CONFLICTING WORDS: RHETORIC OF THE MANCHURIAN CRISIS

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
San Diego State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
History

by
Jinna Simone Borgstrom

Spring 2013
SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

The Undersigned Faculty Committee Approves the

Thesis of Jinna Simone Borgstrom:

Conflicting Words: Rhetoric of the Manchurian Crisis

Kathryn Edgerton-Tarpley, Chair
Department of History

Andrew Abalain
Department of History

Valerie Ooka Pang
School of Teacher Education

4/25/2013
Approval Date
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, who have unwaveringly supported me throughout my life.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Conflicting Words: Rhetoric of the Manchurian Crisis
by
Jinna Simone Borgstrom
Master of Arts in History
San Diego State University, 2013

This thesis examines the rhetoric employed by the Chinese and Japanese delegates to the League of Nations during the Manchurian crisis of 1931-33, as well as the verdict of the League. Individual statements from representative diplomats were analyzed for literal meaning as well as underlying motive driven by circumstance.

Rhetorical analysis of Chinese and Japanese statements during the Manchurian crisis and the subsequent Sino-Japanese conflict reveals the tension between appealing to the international community for aid and maintaining nationalistic pride. The Sino-Japanese conflict challenged the League of Nations’ policies and practices. By attempting to conform to the League’s principles, China and Japan reinforced the League of Nations’ position as the mediator in international conflict dedicated to the maintenance of peace. At the same time, the conflict discredited the League of Nations’ effectiveness because negotiations ultimately failed and Japan withdrew from the League rather than adhere to the League of Nations’ resolutions. Chinese and Japanese delegates manipulated language to impart specific implications in their speeches and statements. Specific examination of word inclusion and omission contributes to understanding the requisite rhetorical skills needed to maintain and develop support without alienating competing foreign powers. When examined in conjunction with historical contextual analysis, it is clear that the rhetoric employed in official Chinese and Japanese statements reflected political dynamics and the pre-World War II trend away from imperialism. Analysis of the League of Nations’ actions during the Sino-Japanese conflict exposes the League’s impotence in the face of a serious international dispute. The League of Nations attempted to appear relevant in negotiating peace, but as demonstrated by this study, the League’s emphasis on its successful implementation of specific procedures and policies was to a large degree a diversionary tactic intended to mask the League’s inability to bring about any true resolution to the Manchurian conflict.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Manchurian Crisis: Rhetorical Acrobatics and Diplomatic Consequences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Narrative: Origins of the Manchurian Crisis</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 CHINA APPEALS TO THE ASSEMBLY</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 JAPAN TAKES THE FLOOR</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS PASSES JUDGMENT</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 CONCLUSION</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Kathryn Edgerton-Tarpley, Dr. Andrew Abalahin, and Dr. Valerie Pang for their enduring support throughout my thesis process. The encouragement and advice I received helped me persist and reach the end of my thesis. I will value the words of wisdom and guidance throughout my life.

I would also like to thank my parents, my sister, and my husband for patiently providing help and care as I worked to complete my thesis. My family has given me the best foundation from which to grow, and a large part of my success is due to the love, support, and inspiration that I receive on a daily basis.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The events of September 18, 1931 proved to be the catalyst that both demolished pseudo-civil relations between China and Japan and ultimately contributed to the disintegration of the League of Nations. An explosion on the Mantetsu railway track in Manchuria provided Japan’s Kwantung Army with a long awaited excuse to attack the Chinese garrison at Fengtian and take full control of Manchuria. The origins of the explosion were long debated, but general consensus determined that the explosion had in fact been organized by Kwantung Army officers, eager to expand Japanese control in Manchuria.

THE MANCHURIAN CRISIS: RHETORICAL ACROBATICS AND DIPLOMATIC CONSEQUENCES

The Sino-Japanese dispute following the Manchurian crisis of 1931 played out on an international stage. The League of Nations believed that negotiation and mediation would bring about a peaceful resolution, and therefore encouraged China and Japan to take part in the Assembly’s protocols. In order to gain international support, Chinese and Japanese delegates crafted diplomatic weapons, aimed to subtly discredit the opposing side and manipulate the international community. The rhetorical tools employed by the delegates reveal the conflict between maintaining national pride and appealing to the League of Nations. While the Chinese and Japanese delegates maneuvered the diplomatic channels, the Assembly itself was faced with the looming conclusion that the League had no real power in mediating international conflicts. Rhetorical analysis illuminates the efforts undertaken by the League of Nations’ members to influence an international body that ultimately could not bring about conflict resolution.

The Manchurian incident proved to be the critical catalyst of the second Sino-Japanese War, as events built up to increase tensions and strain relations between China and Japan. The crisis of September 18, 1931 initiated a chain of events leading to Japan’s exit from the League of Nations and revelations of deep flaws within the League’s design. Because the League of Nations was directly involved in attempts to reach resolution, both
China and Japan were forced to show public faces intended for the international community and proclaim loyalty to the League’s principles and dedication to the League of Nations’ Covenant. Speeches and statements from both Chinese and Japanese diplomats provided clear insight into the creation of Chinese and Japanese international personas, which were often at odds with the rhetoric both nations employed domestically. The pressure to appeal to the international community was not new to the era of the League of Nations. However, the extent to which nations structured public attitudes and presented prose to fit international expectations developed in response to the concept of an international governing body. Study of the Sino-Japanese conflict must incorporate analysis of diplomatic correspondence, speeches, and statements to establish a more comprehensive understanding of both the significance of the League of Nations, itself, as well as the international community’s role in the evolution of the conflict.

The final judgment of the League of Nations occurred in response to the public positions of both China and Japan and the findings of the Commission of Inquiry, charged by the Assembly of the League of Nations to investigate the situation in Manchuria. The Mukden incident was used by all stakeholders to justify military and political action, as arguments were made by both the Chinese and Japanese of victimization and unprovoked attack. The incident, itself, has been the subject of numerous studies from multiple perspectives, but most scholars have been concerned primarily with establishing the Japanese guilt or innocence in the attack. Similarly, scholarly examination of the Sino-Japanese conflict trends towards analysis of Japanese militarism, the economic basis of the conflict, and more recently, the impact of the conflict on the Japanese and Chinese people. The diplomatic statements presented to the League of Nations have played only a minor role in the study of the Second Sino-Japanese War, despite the obvious importance of these addresses in developing a more complete understanding of the relationship between the League of Nations and its member nations. Notwithstanding the vast array of perspectives taken to analyze the Manchurian crisis, few extant studies have analyzed the particular rhetoric used during the crisis.

For historians, the Manchurian incident has provided a point of access to the rise of Japanese militarism and expansionism, as well as a means by which to understand the political turmoil within China. The relative impotence of the League of Nations has been
generally accepted by scholars in light of the Assembly’s handling of the Sino-Japanese crisis. Studies have focused on both the events leading to the Mukden incident, the resulting international crisis, and the effect of the conflict on East Asian relations. Historians have argued about blame, causes, and consequences of the Manchurian crisis, as well as the nature of the international community’s response. Throughout historical study of the second Sino-Japanese conflict and the Manchurian crisis, the speeches and statements of the Chinese and Japanese governments have often been overlooked in favor of the dramatic violence, diplomatic exits, and political upheaval. This analysis investigates the rhetoric used by China, Japan and the League of Nations in the two years following the events of September 18, 1931 and the resulting outcomes.

Critical discourse analysis, a methodology focused on examination of rhetoric in the context of the social sciences, offers an opportunity to identify the role of diplomats as representatives of their respective nations. Discourse analysis, as a general approach, focuses on “issues of stake and accountability, looking at the way people manage pervasive issues of blame and responsibility.”¹ Blame assumes a significant role in discourse analysis studies seeking to understand “the way descriptions are put together to perform actions and manage accountability.”² As an exercise in assigning responsibility, the speeches and written statements of Chinese and Japanese diplomats provide opportune examples of discourse utilized to achieve a social and political goal. As rhetoric is “principally concerned with persuading others to see the world in a particular light,”³ analysis of rhetoric and historical events allows for “distinction between form and content.”⁴ The aesthetic trappings of a diplomatic speech should thus be separated from the underlying pragmatic content of the address, and by identifying the differences between style and substance, the speakers’ social and political contexts are exposed.


² Ibid., 128-129.


⁴ Ibid., 89.
The more specific paradigm of critical discourse analysis is characterized by an understanding of “discourse – language use in speech and writing – as a form of social practice. Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s), which frame it.” The Sino-Japanese conflict was physically enacted on the ground in China, but simultaneously played out diplomatically on a global stage. The influence of the conflict itself on the rhetoric employed by diplomats reflected the relationship between the nature of the League of Nations and the social organization extant in international politics. For this reason, analysis of the phrasings, word choices, and omissions provides insight into the particular conditions created by the League of Nations. Choosing to participate in the League of Nations required adherence to the principles of its Covenant, and dictated the manner in which conflict could be resolved. The Assembly determined that disputes arrive at resolution through negotiation, which in turn necessitated an emphasis on discourse. Detailed examination of the rhetoric employed by diplomats from both China and Japan, as well as that of the League of Nations, illustrates the influence of the international environment on the sequence of political events within the Assembly. Rhetorical analysis of diplomatic statements from the Sino-Japanese conflict, both spoken and written, teases out the particular motives of both the Chinese and the Japanese and exposes the limits of the League of Nations’ power to achieve and maintain international peace.

**HISTORICAL NARRATIVE: ORIGINS OF THE MANCHURIAN CRISIS**

The Chinese government experienced victimization at the hands of the West long before Japan entered the international imperialism game. The Chinese delegates to the League of Nations, in fact, traced the origins of the Manchurian crisis to the nineteenth century, when China was forced to open its markets to foreign trade by Western imperialists. The West criticized “the restrictions which the Chinese government imposed, both in confining trade to south China – initially to Canton – and in limiting the rights, personal as

---

well as commercial, that could be exercised by foreign merchants there.” The British ultimately fought two wars to gain and protect commercial privilege in China, the Opium War of 1839-42 and the Arrow War of 1856-8. Setting a precedent that Japan would later follow, the British forced Qing China to sign unequal treaties that began the process of transforming China into a semi-colony. As Japan entered the modern world, the use of “gunboat diplomacy, though brought under discipline, had by no means been abandoned.” From Japan’s perspective, the use of military might to gain international recognition and rights was well-established and accepted by the West.

Japan was similarly treated to semi-colonial status by Western powers during the nineteenth century. The Japanese were pressured into a treaty in 1858 that forced Japan to open five ports of trade to foreigners, along with establishing extraterritoriality. The treaty port system, so effectively implemented in China, was utilized to open Japan as well. The initial Japanese response to the treaty port system established by the Western powers was one of hostility, shaped by the recognition that Japan was too weak to match the Western powers. Rather than acting through confrontation, which the Japanese realized would not succeed, Meiji Japan experienced a surge of interest in the West. The Japanese learned from the Western powers and according to Sakuma Shozan, a Tokugawa era samurai who became an advisor on coast defense in the mid-1800s, Japan needed to learn that “defending Japan involved learning what foreigners could teach: ‘not theories of government and ethics, but highly ingenious techniques and machinery, borrowed so that we[the Japanese] might be prepared to ward off indignities from the West’.” Japan was torn between traditionalism and Western modernization, and solved this problem by asserting the independence of Japanese progress. According to prominent Japanese thinkers, “Japan would have to stand aside from Asia, not only culturally, in the search for Western-style sources of strength, but

---

7 Ibid., 15.
8 Ibid., 20.
9 Ibid., 24.
10 Ibid., 27.
11 Ibid., 28.
also politically, in order to provide the kind of leadership which Asia seemed unable to furnish for itself.”12 Asia required a leader, and Japan intended to be that leader.

The first step in gaining international recognition as a world power required that Japan escape the yoke of unequal treaties forced upon Japan by Western nations. In July of 1894, Japan signed the first “genuinely reciprocal treaty” with Great Britain, which provisionally abolished extraterritoriality and ended foreign settlements’ special rights, to take in effect in 1899.13 Although nominally a return to Japanese sovereignty, the new treaty “provided for treaty control over tariffs to continue for a further twelve years thereafter, that is, until 1911.”14 Ostensibly, Japan was no longer a “semi-colony” following similar agreements with other powers, but the effects of the unequal treaties continued to influence Japan’s modernization, primarily as the motivation to prove Japan’s military, political, and economic strength to the international community. Having been humiliated by the West and forced to bear witness to the inadequacies of Japan’s military, Japan spent its time as a semi-colony modernizing, based on the theory that in order to compete with the West, Japan must embrace the policies and practices of the West. Japan’s quest to lead East Asia began in Korea.

Korea served as a physical stage upon which Sino-Japanese rivalries played out. In 1876 the Japanese had secured the Treaty of Kanghwa with Korea, which opened Korean ports to Japanese trade, in a manner similar to the types of treaties that had opened Japan to trade with the West. The Treaty of Kanghwa also included a description of Korea as an “independent state, enjoying the same sovereign rights as does Japan.”15 China considered Korea a vassal state, and the Japanese recognition of Korea as a sovereign nation proved contentious. After the signing of the Treaty of Kanghwa, the Japanese began to support the growth of a pro-Japanese faction in within Korea, angering the Chinese. The rivalry between Japan and China over Korea continued to intensify until tensions came to a head in the summer of 1894. The Korean government was overwhelmed by anti-foreign rebellion during

13 Ibid., 33.
14 Ibid., 33-34.
15 Ibid., 44.
the beginning of 1894, and in June, asked for aid from the Chinese military. The Japanese response to Chinese intervention in Korea was to invoke an 1885 agreement between China and Japan that stated that neither Japan nor China would send troops into Korea without advance notice to the other country.16 When the Chinese government fulfilled Korea’s request for military assistance, the 1885 agreement was declared null and void, resulting in Japan sending Japanese military troops into Korea. Both China and Japan promptly refused to withdraw from Korea.17

Although the breach of the 1885 agreement was grounds for sending troops into Korea from a Japanese perspective, the Japanese government recognized that the international community would not accept this as justification for war. Japan provoked China with highly publicized diplomatic requests for joint Sino-Japanese actions in Korea, which China would never accept, and hostilities broke out at the end of July.18 Japan officially declared war on China on August 1, 1894, after establishing troops around and in Seoul, making it possible for Japan to secure most of Korea within two months of the war’s beginning.19 The Treaty of Shimonoseki, signed April 17, 1895, ended the first Sino-Japanese War, with serious consequences for China. In the treaty, China “granted Japan most-favoured nation status in China, agreed to pay a substantial indemnity to offset the costs of the campaign, and ceded to the Japanese four treaty ports, the Liaodong(Liaotung) Peninsula (to the north-west of Korea) and a number of islands including, most importantly, the Chinese province of Taiwan to the south-west of Okinawa.”20 The Treaty of Shimonoseki revealed China’s military and political weaknesses, and simultaneously introduced Japan as a power in East Asia. For the Japanese, the Treaty of Shimonoseki was a great triumph, but was ultimately short-lived due to the intervention of Russia, Germany, and France. The Triple Intervention by Russia, Germany, and France occurred because of foreign fears that Japan would be too powerful and would inhibit the rights and privileges

17 Ibid., 47.
18 Ibid., 48.
19 Ibid.
enjoyed by the Western nations within China. Under pressure from the Western nations, Japan agreed to give up the Liaodong Peninsula in return for a larger indemnity from China.\textsuperscript{21} The Japanese were left with the conclusion that modernization had brought the Japanese to a position of strength within East Asia, but without any real power to assert Japanese interests against those of the West.

The resolution of the first Sino-Japanese War informed the Japanese of their continued weakness on the international stage. The Japanese goal of military and economic autonomy required that the Japanese people and government extend and intensify efforts to modernize and militarize. During the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, the Japanese took the lead in “organizing and manning the international force of European, American and Japanese troops which rescued the foreign nationals besieged in Beijing’s diplomatic compound.”\textsuperscript{22} After working collaboratively with the United States during the Boxer Rebellion, the Japanese signed the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in January of 1902, which dictated that “each country undertook to remain neutral if the other found itself at war with a third power – and to assist the other if it found itself at war with two or more other powers.” The Anglo-Japanese Alliance recognized Japan as an equal partner, the first such recognition from the West.

The Anglo-Japanese Alliance provided encouragement for the Japanese to adopt a hard line with Russia, because the continued presence of Russian troops in Manchuria as a result of the Russian reaction to the Boxer Rebellion presented a threat to Japan’s position in Korea. Convinced that the Russian refusal to remove Russian troops from Manchuria posed an immediate threat to its position in Korea, Japan began the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 by launching land and sea attacks against Russian positions in Manchuria.\textsuperscript{23} The Japanese assault on Port Arthur destroyed much of Russia’s Pacific fleet, and the Japanese navy defeated Russia’s Baltic fleet as well after the latter sailed from European seas to come to the Russia’s aid. During the winter of 1904-1905, both Russia and Japan suffered such great

---


\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 63.

losses that President Theodore Roosevelt’s offer of mediation was mutually acceptable.\textsuperscript{24} The Treaty of Portsmouth was the result of the United States’ mediation, and according to the treaty, “Russia accepted Japanese primacy in Korea and relinquished its economic interests in the south of Sakhalin and the south of Manchuria (including the Liaodong Peninsula).”\textsuperscript{25} The terms of the treaty were generally accepted as signs of Japan’s victory, which took on additional significance because Japan had defeated a Western power. The victories over China and Russia provided the bases for Japan’s imperialist expansion.

The Treaty of Portsmouth opened the door for the Japanese in Manchuria, as Russia ceded its rights to the Chinese Eastern Railway south from Harbin to Japan and the Liaotung peninsula’s lease was transferred from Russia to Japan.\textsuperscript{26} The railway played an important role in Japan’s development of informal empire in Manchuria, as Japan negotiated with China to extend the railway to various locations in Manchuria. China and Japan agreed that the Chang-Kirin railway would be built using a Japanese loan and that “Japan would be consulted before China built any railways which might compete with those of Japan in southern Manchuria.”\textsuperscript{27} Japan successfully gained recognition of its economic rights in Manchuria, and secured a settlement with China regarding future railways. Manchuria was a buffer to be used in order to protect Korea from China and Russia, which involved controlling transportation and communication within the region and keeping civil order, the maintenance of which conflicted with the internationally accepted Open Door policy in China. Japan maintained a military presence based in Kwantung, formerly known as Liaotung, assumedly to protect the growing Japanese population in Manchuria and their economic interests. Although originally intended to be railway guards, the Kwantung headquarters were given great administrative and military rights to defend against Russian intrusion.\textsuperscript{28} The Kwantung Army’s relative autonomy stemmed from the leeway it was given.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[25] Ibid.
\item[27] Ibid., 93.
\item[28] Ibid., 94.
\end{footnotes}
to handle the Manchurian territory, and from the beginning the Kwantung headquarters exhibited a willingness to disregard direct orders from Tokyo.

During the winter of 1911-1912, China underwent a revolution that overthrew the ruling Manchu dynasty and left China in chaos. Left without a clear successor to power, China struggled to find political unity as rival factions fought for control. The Kuomintang, the party of Sun Yat-sen who was recognized as the chosen spokesperson for the revolutionaries, first supported Yuan Shi-kai, and then rose against him, resulting in a fragmented China after Yuan’s death in 1916. Southern China was left in the hands of a weak Kuomintang, and the remainder of the country was split between rival warlords.29 Throughout this period of upheaval, the treaty powers attempted to find and support the faction that would best return stability to China. In 1913, the four power consortium, representing Britain, Germany, France, and Russia, made a loan of approximately twenty five million British pounds to Yuan Shih-k’ai’s government. The goal was to help Yuan establish an effective and stable administration that would then offer favorable economic conditions for the foreign powers.30 Despite the support of foreign powers, Yuan’s government ended with his death, and the resulting instability allowed Manchuria to drift further from Han Chinese control towards pseudo-independence.

With the outbreak of World War I in Europe in 1914, European attention was turned away from China towards more immediate crises. The balance of powers in China shifted as European nations fought one another, and Japan took advantage of the opportunity to pursue its goals of expansion in China.31 Japan used World War I as a convenient method of expansion. In August 1914, Japan declared war on Germany and immediately moved military forces into the German-held Chinese territory of Shantung, acting in the name of the Allies. When Yuan Shi-kai tentatively attempted to arrange for the removal of Japanese troops from the territory, the Japanese responded with the Twenty-One Demands.32 The Twenty-One Demands, drafted by the Japanese and presented to Yuan Shi-kai at the

30 Ibid., 103.
31 Ibid., 109.
32 Ibid., 114.
beginning of 1915, were primarily concerned with Manchuria and Inner Mongolia and Japan’s position in the treaty-port system so long established in China. Japan wanted to extend the lease of the Kwantung Peninsula from the original twenty-five years to ninety-nine. In addition, Japan demanded that rights to the South Manchuria Railway be similarly extended, preventing China from exercising the right to repurchase the railway that had been part of the original agreement. Manchuria was essentially to be placed under Japanese control, politically, militarily, and economically. The Twenty-One Demands also included clauses intended to insert Japanese interests into Chinese companies by giving Japanese investors rights. Japan asked for major railway concessions and that all foreign loans for investment in Fukien be subject to Japanese approval. In sum, the Twenty-One Demands were intended to force China to accept Japanese oversight, particularly in Manchuria and important treaty ports, and the outcome favored the Japanese.

Between 1915 and 1921, Japan worked to solidify its position within Manchuria by investing capital in Manchuria and integrating China into Japan’s sphere of economic influence. Because of growing anti-imperialism attitudes in the West after World War I, Japan’s actions were viewed with increasing disapproval, leading to the Washington Conference of 1921-1922. Nine nations participated in the United-States organized Washington Conference; Japan, China, the United States, Britain, France, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands, and Portugal. The main purpose of the Washington Conference was naval disarmament, as the participating powers agreed that Japan should have a smaller tonnage of ships than the United States or Britain. The Washington Conference resulted in the loosely defined Four Power Treaty of 1921 which outlined Japan, France, Britain, and the United States’ roles as strictly consultants in the event of disputes in East Asia. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 was replaced by the Four Power Treaty and the more formalized Nine Power Treaty of 1922. The nine powers expressed commitment to an open-door policy in

---

34 Ibid., 112-113.
35 Ibid., 113.
36 Ibid., 167.
China and were bound by the treaty to respect China’s sovereignty and independence.\(^{37}\) The Nine Power Treaty was viewed by Japan as a Western attempt to prevent Japan from increasing its influence in China, but the Japanese were pressured to agree in order to retain foreign support.\(^{38}\) For the Japanese, the Nine Power Treaty was an attempt by the West to curb Japan’s expansion and economic interests in China.

During the time period from 1916 through 1927, China was plagued by competing warlords and a fractured government. Yuan Shi-kai, whose government had reacted with great hostility to Japan’s Twenty-One Demands, died in June of 1916 without a clear successor.\(^{39}\) Following Yuan’s death, Tuan Ch’i-jui attempted to establish a government in Peking, while Chang Tso-lin emerged as the ruling warlord of Southern Manchuria.\(^{40}\) In southern China, Sun Yat-sen’s Kuomintang Party and the Chinese Communist Party began attempts to unify China through conquest. During 1926, the joined forces of the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party drove into the middle-Yangtze valley via the Northern Expedition. Increasing tensions between the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang led to a break between them, and in April of 1927, led by Chiang Kai-shek, the Kuomintang established the independent Nationalist government headquartered in Nanking.\(^{41}\) From 1927 until 1937, Chiang Kai-shek extended his Nationalist government’s control, defeating many of the warlords who had fractured China. Chinese nationalism was on the rise, and due to growing anti-foreign and anti-imperialist feelings among the Chinese, Japanese goods were boycotted in China. Japan feared losing economic and treaty protections. As it became apparent that Chiang Kai-shek was aiming to reclaim Manchuria, Japan increasingly felt that actions were necessary to protect Japanese interests in Manchuria.\(^{42}\)

The Kwantung Army, originally created to protect Japan’s South Manchuria Railway, extended its role beyond the railway to include defense of Japanese citizens living in

---


\(^{39}\) Beasley, 116.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., 162.

\(^{41}\) Ibid., 170.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 173.
Manchuria and Japan’s economic investments.\textsuperscript{43} According to a December 1925 resolution, “should a situation develop as a result of hostilities or disturbances, calculated to jeopardize or seriously menace those important interest of Japan, the Japanese forces would be constrained to act as duty demands.”\textsuperscript{44} The Kwantung Army was given permission to defend Japan’s interests if provoked, regardless of whether the provocation was real or fabricated. Chang Tso-lin, the warlord controlling much of Manchuria including Mukden, was considered useful, but not essential to further Japan’s efforts to separate Manchuria from China proper. On June 4, 1928, Chang Tso-lin was killed when a bomb, set by troops from the Kwantung Army, exploded underneath his train.\textsuperscript{45} Chang Tso-lin’s son, Chang Hsueh-liang, immediately succeeded his father, and six months later declared allegiance to the Kuomintang, in direct conflict with Japanese goals.\textsuperscript{46} Japan signed the Kellogg-Briand Pact, a binding agreement that war would not be used to resolve conflicts or disputes, which was meant to take effect in July of 1929.\textsuperscript{47} The Kellogg-Briand Pact represented international norms, and by signing it, Japan agreed to peaceful and diplomatic resolutions.

