



Special Committee to the Qing Imperial Court

*Background
Guide*

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Under heaven, one court rules all

Background Guide

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Formulating a Strategic Response to the Opium Crisis and Foreign Encroachment During the Opium Wars

Message from the Executive Board

Honored Delegates,

Welcome to the Special Committee to the Qing Imperial Court. As we gather in this moment of unprecedented crisis facing the Middle Kingdom, we call upon you to embody the wisdom, dignity, and strategic acumen befitting the servants of the Son of Heaven.

The Executive Board expects nothing less than exemplary conduct from each delegate. You represent not merely officials, but the pillars upon which the Celestial Empire rests. Your deliberations will determine whether the Qing Dynasty emerges stronger from this trial or succumbs to the forces that threaten our sovereignty.

Our Expectations:

1. **Historical Authenticity:** You must think, speak, and act within the constraints of March 1839. Modern concepts, technologies, and hindsight have no place in these chambers. Your solutions must emerge from the knowledge, culture, and capabilities available to the Qing Court at this pivotal moment.
2. **Diplomatic Excellence:** The art of negotiation and consensus-building will be paramount. The Emperor's court demands unity of purpose, even when means may differ. Demonstrate the refined diplomacy that has sustained our empire for centuries.
3. **Strategic Vision:** Short-term fixes will not suffice. The crisis demands comprehensive solutions that address both immediate threats and long-term stability. Consider the interconnected nature of military, economic, social, and diplomatic challenges.
4. **Cultural Sensitivity:** Remember that you serve a Confucian state with deep-rooted traditions. Your proposals must respect the Mandate of Heaven, the importance of face, and the hierarchical nature of Chinese society, while navigating the unprecedented challenge of Western encroachment.
5. **Collaborative Spirit:** No single official, regardless of rank, possesses all the answers. The Emperor's wisdom manifests through the collective counsel of his ministers. Listen carefully to your colleagues, build coalitions, and forge solutions that honor both tradition and necessity.

The fate of our empire hangs in the balance. Foreign barbarians challenge our authority, poison our people, and threaten our very way of life. Yet within this crisis lies opportunity—to modernize where necessary, to strengthen where possible, and to emerge as a rejuvenated dynasty worthy of the Mandate of Heaven.

Rise to this challenge with the dignity and wisdom that befits the servants of the Middle Kingdom. The ancestors watch, the people depend upon you, and history will judge your actions.

May your deliberations bring honor to the Dragon Throne and salvation to our realm.

The Executive Board

Committee Overview

Freeze Date: March 18, 1839

This committee is set at a critical juncture in Chinese history. The freeze date of March 18, 1839, places delegates at the moment when Imperial Commissioner Lin Zexu has just arrived in Canton (Guangzhou) with his imperial mandate to eradicate the opium trade, but before the major confrontations with British merchants that would spark the First Opium War. This timing allows delegates to potentially alter the course of history through their diplomatic and strategic decisions.

Committee Mandate

The Special Committee to the Qing Imperial Court has been convened by the Daoguang Emperor to address the mounting crisis facing the empire. Your mandate encompasses:

- Formulating a comprehensive strategy to address the opium crisis
- Developing responses to foreign encroachment on Chinese sovereignty
- Balancing traditional Chinese governance with the challenges of Western contact
- Preserving the Mandate of Heaven while adapting to unprecedented circumstances
- Crafting policies that protect both the empire's integrity and its people's welfare

Historical Context

The year 1839 marks a watershed moment for the Qing Dynasty. For over two centuries, the empire has maintained its position as the dominant power in East Asia, governing through the Confucian principle of the Mandate of Heaven. However, the increasing presence of Western powers, particularly Britain, has created challenges that traditional Chinese statecraft has never encountered.

The opium crisis represents more than a simple trade dispute—it embodies a fundamental clash between Chinese civilization and Western commercial imperialism. The British East India Company's systematic importation of opium from India has created a public health emergency, drained Chinese silver reserves, and undermined imperial authority. Simultaneously, Western demands for expanded trade rights challenge the tributary system that has governed China's foreign relations for millennia.

Historical Background

The Qing Dynasty in 1839

The Qing Dynasty, established by the Manchus in 1644, represents the final imperial dynasty of China. By 1839, the empire encompasses vast territories from Mongolia to Tibet, from Xinjiang to the South China Sea. The Qing have successfully maintained Chinese civilization while adapting Manchu traditions, creating a unique synthesis of governance that has endured for nearly two centuries.

The Daoguang Emperor, who ascended to the throne in 1820, inherited an empire facing mounting challenges. Natural disasters, population growth, and administrative corruption have strained imperial resources. The White Lotus Rebellion (1794-1804) and other uprisings have demonstrated the potential for internal instability. Into this environment of existing pressures, the opium crisis has emerged as perhaps the most severe threat to imperial authority.

The Canton System

Since 1757, the Qing have regulated foreign trade through the Canton System, which restricts Western merchants to the single port of Canton and requires them to conduct business through licensed Chinese merchants known as the Cohong. This system served Chinese interests well for decades, allowing the empire to control foreign contact while benefiting from international trade.

The Canton System embodies several key principles:

- Centralized control over foreign trade
- Limitation of Western presence to a single port
- Mandatory use of Chinese intermediaries
- Seasonal restrictions on foreign residence
- Prohibition of direct contact between foreigners and Chinese officials

However, by the 1830s, Western merchants increasingly view these restrictions as impediments to profitable trade. The British, in particular, have grown frustrated with the system's limitations, setting the stage for the current crisis.

The Opium Crisis

The opium crisis represents the most immediate threat facing the empire. What began as a manageable trade imbalance has evolved into a national catastrophe affecting millions of Chinese subjects.

Origins of the Crisis

The roots of the opium crisis lie in the broader context of Sino-British trade. For decades, China exported vast quantities of tea, silk, and porcelain to Britain, while British merchants struggled to find products that Chinese consumers desired. This trade imbalance resulted in a significant outflow of silver from Britain to China, creating economic pressure on British merchants and the East India Company.

