Translated selections from:

Liang Qichao, “On the new rules for destroying countries” [Mieguo xinfa lun]\(^1\)

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Today’s world is a new world: new ideas, new learning, new political forms, new laws, new arts and technology, new military weapons, new people [xinmin]. Everything in the world, with and without form, is new; all is unprecedentedly new, not excepting the newness of the universe [tiandi]. How beautiful are the new rules [of this world]! How they flourish! Everyone knows about them, everyone rejoices in them, nobody needs me to encourage them in this. The one thing I can say that hasn’t been said before is that there are also new rules for destroying countries [miegou xinfa].

The decline of states is a general law of nature. From the time when there were people on this earth, there has been a struggle for survival. The struggle for survival includes the strong and the weak, and if there are strong and weak, then there are winners and losers. The rights of the weak and the losers have been swallowed up by the strong and the winners: this is the logic of the decline of states. ... But the decline of states has new rules, which also comprise a general law of natural evolution. When a state is defined by one person, one family, he who would destroy it needs to capture its monarch [jun], collect up its officials, destroy its temples, and remove its large weapons. When the one person, one family, is destroyed, then the state is destroyed.

Today, it is different. Learning is more advanced and we know that a state belongs to its people. The links between individuals and their families are weaker. If one really wants to destroy a state, the whole nation must be destroyed, not merely one person or one family.\(^2\) It cannot be this way. In fact, the destroyers often use the strength of the one person or one family to assist them in destroying the whole nation.

Destroyers of the past: used a whip to attack; today, they use sound and fury to do it. In the past, it [destruction] was sudden; today, it is gradual. In the past, it was obvious [siao]; today, it is subtle [wei]. In the past, one could prepare for the attack because one knew it was coming; today, only once it is upon you are you aware of its presence. In the past, destroyers were like tigers and wolves; today, they are like foxes. Either they use commerce, or they use loans, or they train your soldiers, or they use the establishment of advisors [in your government], or they build roads, or they instigate party competition, or they use assistance in your revolution. When these essences are exhausted, the situation is mature, and at one stroke, they change the name of the nation and change its color on the map. And even before these essences are exhausted and before the conditions are mature, even if the name of the nation and its color on the map remain as before, the [unstable] situation could last for centuries.

Alas! The powerful West uses these new rules against weak countries. I do not know how many [have been attacked in these ways]! If you do not believe it, consider the following examples:

1) The first example is Egypt. Ever since the Suez Canal was opened, Egypt started borrowing money from abroad and simultaneously, European manufactures started passing through [the Canal]. Gold prices were frozen, but capitalists continued to change gold at a time when it was useless; moreover, they relied upon their own nation’s strength to exploit Egypt’s weakness and used high interest rates to lend money. In 1862, Egypt borrowed 1.85 million dollars (1 dollar = 2 yuan); in 1864, Egypt borrowed a further 2.85 million dollars. All of this was purportedly guaranteed by the lender himself. The Egyptian government only received 70% of the total amount.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) Fu can be translated as method or means, or as rules. I have chosen the latter as consistent with Liang’s intention to show a new pattern to global interaction.

\(^2\) The word geo is used throughout to point to states, countries, and nations. I have followed Liang’s contextual understanding and rendered geo in the narrower translation of “state” early on, and then switch to the more expansive terminology of “nation” when Liang signals this by discussing not merely the state, but the whole complex of relations that he understood to comprise a “nation.”

\(^3\) The rest of it presumably disappearing in fees, interest, etc.
beginning, when a lot of gold was being imported, from the outside, it seemed as if Egypt were suddenly thriving. The Egyptian king became intoxicated with the benefits of foreign debt. In 1865 and 1866, Egypt borrowed 3 million more dollars and by 1868, the total debt owed England and France rose to 5.97 million dollars. The Turks, who are Egypt’s overlords, were apprehensive about this borrowing, and warned them about it. But Egypt’s king was surrounded by European advisors, who told him the philosophy and learning of the wealthy countries, and who confused him with responses and opportunities concealed in lovely language. In 1870, Egypt added more to its debt... The more the Turks forbade the borrowing, the more the European capitalists urged it. Finally, they even used 45 million dollars to bribe the Turkish imperial court so as to stop it from commanding Egypt to stop borrowing. The Egyptians ended up with over 5.32 billion dollars of foreign debt. The English and French capitalists, as if they did not know that Egypt was too weak to sustain such a large debt; these so-called advisors, as if they were not in Egypt’s pay; and the [English and French] government officials, as if they were not in daily civil and harmonious contact with the Egyptian court: all of these worked with sustained diligence and sincerity to offer with honeyed words these large debts and bribes. ...