1929 proved to be a critical year in cementing Japan’s belief that Manchuria was essential to the Japanese economy. The Great Depression caused a collapse in the American market for raw silk and Japanese goods.\textsuperscript{48} At the same time, market prices for rice experienced a sharp decline, impacting millions of Japanese peasant farmers. According to estimates, between 1925 and 1930, farmers’ real incomes declined by as much as one third.\textsuperscript{49} Rural poverty directly impacted the Japanese military, as many young officers came from small landowner families. Having experienced extreme hardship caused by the Great Depression, these young military officers led the movement towards a more revolutionary

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 187.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 188.
\item \textsuperscript{48} John Benson and Takao Matsumura, \textit{Japan, 1868-1945: From Isolation to Occupation} (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2001), 73.
\item \textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
military, determined not to allow economic hardship to recur.\textsuperscript{50} Japan felt that the Great Depression had exposed Japanese economic vulnerabilities, and Manchuria became an important means by which to prevent future economic crises.

Chang Hsueh-liang’s alliance with Chiang Kai-shek resulted in the spread of Kuomintang propaganda against the Japanese throughout Manchuria. This supported Chang’s efforts to further develop Chinese railways as competitors against Japan’s Mantetsu, and Japan suffered economically.\textsuperscript{51} The Japanese Diet believed that Manchuria was Japan’s economic lifeline, and the threat of losing Manchuria proved to be the catalyst for the Kwantung Army’s pre-emptive acts.\textsuperscript{52} Because Japan ratified the Kellogg-Briand Pact, the Japanese government could not order explicit military action, but rather required that all military acts be defensive in nature so that Japan could claim that the Japanese army acted out of self-defense to protect Japanese interests. Reports of a bomb explosion on the railway near Mukden on September 18, 1931 provided the excuse the Kwantung Army commander needed to authorize measures to deal with the sudden emergency, and on September 19, 1931, the Japanese military occupation of southern Manchuria began.\textsuperscript{53}

The Manchurian crisis provoked almost immediate reactions from the Chinese, who turned to the League of Nations and the United States for aid. In response, the Japanese delegates to the League of Nations were charged with justifying Japan’s position in Manchuria. The League itself was presented with a true test of its policies and procedures, and delegates from both China and Japan worked to craft meticulously worded statements designed to play upon the sympathies and inclinations of the Assembly. The rhetoric employed by the delegates and the ultimate judgment of the League of Nations reveal the exact extent to which the League of Nations influenced Japan and China’s actions, while underscoring the fact that the League could not produce a resolution to the Sino-Japanese conflict.


\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 190-191.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 193.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholarship on Japan’s imperialist efforts in Manchuria and the subsequent creation of the independent state of Manchukuo attempts to analyze multiple questions regarding Sino-Japanese relations. The Manchurian Incident occurred on September 18, 1931, and the following conflict between Japan and China played out on an international stage as one of the first tests of the League of Nations’ peace-keeping abilities. Although, undoubtedly, the study of Japanese Manchuria contributes to the larger subject of Sino-Japanese relations in terms of policy and diplomacy, more recent scholarship assesses the social and cultural effects of Japan’s position in Manchuria. Newer works have linked the older focus on political analysis and repercussions, to a growing emphasis on cultural studies and narrow interests. The Japanese intervention in Manchuria has been studied from numerous, consistently evolving angles. Each has changed along with the development of broader historical trends influenced by political and diplomatic narratives and social, cultural, and post-modern studies. By developing relationships between multiple perspectives, scholarship provides a more complete evaluation of Sino-Japanese relations and the international community. Through examination of scholarship available in English, shifts in the Western study of the Sino-Japanese conflict show the evolving transition away from Euro-centrism towards social and cultural analyses.

In 1952 Reginald Bassett published *Democracy and Foreign Policy: A Case History, the Sino-Japanese Dispute, 1931-33*. In keeping with the accepted progressive model of history, which dictated that history moved in a linear pattern characterized by simplified cause and effect relationships, Bassett used the Manchurian Crisis as an alternative lens through which to understand British foreign policy and “Anglo-American cooperation.”54 According to Bassett, the crisis in East Asia over Manchuria led to the “indictment of British

---

foreign policy,”55 and this anti-British feeling grew in strength as Sino-Japanese relations disintegrated. Bassett examined how criticism of the British government during the Manchurian crisis reflected deeper issues leading to World War II. Among these were questions of the “nature of the obligations of the League Covenant, the problem of coercive sanctions, and the relations between the British Government and public opinion.”56 Writing less than a decade after the end of World War II, Bassett was consumed with studying British policy and the issues revealed by Western responses to the Manchurian crisis that stemmed from a need to understand how and why World War II happened.

Bassett’s analysis of the Manchurian crisis was entirely Eurocentric in nature. Rather than attempting to understand how the incident affected Japan and China as the states involved, Bassett was more concerned with looking at the consequences from a British standpoint. The Manchurian Incident appeared as a catalyst for the ultimate failure of global peace efforts in Bassett’s work, and revealed flaws within the League of Nations in Western international relations. Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob referred to the rise to prominence of those American social historians post World War II who needed to understand why the United States had not fallen to totalitarianism as a driving force in Western history.57 A similar question consumed Bassett, who searched for an explanation for the failure of the pre-World War II system. Ultimately, Bassett belonged to a group of historians obsessed with understanding the causes and consequences of World War II.

After scholars of Bassett’s generation analyzed the aftermath of World War II, Akira Iriye, a scholar born in Japan but educated in the United States, wrote “Chang Hsueh-Liang and the Japanese,” published in 1960 in The Journal of Asian Studies. Iriye was less concerned with the ultimate result of the Sino-Japanese conflict, and more interested in the relationship between Chang Hsueh-Liang’s Manchurian government and the Nationalist government in China proper. Chang Hsueh-Liang appeared to be a militaristic, ambitious man who sought alliance with anyone who would support his position in Manchuria, and the

---

56 Ibid., 6.
peace between the Nationalists and Manchuria occurred because Chang viewed the Nationalist government as the greatest opportunity for expanded influence. Where earlier historians glossed over the complexity of Manchurian, Chinese, and Japanese relations, Iriye delved into Chang Hsueh-Liang’s character to determine why Chang ultimately chose to side with the Nationalist government against the Japanese. Studying Chang Hsueh-Liang’s path to power in Manchuria presented a complicated picture of a young man struggling to create alliances and solidify his power in the void left by his father’s death. Where Bassett and other euro-centric historians over-simplified the pre-Sino-Japanese War environment in order to reach some sort of understanding about how World War II might have occurred, Iriye studied the Manchurian condition for its impact on Manchuria. Iriye dismissed the idea that Chang Hsueh-liang was simply a proponent of Nationalist ideals, and instead argued that Chang Hsueh-liang needed to be considered as a product of his time and situation. Chang Hsueh-liang was faced with numerous political rivals, and therefore looked toward the direction of greatest support. It was never inevitable that Chang Hsueh-liang would join the Nationalists, and Iriye asserted that Chang took several months to determine the best alliance for his position in Manchuria. Iriye’s emphasis on Chang Hsueh-liang’s relationship with Japan and China proper from a Sino-centric perspective represented a distinct shift in the study of Manchuria prior to the Manchurian Incident, revealing a complex environment that ultimately provided Japan with the opportunity to occupy the territory.

Historians of the 1960s re-interpreted the Sino-Japanese conflict within the context of the decade that shaped them. The Vietnam War caused a radicalization of politics within the United States, and this shift resulted in an inward focus for many American scholars as the debate erupted over the United States’ involvement. Despite the overarching emphasis within American history on domestic issues, scholarship continued to appear studying the Manchurian crisis from a perspective of parallels, comparing Japanese militarism to the United States’ intervention in Vietnam. Takehiko Yoshihashi’s *Conspiracy at Mukden: The*
Rise of the Japanese Military was published in 1963 and argued that the Mukden incident offered a perfect opportunity for Japanese self-styled patriots to push a plan for expansion.\footnote{Takehiko Yoshihashi, Conspiracy at Mukden: The Rise of the Japanese Military (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), vii.} Yoshihashi essentially asserted that the Japanese army ensured that “the atmosphere of crisis continued”\footnote{Ibid., viii.} so that the military could retain power. Published by Yale University Press, Yoshihashi’s study examined Japan’s crisis of the 1930s from a Japan-centric perspective, but needed to be considered in light of the author’s physical location within the US, and awareness of the impact of the Vietnam War on American society and scholarship.

Although Yoshihashi did not directly address whether the Vietnam War influenced his work, the parallels were striking. Protests against the military’s involvement in Vietnam were responsible for the increasing radicalism in American society, and Yoshihashi’s writing warned of possible consequences of growing military power. In tracing the origins of the crisis that arose in Japan because of conflicting factions struggling to decide how to react to growing Sino-Japanese tensions, Yoshihashi presented a view of Japanese military independence limited by his evidence. Yoshihashi admitted that his work was accomplished without consulting sources from China, which were then unavailable considering the struggles in mainland China.\footnote{Ibid., ix.} Additionally, Yoshihashi recognized that this work relied on the records of the Tokyo War Crimes Trials and specific personal memoirs of prominent political figures.\footnote{Ibid., viii-ix.}

By studying a limited number of sources, Yoshihashi examined a specific aspect of Sino-Japanese relations prior to the Mukden incident and immediately afterwards. In comparison to Bassett’s broad analysis of British foreign policy using the Sino-Japanese dispute as a case study, Yoshihashi’s work focused particularly on Japan’s crisis. Conspiracy at Mukden: the Rise of the Japanese Military moved beyond the Eurocentric analysis of Bassett to study Japan’s struggles as they related directly to Japan. Yoshihashi’s purpose was primarily to provide a foundation study on Japanese militarization and to identify the Japanese military as the driving force behind Japanese aggression. Beyond
transitioning from a Eurocentric to Japan-centric perspective, Yoshihashi demonstrated that
the importance of the Manchurian Crisis lay in understanding the immediate causes and
consequences as they related to East Asia, rather than assuming that the incident’s only value
rested in analysis of the efficacy of European policy implementation.

*Defiance in Manchuria: the Making of Japanese Foreign Policy, 1931-1932* by
Sadako N. Ogata appeared in 1964, published by the University of California Press. Ogata’s
work, just one year after Yoshihashi’s, reflected a transition in the study of Japanese
Manchuria. Yoshihashi used the Manchurian Crisis to examine how the military gained
control of Japan’s foreign policy, and Ogata built from that to study the formulation of
foreign policy as the military grew in strength. While recognizing that the military adopted
radicalism in order to advance its power, Ogata detailed how radicalism impacted the
military, itself, and the policies promoted by the military after it gained immense influence
rather than focusing on how the military used its growing power externally.

Ogata studied the policy statements and programs of the Kwantung Army to argue
that the policies enacted in Manchuria were created as “direct expressions of criticism of the
existing Japanese political, economic, and social systems.” The decision-making process of
the Manchuria crisis highlights an incident in which the developments in Manchuria were
controlled by military leaders on the ground rather than official policy makers. In contrast
to Yoshihashi’s work on the specific details of the military’s rise and its use of the Mukden
incident to gain greater power, Ogata moved beyond the basics of military maneuvers.
Instead, Ogata incorporated military decisions in Manchuria into a larger study of how policy
making evolved in Japan during the early 1930s.

Ogata claimed that this study was undertaken because of a long-time fascination with
understanding what prompted Japan to embark on a path of expansionist foreign policy that
ultimately led to Japan’s downfall and defeat in World War II. Despite this, *Defiance in

---

66 Sadako N. Ogata, *Defiance in Manchuria: The Making of Japanese Foreign Policy, 1931-1932*
(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), xvi.
67 Ibid., xiv.
68 Ibid., xv.
69 Ibid., xvi.
70 Ibid., ix.
Manchuria: The Making of Japanese Foreign Policy, 1931-1932 reflected its environment. Ogata’s work, like Yoshihashi’s, needed to be understood within the dominating context of the Vietnam War. This was the case because of the similarities that many drew between Japan’s military in Manchuria ultimately determining policy, and the fear among United States’ citizens of allowing the military to exert influence in decisions regarding the Vietnam War. As Paul Cohen argued in 1984 in describing the impact of the Vietnam War on the study of Sino-Japanese history, and,

The successive crises of the 1960s and early 1970s, by highlighting the contradiction between the destructive capability of American technology and the moral opaqueness of those Americans who had ultimate control over its use, raised questions about the very course of ‘modern’ historical development. After Vietnam, there could be no more easy assumptions about the goodness of American power.71

Without directly confronting the Vietnam War and the policies adopted by the United States, Ogata took a clear stance on the dangers of allowing the military to decide political policy. She presented the Japanese in Manchuria as a case study to warn the United States against allowing something similar from taking place. At the same time, Ogata placed the blame for Japan’s aggressive expansionist and imperialist actions upon the military in its grab for power, and indirectly removed responsibility from the civilian government. An unwillingness to assign blame to the Japanese emperor or government appeared in Yoshihashi’s work as well, as both scholars focused on the military in Manchuria and the ultimate defeat of Japan because of the military.

As hesitant as Yoshihashi and Ogata appeared to be to credit the Manchurian crisis or the aftermath to any organization beyond the military, Chin-Tung Liang took an opposite stance. Published in 1969 by St. John’s University Press, The Sinister Face of the Mukden Incident argued that the Japanese government was fully aware of the actions of the Kwantung Army in Manchuria, and rather than attempting to rein in the military, the government had to cover up the army’s insubordination to save Japan’s public face.72


Liang’s bibliography, indicating that Liang wrote with full awareness of Yoshihashi’s argument. In fact, Liang seemed to write in direct conflict with Yoshihashi, who attempted to skirt around blaming the Japanese government and instead identified the military as instigating and perpetuating tensions with China.

Liang made a broad statement that undeniably contributed to the controversial nature of *The Sinister Face of the Mukden Incident*. Specifically, Liang addressed the question of possible conspiracy theories by stating plainly that, “it is well known that the Mukden Incident was a conspiracy of the young officers of the Japanese army. This is indisputable.” When viewed in conjunction with the later statement of the Japanese government’s complicit cooperation in hiding the conspiracy, Liang took a vastly different position than both Yoshihashi and Ogata. Liang’s interpretation of the event pointed to a partnership between Japan’s government and military that ultimately led to heightened Sino-Japanese tensions. Liang’s explicit statement that not only was the government aware of the insubordination within the Japanese military in Manchuria, but acted to cover it up, and thus became co-conspirators provided the basis for a major debate within the study of Japanese Manchuria.

The primary concern of these three 1960s scholars was responsibility. The issue of assigning blame for the Manchurian crisis took center stage as Yoshihashi, Ogata, and Liang attempted to show that the Mukden incident and the Manchurian crisis could best be analyzed by studying the preceding events. Although the Japanese military took most of the responsibility according to all three scholars, each gave a different explanation for how the military attained such influence differently. By identifying the causes for the rise of Japan’s military and the manner in which the military’s influence was expressed in Manchuria, the main issue appeared to be a question of how involved the Japanese government itself, was in the creation of Japanese policies involving the Manchurian crisis. Additionally, Liang moved the debate to analyze the level of cooperation that existed between the government and the military instead of the more simplistic argument that the government was pushed to the side and unaware, as Yoshihashi and Ogata had argued.

---

The 1960s represented a time of renewed interest in the Manchurian crisis and Sino-Japanese relations. After the 1930s, few works appeared explicitly about the Manchurian incident and those published typically followed Bassett’s perspective, utilizing the Manchurian situation as a way to study the West. By focusing on the origins of the Manchurian crisis and assigning responsibility for the incident, Yoshihashi, Ogata, and Liang therefore provided a basis for future analysis. When taking into considering the fact that Yoshihashi, Ogata, and Liang wrote during the Vietnam War, the rationale for focusing on the dangers of overseas expansion and the potential risks of allowing the military to be used as a tool for expansion becomes clear. Without explicitly taking a stance on the United States’ position in Vietnam, Yoshihashi, Ogata, and Liang commented on the perils of military expansion.

While the debate in the 1960s centered on responsibility and providing the foundation of basic events and players, Chalmers Johnson later analyzed the effect on the relationship between China and Japan. Published in 1972 in *Foreign Affairs*, Johnson’s article “How China and Japan See Each Other” specifically addressed the impact of the Sino-Japanese conflict. Johnson identified three major historical events that shaped Chinese and Japanese attitudes towards one another, and argued that, “Japan’s ultimate betrayal, in the eyes of Chinese revolutionaries, was her military intervention in China between 1937 and 1945 in order to suppress by force the Chinese anti-imperialist nationalist movement.”74 The anti-Japanese attitude attributed to the Chinese by Johnson was clearly visible to Johnson in the 1970s, approximately forty years after the Mukden incident. In comparison, Johnson asserted that, “Virtually all adult Japanese acknowledge and wish to atone for Japan’s military actions on the continent, but many fewer will agree that Japan was fighting for a totally worthless national cause.”75 The Japanese believed that there had been legitimate need for militarism and imperialism, and the contrast between wishing to make amends and yet continuing to subscribe to the notion that the cause had been legitimate epitomized the source of strain in Sino-Japanese relations. For Johnson, this was important primarily because it helped create understanding of his contemporary political situation. Rather than

---

75 Ibid., 715.
being concerned with assigning blame, Johnson used historical events to establish the basis of Chinese and Japanese tensions and make predictions about future conditions.

Johnson used the Sino-Japanese conflict to study his own surrounding diplomatic environment rather than explicitly judging the two nations, but succeeding scholarship moved further into critical analysis of the Japanese empire and expansion. In 1983, a book entitled *The China Quagmire: Japan’s Expansion on the Asian Continent 1933-1941* was published by Columbia University Press. Edited by James Morley, the work consisted of several translations from *Taiheiyo senso e no michi: kaisen gaiko shi, The road to the Pacific War: Diplomatic history to the outbreak of war*, a seven volume collection of essays.76 Although the original Japanese essays were first published in Tokyo by *Asahi Shimbunsha* in 1962, the publication of translations in the United States represented a shift in the interest of American historians.

Despite the approximately two decades between the Japanese publication and the American translation, the translated title, *The Road to the Pacific War: Diplomatic history to the outbreak of war*, suggested a new focus in the study of the Manchurian crisis. Unlike most previous works which suffered from limited primary sources, Morley stated that the Japanese scholars had access to a great number of previously unavailable sources from the army and navy, the Justice Ministry and Foreign Ministry, and the private papers of several Japanese leaders, both military and civilian.77 The stated purpose of this publication was to trace Japan’s road to war, therefore, analysis of the Manchurian incident was only a part of the work’s focus.78 Rather than studying only the Manchurian crisis as Yoshihashi, Ogata, and Liang did, *The China Quagmire: Japan’s Expansion on the Asian Continent 1933-1941* placed the Manchurian incident within the larger context of Japanese expansion.

Morley’s text translated Shimada Toshihiko’s essay on Japan’s “Designs on North China, 1933-1937,” originally published between 1962 and 1963 as part of the *Taiheiyo

---

77 Ibid., ix.
78 Ibid., xiii.
Shimada’s main argument continued to be that Tokyo policies often came second to the will of Japanese military leaders in China. Shimada’s essay presented the story of a “nation heading inexorably towards war with China, constantly being prodded to move faster along this path by impetuous field offers,” according to translator James B. Crowley. Although strikingly similar to the assertions of both Yoshihashi and Ogata, the publication of Shimada’s essay expanded the study of Japanese Manchuria beyond the earlier Japanese-American scholars.

Morley’s text provided the foundation for studying the Manchurian crisis and the resulting Sino-Japanese tensions as part of the global trend of imperialism and the path to world war. The singular event of Mukden and the subsequent independence of Manchukuo, while indicative of the Japanese military’s growing strength and influence, were part of a larger road to war. Where American scholars in the 1960s felt the need to establish a foundation of actors and events, the publications of these Japanese essays in 1983 indicated the expansion of scholarly interests beyond responsibility and into consequences. Manchuria, although a key piece in Japan’s imperialist efforts, began to take a place in the comprehensive narrative of Japanese imperialism.

W.G. Beasley’s *Imperialist Japan: 1894-1945*, published in 1987 by the Oxford University Press and one of the most influential scholarly works on Japan’s expansion and the creation of Japanese imperialism, built upon Morley’s examination of Japan as an imperialist power. Beasley stated that, “Japanese actions were not a product of finance capitalism, but an opportunistic attempt to increase ‘primitive capitalism accumulation’ in order to enhance the country’s strength.” Because of this, Beasley defined the nature of imperialism as “the timing and direction of the impetus, the degree of its success and failure, the kind of advantages that are sought, the institutions that are shaped to give them

---


80 Ibid., 3.

81 Ibid.

durability,”83 and his study attempted to examine these aspects of Japan’s actions from 1894-
1945.

Within Beasley’s work, Manchuria occupied only a small part in analyzing the whole of Japanese imperialism. Instead of examining Manchuria as a relatively isolated incident, as 1960s scholars did to build a foundation, Beasley attempted to look at the larger picture of Japan’s goal to create a new order in East Asia. Unlike previous works, Beasley brought nationalism into his study, significant primarily because of the rise of social history and a general shift towards the study of nationalism in the historical field. The concept of national identity as a social movement played a large role in Beasley’s explanation of why nationalism appealed to young military officers and in turn led to the militarization of Japanese policy in Manchuria.84 Although the emphasis remained on the military’s guidance of the Manchurian incident, Beasley looked beyond conspiracy theories and avoided entering the debate on responsibility.

Beasley’s discussion of Japanese nationalism set him apart from earlier scholarship, because although he recognized the individual theorists who proposed ideas of a nationalist revolution, Beasley used them only to distinguish between the different social factions within the government and military.85 The relationship between the Imperial Way faction and the Control faction, according to Beasley, essentially determined Japan’s imperialist efforts in Manchuria.86 Because the Manchurian incident led to an exponential increase in Sino-Japanese tensions along with injuring Japanese relations with the international community, Beasley put it within the more global context of Japanese expansionism.

The shift in the study of Sino-Japanese relations through the Manchurian incident to a larger more encompassing analysis of Japan’s empire appeared in works alongside Beasley’s. 1987 marked a turning point in the scholarship, as Michael Montgomery’s Imperialist Japan: the Yen to Dominate addressed the causes and results of Japan’s imperialism. Montgomery stated that the purpose of his text was to address the discrepancies between Japan’s public

84 Ibid., 178.
85 Ibid., 181.
86 Ibid.
front and the inner attitudes of superiority that led to the Pacific War. In response to the 1982 publication of corrections to Japanese textbooks that essentially tried to minimize the horrific nature of Japanese imperialism in Korea and China, Montgomery titled his introduction “Restoring the Facts,” and this guided the entirety of the study.

Unlike Beasley, who limited his study to the time period 1894-1945, Montgomery began his analysis with eighth-century sources in order to establish that Japan’s militarism had a foundation in Japanese culture. In doing so, Montgomery proposed that Japanese imperialism stemmed from the beginning of society in Japan and an inherent superiority complex nurtured by Shinto culture. Within the grand scheme of Montgomery’s argument, the Manchurian incident appeared only near the end as an expression of militarist buildup from centuries of cultural encouragement. Beyond studying the Mukden incident, Montgomery presented an examination of Manchukuo itself after having analyzed the Manchurian crisis that resulted in Manchukuo’s independence. Specifically, Montgomery attempted to explain how Japan created Manchukuo and its impact on China and the international community.

As with Beasley, Montgomery appeared preoccupied with determining the basics of Japan’s imperialism and used the Manchurian crisis as an example of Japan’s militarism. For both Beasley and Montgomery, the Manchurian incident became subsumed into the larger picture of Japanese imperialistic goals and the emphasis appeared to be on explaining why Japan chose to militarize and the roots of Japan’s expansion. Neither Beasley nor Montgomery attempted to assign responsibility for the Manchurian incident, however both made efforts to explain the consequences of the Manchurian crisis in terms of the Japanese empire.

The emphasis in Beasley and Montgomery’s works lay almost entirely on Japan’s existence as a militaristic and imperialist state. Although both made reference to the

---

88 Ibid., vii.
89 Ibid., ix.
90 Ibid., 302.
91 Ibid., 326.
structural system that allowed Japan to justify its extension into China, neither spent a great
deal of time on examining in detail Japan’s involvement prior to military intervention after
the Mukden incident. Beasley’s argument remained centered on the exploitation of an
available opportunity to expand while Montgomery appeared mostly concerned with tracing
the roots of Japanese imperialism and militarism. Both scholars attempted to provide a large-
scale analysis of imperialist Japan, and in doing so touched upon multiple factors
contributing to Japanese imperialism, including Manchuria.

Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers, and Mark R. Peattie. The time frame specifically covered the
Russo-Japanese War through the Sino-Japanese War of 1937, and this narrowing allowed the
essays incorporated to study Japan’s involvement in China without needing to include World
War II. The time frame additionally made this compilation strictly concerned with Sino-
Japanese issues, separating the Japanese experience in China from the experiences of other
foreign nations.92 The scholars who contributed to this compilation focused entirely on the
Japanese informal empire, consisting of Japan’s economic investments in China, the treaty
port system, and Japan’s influence on the running of Manchukuo.

The organization of Duus, Myers, and Peattie’s text indicated a thematic analysis
rather than a chronological study as previous scholars attempted. Part one, “Trade and
Investment,” consisted of five essays devoted to studying the Japanese economic efforts in
Japan, and the South Manchurian Railway Company and the economic development of
Manchuria represented significant portions of Japan’s investments in China.93 Previous
scholars all made mention of the economic motivations for Japan to expand into China,
however not in the same level of detail or delineation by type of economic investment as
Duus, Myers, and Peattie. Beyond the economic analysis of the Japanese informal empire,
Duus, Myers, and Peattie contributed studies of culture, community, and the concept of sub-
imperialists, who were Chinese nationals who worked with the Japanese and were active
participants in Japan’s imperialism.

