

Primary and Secondary Sources Activity

The logo for 'networks' features the word 'networks' in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stylized graphic consisting of several thin, intersecting lines that form a network-like structure, with a small circle at one of the intersection points.

Challenge and Transition in East Asia

The Open Door Policy

Background

In the late 1890s, the United States was eager to maintain its flexibility to trade with China, where large markets for U.S. products existed. However, several other nations, including Britain, Russia, and Germany, had established spheres of influence there. In September 1899, U.S. Secretary of State John Hay sent notes to a number of foreign governments expressing the U.S. desire for an “open door” policy of free trade with China.

The excerpt from the first “Open Door Note” was addressed to Andrew D. White, the U.S. ambassador to Germany. The following year, during the Boxer Rebellion in China, Hay issued a second “Open Door Note.” The rebels were bitterly hostile to all foreigners in China. In another policy statement, Hay emphasized the resolve of the United States to preserve Chinese territorial sovereignty.

In his political cartoon *The Open Door*, artist William Allen Rogers portrayed how, in order to trade with China, the United States had to confront the European powers already established there. China is represented as a Chinese-style building, with dragons and an ornately carved door. Guns, bayonets, and a German-style helmet appear in the open door. Uncle Sam—representing the United States—is shown as a traveling salesman.

Directions: Read the selections and examine the political cartoon. Then answer the questions that follow.

The Government of the United States would be pleased to see His German Majesty’s Government give formal assurances, and lend its cooperation in securing like assurances from the other interested Powers, that each within its respective sphere of whatever influence—

First. Will in no way interfere with any treaty port or any vested interest within any so-called “sphere of interest” or leased territory it may have in China.

Second. That the Chinese treaty tariff of the time being shall apply to all merchandise landed or shipped to all such ports as are within said “sphere of interest” (unless they be “free ports”), no matter to what nationality it may belong, and that duties so leviable shall be collected by the Chinese Government.

— U.S. Secretary of State John Hay, first “Open Door Note,” 1899

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The policy of the government of the United States is to seek a solution which may bring about permanent safety and peace to China, preserve Chinese territorial and administrative entity, protect all rights guaranteed to friendly Powers by treaty and international law, and safeguard for the world the principle of equal and impartial trade with all parts of the Chinese Empire.

— U.S. Secretary of State John Hay, second "Open Door Note," 1900

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Caption: *The Open Door* by William A. Rogers.

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1. **Summarizing** How would you summarize John Hay's first request in the first Open Door Note?

2. **Analyzing Information** In the first Open Door Note, why do you think John Hay emphasized that no one except the Chinese government should collect any taxes?

3. **Understanding Relationships** In the second Open Door Note, how did the interests of the Chinese government coincide with those of the United States?

4. **Comparing and Contrasting** What are the similarities and differences of the portrayals of Germany and the United States in the cartoon?

5. **Inferring** What might the bag on the ground in the cartoon represent? Explain your answer.

