



*Zhang Yongjin*

China in the  
International  
System  
1918-20

## CHINA IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM, 1918–20

# **China in the International System, 1918–20**

**The Middle Kingdom at the Periphery**

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**Palgrave Macmillan**

ISBN 978-1-349-21240-8 ISBN 978-1-349-21238-5 (eBook)  
DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-21238-5

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Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 1991 978-0-333-53682-7

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Scholarly and Reference Division,  
St. Martin's Press, Inc., 175 Fifth Avenue,  
New York, N.Y. 10010

First published in the United States of America in 1991

ISBN 978-0-312-05341-3

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Zhang, Yongjin.

China in the international system, 1918–20: the middle kingdom at  
the periphery/Zhang Yongjin.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-312-05341-3

1. China—Foreign relations—1912–1949. I. Title

DS775.8.Z43 1991

327.51'009'041—dc20

90-43360  
CIP

To the memory of my mother

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# Acknowledgements

In the course of preparing and completing this book, I have accumulated a number of intellectual and personal debts. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people who have encouraged and assisted my studies in Oxford. I owe a special debt to Mr Don Markwell, Professor Adam Roberts and Mr Christopher Seton-Watson for their patience, stimulus and guidance over the last five years. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of a number of libraries around the globe, in particular the National Library of China in Beijing, the Second National Archive Library in Nanjing; Library of Congress and the National Archives in Washington, the Butler Library of Columbia University, the Firestone and Mudd Libraries of Princeton University, and Sterling Memorial Library of Yale University; and the Public Record Office and the British Library in London and the Bodleian Library in Oxford. I am grateful to Wolfson College, Oxford, for offering this research fellowship so that I can put the final touch to the manuscript. Finally, I would like to thank my wife and my daughter for their love, tolerance and encouragement and for the five years during most of which we have lived in two parts of the world, the East and the West.

ZHANG YONGJIN



# Note on Transliteration

In transliterating Chinese characters, the *pinyin* system has been used throughout the text, except in the quotes, where the original spelling stands unchanged. A glossary is appended at the end of the book (pp. 240–3).

# List of Abbreviations

<i>CA</i>	Chinese archives deposited in the Second National Archive Library in Nanjing, China
<i>CAB</i>	Cabinet Documents (Public Record Office, London)
<i>CER</i>	Chinese Eastern Railway
<i>CHC</i>	<i>Cambridge History of China</i>
<i>CSPSR</i>	<i>Chinese Social and Political Science Review</i>
<i>DBFP</i>	<i>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–1939, First Series</i>
<i>FO</i>	Foreign Office Documents (Public Record Office, London)
<i>FRUS</i>	<i>Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States</i>
<i>JFMA</i>	<i>Japanese Foreign Ministry Archives</i>
<i>ML</i>	<i>Miji Lucun</i> (A Record of Secret Correspondence)
<i>NCH</i>	<i>North China Herald</i>
<i>NGB</i>	<i>Nihon gaikō bunshō</i> (Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy)
<i>WAYDZ</i>	<i>Wusi Aiguo Yundong Dangan Ziliao</i> (Source Materials about The May Fourth Patriotic Movement)
<i>ZEGS</i>	<i>Zhong E Guanxi Shiliao</i> (Archival Materials on Sino-Russian Relations)
<i>ZEGS – EDHWS</i>	<i>Zhong E Guanxi Shiliao – E Dui Hua Waijiao Shitan</i> (Soviet Preliminary Diplomatic Feelers to China)
<i>ZEGS – EZB</i>	<i>Zhong E Guanxi Shiliao – E Zhengbian</i> (Russian Revolution)
<i>ZEGS – EZYYI</i>	<i>Zhong E Guanxi Shiliao – E Zhengbian Yu Yiban Jiaoshe</i> (Russian Revolution and General Contact)
<i>ZEGS – TESD</i>	<i>Zhong E Guanxi Shiliao – Tingzhi E Shiling Daiyu</i> (Discontinuation of Recognition of Russian Minister and Consuls)
<i>ZEGS – XB</i>	<i>Zhong E Guanxi Shiliao – Xinjiang Bianfang</i> (Xinjiang Frontier Defence)
<i>ZEGS – YJ</i>	<i>Zhong E Guanxi Shiliao – Yiban Jiaoshe</i> (General Contact)
<i>ZEGS – ZT</i>	<i>Zhong E Guanxi Shiliao – Zhongdong Tielu</i> (Chinese Eastern Railway)

# Introduction

China's integration into the contemporary international society looks today, at the end of 1989, increasingly like a process incomplete. One hundred and fifty years after the so-called 'Opium War' of 1839–1840 when the British first 'opened' China for Western commerce, China's strenuous efforts in search of a creative answer to foreign challenges seem to be still going on. More than a hundred years's modernization of China is today more of a failure than a success. Like their predecessors, contemporary Chinese intellectuals are still grappling with the incompatibilities between the Chinese and the Western cultures. The economic reforms in the 1980s bear striking similarities to the Self-Strengthening Movement in the 1860s and the 1870s. The trauma of China's modernization is far from over. It is seventy years since the Paris Peace Conference, when the present-day international society was taking shape with its global institutions and democratic principles, and when China was for the first time accepted into the Family of Nations, as reflected, for example, in its membership of the League of Nations. The year 1919 of course also witnessed the coming to maturity of Chinese nationalism, with its strongest yet manifestation during the May Fourth Movement. Yet, then as now, China had to adjust itself to the changing values and principles of the international society so as to take its rightful place in that society. Then, as now, China's place in the international system posed a 'China problem' for the Western powers in their perception of a global international order. Then, as now, the international society was faced with the problem of how to respond to the ups and downs of China's adaptations and adjustments to the values and institutions of the changing international system. From the vantage point of 1989, one may indeed ask: What is, after all, behind such a sequence as 1839, 1919, 1949 and 1989?

The analogy must not be stretched too far, however. Historical events are never affected by analogies but determined by the combinations of circumstances. Historical circumstances may indeed vary. Nevertheless, the theme—China's integration into the international society—seems perpetual. It is likely to remain with us, not only as a matter of historical interest, but more probably as a matter of future importance.