The solution emerged from British colonial territories in India, where the cultivation of opium poppies provided a lucrative crop. By the 1820s, the British had established a systematic trade network that transported opium from India to China, where it was exchanged for silver that could then purchase Chinese goods. This triangular trade solved Britain's balance of payments problem while creating enormous profits for British merchants.

The Spread of Addiction

The consequences for Chinese society proved devastating. Opium addiction spread rapidly through all levels of society, from imperial officials to common laborers. Conservative estimates suggest that by 1839, over four million Chinese have become addicted to the drug, with the number growing daily.

The social impact extends beyond individual addiction. Families have been destroyed as breadwinners succumb to the drug's effects. Agricultural productivity has declined as farmers abandon their fields for opium dens. Military effectiveness has been compromised as soldiers become addicted, undermining the empire's defensive capabilities.

Economic Consequences

The economic impact of the opium trade has proven equally serious. Silver, the foundation of the Chinese monetary system, has flowed out of the country in unprecedented quantities. Conservative estimates suggest that between 1820 and 1839, over 100 million taels of silver have left China to pay for opium imports.

This silver drain has created severe economic disruption. The relative value of silver to copper has shifted dramatically, affecting the daily lives of ordinary Chinese who conduct their transactions in copper cash. Inflation has increased the cost of basic necessities, while the imperial treasury has suffered from reduced tax revenues.

Previous Anti-Opium Efforts

The Qing government has not remained passive in the face of this crisis. As early as 1729, the Yongzheng Emperor prohibited the sale and consumption of opium. Subsequent edicts have reinforced these prohibitions, with penalties including exile and death for those involved in the opium trade.

However, enforcement has proven problematic. Corruption among local officials has allowed the trade to continue despite imperial prohibition. The vast coastline of southern China provides numerous opportunities for smuggling, making comprehensive enforcement extremely difficult. Moreover, the involvement of foreign merchants has complicated enforcement efforts, as traditional Chinese legal procedures do not easily accommodate foreign defendants.

Foreign Encroachment

Beyond the opium crisis, the empire faces broader challenges from Western encroachment. The arrival of Western powers represents the first serious challenge to Chinese civilizational superiority since the Mongol invasions of the 13th century.

The Tribute System Under Pressure

For centuries, China has maintained international relations through the tribute system, wherein foreign nations acknowledged Chinese supremacy in exchange for trading privileges and protection. This system reflected the Chinese understanding of their civilization as the center of the world, with all other peoples occupying subordinate positions.

Western powers, particularly Britain, have increasingly challenged this system. British merchants and diplomats reject the tributary relationship, demanding to be treated as equals. They insist on direct diplomatic contact with Chinese officials, permanent residence in China, and expanded trading rights. These demands fundamentally challenge the philosophical foundations of Chinese foreign policy.

Military Technological Disparity

The Western military advantage has become increasingly apparent. British warships, equipped with modern cannons and steam power, far exceed the capabilities of Chinese naval forces. Western military organization, training, and discipline have proven superior to traditional Chinese approaches.

This technological disparity creates a fundamental problem for Chinese strategy. The empire's vast size and population provide significant advantages in any prolonged conflict, but Western military technology may enable rapid decisive victories that could undermine Chinese resistance before these advantages can be mobilized.

Missionary Activities

Christian missionaries have begun arriving in China in increasing numbers, challenging traditional Chinese religious and philosophical systems. While their numbers remain small, their presence represents a direct challenge to Confucian values and the emperor's role as the Son of Heaven.

The missionary challenge operates on multiple levels. Intellectually, Christianity presents an alternative worldview that contradicts fundamental Chinese assumptions about the nature of society and authority. Socially, Christian communities create alternative centers of loyalty that compete with traditional Chinese institutions. Politically, missionaries often serve as advance agents of Western influence, preparing the ground for expanded foreign involvement in Chinese affairs.

The Appointment of Lin Zexu

In December 1838, the Daoguang Emperor made a crucial decision by appointing Lin Zexu as Special Imperial Commissioner with extraordinary powers to address the opium crisis. This appointment represents the emperor's recognition that traditional approaches have failed and that extraordinary measures are necessary.

Lin Zexu brings impressive credentials to this assignment. Born in 1785, he has distinguished himself as a scholar-official of exceptional ability and integrity. His service as Governor of Hunan and Hubei provinces demonstrated his administrative competence and his commitment to anti-corruption measures. Most importantly, his successful suppression of opium cultivation in those provinces proved his dedication to eradicating the drug trade.

The emperor's instructions to Lin Zexu are comprehensive and urgent:

- Completely eradicate the opium trade in Guangdong Province
- Apprehend and punish all Chinese involved in the illegal trade
- Confiscate all opium stocks held by foreign merchants
- Implement measures to prevent future opium importation
- Restore the integrity of the Canton System

Lin Zexu's appointment has been accompanied by extraordinary powers, including the authority to dismiss corrupt officials, mobilize military forces, and implement emergency measures. The emperor's confidence in Lin Zexu is absolute, but the challenges he faces are unprecedented.

Key Issues and Challenges

The Opium Crisis

The opium crisis represents the most immediate and serious challenge facing the empire. The committee must address multiple interconnected aspects of this crisis:

Public Health Emergency

The addiction crisis has reached epidemic proportions. Medical knowledge of the time provides limited understanding of addiction as a disease, but the observable effects on Chinese society are undeniable. Families have been destroyed, productivity has declined, and social order has been disrupted.

The committee must consider how to address the immediate health crisis while preventing its future recurrence. Traditional Chinese medicine offers some treatments for opium addiction, but these have proven insufficient for the scale of the current crisis. The committee must also address the social stigma associated with addiction and develop policies that encourage recovery rather than punishment.