---

92 Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers, and Mark R. Peattie, eds., *The Japanese Informal Empire in China, 1895-

93 Ibid., 101-133.
The introduction of culture into the study of Japanese imperialism in China marked a new emphasis beyond military growth and issues of Sino-Japanese relations. The essays included in Duus, Myers, and Peattie thus reflected a shift in the study of history itself, as the field of history transitioned to incorporate a greater analysis of the impact of culture and broke apart traditional narratives to provide multiple perspectives.\textsuperscript{94} The Japanese Informal Empire in China, 1895-1937 essentially outlined Japan’s efforts in China prior to significant military conflict into individual aspects of Japanese involvement. As such, Duus, Myers, and Peattie represented a bridge in the study of Japan in China during the twentieth century from the all-encompassing attempts of Beasley and Montgomery to a more focused examination of Japanese imperialism’s influence on culture, both Japanese and Chinese.

Parks M. Coble’s \textit{Facing Japan: Chinese Politics and Japanese Imperialism, 1931-1937} looked beyond Japan itself in studying Sino-Japanese relations. Published in 1991, Coble’s study gave agency to China’s government and refuted the assumption that China was solely a victim of Japanese imperialism. The policies of China during the approximate half century of Japanese attempted expansion tended to be minimized in the field of Japanese studies as seen in Beasley’s and Montgomery’s works, which provided a foundation for most modern studies of Japanese imperialism. Rather than studying what the Japanese did in China, Coble aimed to examine how Japan’s actions impacted “first, the Nanking government and its leaders, secondly the regional leaders such as Feng and Yen, and thirdly, the independence forces of ‘public opinion.’”\textsuperscript{95}

Undoubtedly the Japan issue was central to Chinese politics in the 1930s, however Coble asserts that scholarly work on domestic aspects of the resistance issue dealt primarily with the internal history of the Chinese Communist Party.\textsuperscript{96} This limited view did not provide a clear picture of the actual development of Chinese politics around the Japanese problem and thus Coble attempted to remedy the lack of understanding as to how Japan influenced Chinese domestic politics outside of the Chinese Communist Party. By studying


\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 9.
the changing policies of the Kuomintang government as well as newspapers and various publicly available journals, Coble argued for the study of Japanese imperialism from the point of view of China’s government and people.\footnote{Parks M. Coble, \textit{Facing Japan: Chinese Politics and Japanese Imperialism, 1931-1937} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 2.} Earlier scholars like Beasley and Montgomery, as well as Duus, Myers, and Peattie, focused primarily on Japan’s efforts without taking into consideration China’s responses. In terms of the Sino-Japanese field of study concerned with the first half of the twentieth century, Coble took a vastly different approach to examining Japanese imperialism from a Chinese point of view.

Louise Young’s analysis of Japanese imperialism as “total” proved to be as groundbreaking as Coble’s work on China’s response to the Japan issue of the 1930s. \textit{Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism} was published in 1998 and combined a Japan-centered focus with an emphasis on cultural values. Although admittedly through Japanese eyes, Young looked beyond the elite views and examined the “story of Manchukuo in Japan.”\footnote{Louise Young, \textit{Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 14.} The concept of total imperialism denoted the extent to which Young credited the birth of Manchukuo to the emergence of “economic forces as well as strategic imperatives, by political processes and cultural determinants, by domestic social forces as well as international pressures.”\footnote{Ibid., 13.} Specifically, Young argued for the study of Manchukuo’s impact on Japanese society by stating that “the process of empire building in Manchuria touched the lives of most Japanese in the 1930s in one way or another.”\footnote{Ibid.} The focus of Young’s work moved from the events in Manchuria to the propellants and consequences of those events in Japan itself.

Young’s work placed early scholarship on Japan’s militarism and imperialism within the context of Japanese social and cultural values. In stating that historians have traditionally examined the Japanese expansion into Manchuria from a top-down perspective, Young attempted to provide an alternative method of studying this facet of Japanese imperialism.\footnote{Ibid., 5.}
Young questioned the accepted definitions of “state” and “society” while breaking down the existing structural analysis of Japan’s empire-building. Young studied the Japanese empire as a “popular enterprise” rather than a simple expression of state policy and military insubordination. As a “popular enterprise” the motivations and dynamics of Japanese culture could be studied as contributors to Japanese imperialism, making the Japanese people themselves influential in the development of government policy.

In studying the concept of social imperialism and the culture of imperialism in Japan, Young brought together political, social, military, and cultural aspects of Japan’s total imperialism. Young provided a means by which to study Japanese culture as it encouraged militaristic imperialism and reacted to expansion. The combination of elite top-down study with an analysis of bottom-up popular experiences represented a distinct change in the study of Japanese imperialism. In addition, Young addressed a combination of domestic environment and international pressure, which ultimately led to the Manchurian incident and the society-wide support for empire-building. The emphasis on addressing Japanese Manchuria as it was experienced by all levels of Japanese society reflected the overall movement in the historical field from political history towards social and cultural histories. Young’s work fit with the overarching trend towards looking beyond formal “law, literature, science, and arts to the codes, clues, hints, signs, gestures, and artifacts through which people communicate their values and truths.”

Young’s work directly examined the issues of social and contextual sources as motives for action in terms of Japanese society’s pushing for and reacting to efforts to expand into Manchuria and build an empire.

As Young represented a new cultural emphasis in the study of Japanese Manchuria, See Heng Teow mixed a study of Japanese policy with the cultural implications in China. Published in 1999, Japan’s Cultural Policy Toward China, 1918-1931: A Comparative Perspective directly confronted the paradigm of cultural imperialism. Rather than the “linear pattern of Japanese cultural aggression toward China, in line with Japan’s increasing

---

102 Louise Young, Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 8.

103 Ibid., 9.

political, economic, and military encroachments in China from the 1890s to the 1940s,"105 that Teow claimed dominated scholarship, Teow offered a study of the “factors that promoted the Japanese government to initiate a cultural policy toward China, the mechanisms Japanese officials adopted in framing and implementing the policy, and the role the Chinese government played in those processes.106

As Teow addressed issues of cultural policy, similarities with Coble’s work on Chinese politics in response to Japanese imperialism appeared when considering Chinese agency. Teow stated that “China was not merely a passive receptacle of American, British, and Japanese diplomacy but actively sought to redirect the cultural efforts in ways that would best serve Chinese national interests and aspirations.”107 The recognition of China’s role as an active participant in diplomatic exchange flew in the face of older scholarship that essentially ignored China and identified Japan entirely as the aggressor.

Teow’s work specifically stated that Japan did not have a policy of cultural imperialism until 1923 when Japan was prompted by “pragmatic interests, international cultural rivalries, and a blend of ethnocentrism, moralism, and idealism,”108 to adopt one. Teow defined cultural imperialism as a “specific form of cultural process” that “describes the permeation and perversion of one culture by the thought, habit, and purpose of another.”109 The time frame and the justifications represented new ideas in the study of Japanese Manchuria because, rather than assuming that cultural imperialism happened over decades of Japanese aggression, Teow’s analysis supported the idea that cultural imperialism happened as a response to conditions in China more than twenty years after what most scholars identified as the beginning of Japanese imperialism in 1894. In addition, Teow argued that Japanese motivations for implementing cultural imperialism policies were the same reasons used by the United States and Great Britain in dealings with China.110

106 Ibid.
107 Ibid., xii.
108 Ibid., xi.
109 Ibid., 147.
110 Ibid., 2.
Manchuria served only a minimal role in Teow’s analysis of Japanese cultural policies in China, but this did not lead to a broad assessment of Japan’s imperialism as a whole. Instead, Teow narrowed the focus on this analysis to specific policies and the motivations behind their creation. Because of this focus to the multiple actors involved in cultural imperialism within China, Teow’s work reflected both a change in historical study towards cultural motivations as well as a specific and direct confrontation with the previously accepted assumptions of Japanese aggression and Chinese victimization.111

Early scholars studying Japanese imperialism tended to present a simplified image of Japan creating an empire based on militaristic goals of expansion and China as a passive victim. Coble and Teow complicated this picture by focusing on Chinese agency in the creation of Japanese policy. Although Coble and Teow recognized that China could not be viewed as an entirely helpless victim, Rana Mitter’s *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Modern China*, published in 2000, was the first to analyze Chinese collaboration during the Japanese occupation. Among the primary questions Mitter sought to answer was, “Who collaborated with the Japanese, who resisted them, and why?”112 The concept of collaboration itself caused problems because of the prevalence of resistance as a powerful theme in China, which Mitter asserted was exaggerated by the collective memory of the period and has served to preclude any discussion of collaboration.113 Mitter took this study beyond the admission of Chinese agency in policy formation to an analysis of the individuals and groups who actively chose to cooperate and collaborate with the Japanese.

Mitter’s goal appeared to be the examination of motivations for both resistance and collaboration in northeastern China. While Mitter recognized that resistance could not be ignored, this analysis emphasized the creation of a resistance-based myth by Chinese nationalist propagandists who needed to maintain China’s cultural dignity.114 The explicit

---


113 Ibid., 16.

114 Ibid., 19.
denial of the all-encompassing image of Chinese resistance to the Japanese placed Mitter against the entirety of Chinese scholarship, which used Manchurian resistance as a politically unifying theme. Mitter’s work fit within the genre of cultural history specifically because Mitter discussed the definitions of resistance, collaboration, and nationalism. The study looked for individual and personal circumstances to explain the choices of different groups in Northeastern China, pushing for cultural significance in the decisions to either resist or collaborate.

The controversial nature of suggesting that Chinese people collaborated willingly with the Japanese indicated the willingness of Western scholars to further dismantle the myth of Japan as victimizer and China as victim. Despite this, few took Chinese participation to the same extreme as Mitter in studying the relationships between Japanese occupiers and the Chinese population. Yoshihisa Tak Matsusaka’s *The Making of Japanese Manchuria, 1904-1932* presented a key example of scholars stepping back from allegations of collaboration among the general Chinese populace while recognizing that resistance was not universal. Published in 2001, Matsusaka argued that the “establishment of Japanese rule in Manchuria was, for the most part, an incremental process.” Within this slow process however, the Japanese embarked on partnerships with local individuals in Manchuria. Without implying that the general population collaborated with the Japanese as Mitter did, Matsusaka made reference to examples of working together as part of the larger creation of Japanese Manchuria.

Matsusaka stated that relatively little has been done on pre-conquest Manchurian developments outside of diplomatic and political studies like those of Akira Iriye, and thus the purpose of his analysis was to examine the “interactions of defense, diplomacy, and economic policy in shaping the overall course of events and by offering a long view of developments.” Matsusaka attempted to outline the empire-building process as it pertained to the creation of a model state in Manchuria and the implementation of “adaptive


117 Ibid., 6-7.
rationalization in the formulation of imperial policy." In many ways Matsusaka appeared to take a traditional approach by providing a relatively large scale narrative outlining the beginning of Meiji imperialism through the origins of the South Manchurian Railway Company and the management of Manchuria prior to World War I. Matsusaka then provided an analysis of the debate in Japan over Manchuria and the adaptation of existing imperialist models, as in Taiwan and Korea, to fit Manchuria. The Manchurian crisis appeared as the result of Japan’s endeavors in Manchuria, not the catalyst leading to intensified Sino-Japanese tensions as many scholars of Japanese imperialism have argued.

Although published in 2001, Matsusaka’s work more closely resembled that of Beasley or Montgomery than Young or Mitter. Matsusaka’s contribution to the field lay in the time frame studied and the incorporation of Taiwan and Korea, rather than in the methodology used. Although Matsusaka made an argument for the combined interactions of defense, diplomacy, and economic policy in shaping the eventual creation of Manchukuo, the primary achievement of this work was in adding pre-1930s analysis to the existing base of knowledge on Japanese Manchuria. Instead of distinguishing specific aspects of Japanese investments, which Matsusaka argued dominated discussion of Manchuria prior to independence, The Making of Japanese Manchuria, 1904-1932 attempted to present a holistic view of circumstances leading up to the 1930s. Matsusaka’s work appeared almost as an anomaly within the field of Sino-Japanese relations and Japanese imperialism because it built a foundation rather than arguing with existing ideas. Despite this, it remained significant because it placed the emphasis on the years before the Manchurian crisis in order to study Japanese Manchuria based on Japan’s existing efforts in Manchuria.

With the 2002 publication of The Manchurian Crisis and Japanese Society, 1931-33, Sandra Wilson exemplified a cultural history approach to the topic. Wilson followed in the footsteps of Young’s analysis of Japan’s culture of imperialism by studying how the Manchurian crisis was viewed and handled within Japan from national and local

---

119 Ibid., 126.
120 Ibid., 198.
perspectives. Although both interested in the cultural significance of Manchuria to the Japanese, Wilson came to a vastly different conclusion than Young. Young’s argument identified 1931 as a turning point in Japan’s evolution of total empire, however Wilson contradicted this by asserting that “the lives of the majority were not perceptibly changed by the invasion of far-off Manchuria: certainly most people were much less affected by the Manchurian Incident than they were by the global depression.”

Instead, Wilson argued that the Manchurian crisis offered a prime opportunity to study the relationship between state and society in order to understand how various social groups interacted with one another and the state.

Wilson relied on a variety of voices from all walks of life to show the multiplicity of responses to the Manchurian incident rather than the more popular assumption that all Japanese citizens participated in the massive wartime imperialism effort. Although Wilson admitted that outright opposition to the efforts in Manchuria did not occur, the absence of opposition could not be assumed to represent wholesale war fever. The range of responses that Wilson analyzed extended from political figures to village activists, military officers to writers and business leaders. In personalizing the nature of response, Wilson created a cultural micro-history dedicated to identifying the vast array of experiences based on individual circumstances.

The debate on the significance of 1931 for Japanese imperialism evolved from Wilson’s assertion that the year did nothing to actually alter the experiences of the general Japanese population. Prior to Wilson’s study, Young’s argument for total empire fit with a larger acceptance of Japan’s cultural tendency for militarism and nationalistic imperialism with 1931 as the turning point in Japan’s wartime fever. Wilson effectively cast doubt upon the assumption that Japanese society as a whole carried a cultural predisposition for nationalist militarism and the will to build an empire. By studying the importance of the

---


122 Ibid., 7.

123 Ibid., 217.

124 Ibid., 7.
Manchurian crisis to individuals and specific groups in Japan, Wilson attempted to show how limited the impact of the Manchurian incident actually was on the general Japanese society.

While Wilson argued that the Manchurian crisis did not act as a catalyst for the birth of Japanese war fever and total empire, Japanese imperialism undoubtedly affected Japan’s neighbors in East Asia. Edited by Robert Cribb and Li Narangoa, *Imperial Japan and National Identities in Asia, 1895-1945* extended beyond the Sino-Japanese dispute itself to study how Japanese imperialism aided in shaping national identities in many Asian states. Published in 2003, Cribb and Narangoa’s compilation included essays on India, Siberia and Russia, Tibet, Mongolia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Taiwan, and Korea as well as Manchuria, as the scholars involved traced the influence of Japanese imperialism through the lens of world history.

Cribb and Narangoa’s text showed the adaptability of the Japanese empire as it utilized a variety of methodologies to spread its influence through Asia. Cribb and Narangoa asserted that the Japanese attempted to “recruit their subjects’ sense of identity to the national cause. They did this by creating a variety of discourses about the nature of their empire.”

Although the essays included did not directly cite Matsusaka, the analysis of Japan’s imperial adaptations depending on location and need appeared to be a common thread within Cribb and Narangoa’s compilation. The concept that Japan needed to present an appealing picture of empire to its neighbors complicated the early theory that Japan simply expanded through military force and its victims had no choice but to accept.

By studying the vast array of national identities influenced by Japanese imperialism, Cribb and Narangoa came to a conclusion strikingly similar to that of Mitter, albeit on a larger scale. Where Mitter focused on Manchurian and Northeast China, Cribb and Narangoa looked at Asian nations in the vicinity of Japan and argued that “in every society which the Japanese encountered, people made use of Japanese models, actions and ideas for their own purposes.”

This statement avoided the controversial term “collaboration,” but implied that people had the opportunity and ability to utilize the Japanese presence for their

---


126 Ibid., 2.
benefit. The recognition of agency appeared as Sino-Japanese historians moved beyond traditional narratives of victim and victimizer and delved into studying the people at every level.

The recognition of agency and the dismissal of the victim mentality in studying the Japanese empire and specifically Manchuria allowed for a study of the bi-directional flow of influence between Japan and Manchuria. Although Young and Wilson both addressed Japanese society and the impact of the Manchuria crisis on the Japanese, *Crossed Histories: Manchuria in the Age of Empire* went one step further in studying the relationship between colonizers and colonized. Published in 2005 and edited by Mariko Asano Tamanoi, this collection of eleven essays presented Manchuria not as a specific geographic location, but instead as a geopolitical imagining of “various individuals and groups shaped by imperialism, colonialism, Pan-Asianism, postcoloniality, and present globalization.”

Essentially, this volume studied the image of Manchuria and how this picture was created in Japan and Manchuria itself.

By removing the concrete concept of Manchuria as a specific geopolitical state, this text changed the nature of the field. Tamanoi placed the image of Manchuria within the Japanese empire against the reality, and studied the major themes of Pan-Asianism, nationalism, and memory that served to create Manchuria. The dissection of the idea of Manchuria itself fit within a post-structuralist and post-modernist realm of discussion, which sought to redefine pre-existing conceptualizations to better understand the causes and consequences of historical patterns and events. Post-modern historians contested all prior foundations of meaning in history, and thus believed that all history should be presented in a relativistic manner rather than depending on traditional definitions and understandings. The scholars involved in this volume were concerned with re-defining Manchuria and separating the image used by the Japanese empire from the actuality of existence in Manchuria. Tamanoi built directly upon the foundation set by Young and Wilson in studying

---


128 Ibid., 4.

the interdependency of Japan and Manchuria, but instead of accepting Manchuria as given, these essays differentiated Manchuria, itself, from the various images of Manchuria presented by Japan. *Crossed Histories: Manchuria in the Age of Empire* represented a distinct shift in the study of Japanese Manchuria towards analyzing the idea of Manchuria and what it represented.

From the early works of Yoshihashi, Ogata, and Liang who looked for responsibility for the Manchurian crisis as a way to establish a foundation in the field, the evolution of studies of Japanese imperialism reflected changes in the study of history itself. The overarching narrative of Beasley and Montgomery during the 1980s as they attempted to study Imperialist Japan as a whole took the roots of Japanese imperialism into consideration and marked the transition towards the political and nationalistic histories of Duus, Myers, and Peattie. The transition towards social and cultural emphasis did not have a clear demarcation, however undeniably the change could be seen as scholars like Young and Teow focused on cultural significance and motivations. The more recent efforts of Mitter, Cribb and Narangoa, and Tamanoi redefined Manchuria and attempted to look beyond the traditional understandings of Manchuria’s place within the Japanese empire. While undoubtedly each scholar dealt with personal biases and the influence of contemporary events like the Vietnam War, the study of the Japanese empire in Manchuria developed much as the historical field itself evolved. With the introduction of new ideas into the field like that of collaboration on the part of Manchurians and an analysis of Japan’s impact on creating distinct national identities throughout Asia, more recent scholars have stepped away from traditional victim narratives to more closely examine both local and global experiences. By breaking down the accepted methodologies for analyzing Japanese Manchuria, the field opened up to a vast array of interpretations for understanding Japanese imperialism and Japanese Manchuria.

None of the above studies focus much attention on the diplomatic and official statements of the parties involved in the Manchurian crisis. Employing critical discourse analysis to examine such statements allows for a new understanding of both Chinese and Japanese responses to and constructions of the Manchurian incident, and provides a case study of the League of Nations’ ability to deal with a major international crisis. The statements of the Chinese and Japanese representatives both support and refute the arguments
that scholars have made in studying the Manchurian crisis, and conversely, scholarship on
the subject provides a foundation from which to analyze the relative accuracy of the
representatives’ rhetoric and analyze the underlying meanings of their statements. The
Japanese government clearly needed to defend its actions in Manchuria and explain the
legitimacy of military intervention while denying involvement in the Manchurian
independence movement, while the Chinese government played the role of passive victim to
gain sympathy and call upon the League of Nations to defend Chinese sovereignty. While
the governments involved exhibited explicit efforts to achieve political goals, the non-
involved parties used the Manchurian crisis as a test-study for the League of Nations’
Covenant. The rhetoric of the Manchurian crisis established the Sino-Japanese conflict as the
first real challenge to the League of Nations’ international peace efforts. Gaining a clear
understanding of the rhetoric used by Chinese and Japanese diplomats allows for
examination of the complex nature of international relations and the ultimate effects of the
Manchurian crisis on the League of Nations.
CHAPTER 3

CHINA APPEALS TO THE ASSEMBLY

Published in New York by The MacMillan Company in April of 1932, China Speaks: On the Conflict Between China and Japan presented a far different picture of the Manchurian crisis than the statements of Japanese diplomats. China Speaks included three distinct Chinese voices: the introduction, written by W.W. Yen, China’s chief delegate to the League of Nations, the main body of the text authored by Chih Meng, and the appendix, which provided a copy of the Chinese government’s statements delivered to the League of Nations on February 12, 1932, just two months prior to the publication of China Speaks.130 Each offered differing perspectives and made individual rhetorical choices. Through this published attack on Japan’s aims, China hoped to prove the antagonistic and imperialistic nature of Japanese actions in Manchuria. Yen’s introduction to China Speaks and the text itself were intended for an American audience rather than for the League of Nations, and provide a clear view into the rhetoric used by the Chinese to sway international opinion in support of China’s position. The ultimate goal of this text was to discredit Japanese claims to Manchuria while reinforcing China’s supremacy in the region. The writers of China Speaks felt no obligation to show respect for Japanese diplomats because of the particular nature of the American audience. The United States did not participate in the League of Nations, and therefore the authors of China Speaks felt no compunction about directly accusing Japan of unjustifiable acts. This, in turn, opened the door for more confrontational rhetoric, which revealed a picture of China’s strategy in dealing with the Manchurian issue.

Where Meng’s writing made little attempt to disguise his obvious disgust and anger with Japanese actions, the Chinese government’s statement included in the appendix to China Speaks presented a far more diplomatic assessment of the situation. The Chinese government began by stating,

With full realization of its responsibility to the civilized world and willingness to submit the accuracy of those statements to the impartial international enquiry and adjudication, the Chinese National Government presents the following summary of the Sino-Japanese conflict from its inception.\(^{131}\)

Within this was a clear appeal to the international community to recognize China as a member of the so-called “civilized world,” and to thus build a sense of commonality with those nations identifying themselves as “civilized.” This statement served another purpose by asserting that China acted as a humble nation willing to accept the judgment of an impartial international enquiry, with the intention of inciting an automatic comparison to the Japanese government’s handling of the conflict.

The Chinese government began its summary of the conflict with an incendiary statement that, “At no time since the Russo-Japanese War has the Chinese Government doubted the purpose of Japan to seize Manchuria whenever an opportune occasion arose.”\(^{132}\)

At the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War, Japan had developed a projection of terms to be demanded from Russia which required “acknowledgement of Japanese control over Korea and Manchuria.”\(^{133}\) The original set of demands reflected the desires of the Japanese consciousness as expressed by the Japanese Foreign Secretary and his team, but the demands presented to the international community were significantly reduced. The extravagant original aims of monetary indemnity from Russia following the end of the Russo-Japanese War and recognition of both Korea and Manchuria as Japanese territories were tempered only by the idea that those original demands would be nearly impossible to attain and could impede even the edited list of demands. For this reason, the Japanese delegate identified only “Japanese control of Korea, withdrawal of Russian troops from Manchuria and cession of the Kwantung Peninsula with the connecting railway to Harbin” as “absolutely indispensable,” while “the payment of an indemnity and the cession of Sakhalin” was “relatively important.”\(^{134}\) The set of demands that the Japanese delegate arrived with was


\(^{132}\) Ibid.


\(^{134}\) Ibid.
diluted during negotiations to the point of denying the Japanese government what it felt it had earned in defeating the Russians in 1905.

The ultimate inability of Japan to lay claim to Manchuria supported the Chinese government’s argument that,

At the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War, Japan put strong pressure on China to implement Japan’s gains from Russia and to grant Japan additional special privileges, impairing China’s sovereignty and contravening the ‘open door’ policy in Manchuria.135

China was obviously well aware of Japan’s aims, and thus the motivations for Japan’s efforts to gain a special position within China, and specifically Manchuria. In claiming that Japan attempted to negotiate around the open door policy that had been established in Manchuria, the Chinese government of necessity appealed to the Western nations that held a stake in the continuation of the open door policy. The Chinese government had originally been forced into submitting to the open door policy despite arguing that it threatened Chinese sovereignty, but in light of the conflict with Japan, China found it necessary to manipulate the policy for Chinese benefit.

The assessment of sovereignty was a key factor in China’s perspective of the Sino-Japanese conflict, as evidenced by China’s claim that because of World War I, “Japan took advantage of the preoccupation of the Powers and China’s military weakness to present the twenty-one demands which, if conceded, would have destroyed China’s sovereignty.”136

Presented in such a way, the twenty-one demands appeared to be an underhanded attempt to achieve Japan’s goals of influence and empire. The statement continued by claiming that, “China was forced to concede some of those demands, which she did under protest and so notified all the friendly Powers.”137 By emphasizing that China conceded to some Japanese demands unwillingly, the Chinese government supported the image of Japan as relentless aggressor against a peaceful, civilized, internationally accountable China. Additionally, the statement argued that having conceded to some Japanese demands, the Chinese government

136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
notified the “friendly Powers,” which confers partial responsibility for the heightened tensions onto those same “friendly Powers.” With this assertion, the Chinese government cleanly sidesteps having to acknowledge any responsibility for the Sino-Japanese conflict’s origins, and, while publicly assuming friendship with the international community, implicitly critiques that friendship for allowing Japan’s aggression.

