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Compulsive capitalism: Military invasion, dichotomous the Anglo-Chinese War I as a case study

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Abstract

Capitalism has been extensively researched for several periods. The majority of political and economic authors disagreed on its definition. Capitalism faced many deviations in meaning and implementation, and those deviations made varieties of capitalism. This study aims to illustrate the definitions of capitalism and its relation with military invasion, based on the Anglo-Chinese War I as a case study according to preceding references, and proven historical facts, and asks if capitalist goals can be achieved by military invasion. Furthermore, it will be the first time in political socioeconomics that the term "compulsive capitalism" is used.

Keywords: Anglo-Chinese War I, compulsive capitalism, the, opportunistic self-interest, authoritarianism, the international relations

Introduction

Undoubtedly, the wide range of political terms that have dichotomies like dictatorship, democracy, capitalism, and socialism are used by critics and advocates alike, but with little coherence to their meaning. The terms were created to describe economic, governmental, or administrative systems based on the original theory of those systems, this fact was the motivation for a lot of authors to write about the dilemma which related to concept of capitalism.

Capitalism, in short, is a laissez-faire system in which individuals invest capital (Cash or other assets used in a business venture) in a company to produce a good or service that can be sold to consumers on the free market under the basis of competition and it is in contrast with the economic system socialism (Both stand for diametrically opposed worldviews).

Capitalism faced many deviations in meaning and implementation, and those deviations made varieties of capitalism. One of those varieties was described but not defined in many historical events, such as the treaties of Allahabad, Nanking, and Rome, where The trade treaties were applied to open a free market and to create a trade bond between the countries, but these trade came after battel/military invasion to show a different phase of capitalism, which we can call compulsive capitalism, which is defined as "forcefully imposed capitalism".

In that paper, we will discuss the 1st Anglo-Chinese War in all impartiality as one of these historical events to detect the relationship between capitalism and the military invasion, which might create a new term in the field of political socioeconomics called "compulsive capitalism".

Concept of Capitalism and the roots of dilemma

Political ideologies such as 'Capitalism' have many definitions according to the authors, the period, the specialty, and the causality. The term 'capitalism' began as a term of criticism. Its first significant use was by the French anarchist Pierre Joseph Proudhon (Dizerega, 2019) ^[3], while it first emerged in English in the 1850s, achieving widespread circulation only in the early twentieth century with the writings of Max Weber and Werner Sombart (Ingham, 1999) ^[7]. From many different sources, the definition of the Clemson Institute for the Study of Capitalism was the clearest they define it as a system of laissez-faire that calls for a government policy of non-interference with the economic lives of its citizens where the government does not engage in regulation, supervision, or direction of market processes.

They also define it as the socioeconomic system where all property is privately owned and freely formed contracts form the basis of economic interaction (Capitalism defined and defended).

The source of the dilemma is that although Karl Marx was the first to characterize "capitalist relations of production", he never mentioned "capitalism" in the contemporary sense (Kocka, 2016) ^[9]. Other than that, Weber and Marx actually have very different ideas about what "capitalism" is. Marx (1974) ^[12] defined capital as "value appropriated without an equivalent". In contrast, Weber (1978) defined capital as "the money value of the means of profit-making available to the enterprise at the balancing of the books." Weber's definition of capital is significantly different from Marx's. Moreover, to prove the dilemma, Amartya Sen's journey from India to the West to save capitalism from the capitalists is covered in Stevens' book Stevens (2023) ^[16] (In Search of a Moral Foundation for Capitalism: From Adam Smith to Amartya Sen). Sen based his critique of capitalism on Adam Smith's original moral foundation. Another example has been discussed by Wolf (2004) ^[17], who acknowledges that there is no short and easy definition of the concept 'Capitalism' because among critics there is no agreement.

As a result, politicians have encountered variations in the definition, comprehension, and implementation of capitalism over the years.