Economic Disruption

The silver drain resulting from opium imports has created severe economic instability. The committee must address both the immediate monetary crisis and the long-term economic consequences of the trade imbalance.

Options for addressing the economic crisis include:

- Implementing alternative monetary systems less dependent on silver
- Developing Chinese export industries to restore trade balance
- Negotiating trade agreements that limit silver outflows
- Implementing domestic economic reforms to reduce dependence on foreign trade

Law Enforcement Challenges

The enforcement of anti-opium laws has proven extremely difficult due to corruption, geographic challenges, and the involvement of foreign merchants. The committee must develop new approaches to law enforcement that can effectively address these challenges.

Considerations include:

- Reforming the judicial system to address corruption
- Developing specialized anti-smuggling forces
- Creating new legal frameworks for dealing with foreign defendants
- Implementing community-based enforcement mechanisms

Foreign Relations and Diplomacy

The committee must address the broader challenge of managing relations with Western powers while preserving Chinese sovereignty and dignity.

The Tribute System vs. Western Diplomatic Norms

The fundamental conflict between Chinese and Western approaches to international relations requires careful consideration. The committee must decide whether to maintain the tribute system, modify it to accommodate Western demands, or develop entirely new approaches to foreign relations.

Military Preparedness

The technological superiority of Western military forces creates an urgent need for military reform. The committee must consider how to modernize Chinese military capabilities while maintaining the empire's defensive advantages.

Trade Policy

The committee must develop a comprehensive trade policy that addresses Western demands for expanded commerce while protecting Chinese interests. This includes decisions about port access, tariff structures, and the rights of foreign merchants.

Internal Governance and Reform

The crisis has exposed weaknesses in the imperial system that require attention:

Administrative Corruption

Corruption among local officials has severely undermined the empire's ability to address the opium crisis. The committee must develop anti-corruption measures that can restore governmental effectiveness.

Provincial Administration

The relationship between central and provincial authorities has proven problematic in addressing the crisis. The committee must consider reforms to improve coordination and accountability.

Social Stability

The economic and social disruption caused by the opium crisis has created potential for internal unrest. The committee must develop policies that maintain social stability while addressing the underlying causes of discontent.

Cultural and Philosophical Challenges

The confrontation with Western civilization raises fundamental questions about Chinese identity and values:

Confucian Governance

The traditional Confucian approach to governance emphasizes moral leadership and social harmony. The committee must consider how these principles apply to the unprecedented challenges of Western contact.

Technological Adaptation

The superior Western technology raises questions about the relationship between traditional Chinese learning and practical knowledge. The committee must consider how to adapt useful Western innovations while maintaining Chinese cultural integrity.

Religious and Philosophical Challenges

Christian missionary activities and Western philosophical ideas challenge traditional Chinese beliefs. The committee must develop policies that protect Chinese cultural traditions while addressing the intellectual challenges posed by Western thought.

Delegate Positions and Responsibilities

Daoguang Emperor

The Son of Heaven and Supreme Ruler

As the Daoguang Emperor, you embody the Mandate of Heaven and hold ultimate authority over all decisions. Your reign has been marked by significant challenges, including natural disasters, rebellions, and now the unprecedented crisis of foreign encroachment and opium addiction.

Key Responsibilities:

- Provide overall strategic direction to the committee
- Balance competing advice from various officials
- Maintain the dignity and authority of the imperial office
- Ensure that all decisions conform to the Mandate of Heaven
- Consider the long-term implications of policies on dynastic legitimacy

Historical Context: Born in 1782, you ascended to the throne in 1820 following the death of your father, the Jiaqing Emperor. Your reign has been characterized by attempts to address the

empire's mounting problems through traditional Confucian governance. You have shown personal commitment to fighting corruption and maintaining imperial authority, but the scale of current challenges tests the limits of conventional approaches.

Key Concerns:

- Maintaining imperial dignity while addressing foreign demands
- Balancing the need for strong action against the risks of provoking foreign retaliation
- Preserving the Mandate of Heaven during a period of unprecedented challenge
- Ensuring that solutions address both immediate crises and long-term stability

Lin Zexu

Special Imperial Commissioner

As the newly appointed Special Imperial Commissioner, you carry the emperor's full confidence and extraordinary powers to address the opium crisis. Your reputation for integrity and effectiveness has earned you this crucial assignment.

Key Responsibilities:

- Develop and implement comprehensive anti-opium policies
- Coordinate with local officials to ensure effective enforcement
- Manage relations with foreign merchants and their governments
- Report directly to the emperor on the progress of anti-opium efforts
- Serve as the primary architect of the empire's response to the crisis

Historical Context: Born in 1785, you have built a distinguished career as a scholar-official. Your service as Governor of Hunan and Hubei provinces demonstrated your administrative competence and commitment to anti-corruption measures. Your successful suppression of opium cultivation in those provinces proved your dedication to eradicating the drug trade.

Key Concerns:

- Completely eradicating the opium trade while minimizing conflict with foreign powers
- Implementing effective enforcement measures despite widespread corruption
- Balancing moral principles with practical political considerations
- Maintaining the emperor's confidence while addressing unprecedented challenges

Qishan

Viceroy of Zhili

As Viceroy of Zhili, you govern the province surrounding Beijing and serve as one of the empire's most senior territorial administrators. Your position provides crucial insights into the relationship between central policy and local implementation.

Key Responsibilities:

- Advise on the practical implementation of anti-opium policies
- Coordinate between central government and provincial authorities

- Provide intelligence on the spread of opium addiction in northern China
- Assist in developing comprehensive enforcement strategies
- Manage the security implications of anti-opium efforts

Historical Context: Your experience as a provincial administrator has provided you with detailed knowledge of the challenges facing imperial governance. You understand the difficulties of implementing central policies at the local level and the importance of securing cooperation from local officials.