Because this statement was intended to reach the international community, the Chinese government was forced to carefully word criticism of the way the Sino-Japanese conflict was handled. The statement claimed that, “At the Paris Conference, at the Washington Conference, and before the League of Nations, China reiterated her protests against those exactions of Japan and repudiated them at all suitable occasions.”¹³⁸ In composing this phrase, the Chinese government not only described the actions of China, but implicitly accused the nations that participated in the Paris Conference, the Washington Conference, and held seats in the League of Nations of failing to support China. Based on this statement, the Chinese government suffered three times from the lack of international support in maintaining China’s sovereignty. Although China obviously felt enmity towards Japan, the Chinese government appeared to also hold the international community partly responsible for the Sino-Japanese conflict and the degradation of China’s sovereignty in Manchuria.

The Washington Conference of 1921-22 resulted in the signing of the Nine Power treaty of Washington, and the Chinese government argued that within the treaty, “China’s territorial integrity and administrative autonomy were guaranteed by all the Powers and it was definitely stated that Manchuria is an integral part of China’s territory.”¹³⁹ This statement served as an explicit reminder that China’s claim to Manchuria was legitimate according to the Washington Treaty, and that the Washington treaty should have been used as the guidelines for relations between China and Japan. The Chinese government made reference to the intended usage of the Washington Treaty in comparison to the actuality of its implementation by arguing,

¹³⁹ Ibid., 178.
Subsequent to signing the Nine Power Treaty, the Chinese Government has invariably in its relations with Japan and other Powers insisted upon observing the terms and the principles of that Treaty, but, owing to Japan’s continuously trying to step outside the Treaty and to insist upon having special rights in China, especially in Manchuria, the Chinese Government has been unable to avoid disputes and frictions with Japan which, when serious, China tried to refer to the League of Nations and the Court of International Justice.\textsuperscript{140}

The picture drawn by the Chinese government consists of China as the ultimate victim of both Japanese aggressions and the inability of the League of Nations to enforce the provisions of the treaty.

The Chinese government needed to maintain the support of the League of Nations, and thus criticizing the lack of support from the League of Nations needed to be done carefully. The Chinese statement made the claim that, “On several occasions China sought without success to invoke provisions of the League of Nations Covenant that obsolete and unsatisfactory treaties might be revised.”\textsuperscript{141} Both Japan and China were members of the League of Nations, so it may be assumed that the Chinese government expected the Japanese government to place equal value on the provisions set forth by the League. For the Chinese government to assert that China had attempted unsuccessfully to utilize the provisions of the League’s Covenant implied that the League was ineffectual. Despite this, the wording of the statement allowed the Chinese government to focus on China’s interactions with Japan rather than emphasizing the failure of the League of Nation’s Covenant. In addition, the reference to the League provision outlining the handling of obsolete or unsatisfactory treaties relied on the implication that the treaties relating to Sino-Japanese relations were in fact obsolete or unsatisfactory.

The Chinese government plainly stated that the diplomatic tensions and failure of the League of Nations provisions to mediate a solution “was the situation last September when, without provocation, Japanese troops attacked Chinese troops at Mukden and usurped control there. A careful analysis shows without doubt that Japan’s military coup was premeditated


\textsuperscript{141} Ibid.
The Chinese government was mainly concerned with building a case against Japan in the eyes of the international community, and portraying China as the helpless victim was an integral part of that case. Relations between China and Japan had already declined past the point of bothering to skirt around direct accusations. This fact resulted in a greater priority to create and foment doubt about Japan’s ulterior motives and unprovoked, premeditated attack on Chinese sovereignty. The assertion that “careful analysis shows without doubt” the nature of Japan’s military actions implied that the situation could not be interpreted in any way other than that provided by the Chinese government’s analysis. China needed the backing of the League of Nations, and proving that China was the victim strengthened the Chinese position and garnered greater support based on the League’s Covenant and public position on maintaining peace.

Beyond the events of September 18th, 1931 the Chinese government argued that, “Using various pretexts, the Japanese army has overturned Chinese authority in Manchuria and taken control almost of the whole of these provinces, while China appealed in vain to the League of Nations and the peace pacts.” China obviously refused to entertain the possibility that the Mukden incident was anything other than a Japanese excuse for entering and controlling Manchuria. The repeated mention of Japan’s unprovoked attack on Chinese sovereignty reiterates China’s position of appealing to western audiences as the victim of Japanese aggression. By painting Japan as militaristic and expansionist, China attempted to call upon the League of Nations’ and United States’ desire for peace and preservation of peace.

Despite criticizing the League of Nations, the Chinese government needed to retain the support of the League’s members. The Chinese statement asserted,

Since the Mukden attack, Japan tried to draw the Chinese Government into separate negotiations, but China, following precedents set at Paris, Washington and Geneva, has refused to negotiate without the presence or participation of neutral Powers, knowing full well that she cannot singly resist Japan’s pressure back by unbridled military force which aims at the annexation of Manchuria.144

143 Ibid.
144 Ibid.
The reference to the precedents of Paris, Washington, and Geneva intentionally created a support system for China’s decisions to avoid being cornered into negotiations with Japan alone. Militarily, China acknowledged that Japan was superior, which implied that China needed aid from the “neutral Powers” in order to resist Japan’s expansion. Because China refused to negotiate with Japan, the Chinese government needed to explain why avoiding negotiations did not reflect an unwillingness to deal with Japan, but rather an aversion to negotiating without the participation of additional League of Nations members.

The military vulnerability of China required the Chinese government to take a strong stance diplomatically against Japanese pressures to negotiate, and the statement asserted, Those tactics failing to frighten the Chinese Government, Japan decided to carry military action into the heart of China, showing her contempt for and indifference to world opinion, with the purpose of convincing the Chinese that it was hopeless to appeal for outside help.145

The Chinese statement presented the situation as a case of militaristic expansionism unhindered by the opinions of the international community. Intimidation through military force was intended to discourage China from looking for international aid. The Chinese statement continued by arguing, During four months of continuous Japanese military aggression, the indignation of the Chinese people was aroused to the highest pitch, while the Chinese Government, already harassed by natural calamities, was faced with the task of dealing with invasion from without and restraining popular feeling within.146

The Chinese government ascribed the term “aggression” to Japan’s actions throughout this statement, and the choice of words was indicative of China’s chosen narrative of China as victim and Japan as victimizer. By claiming that the Chinese government was forced to deal with internal anti-Japanese sentiments and anger, the Chinese statement implicitly argued that in denying negotiations with Japan and appealing for foreign aid, China was in fact acting in the interests of the Chinese people.

After outlining Japan’s attack on Shanghai in January of 1932 during which Japan concentrated military power on Shanghai in response to violence against Japanese monks and

146 Ibid., 179.
anti-Japanese protests, the Chinese statement claimed that, “The Japanese naval and military forces have used the International Settlement at Shanghai both as a base for their attacks on the Chinese police and troops and as a sanctuary where they can retire when repulsed and for recuperation and re-supply.” The Chinese government did not accuse international powers of sheltering Japanese aggressors, but by stating that the International Settlement was being used as a base, implying that the international community had unwittingly been used by the Japanese. The reference to the settlement as a Japanese sanctuary implicitly identified the International Settlement as ignorantly playing host to the Japanese troops, but China obviously hoped to have support from the International Settlement in repulsing the Japanese. China could not afford to alienate the powers it hoped to receive aid from, and thus the careful wording, placing blame entirely on Japan, was intended to avoid offending the potential audience of this statement.

The International Settlement was home to many foreigners in Shanghai, and due to trading treaties and agreements, the settlement was distinct from Shanghai itself. Because of this, the Chinese government argued,

The Chinese troops, in defending China’s soil from ruthless invaders, have been unable to reply effectively to the Japanese attacks without endangering the lives and property of thousands of friendly neutral foreigners residing in the International Settlement and surrounding suburbs and have been unable to pursue their Japanese attackers without risking a conflict with friendly neutral foreign police and troops protecting the Settlement.

The characterization of the International Settlement’s foreign police as “friendly” and “neutral” suggests that clashes between Chinese police and troops were not entirely friendly and neutral in nature. Despite this, the Chinese government offered assurances that Chinese troops were not willing to risk the lives and property of the “friendly neutral foreigners” as a way to alleviate concerns that a clash between Chinese troops and Japanese troops would result in loss of life or property for the foreign powers. The implication was that in protecting foreign rights and residents, China’s efforts against Japan’s aggression had been restricted and unsuccessful, thereby, placing foreign interests over China’s own.

---


148 Ibid.
The Chinese government used the image of China as the protector of international interests to create a feeling of indebtedness on the part of the Western nations. The Chinese statement asserted that, “Chinese artillery cannot reply [to Japanese attacks] without gravely endangering scores of neutral vessels in port.” This implied that the Chinese failure to effectively counter Japanese aggression occurred not because of military inferiority on the Chinese side, but rather because of the Chinese unwillingness to endanger foreign interests. This statement furthered the argument that China was a victim of Japan’s irrational and unprovoked military aggression. In continuing to describe Japan’s military actions in China, the Chinese government emphasized the indiscriminating nature of Japanese aggression, stating,

Japanese airplanes bombed all parts of Chinese districts of Shanghai, also parts of the International settlement and then withdrew over the midsection of the International Settlement. Japanese military forces and civilian un-uniformed elements have killed and injured presently large number of Chinese peaceable unarmed men, women, children, estimated between one and two thousand, and imprisoned, maltreated many others and executed many without trial.

The Chinese statement accused the Japanese military of horrific acts of aggression, but identified un-uniformed Japanese civilians as participants in the deaths and injuries of unarmed Chinese individuals. Without making claims of war crimes, the Chinese government effectively implied that Japanese citizens, both military and otherwise, acted against non-combatants and failed to justly try many Chinese individuals who were executed. The references to execution without trial and the deaths of unarmed Chinese citizens at the hands of Japanese citizens were intended to appeal to the Western expectation of fair trials and the avoidance of atrocities against non-combatants.

China’s relationship with the West depended on the maintenance of trade relations and the protection of foreign interest within China. Because of this, the Chinese government believed that by serving foreign interests and citizens, as evidenced by China’s assertion that Chinese troops avoided effective actions against Japanese troops for fear of injuring foreign


150 Ibid., 180.
nationals, China would enjoy the support of the Western states. The Chinese Government stated,

When the United States of America and Great Britain, supported by France, Germany and Italy, recently presented to Japan and China a note in five points designed to end hostilities and to bring about the liquidation of this situation worse than war, the Chinese Government without hesitation accepted the proposals of the Powers in full.\textsuperscript{151}

The Chinese acceptance of the proposal from the Western states indicated China’s willingness to work with the international community in resolving the situation. China needed the military and economic backing of the Western nations because alone, China could not effectively halt Japan’s advances. By referencing the Western nations as “Powers,” China implicitly identified the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, and Italy as the controlling forces behind the sequence of events in China’s conflict with Japan. China subtly relegated some responsibility for arriving at a peaceful resolution to the Western Powers by allowing the Western nations to act as moderators and accepting their proposals to end hostilities.

Although China agreed to the five points suggested by the United States, Great Britain, and the other Western states, the Chinese statement asserted,

In flatly turning down, first, the proposals of the International Shanghai Defence Committee, then the Powers’ five proposals and more recently still the British Admiral Kelly’s scheme, Japan is thus closing every avenue to peace, leaving China no alternative but to continue to adopt appropriate measures for self-defence to the best of her ability.\textsuperscript{152}

In arguing this, the Chinese government served several purposes, among them the continued characterization of Japan as disdainful of international interests, the representation of China’s actions as self-defense, and the reminder to the international community of Japan’s aggressive refusal to peacefully end hostilities.

The Chinese government’s strategy of comparing the Chinese perception of events with the assertions of Japanese officials was intended to place Japan squarely in opposition to China’s version of the truth. China’s statement claimed,

\begin{footnotesize}
152 Ibid.
\end{footnotesize}
The Chinese Government asks the world to contrast known facts of Japan’s acts in China during recent months with the Japanese Government’s latest statement that ‘it is the immutable policy of the Japanese Government to ensure tranquillity in the Far East.’ Without explicitly stating which Japanese actions the Chinese government was referencing, the statement implied that the Japanese government failed to honestly address the military conflict in general. Additionally, the Chinese statement made a subtle point of accusing the Japanese Government of failing to match actions to policies. The Chinese government appealed to the world to analyze the available information and to arrive at the ultimate conclusion that Japan spoke of peace but acted in aggression. By quoting the Japanese “immutable policy – to ensure tranquillity,” the Chinese statement effectively threatened Japan with the phrasing of Japanese policy and attempted to force recognition that Japan had presented untruthful statements to the international community.

The need to contrast Japan’s words with Japanese issues persisted throughout China’s appeal as China asked the international community to “contrast Japan’s statement that ‘her troops in China are only to discharge an international duty’ with the efforts of the League of Nations and Washington Treaty Powers to induce Japan to withdraw her troops from China and to cease warfare.” Utilizing Japan’s statements as evidence of Japan’s contradictory military aggression and publicized goals allowed the Chinese government to avoid directly accusing Japan of illegitimate action. Japan’s statement called upon international responsibilities as justification for the presence of Japan’s troops in China, and in response China referred to the efforts of the international community to encourage Japan’s exit from China. The international community would have been hard pressed to accept Japan’s actions because China specifically pointed out that Japan directly worked against the interests, wishes, and efforts of the League of Nations and the Washington Treaty powers. Although the international community undoubtedly would have preferred to simply accept Japan’s

---

154 Ibid.
155 Ibid., 181.
claims of peaceful intervention to avoid becoming embroiled in the Sino-Japanese conflict, the Chinese statement intended to make neutrality impossible.

China’s appeal to the international community for aid in defending treaties and foreign interests in China was furthered by the encouragement to,

Contrast Japan’s frequent declarations that she has no territorial ambitions vis-à-vis China with her refusal to submit the Manchurian and other Sino-Japanese questions before a conference of Treaty Powers. Also contrast Japan’s acts at Shanghai causing immense destruction of the property of all nationals and loss of lives with her statement that she acted in Shanghai in co-operation with the other foreign defence forces and foreign municipal authorities and with the latest statement of the Shanghai foreign Municipal Council that ‘Japanese Government and not the Municipal Council is solely responsible for acts of the Japanese armed forces in Shanghai’ 156

In order to appeal to the international powers, China needed to make the conflict about more than a simple expansion of Japan into China, and the Chinese statement intended to do so by citing the destruction of foreign interests. Where the international community may have felt no responsibility for the well-being of Chinese citizens in the struggle against Japan, the injury of foreign nationals forced the attention of the world to turn to China and Japan. Japan obviously felt compelled to justify military action, as in the Shanghai incident, by asserting that the Japanese military had the cooperation of international municipal authorities, however the Chinese statement asserted otherwise by citing the Shanghai foreign municipal council’s claim that the Japanese government was solely to blame for the destruction and loss of life. Japan’s argument appeared tenuous at best, and when faced with explicit denial of cooperation by the foreign municipal government, Japan’s attempted subterfuge could not withstand investigation. China hoped that by illuminating the role that Japan played in threatening international economic interests and foreign nationals, the international community would rally behind China’s cause in defending China against Japanese invasion.

The ultimate aim of the Chinese statement was to paint a vivid picture of China as the hapless victim of Japanese military aggression in an onslaught that threatened both Chinese sovereignty and foreign interests. The Chinese government asserted,

Since Japan’s astounding action in Mukden last September, it has been the unswerving policy of the Chinese Government to avoid, by all means at its command, a state of war and to that end it has endured intense humiliation, risked its own existence in face of popular feelings, in the hope that the worldwide pacific measures might check Japan’s reckless course.

By characterizing the Mukden incident as astounding to the Chinese government, the statement expressed the feelings of surprise and disbelief experienced by the Chinese. Additionally, the Chinese statement pointed to China’s sacrifice in terms of popular feelings suffered because of China’s commitment to a peaceful resolution. China employed passive aggressive techniques of persuasion by implying that the Chinese sacrifices occurred due to China’s policy of maintaining and working towards international peace, and would only be vindicated in popular feelings if the international community would act to halt Japan’s aggressive expansionist aims. The Chinese statement implicitly argued that the world owed China aid because of China’s sacrifices in the name of international interests and peace. The Chinese government needed to find a reason for its stubborn persistence in publicly claiming a commitment to peaceful measures and unwillingness to enter a state of war, and the idea that China was hoping for international aid served this purpose. In contrast to its peaceful proclamations, the Chinese government was engaging the Japanese troops militarily, and to legitimize this China had to promote the concept of action in self-defense only. China married the concept of commitment to international peace with justification of Chinese military action against Japan with a statement asserting,

> Despite the failure so far of the pacific agencies, the Chinese Government adheres to its faith in world justice, but it cannot passively submit to Japan’s invasion of China’s territory and slaughter of people. It therefore solemnly declares to the world that China will continue to resist in self-defence Japan’s attacks at all points and with all the forces at its command.

The Chinese statement softened criticism of the failures of the international community to force peace on Japan with the phrase “so far,” which indicated the underlying Chinese hopes that the international agencies of peace would eventually be successful. Despite this profession of hope, the Chinese government obviously felt pressured to defend its people and

---


158 Ibid.
territory, but needed to justify military action to the international community. The continued assertion of self-defense followed a pattern of reinforcement through repetition as China built a case for Chinese victimization.

In conclusion, the Chinese statement pressed for recognition of China’s peaceful policies by stating,

>The Chinese Government further declares that it is China’s desire to settle issues in connection with the present crisis in purview of interested Powers and in accordance with principles guaranteeing world peace and the sovereignty, independence, and territorial and administrative integrity of China.\(^{159}\)

The Chinese government intentionally acknowledged the interests of foreign nations and China’s assertion played on the need of foreign countries to protect their assets and citizens. China was opened to Western trade interests, and thus by emphasizing the Japanese threat to foreign nationals and business, China hoped to garner greater international support against Japan. The world was primarily concerned with the maintenance of peace, as illustrated by the charter of the League of Nations, and China’s government needed to act within the boundaries of global expectations and wishes. In many ways, the published goals of “world peace and the sovereignty, independence, and territorial and administrative integrity of China,” could have been applied to many of the unfair trade agreements and concessions that China had made to the international community, but the Chinese statement was careful to apply its complaints only to the actions of Japan. It would not have served China’s purposes to group the Western powers with Japan, and China was obviously well aware of this, which made it necessary to precede this statement with the key phrase, “in purview of interested Powers.”

The Chinese government’s statement clearly followed diplomatic guidelines that required China to appeal to the international community without offending the foreign powers or presenting as irrationally vengeful towards Japan. The statement emphasized the self-defensive nature of China’s response to Japan’s attacks, supported by evidence of Japan’s peaceful public statements and the reality of Japan’s aggressive military expansionism. Based on the rhetoric used by the Chinese government, the aims of the

statement were to garner sympathy for the suffering and sacrifice of the Chinese people while reminding the international community of its interests and those of the non-Chinese citizens who were being threatened along with the Chinese. China’s government hoped that by appealing to the Western powers’ sense of preserving the economic advantages that they enjoyed in China, the international community would feel obligated to step in and take measures to limit Japan’s aggression. Japan was portrayed as the expansionist, aggressive, militaristic victimizer of the peaceful Chinese who wanted only to protect international interests. This portrayal was clearly a strategy designed to garner international support.

The introduction to China Speaks employed even stronger rhetoric to denounce Japan’s actions in Manchuria. Written by W.W. Yen, the Chief Delegate of China to the League of Nations and Minister of China to the United States, the introduction made no attempt to hide Yen’s feelings of contempt for Japan’s handling of the Manchurian issue. Yen began by stating that, “For years past, the Japanese publicists have taken great pains to convince the world that the control of possession of Manchuria is vital to the existence of Japan.”160 With this single statement Yen summarized the Japanese argument, and followed this by asserting that, “They have appealed on sentimental or historical grounds; they have elaborated its economic necessity; and they have argued on grounds of military necessity.”161 Yen implied that Japan’s attempts to justify control of Manchuria were not only illegitimate, but that Japan had tried to influence popular opinion through by manipulating publicity regarding the state of China. In drawing attention to this, Yen insinuated that Japanese publicists were essentially con-men searching for the most effective way to influence the international community.

Yen not only dismissed Japan’s claims, he countered with an argument that, “The greatest difficulty with these Japanese spokesmen is that they think only of the national existence and defense of Japan, while it never seems to occur to them that China has her needs too.”162 According to Louise Young’s 1998 study of Japanese Manchuria, Japan’s

161 Ibid.
162 Ibid.
need to maintain control of Manchuria stemmed from Japan’s fear of “a revenge attack after the Russo-Japanese War, Japanese Army planning concentrated on countering the Russian threat by turning Manchuria into a strategic buffer zone.” Along with economic interests developed around Mantetsu, the South Manchurian Railway, Manchuria became a linchpin in Japan’s imperialist expansion. The development of Manchuria occurred in large part because “Kwantung Army officers made the army into an agent of subimperialism,” working “first, to help secure concessions from the Chinese to build new rail lines deemed strategically necessary, and second, to ensure that Manchuria remained free of the political and military disturbances beginning to spread throughout China.” Prior to international scrutiny, no mention of the Manchurian people’s needs was made in influencing the decisions of the Japanese government and military within Manchuria. Ironically, Yen continued the introduction by doing the precise thing he claimed the Japanese spokesmen had done, thinking entirely of his own homeland. In response to the alleged obsession with Japan’s wellbeing that Yen attributed to the Japanese spokesmen, Yen asked, “What about the national existence of China, the national defense of China, the economic requirements of China, and the strategic necessity of Manchuria to China?” Yen obviously believed that China was being ignored in the debate over Manchuria and wanted to bring the focus back to China’s claims rather than leaving the issue as a question of Japanese legitimacy.

Yen directly confronted the methods of persuasion that he claimed the Japanese used by turning the international focus to China’s perspective. He addressed sentimental and historical appeals by stating that “Manchuria has been a part of China for centuries and it is the home of millions of Chinese.” He brought attention first to Manchuria as a piece of China and continued with the assertion, “That Japan fought Russia on Chinese soil and that a large number of Japanese soldiers lost their lives in Manchuria, constitutes no valid reason for the preposterous claims which have been constantly put forward by the Japanese.

---

163 Louise Young, Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 30.
164 Ibid.
166 Ibid.
spokesmen.” Yen held back nothing in the rhetoric he employed, as shown by his claim that the Japanese argument was “preposterous” and “no valid reason.” There appeared to be no hesitation on Yen’s part and no fear of possible international repercussions in so directly contradicting and insulting the arguments of the Japanese. Undoubtedly, this occurred because of the different in audiences, and the aggressive tone taken by Yen indicated the level of confidence he had in addressing a sympathetic American audience.

After denying the Japanese appeals to history to justify Japan’s attempts to intervene in Manchuria, Yen methodically negated the economic and strategic angles put forth by Japan’s diplomats. Yen stated that, “Economically, Manchuria is destined to play a very important role in the industrial development of China.” Yen played to his American audience by emphasizing industrialization which fit with American priorities and would appeal to American sympathies. Although Yen obviously wanted to push Chinese industrialization and modernization as the main reasons China needed to maintain control of Manchuria, his mention of destiny reflected an entirely traditional viewpoint of China’s importance. Yen’s usage of the term destiny pointed to the entitled perspective that China held towards Manchuria and clearly represented the Chinese diplomat’s underlying beliefs in the debate over Manchuria. Yen rationalized the Chinese economic need by stating,

Manchuria, with its rich soil is looked upon as the granary for China’s millions. China, no less than Japan, is faced with the problem of surplus population, especially in the provinces along the coast. Exclusion laws operate against Chinese emigrants even harder than they do against Japanese.

In these few sentences Yen compared Chinese need to that of the Japanese twice and attempted to minimize Japanese issues in the face of arguably more dire Chinese needs. Regardless of the justifiable Chinese concerns about over-population and the need for food, Yen appeared to cite these as support for Manchuria’s destiny to support China.

Strategically, Yen again attempted to negate Japanese claims to Manchuria by arguing,

168 Ibid., vi.
169 Ibid.
Chinese history has taught that China’s security depends upon an adequate defense of its northern boundary. During the last thousand years, China has witnessed two invasions, each of which led to a domination of China for several hundred years. Both of them came from beyond the Great Wall.¹⁷⁰

Interestingly, Yen omitted the fact that one of the non-Han dynasties in China was actually a Manchu dynasty and instead generalizes the invaders as domination from the north. From Yen’s discussion of the strategic importance of Manchuria, it appeared that he viewed Manchuria as a buffer zone needed for the protection of China but without needs of its own. Clearly Yen saw Manchuria as a tool to protect and support the rest of mainland China as he asked, “If Manchuria is spoken of as the first line of defense of Japan, what about China? Where is China’s first line of defense and where is China’s second line of defense?”¹⁷¹

Although understandably concerned about his country, Yen seemed to avoid any mention of Manchuria as an independent state, despite the fact that this text was published two months after Manchukuo’s formal declaration of “independence” under Japanese rule.