Even in one’s wildest dreams, it could never have come to this in the old era of destroying states!

But in this era, even by 1874 and 1875, Egypt’s financial ministry couldn’t hope to sweep up the mess. The more debt the managers forced on Egypt, the more completely empty the coffers of the national treasury became. Then, the English consulate compelled the Egyptian king to engage an Englishman as advisor to manage the country’s finances, and to raise revenue from the people (this is similar to China, where several years ago they sold stocks through the increase of taxes. This did not make the shortfall by even one little bit. In 1875, the Egyptians were finally forced by the lender countries to establish a department of finance, and to place English and French people as department heads. At the start, when they took up their posts, in the face of opposition in Egypt’s ministry of finance, they put in place severe provisions in the law on the management of finances; gradually, foreigners entered the service as supervisors, to manage the railroads and to handle taxes; financial power moved to the hands of foreigners. In 1877, the Department of finance engaged several Europeans and disbursed 175,000 dollars in salaries. In another case, under the encouragement of the consulate, they gave the debt manager a high government salary. Not only that, but the management of taxes in is foreign hands. There are over 100,000 Europeans in Egypt, and those engaged in private enterprises are exempt from taxes. The Egyptian court has berated the English and the French over this issue, but their governments have not responded. After a year, and on the pretext that Egypt’s domestic politics were in great disarray, they deviously, unexpectedly, and fearlessly rejected [Egypt’s request on taxes]. By 1878, the Department of finance doubled the per capita tax on all Egyptians, and tripled it for Egyptian industry: the foreigners also grab the interest [on the debt] which comes to 1.7 million dollars a year. There is scarcely 5.25 million/year for Egypt’s government expenses; the rest goes to foreigners. For months, Egyptian officials did not receive their salaries, although European employees got their hefty salaries as usual. The Egyptian king was sued in court [over the salaries] and the verdict was rendered by a European in a European-style courtroom. In one case, the Egyptian king’s private property was given to some Europeans as interest payment on the debt. And even this is not the most extreme: Egypt’s annual revenue and expenditures were put under the control of foreigners; now French and English employees in the finance and Industry departments make up the majority. ... and they say that Egyptians are ancient and thus useless! ...

In the four years from 1879-1882, all the officials in the country have been removed and changed; in their former positions, there are now 1325 Europeans who receive collectively a salary of 1.865 million dollars. And they still said that they were promoting stability in Egypt’s domestic politics, and that they were putting Egypt’s finances in order. Finally, they even took over foreign policy and reduced the number of troops in the army so as to render the Egyptian army powerless and unable to resist; they increased taxes on the aristocracy and eliminated all “troublemakers,” thus rendering people incapable of standing up for themselves. They surveyed the country’s arable land, and put the peasants in an uproar. Even that wasn’t sufficient. They took advantage of the ignorance of common people, and using honeyed words and promises, they forcibly took their land. Most of it went into European management, and people were left with no means of feeding themselves. ... The Egyptian king was forced to abdicate in favor of a new king. All of this was in the hands of the manager of the debt.

And that is not all.

The Egyptian people had endured all they could endure, had observed all they could observe, and before the very last road was closed off completely, they could but rise up against the foreigners and fight. Thus, the so-called civilized defenders of morality—Great Britain—and the so-called respecters of religion and freedom—France—
each using several thousand great heroes, suppressed all of Egypt, captured the Egyptian King, attacked the people of Egypt, and left no stone unturned with their troops of justice. And the people of noble spirit [shish] in Egypt, who are patriotic Egyptians, servilely bowed their heads and, their necks shackled, took to roaming the country [like bandits or rebel troops], as on an isolated island in a foreign land.