Key Concerns:

- Ensuring that anti-opium policies can be effectively implemented across diverse provinces
- Managing the potential for social unrest resulting from enforcement efforts
- Balancing central directives with local conditions and capabilities
- Maintaining security in the region surrounding the capital

Yi Tang

Imperial Advisor

As an Imperial Advisor, you serve as one of the emperor's closest counselors on matters of state. Your role involves providing strategic guidance on the broader implications of the empire's response to the current crisis.

Key Responsibilities:

- Provide strategic analysis of policy options and their implications
- Advise on the integration of anti-opium efforts with broader imperial policies
- Analyze the long-term consequences of various approaches to the crisis
- Serve as a liaison between the emperor and other officials
- Contribute to the development of comprehensive solutions

Historical Context: Your position as Imperial Advisor places you at the center of imperial decision-making. You have access to information from across the empire and responsibility for providing the emperor with balanced assessments of complex situations.

Key Concerns:

- Ensuring that responses to the opium crisis serve the empire's long-term interests
- Managing the integration of military, diplomatic, and administrative approaches
- Balancing traditional Chinese principles with the need for adaptation
- Maintaining imperial unity and authority during a period of crisis

Keying

Negotiator with Britain

As the designated negotiator with British representatives, you occupy a crucial position in managing the empire's relationship with its most challenging foreign partner. Your role requires balancing Chinese dignity with practical diplomatic necessities.

Key Responsibilities:

- Conduct negotiations with British merchants and officials
- Advise on British intentions and capabilities
- Develop diplomatic strategies that protect Chinese interests
- Manage the implementation of any agreements reached with foreign powers
- Serve as the empire's primary interpreter of Western diplomatic practices

Historical Context: Your appointment as negotiator with Britain reflects the emperor's recognition that the crisis requires sophisticated diplomatic management. You must navigate between Chinese expectations and British demands while seeking solutions that preserve imperial authority.

Key Concerns:

- Achieving diplomatic solutions that avoid military conflict
- Maintaining Chinese dignity while addressing British demands
- Understanding and adapting to Western diplomatic practices
- Protecting Chinese sovereignty while managing foreign relations

Yijing

General

As a senior military commander, you provide essential expertise on the empire's defensive capabilities and the military implications of various policy options. Your role involves both strategic planning and tactical implementation.

Key Responsibilities:

- Assess the military implications of anti-opium policies
- Advise on the empire's defensive capabilities and limitations
- Develop military strategies for protecting Chinese territory and interests
- Coordinate military support for civilian enforcement efforts
- Provide intelligence on foreign military capabilities and intentions

Historical Context: Your military experience provides crucial insights into the empire's strategic position. You understand both the strengths and limitations of Chinese military forces and the challenges posed by Western technological superiority.

Key Concerns:

- Preparing for potential military conflict while avoiding unnecessary provocation
- Modernizing Chinese military capabilities to address Western advantages
- Coordinating military and civilian efforts to address the crisis
- Maintaining military readiness while supporting diplomatic solutions

Yilibu

Diplomat

As a diplomat, you specialize in managing the empire's foreign relations and understanding the complexities of international law and custom. Your expertise is essential for navigating the diplomatic challenges of the current crisis.

Key Responsibilities:

- Advise on international law and diplomatic precedents
- Analyze the diplomatic implications of various policy options
- Develop strategies for managing relations with multiple foreign powers
- Coordinate diplomatic communications with foreign governments
- Provide expertise on Western diplomatic practices and expectations

Historical Context: Your diplomatic experience has provided you with unique insights into Western approaches to international relations. You understand the challenges of reconciling Chinese and Western diplomatic traditions.

Key Concerns:

- Developing diplomatic solutions that respect Chinese sovereignty
- Managing the empire's relationships with multiple foreign powers
- Adapting Chinese diplomatic practices to meet Western expectations
- Preventing the crisis from escalating into broader international conflict

Mu Zhang'a

Imperial Cabinet Member

As a member of the Imperial Cabinet, you participate in the highest levels of imperial decision-making and help coordinate the empire's response to the current crisis across all areas of government.

Key Responsibilities:

- Participate in strategic planning and policy development
- Coordinate the implementation of decisions across government departments
- Provide analysis of the broader implications of policy options
- Serve as a liaison between different areas of imperial administration
- Contribute to the development of comprehensive solutions

Historical Context: Your position in the Imperial Cabinet places you at the center of imperial governance. You have access to information from across the empire and responsibility for ensuring that policies are effectively coordinated and implemented.

Key Concerns:

- Ensuring effective coordination between different areas of government
- Managing the administrative challenges of implementing new policies
- Maintaining governmental unity and effectiveness during the crisis
- Balancing immediate needs with long-term imperial interests

Duanhua

Prince

As a member of the imperial family, you bring the perspective of dynastic interests and the long-term implications of current decisions for the future of the Qing Dynasty.

Key Responsibilities:

- Advise on the dynastic implications of policy options
- Represent the interests of the imperial family in committee deliberations
- Provide strategic guidance on preserving dynastic legitimacy
- Serve as a link between the emperor and other members of the imperial family
- Contribute to the development of policies that serve long-term dynastic interests

Historical Context: Your position as a prince provides you with unique insights into the challenges facing the dynasty. You understand the importance of preserving imperial authority while adapting to changing circumstances.

Key Concerns:

- Preserving dynastic legitimacy and authority during a period of crisis
- Ensuring that policies serve the long-term interests of the imperial family
- Managing the relationship between imperial interests and national needs
- Maintaining the dignity and authority of the imperial office

Sengge Rinchen

General

As a Mongol general serving the Qing Dynasty, you represent the empire's multi-ethnic character and provide military expertise from a unique perspective within the imperial system.

Key Responsibilities:

- Provide military analysis and strategic planning
- Advise on the empire's defensive capabilities in frontier regions
- Coordinate military responses to the current crisis
- Represent the interests of non-Han populations within the empire
- Contribute to the development of comprehensive military strategies

Historical Context: Your position as a Mongol general reflects the Qing Dynasty's success in incorporating diverse populations into the imperial system. You understand the challenges of maintaining unity across ethnic and cultural boundaries.

