

Prelude to the Opium War? British reactions to the ‘Napier Fizzle’ and attitudes towards China in the mid eighteen-thirties*

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Abstract

This article examines public reactions to the ‘Napier Fizzle’ and the discussion about Britain’s China policy within the British community in China in the mid eighteen-thirties. This period has received much less attention than the Napier incident itself and the immediate causes of the Opium War. Based on popular publications available in Canton in this period, the article investigates the debate over the cause of Lord Napier’s failure, including the ‘show of force’ theory as well as other ‘minor’ voices. It reveals that, although ‘show of force’ was the most prominent attitude at the time, the mid eighteen-thirties should be considered as a period of confused thinking with regard to Britain’s China policy, rather than a clear stage in the preparations for an open war.

The First Anglo-Chinese War (1840–2), also known as the ‘Opium War’, is a fateful conflict that had profound consequences on the histories of both Great Britain and China. In order to account for its outbreak, as well as the entry of ‘international imperialism’ into Chinese history, various opinions have been put forward by modern historians from different perspectives. Neither the more general explanation highlighting the irreconcilability of Britain’s industrial expansion and China’s containment¹ nor some highly specific cause, for example identifying the domestic political crisis facing the whig government in the late eighteen-thirties as the primary reason for the Sino-British confrontation, has won the debate on what caused the Opium War.² Some important sources and periods remain understudied. This article examines the intra-communal discourse of British opinion formers in the mid eighteen-thirties. By offering a detailed investigation of popular British views in this period, it demonstrates that the prevailing interpretation, which claims that the Napier incident in 1834 marked the beginning of Britain’s pro-war attitude towards China, is highly problematic.

After the American War of Independence concluded in 1783, significant changes occurred in the structure of the British empire. Growing importance was attached to Asia, particularly the empire in India. The trade with China that commenced from the seventeenth-sixties became increasingly important for the expansion of British commerce overseas. Nevertheless, China's Canton commercial system, which confined the country's foreign trade to a small area outside the city walls of Canton (Guangzhou) and restricted it to being conducted through a handful of government-authorized merchants, resulted in a trade balance unfavourable to the British. On the one hand, the fact that Britain had no access to the wider Chinese market made it almost impossible to import into China the same manufactured products that were sold in India; on the other, since China accepted only silver and gold as payment for its products, and had no demand for British goods, an ever-increasing requirement for Chinese tea in Britain resulted in a drain of precious metals from the country. In order to reverse this deficit and provide funds for the tea trade, there was a pressing need for the British East India Company to assist the China trade with a channel of remittance from India to Britain.³ Meanwhile, back in Britain, the theories of Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham promoted the benefits of free trade. The free competition and reciprocity of trade were deemed beneficial not only to the British but to the whole of mankind, not least the Chinese. Government control over commerce, such as the Canton system of China, became more and more unacceptable to British manufacturers and merchants, who anxiously desired to open up new markets for their products, particularly in China. In these circumstances, from the late seventeenth-eighties to the eighteen-tens, three complementary British embassies to China were proposed with the aim of gaining greater trade rights. The first, the Cathcart embassy of 1788, was called off because of the sudden death of Charles Cathcart before he reached the country. The latter two, the Macartney embassy of 1793 and the Amherst embassy of 1816, although they did reach the imperial court, failed in their attempts to

expand trade with China. Instead, an era of deep mutual incomprehension between the two nations was unveiled.

Despite the failure of these missions, there was a growing British belief that unreserved forbearance on their part was not the best means of dealing with the Chinese government, and that conversely, disregarding its authorities to a certain degree, or even employing coercive means, would be more helpful in achieving Britain's ultimate objective.⁴ To some extent, these early attitudes resulted in the Napier incident (also known as the 'Napier Fizzle') in 1834, the third major encounter between British and Chinese authorities before the outbreak of the Opium War. In contrast to the previous embassies, Lord Napier, the first chief superintendent of trade at Canton, employed a firm hand in his dealings with the Chinese government. Although this did not ultimately yield the expected results, the Napier mission can be viewed as Britain's first attempt to adopt an aggressive line of action against the empire of China.⁵ According to prevailing interpretations, most of which are based on findings drawn from the Jardine Matheson papers, Napier's conduct signalled the beginning of a 'forward policy', which was designed to compel the Chinese government to grant the British increased commercial facilities.⁶ Recently, Glenn Melancon has pointed out that these merchants did not have 'as much of a voice as has been previously assumed'.⁷ By examining the private papers of British officials and unpublished foreign office records, he was able to claim that 'the British government had no policy of aggression toward China' in 1834.⁸ His argument, however, has not proved strong enough to remove the commonly held perception that sees the Napier affair as a prelude to the Opium War.⁹ There are a number of reasons for this. First, historians who have written on this subject have focused either on the 'Napier Fizzle' itself or on the immediate causes of the Opium War, while little attention has been paid to the period in between, that is, the mid eighteen-thirties. Without a detailed knowledge of this interim period, any research that examines the Napier incident as a free-standing

event, as Melancon has done, is unable to overthrow the traditional narrative about the long-term causes of the First Anglo-Chinese War. Second, although Melancon has shown that no member of the British government was interested in waging a war against China in 1834, he and some other modern historians, such as Harry G. Gelber, have only examined one side of the story, namely the opinions of decision-makers in the British government.¹⁰ Public reactions to the Napier incident and discussion within the British community in China concerning Britain's future course of action were generally overlooked in their works. Third, despite the fact that, in the mid eighteen-thirties, British residents in China, as well as the concerned merchant and legal communities in London, were not a politically significant group,¹¹ their attitudes have, in the past, been presented too much as one single voice which 'clearly had no respect for China's rulers or their laws'¹² and was solidly united in promoting a policy of coercion towards China.¹³ Without investigating the complex views held by these seemingly unimportant opinion-formers, a series of questions cannot be answered and misunderstandings remain. For example, apart from among those who had direct power to decide the nature of Britain's policy towards China, was a strong-hand policy towards China generally justified and promoted immediately after 'the Napier Fizzle'? Was it true that all the British commentators outside government circles considered a war with China desirable from the mid eighteen-thirties onwards? Were any other policies advocated and, if so, what was their impact? By exploring popular publications at this time, particularly some English-language newspapers published by Western (mainly British and American) merchants and missionaries in Canton, answers to these questions will be offered in this article. Only after this evidence has been presented can we ascertain whether or not the British at large were in favour of war in the immediate aftermath of the Napier incident, as well as the reliability of the contention that open hostilities between China and Britain became almost inevitable from 1834 onwards.

As for what transpired in the ‘Napier Fizzle’, a descriptive account can be found in quite a number of modern works.¹⁴ In brief, the British government abolished the East India Company’s (E.I.C.) monopoly of China trade in August 1833. This decision resulted in a series of changes in British-Sino relations. Most important, instead of using the E.I.C.’s select committee at Canton, the British government had to represent its merchants in China and deal directly with the Chinese authorities. In this context, a new trade commission led by William John, ninth Lord Napier, the former shipmate and personal friend of King William IV, was quickly established. In July 1834, Napier arrived at the harbour of Whampoa in a British warship without receiving any prior permission from the Chinese government. This unauthorized entry into the Celestial Empire was followed by an approximately two-month stay at Canton, for which an additional permit was required. During this period, Lord Napier, assuming himself to be the representative of the British crown, refused to accept Hong merchants, who had acted as middle men between foreign traders and local authorities since 1720, as the proper channel of communications. Instead, he insisted on writing directly to Chinese officials. In his correspondence, Napier resolved to abandon the normal heading of ‘pin’ (petition), which implies subservience, in order to suggest equality between himself and the Chinese viceroy, Lu Kun, the highest authority at Canton. After several attempts to deliver this letter at the city gate had been rejected, the situation escalated into a crisis. The Chinese stopped all trade with Britain and demanded Napier’s immediate departure. Napier, in response, adopted some strong measures. He not only circulated in Canton a proclamation accusing the viceroy of ‘ignorance and incompetence’, but also ordered two British frigates to force a passage to Canton when he was put under house arrest by the Canton government.¹⁵ After a standoff of a few days, on 21 September, Napier’s weakened health compelled him to

withdraw. He died shortly afterwards in Macao, partly as a result of the very slow journey there in a Chinese boat, the only means by which he was allowed to leave Canton.