Imprecision of the terms comes into sharp relief when we pose critical questions, like: 'Is China capitalist?' or 'Can a capitalist economy abandon growth?' When does a country move from 'capitalism' to socialism', from 'communism' to 'capitalism'; or to something new altogether? We believe that the widespread variety of economic models demands that social theorists provide a more satisfactory definition of capitalism; among critics, there is no agreement. On the other hand, countries with significant elements of government ownership of enterprises operating within a market order, such as public utilities, or providing public services separate from such an order, such as Social Security, were called socialists, such as the Soviet Union and China, which are considered symbols of socialism. As a general term, "socialism" had no coherent meaning and still does not. But it was always contrasted and confronted with the term "Capitalism" which refers to the form of economy that was commonplace in Britain in the nineteenth century or the United States (Keynes, 1936; Harris, & Delanty, 2023) ^[8, 5].

British Culture and Capitalism

The British Empire spanned the entire world at the height of its dominance in the early 19th century. Due to its extensive control over regions of Africa, India, Australia, New Zealand, Polynesia, Canada, and the Caribbean, the British Empire became well-known worldwide for its rich customs and traditions. Language, food, architecture, the arts, tea drinking, and the British Royal family are just a few examples of how Britain's past as an imperial power has influenced various aspects of its culture.

Furthermore, the aristocracy, which typically ranks only below the monarch in society, was retained by the British. This status can include feudal or legal privileges.

To replace the previous feudal regimes and establish capitalism in the 18th century, Europe turned to economist Adam Smith's (1776) ideas about the free market. These ideas were the first to identify the issues with mercantilism,

such as trade imbalances, and were regarded as the foundation for capitalism.

Apart from the entertainment life that the people living in the empire enjoyed, the British behavior forced the rulers to use industrialization and imperialism to propel Britain to the forefront of the global economy, possibly at the expense of its colonies, like South Asia. For this reason, the British Empire was at the center of these significant changes in the global economic system.

In theory, a boom in capitalist enterprise was enabled by the expansion of trade between Europe and Asia since the early modern era, not only in the British Empire but also in many other parts of the world that are now connected to the global economy. However, the forces of imperialism's expansion and the coercive, exploitative practices of colonialism really served as the foundation for this global growth.

Thus, capitalism-which is generally defined as an economic and social structure marked by market exchange and profit-seeking-became an integral part of contemporary societies, but regrettably, it was founded on the coercion of others.

Marxists (as well as other critics) consider this one of the drawbacks of capitalism: it creates a tiny, affluent, wealthy class that takes advantage of a large, underpaid, and exploited lower class of workers. This wealthy capitalist class then owns the factories, land, and other means of production, and the workers are forced to sell their labor to survive.

The Chinese capitalism

Even though the majority of research and studies show that capitalism exists in China, the system in that country still baffles the West (Lin, 2006; Napoleoni, 2011; Losurdo, 2017; Dale & Unkovski-Korica 2023) ^[10, 14, 11, 2].

According to Ahrens & Jünemann (2010) ^[1] China is considered a hybrid of the coordinated market economy (CME) and the liberal market economy (LME), both of which were discussed in Capitalism Against Capitalism (1991), wherein they postulated the existence of a Rhine model of capitalism (CME) (Japan, Germany, and the Netherlands) that is institutionally opposed to and has greater efficiency and welfare potential than the less coordinated and organized Anglo-Saxon variety (LME).

Furthermore, according to McNally (2007) ^[13] China represents a completely new form of capitalism that combines elements of "network capitalism", "new global capitalism", and the East Asian state-led capitalism model.

China may have already reached the transitional stage between capitalism and communism which Marx characterized as "the dictatorship of the proletariat".

Capitalism in China, at least as it existed before the communist revolution, has perhaps already evolved into something else under the influence of the communist ideology that has dominated the country since 1949. Hence, the authors still ask What, then, is this something else, which is, as we see, a peculiar mixture of capitalism and communism under the dictatorship of a one-party state?