Key Concerns:

- Ensuring that military strategies account for the empire's diverse populations
- Managing the military implications of the crisis in frontier regions
- Coordinating between different military commands and traditions
- Maintaining loyalty among non-Han military forces

Wenqing

Minister of War

As Minister of War, you oversee the empire's military administration and provide essential expertise on the military implications of the current crisis.

Key Responsibilities:

- Oversee military administration and logistics
- Coordinate military support for anti-opium enforcement efforts
- Advise on military preparedness and defensive strategies
- Manage military resources and personnel
- Provide strategic analysis of military options

Historical Context: Your position as Minister of War places you at the center of military planning and administration. You understand the empire's military capabilities and limitations and the challenges of coordinating military efforts across vast territories.

Key Concerns:

- Ensuring military preparedness for potential conflict
- Coordinating military support for civilian enforcement efforts
- Managing military resources effectively during the crisis
- Maintaining military readiness while supporting diplomatic solutions

Guiliang

Scholar-Official

As a scholar-official, you represent the intellectual traditions of the imperial system and provide expertise on the philosophical and cultural implications of the current crisis.

Key Responsibilities:

- Provide analysis of the philosophical and cultural implications of policy options
- Advise on the relationship between traditional Chinese values and current challenges
- Contribute to the development of policies that respect Chinese cultural traditions
- Serve as an interpreter of Confucian principles in contemporary circumstances
- Provide intellectual leadership during the crisis

Historical Context: Your position as a scholar-official reflects the Qing Dynasty's commitment to Confucian governance and the integration of intellectual and administrative leadership. You understand the importance of maintaining cultural continuity while adapting to changing circumstances.

Key Concerns:

- Ensuring that policies respect traditional Chinese values and principles
- Managing the intellectual challenges posed by Western ideas and practices
- Maintaining cultural continuity while adapting to new circumstances
- Providing intellectual leadership during a period of unprecedented challenge

Baojun

Provincial Governor

As a Provincial Governor, you provide crucial insights into the challenges of implementing central policies at the local level and the practical implications of various policy options.

Key Responsibilities:

- Advise on the practical implementation of anti-opium policies
- Provide intelligence on local conditions and challenges
- Coordinate between central government and local authorities
- Manage the administrative challenges of enforcement efforts
- Represent the interests of provincial populations

Historical Context: Your experience as a Provincial Governor has provided you with detailed knowledge of the challenges facing local administration. You understand the difficulties of implementing central policies and the importance of securing local cooperation.

Key Concerns:

- Ensuring that policies can be effectively implemented at the local level
- Managing the potential for social unrest resulting from enforcement efforts
- Balancing central directives with local conditions and capabilities
- Maintaining governmental effectiveness during the crisis

Zhaolian

Prince

As another member of the imperial family, you contribute to the representation of dynastic interests and the long-term implications of current decisions for the future of the Qing Dynasty.

Key Responsibilities:

- Advise on the dynastic implications of policy options
- Represent the interests of the imperial family in committee deliberations
- Provide strategic guidance on preserving dynastic legitimacy
- Serve as a link between the emperor and other members of the imperial family
- Contribute to the development of policies that serve long-term dynastic interests

Historical Context: Your position as a prince provides you with unique insights into the challenges facing the dynasty. You understand the importance of preserving imperial authority while adapting to changing circumstances.

Key Concerns:

- Preserving dynastic legitimacy and authority during a period of crisis
- Ensuring that policies serve the long-term interests of the imperial family
- Managing the relationship between imperial interests and national needs
- Maintaining the dignity and authority of the imperial office

Zhang Jing

Scholar

As a scholar, you provide intellectual analysis and contribute to the development of policies that integrate traditional Chinese learning with contemporary challenges.

Key Responsibilities:

- Provide scholarly analysis of the current crisis and potential solutions
- Advise on the relationship between traditional Chinese learning and contemporary challenges
- Contribute to the development of policies that respect intellectual traditions
- Serve as an interpreter of classical Chinese texts and principles
- Provide intellectual leadership during the crisis

Historical Context: Your position as a scholar reflects the importance of intellectual leadership in Chinese governance. You understand the relationship between traditional learning and practical administration.

Key Concerns:

- Ensuring that policies respect traditional Chinese intellectual traditions
- Managing the intellectual challenges posed by Western ideas and practices
- Maintaining intellectual continuity while adapting to new circumstances
- Providing scholarly guidance during a period of unprecedented challenge

Enlin

Advisor

As an advisor, you provide counsel on a wide range of issues and contribute to the development of comprehensive solutions to the current crisis.

Key Responsibilities:

- Provide strategic analysis of policy options and their implications
- Advise on the integration of different aspects of the imperial response
- Analyze the long-term consequences of various approaches to the crisis
- Serve as a liaison between different officials and departments
- Contribute to the development of comprehensive solutions

Historical Context: Your position as an advisor places you in a crucial role in imperial decision-making. You have access to information from across the empire and responsibility for providing balanced assessments of complex situations.

Key Concerns:

- Ensuring that responses to the crisis serve the empire's long-term interests
- Managing the integration of military, diplomatic, and administrative approaches
- Balancing traditional Chinese principles with the need for adaptation

- Maintaining imperial unity and authority during a period of crisis

Jiang Youxian

Scholar

As another scholar, you contribute additional intellectual perspective to the committee's deliberations and help ensure that decisions reflect the best of Chinese intellectual traditions.

Key Responsibilities:

- Provide scholarly analysis of the current crisis and potential solutions
- Advise on the relationship between traditional Chinese learning and contemporary challenges
- Contribute to the development of policies that respect intellectual traditions
- Serve as an interpreter of classical Chinese texts and principles
- Provide intellectual leadership during the crisis

Historical Context: Your position as a scholar reflects the importance of intellectual leadership in Chinese governance. You understand the relationship between traditional learning and practical administration.