Immediately after the ‘Napier Fizzle’, there followed a heated discussion among those who had interest in or experience of Chinese affairs, particularly the British community in Canton. Within a short period of time, various pamphlets and articles on the present state of affairs and future prospects for British-Sino relations were produced and widely circulated. This public debate, as well as the images of China that it presented, has previously been very little studied. In particular, the reason for the failure of Napier’s commission, one of the central topics discussed in this literature, where it was examined from a variety of perspectives by different commentators, has never been introduced and analysed for modern readers.

A popular opinion at the time was that Napier’s failure was caused by the ‘treacherous and cowardly conduct of the Chinese authorities’.¹⁶ With regard to what Napier had suffered in the incident, many British writers were convinced that it was in fact unavoidable given the character of the Chinese government: because ‘the Chinese were predetermined to insult him ... no moderation on his part would have procured for him a fitting reception’.¹⁷ Moreover, many of them were disposed to consider the ‘Napier Fizzle’ as a serious insult to the British crown and nation by the Chinese authorities, rather than simply as the superintendent’s personal misfortune. For example, G. J. Gordon, in his *Address to the People of Great Britain*, claimed that ‘Our sovereign himself has, in the person of his representative at Canton, the late Lord Napier, been insulted by the Chinese authorities’.¹⁸ An anonymous writer in the *Chinese Repository* asserted that ‘the course which the Chinese pursued with regard to Lord Napier ... was most barbarous and unjust ... Wrongs and insults have been heaped on the representative of a great and powerful nation, seeking an amicable, an honorable, and a profitable intercourse ... their government has outraged the laws of

common right and humanity'.¹⁹

From the very beginning, discussion of the cause of Napier's unsuccessful diplomacy was not limited to the incident itself, but was closely connected to a wider context which saw the Chinese government censured from a variety of perspectives. Most remarkably, the Napier mission was described by many commentators as a gracious attempt by Britain to meet the commercial and social needs of both nations, and hence, the Chinese government was accused of having violated the law of nations as well as natural law, especially with respect to economic freedom and freedom of movement. On the principle that 'All men ought to find on earth the things they stand in need of ... The introduction of dominion and property could not deprive men of so essential a right',²⁰ one of the authors lamented that:

Considering all the nations of the earth as one family, we see no reason why one of them, because it has remained for ages, occupying so large a portion of the common soil, in a state of moral and political idiocy, shall not only deny to the surrounding members all the advantages that may be derived from an interchange of its various productions, but also insult them when they come to them with the most friendly and the most beneficent intentions.²¹

In addition, some of the personal inconveniences to which the British residents in Canton were subject also produced strong complaints. In particular, the prohibition on foreign females entering Chinese territory, which compelled British merchants to leave their wives during the trading season, really annoyed the foreign community in Canton. It was denounced as 'an insult perfectly gratuitous' that made them believe 'the laws of nature are outraged' in China.²² The British also attempted to justify their cause from the perspective of the Chinese people. They argued that, as with foreigners, the universal rights of Chinese subjects were greatly restricted by their arbitrary government. In an article entitled 'Universal Peace; obstacles to it in the character and government of nations', it was maintained that:

the government destroys the personal liberty of its subjects; none of whom may pass beyond the frontiers of the empire, or hold any intercourse with foreigners. Those who presume to disobey these restrictions are declared outlaws, worthy of death. In this way all the avenues to the introduction of every species of useful knowledge are sealed up ... Moreover, the government affords but very imperfect security for the property of the people. In a word, it acknowledges no rights in its subjects. Such is the unnatural, the unreasonable, and the unrighteous condition in which the monarch of this empire holds his subjects; he robs them of liberty of conscience; annihilates their personal rights; and guaranties [*sic*] to them no security.²³

From such accusations, the view that ‘the Chinese government is in the highest degree demoralized’ became increasingly prevalent.²⁴ Consequently, these attacks created the impression that it was the Chinese government that had ruined Napier’s friendly commission and made this opinion more convincing to a wider readership.

Despite such strong criticism of the Chinese government, this view was not advanced by all British commentators. Some writers were inclined to suggest that Napier’s misfortune resulted from his own failings. In an article published by the *Canton Register*, the author not only asserted that Napier’s conduct was ‘offensive to the Chinese Government’, but lamented that ‘It is to be regretted that a person so inexperienced and ignorant of Chinese usage should have been sent to China at the critical moment of opening the British trade with that empire’.²⁵ Sir George Thomas Staunton, an old China hand who had been involved in Chinese affairs since the Macartney mission, advanced a similar point of view. In a more detailed observation, he maintained that ‘the case of Lord Napier is not a tenable position in argument against the Chinese’.²⁶ Napier had infringed Chinese laws in two ways. First, he was ‘an individual whose first act within the Chinese territories was a violation of its laws’.²⁷

Lord Napier could not be ignorant of the fact, as he had persons of the greatest local

experience and information joined with him in his commission, that no foreigners of any description have ever been permitted by the Chinese Government to establish themselves at Canton except in strictly a commercial character; and that, moreover, no person, even if habitually resident at Canton in such commercial character, was permitted to visit that city from Macao, without previously obtaining a certain license or passport ... I fearlessly ask, then, what right or pretext had Lord Napier to signalize his first appearance in China by a violation of the known and acknowledged regulations of the country?²⁸

Second, Napier's decision to order two British frigates to proceed to Canton was 'another illegal act'.²⁹ Staunton wrote:

All this was done without any actual need of either their assistance or their protection. Lord Napier was perfectly safe – his person was not threatened – he had only to go away, and return from whence he came. The object, therefore, neither was nor could have been any other than that of aiding him in his resistance to the orders of the Government.³⁰

As well as expressing these opinions, Staunton also refuted some of the viewpoints which were commonly advanced in support of Napier's conduct. For instance, against the claim that Napier was a representative of the British sovereign in China, Staunton stressed:

He was in no sense whatever the King's Representative. The fact is, however, that as far as the Chinese were concerned, he had no public character at all. No public functionary sent to another state can claim, as we have seen, the rights and privileges of his appointment till he is recognised ... official station or public privilege he had literally none.³¹

In opposition to Napier's assertion that he was 'invited' by the Chinese government, but then

not treated accordingly,³² Staunton pointed out that the Chinese authorities' original intention was actually misunderstood and even distorted by Napier and other observers. He maintained that:

the Chinese did *not* contemplate the coming out of an officer from the King, claiming new rights and privileges; but expected and required that, notwithstanding the abolition of the East India Company's trade and privileges, matters should be carried on at Canton, as far as they, the Chinese authorities, were concerned, precisely '*as heretofore*'.³³

These opinions strengthened Staunton's argument that Napier was by no means innocent in relation to what had occurred at Canton. It is worth noting, however, that similar points of view were rarely found in other works produced at this time. This was probably because, apart from Staunton, very few British observers were able to interpret China-related affairs from the Chinese perspective and with a knowledge of the Chinese language. His ability to adopt such an approach was perhaps one of the reasons why Staunton's views on the Napier incident differed greatly from what became the mainstream voice.