After elucidating the dilemma of capitalism, what would happen if that definition was changed or enforced through coercion? Will that result in the invasion of nations, societies, or organizations in the name of trade nets, free markets, or the balance of trade, driven by opportunistic self-interest? After responding to this query, could it be referred to as compulsive capitalism?

Are the treaties of Allahabad, Nanking, Rome, and so on examples of compulsive capitalism? Was the East India

Company founded for trade purposes?

This essay will attempt to investigate the causes of one of those instances, the Nanking Treaty that put an end to the First Opium War, and whether a military invasion can accomplish capitalism's objectives. Could this be explained by capitalism or the free market? Or are military invasion and capitalism two sides of the same coin?

The First Opium War

From the vision of Florek (2018), The story began in 1664 when King Charles II (king of England) received from China two pounds of leaves and leaf buds of an evergreen shrub native to East Asia (*Camellia sinensis*), The leaves serve as an aromatic beverage, and he prepared them by

pouring hot or boiling water over the cured or fresh leaves (Which called tea today), The king liked the taste of this drink, and suddenly he became very popular in the kingdom. While the import of tea became essential (Figure 1), in the late 18th century, the kingdom was importing close to 7,000 tonnes per annul from China, and from that, the tea became an excellent source of government income because the exchequer imposed a 100% tax on the import. In conjunction with that, the Chinese empire was an economic giant and virtually an exclusive producer of highly valued commodities such as silk, porcelain, and tea, among others; hence, China needed silver not only to enlarge its economy but also to pay for the administration and the army that held the large empire together.

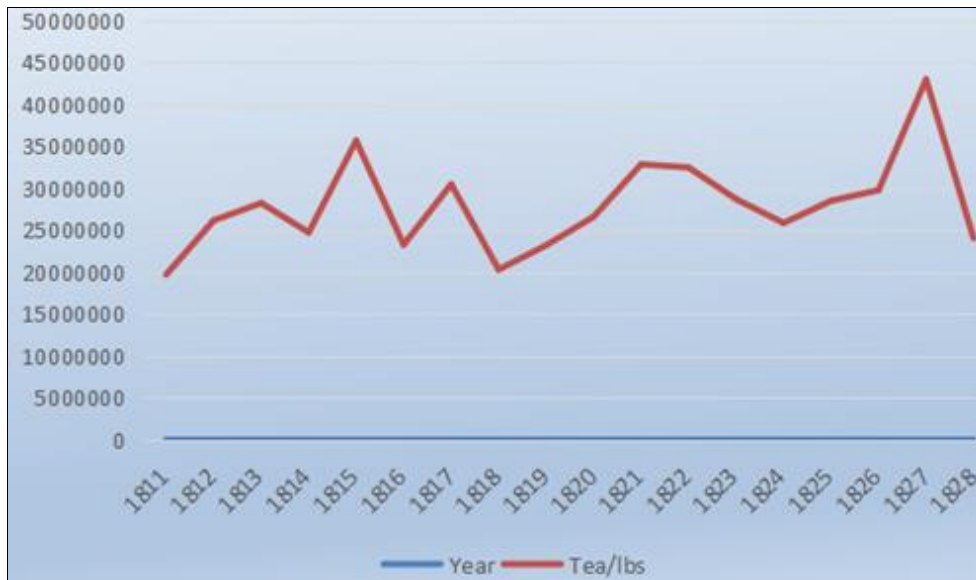


Fig 1: Shows the East India Company's Chinese tea trade in 1830.

Till this part, all authors from the West and East are consistent about what happened till this point, because it was just a trade process where the Chinese merchants offered their products in exchange for silver and that achieved the term of the free market (The essence of capitalism) despite that, there were battles began in

November 1839 between Britain and Imperial China, each side had different reasons for starting the battle (Figure, 2) where the British side called it the Anglo-Chinese War or the 1st Opium war, while the Chinese consider it a military invasion for their ports.