Alas! Those in the world who have policies to accumulate foreign debt and to have foreign-born officials in their governments, I now warn you that your future will look like Egypt’s. Although, I am not surprised: these are the new rules for destroying countries. (33-35)

2) The second example is Poland. Poland has been a European country for 1000 years. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Polish state began to decline. The Swedish King forced the Polish King to abdicate and established a new monarch. When there was an opportunity, the former King invited the Russians to assist him in recovering his position, attempting to resist with the strength of the Russian Tsar. The state split into two large factions: one concealing reliance upon the Russians and French, one concealing reliance upon the Russians. They fought and quarreled endlessly over politics and religion. Russians appeared sincere, and they used honeyed words full of brotherly love to craftily steer the Poles into welcoming them. But the struggle between the factions became more heated by the day, and was soon set aflame. Gradually the disorderly words spilled into the public discussion of national affairs; to control the situation, 40,000 troops were stationed on Polish territory and the Russian troops amassed and forced people to join one of the two factions. There were two issues at hand: one faction sought to separate the previous Polish King from the current monarch; the other sought to allow the Russian Tsar to meddle in Poland’s internal affairs. The two concealed parties fell into a trap that neither could then escape.

Russian troops were stationed on the artillery stand in front of the aristocrats’ parliament building and they threatened to open fire, thus forcing the members of parliament to endorse them. After this, the Russians publicly proceeded to encourage the abdicated Polish King to kill those Poles with power over the course of events in the previous decades. Subsequently, the Turkish Austro-Prussians indirectly imitated the Russians, and the internal struggles became more pronounced and endless. And the Russians, from beginning to end, used the Polish King to command the Poles and did not force him to abdicate his position.

All along, the People’s Revolutionary Party [Tongmeng dang] traveled everywhere to arouse the people, but the puppet king suppressed them. The leaders of this Party were eliminated, and there was no one left to assist the people to stand up again. A knife was inserted in the midst of Poland, and with this, the country was carved up like a melon [guafen]. By 1712, the name “Poland” disappeared from the map.

For those who plan to ask foreigners for assistance in their internal political struggles between parties, I point to the subversion of Poland as an example of your possible future. Although, I am not surprised: these are the new rules for destroying countries. (35)

3) The third example is India. The destruction of India, it could be said, is the strangest I’ve encountered of all the destructions of thousand-year-old countries. In history, I’ve heard that there were countries that destroyed other countries; yet I’ve never heard of a non-country destroying a country. Today’s India covers an area of 1.8 million sq. miles and has over 290 million people; it was overtaken by 70,000 small capitalists in the East India Company, under the direction of Queen Victoria of England. The beginning of England’s economic assault on India was in 1639, when it obtained a strip of land 6 miles long by 1 mile wide. Within 27 years, control began to reach towards the isolated city of Bombay, and every year, they collected a 10 pound tribute for the Queen in order to assert control. From a territory not yet 3 sq. miles in size, control extended to over 1.8 million sq. miles of land; from an income of 10 pounds per year, revenue has increased to 5.6 billion pounds per annum: what is the reason for the British success in this business?

According to general theories, England would have had to have used a large army, expended an untold amount of money on the military in order to begin the operation. But, this assumption is in error. The English destroyed India not by using English military power, but by using Indian power. Formerly, the French had sent hundreds of gifts to India in their bid to swallow India and to double the size of France. On the one hand, they recruited Indian natives and taught them European military tactics, while putting in place European generals to command them; on the other hand, they wanted to capture power in India, to use Indian officials and the monarch as their puppets to lead the Indian people to obey their commands. Alas! After this, the reasons that the English were able to nibble away at India was that they used the magic of earth-shaking big business. The English court did not
even send one soldier, or sacrifice one life, or levy one cent of tax, or raise one bit of national debt.

By 1773, the strategy was set. The East India Company had flourished in this era and had spread all over India. English soldiers in India only numbered 9000 (and these were Company soldiers, not state-soldiers). The rest were natives. By 1857, there were more than 235,000 Indian soldiers and when the English got ready to invade, it was the Indians who attacked the Indian people. After the battle was won, they used Indians to supervise Indians, and this is how it has worked up to this day. Whether it is military expenditure or the upkeep of soldiers, the whole sum, every last penny without exception, comes from the Indian people themselves. Ruling over the country today, there are five brilliantly-named Indian Emperors, and under each, there are lords and chieftains, each with his own state [guo] and people. It is by this scheme that the people and collectivities under the thousands of chieftains obey [the British].