In comparison with the Japanese diplomats, who were careful to speak about Manchukuo as a state created for the Manchurians despite the actuality of Japanese control, Yen simply ignored the concept of independence for the region entirely. Instead, Yen framed the conflict over Manchuria as a struggle for fulfilling economic and strategic needs. Yen’s simplified analysis of the situation pitted the Japanese against the Chinese without consideration of international factors or the Manchurian people themselves, who made up a relatively small part of Manchuria’s population. The obvious goal of Yen’s statement was to present the Chinese as reasonable and rational in his argument for control over Manchuria, and he asserted that, “The Chinese are not so unreasonable as to ignore the reasonable and legitimate needs and aspirations of the Japanese people.”¹⁷² Undoubtedly this statement was intended to provide a basis for comparison to Yen’s image of Japanese expansionist aims and irrationality in claiming Manchuria. Yen furthers this picture of Chinese pacifist approach to the situation by stating that, “Japan is our nearest neighbour, and we sincerely desire to be at

¹⁷¹ Ibid.
¹⁷² Ibid., vi-vii.
peace with our neighbours.”¹⁷³ Of necessity, Yen needed to promote China as an ultimately peaceful state, particularly since his audience for this introduction consisted of Americans who would not have looked positively upon an imperialistic, militaristic, East Asian nation.

As the counterpoint for the image of peaceful China, Yen needed to provide a picture of Japan as a thoughtless, expansionist, war-mongering state. Yen began by stating that, “For many centuries the Japanese people have shared the heritage of our civilization.”¹⁷⁴ Yen followed this with an assertion,

> It has been admitted by one of the leading Japanese savants, ‘Your civilization[Chinese] has been our [Japanese] civilization, your history has been our history, your language has been our language, your art and philosophy has been our art and philosophy.’¹⁷⁵

Significantly, Yen did not specify who the “leading Japanese savant” was, or the context in which his statement had been made. Instead, it appeared as an isolated quotation that just so happened to fit with Yen’s argument that Japan really owed its civilization to China. Yen explicitly insulted the value of Japanese culture by claiming it was an offshoot of Chinese civilization. In a statement designed to veil slurs with compliments, Yen claimed,

> We are happy to see the phenomenal rise of modern Japan and her rapid progress and great prosperity. But, when she blindly pursues her own interests in utter disregard of China’s vital interests, and when she is bent on imperialistic conquest without any consideration for China’s needs and aspirations, China must resist for her self-respect and self-preservation.”¹⁷⁶

The statement of Chinese happiness for Japan’s success was necessary to support Yen’s idealized picture of China as a peaceful state sharing culture and heritage with Japan. By recognizing Japan’s achievements and falsely expressing admiration, Yen could claim that his derisive interpretation of Japan’s underlying expansionist motive bore some semblance of objectivity. By referring to Japan’s blind pursuit of imperialistic expansion, however, Yen clearly pushed the concept of China as a victim of Japan’s goals of conquest. The

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.
¹⁷⁵ Ibid.
¹⁷⁶ Ibid.
identification of China as victim denied the development that Manchuria ultimately experienced as a result of Japan’s investments. According to Ramon H. Myers’ 1989 study, Regional development truly flowed from the activities of the SMR[South Manchurian Railway]. By 1931, the SMR was the dominant force in the region. In that year, total Japanese investment in Manchuria came to 1.7 billion yen, or about 72 percent of all foreign wealth there. The blame was placed explicitly upon Japan for everything negative, while Yen implied that China simply reacted to Japanese aggressions, both economic and military in nature, to preserve China’s self-respect and to protect Chinese sovereignty.

Although Japan pressed unequal treaties upon China, for Yen to deny the benefits of Japanese investments in Manchuria gave Japan no acknowledgment for Manchurian development, and no conceptualization of whether similar development would have occurred without foreign investment. The characterization of Japan’s efforts as a “great war machine” explicitly showed China’s stance in the case of Mukden. With the following assertion that, “There was no warning; there were no diplomatic preliminaries; no attempts to discuss alleged grievances or to negotiate,” Yen provided additional evidence of Japan as aggressor and China as the innocent victim, attacked without provocation or warning. Yen made no mention of any alternative catalysts for why Japan attacked at Mukden, including the possibility that the Chinese might have incited the conflict, or that the presence of Chinese troops could have felt threatening to the Japanese, who were already feeling that Japan’s treaty rights had been infringed. This exclusion was clearly part of Yen’s strategy to garner sympathy for China’s position.

179 Ibid.
Since Yen ultimately hoped to gain the support of those reading the volume he introduced, he obviously felt that it was necessary to emphasize Japan’s militarism and imperialistic aims. Yen described the situation poetically, asserting,

Since then[September 18, 1931], the sky of the Far East has been red with the glare of burning cities and villages; and the tramp of Japan’s armies and the thunder of her guns have been heard throughout Manchuria, at Shanghai, at Nanking, and elsewhere in China.¹⁸⁰ The usage of artistic terms and dramatic characterizations attempted to draw Yen’s audience into the scene, because if the international community could empathize along with sympathizing, China would experience greater support in the struggle against Japan. Yen advanced this particular understanding of the conflict by describing its current conditions, and stated that, “More than two thousand square miles of Chinese territory and thirty millions of Chinese people are today under the Japanese yoke.”¹⁸¹ In this, Yen implied that Chinese sovereignty had been threatened and infringed upon, and the focus on territorial loss and the illegitimate rule over millions of Chinese citizens attempted to elicit indignation from his audience.

Yen avoided directly addressing the issue of Chinese anti-imperialist nationalism because any attempt to explicitly deny the financial interests of the Japanese in China would not have easily been accepted by the Assembly as many of the League of Nations’ members claimed interests in East Asia. Myers asserted that, “by 1923 and after, the Chinese made greater efforts through strikes, public criticism, and willful destruction of Japanese property to resist that expansion.”¹⁸² Such incidents did not appear in Yen’s statements, assumedly because attacks on foreign interests would not have gained the Chinese sympathy within the Assembly and would have provided a basis for the Japanese argument of legitimate, provoked response.

As chief delegate to the League of Nations, Yen was very familiar with the Japanese delegates and their explanations for Japan’s intervention in Manchuria. Yen did not hesitate

¹⁸¹ Ibid.
to confront those explanations, and he argued that, “Various pretexts and excuses for an aggression which has few historic parallels have been put forward by Japan.”183 Without acknowledging any possibility of legitimate Japanese actions, Yen decried the Japanese position within China. By terming Japan’s intervention as aggression based on excuses and pretexts for justification, Yen challenged outright the Japanese diplomatic efforts to define the causes of the conflict. Yen exhibited little interest in maintaining cordial relations with the Japanese as he described the unprovoked attack on Chinese sovereignty. He clearly understood how to play to American sympathies.

Despite the fact that the United States did not join the League of Nations, it was essentially the brainchild of Woodrow Wilson. In recognizing the precepts of the League as common goals for the international community as a whole, Yen used League convictions to appeal to his American readers. Yen stated, “That the World War profoundly stirred the conscience of civilized men is a truism. The ambitious attempt to organize peace on a permanent basis has commanded universal sympathy and given unbounded hope.”184 The reference to the “conscience of civilized men” appeared as a subtle way to criticize Japan, as the statement asserted that civilized men after World War I attempted to bring about peace and Yen clearly argued that Japan had done the opposite. Additionally, Yen implied that organizing peace was a universal aim, and thus that Japan’s expansionist policies violated the attempt to bring about permanent peace and the interests and hopes of the international community. In this, Yen bound together the League and his audience through the mutual desire for peace against the actions of Japan.

Yen identified similar beliefs between all civilized states as a way to unite international opinion against Japan’s campaign of aggression. Yen argued, “the simple and impressive renunciation of war, solemnly recorded in the Kellogg-Briand Pact, has been welcomed with a sympathetic understanding by people of every race and condition.”185

Implied within this statement was the exclusion of Japan in the “people of every race and

184 Ibid.
185 Ibid.
condition." Yen used the Kellogg-Briand Pact as an example of the Japanese government’s unwillingness to conform to the peaceful expectations of the international community, which created a clear division between Japan and the nations devoted to the maintenance of global peace.

Yen asserted that the renunciation of war as detailed by the Kellogg-Briand Pact and the League of Nation’s founding principles of peace “together make up what we may call the NEW ORDER in the affairs of nations. Will this NEW ORDER gather to itself strength and survive; or is it destined to find disaster on the rocks of human selfishness, greed, and materialism?” Yen challenged the international community to protect the new world order founded on ideals of peace against the militaristic expansion of Japan. Without reiterating the numerous examples of Japanese aggression, Yen turned the focus to the actions of the global community, as if daring them to uphold the standards that the League of Nations and the Kellogg-Briand Pact had set.

The decision to simplify the Sino-Japanese controversy into a conflict between a new order of peace and an old order of violent imperialism reflected a diplomatic strategy of offering a situation with a single correct answer. It would have been difficult for a member of the League of Nations to disagree with the upholding of peace as presented by Yen, and a challenge to Yen’s summary of the conflict would have been interpreted by the Chinese as supporting Japan’s defiance in the face of international peace-keeping. Yen characterized Japan’s militarism by stating that, “Japan, though a participant in all of the measures taken to build up the modern system of right, has chosen the ancient method of might to settle her dispute with China” The implied comparison between old order violence and new order adjudication epitomized Yen’s argument that Japan, although acting as if it wanted to be a member of the modern community, in fact preferred to resolve disputes through violent, military conflict. Yen pitted Japan against the modern system of legitimized action which included the League of Nations and the Kellogg-Briand Pact. Yen clearly demonstrated that to side with Japan would be viewed as a repudiation of the modern international system.

---

187 Ibid.
In contrast to Japan’s adherence to the old system of might, Yen stated, “China, on the other hand, rests her cause squarely on the foundations which have been so carefully laid for the peaceful adjustment of all international differences. She has kept the Covenant of the League and now invokes its protection.”\textsuperscript{188} Yen professed China’s belief and trust in the League of Nations and implicitly held the League of Nations responsible for resolving the Sino-Japanese conflict. In keeping the Covenant of the League, Yen argued for the League’s responsibility to China, and called upon the League’s member nations to support China against Japanese attack. For Yen, the situation was simple; China upheld the League’s principles and thus the League needed to protect China. Not only was Yen asking that the League provide aid to China, Yen implied that in doing so, the League was defending its principles against Japan’s challenge.

Yen’s passionate introduction to China Speaks was followed by a forward written by Chih Meng, the author of the main text. Meng was the associate director of the China Institute in America, after arriving in the United States in 1919 on a grant to study at Columbia University. Meng had participated in the May Fourth student demonstrations against the Versailles Treaty in 1919, arguing that the treaty would encourage Japan to take possession of Manchuria.\textsuperscript{189} Meng’s position as the associate director of the China Institute in America was thus heavily influenced by his belief that the international community had provided Japan with implicit consent to invade Manchuria, and thus that the international community owed China its support in reasserting Chinese sovereignty in the region. Meng’s mission therefore, was to convince the United States through \textit{China Speaks} of Japan’s victimization of China.

Chih Meng explicitly challenged Japanese assertions of self-defense, and unabashedly accused Japan of aggression and premeditation in Japan’s dealings with China. Meng’s forward set the tone of China Speaks as one that was explicitly pro-international economic interests but decidedly anti-Japanese aggression. Meng chose to begin the forward with a quote from President Abraham Lincoln indicating Meng’s awareness of the American


audience for whom China Speaks was published. Meng stated that, “Lincoln is reported to have said, ‘You can fool some of the people all the time; all the people some of the time; but not all of the people all of the time.’”190 Considering the public nature of the Sino-Japanese conflict, this analysis of the impossibility of fooling “all the people all the time” into believing any one version of the truth was a clear attack on the propaganda and publications of the Japanese government. Meng asserted that Lincoln’s quote could be summarized as, “Lincoln’s ingenious way of saying honest is the best policy.”191 Without accusing Japan of lying about Japanese motives and interests, Meng suggested that, “Unfortunately, some publicists have no use for this truth, and, during an international crisis, they are the first ones to make out ‘perfect’ cases for their respective countries.”192 Considering that Meng represented the Chinese perspective as evidenced by the very title of the text, China Speaks, the reference to “some publicists – for their respective countries” undoubtedly pointed to the Japanese.

Chih Meng aimed to not only discredit the Japanese government’s assessment of the Sino-Japanese conflict, but also to gain the support of the international community against Japan’s invasion of Chinese territory. Flattery appeared to be a great tool in accomplishing the latter as Meng stated,

During the present crisis the United States and the League of Nations have written a new chapter in diplomatic history. In the notes of Secretary of State Stimson and the Council and Assembly meetings of the League of Nations even diplomats have called a spade a spade.193

Meng exhibited an understanding of American idioms designed to make his arguments sound and appear relatable to an American audience. Additionally, Meng credited the United States and the League of Nations with writing a “new chapter in diplomatic history,” which was meant to encourage the aforementioned parties to look favorably on China’s plight as they considered the situation.

191 Ibid.
192 Ibid.
193 Ibid.
Developing a relationship with the international powers was of primary importance in Meng’s forward, and he asserted, “May not individuals, even patriots, discard the attitude of ‘my country, be it right or wrong, my country,’ and get down to fundamental issues.” This appeared almost as a plea to ignore state boundaries and focus instead on the larger problems that plagued international relations, specifically the tensions between China and Japan. Rather than citizens concerning themselves solely with the matters directly affecting their respective states, Meng argued that individuals needed to see beyond state lines to find commonalities in the human condition. In this case, Meng hoped that his audience would be able to analyze the Sino-Japanese conflict and feel sympathy for the Chinese as victims of Japan’s aggression. The so-named “fundamental issues” were at the heart of the conflict and Meng felt the need to create a sense of commonality with his audience as a step to garnering support. A conflict halfway around the world would likely have been viewed as an issue of little concern to many individuals in the United States, and thus Meng had to convince his American audience that the issues at hand went beyond the borders of China alone.

Meng argued,

> The inertia of the old is great and the path of new habit-forming is difficult. It requires the highest order of individual and group discipline. The Chinese people, even in their intense suffering and distress, want civilization to advance and not to retreat.  

Meng was aware that any assertion claiming that China was owed aid would alienate his audience, and thus his statement highlighted the negative experiences of the Chinese people as willing sacrifices in the name of progress. Meng made no attempt to plead for aid, but instead claimed that China suffered in order to protect the advancement of civilization, and implied that the remainder of the world, primarily the Western powers, should support China in order to safeguard the new order of international justice.

After the forward, Chih Meng launched into his assessment of Manchuria by comparing it to the United States, undeniably in an attempt to make it easier for his American audience to relate to the troubles in Manchuria. In describing the population, Meng asserted

---

195 Ibid.
that, “Manchuria has a higher content of 100 per cent Chinese than America has of 100 per cent Americans.”\textsuperscript{196} The supposed homogeneity of Manchuria’s populace in fact had no real comparison in the United States in terms of genetics, because Manchuria was populated by both Han Chinese and ethnic Manchus, which Meng lumped into a single category of “Chinese.” Despite this, Meng’s assertion could have been applied to the American sense of nationalism which tied Americans together, whereas the homogeneity of Manchuria was entirely ethnic in nature. Without specifying, Meng’s statement could be interpreted differently based on the specific demographics of his audience.

Meng utilized the relative and absolute locations of Manchuria as another point of comparison with the United States. Meng pointed out that Manchuria “is in the northeastern corner of China just as New England is the northeastern corner of the United States.”\textsuperscript{197} American nationalism would have immediately disregarded any notion of losing New England as part of the country, and by drawing a comparison between Manchuria and New England, Meng subtly played upon the nationalistic feelings of an American audience. Meng described Manchuria in detail, stating,

\begin{quote}
Its area is about 384,000 square miles – more than three times the combined area of New England and New York states. Its important harbor, Dairen, is on the same latitude as San Francisco, St. Louis, Lisbon and Constantinople. Harbin, the most important commercial center in North Manchuria, is on the same latitude as Portland (Oregon), St. Paul (Minnesota), Ottawa (Canada), Milan, the south of Paris, and Vienna.\textsuperscript{198}
\end{quote}

It was unlikely that many of Meng’s American readers knew about Manchuria. His description of Manchuria through a series of comparisons to American cities and states reflected Meng’s need to make Manchuria relatable.

The relationship between greater China and Manchuria presented a problem for Meng, as evidenced by the lengths he went to in describing why China needed to keep Manchuria. Because of its distance from his audience in the United States, the obvious solution to those who would not be affected would have been to let Manchuria be


\textsuperscript{197} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{198} Ibid.
independent or fall under Japanese rule if it would end the far-off conflict. Meng needed to prevent this idea from becoming the popular solution in American minds because it would inhibit the United States’ willingness to support Chinese efforts to push the Japanese out of Manchuria. To make the situation more real for Americans, Meng compared the Chinese incorporation of Manchuria to the American Revolution on a timeline, however in reality, the Manchus had in fact taken over China, not the other way around. Meng stated,

The northern part of Manchuria became an integral part of China in the Ching dynasty (A.D. 1644-1911). The home of the Manchu people was in northern Manchuria. When they occupied southern Manchuria and established the Ching dynasty, the whole of Manchuria came under the rule of one central government one hundred and thirty-two years before the American Revolution.\(^{199}\) This statement implied that if America had been able to developed a cohesive, unifying concept of being “American” by the time of its revolution, China would have been able to solidify the same unifying identity with Manchuria, given an additional one hundred years.

After establishing that Manchuria had time to become an integral part of China, Meng needed to prove that it had, in fact, occurred by examining Manchuria’s culture in comparison with Chinese culture. Meng argued,

The Manchus have been entirely assimilated into Chinese culture. The few Manchu remnants have long abandoned the Manchurian language. The Chinese and Manchus now speak one dialect. In language, customs, traditions, and sentiments, Manchuria and China are one. In the social and political thinking of the Chinese people today, there is absolutely no distinction between a Manchu and a Chinese.\(^{200}\)

Meng’s conviction was absolute, because if he had acknowledged a clear cultural separation between the Manchu and the Chinese, it would have been difficult to argue that China and Manchuria could not be divided without sounding as imperialistic as the Japanese. Meng further refuted possible arguments that China had forced Manchuria to assimilate by claiming that, “In adopting the Chinese culture and through inter-marriage, the Manchus have united voluntarily with the Chinese race. Today about 97 per cent of the people in Manchuria are

---


\(^{200}\) Ibid., 5.
Meng considered the Manchu people as part of the ninety-seven percent Chinese population in Manchuria, because he asserted that the Manchus had voluntarily chosen to be integrated with the Han Chinese majority. The emphasis on the willing nature of Manchurian acceptance of Chinese culture was intended to differentiate the absorption of Manchuria into China from the aggressive, violent invasion and conquest of Manchuria by the Japanese.

After describing the relationship between Manchuria and China as culturally inseparable, Meng wrote relatively little about the economic importance of Manchuria to China. Meng summarized the work of Sir Alexander Hosie, a two-time British Consul General in Manchuria, by stating simply,

“The official Chinese documents and the investigations of Sir Alexander Hosie correspond on two main points: (1) that South Manchuria had already become as early as 1882 an important trade center and a most prosperous section of China; and (2) that over thirty years ago there was already a fairly large population [of Chinese] in Manchuria.”

The introduction of a non-Chinese opinion was a key factor in the Chinese case because it allowed the Chinese to negate the argument that China unilaterally believed in and enforced the relationship between Manchuria and China. Great Britain, as a world power, would have been hard pressed to ignore or discredit the findings of its own Consul General.

The establishment of the conjoined nature of China and Manchuria provided the foundation for Meng’s assertion that, “Manchuria has become the cockpit but the cocks were uninvited” in reference to the interests of both Japan and Russia in Manchuria. As Meng stated, “The cradle of conflict’ now holds the offspring of foreign parentage, because the imperialistic schemes that gave birth to the conflict were made in Tokyo and St. Petersburg.”

Although European countries had engaged in imperialism based on the political ideologies of the nineteenth century and the emphasis on conquest, Japan “entered the game of imperialism with the energy and enthusiasm of a novice, and her marked-out

---

202 Ibid., 7.
203 Ibid., 8.
204 Ibid.
prey became Manchuria." Meng began by identifying the powers of Europe as the originators of imperialist aims in China, and then subtly avoided accusations against the European nations by instead identifying Japan as the aggressor. Meng played a role that required a delicate balance in order to prevent alienating possible Western allies while simultaneously attempting to trace the roots of Japanese imperialism in Manchuria, an internationally recognized part of China rather than an independent state. The history that led up to Japan’s occupation of Manchuria could be interpreted in several ways, and Meng masterfully created a Chinese perspective emphasizing Manchuria’s identity as an integral part of China.

Meng chose to gloss over any Chinese actions that might have been interpreted as threatening to Japan and cleverly presented China as a friend to nineteenth-century Korea. Meng explained that when faced with the Tonghak Rebellion in 1894, “the Korean Emperor requested assistance from China for its suppression. Japan claimed that she had equal right to send her forces to Korea and refused to recognize China’s suzerainty during the 1894-5 Sino-Japanese War. China and Japan went to war and China was defeated.” By identifying Korea as protected under China’s suzerainty, Meng essentially claimed that Korea was a tributary state, which interestingly could be understood as a matter of imperialism. Meng claimed that Japan’s actions had been imperialist in nature and that Japan deliberately ignored the sovereignty of China and China’s protectorate in Korea. Meng’s argument inherently contained a paradoxical analysis of imperialism as negative when used against China’s interests, but positive when used for Chinese benefit. In Meng’s case, attitude defined the justifiability of imperialism, as Meng portrayed China as a reluctant imperialist state, intervening only at the bequest of the Korean leader in comparison with Japan’s aggressive push for conquests.

Meng’s assessment of China’s conflict-averse nature was reinforced by the fact that, “throughout the Russo-Japanese War, China maintained strict neutrality.”

---

206 Ibid., 9.
207 Ibid., 11.
Japanese War, lasting from 1904 to 1905, “was fought on Chinese territory and resulted in heavy losses in Chinese lives and property,” but ultimately Japan “gained a foothold in South Manchuria.”\textsuperscript{208} Meng emphasized that the impact of remaining neutral during the Russo-Japanese War resulted in China inability to remain neutral in dealing with Japan over Manchuria. Undeniably, Japan used the Russo-Japanese War to cement its presence in Korea and move into Manchuria and reinforce Japanese militarism, but Meng’s focus continued to be on the detrimental effects to China, making his argument more plausible as one of victimization and self-defense. While clearly attributing blame for the Chinese deaths to the Japanese and Russians, Meng analyzed the outcome of the war by stating, “without a decisive victory, Japan had reached the objective of the previous war with China. Moreover, Japan secured recognition from Russia and China of her special political and military position in Korea.”\textsuperscript{209} The goal of the Japanese had been to establish a presence in Manchuria, and although this was achieved, Meng’s identification of the Japanese victory as indecisive was a subtle questioning of Japan’s triumph. Meng attributed Japan’s acquisition of South Manchuria and Korea to the Treaty of Portsmouth, without which Meng claimed there may have been a “continuation of hostilities” that “might see the tide of battle turned against them.”\textsuperscript{210} According to Meng, the Japanese needed to end the Russo-Japanese War quickly to avoid looming defeat, and the Portsmouth Peace Conference provided a convenient opportunity for the Japanese to appear generous in their victory.

The definition of history itself became a question to Meng with a comparison of “history and later Japanese rationalizations of history.”\textsuperscript{211} Interpretation and perspective influenced the presentation of evidence regarding the case for Manchuria, and Meng clearly recognized that to build support, the Japanese version of events needed to be discredited. In order to achieve this, Meng labeled Japan’s construction of events as a “rationalization of history” rather than “history.” Meng explored the difference between the two conceptualizations of history by addressing specific aspects of Japan’s version of events and


\textsuperscript{209} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{210} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{211} Ibid., 12.
questioning the validity of Japan’s purported rationales, stating, “one of them is that Japan fought Russia to preserve the integrity of China. She apparently had not thought of the integrity of China in the Sino-Japanese War.”

Meng did not define “integrity” as he used it, but rather left it a vague term that could be expanded or contracted to fit the needs of the argument. In addition, Meng chose not to expound on the particular offenses of Japan, and instead generalized the situation as a Japanese lack of consideration for China. Following this statement, Meng briefly addressed Japanese motives in Korea, asserting,

> When Japan declared war on Russia in 1904, she solemnly announced that ‘the integrity and independence of Korea is a matter of deep concern to the Empire.’ Hardly one year before the annexation, Prince Ito declared on behalf of the Japanese Emperor that, ‘The annexation of Korea has no part in the purpose of the Japanese Government.’ Japan annexed Korea in 1910, and, since then, has held the Korean people in subjugation under her iron heel.

In comparison with Meng’s vague, generalized assessment of the Japanese rationalizations in dealings with China, this analysis of Japan’s purposes and actions in Korea specifically quoted Japanese statements in order to show Japan’s hypocrisy in its annexation of Korea. By utilizing a strategy of presenting Japanese rationalizations followed by skeptical statements rather than explicit denouncements, Meng avoided outright verbal conflict while providing evidence contradicting Japanese assertions. This strategy aimed to lead his audience to doubt the validity of the Japanese perspective.

According to Meng, Japan’s public declarations of motive contradicted Japanese political and military choices, and Japan largely acted out of self-interest without regard to international agreements. Meng stated,

> After Japan entered South Manchuria she largely closed the door to other nations. She did this contrary to the principles of the Open Door which Japan repeatedly professed, and her pledge in the Treaty of Portsmouth – Article IV – Japan and Russia reciprocally engage not to obstruct any general measures, common to all countries, which China may take for the development of commerce and industry in Manchuria.