Fig 2: Shows the reasons for the 1st Opium War according to different visions.

According to what was published on the official site of the National Army Museum UK in 2024 about the First Opium War, the First Opium War happened between 1839 and 1842, to keep the trade balance between Britain and Imperial China.

By the beginning of the 19th century, The relationship between Britain and China was already unstable because the Chinese would only sell their goods in exchange for silver and would not accept British goods in return, gradually depleting Britain's silver stockpiles. As a result, the East India Company and other British traders began bringing Indian opium into China illegally, demanding payment in silver that was later used to purchase tea and other items. Then in May 1839 The British Chief Superintendent of Trade (Charles Elliott) was forced by the Chinese to hand up the opium stores in Canton for destruction, which sparked the war.

in November 1839 after several skirmishes, the fighting began, Voltage and Hyacinth HMSs defeated 29 Chinese vessels during the evacuation of British refugees from Canton, then after this defeat, the admiral of the Chinese fleet, Kuan Ti, asked for a truce because ten of his 13 war-junks had been captured and his flagship had been destroyed while the British force had suffered only 38 casualties.

After those defeats of the Chinese forces, the negotiations began the British demands by the foreign secretary, Lord Palmerston can be summed as follows:

1. The Chinese should pay compensation
2. They should cede one of their coastal islands to the British for use as a trading station.

But those demands were refused by the Chinese and, hostilities resumed.

Under Lieutenant-General Sir Hugh Gough, the British proceeded up the Pearl River with a strengthened military and moved north, seizing Canton, Amoy (Xiamen), Chusan, Chinhai (Zhenhai), and Ningpo (Ningbo). With negotiations failing again, the Chinese launched a counter-attack on March 10, 1842, but were easily repelled. Chapu (Zhapu) was also taken on May 18, 1842, despite brave Chinese resistance. Gough and Admiral Sir William Parker then proceeded to Shanghai, which was conquered on 19 June 1842 then Chinkiang (Zhenjiang) on July 21, after all these defeats and the fall of Chinese cities and Faced with the possibility of a British assault on Nanking (Nanjing), the Chinese sued for peace.

The treaty of Nanking was concluded (Fig. 3), Hong Kong was ceded to Britain, and the treaty ports of Canton (Guangzhou), Amoy (Xiamen), Foochow (Fuzhou), Shanghai, and Ningpo (Ningbo) were subsequently opened to all traders in addition to that, the Chinese paid the reparations and compelled to relax their control on foreign trade, including the opium trade.

And so the war ended on 17 August 1842, by applying the free market ideology (Capitalism), where that treaty enabled the British to 'carry on their mercantile transactions with whatever persons they please' and paved the way for the opening up of the Chinese market (According to the explanation on the website, they summed the benefits of this war between the British-Indian forces and Imperial China as served the interests of opium smugglers and also their victory opened up the lucrative Chinese trade to British merchants). Not far from that British/Western vision, the Harvard scholar Gelber, (2006) ^[4] wrote about how the

world is so wrong about the reasons for the opium war.

He justified the British going to war because of

1. The military threats to defenseless British civilians, including women and children.
2. The Chinese refused to negotiate on terms of diplomatic equality.
3. The Chinese refused to open more ports than Canton to trade, not just with Britain but with everybody (rejecting the free market ideology).

The author said" The belief about British "guilt" came later, as part of China's long catalogue of alleged Western "exploitation and aggression".

Gelber, (2006) ^[4] also defends the British desire to open limitless Chinese markets, if only they could get what beyond Canton. He wrote, "They wanted more ports opened to trade and proper diplomatic relations in Beijing. It was what Lord Macartney's mission to China had asked for back in 1793-1794".

