

**TOW LEADERS OF MODERN ASIA:
LI HUNG-CHANG AND HARA KEI**

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Introduction

The biggest question for modern Asia was, of course, how to cope with the encroachment of the formidable West. Thus, the biggest question was how to lead the people in their struggles to defend themselves against this threat. The forces wrought by the West were so powerful that the task was an impossible one and modern Asian leaders almost without exception failed at the task. Desperately impossible as that task might have been, and destined as they were to fail after all, modern Asian leaders tackled it, employing different strategies and tactics.

I would like to take up tow modern Asian leaders and compare them because I think they adopted contrasting strategies in the face of the same task of leading people in the defense of their independence. They are, as you already know from the title, Li Hung-chang from China and Hara Kei from Japan. I would maintain that they represent two types of leadership in modern Asia. Of the two types of leadership they represent, the first one I would call "national leadership" and the second one "civilizational leadership."

Li Hung-chang was a leading mandarin, the most powerful figure of the Qing dynasty during its final stage. He was born in Anhwei Province in 1823 and died in 1901. Hara Kei is well known as the first "commoner" to become Prime Minister of modern Japan in its rising stage. He was born in Morioka in 1856 and died in 1921. There was a thirty-three year difference between their ages and when Hara became one of Japan's leading political figures as Prime Minister in 1918, Li had been dead for nearly twenty years. You would think they had never met each other. On the contrary, they met face to face in Tientsin, China during 1884-85. When they met, Hara was 27 and Li was 61. According to the traditional East Asian seniority rule, I should perhaps first talk about Li, but I would like to start with Hara and then take up Li.