---

213 Ibid.
214 Ibid., 13.
Meng used Japan’s prior statements and actions as evidence that Japan’s claims regarding respecting the integrity and sovereignty of its Asian neighbors was often followed by military conquest. The mention of this particular article from the Treaty of Portsmouth specifically drew attention to the development of economic prosperity through commerce and industry, and emphasized that the Japanese had agreed to recognize China’s rights to establish and implement economic measures in Manchuria. Meng then drew on a Western source, George Bronson Rea, editor of the Far Eastern Review, who wrote in 1915,

> Experience has shown that any regions of China in which political control is exercised by the Japanese, the tendency is for foreign trade other than Japanese to diminish. . . . It can be seen from the figures . . . that Japanese goods even when there was some limitation to the control exercised by Japan over South Manchuria, succeeded in displacing those from other countries.215

Meng pointed to George Bronson Rea precisely because he was a non-Chinese observer, and could thus make a point about Japan’s unwillingness to participate in the international economic principles agreed to in treaties and in practice. Rea’s statement continued,

> Some Japanese publicists are quite candid in regard to Japan’s ambitions. They state that Japan is sufficiently powerful to compel the European and American merchants to surrender the China market to exclusive Japanese exploitation. Japan professes belief in the Open Door policy as long as she thinks it advantageous for her to do so, but the time, they declare, has come when Japan can disclose her real policy, that of exclusion.216

Meng chose to leave Rea’s comments without annotation, and immediately followed one Western source with another, Stanley K. Hornbeck, who at the time of Meng’s writing was a member of the United States State Department. In 1916, Hornbeck asserted,

> Before the war the tobacco trade in Manchuria was largely in the hands of the British-American Tobacco Company. When the Japanese government compelled the company to sell to it the factories in Japan, the company began to build factories in China. The Japanese Government Tobacco Monopoly soon became a serious competitor of the British-American Company, particularly in Manchuria. After the war, artificial obstacles were placed in the way of the business of the latter.217

---

216 Ibid., 14.
217 Ibid., 14-15.
Both Rea and Hornbeck were Western observers, and so their arguments were likely to be accepted by an American audience. Meng’s minimal commentary before Rea and Hornbeck’s block quotes intentionally directed the focus towards the Western sources, assumed to be unedited and in context. Meng deliberately avoided inserting a Chinese perspective in delivering these Western statements because Meng was clearly aware that reading the undiluted and unaltered writings of compatriots would have a far greater impact on his American audience. The use of Western interpretations and analyses of Japanese motives, purposes, and actions in China reduced the risk of Meng’s writing being dismissed as Sino-centric and retaliatory against Japan.

Meng subsequently provided Chinese experiences as support for Rea and Hornbeck. The presentation of Western argument followed by Chinese evidence lent to the purported idea that China was merely commenting on a pattern of Japanese behaviors that had been identified and witnessed by the West, rather than China creating a new argument and using Western sources to defend it, which was a much less appealing viewpoint to American attitudes. After identifying Japan’s refusal to match actions to internationally agreed-upon standards of trade and economic rights as established by Rea and Hornbeck, Meng offered the case of Manchuria as evidence. Meng stated,

Soon after the establishment of the Chinese Republic, the Chinese government planned the economic development of Manchuria. The great powers were sympathetic and organized the Four-Power Consortium. The Chinese government intended to secure loans from this consortium in order to develop the railways and resources in Manchuria and also to prepare herself to redeem the Russian and Japanese railway leases when they should mature.218

Meng explicitly laid out the Chinese plan for Manchurian economic development and while asserted that the proposed plan met with the approval of the great world powers, including the United States for whom Meng is writing. In accordance with the Treaty of Portsmouth, the undertakings of the Chinese government would have been classified as development of commerce and industry in Manchuria. Although Meng did not restate the relevant points of the article, it was nonetheless accessible, having been quoted at the beginning of Meng’s analysis of Japan’s efforts to close Manchuria to outside powers. Without denying or

denouncing past support for Chinese efforts in Manchuria, the United States would have struggled to justify a change in opinion, and Meng’s appeal for support depended on the United States holding consistently to previous positions.

The support of the great powers did not ultimately result in the retention of Chinese sovereignty in Manchuria, but the political stance of the United States and other world powers colored the interpretation of Japanese actions. Meng stated,

In 1911 Japan made the following declaration: Japan possesses in the region of Southern Manchuria special rights and interest and while she is fully prepared in the future, as in the past, to respect the rights of others, she is unable to view with indifference measures which tend not only to menace those special rights and interests, but to place her subjects and institutions at a disadvantage as compared with the subjects and institutions of any other country.  

Japan’s statement proved contradictory in nature. It professed to support the rights of others, yet ignored the internationally accepted rights of China in Manchuria. The Japanese assertion of rights in Manchuria prompted Russia to produce a similar statement, Meng explained, “The next year Russia made a similar declaration, asserting that she had special rights and interest in the regions of Northern Manchuria, Mongolia, and Western Manchuria.”

Without the agreement of China, which claimed long-standing historically based rights in Manchuria, Japan and Russia effectively divided the territory between them. Meng deliberately chose not to draw the obvious conclusions that Japan and Russia participated in the international community and within international standards only so far as necessary to reach goals of expansion and power before breaking away. Instead of noting the Chinese reaction to the declarations of both Japan and Russia, Meng pointed to the response of the United States, stating,

Both Japan and Russia managed to join the Consortium, with reservations of their special rights and also attaching political significant to the terms under which the Consortium was to function. This compelled the United States to withdraw from the Consortium in 1913, declaring ‘Our interests are those of the Open Door – a door of friendship and mutual advantage. This is the only door we care to enter.”

---


220 Ibid., 17.

221 Ibid.
Meng hoped that reminding his American audience of the United States’ withdrawal from the Consortium would encourage continued American contestation of Japanese and Russian claims.

Meng also claimed that the Twenty-One Demands presented to China by Japan in 1915 “aroused nation-wide reaction in the United States.”²²² Meng deliberately did not address the Chinese response to the Twenty-One Demands, but instead honed a carefully aimed argument meant to incite an American audience. Meng reminded his audience that Japan had sent “a special mission to win back American confidence and to secure America’s recognition of her special rights and position in Manchuria.”²²³ He thus implied that the Japanese believed the Americans were ignorant of the facts and could easily be swayed by diplomatic means. Meng stated, “in 1917, the Japanese government sent Count Ishii as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the United States, and concluded an understanding that same year with Secretary of State Lansing.”²²⁴ The agreement between Secretary of State Lansing and Count Ishii acknowledged that Japan had special interests in China, but otherwise produced only vague definitions of what special interests might exist.²²⁵ By highlighting Count Ishii’s titles, Meng reinforced the subtle suggestion that the United States was vulnerable to manipulation via flowery diplomacy.

Meng utilized language to incense Americans reading China Speaks, and was careful to direct American anger towards the Japanese. After implicitly insulting the intelligence of the American government, Meng softened the slight, conceding that “it is difficult to ascertain the real meaning and motive of Japan in obtaining this understanding.”²²⁶ The suggestion that others had been hard pressed to derive Japan’s motive for obtaining the Ishii-Lansing agreement created an atmosphere of Japan versus the rest of the world. The United States thus felt that it belonged to a community of nations, all of which were confused by

²²³ Ibid.
²²⁴ Ibid.
Japan’s actions. Meng further stressed that the United States had, in fact, been taken advantage of by the Japanese as he argued, “the Japanese sought to claim that the United States in the agreement recognized Japan’s special interest and position in Manchuria, which superseded the Open Door Principle. The American interpretation has been different.”

Meng detailed the specifics of the Japanese understanding of the agreement, but chose to generalize the American perspective as simply “different.” In doing so, Meng directed his audience to focus on the Japanese use of the agreement to achieve Japan’s goals, encouraging increased animosity towards Japan for manipulating the Ishii-Lansing agreement.

The Ishii-Lansing agreement “caused so much misunderstanding that it was terminated in 1923.” Meng avoided explicitly blaming the Japanese for the ending of the agreement, but clearly intended for his audience to connect the wrongful use of the agreement for political gain by the Japanese to the failure of the agreement. According to Meng, “Since then Japan has persisted in attempting to have the United States government recognize her special position in Manchuria.” From Meng’s perspective, the Ishii-Lansing agreement came about by underhanded means on Japan’s part, and was used by the Japanese to make false claims of having the United States’ support. Following the official termination of the agreement, Meng painted the Japanese as conniving because the Japanese government persisted in attempts to gain American recognition of Japan’s position in Manchuria. By appealing to the United States’ pride, Meng exerted a different type of influence, albeit no less manipulative, as he argued that Japan had in fact taken advantage of the United States. To convince the United States to take a stand against the Japanese, Meng balanced claims of American naiveté against consolation that the United States was not the only victim of Japan’s dishonesty.

The government statement, W.W. Yen’s introduction, and Chih Meng’s main text shared a central argument of unprovoked Japanese aggression and Chinese victimization. The rhetoric changed to reflect the audience, either the League of Nations or the American

---

228 Ibid., 18.
229 Ibid.
people, but the Chinese claim that Japan infringed upon Chinese sovereignty was designed to appeal to Western nations during a growing movement against imperialism. The sharp rhetoric employed in China Speaks demonstrated the degree to which garnering Western support for China’s cause depended on China’s ability to depict Japan as an expansionist, imperialist, militarist victimizer of peace-loving China.
CHAPTER 4

JAPAN TAKES THE FLOOR

Japanese statements to the League of Nations were on the whole more cautious and constrained than the bold claims made in *China Speaks*. The political machinations of the League of Nations required delegates to carefully word addresses and strategically phrase arguments in order to gain support. The international legitimacy of any nation’s actions outside of its borders depended on Assembly approval, making the League of Nations a platform from which to study how the Japanese approached the Manchurian incident and the events surrounding the creation of an independent Manchurian state. The words of the Japanese address reflected the Japanese approach to international politics within the League, but when examined through the lenses of motivations and contextual pressures, the rhetorical choices of the Japanese delegates reveal the conflicting aims that shaped the speeches. Japan sought the backing of the international community and because of this had to work carefully within international standards when asserting the need for Japanese actions in Manchuria. Participation in the League of Nations hobbled the Japanese delegate’s ability to speak forthrightly about Japan’s conflict with China for fear of insulting the Chinese delegate and alienating other member nations. Maintaining a delicate balance between defense of Japan’s military and diplomatic choices and subtle criticism of the international community’s responses appeared to have been the goal of Japan’s addresses, headed by Yosuke Matsuoka, chief Japanese delegate to the Assembly.

The signing of the “Report of the Commission of Enquiry” on September 4, 1932 and the subsequent publication of the Report in Geneva on October 1, 1932 led the Japanese delegation to directly address the findings of the Commission. The Report’s findings posed a serious challenge for Japan. According to the Report, the “government in Manchuria should be modified in such a way as to secure, consistently with the sovereignty and

---

administrative integrity of China, a large measure of the autonomy designed to meet the local conditions.”231 The autonomous state of Manchukuo was not recognized by the League of Nations, and the Report asserted that the supposed Manchurian independence movement did not represent the majority of people living in Manchuria. Rather, the Report found that “Manchukuo” was viewed by the local Chinese people as a Japanese tool, and therefore Manchukuo had little support among the local population.232 Additionally, the Report concluded that the Kwantung Army had not acted out of self-defense because the Chinese had no plan of attacking either the Japanese troops or Japanese citizens.233 The Report placed the responsibility for the crisis squarely on the Japanese, and decried the military operations of the Kwantung Army in Manchuria. Although Yosuke Matsuoka, Japan’s chief delegate to the League of Nations, spoke passionately in defense of Japan’s actions, he was ultimately unsuccessful in his quest to gain international support. After the League of Nations adopted the Report’s conclusions, Japan withdrew from the League of Nations on February 24, 1933.

Yosuke Matsuoka began his November 21, 1932 address to the League’s General Assembly by stating that the observations laid before the Council of the League of Nations by the Japanese delegation were those that the Japanese government, “thought proper to make regarding the Report of the Commission of Enquiry.”234 This preface implied that propriety was the primary goal of Japan’s response to the Report and additionally that the observations made by the Japanese delegation were intended to politely inform rather than aggressively contradict the Report. This was further supported by the Japanese assertion that “the Report, taken as a whole, and especially it its descriptive accounts, furnishes a valuable picture of events.”235 The Japanese delegate recognized and praised the Report while still undermining its credibility by identifying it as a picture rather than a statement of facts.


232 Ibid., 111.

233 Ibid., 71.


235 Ibid.
This strategy of giving praise appeared throughout Matsuoka’s remarks as an attempt to assuage the sting of Japanese criticism. Immediately after stating that that Japanese Government wanted “to extend to the distinguished members[of the Commission], collectively and individually, our sincere appreciation and thanks,” Matsuoka began categorizing Japan’s issues with the Report. According to the Japanese delegate,

We owe it to candour, however, to state that the Report has not been as full or as proper in many of its deductions and conclusions as a longer study of the problem would have produced. We have, therefore, taken pains to draft certain observations for the consideration of the Council, and we hope that these will be carefully examined and fully weighed.

Matsuoka carefully worded this statement to portray the gravity with which the Japanese considered the Report. The assertion that the Japanese government had “taken pains” to compose observations avoided explicitly challenging the conclusions of the Report and instead emphasized the effort that had been exerted to present the Japanese perspective.

Matsuoka took an aggrieved stance in analyzing the Japanese view of China, and asserted, “The condition of China is described at length in the Report, but a somewhat optimistic and hopeful attitude is taken which, we regret to say, we are unable to share.” The use of “regret” to describe Japan’s feelings towards the optimism expressed in the Report acted as an opening to Matsuoka’s primary strategy of remorse for the inevitability of Japan’s actions in China. Japan could not deny its military action in China, but worked diligently at framing the intervention as one the Japanese delegates wished they could have avoided. The Japanese delegates persevered in defending Japan’s direct interference in Manchuria’s affairs despite criticism from the Commission of Enquiry, because to acknowledge any part of the Commission’s accusations as even partially true would have undermined Japan’s credibility and sincerity. According to Matsuoka,

The Commission takes us Japanese to task for having shared in the ‘altogether different attitude which was taken at the time of the Washington Conference,’ when ‘there existed no fewer than three Governments professing to be

---
237 Ibid.
238 Ibid.
independent, not to mention the autonomous status of a number of provinces or parts of provinces.\textsuperscript{239}

Matsuoka cleverly recognized that ignoring the contentions of the Commission would likely alienate key members of the League of Nations who required explanation. Because of this, Matsuoka specifically addressed the change in Japan’s opinion of China’s situation as stated in the Report by asserting,

At the time of the Washington Conference, in 1922, although conditions in China were not ideal, it was possible for us to join with other Powers in hoping for a restoration of unity and peace, and we gladly did so. We knew that conditions were worse than they had been ten years before when the Republic was proclaimed, but we hoped for improvement. Now another decade has passed and conditions are not better but worse.\textsuperscript{240}

Matsuoka emphasized the passage of time without discernible improvement as the motivation for Japan’s involvement in the Manchuria situation. The members of the Assembly likely did not require a lesson in China’s history or an explicit statement of the political turmoil that China experienced, but Japan was searching for justification, and ten years without progress made it appear that Japan had not made the situation worse, but had in fact intervened in a stagnating, stalled Chinese political environment. Matsuoka’s statement was intended to express that Japan had been optimistic that China would be able to develop a stable government, but that optimism had transformed to realism after ten years with no improvement. Without any explanation, Japan’s involvement appeared opportunistic and imperialistic, making it necessary for Matsuoka to clarify the particular circumstances that had ultimately pushed Japan to act.

The Japanese argument extended beyond the desire to help neighboring Manchuria escape from the “kaleidoscope of rival military leaders, usually called war leaders.”\textsuperscript{241} In conjunction with claims that Japan acted to help bring stability to the region, Matsuoka pointed to other foreign powers as examples from which Japan took its cues. According to the Japanese statement, “Foreign troops – European and American as well as Japanese – have


\textsuperscript{240} Ibid., 77-78.

\textsuperscript{241} Ibid., 78.
been stationed in China for more than thirty years, and foreign naval vessels have been patrolling the Yangtze River for a similar length of time.”

Without directly accusing Assembly members or the United States of hypocrisy, Matsuoka clearly defined the established prerogative of foreign nations within China. Matsuoka drew connections between the Japanese and other foreign powers in the hopes of making it difficult for those European nations and the United States to decry Japan’s actions. Matsuoka reiterated foreign justifications for the presence of military troops, stating,

> These foreign forces are kept there, not only for the protection of their respective nationals who may venture beyond the beaten tracks of trade and travel, but to protect even the foreign legations at the old capital, Peking (now Peiping), and the new capital, Nanking; that is to say, to protect the plenipotentiaries of foreign countries.

By presenting the rational utilized by multiple foreign powers to legitimize the presence of military forces within China, Matsuoka simultaneously called upon the selfsame justifications for Japan’s troops in Manchuria. Additionally, the purported necessity of troops to protect foreign dignitaries within the capitals, both old and new, contributed to the general sense of instability and potential danger presented by the uncertain nature of China’s domestic politics. According to Matsuoka’s argument, if the climate was hostile enough to require protections for European and American citizens, it was equally dangerous for Japanese citizens. By asking the rhetorical questions,

> Is it not an extraordinary state of affairs when Ministers Plenipotentiary, accredited to a recognised Government, have to be followed by troops or men-of-war for the safety of their lives? Does such a condition exist anywhere else in the world? Is the presence of foreign military and naval forces in China only a matter of form?

Matsuoka implied that Japan had merely followed the extant policies implemented by other foreign countries. By identifying similar military procedures governing the presence of troops from European countries and the United States, Matsuoka weakened the Chinese claim that Japan’s aggression was unprovoked. The fact that foreign dignitaries needed

---


243 Ibid., 78-79.

244 Ibid., 79.
military protection, even within China’s capitals, was mentioned as a justification for keeping troops within China and to subtly insult China’s ability to secure its cities. No member of the Assembly would deny Japan the right to protect Japanese citizens, particularly diplomatic representatives, because many foreign nations felt the need to similarly exercise military might within China.

Matsuoka identified the situation within China as “permeated by acute anti-foreign feeling,” caused by a government working “assiduously to instil a hatred of foreigners into the minds of the younger generation.” The generalization of “anti-foreign” rather than “anti-Japanese” again indicated Matsuoka’s push for the Assembly to view Japan as part of the larger “foreign” community in China concerned with protecting “foreign” interests, rather than as an independently acting nation absorbed in ensuring only Japanese rights. The characterizations of China as unstable and anti-foreign might have been accepted as unbiased if they had been delivered by a Western power, but Matsuoka needed to preemptively dispel possible claims of prejudice. Matsuoka embedded a single paragraph within this address dedicated to establishing impartiality and stated,

As, in the course of my remarks, I must seem, unavoidably, to cast reflections on the conduct of the Chinese, it may be well for me to disclaim the idea – sometimes latent in the Report – that Japan entertains feelings of bitterness or hostility towards the Chinese people. The Japanese Government believes that the Chinese people have been much misled, much terrorised and much misrepresented, and that their main desire is to enjoy in peace and quiet the results of their industry.

Without mention of who misled or terrorized the Chinese people, Matsuoka presented a picture of Japan as a friendly neighbor to China wishing only to see the Chinese people prosper. Within his statement, Matsuoka vaguely assessed the Chinese situation from a supposedly dispassionate perspective, and implied that the presence of bias rested within the Report of the Commission of Enquiry itself. Exhibiting a demonstrably impressive diplomatic turn of phrase, Matsuoka attempted to plan the idea that Japan acted only to help

246 Ibid., 81.
China, much to the dismay of the Chinese National Government, and that the Report itself have been tainted by partiality.

Less than a month after delivering Japan’s response to the Report of the Commission of Enquiry, Yosuke Matsuoka defended Japan’s case with an address delivered at the ninth plenary meeting on December 6, 1932. Although undoubtedly the Japanese delegation had carefully presented Japan’s position in Manchuria to the League of Nations prior to this address, Matsuoka clearly took a defensive stance in correcting misrepresentations of Japan’s interests. In the first line, Matsuoka brushed the accusations and claims of the Chinese delegation aside, stating that, “Almost all, if not quite all, of the points made by the Chinese delegation have been answered and completely refuted in advance.”247 Although acknowledging that the Chinese delegation brought serious concerns to the assembly, Matsuoka considered the Chinese claims negligible. Following this, Matsuoka asserted, “I do not, therefore, think it necessary at this moment to enter into a discussion with him[the Chinese delegate].”248 Without directly provoking the Chinese delegation or openly disrespecting the Chinese delegates, Matsuoka’s choice in language emphasized a subtle sense of superiority to the Chinese.

The image of Matsuoka as a patronizing educator appeared as he attempted to discuss Japan’s position in the Sino-Japanese dispute. Matsuoka stated,

> The Japanese point of view has already been stated in our Observations, in my addresses before the Council, and in communications to it. But the issue is of such importance that we want to spare no effort to bring the Members of the Assembly to a realisation of the facts.249

Matsuoka implied that the members of the League of Nations to whom he was speaking had heard the facts several times, and despite listening to repeated narratives of the situation were continually unable to recognize such information as truth. It appeared that Matsuoka considered this task to be a burden, particularly because he was obviously convinced that his address simply reiterated facts that had already been stated. He spared no effort to restate the

---


248 Ibid.

249 Ibid.
Japanese version of truth in order to garner support for the Japanese cause, but he felt that he was only repeating the Japanese point of view yet again. Matsuoka could not state directly that the Assembly should already have accepted the Japanese viewpoint as the facts for fear of offending those members who disagreed, but instead worded his address in a way that implied the unnecessary nature of presenting the facts to an audience determined to ignore the Japanese interpretation of the truth.

Having stated his opinion that this address should not be necessary, Matsuoka had to negate the numerous characterizations of Japan’s stance that were running rampant through the Assembly. He began by acknowledging the existence of incorrect understandings of Japan’s position by stating, “There seems to be an impression that Japan opposes, and China supports, the Report of the Commission of Enquiry.” Matsuoka then continued the address to illustrate the numerous aspects of the document that “the Chinese can accept with no pleasure.” By doing so, Matsuoka strategically avoided any discussion of the specific issues that the Japanese did not agree with in the Report, and pushed the attention to the problems that China should have with the document. In addition, Matsuoka used the Report’s findings to critique conditions in China that he claimed China’s government had attempted to hide from the international community. The insinuation that the Chinese government had withheld pertinent information from the world served as a point of inconsistency and deceitfulness that Matsuoka used to discredit both the Chinese delegation’s arguments and the validity of the Report.

Matsuoka vaguely asserted that the Japanese government regarded many parts of the Report as entirely accurate, and immediately followed this by identifying Japan’s specific disagreement with the Report. According to Matsuoka, “Our principal disagreement with the Report, in the sections dealing with the disordered condition of China, is where it occasionally expresses optimism for the rehabilitation of the country.”

---


251 Ibid.

252 Ibid.

253 Ibid.
with which Matsuoka approached the possible rehabilitation of China served as Matsuoka’s point of divergence from the Report. In terms of critiques, Matsuoka’s main disagreement with the report was relatively minor, and he further minimized the extent of disagreement by claiming,

We, too, have hope, but it is not for the immediate future, for a country in China’s condition of disorganisation, as Chinese history shows, cannot recover quickly. For a country vaster than Europe in territory and larger than Europe in population to change abruptly from an ancient to a modern State is too much to expect in a brief period of time.\(^{254}\)

Matsuoka pointed to the issues in expecting China to modernize too quickly, and expressed Japan’s hope for a stable, rehabilitated China as a neighbor. Effectively, Matsuoka minimized his critique of the Report’s optimism by asserting that Japan hoped for China’s rehabilitation but disagreed with the Report about the timeline for achieving stability, and avoided actually addressing any of Japan’s rumored opposition to the Report.

The complex Chinese history that Matsuoka used as the foundation for the Japanese claim that Manchuria needed a great deal of time to stabilize arguably referred to the period of warlords that had in fact ended prior to the Manchurian crisis. In *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Modern China*, published in 2000, Rana Mitter addressed the consistently unstable nature of Manchurian politics and the tides of support that Zhang Xueliang, the warlord who controlled Manchuria, struggled to balance. Mitter stated,

The civilian elites in Manchuria had been alienated from the Zhang regime by the financially crippling wars of conquest of the 1920s. They now found it hard to put their faith in the new agenda professed by Zhang Xueliang, which involved improving the regional infrastructure, because of his entry into the conflict in North China between March 1929 and November 1930.\(^{255}\)

Although Zhang eventually entered the North China civil war on the side of the Nanjing government in alliance with Chiang Kaishek, Zhang’s preliminary prevarications regarding entry into the conflict and his ultimate decision to take part “gave sections of the elite who


were against Zhang a reason to criticize him.”256 The increasingly disenchanted Manchurian elite military and civilian population lost trust in Zhang which intensified the tensions that existed within Manchuria. Matsuoka referenced the disorganized nature of China’s recent history without specifically mentioning the conditions that existed in Manchuria prior to “independence,” but assuredly Matsuoka assumed that his audience would make the connection. By presenting the Japanese argument in vague terms and allowing the Assembly members to come to their own conclusions, Matsuoka could not be accused of planting false conceptualizations of China’s difficulties. Instead, Matsuoka implied that the internal Manchurian issues provided the Manchurian people with motivation to secede from China and that success as an independent nation would not occur rapidly.