Aside from censuring Lord Napier, the British government was also blamed by some commentators for sending such a high-ranking figure when the Chinese expected only a commercial representative,³⁴ and for giving 'foolish' instructions to the superintendents.³⁵ For one thing, Staunton pointed out that, although he had made clear to parliament in 1833 that the previous sanction of the Chinese government was indispensable to the appointment of any British functionary at Canton, his advice was not taken. Instead, Napier 'seems to have been simply instructed to proceed direct to Canton, and to assume at once his official character there, without the least anticipation of difficulty or discussion, just in the same way as a successor would have been appointed to any vacant Consulship in Europe'.³⁶ Nonetheless, Staunton maintained that 'a far greater share of the blame appears to lie with his Lordship's

instructions, than with himself'.³⁷ On the government's decision to appoint the second and third superintendents from the E.I.C. officials remaining at Canton, some observers maintained that this sent the wrong signal to the Chinese authorities. According to this viewpoint, the appearance of these E.I.C. servants gave the Chinese the impression that 'the company is still paramount though in abeyance, and that the whole of the late proceedings here were a trick to terrify them into better terms'.³⁸ In consequence, the Chinese authorities were induced to think that 'if they could only eject Lord Napier, they would then be able to preserve the *status quo* of things, and conduct matters as heretofore'.³⁹ From this perspective, therefore, not only the British government, but also the East India Company were held 'indebted for our late humiliation, and the death of the first representative of England to China'.⁴⁰

In brief, in the years after Napier's death, the published interpretations of the 'Napier Fizzle' were quite different. The reasons given for his failure, despite the frequent claims that the Chinese government was at fault, were in fact varied. Quite a few British observers, particularly Staunton, not only challenged this standpoint from a variety of perspectives, but also suggested that Napier himself, the British government and even the East India Company were responsible for Napier's misfortunes. However, these arguments did not necessarily indicate that those writers who advanced such alternative interpretations entertained more favourable views of China. On the contrary, the negative image which had been held by British merchants at Canton for a long time was further confirmed as a result of the Napier incident. In this regard, even Staunton clearly stated that:

the vices of the Chinese national character, and also the vices of their political and commercial system. I shall certainly not undertake to defend either. It has been my lot, during a considerable portion of my life, to have had ample opportunities of witnessing these evils ... These evils ... I have always readily acknowledged and

deplored.⁴¹

Hence, there was no doubt that the enhancement of such an unfavourable image helped to lay a foundation for the discussion of the future measures to be adopted in China.

Apart from the debate on the cause of the 'Napier Fizzle', Napier's failed effort to create fear in the Chinese government also excited other discussions among British subjects in Canton. Was it wrong to adopt this aggressive approach? Or did it fail because it was still not resolute enough? There were a range of views about which approach ought to be employed in Britain's future contacts with China. However, of the various proposals, the most prevalent voice in Canton in the mid eighteen-thirties was the 'show of force' theory.

The 'show of force' theory was, in essence, a general idea advanced in miscellaneous pamphlets and articles, which were widely distributed in Canton in the mid eighteen-thirties. Despite its prevalence, it was neither a policy devised by any British authority nor a rigidly defined strategy promoted by certain interest group. Little is known about who first employed this term, but it is clear that, in the two years after the Napier incident, a number of British merchants, missionaries and anonymous writers began demanding the adoption of a more forceful attitude towards China in the local English-language press, such as the *Canton Register*⁴² and the *Chinese Repository*.⁴³ Although there was a division of opinion among supporters of this theory as to precisely what 'show of force' meant, they agreed on the fact that 'The time has arrived when a decisive step must be taken'.⁴⁴ In light of the recent experience of Napier, they argued that a harsher tone had to be adopted by the British government in its intercourse with China, otherwise the present difficulties would never be satisfactorily resolved. These advocates proposed that a determined plenipotentiary, granted full power and 'attended by a sufficient maritime force', should proceed to the immediate

vicinity of the imperial residence at Peking, 'for the purpose of demanding redress for injuries sustained, and negotiating a commercial treaty on a liberal basis'.⁴⁵ Only by this means, they maintained, would the Chinese authorities be intimidated and the two nations' commercial intercourse be 'easily, speedily, and peaceably placed upon an honourable and secure footing'.⁴⁶ This 'show of force' approach had much in common with Napier's coercive policy, particularly in terms of taking a firm stand against the Chinese government. It was, however, based on a profound discussion over about two years, and consequently the justifications for such a strategy were more developed and had a considerable influence on the images of China that were being constructed.

To begin with, in order to make the suggested line of action fully legitimate, supporters of the 'show of force' attitude tended to reinforce the argument that, insofar as China had capriciously set itself against the universal laws of nations and the general interests of the human race, the British had just cause to protest. For example, in an article in the *Canton Register*, it was maintained that:

We must consider the Chinese either as a civilised nation, and one responsible for their own acts, or as barbarians; if as the former, we have an undoubted right to demand with the strong hand, ample satisfaction, not only for their present conduct, but for a long debt of past indignities; if as the latter, according to the usages of nations we see no valid objection to treating them just in the manner that our superior military and naval power can enable us to do, even to the occupation of a portion of their territory.⁴⁷

With regard to the propriety of employing the discourse of universal laws in the case of China, these advocates pointed out that it was absolutely unreasonable to talk of the country being 'at liberty to disregard the law of nations, on the ground of her having never deigned to recognize it'.⁴⁸ Since the law of nations is but 'the just and rational application of the law of

nature to the affairs and conduct of nations’, China, as a large branch of the great family of mankind, could not be ‘exempt from the obligations of that law which God himself has prescribed for the conduct of his creatures’.⁴⁹ In addition, since ‘nations are under obligations to each other’, China, whose laws ‘are all more or less hostile to a free and amicable intercourse with foreigners’,⁵⁰ was certainly ‘in a position of open violation of the law’.⁵¹ As a consequence of such reasoning, taking a strong line towards China was seen as legitimate, no matter from which perspective it was viewed. From the standpoint of the British, in particular, ‘it is the sacred duty of every government on earth to protect its subjects and maintain its own honor in foreign countries’.⁵² From a wider point of view, it was in ‘the *interest* of all civilized nations’⁵³ that China should be ‘compelled to abandon a position so hostile to the general interests of the human race’.⁵⁴ In other words, with respect to a ‘show of force’ policy, its supporters avowed solemnly that ‘Recent injuries demand this. Humanity demands it. And justice will approve of it’.⁵⁵

Along with the claim that it was legitimate to interfere in the Chinese affairs, advocates of ‘show of force’ also attempted to demonstrate that such a coercive policy, supported by a British naval force, was the best course of action to take. There were several grounds for this belief. In the first place, experience had shown that ‘the more forbearance and indulgence are shown to them [the Chinese government], the more proud and overbearing they become’,⁵⁶ and therefore the previous conciliatory policy had to be abandoned. As James Matheson, a leading British merchant, maintained, ‘Experience ought by this time to have shewn us that it is a foolish and useless policy to attempt to gain the confidence of the Chinese by exhibiting, as was constantly enjoined by the East India Company, a servile deference to their innumerable and absurd peculiarities and customs’.⁵⁷ Similarly, it was asserted in the Canton Petition (1834), a memorial signed by a number of British merchants to King William IV calling for a more forceful stance, that:

we cannot but trace the disabilities and restrictions under which our commerce now labours, to a long acquiescence in the assumption of supremacy over the monarchs and people of other countries, claimed by the Emperor of China ... we are forced to conclude that no essentially beneficial result can be expected to arise out of negotiations, in which such pretensions are not decidedly repelled.⁵⁸

According to this view, if Britain was truly determined to realize its desired commercial goals, it was essential to abandon the submissive policy which had previously been adopted and to employ totally different measures.