Is this called using one’s own country to destroy oneself, or is it called not being destroyed? I have no way of knowing. For, in this way, it is still India. Yet, the reason England could take over the islands of the South Seas and France could take over Annam is by the use of this technique [shu]. If, in the world, there are those who fawn on foreign powers and are cruel to their own race [zhong] and still think they are being successful, I urge them to look at the example of India. Although I am not surprised; these are the new rules for destroying countries. (35-36)

4) The fourth example is the Boers. The South African people are a strong people [minjue], and today they are fighting a war with the British. The Boer race [zhong] originally settled at the Cape of Good Hope. For the past century, they have repeatedly been compelled by the English to move inland. They established two republics—the Transvaal and the Orange Free State—in the center of Southern Africa. The family clans led one another in agriculture, in herding, in hunting, leading a carefree, calm, and quiet life in this small territory. But in 1865, certain Europeans wandered into the area, discovered that there was gold, and then surveyed the land in the Transvaal. In 1885, they discovered larger gold deposits... The English merchants at the Cape of Good Hope grabbed millions in profit with one snatch. Then, as the profits diminished, they rocked together [to find more gold]; from beginning to end, it took twelve years... They created companies and a formerly deserted area—Johannesburg—suddenly became a densely populated city with 150,000 residents. The Transvaal government’s economic power moved to this city of gold, yet the administrative reins were in the hands of the English. The English thus changed their plans to swallow the country by military means into a strategy of invading it by wealth. They forced the Transvaal government to cede land so as to build a railroad from the capital, the city of gold [Johannesburg], to the Cape of Good Hope. The President, in order to resist and knowing that this railroad would be a source of disaster, instead build a railroad to the Indian Ocean. ... But the English in the city of gold demanded administrative autonomy and put themselves up for election as representatives to parliament, in order to interfere in the domestic affairs of the Transvaal, but they did not receive more than 10,000 votes from the residents of the capital. The population of that city of gold is fifteen times that, and the strength of wealth and knowledge is also concentrated there. So the old crafty English merchants and the simple people of the Transvaal capital ended up serving in the same parliament. In this way, the governmental power of the whole state ended up in the hands of the English. While the English were thus faced with accumulated concerns, the Boers were more familiar and clear about things. Thus, when the new parliament began to meet, the Transvaal people strongly resisted it.

In 1895, the chairman of one English company used 600 soldiers to secretly take over the affairs of the city of gold. The instigators forced the chief supervisor of the Cape of Good Hope to unleash barbaric violence, but in this instance, it was controlled by the Boers and they [the English] did not achieve their goals. Again, in 1899, English immigrants to the Transvaal united 30,000 people together to sign a petition to the English government demanding that they interfere in the Transvaal government, demanding the right for political participation [in the Transvaal]. The English government, relying upon its big power status, used strong-arm methods to limit political participation to those who had lived in the Transvaal for at least five years. This had little immediate impact, but it raised the question of sovereignty. Indeed, it made the Transvaal into a de facto British protectorate... ...

The British did not believe that the Transvaal would dare to take on the most powerful country in the world in order to retain its own sovereignty. They thought the Boers would surrender, just as had the Egyptians and the Indians. The Boers did not... The so-called civilized and moral British were thus defeated in an incredible fashion.

If there are those in the world who seek assistance in developing mines or building railroads, and who compromise on their territorial boundaries and autonomy in favor of foreigners and aid from large countries, I am happy to narrate to them the history of the Boer war. Although I am not surprised: these are the new rules for
destroying countries. (36-38)

5) The fifth example is the Philippines. The Filipinos are peoples of the same continent and race as we [feilubingzhe wu tongzhou tongzhong zhi guomin]. They have struggled twice with white people, and through many twists and turns, they still have not won. They are situated to the south of us... Spain's strength was insufficient to destroy the Philippines, but I am not going to discuss that episode here. Here, I want to discuss the Philippine/American encounter and why the Americans were able to destroy the Filipino people. The reason is contained in the new rules!