As the chief delegate to the League of Nations, Matsuoka was responsible for maintaining Japan’s image and reputation within the League as well as garnering support for Japan’s actions. It is unsurprising therefore, that Matsuoka made certain to reassure the Assembly that, “Japan is a loyal supporter of the League of Nations.”257 This particular address had several goals, among them to reiterate Japan’s position as a loyal part of the League and its continuing conformity to the League’s principles, and to outline the legitimacy of Japan’s efforts in Manchuria. Politically, Matsuoka attempted to draw correlations between Japan’s actions and the Covenant of the League. Matsuoka projected an image of intense loyalty to the precepts and policies of the League, and subtly asserted that, “No open-minded person who has observed our long and earnest patience in our relations with China can contend to the contrary.”258 By saying such, Matsuoka implied that it would be close-minded and incorrect for anyone to argue that Japan’s actions did not follow the standards of the Assembly. Although many members of the League disagreed with Matsuoka’s assertion and were convinced instead that Japan had illegitimately intervened in


258 Ibid.
Manchuria and threatened China’s sovereignty, to directly deny Matsuoka’s claims would have immediately identified them as part of the “close-minded and incorrect.”

Matsuoka used his statements about Japan’s loyalty to the League and patience with China as openings to discuss the nature of Japan’s actions and motivations in China. The reasons for Japan’s presence and interference in China, specifically Manchuria, were of prime significance in establishing the legitimacy of such actions before the international community. The beginnings of Japan’s expansion into Manchuria stretched back to the end of the nineteenth century, and the modern diplomatic relationship between China and Japan was characterized by economic and political conflict. According to Louise Young’s analysis in *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the culture of Wartime Imperialism*, published in 1998,

> The expansion of Japanese interests relied on using a combination of threat and bribery to extract ever more concessions from the local Chinese leadership. Equally important, such negotiations were never simply between Japan and China, but were embroiled in the multilateral intricacies of China diplomacy.259

The establishment of a Kwantung governor general in 1905 and 1906 gave a veneer of legitimacy to Japan’s management of Manchuria. Young argued that, “While the Kwantung Army labored to strengthen Japan’s strategic position on the continent, the mighty South Manchurian Railway (Mantetsu) undertook to open Manchuria to economic exploitation.”260 Japan followed the “classic pattern of an extractive colonial economy,”261 but the changing international climate after World War I veered away from acceptance of the traditional conceptualization of colonialism. It became increasingly important to justify actions based on self-defense and economic interests in order to detract from the negativity associated with imperialism within the League of Nations, and the well-established South Manchurian Railway provided Japan with an ideal opportunity to play to international expectations.

Although he undoubtedly felt that Japan acted rightly, Matsuoka needed to convince the League of Japan’s correct actions, and his strategy for doing so reflected his awareness

---


260 Ibid., 31.

261 Ibid., 32.
that in general, the international community was leery of Japan’s intervention in another sovereign state. In an attempt to persuade the Assembly members, Matsuoka appealed to concerns shared by many of Japan’s international peers. Among these common concerns, Matsuoka stated,

We sought in Manchuria only the observance of our treaty port rights and the safety of the lives of our people and their property. We wanted from China the right to trade, according to the existing treaties, free from unwarranted interference and molestation.262

From an international perspective, there was little in Matsuoka’s statement that would have appeared unreasonable. The West had often used similar justifications for intervention in East Asia, as exhibited by the Opium War of 1840-2 and the Arrow War of 1856-8. Both wars were fought by the British in China in order to protect Britain’s commercial interests, establishing a precedent for military action to defend financial interests.263 Japan itself had been the victim of Western intervention for economic benefits in July of 1853 with the arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry and U.S. demands for a “treaty of friendship” that resulted in an 1854 treaty under duress. This 1854 treaty opened two Japanese ports to American ships, and ultimately convinced the Japanese people of the need to modernize to prevent further infringement on Japan’s sovereignty.264 The alleged denial of treaty and trade rights and privileges placed blame for the Manchurian situation solely upon the inability of China to fulfill its obligations. Matsuoka furthered this claim by asserting that “our policy of patience and our efforts at persuasion were misinterpreted by the Chinese people. Our attitude was regarded as weakness, and provocations became persistently more unbearable.”265 According to Matsuoka, the appearance of weakness on the part of the Japanese undoubtedly contributed to the confidence of the Chinese government in directly ignoring treaty rights and Japanese interests.

264 Ibid., 23.
Rather than the aggressor, Matsuoka painted a picture of Japan as the victim of Chinese provocation. He argued that “our rights and interests were assailed, and even, in some cases, the persons of Japanese subjects attacked.”266 By generalizing Japan’s rights and interests under fire without specifying exactly what those rights and interests were, Matsuoka looked for empathy from every peer of Japan’s who possessed interests in China. Britain, France, Russia, the United States, and numerous other Western states had treaty rights and economic privileges in China by 1866,267 and the threat against Japan’s interests would have caused fear that the interests of Western nations could similarly be threatened. This reiteration of Japan’s complaints against China supported Matsuoka’s claim, “That we acted in self-defense is clear and warranted.”268 The specific reference to self-defense appealed to the general aims of the League of Nations as a whole in preserving international peace. As the aggressor, Japan would undoubtedly have been censured for interference in China’s domestic sovereignty, but by claiming self-defense, protection of Japanese citizens, and preservation of treaty rights, Matsuoka argued for the legitimacy of Japan’s intervention in Manchuria.

Alongside the general characterization of Japanese actions as undertaken in defense of Japan’s rights and interests, Matsuoka delved into the specific series of events that provoked Japanese response and detailed Japan’s reactions in terms of League policies. In addressing the Mukden incident, Matsuoka asserted that, “Our government had no knowledge of the trouble until after it occurred. But, on learning of it, we informed the League.”269 It can be assumed that this statement was a counter to a prior claim that Japan hid knowledge of the Mukden incident prior to September 18, 1931. Rana Mitter argued that not only did the Japanese government have no knowledge of the incident prior to its occurrence, the “government in Tokyo, headed by Premier Wakatsuki Reijiro, was appalled

268 Japanese Delegation to the League of Nations, 139.
269 Ibid.
to hear the news of the coup.” Matsuoka again asserted Japan’s adherence to the League’s policies. By choosing to flatly deny prior knowledge on the government’s part of the Kwantung Army’s plans, Matsuoka offered little opportunity for critics to dissect his assertion for information about the state of relations between the Japanese government’s representatives in Northeast China and the Kwantung army that Mitter described as, “so venomous that soldiers were assigned to keep the Japanese consul in Shenyang[Mukden] under lock and key during the events of 18 September.” Japan could not afford to acknowledge that the Kwantung Army had acted without provocation or with the support of the Japanese imperial government without losing international sympathies and support. Matsuoka’s insistence that the conflict was over the protection of Japanese interests and citizens reflected this need to present the situation in a way designed to garner support and avoid alienating the League of Nations. Japan refused to take responsibility for the outcome of the Mukden incident and specifically pointed to Japan’s efforts to negotiate with China as evidence that conflict had not been Japan’s intended goal.

According to Matsuoka, Japan attempted to enter negotiations with China in October of 1931, but because the League of Nations failed to support the negotiations, “China, encouraged by the attitude taken by the League, turned a deaf ear to this proposal, thus stiffening and complicating the situation.” Matsuoka thus placed blame for the extent of the Manchurian crisis on a combination of China’s disregard for Japanese rights and interests, the unwillingness of the Chinese to negotiate, and implicit support of China’s positions by the League of Nations. Matsuoka implied that if the League of Nations had supported the 1931 Sino-Japanese negotiations, then a peaceful settlement could have been achieved.


271 Ibid., 74-75.

Beginning in 1928, a newly empowered Chiang Kai-shek had been given free rein to distribute propaganda against Japan, and his nationalist government supported a “policy of encouraging plans for Chinese railways and harbor installations which would compete” with Japanese business.273 Japanese exports to China dropped and Japanese businesses suffered from profit loss that Japan attributed to concerted Chinese efforts to attack Japan’s economic privileges in Manchuria.274 Matsuoka identified a “mob psychology” in China, and argued that the unofficial boycott of Japanese goods intensified and supported anti-Japanese sentiments in China, and created resentment in Japan.275 The boycott itself was “a great hindrance to the promotion of international peace and co-operation. It creates circumstances which threaten the good understanding between nations, on which peace depends.”276 After describing the boycott as detrimental to the establishment of peaceful relations between China and Japan, Matsuoka placed the issue before the League, “one of whose primary duties lies in the elimination of possible causes of friction between nations.”277 The decision to insert this reference to the League’s goals and purposes deliberately forced the Assembly to think about the boycott as an issue of international peace despite the Chinese desire to legalize the boycott through the League. By presenting the Japanese problems with the boycott along with a discussion of the Manchurian crisis, Matsuoka tied the issues together and ultimately made it more difficult for the Chinese campaign to legalize the boycott without considering the impact of the boycott on Sino-Japanese relations. According to Matsuoka, the Chinese government had fragmented the situation in hopes of presenting individual pieces of the larger issue to the League. Thus, the Chinese delegation attempted to receive judgment on the boycott independent of the Manchurian crisis. Japan’s position, diametrically opposed to the Chinese, combined these issues under the umbrella of “Sino-Japanese relations,” which required consideration of the boycott and crisis together.

274 Ibid.
276 Ibid., 140.
277 Ibid.
Matsuoka clearly was aware of international opinion regarding the Manchurian crisis, particularly because it fell within his duties to influence the positions of League members to Japanese advantage. Matsuoka asserted,

> While the situation was developing in Manchuria, efforts were made in Europe and America to rally what is called ‘world opinion’ against Japan. The craft of propaganda, in which our Chinese friends are particularly adept, was put into effective use in shaping world opinion against Japan before the facts were fully known.²⁷⁸

This statement was constructed entirely of accusations directed against both China and the international community for judging Japan prior to complete awareness of the situation and using propaganda to promote a negative image of Japanese actions in Manchuria. Matsuoka offered an analysis of the effects of antagonistic propaganda from the perspective of a victim and proposed that the Western campaign against Japan encouraged the tense situation and inflamed Sino-Japanese hostilities. According to Matsuoka, the negative propaganda,

> Encouraged Chinese leaders to take an uncompromising attitude towards us. It encouraged them to believe that Western countries would interfere and save them from the consequence of their anti-foreign policies as they were applied to Japan and her interests. It accentuated a situation from which we were unable to withdraw without danger of further and more serious evils to follow.²⁷⁹

Matsuoka attributed the belligerently anti-negotiation attitude of the Chinese to China’s belief that the Western countries would support China against Japan and argued that instead of helping to arrive at a solution, this belief encouraged Chinese officials to push Japan further towards outright conflict. Based on the assumption of western influence on Chinese diplomatic behaviors, the Japanese delegate arrived at the conclusion that had Western states avoided involvement in the dispute, China and Japan would have been able to conduct more successful negotiations.

Matsuoka carefully asserted that defense of Japanese interests and citizens took precedence in Japan’s relations with China regarding Manchuria. With numerous references


²⁷⁹ Ibid.
to Japan’s self-defense, Matsuoka built a case for Japan’s victimization at the hands of an aggressive and uncompromising Chinese state, but relied solely on abstract claims of denied interests and rights to justify Japan’s response to the purported acts against the Japanese. Matsuoka made the claim, based on repeated affronts to Japanese trade interests, that “In dealing with China, Japan is dealing with a State in a menacing condition.” Matsuoka deliberately avoided calling the Chinese nation as a whole a menace, but instead referred to the condition of the government as it posed a threat to Japan. The rhetorical differentiation between “state,” indicating the combination of geography, demographics, and history of China, and “condition” of the state, referring to the Chinese government, had to be maintained in order to prevent outright hostilities within the League and to avoid explicitly offending China and her allies.

The separation between state and government condition allowed Matsuoka to critique the Chinese Nationalist Government for its responsibility in creating the “menacing condition” rather than blaming the generalized concept of China. For Matsuoka’s argument, the government of China needed to be approached as an entity that coincidentally existed in the geographically defined state of China, rather than addressing the government and nation as inextricably linked. Matsuoka stated,

The actual menace to us not only existed prior to the incident of September 18th, 1931, but was being intensified by the activities of the Kuomintang Party and officials of the Nanking Government. As far as there is a National Government in China, that Government is related closely to the Kuomintang.

To support this claim, Matsuoka referenced the Report of the Commission of Enquiry, stating,

The Report of the Commission of Enquiry is emphatic on this point. It states on page 16 that, ‘in 1927, the Central Government was established at Nanking. It was controlled by the party (Kuomintang Party) – it was, in fact, merely one important organ of the part’.

---


281 Ibid.

282 Ibid.
which further bolstered his earlier assertion that the Japanese government in fact agreed with much of the Report, contrary to popular impressions within the League. Matsuoka’s statement established Japan’s view that China had consistently threatened Japanese interests in China, and by doing so, he attempted to outline the provocation for the events of September 18, 1931 and dispel the assumption that Japan acted out of aggression rather than self-defense.

The League’s determination of the legitimacy of Japan’s claims ultimately would decide whether the international community would view Japan as legitimate in defending Japanese interests, or as an aggressive, unprovoked nation bent on expansion. Matsuoka’s continued emphasis on Japan’s devotion to the preservation of peace indicated his awareness of the need to present a specific picture of Japan’s goals in order to gain League support. In his analysis of the Kuomintang government, Matsuoka stated,

Against such a party and government, and against their declared policy and active efforts to terminate our interests and treaties in Manchuria, we have acted in defence. We have acted also with the view to promoting and preserving peace. Because our action came as a result of an incident does not alter the general fact. It had to come sooner or later. The menace to Japan was actual. If her rights and interests in Japan were violated, the sufferer would be none but Japan.283

Although Matsuoka acknowledged that Japan had presented its case before the League at the beginning of his address, this statement again laid out Japan’s alternative perspective. As far as Matsuoka was concerned, the Assembly had yet to accept the facts as Japan saw them, and so it fell to him to detail Japan’s motivations to make Japan understood by the League. Matsuoka’s stubborn insistence that the Japanese version of events was indeed fact exhibited no interest in compromise, but followed the simple notion that the more a statement was repeated, the more believable it would become.

The specifics of handling the Sino-Japanese crisis supported Japan’s plea of self-defense in Matsuoka’s address. This progression allowed for Matsuoka to first address Japanese motivations for initial intervention in Manchuria and subsequently to use this to deny Japan’s alleged shortcomings in informing and involving the League. Matsuoka

---

confronted the question of why the Japanese government did not seek protection from the League with a three part answer,

In the situation that existed in Manchuria, Japan had to deal first with imminent danger; secondly, with a country whose authority did not extend to Manchuria; and, thirdly, with a Government which had adopted a policy of unilateral abrogation of treaties and conventions.\textsuperscript{284}

Matsuoka intended to garner sympathy from Japan’s peers in dealing with generalized threats to Japan’s treaty interests, an issue common in the international community. Few nations would disagree with the necessity of maintaining treaty rights and international conventions, and Matsuoka appealed to this adeptly.

Japan’s argument that sending troops to Manchuria was necessary to protect Japanese interests provoked harsh criticism and the assertion that Japan should have looked to the League of Nations for protection. Matsuoka responded to this by referring to 1927, when the United States, France, and Great Britain sent troops to Shanghai in order to protect the “Peking Government” from Nationalist forces with full League approval.\textsuperscript{285} The United States, Britain, and Japan had been trying to put policies into effect that would address Chinese economic concerns, but the fractured nature of Chinese politics forced them to take measures to protect international interests. The Nationalist forces were much more radically opposed to foreign rights than the warlord-run Beijing government, and thus the Western states felt the need to protect the existing government in Beijing against the Nationalists and their Northern Expedition.\textsuperscript{286} Matsuoka argued that, “The same Peking Government also refrained, for the same reason, from calling the attention of the League to the despatch of Japanese troops to Tsinanfu in 1927 and 1928, for then the Japanese might have been of help in saving them from defeat.”\textsuperscript{287} Considering that the Nationalist forces ultimately won, Matsuoka then stated that the Chinese representative had to be biased against the necessary Japanese intervention in Manchuria because Japanese forces aided in defeating the

\begin{footnotesize}

285 Ibid.


287 Japanese Delegation to the League of Nations, 141.
\end{footnotesize}
Nationalists at Tsinanfu. Matsuoka attempted to discredit the arguments of the Chinese delegate by offering examples of foreign troops being called to China to protect foreign interests as precedent for the Japanese doing the same. Along with mention of incidents involving foreign forces in China, Matsuoka called the bias of the Chinese delegates into question by associating the delegates with an explicitly anti-Japanese group, the Nationalists that had fought against Japanese troops before, insinuating that inevitably the Nationalists would take an anti-Japanese stance because of Tsinanfu.

The issue of legitimacy took precedence in determining the rights of Japan in Manchuria. Matsuoka’s arguments fit within the established image of Japan as victim that the Japanese government needed to develop in order for the League to recognize Japan’s actions as self-defense. Historically, Matsuoka looked to the events leading up to the Mukden incident to show how conciliatory Japan had been in dealings with China. Matsuoka’s attempted to present Japan as stable, cooperative, and peace-driven in comparison with the instability within China and the aggressive anti-foreign attitude of the Nationalist Chinese government. Matsuoka asked of the Assembly,

Will any one who knows the terms of the treaties regarding China, signed at the Washington Conference, dispute the fact that the greatest concessions made by any Power to China at that time were those that Japan made? Greater than the concessions of all nations combined were those which Japan made to China. Japan had agreed to maintain a smaller tonnage of ships than either the United States or Britain, as well as the return of the Kiaochow territory to China and the withdrawal of Japanese troops from the Tsingtao-Tsinan railway. Japan additionally lost naval and financial benefits because of the transition from an Anglo-Japanese alliance to a four-power agreement that required nothing more than consultation with Japan with regards to East Asian disputes. The Anglo-Japanese alliance was officially formed on January 30th, 1902, and dictated under its terms that both parties

---


289 Ibid., 143.


291 Ibid., 167.
Were empowered to take any necessary measures to protect their respective interests in China and Korea, while the other was to remain neutral if such measures involved one of them in war; if on the other hand another Power entered such hostilities, they were pledged to go to each other’s assistance.\(^{292}\)

This alliance had guaranteed Japan’s legitimacy in protecting Japanese interests, and thus Japan’s participation in the Washington Conference and acceptance of the Washington Treaty intentionally supported the Japanese claims of adherence to international standards at the cost of Japanese rights and interests. Matsuoka reinforced Japan’s devotion to the League of Nations’ principles by explicitly referencing Japan’s willing concessions in the Washington Treaty terms.

Matsuoka employed a strategy of comparing Japan’s actions in Manchuria to those of Great Britain in Shanghai. The British concluded that the League of Nations could not assist in settling the difficulties between the United Kingdom and China in 1927. At this time Britain urged the powers to recognize revision of old treaties and undertook the defense of the foreign position in Shanghai regardless of cost.\(^{293}\) Matsuoka informed the league that, Japan, likewise, saw no way in which the League could help her in Manchuria. Moreover, let it be noted the marked difference between the case of Shanghai and that of Manchuria. Whereas the United Kingdom sent troops to Shanghai, Japanese troops were already on the spot by virtue of treaty rights, for the protection of the Japanese interests along the South Manchuria Railway.\(^{294}\)

Matsuoka made clear the differences between the League-approved British troops sent to Shanghai and the Sino-Japanese tensions surrounding the presence of Japanese troops in Manchuria in order to highlight the legitimacy of Japan’s troops following international standards associated with treaty rights, regardless of League approval. By specifying the distinct characteristics of the Japanese situation versus Great Britain’s circumstances, Matsuoka attempted to mitigate the extremity of Japan’s actions and identify Japan’s choices as less drastic than those of Great Britain, despite extreme provocation.


Matsuoka’s analysis of the roots of Sino-Japanese tensions focused primarily on Chinese hostilities and anti-Japanese policies and the effects of negative propaganda on the heightened situation. According to Matsuoka, “Sooner or later the results could not be otherwise than what has occurred. What has taken place the Assembly knows.” Based on his statements, Matsuoka presented the trouble between China and Japan as a case of inevitability brought about entirely by Chinese actions and Western bias. Despite enduring threats to Japanese interests, Matsuoka’s claim implied that Japan continues to work for Chinese progress, which was “essential, not only to the maintenance of law and order, but to a stabilization of her foreign relations. It should, therefore, be the urgent duty of the League to aid China in this direction.”

For Matsuoka to make the argument that Japan’s intervention in China occurred solely because of a desire to aid China, he needed to establish the responsibility of the League in ensuring peace and progress. Matsuoka did so by stating,

> The fundamental principle of the League is to promote international co-operation and achieve international peace and security, as pointed out in the Preamble of the Covenant. Japan, for her part, is ready to do all in her power to co-operate with the League in helping China to attain progress.

Matsuoka reiterated the Japanese devolution of the League’s goals and policies, but at the same time this statement served to remind the Assembly of a fundamental principle of the League. The conclusion that Matsuoka hoped the Assembly members would reach was that since Japan explicitly hoped and worked for progress in China as well as the stability of international relations in East Asia, it was the duty of the League to support Japan’s actions.

While the December 6, 1932 address began with Japan’s position regarding the general Sino-Japanese situation, Matsuoka spent the latter part of this speech discussing Manchuria specifically. Matsuoka declared, “With regard to the independence of Manchoukuo, the Japanese Government cannot be held responsible.” From the address, it

---


296 Ibid.

297 Ibid., 144-145.

298 Ibid., 145.
may be ascertained that allegations that the Japanese government actively encouraged and aided an independence movement in Manchukuo acted as a catalyst for Matsuoka’s speech. Matsuoka stated,

> It is one thing to state that some officials or officers interested themselves in the autonomy movement (the Commission perhaps meant to refer to the attempt to recover peace and order through local government, although the phraseology is not clear). It is another thing to hold a Government responsible for abetting an independence movement.\(^{299}\)

Matsuoka attempted to separate the Japanese government from the events in Manchuria, and in doing so argued that the Japanese government could not be held liable for the actions of individual Japanese citizens who participated in the independence movement. To gain international support for its involvement in Manchuria, Japan needed the League of Nations to recognize that the Japanese government was not responsible for the success of the Manchurian independence movement.

Because of the Chinese claim that the Japanese government was directly involved in the Manchurian independence movement, Matsuoka had to spend a great deal of time explicitly outlining Japan’s official stance. He stated, “Prior to September 18th,” significant because of the Mukden incident, “our Government had no plan or design to accomplish the independence of Manchuria, nor has it allowed itself at any time to be connected with the independence movement.”\(^{300}\) Matsuoka specifically asserted that the Japanese government did not plan the independence, and chose not address how an independent Manchuria benefited Japan. Despite the absence of an official connection between the Japanese government and the independence movement, the length of time that Matsuoka spent defining this absence clearly intimated the presence of an unofficial relationship. Because Matsuoka did not acknowledge the relationship prior to Manchurian independence, he did not need to clarify whether that relationship occurred out of the Japanese government’s desire to ally with Manchuria or the Kwantung Army’s.


\(^{300}\) Ibid.
Matsuoka’s steadfast defense of Japan’s ignorance of the situation in Manchuria provided the basis for his argument that the Japanese government in no way could be blamed for the consequences of the Mukden incident. In contrast to Japan’s publicized lack of awareness, in Takehiko Yoshihashi’s 1963 work, *Conspiracy at Mukden: the Rise of the Japanese Military*, the Japanese official statements were shown to be fallacies. According to Yoshihashi, “In Tokyo on September 11, meanwhile, War Minister Minami was summoned to the Imperial Palace and sternly cautioned to restore discipline in the army.”\(^301\) Not only was the Emperor aware of the Kwantung Army’s possible deviation from established orders, but “On September 12 Foreign Minister Shidehara received a cable from Hayashi, the Consul General of Mukden, stating that the company commander of a garrison unit in Fushun had warned that a big incident would break out within a week.”\(^302\) Clearly both the Imperial Palace and the secular government were apprised of the threat of incident at Mukden and the Kwantung Army’s plans, but efforts to prevent the Mukden Incident failed. Whether Matsuoka had been informed of the failure to prevent the Mukden incident or was kept ignorant of the situation, his duty was to convince the Assembly that Japan had been just as surprised by the incident as the international community at large and that the Kwantung Army had in no way acted against direct orders. Despite evidence to the contrary, the success of Matsuoka’s argument required that the international community accept of the idea that the Kwantung Army acted to protect Japanese interests but played no part in the independence movement, and that the Japanese government had no intelligence forewarning of a possible inflammatory situation at Mukden.

For Japan’s claims, the order of events appeared to be of great significance to Matsuoka in absolving the Japanese government of aiding and abetting the Manchurian independence movement. Matsuoka needed the League of Nations to recognize that the independence movement was autonomous, without Japanese involvement, but the Report determined that there was little real support for an independent Manchukuo among the local Chinese people. Matsuoka argued that, “First came the movement of the leaders of the


\(^{302}\) Ibid.
people in the territory itself. This, contrary to the Commission’s Report, was definite and emphatic, and began within eight days after the incident of September 18th.”³⁰³ For the first time in his address, Matsuoka contradicted the findings of the Commission, which points to the importance of this particular statement. To further support the assertion that the Japanese government had no direct involvement in the homegrown Manchurian movement, Matsuoka stated,

Before our troops in Manchuria had time to consider anything beyond their immediate military duties, before our Government had time to learn the full significance of the events that were taking place, the movement was being launched by Chinese leaders in Manchuria. Learning of this movement, our Government took immediate steps to avoid participation, reaffirming its traditional policy of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of China.³⁰⁴

Matsuoka attempted to emphasize the strength of the Manchurian independence movement’s Chinese leaders and the fact that these Chinese individuals acted before the Japanese government had even heard of the movement. Effectively, Matsuoka denied the claim that the Japanese government had instigated the movement for Manchurian independency by asserting ignorance of the movement. In addition, Matsuoka used this statement to reiterate Japan’s official policy of non-involvement in Chinese domestic affairs by avoiding ties to the independence movement.