Second, advocates of this theory continued to strengthen the notion that in dealing with the 'haughty, semi-civilized, despotic' government of China, 'nothing will bring them to submission, until they have had demonstrative proofs of the force of British argument and reasoning, at the foot of the Imperial throne at Peking'.⁵⁹ This meant that a show of Britain's strength was crucial to this new policy because only 'when force is opposed to force, their courage fails, and they prefer concession to a doubtful struggle, in which ... they can never be victorious'.⁶⁰ In support of such a view, the Chinese government was compared to a village cur, which reduced the image of the country to a new low level. It was maintained that:

Timidity and insolence are two prominent characteristics of the Chinese government, whose conduct (to compare great things with small) is like that of a village cur. The little animal barks furiously, pursues and tries to bite the stranger who is unprovided with a stick, particularly if he runs; but when he turns round, the cur draws back; if he lifts his stick, the cur flies; if he actually strikes, the cur becomes more cautious in future not to be the aggressor, and even endeavors to conciliate the offended party by fawning and wagging his tail and licking the hand that gave the blow. This is a true picture of the conduct of the Chinese government, as every one knows who is familiar

with its history.⁶¹

With the introduction of this particular image, an increasing number of British subjects, as well as other foreign residents in Canton, were led to believe that nothing could be expected from sending humble petitions to such a government. On the contrary, ‘if we wish to have a treaty with China, it must be dictated at the point of the bayonet, and enforced by arguments from the cannon’s mouth’.⁶²

Last but not least, the ‘show of force’ advocates were confident that such new strong measures could be safely adopted. Because of the timidity of the Chinese, they believed, the imperial court would make every sacrifice in order to avoid dangerous confrontations. To reinforce this viewpoint, it was maintained that the Chinese had an innate characteristic, which was ‘more apt to waste the idle artillery of words in official interdiction, than to resort to serious and really threatening measures’.⁶³ In consequence, history had shown that ‘There is not ... a single instance in which European troops have been attacked by Chinese’ in the past two centuries.⁶⁴ Moreover, since the emperor was fully aware of the weakness of his empire, as well as ‘the want of loyalty in the people’, he would certainly not venture to resort to any hostile measures, but would seek peace.⁶⁵ As one of the articles in the *Chinese Repository* elaborated on this topic:

Taoukwang [Daoguang], the present emperor of China, is a man of the most pacific disposition, who instead of annihilating daring rebels, begs their leaders to submit, and wages bloodless war against them by means of gold and silver bullets ... if the matter was once brought home to his own bosom, which has never yet been done, and if he began to see the affair in a serious light and has no alternative but acquiescence in our proposals, we are persuaded that he would quietly yield to seeming necessity.⁶⁶

As a result of this belief, concerns that a serious clash would immediately ensue if the British government adopted a forceful policy were largely discounted.

It can be observed from the above that the advocates of the 'show of force' policy substantially justified the belief that a firm line of action, supported by British maritime forces, was the most effective way to deal with Chinese affairs. It was not only founded on legitimate and rational grounds, but was also the most effective and safest course of action to be taken in order to force the Chinese government to comply with Britain's just demands. Nevertheless, while agreeing on a general 'show of force' strategy, these writers did not agree with each other in all respects. In particular, although they shared a common view of the advantages of a more aggressive stance, they were divided in their attitudes to the actual use of arms, or on whether to advocate open war.

Notwithstanding the strength of the 'show of force' policy, in the mid eighteen-thirties there were very few commentators who ventured openly to embrace the idea of a war with China. At least on paper, even the *Canton Register* and Matheson, who were usually considered as major advocates promoting a forceful policy, were anxious to deny that they had 'any wish or suggestion which was likely to involve the two countries in a war'.⁶⁷ Some modern historians, such as Wu Yixiong, have tended to stereotype the *Canton Register* as an organ for the most hardline policy.⁶⁸ Yet, as one of the most influential English newspapers at Canton, the *Register* actually published numerous articles which contained a wide variety of opinions. It is not appropriate, therefore, to ignore the diversity of essays it printed. In different issues, its editor explicitly disclaimed that the newspaper had ever had any editorial policy of advocating a war against China.⁶⁹ This indicates that, in the mid eighteen-thirties, the use of arms was still not a strategy supported by a majority at Canton.

Although straightforward appeals for open hostilities were rarely expressed in publications, it should be noted that there was widespread discussion opposing the idea of war with China.⁷⁰ This suggests that calls for open violence were perhaps informally communicated on a greater scale than they appear in the published sources. The fact that

there were many more public appeals against than in favour of a war, however, indicates that regardless of the extent to which open hostilities against China were really wanted, the political climate at the time prevented this view from being openly stated through the press. Again, it proves that, in the mid eighteen-thirties, there was a certain degree of consensus among the British communities in Canton that it was not wise to raise the issue at this time.

Even though the scale of the most radical calls for war was rather limited, there were some articles in which a clear desire to resort to force was expressed. For instance, in September 1835, one commentator wrote: ‘no delicacy should be used towards the celestials; and if it be expedient to use power to compel them to our and their own goods, we ought not for a moment to hesitate to use it ... But the Chinese are too wise ever to give us the pretence’.⁷¹ Among the available sources, this passage is probably the best evidence that there were indeed some militant British at this time who were seeking an excuse to use force against China and who wished to push this hardline policy to extremes. As for such a ‘pretence’, some other commentators suggested that a stoppage of trade – the usual check applied by the Chinese government on foreign merchants – could be regarded as a virtual declaration of war by the Chinese. According to this view, if the Chinese ever ventured to repeat that policy, it could provide a great opportunity for Britain to avoid the moral responsibility of waging a war against an innocent country. It was claimed that ‘any threat on the part of the Chinese officers to resort to their favourite and hitherto too successful policy – a stoppage of trade ... should be instantly retaliated: for it is a declaration of war, a cartel of defiance, a manifestation of passive hostility’.⁷² In such an event, it would look as if China rather than Britain ‘is determined to precipitate an open rupture’, and it would ‘surely deserve little sympathy’.⁷³ For this reason, a commentator was confident enough to write that ‘If her forts have been dismantled, her troops killed and, her laws and territory violated, what induced these acts? her [*sic*] own ignorance, falsehood, treachery and cowardice. Let China

avenge her own wrongs; let her redress the grievances of foreigners and she will remove the cause of too probable future wrongs'.⁷⁴

