The first formal war occurred between China and Britain was the Opium War of 1839-1842. The causes which led to its occurrence were rather complicated. In general, the majority of the Chinese scholars believes that it was Britain's invasion to China with a bid to force upon the sale of opium to the Chinese people; it is thus of sinful nature and the British should be blamed. On the other hand, most British scholars argue that it was purely a commercial war owing to China's ignorance to the United Kingdom and China's reluctance to promote international trade, thus no one should be blamed for the occurrence of this bloody war. However, from a broader viewpoint of historical development, we can say that the Opium War was the result of the ultimate expansion of British capitalism and colonialism. Since China had vast population and rich resources but practised self-isolationism, she appeared naturally as a target for British colonial development. In other words, the Opium War was not a matter of mere coincidence.

The Opium War serves as an important point of transformation in the modern history of China. It gradually induced China to transform herself from an isolated celestial empire to a semi-colonial position within a period of about 60 years. More important, the war forced China to put aside her traditional political, social, and economical fibre.

When the war had exploded, many weaknesses of the Manchu government were being exposed, for example, the stupidity and the lack of knowledge to current British and European affairs on the part of the Chinese court officials, the cowardice of the army generals, etc. Therefore, the defeat of China in this war was a matter of logical sequence given that she had to fight the well-trained and -equipped British forces with their daring army generals in command.

The Opium War started before the end of 1839 and ended at the conclusion of the Treaty of Nanking in August 1842. Many battles were fought during this period of nearly three years. The initial stage of the war was marked by the battle of Tinghai
In July 1840 to the battle of Canton 广州 in May 1841; whereas the subsequent stage was marked by the battle of Amoy 厦门 in July 1841 to the operations in Yangtze River 长江 in the middle of 1842. It should be noted that the primary battlefield in the first stage of the War was located in the regions along the China coastal areas, e.g., the battles of Tinghai, Bogue 虎门, and Canton, etc. In the second stage, however, the hinterland of China was involved, e.g., the operations in the eastern Chekiang 浙东 and the lower Yangtze River valley.

In this Academic Exercise, the author aims to analyse the military aspects of the War through a critical analysis of its every major battle. The Exercise consists of six chapters in total. Chapter I deals with the Sino-British armed conflicts in Kowloon 九龙, Chuanpei 长沙, and Kuanyung 宜通, which spear-headed the Opium War. These minor warfares were extremely important due to the fact that they had exposed the military weaknesses of the Chinese forces to the British army. As a result, it enhanced British confidence to gear forward for their invasion to the Chinese empire. In Chapter II, the preparations for war of both sides is being discussed in detail. This is followed by Chapter III which deals with the various battles in the first stage of the game. Then, the major battles of the War's second stage are being dealt with in Chapter IV. Chapter V analyses various military problems of the Chinese forces during the war. The last Chapter concludes that China was then no match to Britain in military operations in view of her military weaknesses in armament, army organization, the effective chain of command, its personnel's morale, etc.

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