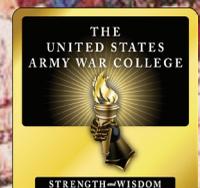
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