In contrast to such militant views, the vast majority of the 'show of force' advocates, although in support of a more determined attitude from the British government, were clearly not in favour of open hostilities against China. According to the most common opinion, any step which might lead to bloodshed in China was disapproved of on the grounds of justice and expediency. For one thing, some authors maintained, to wage a war for the sake of commercial advantages was not only repugnant to people's feelings, but inconsistent with the maxims of international law. An article in the *Canton Register* claimed that 'the act of pillaging and destroying the towns and villages of the Chinese people, merely because they refuse to enter into any treaty of commerce, alliance, or friendship with us' was 'atrocious' conduct.⁷⁵ In the *Chinese Repository*, another author who agreed with this view went on to state that 'We abhor bloodshed and that policy which would build up its own prosperity on the ruins of others. We advocate no course which is repugnant to justice or the laws of nations'.⁷⁶ The resort to force was also rejected for practical reasons. Some observers were worried that if military action were taken, there might be unexpected results which would turn out to be ruinous for Britain's commercial activity. For instance, one of them pointed out that 'the Chinese may imitate the example of the Japanese, and exclude all foreigners forever, or cut down the tea shrub and put an effectual stop to foreign commerce'.⁷⁷ In that case, all British-Sino trade would be endangered. Others, such as the following commentator in the *Canton Press*, reminded the public of the fact that:

this Government ... had, still the extraordinary power and influence to order its subjects to retire ... from the coast into the interior of the country to avoid intercourse ... and to enforce obedience to that order. Suppose that a British force were to land at Tiensing and similar orders were given and obeyed, might not the

Expedition be thereby considerably embarrassed? Or if this is not the case, supposing the Emperor sufficiently uncompromising, to render hostilities indispensable, is a force of 600 soldiers sufficient to march up to Peking ... can it for one moment be reasonably supposed that if the Emperor be really willing ... to oppose his forces to this aggression, that he would not succeed in overcoming so very trifling an armament? ... The mildest treatment of the Chinese would be to confiscate our property as a setoff for damage sustained in the north, and expel us for ever from the country. We could in justice not find fault with this.⁷⁸

In the mid eighteen-thirties, these considerations led many to maintain that it would be improper to wage war against China. As a result, the vast majority of the 'show of force' advocates, as well as the other British subjects at Canton, were further persuaded that open hostilities against China were inappropriate under the present circumstances.

For most of the 'show of force' supporters, their concerns over the danger of resorting to military action did not prevent them from insisting on the necessity of impressing the Chinese government with a due sense of the power of Great Britain. Although they tended to identify their views as a 'middle course' or a 'half-way measure', a fact which has confused some modern readers, these observers agreed that neither open violence nor unconditional submission should be adopted in Britain's relations with China.⁷⁹ Instead, they were convinced that a firm resolve, accompanied by a clear demonstration of Britain's ability to resort to extreme measures, was the most effective strategy to adopt. It was widely believed at Canton that 'we can demand everything from the fears of the Chinese Government, but nothing from their good will'.⁸⁰ For this reason, it was vital to dispatch a plenipotentiary who was 'firm of purpose and strong of nerve, armed with discretionary powers',⁸¹ to remonstrate with the emperor, both to command respect from the Chinese and to allow 'no encroachment on our rights or insult to our national honor to pass with impunity'.⁸² This course of conduct

was considered by most of these commentators as the surest way to success. For one thing, ‘Such firmness carries greater force of conviction to the Chinese than the best diplomatic arguments ... the less that proof by words is resorted to, and the more it is shown by incontestable facts, that the plenipotentiary is an immovable man, the greater will be his success’.⁸³ For another, given the present state of China and the character of the nation, a ‘show’ of Britain’s naval power would not only fail to result in open violence, but would hasten the conclusion of an amicable arrangement with the country:

A glimpse of one or two of our men-of-war stationed off the north-eastern coast of China, would send a thrill of consternation through the whole empire, and do more to incline the Chinese to listen to the dictates of reason and justice than centuries of ‘temporizing’ and submission to insult and oppression.⁸⁴

Matheson concluded that ‘the surest preventive of war is an unequivocal manifestation of our being neither unable nor unprepared, on its becoming necessary, to resort to it’.⁸⁵

In sum, although a ‘show of force’ strategy was generally the most prominent policy advocated in Canton in the mid eighteen-thirties, there was no agreement about how this strategy should be implemented. Among the advocates of this course of action were those who simply wanted the Chinese to recognize the strength of the forces at Britain’s disposal, whereas others were much readier to support the actual use of force. After a detailed examination of the sources available, it can be shown that the vast majority of observers in Canton held the former point of view. On the one hand, these commentators insisted that it was absolutely crucial to adopt a resolute and forceful line of action, supported by a display of Britain’s maritime power; but, on the other hand, it was unjust and impractical to try to resort to a serious use of violence or to open war. It can therefore be inferred that, for most of the ‘show of force’ advocates, the significance of this new strategy did not rest on any physical harm being inflicted on the Chinese people, but on the psychological impact that it

would have on the Chinese authorities. These commentators were most concerned that advocating this new course of action would signal a change in Britain's official attitude towards China, that is, a change from unresisting submission to firm determination. It was for this change, rather than for direct armed intervention, that the majority of British residents in Canton had been waiting and lobbying.

In addition to the widespread discussion of a 'show of force' strategy, there were other views in this period about Britain's future relations with China. As with the 'show of force' advocates, those who held such views can be found across different social groups, including the British merchants and missionaries in Canton, as well as some old China experts. These observers concurred with the majority of the 'show of force' supporters in opposing open hostilities, but they also attempted to find better approaches than a directly aggressive military response. Among these 'minor' voices, the following are worthy of particular notice.

First, instead of advocating a show of strength in the vicinity of Peking, an economic blockade was proposed as an effective means to combat the oppression of British merchants by the Chinese government. Some commentators suggested that, if the Chinese authorities in Canton ventured to stop the trade again, the British government should respond strongly to ensure that 'their [the Chinese] own trade will be stopped as long as ours continued to be so'.⁸⁶ Karl Gützlaff, the Protestant missionary and foremost China expert in Canton, agreed that this was 'the least bloody and the most efficacious' plan to exert pressure on the Chinese government because 'The trade along the coast is enormous and feeds myriads; as soon as it ceases ... the effects would be dreadful, so much so, that the local government, as well as the Court, would pray for the resuming of the trade, with more humanity than we ever intend to do'.⁸⁷ In an article in the *Canton Register*, it was argued that this course of action was indeed a feasible one. Because there were numerous navigable rivers which led to the most

prosperous cities, and the forts along China's coast were 'in the most defenceless state', 'the most important parts of the empire' were actually 'open to the grasp of a superior maritime power'.⁸⁸ A detailed plan was devised by the author to cut off communications between important ports along the coast and the rest of China using only thirteen warships.⁸⁹ All in all, according to the supporters of this policy, it was hoped and believed that, through a non-violent but resolute economic blockade, the imperial court could be made to realize that the economic vitality of its maritime provinces could easily be threatened by British naval power, to such an extent that its control and influence over the whole country might be endangered. As a consequence, it was believed that China's attitude as well as its policies towards Britain would soon be profoundly changed.