Key Concerns:

- Ensuring that policies respect traditional Chinese intellectual traditions
- Managing the intellectual challenges posed by Western ideas and practices
- Maintaining intellectual continuity while adapting to new circumstances
- Providing scholarly guidance during a period of unprecedented challenge

Qin Ying

Governor

As a Governor, you provide additional perspective on the challenges of provincial administration and the practical implications of various policy options.

Key Responsibilities:

- Advise on the practical implementation of anti-opium policies
- Provide intelligence on local conditions and challenges
- Coordinate between central government and local authorities
- Manage the administrative challenges of enforcement efforts
- Represent the interests of provincial populations

Historical Context: Your experience as a Governor has provided you with detailed knowledge of the challenges facing local administration. You understand the difficulties of implementing central policies and the importance of securing local cooperation.

Key Concerns:

- Ensuring that policies can be effectively implemented at the local level

- Managing the potential for social unrest resulting from enforcement efforts
- Balancing central directives with local conditions and capabilities
- Maintaining governmental effectiveness during the crisis

Wenfeng

Adviser

As an adviser, you contribute to the strategic planning and policy development necessary to address the current crisis.

Key Responsibilities:

- Provide strategic analysis of policy options and their implications
- Advise on the integration of different aspects of the imperial response
- Analyze the long-term consequences of various approaches to the crisis
- Serve as a liaison between different officials and departments
- Contribute to the development of comprehensive solutions

Historical Context: Your position as an adviser places you in a crucial role in imperial decision-making. You have access to information from across the empire and responsibility for providing balanced assessments of complex situations.

Key Concerns:

- Ensuring that responses to the crisis serve the empire's long-term interests
- Managing the integration of military, diplomatic, and administrative approaches
- Balancing traditional Chinese principles with the need for adaptation
- Maintaining imperial unity and authority during a period of crisis

Fuqing

Commander

As a Commander, you provide military expertise and contribute to the development of military strategies for addressing the current crisis.

Key Responsibilities:

- Provide military analysis and strategic planning
- Advise on the empire's defensive capabilities and limitations
- Coordinate military support for civilian enforcement efforts
- Provide intelligence on foreign military capabilities and intentions
- Contribute to the development of comprehensive military strategies

Historical Context: Your military experience provides crucial insights into the empire's strategic position. You understand both the strengths and limitations of Chinese military forces and the challenges posed by Western technological superiority.

Key Concerns:

- Preparing for potential military conflict while avoiding unnecessary provocation
- Coordinating military and civilian efforts to address the crisis
- Maintaining military readiness while supporting diplomatic solutions
- Managing the military implications of anti-opium enforcement efforts

Wen Zhenheng

Scholar

As another scholar, you contribute additional intellectual perspective and help ensure that the committee's decisions reflect the wisdom of Chinese intellectual traditions.

Key Responsibilities:

- Provide scholarly analysis of the current crisis and potential solutions
- Advise on the relationship between traditional Chinese learning and contemporary challenges
- Contribute to the development of policies that respect intellectual traditions
- Serve as an interpreter of classical Chinese texts and principles
- Provide intellectual leadership during the crisis

Historical Context: Your position as a scholar reflects the importance of intellectual leadership in Chinese governance. You understand the relationship between traditional learning and practical administration, and your expertise in classical texts provides valuable guidance for navigating unprecedented challenges.

Key Concerns:

- Ensuring that policies respect traditional Chinese intellectual traditions
- Managing the intellectual challenges posed by Western ideas and practices
- Maintaining intellectual continuity while adapting to new circumstances
- Providing scholarly guidance during a period of unprecedented challenge

Sun Yuting

Governor

As a Governor, you bring additional provincial perspective to the committee's deliberations and contribute to the development of policies that can be effectively implemented across the empire.

Key Responsibilities:

- Advise on the practical implementation of anti-opium policies across different provinces
- Provide intelligence on regional variations in the opium crisis
- Coordinate between central government and local authorities
- Manage the administrative challenges of enforcement efforts
- Represent the interests of provincial populations

Historical Context: Your experience governing a province has provided you with intimate knowledge of the challenges facing local administration during this crisis. You understand how

national policies must be adapted to local conditions and the importance of maintaining popular support.

Key Concerns:

- Ensuring that anti-opium policies can be effectively implemented despite regional variations
- Managing the potential for social unrest resulting from enforcement efforts
- Balancing central directives with local conditions and capabilities
- Maintaining governmental effectiveness and legitimacy during the crisis

Longwen

Military Officer

As a Military Officer, you provide tactical expertise and contribute to the development of operational strategies for addressing the military aspects of the current crisis.

Key Responsibilities:

- Provide tactical analysis and operational planning
- Advise on military logistics and resource allocation
- Coordinate military support for anti-opium enforcement operations
- Assess enemy capabilities and develop countermeasures
- Contribute to the development of comprehensive military strategies

Historical Context: Your experience as a military officer has provided you with practical knowledge of military operations and the challenges of coordinating complex military campaigns. You understand the importance of logistics, intelligence, and coordination in successful military operations.

Key Concerns:

- Ensuring military preparedness for potential conflict with foreign powers
- Coordinating military support for civilian enforcement efforts
- Managing military resources effectively during the crisis
- Maintaining military discipline and morale during uncertain times

Wenwei

Courtier

As a Courtier, you provide insights into court politics and contribute to the management of internal imperial dynamics during this crisis.

Key Responsibilities:

- Advise on court politics and internal imperial dynamics
- Serve as a liaison between different factions within the imperial court
- Provide intelligence on the political implications of various policy options
- Contribute to maintaining imperial unity and authority

- Assist in managing the emperor's relationship with his officials

Historical Context: Your position as a courtier has provided you with detailed knowledge of the complex political dynamics within the imperial court. You understand the importance of maintaining consensus and managing competing interests during times of crisis.