Finally, Gelber, (2006) ^[4] describe the free trade is a moral imperative, he also used the description of the chief British official in China Sir John Bowring who said "Free trade is Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is free trade."



Fig 3: Shows the historical sequence of the first Opium War.

From the other side of the world especially in China/Asia the reasons for The Anglo-Chinese I war can be summed in Frank/clear form as flow:

1. Continuation of the British to transport opium despite the issuance of prohibition orders in China.
2. Exploitation of the Chinese's rejection of trade and they invaded them to achieve the British opportunistic self-interest/authoritarianism.

We can also use what Gelber, (2006) ^[4] summarized about the Chinese vision /reasons, he wrote "Britain wanted to expand its imperial power and sell more goods, especially opium whose import the Chinese tried to ban, while the British sold or smuggled in any way. In other words, it was a case of commercial and imperialist British greed trying to force opium on the Chinese".

We will also use what Xi Jinping said in his Speech at a Ceremony Marking the Centenary of the Communist Party of China on July 1, 2021, to understand the impact of this war and the Chinese vision of it "The Chinese nation is a great nation. With a history of more than 5,000 years, China has made indelible contributions to the progress of human civilization. After the Opium War of 1840, however, China was gradually reduced to a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society and suffered greater ravages than ever before. The country endured intense humiliation, the people were subjected to great pain, and the Chinese civilization was plunged into darkness. Since that time, national rejuvenation has been the greatest dream of the Chinese people and the Chinese nation".

After going into the meaning of "Capitalism" and the reasons for the opium war from both sides West and East, that paper should answer the main question, is military invasion one of the tools of Capitalism/ free market? is capitalism interested in the public and private sector organizations or the countries also be forced to open-door policy for each other via military invasion?

This research paper will not tend to any vision, but it will use all visions to answer: the British demands for trade in China were refused, the military invasion began, then ended when the Treaty of Nanking was applied (the free market treaty), and the British demands focused only on the commercial treaty, not the revenge for the children and women, as mentioned in Gelber (2006) ^[4].

The answer is agreements like the Nanking Treaty are considered to be the public face of compulsive capitalism and the military invasion is one of the capitalist tools or in another form capitalism and military invasion might be two sides of the same coin according to many cases e.g The Anglo-Chinese War I, that answer see eye to eye with Hevia, (2003) ^[6] who has described the reason for that war as "In this view, an ascendant commercial-industrial class in Britain, fresh from successful political battles that altered the makeup of Parliament (The Reform Act of 1832) and ended the monopoly of the East India Company in Asia, insisted on greatly expanding British economic interests globally, and especially in China. Strong advocates of free trade, this group demanded that state military power should be brought to bear to alter the situation in China and thereby further national and individual interests. The government was more than willing to oblige, historians argue because it was in the thrall of these class interests".

Finally, the politico-economic-administrative system in China continues to perplex the West, even though most

research and studies demonstrate that there is capitalism in China (Lin, 2006; Napoleoni, 2011; Losurdo, 2017) ^[10, 14, 11]. Still, the West believes it is unlike Western capitalism, possibly due to differences in the meaning, tools, and applications of the term capitalism or because some capitalists chose to use it incorrectly to exploit other countries.

Conclusion

Capitalism has been extensively researched for several periods. The majority of political and economic authors disagreed on its definition, the deviation in the implementation of capitalism led to the emergence of compulsive capitalism (Forcefully imposed capitalism). Western and Eastern perspectives differ on the reasons behind the opium war. This essay examined the war's events from the perspectives of both sides and came to the following conclusions: the Chinese ports were attacked when they refused to comply with British trade demands; the military invasion started and ended with the application of the Treaty of Nanking, which established free market principles; and the British demands were limited to the commercial agreement rather than seeking retribution for the women and children. We conclude that, under the guise of a free market (Capitalism), military invasion can be used to correct trade imbalances, and that the Opium War's events provide excellent evidence of compulsive capitalism.

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