Second, in his public letter to Palmerston, alongside his references to a coercive line of action, Hugh Hamilton Lindsay advanced another proposal. He suggested the withdrawal of all political establishments from China, and the appointment of 'a person of no pretensions' as agent for the customs, whose duty was simply 'registering ships' papers, and countersigning manifests'.⁹⁰ He argued:

This mode of procedure will be highly embarrassing to the Chinese authorities, who are most anxious to see some recognised chief at Canton for the purpose, as they term it, of 'managing and controlling all affairs of the English nation;' and on the very first difficulty or dispute which occurs, they will most anxiously inquire, why no such authority exists. Our reply then is obvious: 'It is your own fault; for, when we sent one to you, you treated him with insult; and it is incompatible with the dignity of England that a representative of her sovereign should be subject to such indignity; no chief will, therefore, be sent until you promise him 'proper reception and treatment.'⁹¹

This alternative course of conduct was applauded by a number of notable observers. From an economic perspective, James Goddard agreed that it was more reasonable to develop a purely

commercial intercourse than to preserve the expensive, but unproductive, political establishments. In his opinion, to leave the trade to the 'patient, thrifty, dexterous assiduity of private and untrammelled enterprise' would be helpful to British merchants in Canton. As 'guardians of their own anomalous privileges', they could be allowed to 'protect themselves in the best way they could against the encroachments of the Chinese'.⁹² Staunton, in his *Remarks on the British Relations with China*, also expressed his support for Lindsay's second proposal. He described it as 'a plan, easy and simple, perfectly peaceable as well as legitimate'.⁹³ Instead of seeking to instil fear in the Chinese, this proposal, 'by a merely negative course of proceeding', placed them 'in such a highly embarrassing predicament ... that they must very shortly become most anxious to do that of their own accord, which it is not quite certain that all our embargoes and blockades would extort from them'.⁹⁴ In addition, Staunton suggested that, in concert with the political withdrawal, Britain should try to set up a trading post beyond the limits of Chinese jurisdiction: 'there is an infinite number of intermediate islands ... which might be taken possession of, not only without a contest, but without the violation of any right in practical exercise'.⁹⁵ Given the commercially oriented character of the Chinese, they 'would not hesitate to trade with foreigners there, if they could be assured of receiving protection'.⁹⁶ By establishing such an intermediate trading station, Staunton was convinced that British-Sino relations could be put onto a thoroughly satisfactory commercial basis. As a result, the molestation and oppression of British merchants by the Chinese government would be avoided, while the profitable trade with China would be maintained in the most pacific and lawful manner.

Third, a number of observers who believed in the peaceful benefits of commerce contended that nothing was more trustworthy than the 'irresistible and expansive energy of the free trade'.⁹⁷ They maintained that, since China had 'sufficient resources' to 'isolate itself from the rest of the inhabitants of this globe',⁹⁸ too precipitate an attempt to coerce its

government would only serve to retard the progress of mutually beneficial trade.⁹⁹ Since ‘the Chinese government and people are not yet sufficiently advanced in civilisation to be capable of forming a reasonable commercial treaty’, an immediate demand for a treaty might place unnecessary burdens on the British government, while not producing any positive effects.¹⁰⁰ The best course of action at this stage, therefore, was simply to trust ‘the gradual operation of time’, so that, with the progress of the trade, the obstacles and prejudices in China would ultimately be overcome.¹⁰¹ An article in the *Canton Press* elaborated on what would transpire as a result of such a policy. Its author predicted that:

whilst on continuing a course of quiet and unassuming trade, which brings us in continual and ... extensive intercourse with the mass of the people, these will soon become aware of many of the disabilities under which we labour, and from which they equally suffer. Such a state of things must lead to evasion of the imposed regulations. The people find it their interest to treat us well to secure their own welfare, and public opinion among Chinese even is strong enough to make itself heard by its rulers ... The rapacity of the Local Government is too great to allow so rich a prize to escape without attempting to draw large profits from it individually. The consequence will be, that the too heavily taxed commodity will not only continue to be smuggled into the ports of the eastern coast, but will be sent there in greater quantities than ever ... and the Government at Peking failed in obtaining the object it had in view, viz, that of preventing foreign ships from visiting other ports than Canton will have at no very remote date to concede to us the freedom of these ports, in order to enjoy the revenue of which under the present system it is deprived.¹⁰²

According to this view, although ‘The process will be slow, [and] the result doubtful’, the advantages that might arise would be enormous once the Chinese authorities realized the reciprocal benefits of international commerce.¹⁰³ It was for this reason, as well as for its

perfectly peaceful nature, that this course of action was considered by some as ‘the true policy of foreign states in their communications with China, and the only policy which the Chinese government in its present state of knowledge is likely, or possibly, able to pursue towards foreigners’.¹⁰⁴

Last, some commentators, mostly Protestant missionaries, did not wholly agree with those who believed in the progressive influence of commerce. Instead, they believed that the spread of Christianity and of useful knowledge was the most just and powerful means to be adopted in Britain’s future intercourse with China. These observers contended that a purely commercial course of action was more applicable to the uncivilized races of the islands than to the comparatively refined continental nations.¹⁰⁵ In the case of China, therefore, the most worthy and effective line of action would not be to wait passively for the long-term results of economic improvement. On the contrary, it might be a much better idea actively to ‘*attempt* the amelioration of the condition of China’,¹⁰⁶ through ‘the diffusion of knowledge and the dissemination of religious truth’.¹⁰⁷ In the opinion of such writers, an intellectual and moral darkness was hanging over the empire of China, and all its inhabitants, irrespective of nationality, were the sufferers. For quite a long time, these existing evils, mainly occasioned by the Chinese government, had not only suppressed or misdirected the genius of the Chinese people, but prevented ‘almost entirely that interchange of thought and those kind offices of humanity, which the Almighty has vouchsafed to his creatures as their birth right’.¹⁰⁸ For this reason, the Chinese ‘cannot make known their wishes or sufferings to each other, or join in any determination to acquire new privileges or redress old wrongs’.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, the previously advanced Chinese civilization had more recently fallen far behind the free and cultivated nations of the West. In spite of these unfavourable circumstances, these commentators argued, ‘The Chinese are by no means such a forlorn race, so incapable of improvement’.¹¹⁰ What was needed in China was nothing but the moral power of Christianity,

as well as the knowledge of Western sciences and arts. They maintained that it was the divine duty of the spiritually advanced nations, particularly powerful Britain, to enlighten the minds and secure the salvation of the Chinese nation. Once darkness was dispelled and prejudices overcome, the foundations of friendly relations between China and Western countries would be laid and, as a result, the evils which so restricted foreign trade would be permanently removed. As one commentator stated: 'Truth is our object ... we do wish and hope and desire to bear a humble part in labours to concentrate the *energies* of *all* in just and generous efforts to improve the condition of China. This is DUTY'.¹¹¹ In addition, 'Knowledge is strength: if we can show our mental superiority, and excite congenial feelings in the breast of those to whom we communicate our sciences, we shall marshal the minds of the people, and have public opinion in our favour'.¹¹²

In conclusion, apart from support for a 'show of force' strategy, a variety of opinions were expressed in the press at Canton about the best line of action to be employed with regard to China. Although individually none of these 'minor' voices was able to contend against the former in terms of scale and influence, their impact seems much more significant when they are viewed as a whole. Furthermore, as they concurred with the majority of the 'show of force' advocates in opposing open hostilities, it can be inferred that the voices against violence were, in fact, in a clear majority, even though a war with China did become more imaginable after the 'Napier Fizzle'. For this reason, the prevailing historical interpretation that 1834 marked the beginning of Britain's pro-war attitude towards China deserves serious reconsideration. Since no one at the time could have known that a war would break out in just a few years, we cannot view it retrospectively and maintain that the Opium War had become inevitable from this time onwards. The mid eighteen-thirties, therefore, should be considered more as a period of confused thinking with regard to Britain's China policy, rather than a clear stage in the preparation for a military conflict.

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¹ See, e.g., D. Owen, *British Opium Policy in China and in India* (New Haven, Conn., 1934; repr. 1968), p. 168; W. C. Costin, *Great Britain and China: 1833–60* (Oxford, 1937), p. 20; M. Greenberg, *British Trade and the Opening of China 1800–42* (1951), p. 215; H. Chang, *Commissioner Lin and the Opium War* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), p. 2; G. Graham, *The China Station: War and Diplomacy, 1830–60* (Oxford, 1978), p. x.