During the Spanish-American War, the Filipinos were still under Spanish control. Americans sent troops to the island in order to attack Spanish power, but the US's own strength was not sufficient, so it attracted Filipinos to fight, in their own name and under General Aguinaldo. General Aguinaldo's revolution was not yet completed when the Filipino consulate in Hong Kong and the American consulate in Singapore signed a secret treaty providing for the following scheme: they [the Americans] sent a telegram to the government in Washington and the navy empowered Dewey, who led American troops to take Aguinaldo back to the Philippines [from Hong Kong]. General Aguinaldo's intention was to mobilize Filipinos to voluntarily participate [in the US action against Spain], not to use Filipinos as American dogs, to substitute for Americans in driving out [the Spaniards]. But the current American government, using its Monroe Doctrine, changed its policy to one of imperialist invasion in a desire to obtain a long-term commercial base in the Eastern Seas. Under cover of their misleading intent, Americans took the Filipinos [in exile back to the Philippines] and announced that their soldiers were arriving to assistance Filipinos in obtaining their independence from Spanish rule. Filipinos thought that Americans were civilized and believed them; they were heartily welcomed.

In 1898, the Filipino Independence army was successful [against the Spaniards] and a democratic government was established. At this time, the independent Filipino government controlled 167,845 sq. miles of territory and ruled more than 9,395,000 people. The American invaders, by contrast, only held not more than 143 sq. miles of territory and not more than 300,000 people. The Filipinos did not rely upon American power to gain their national sovereignty [guoquan]; to the contrary, Americans used the Filipinos’ assistance to eliminate Spanish power. That was the relationship between the two countries. Then, the Americans used their big-country status and power to fight on to final victory [in the Spanish-American War]. Once this was over, they returned to the Filipinos, who had just been through a bloody three-year war, in which the number of dead and wounded was enormous. That is the reason they could not go on to punish the Americans, not because they did not engage them. Today, all is lost. After numerous battles, General Aguinaldo has become the new leader [under the Americans]. The way of heaven is indeed unknowable if you use naked force [qiang quan].

Those in the world who want to mobilize the assistance of foreigners in order to accomplish a revolution, I point them in the direction of the battlefields in the Philippines. Although I am not surprised; these are the new rules for destroying countries. (38).

Summary of Remaining points:
--of all of the above countries lost through these new rules, not one has come back.
-- is this called civilization/ modernity [wenming]?
   Is this called international law?
   Is this called loving others as yourself, or seeing enemies as friends?

--Western philosophers have a saying: "If two equals meet, there is no such thing as power, for reason [daoli] is power; if two unequals meet, there is no such thing as reason, for power is reason."

I. Catalogues China’s growing national debt, and relates this directly to Egypt: “Egypt was lost because of national debts, so we should not borrow.” (39-42)

II. In Poland, the aristocracy is working with and dependent upon Russia: is this not like China and Zhang Zhidong?: “Poland was lost [yong] because it asked for Russian assistance, so China and Zhang Zhidong should cease asking foreigners for help.” (42-44)
III. Summarizes Robert Hart [British official; appointed as Customs Commissioner in the Chinese Customs Bureau-by treaty of Tianjin (1860)]: that there are 3 choices for the West in China:

1) change the emperor--too difficult
2) support the Manchu government and work through it --only viable option
3) cut China up like a melon --but if Boxers are any indication, the rise of people's resistance will soon be too much to handle.

-- Liang Qichao concludes that the Chinese are imminently to become "slaves of slaves" (slaves of the Manchus who are slaves to foreigners), just like the Indian village chiefs and the Annam king (44-45)

IV. Conclusion: That the whole rhetoric of keeping China whole, put forward by the Open Door policy, only disguises commercial penetration of the country. But, as soon as China loses its commercial autonomy and its territorial sovereignty (bic of railroad building, river transport, mining, etc.) then it is lost anyway (as with the Boers). "Shanghai, Hankou, etc., are called foreign concessions, yet what are foreign concessions but colonies? Once they make the whole country into a free trade zone, then will the country be anything more than a colony?"

(46)

Therefore, one must be very suspicious of the baoquan [keeping whole] rhetoric promoted by the Open Door policy because while guafen [carving like a melon] is transparent and will inspire resistance, baoquan allows for complacency, which translates into self-destruction. (46-47)

Translated by Rebecca E. Karl