Key Concerns:

- Maintaining imperial unity and authority during a period of unprecedented challenge
- Managing competing interests and factions within the imperial court
- Ensuring that political considerations support rather than undermine effective policy
- Preserving the dignity and authority of the imperial office

Lai Enjue

General

As a General, you provide senior military leadership and contribute to the development of comprehensive military strategies for addressing the current crisis.

Key Responsibilities:

- Provide strategic military analysis and planning
- Oversee military preparations for potential conflict
- Coordinate military support for civilian enforcement efforts
- Advise on military implications of diplomatic and political decisions
- Contribute to the development of comprehensive defense strategies

Historical Context: Your experience as a general has provided you with comprehensive knowledge of military strategy and the challenges of coordinating large-scale military operations. You understand the relationship between military action and political objectives.

Key Concerns:

- Preparing the empire's military forces for potential conflict with technologically superior enemies
- Coordinating military and civilian efforts to address the opium crisis
- Maintaining military readiness while supporting diplomatic solutions
- Managing the challenges of military modernization and reform

Strategic Considerations and Policy Options

Addressing the Opium Crisis

The committee must develop comprehensive strategies to address the multiple dimensions of the opium crisis. The following options represent potential approaches, each with distinct advantages and risks:

Complete Prohibition and Enforcement

The most direct approach involves the complete prohibition of opium importation, sale, and consumption, coupled with vigorous enforcement efforts. This strategy aligns with traditional Chinese moral principles and imperial authority.

Advantages:

- Demonstrates imperial resolve and moral authority
- Addresses the root cause of the addiction crisis
- Maintains consistency with existing imperial edicts
- Potentially eliminates the silver drain over time

Risks:

- May provoke military confrontation with foreign powers
- Requires extensive enforcement resources
- May drive the trade underground rather than eliminating it
- Could disrupt legitimate trade relationships

Implementation Challenges:

- Securing cooperation from corrupt local officials
- Monitoring extensive coastlines and borders
- Addressing the addiction crisis among existing users
- Managing potential economic disruption

Regulated Legalization

An alternative approach involves the legalization of opium under strict imperial control, with regulated sales and taxation designed to minimize social harm while eliminating illegal trade.

Advantages:

- Eliminates the illegal trade and associated corruption
- Provides revenue for the imperial treasury
- Allows for medical supervision of addiction treatment
- Reduces potential for foreign military intervention

Risks:

- Contradicts traditional Chinese moral principles
- May be seen as imperial capitulation to foreign pressure
- Could increase addiction rates through easier access
- May face resistance from Confucian scholars and officials

Implementation Challenges:

- Developing regulatory frameworks for controlled distribution
- Training officials in addiction treatment and management
- Establishing taxation systems for regulated sales

- Managing public reaction to policy changes

Diplomatic Negotiation

A third approach emphasizes diplomatic negotiation with foreign powers to address the crisis through international cooperation and treaty arrangements.

Advantages:

- Avoids military confrontation
- Maintains the possibility of continued trade relationships
- Addresses the international dimensions of the crisis
- Allows for face-saving solutions for all parties

Risks:

- May require concessions that undermine imperial authority
- Success depends on foreign cooperation
- May not address the immediate crisis effectively
- Could be seen as weakness by domestic audiences

Implementation Challenges:

- Navigating different diplomatic traditions and expectations
- Securing domestic support for negotiated solutions
- Ensuring compliance with negotiated agreements
- Managing ongoing relationships with foreign powers

Military Preparedness and Defense

The committee must address the empire's military preparedness in the context of potential conflict with technologically superior Western powers.

Traditional Military Strengths

The empire possesses several traditional military advantages that remain relevant:

Population and Resources:

- Vast population provides enormous potential for military recruitment
- Extensive territory offers strategic depth for defensive operations
- Rich agricultural base can support extended military campaigns
- Traditional military organization provides proven command structures

Geographic Advantages:

- Extensive coastline complicates enemy naval operations
- River systems and inland waterways favor defensive strategies
- Mountain ranges and difficult terrain impede enemy advances
- Strategic control of key ports and commercial centers

Cultural Factors:

- Strong cultural unity provides foundation for national resistance
- Traditional military values emphasize discipline and loyalty
- Confucian principles support sacrifice for imperial defense
- Historical experience with foreign invasion provides strategic lessons

Military Modernization Requirements

However, the empire must also address significant military modernization requirements:

Technological Upgrades:

- Modern artillery and firearms to match Western capabilities
- Naval modernization to defend coastal areas effectively
- Improved logistics and supply systems
- Enhanced communications and intelligence capabilities

Organizational Reforms:

- Professional military training programs
- Standardized military equipment and procedures
- Improved coordination between different military commands
- Enhanced integration of military and civilian administration

Strategic Adaptations:

- New tactical approaches to address Western military advantages
- Improved coastal defense systems
- Enhanced intelligence gathering capabilities
- Coordination with diplomatic and economic strategies

Economic and Trade Policy

The committee must develop comprehensive economic policies that address both the immediate crisis and long-term economic development.

Trade Balance and Monetary Policy

The silver drain resulting from opium imports has created severe economic disruption that requires immediate attention:

Monetary System Reforms:

- Consideration of alternative monetary systems less dependent on silver
- Development of domestic banking and credit systems
- Stabilization of currency exchange rates
- Management of inflation and price stability

Trade Policy Adjustments:

- Diversification of export industries to improve trade balance
- Development of import substitution industries
- Negotiation of more favorable trade agreements
- Exploration of new international markets

Economic Development Strategies:

- Investment in domestic manufacturing capabilities
- Improvement of transportation and communication infrastructure
- Development of domestic financial institutions
- Promotion of technological innovation and adaptation

Revenue Generation and Fiscal Policy

The crisis has created significant fiscal pressures that require innovative approaches to revenue generation:

Tax System Reforms:

- Modernization of tax collection systems
- Development of new revenue sources
- Improvement of tax administration efficiency
- Reduction of tax evasion and corruption

Public Finance Management:

- Prioritization of essential government functions
- Efficient allocation of resources for crisis response
- Development of contingency funds for emergency situations
- Long-term fiscal planning for sustainable governance

Social Policy and Cultural Preservation

The committee must address the social dimensions of the crisis while preserving Chinese cultural traditions and values.