² G. Melancon, ‘Honour in opium? The British declaration of war on China, 1839–40’, *International History Rev.*, xxi (1999), 855–74; G. Melancon, *Britain’s China Policy and the Opium Crisis: Balancing Drugs, Violence and National Honour, 1833–40* (Hampshire, 2003), pp. 5–6, 133–9.

³ Greenberg, pp. 3–17.

⁴ The advice given by members of the Macartney and Amherst embassies varied greatly. In general, the former pinned more hopes upon an imagined merciful Chinese monarch, hence a forcible course of conduct was seen as the last option, whereas similar views can hardly be found in the accounts of the latter group.

⁵ To avoid the term ‘the Chinese empire’, ‘the empire of China’ is used in this article, as it was not always an empire by and for the Chinese.

⁶ Greenberg, p. 191; M. Collis, *Foreign Mud: Being an Account of the Opium Imbroglia at Canton in the 1830s and the Anglo-Chinese War that Followed* (1964), pp. 108–25; B. Inglis, *The Opium War* (1976), p. 89.

⁷ G. Melancon, ‘Peaceful intentions: the first British trade commission in China, 1833–5’, *Hist. Research*, lxxiii (2000), 33–47, at p. 47.

⁸ Melancon, ‘Peaceful intentions’, p. 47. Melancon elaborates on this point of view in *Britain’s China Policy*.

⁹ U. Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge: China and the Networks of British Imperial Expansion* (Basingstoke, 2009), p. 92; J. Lovell, *The Opium War: Drugs, Dreams and the Making of*

China (2011), p. 8.

¹⁰ Ch. 2 of Gelber's book deals specifically with the general outlook of the British government in London (see H. G. Gelber, *Opium, Soldiers and Evangelicals: Britain's 1840–2 War with China, and its Aftermath* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 19–39).

¹¹ Greenberg argued that perhaps 'the most important consequence of 1834' was that the weight of the home manufacturing interests in Britain was thrown behind a 'forward policy' in China (see Greenberg, p. 195). Nevertheless, no matter whether they are viewed individually or as a whole, in the mid 1830s the British community in China and concerned interest groups in Britain did not yet possess a strong voice in shaping government policies. The British government did not take the China question seriously until reports about the opium crisis reached London in Aug. 1839.

¹² Melancon, 'Peaceful intentions', p. 47.

¹³ Similar opinion can also be found in W. T. Hanes III and F. Sanello, *The Opium Wars: the Addiction of One Empire and the Corruption of Another* (Naperville, Ill., 2002), p. 32.

¹⁴ E.g., H. B. Morse, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire* (3 vols., 1910–18), i. 118–44; Chang, pp. 51–62; P. W. Fay, *The Opium War 1840–2* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1975), pp. 67–79; Graham, pp. 44–64; C. Hibbert, *The Dragon Wakes: China and the West, 1793–1911* (Harmondsworth, 1984), pp. 90–102; Gelber, pp. 1–18.

¹⁵ *Correspondence Relating to China* (Parl. Papers 1840 [223], xxxvi), p. 29.

¹⁶ H. H. Lindsay, *Letter to the Right Honourable Viscount Palmerston on British Relations with China* (1836), p. 6. Hugh Hamilton Lindsay (1802–81), who worked for the East India Company at Canton from 1820, was a key figure who actively participated in the discussions about Britain's China policies during the early encounters between the two countries. For his views and activities, see R. Bickers, 'The challenger: Hugh Hamilton Lindsay and the rise of British Asia, 1832–65', *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, xxii (2012), 141–69.

¹⁷ Lindsay, p. 3.

¹⁸ G.J. Gordon, *Address to the People of Great Britain, Explanatory of Our Commercial Relations with the Empire of China* (1836), p. 12.

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- ¹⁹ ‘British authorities in China’, *Chinese Repository*, iii, no. 10 (Feb. 1835), 472.
- ²⁰ A quote of Vattel’s, cited in J. Matheson, *The Present Position and Prospects of the British Trade with China; Together with an Outline of Some Leading Occurrences in its Past History* (1836), p. 34. This book was reprinted by Cambridge University Press in 2012.
- ²¹ *Canton Register*, viii, no. 39 (29 Sept. 1835), 156.
- ²² Matheson, p. 49.
- ²³ Anonymous, ‘Universal peace; obstacles to it in the character and government of nations’, *Chinese Repository*, iii, no. 11 (March 1835), 527.
- ²⁴ ‘Brito-Chinese politics’, *Canton Press*, i, no. 49 (13 Aug. 1836), 388.
- ²⁵ ‘The Chinese trade’, *Canton Register*, viii, no. 28 (14 July 1835), 113.
- ²⁶ G. T. Staunton, *Remarks on the British Relations with China, and the Proposed Plans for Improving them* (1836), p. 26.
- ²⁷ Staunton, pp. 18–19.
- ²⁸ Staunton, pp. 17–18.
- ²⁹ Staunton, p. 23.
- ³⁰ Staunton, pp. 23–4.
- ³¹ Staunton, pp. 26–7.
- ³² See Napier, ‘Present state of relations between China and Great Britain—Interesting to the Chinese merchants—A true and official Document’, Canton, 26 Aug. 1834 (*Correspondence Relating to China*, p. 33). This view was also held by many Britons at the time to suggest that it was the Chinese who broke their word.
- ³³ Staunton, p. 43 (original emphasis).
- ³⁴ J. Goddard, *Remarks on the Late Lord Napier’s Mission to Canton; in Reference to the Present State of our Relations with China* (1836), p. 12.
- ³⁵ *Canton Press*, i, no. 36 (14 May 1836), 283.
- ³⁶ Staunton, p. 19.
- ³⁷ Staunton, p. 19.

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- ³⁸ Viator, 'To the editor of the Canton Register', *Canton Register*, viii, no. 11 (17 March 1835), 44.
- ³⁹ Goddard, p. 5.
- ⁴⁰ Viator, 'To the editor of the Canton Register', *Canton Register*, viii, no. 11 (17 March 1835), 44.
- ⁴¹ Staunton, p. 40.
- ⁴² The *Canton Register* was founded in Nov. 1827 by Scottish merchants James Matheson and his nephew Alexander, together with Philadelphian William Wightman Wood, who was the first editor.
- ⁴³ The *Chinese Repository* was founded in May 1832 by Elijah Coleman Bridgman, the first American Protestant missionary appointed to China.
- ⁴⁴ Matheson, p. 79.
- ⁴⁵ 'British authorities in China', *Chinese Repository*, iii, no. 8 (Dec. 1834), 363; Lindsay, p. 12.
- ⁴⁶ Matheson, p. 70.
- ⁴⁷ *Canton Register*, viii, no. 39 (29 Sept. 1835), 156.
- ⁴⁸ Matheson, pp. 42–3.
- ⁴⁹ Matheson, pp. 49–50.
- ⁵⁰ 'Negotiation with China', *Chinese Repository*, iii, no. 9 (Jan. 1835), 422.
- ⁵¹ 'British authorities in China', *Chinese Repository*, iii, no. 8 (Dec. 1834), 363.
- ⁵² 'War with China', *Canton Register*, viii, no. 8 (25 Feb. 1835), 31.
- ⁵³ An enemy to half-measures, 'What steps should the expected strength from England take?', *Canton Register*, viii, no. 14 (7 Apr. 1835), 54.
- ⁵⁴ Gordon, p. 16.
- ⁵⁵ 'Negotiation with China', *Chinese Repository*, iii, no. 9 (Jan. 1835), 421.
- ⁵⁶ 'British authorities in China', *Chinese Repository*, iii, no. 8 (Dec. 1834), 362.
- ⁵⁷ Matheson, p. 63.
- ⁵⁸ 'To the King's most Excellent Majesty in Council: the Petition of the undermentioned British Subjects at Canton' (also known as the 'Canton Petition'), 9 Dec. 1834 (in *China Trade and Empire: Jardine, Matheson & Co. and the Origins of British Rule in Hong Kong 1827–43*, ed. A. Le Pichon (Oxford, 2006), p. 563).

