

## The Open Door Notes (1899-1900)

*By the late 19th century, Japan and the European powers had carved much of China into separate spheres of influence, inside of which each held economic dominance. The U.S., coming late to imperialism, held no sphere of influence in China. In 1899 U.S. Secretary of State John Hay proposed an "Open Door" policy in China in which all nations would have equal trading and development rights throughout all of China. Such a policy would put all the imperialist powers on equal footing in China and would limit the advantages of having ones own sphere of influence. As you read, think about how the Open Door policy might be seen as altruistic, and think about how it reflects American political and economic self-interest.*

Earnestly desirous to remove any cause of irritation and to insure at the same time to the commerce of all nations in China... [the United States urges all nations claiming a sphere of influence in China to declare] that [all nations] shall enjoy perfect equality of treatment for their commerce and navigation within such spheres.... Within its respective sphere [a nation]... ?

First. Will in no way interfere with any treaty or port or any vested interest [of another nation] within [its own] sphere [of influence]... in China.

Second. That the Chinese [tariff]... shall apply to all merchandise landed or shipped to all such ports... within said sphere [of influence]... no matter what nationality it may belong, and that duties so leviable shall be collected by the Chinese government.

Third. That [a nation] will levy no higher harbor dues on vessels of another nationality frequenting any port in such sphere that shall be levied on vessels of its own nationality, and no higher railroad charges over lines... within its sphere on merchandise belonging to citizens or subjects of other nationalities, transported through such sphere than shall be levied on similar merchandise belonging to its own nationals transported over equal distances....

[The United States seeks] the adoption of measures insuring the benefits of equality of treatment of all foreign trade throughout China....

We adhere to the policy... of peace with the Chinese nation, of furtherance of lawful commerce, and of protection of lives and property of our citizens by all means.... [We are committed to] affording all possible protection everywhere in China to American life and property;... guarding and protecting all legitimate American interests;... [and] aiding to prevent a spread of disorders [in China]....

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 China