Addiction Treatment and Social Welfare

The opium addiction crisis requires comprehensive social policy responses:

Treatment Programs:

- Development of medical treatment facilities
- Training of healthcare providers in addiction treatment
- Integration of traditional Chinese medicine with modern approaches
- Community-based support systems for recovery

Social Support Systems:

- Economic assistance for families affected by addiction
- Educational programs to prevent future addiction

- Community organization to support recovery efforts
- Integration of treatment with traditional social institutions

Legal and Judicial Reforms:

- Development of legal frameworks that emphasize treatment over punishment
- Training of judicial officials in addiction-related cases
- Creation of specialized courts for addiction-related crimes
- Integration of traditional Chinese legal principles with modern requirements

Cultural Preservation and Adaptation

The confrontation with Western civilization requires careful consideration of cultural preservation and adaptation:

Educational Reforms:

- Integration of useful Western knowledge with traditional Chinese learning
- Development of translation and interpretation capabilities
- Training of scholars in both Chinese and Western traditions
- Creation of educational institutions that serve national needs

Cultural Policy:

- Protection of traditional Chinese cultural institutions
- Adaptation of cultural practices to meet contemporary challenges
- Development of cultural exchanges that strengthen rather than weaken Chinese identity
- Integration of cultural preservation with modernization efforts

Religious and Philosophical Considerations:

- Response to Christian missionary activities
- Strengthening of traditional Chinese religious and philosophical institutions
- Development of intellectual responses to Western ideas
- Integration of traditional values with contemporary governance needs

Questions for Consideration

As delegates prepare for committee sessions, the following questions should guide your research and position development:

Strategic Questions

1. **Fundamental Approach:** Should the empire prioritize complete elimination of the opium trade, regulated control, or diplomatic negotiation? What are the long-term implications of each approach?

2. **Military Preparedness:** How should the empire balance military modernization with diplomatic solutions? What level of military conflict is acceptable to achieve policy objectives?
3. **Economic Policy:** How can the empire address the immediate economic crisis while building long-term economic strength? What role should foreign trade play in imperial economic strategy?
4. **Cultural Preservation:** How can the empire adapt to Western challenges while preserving Chinese cultural integrity? What aspects of Western civilization might be beneficial to adopt?

Tactical Questions

1. **Implementation:** How can anti-opium policies be effectively implemented given widespread corruption and the challenges of enforcement? What institutional reforms are necessary?
2. **International Relations:** How should the empire manage relationships with multiple foreign powers while maintaining sovereignty and dignity? What diplomatic strategies are most likely to succeed?
3. **Internal Coordination:** How can the empire improve coordination between central government and provincial authorities? What administrative reforms are necessary?
4. **Resource Allocation:** How should the empire prioritize the allocation of limited resources among military, diplomatic, and administrative needs?

Philosophical Questions

1. **Legitimacy:** How can the empire maintain the Mandate of Heaven while adapting to unprecedented challenges? What changes are compatible with imperial legitimacy?
2. **Governance:** How should Confucian principles of governance be applied to the unprecedented challenges of Western contact? What aspects of traditional governance remain relevant?
3. **Identity:** How can the empire maintain Chinese identity while adapting to Western challenges? What defines Chinese civilization in the context of global contact?
4. **Modernization:** What aspects of Western civilization should be adopted, and what should be rejected? How can useful innovations be integrated without compromising essential values?

Historical Authenticity

All delegates must maintain strict historical authenticity in their portrayals:

Knowledge Limitations: Delegates may only use information available as of March 18, 1839. Knowledge of subsequent events, modern concepts, or anachronistic ideas is prohibited.

Cultural Sensitivity: All interactions must reflect the cultural norms and expectations of the Qing imperial court. This includes appropriate deference to hierarchy, respect for Confucian values, and maintenance of imperial dignity.

Language and Concepts: Delegates should avoid modern terminology and concepts that would not have been available to historical figures. When in doubt, consult with the Executive Board.

Decision-Making Process: All decisions must reflect the collective nature of imperial governance and the emperor's ultimate authority. Individual delegates cannot make unilateral decisions outside their historical authority.

Conclusion

The Special Committee to the Qing Imperial Court convenes at one of the most crucial moments in Chinese history. The decisions made in these sessions will determine whether the Middle Kingdom successfully navigates the unprecedented challenges of Western contact and the opium crisis or succumbs to forces that threaten its very existence.

The crisis demands wisdom, courage, and unity from all participants. Traditional Chinese governance emphasizes the importance of collective counsel and the integration of diverse perspectives in service of the empire's welfare. The committee must demonstrate these principles while addressing challenges that no previous generation of Chinese officials has faced.

Success will require balancing multiple competing demands: maintaining imperial dignity while adapting to new realities, preserving Chinese cultural values while learning from foreign innovations, and addressing immediate crises while building long-term strength. The empire's vast resources and rich traditions provide a strong foundation, but only through skilled leadership and wise decision-making can these advantages be effectively utilized.

The ancestors watch, the people depend upon you, and history will judge your actions. The Mandate of Heaven calls upon you to serve the empire with wisdom, courage, and dedication. May your deliberations bring honor to the Dragon Throne and salvation to the Middle Kingdom.

The future of Chinese civilization rests in your hands. Rise to meet this challenge with the dignity and wisdom that befits the servants of the Son of Heaven.