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- ⁵⁹ *Canton Press*, i, no. 18 (9 Jan. 1836), 138.
- ⁶⁰ A Wellwisher, 'Intercourse with China', *Chinese Repository*, iii, no. 9 (Jan. 1835), 401.
- ⁶¹ 'Treaty with the Chinese, a great desideratum', *Chinese Repository*, iv, no. 10 (Feb. 1836), 448.
- ⁶² 'Treaty with the Chinese, a great desideratum', *Chinese Repository*, iv, no. 10 (Feb. 1836), 446.
- ⁶³ Matheson, p. 59.
- ⁶⁴ Gordon, p. 107.
- ⁶⁵ *Canton Register*, vii, no. 16 (22 Apr. 1834), 62.
- ⁶⁶ 'Treaty with the Chinese, a great desideratum', *Chinese Repository*, iv, no. 10 (Feb. 1836), 446.
- ⁶⁷ Matheson, p. 59.
- ⁶⁸ Wu Yixiong, 'The formation of a general sentiment among Westerners in China for waging war against China before the Opium War', *Modern Chinese History Stud.*, ii (2009), 23–43.
- ⁶⁹ 'Supplement to the Calcutta Courier, Feby. 7', *Canton Register*, viii, no. 21 (26 May 1835), 83; *Canton Register*, ix, no. 33 (16 Aug. 1836), 134.
- ⁷⁰ E.g., see 'Free trade to China', *Canton Register*, vii, no. 26 (1 July 1834), 101–3; 'Treaty with the Chinese, a great desideratum', *Chinese Repository*, iv, no. 10 (Feb. 1836), 441–9; 'Brito-Chinese Polities', *Canton Press*, i, no. 49 (13 Aug. 1836), 387–9.
- ⁷¹ *Canton Register*, viii, no. 39 (29 Sept. 1835), 156.
- ⁷² An enemy to half-measures, 'What steps should the expected strength from England take?', *Canton Register*, viii, no. 14 (7 Apr. 1835), 54.
- ⁷³ 'War with China', *Canton Register*, viii, no. 8 (25 Feb. 1835), 31.
- ⁷⁴ *Canton Register*, ix, no. 33 (16 Aug. 1836), 134.
- ⁷⁵ 'Free trade to China', *Canton Register*, vii, no. 26 (1 July 1834), 102.
- ⁷⁶ 'Treaty with the Chinese, a great desideratum', *Chinese Repository*, iv, no. 10 (Feb. 1836), 447.
- ⁷⁷ 'Treaty with the Chinese, a great desideratum', *Chinese Repository*, iv, no. 10 (Feb. 1836), 446.
- ⁷⁸ 'Brito-Chinese polities', *Canton Press*, i, no. 49 (13 Aug. 1836), 388.
- ⁷⁹ See A Wellwisher, 'Intercourse with China', *Chinese Repository*, iii, no. 9 (Jan. 1835), 393–405; 'Treaty with the Chinese, a great desideratum', *Chinese Repository*, iv, no. 10 (Feb. 1836), 441–9. The

former contains four letters by different writers.

⁸⁰ The National Archives of the U.K.: Public Record Office, FO 17/9/148, Gützlaff, ‘Present state of our relations with China’, separate inclosure, Robinson to Palmerston, 26 March 1835.

⁸¹ A Wellwisher, ‘Intercourse with China’, *Chinese Repository*, iii, no. 9 (Jan. 1835), 403.

⁸² ‘Treaty with the Chinese, a great desideratum’, *Chinese Repository*, iv, no. 10 (Feb. 1836), 447.

⁸³ A Wellwisher, ‘Intercourse with China’, *Chinese Repository*, iii, no. 9 (Jan. 1835), 404.

⁸⁴ Matheson, pp. 62–3.

⁸⁵ Matheson, p. 78.

⁸⁶ A correspondent, ‘Character of the Chinese’, *Canton Register*, vii, no. 50 (16 Dec. 1834), 200.

⁸⁷ T.N.A.: P.R.O., FO 17/9/152, FO 17/9/150.

⁸⁸ A correspondent, ‘Character of the Chinese’, *Canton Register*, vii, no. 50 (16 Dec. 1834), 200.

⁸⁹ For the details, see A correspondent, ‘Character of the Chinese’, *Canton Register*, vii, no. 50 (16 Dec. 1834), 201.

⁹⁰ Lindsay, p. 5.

⁹¹ Lindsay, p. 5.

⁹² Goddard, pp. 16–17.

⁹³ Staunton, p. 31.

⁹⁴ Staunton, p. 31.

⁹⁵ Staunton, p. 42. This opinion coincides with Lord Napier’s view in Aug. 1834. In his correspondence with Earl Grey, to ‘take possession of the island of Hong Kong’ was mentioned for the very first time to the British government (see Lord Napier to Earl Grey, Canton, 21 Aug. 1834 (*Correspondence Relating to China*, p. 27)).

⁹⁶ Staunton, p. 42.

⁹⁷ A correspondent, ‘Commercial Treaty with China’, *Canton Register*, viii, no. 4 (27 Jan. 1835), 14.

⁹⁸ *Canton Press*, i, no. 22 (6 Feb. 1836), 170.

⁹⁹ R. I., ‘Notices of modern China’, *Chinese Repository*, v, no. 5 (Sept. 1836), 211–12.

¹⁰⁰ A correspondent, ‘Commercial treaty with China’, *Canton Register*, viii, no. 4 (27 Jan. 1835), 14.

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- ¹⁰¹ A correspondent, 'Commercial treaty with China', *Canton Register*, viii, no. 4 (27 Jan. 1835), 14.
- ¹⁰² 'Brito-Chinese politics', *Canton Press*, i, no. 49 (13 Aug. 1836), 388.
- ¹⁰³ Goddard, p. 18.
- ¹⁰⁴ R. I., 'Notices of modern China', *Chinese Repository*, v, no. 5 (Sept. 1836), 207.
- ¹⁰⁵ 'Free intercourse between China and Christendom', *Chinese Repository*, v, no. 6 (Oct. 1836), 255.
- ¹⁰⁶ 'Free intercourse between China and Christendom', *Chinese Repository*, v, no. 6 (Oct. 1836), 242.
- ¹⁰⁷ An American Merchant, 'Remarks on British relations and intercourse with China', *Chinese Repository*, iii, no. 9 (Jan. 1835), 412.
- ¹⁰⁸ 'British authorities in China', *Chinese Repository*, iii, no. 8 (Dec. 1834), 361.
- ¹⁰⁹ 'Free intercourse between China and Christendom', *Chinese Repository*, v, no. 6 (Oct. 1836), 257.
- ¹¹⁰ *Canton Register*, vii, no. 16 (22 Apr. 1834), 62.
- ¹¹¹ 'Free intercourse between China and Christendom', *Chinese Repository*, v, no. 6 (Oct. 1836), 242.
- ¹¹² *Canton Register*, vii, no. 16 (22 Apr. 1834), 62.