Rana Mitter’s study, published in 2000, argued that the origins of the relationship between Japan and an independent Manchukuo lay in the coup by the Kwantung Army, whose actions immediately following the Manchurian incident were “heavily affected by Chinese actions and, in some cases, refusal to act.”³⁰⁵ Mitter’s statement explicitly credited the Japanese involvement in the Manchurian independence movement as military in nature, which would have supported Matsuoka’s original claims that the Japanese government had a policy of non-intervention in China. Clearly the Kwantung Army acted outside the official position of the Japanese government, and thus Matsuoka’s specific address of the


³⁰⁴ Ibid.

government’s policy subtly avoided mention of the military coup. Matsuoka previously stated that the Japanese government was not aware of the Kwantung Army’s actions on 18 September prior to the incident, and the period of initial occupation began with the choices of the Kwantung Army, not the Japanese government. Mitter continued by stating,

Japanese co-optation of the Manchurian Chinese elite members at a provincial and local level, making them part of the new regime, was encouraged by the policy of non-resistance to the Japanese advocated by Nanjing and followed by prominent members of the Zhang Xueling administration, who might have been expected to oppose the Kwantung Army’s incursions.306

Mitter presented an argument diametrically opposed to Matsuoka’s claims of a homegrown Manchurian independence movement. However, Matsuoka never had to address the issue of Chinese collaboration before the Assembly. Instead, he focused on the Japanese government’s official involvement in the creation of Manchukuo succeeding the independence movement, and not on the unofficial influence and control it was speculated that Japan had in Manchuria preceding the Mukden incident. The incorporation of Manchurian elites allowed Matsuoka to persuasively argue Japan’s position; Manchurian independence occurred because of the desires of the Manchurian people.

The Japanese government’s approach to handling the situation created by the Manchurian independence movement appeared in Matsuoka’s claim that,

On September 26th, both Baron Shidehara, the Foreign Minister, and General Minami, the War Minister, issued instructions, respectively, to the civil and military representatives of Japan in Manchuria, forbidding participation in this movement.307

Matsuoka needed to identify the official position and the steps taken by the government against supporting the independence movement to separate the Japanese government’s stance from the claims of Japanese participation in the movement. By referencing both the Foreign Minister and the War Minister as leaders of both the civil and military Japanese presence in Manchuria, Matsuoka tried to establish the credibility of his claim that the Japanese government wanted to avoid involvement. Despite this, Matsuoka admitted,


Their efforts could not stop the movement on the part of the leaders of the people in Manchuria, nor could it stop the sympathy of the Japanese with them. The people of Manchuria had suffered too long under the oppression of ruthless dictators; and, seeing the opportunity to organise a civil Government, they lost no time in taking advantage of it.

Matsuoka identified the unofficial Japanese opinion on the Manchurian independence movement as one of popular sympathy, and thus kept the Japanese government distinct from the Japanese people. The subsequent justification for those feelings of sympathy again showed how Matsuoka attempted to draw attention away from Japanese actions in order to focus instead on issues within China itself. Matsuoka’s assertion that the Manchurian independence movement saw the chance to create an organized civil government appeared to be an attempt to change the image of the movement from a Japanese-provoked rebellion to a justified move towards order. The concept of Manchurian nationalism emerged as a unifying ideology in the newly independent Manchukuo, which fit with Matsuoka’s assertion that the creation of Manchukuo was the ultimate expression of the Manchurian independence movement. Rana Mitter, in contrast, viewed Manchurian nationalism as the production of “a plethora of organizations and structures that aimed to create a national identity for the new state.” Matsuoka’s argument recognized Manchurian nationalism, but rather than identifying it as the result of Japanese military actions, Matsuoka claimed that Manchurian independence occurred due to a grassroots Manchurian movement.

Matsuoka continued to address the feelings of the Japanese people by stating, “With regard to the recognition of Manchoukuo there is this to say. The new government had the sympathy of all Japanese people.” Again, Matsuoka made sure to state that it was the Japanese people who felt sympathy for Manchukuo, not that the government supported the independence movement. Although official recognition of Manchukuo came from the Japanese government in September 1932, Matsuoka spoke more of the people and their

---


310 Japanese Delegation to the League of Nations, 146.

feelings towards a new government in Manchuria. The division between the Japanese government and the Japanese people provided a backbone for Matsuoka’s argument against claims of the Japanese government’s direct involvement in the independence movement. The Japanese newspapers reflected the focus of the Japanese people, as “newspapers vied to scoop the daily progress of the Kwantung Army as they tracked its course in September step by step, recording the occupation of Fengtian, Jilin, and other cities along the South Manchurian Railway as well as the removal of Zhang Xueliang’s forces to the city of Jinzhou in southwestern Manchuria.”312 According to Young, “For six months, the news war over Manchuria consumed the media and their reports gripped the nation.”313 The Japanese media was highly developed and the circulation of dailies ensured that news of the crisis in Manchuria was spread through Japan’s population and reinforced by the people’s demand for information.

The expressed rift between the Japanese people and the Japanese government existed not only within Japan itself, but extended to the Japanese settlers in China. In a 2001 study, Yoshihisa Matsusaka stated, “By the late 1920s, many Japanese living in Kwantung and in the Railway Zone, in particular, had come to see themselves as an endangered minority besieged by an overwhelming majority of increasingly hostile ‘natives.’”314 Matsuoka argued that the Japanese government acted only out of necessity rather than out of expansionist leanings, and Matsusaka presented evidence that supported this idea. The Japanese settlers in Manchuria submitted petitions to Prime Minister Tanaka, enumerating complaints of Chinese competition and an inability to respond because of an unsupportive Japanese government. According to Matsusaka,

Foreign Minister Shidehara seemed to confirm their view of an indifferent, if not unsympathetic, home government in remarks to the Diet in early 1931. He blamed the settlers themselves for their troubles and suggested that the primary source of ‘stagnation in Manchuria’ stemmed from the fact that Japanese residents

312 Louise Young, *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 58.
313 Ibid.
had ‘adopted an attitude of superiority toward the Chinese and a spirit of
dependence on the Japanese government.’

Matsusaka’s analysis of the general feelings of Japanese settlers in Manchuria reinforced
Matsuoka’s original claims of the Japanese government that intervention was a last resort.
Matsuoka asserted that individual Japanese settlers may have participated in the
independence movement, a statement supported by Matsusaka’s statement that,

Militant settlers, best represented by an organization known as the Manchurian
Youth League, founded in 1928, saw the solution to their plight in the armed
overthrow of the Chang Hsueh-liang regime and the establishment, in its place, of
a sovereign Manchurian state severed from China and linked to Japan.

In light of the founding of the Manchurian Youth League, approximately three years prior to
the Mukden incident, the Japanese government was undoubtedly aware of the growing
support for an independence movement among Japanese settlers in Manchuria, making
Matsuoka’s argument purely dependent on a narrow distinction between the sentiments of the
Japanese people and the official statements of the Japanese government that existed.
Matsuoka’s assessment of Japan’s reasoning for recognizing Manchukuo as an independent
state again emphasized the people rather than the government. Although official recognition
came from the Japanese government, Matsuoka focused on why the Japanese people wanted
to acknowledge the new government, and changed rhetorical style in the process. Matsuoka
referred to himself as part of the larger generalized “Japanese people” as he stated,

We saw in it the solution of a problem which had troubled us for forty years. We
saw it in the termination of hostile incitement from China Proper. We saw the
advent of a civil Government, composed of reasonable men who understood the
strategic and economic importance of the territory to Japan. We saw the promise
of peace for the future.

By using the pronoun “we,” Matsuoka effectively unified the view of the Japanese people
and used this solidified whole to argue for the Japanese decision to recognize Manchukuo.
His reasoning appears logical and rational and undoubtedly Matsuoka hoped to appeal to the
general international goal of peace. Matsuoka did not state that this was the opinion of the

University Press, 2001), 361.

316 Japanese Delegation to the League of Nations. The Manchurian Question: Japan’s Case in the Sino-
Japanese Dispute as Presented Before the League of Nations (Geneva: Japanese Delegation to the League of
Nations, 1933), 146.
Japanese government, however, it may be assumed that the “Japanese people” that Matsuoka referred to represented the overall sentiments of the government. Despite asserting that the Japanese government had nothing to do with the independence movement itself, following the declaration of Manchukuo’s independence, Matsuoka obviously believed that the Japanese government’s relations with the newly formed Manchukuo government were reasonable.

Matsuoka’s continued use of “we” furthers his implication that the Japanese people shared the same desires and views towards Manchukuo. He asserted that, “We wanted peace. We did not, and we do not, want Manchuria. We wanted only the preservation of our rights and interests there.”

Although using the voice of the Japanese people, Matsuoka reiterated the arguments of the Japanese government in terms of rights and interests, and the official stance that Japan had no interest in obtaining Manchuria or ruling it. Matsuoka’s clever use of “we” implied that the Japanese people were supportive of the new Manchurian government and recognized the benefits that an independent Manchurian state would provide. Specifically, Matsuoka credits the people with responsibility for the official recognition of Manchukuo as he stated, “our Government, in giving that recognition, acted in response to the demands of the Japanese people and the appeals of Manchoukuo.”

By attributing the push for recognition to the Japanese people, Matsuoka skirted around the contradiction presented by his earlier assertion that Japan maintained a historical avoidance of intervening in Chinese domestic affairs.

According to Matsuoka,

> If all the condition in the Far East were fully known and carefully weighed, it would become evident that Japan, so vitally invested in Manchuria, could not possibly withhold the recognition any longer. In point of fact, the extension of recognition to one State by another is entirely within the exercise of its sovereignty and can in no case be contested by another. There are many precedents in European and American history.

---


318 Ibid.

319 Ibid.
Without presenting any specific examples of the conditions or historical events to which he was referring, Matsuoka effectively argued that Japan needed to recognize Manchukuo and that such recognition was within international standards. Matsuoka’s statement of giving recognition as a right accorded by sovereignty subtly implied that to declare Japan’s recognition of Manchuria unacceptable would be to issue a challenge to Japan’s sovereignty. In combination with Matsuoka’s vague reference to Western examples of the same, it would have been difficult for the League of Nations to directly contradict Matsuoka’s statements without opening America and European countries to similar criticism regarding sovereignty. Matsuoka further attempted to align the creation of the state of Manchukuo with the aims of the League of Nation by quoting several passages from the Report of the Commission of Enquiry. Matsuoka stated,

> The Commission’s Report says (on page 125) that: ‘the all-important problem at the present time is the establishment of an administration acceptable to the population and capable of supplying the last need – namely, the maintenance of law and order.’

From the information presented by Matsuoka, it would appear that the state of Manchukuo fulfills these requirements as a government created and led by Manchurian leaders. Matsuoka continued with,

> The Report states also (on page 132) that: ‘It would be the function of the Council, in the paramount interest of world peace, whatever may be the eventuality, to decide how the suggestions made in our report may be extended and applied to events which are still developing from day to day, always with the object of securing a durable understanding between China and Japan, by utilising all the sound forces, whether in ideals or persons, whether in thought or action, which are at present fermenting in Manchuria.’

As far as Matsuoka was concerned, the independence of Manchukuo presented the solution to stabilizing Sino-Japanese relations and ensured the protection of Japan’s interests, which fit within the goals of the Report that he referred to.

---


321 Ibid., 147.
Rana Mitter’s assessment of the success of co-optation supports Matsuoka’s argument that Manchukuo acted as a solution for Japan’s worries about Japanese interests. Mitter stated,

Co-optation of provincial elites was made a priority, and although there were many notable acts of resistance, cooperation with the Japanese became the norm. To that extent, it should be acknowledged, the Kwantung Army had laid the administrative foundations for its new possession effectively in the years 1931 to 1933 at the provincial level.322

Although the new government in Manchukuo was not independent of Japanese influence as Matsuoka claimed, Mitter recognized the effectiveness of Japanese strategies in creating a relatively stable Manchurian state. With the incorporation of local Manchurians into the government of independent Manchukuo, the Kwantung Army essentially presented a solution to the problem of acceptable administration highlighted by the Commission of Enquiry. Matsuoka proved he was adept at using the Report to support Japan’s arguments and actions. In particular, Matsuoka asserted,

It is stated in Chapter IX of the Report (page 127) that: ‘A mere restoration of the status quo ante would be no solution. Since the present conflict arose out of the conditions prevailing before last September to restore these conditions would be to invite a repetition of the trouble. It would be to treat the whole question theoretically and leave out of account the realities of the situation.’ And in another place (on page 130) the Report says that ‘a satisfactory regime for the future might be evolved out of the present one without any violent change.’323

Clearly the new state of Manchukuo was a diversion from the status quo and Matsuoka hoped to bring the Assembly to draw a similar conclusion. In addition, Matsuoka used the Report to establish the fact that the tense relations between China and Japan did not begin with the Mukden incident, which Matsuoka had previously argued in tracing the history of Sino-Japanese tensions, specifically with regards to Manchuria.

Matsuoka established what the Commission of Enquiry found with regards to the existing situation and how best to resolve the conflict before declaring,

---


In the light of these findings of the Commission of Enquiry, I should like to know what the Assembly will think of the actions already taken, and of those that are being taken, in Manchoukuo by Chang-Hsueh-Liang and by the Nanking Government. But it is my opinion that these actions run counter to these findings by the Commission.\(^{324}\)

With this statement, Matsuoka argued that the Chinese government was actively working against the suggestions of the Report but avoided explicitly stating which actions to consider. By asking the Assembly to analyze the actions of the Nanjing government, Matsuoka avoids directly criticizing the Chinese handling of the situation. Instead, Matsuoka offered the Report’s suggestions directly lifted from the Report itself in combination with a personal opinion that the Nanjing government was not acting in line with the Commission’s findings. Against the unspecified actions of the Chinese government, Matsuoka stated that, “We would therefore suggest that the sound forces, of which the Report speaks be left to develop naturally. Interference with their development might bring about consequences contrary to what the League has been seeking to accomplish.”\(^{325}\) Matsuoka suggested in this statement that the development of an independent Manchurian state occurred naturally and thus fit with the League’s hopes for a resolution to the Manchurian situation. Matsuoka’s claim that this was a natural development represented a further extension of his argument that Japan was not involved in the Manchurian independence movement or in the creation of Manchukuo. Essentially, Matsuoka wanted to convince the League to avoid intervening in the case of Manchuria by presenting it as a grassroots movement for independence rather than an external expression of Sino-Japanese tensions.

Matsuoka followed this analysis of the League’s purported goals for Manchuria with a Japanese interpretation of China’s needs. He stated,

> We Japanese, knowing China, do not take seriously the warnings often made at Geneva – that China will be unified and militarised as a result of Japan’s action in Manchuria. We believe that a really united China is a peaceful China, not a militarised China.\(^{326}\)


\(^{325}\) Ibid.

\(^{326}\) Ibid., 147-148.
This argument was obviously made in response to international worries that Japanese action would act as a catalyst for Chinese militarization. Without specifying how Japanese actions have affected the development of peace in China, Matsuoka claimed that the argument of Japan inducing militarization was negligible.

Not only did Matsuoka argue that Japan’s actions in Manchuria did not affect China’s unification or militarization, but he also made accusations against the Chinese representatives’ manipulation of the international community’s lack of knowledge regarding the Manchurian situation. Matsuoka stated that, “I am afraid advantage is taken by the Chinese Representatives of Western unfamiliarity with Eastern psychology.”327 Specifically, Matsuoka claimed,

There are more armed soldiers in China even to-day than in any other country in the world. There are between two and three million men in arms. But the hostility of any of the military chiefs to foreigners is not as great as their hostility to one another.328

Matsuoka’s argument relied on a different interpretation of Chinese domestic tensions than the version the Chinese delegates may be assumed to have given. Obviously Matsuoka did not want to accuse the general Assembly of acting wrongly, and so focused instead on illuminating what he considered the actual facts of China’s militarization. Matsuoka drew attention away from the mistaken beliefs of the Western states and instead pointed to the internal military tensions that he argued were responsible for Chinese hostilities. Without directly accusing the Chinese representatives of lying to the Assembly, Matsuoka implied that the supposed Western lack in understanding of Chinese conditions was responsible for the West’s antagonism towards Japan’s actions in an increasingly militarized China. Matsuoka attempted to rectify the lack in Western knowledge of the situation in China by offering a brief historical overview. According to Matsuoka,

This[hostility to one another] has always been the case, from the days of the first British wars with the Chinese. Chinese generals do not always support one

328 Ibid.
another against a foreign enemy. In short, Chinese armies are not created primarily for the defence of the country.\textsuperscript{329}

Matsuoka made a case for internal militarization rather than militarization as a response to foreign intervention, and referred to the fractured nature of the Chinese military as evidence. The assertion that Chinese armies were not created for the defense of the country but rather as an outward expression of internal division appeared as the summation of Matsuoka’s historical overview.

Beyond hostilities between warlords, Matsuoka presented a skeptical interpretation of China’s governments. He stated,

\begin{quote}
Since the proclamation of the Republic in China, Governments have been short lived. They have risen and fallen in quick succession. And now what do we see? A National Government that had its beginning in the Russian movement to ‘sovietise’ China; a Government that controls only the several provinces about the mouth of the Yangtze River, and even these not completely; a Government that rebelled from the Soviet movement, but retained its revolutionary principles regarding the unilateral abrogation of treaties with foreign countries.\textsuperscript{330}
\end{quote}

Effectively, Matsuoka questioned the stability and relative authority of the existing Nationalist government in China. Not only did Matsuoka point to the revolutionary nature of the Chinese government, he implied that the National government was limited in power and unable to exert real authority even in the provinces that it controlled. The claim that governments in China had been short lived implied that Matsuoka believed this Nationalist government would also fall. Matsuoka’s analysis of the Chinese government presented the opinion that the Nationalist government, like its predecessors, was ultimately ineffective and would not remain in power much longer. Although it appeared early in the address that Matsuoka wanted to avoid offending the Chinese delegation, this statement obviously diverged from that track and could hardly have been construed as anything but a direct criticism of the Chinese government.

\textsuperscript{329} Japanese Delegation to the League of Nations. The Manchurian Question: Japan’s Case in the Sino-Japanese Dispute as Presented Before the League of Nations (Geneva: Japanese Delegation to the League of Nations, 1933), 148

\textsuperscript{330} Ibid.
In addition to questioning the actual extent of the Nationalist government’s sovereignty, Matsuoka paid close attention to the rise of communism, the main threat to the Nationalist government. Matsuoka stated,

The League Commission’s Report states at the top of page 23 that ‘Communism has become an actual rival of the Nationalist Government.’ The communist movement controls as many provinces as the recognised Government. I might even say that communism is to-day eating into the very heart of China.\[^{331}\]

Essentially, Matsuoka suggested that although the Nationalist government was recognized by the international community, the communist movement was equally powerful and could arguably become a controlling power in China. Matsuoka used this internal struggle within China as a justification for Japan’s continued interest in China’s domestic affairs. He asserted that, “In this connection, we would say that Japan cannot afford to shut her eyes to the possibilities of the future.”\[^{332}\]

Aside from his earlier vague references to Japan’s interests and rights, the struggle between the National government and the communist movement appeared to be a viable reason for Japan to be concerned with China’s internal politics. Although Matsuoka was careful to avoid mentioning the extent to which Japan took interest, the vague reference to future possibilities implied that Japan was carefully considering the best way to approach turmoil in China.

The one solid fact remained that Japan had officially recognized the new state of Manchukuo, however Matsuoka attempted to justify the recognition as a last resort in response to the instability within China brought about by the rise of the communist movement. Matsuoka argued,

Our action in recognising the State of Manchoukuo was the only and surest way for us to take in the present circumstances. In the absence of any other means of stabilising conditions in that territory – where we have interests, both strategic and economic, which we cannot sacrifice – we had no other recourse.\[^{333}\]

Again Matsuoka referred to Japan’s interests, but did not specify what those interests were or how the recognition of Manchukuo protected Japanese interests. Matsuoka’s assertion


\[^{332}\] Ibid.

\[^{333}\] Ibid.
attempted to justify Japan’s recognition of the state of Manchukuo as a last resort after having been left with no other option. Matsuoka appealed to the Assembly for sympathy in the face of threatened interests and it would have been hard to deny that protection of those interests would merit recognition of a stable government.

After presenting Japan’s case for Manchukuo, Matsuoka addressed the issue of settling Sino-Japanese hostilities by stating that, “Now the Assembly has to consider whether it will or will not make suggestions for a settlement, and, should it decide to make them, what those suggestions will be.” Although Matsuoka did not assert that the Assembly should avoid getting involved in the settlement of the Manchurian situation, his statement subtly questioned whether the Assembly ought to make suggestions. The issue was not limited to what the Assembly would suggest, but instead Matsuoka suggested a two-step process that began with deciding if the Assembly should suggest anything at all.

Matsuoka prepared for the decision of the Assembly to step in and make suggestions by offering guidelines for Assembly intervention. He stated,

Any suggestions should, we think, be governed by the following principles: (1) The terms must be such that they can be effectively put into operation, and that they will accomplish and preserve peace in the Far East. (2) A solution must be found for the disordered condition of China. (3) In case any plan for settlement is found by the League, this organisation must take upon itself the responsibilities for its execution.

The principles suggested by Matsuoka appeared reasonable and in-line with the League’s goals, which would have made it difficult to fight against them. Matsuoka spent a good deal of his address trying to prove exactly how reasonable and justified Japan’s actions in Manchuria were, and these guidelines were obviously part of Matsuoka’s larger strategy to show how supportive Japan was of the Assembly and the resolution of the Sino-Japanese hostilities.

---


335 Ibid., 149.
Although Matsuoka’s guidelines were meant to indicate Japan’s willingness to resolve the Manchurian situation, he followed this with implicit warnings of the difficult nature of Assembly involvement. Matsuoka suggested,

Considering the actual condition in China, the execution is one that is likely to be costly, and the League should have both the will and the means to make the necessary sacrifices. Is any Member of the League ready to participate with others in such an undertaking?336

The reference to the costs of executing a solution to the Manchurian issue was meant as a warning to the members of the Assembly, and Matsuoka carefully inserted a subtle mention of sacrifices. Considering the earlier mention of Western misunderstanding of the East Asian situation, Matsuoka’s attempt to remind the Assembly of the sacrifices that might be required appears to be an effort to discourage Assembly action. In combination with the rhetorical question of who might actually be willing to work on achieving a solution, Matsuoka obviously wanted to force the Assembly to consider the costs of action and hoped that they would arrive at the conclusion that involvement would require too much of the Assembly’s member nations. Matsuoka attempted to encourage an analysis of the costs and benefits of acting and his emphasis on the price of a solution was meant to be a warning to the Assembly.

After pointing to the sacrifices and costs of League action, Matsuoka asserted,

Japan is fully conscious of the fact that the League is a bulwark of peace. The spirit of the League coincides with the fundamental policy of Japan, which is to consolidate peace in the Far East and to contribute to the maintenance of peace throughout the world. This she believes to be her share in contributing towards the progress of the world and the promotion of human welfare.337

The repeated recognition of the League’s policy of peace acted as an opening for Matsuoka to align Japan with the League and again assert Japan’s loyalty to the efforts of the League. Not only did Matsuoka place Japan’s policies within the larger scope of the Assembly’s efforts, he portrayed Japan’s intervention in the Manchurian situation almost as a favor to the international community. Rather than acting for Japan’s own good, Matsuoka’s argument


337 Ibid.
was that Japan was contributing to the larger League goal and working for the Assembly’s policy.

In an attempt to further prove Japan’s loyalty to the League, Matsuoka took a reverse approach by stating,

It is true that voices have been raised in some quarters criticising the efficiency of the League. But the fact that the Manchurian affair has not led to open war between China and Japan, or to trouble between other interested Powers, is assuredly due to actions of the League.  

Matsuoka’s strategy first offered a critique of the League from an indirect angle by referencing anonymous voices, and followed it with praise of the League’s actions. By immediately crediting the League with preventing open war, Matsuoka identified Japan as a supporter of the Assembly despite outside criticism. Matsuoka continued his praise of the League by stating that, “It may be safely said that the League has thus fulfilled the high object of its existence. To hope for anything over and beyond what it has done in this direction would be to expect too much, under present conditions in China.” In this statement Matsuoka both expressed admiration for the League’s commitment to its purpose and also indirectly encouraged the League to keep from acting further. Japan obviously wanted the Assembly to stay out of the Manchurian situation, and with excessive praise Matsuoka hoped to stroke the egos of League members and assure them that they had already done enough and did not need to continue taking interest in Manchuria.

Worries over the League’s stability appeared as Matsuoka asserted,

Again, as to the apprehension entertained in some quarters that the present case might lead to weakening, or even undermining the principles of the Covenant, we firmly believe that such apprehension is entirely groundless. The exceptional nature of the present case makes it plain that you can hardly apply to it those principles by generalisation.

Matsuoka’s referral to unfounded apprehension critiqued the League while simultaneously reassuring the Assembly of Japan’s confidence in the League’s principles. Matsuoka

---


339 Ibid.

340 Ibid., 149-150.
presented the Manchurian situation as exceptional and thus, not a threat to League principles. Not only did Matsuoka assert the opinion that the Japanese situation in Manchuria was exceptional, he referred to the Report of the Commission as bringing

Out this exceptional nature clearly when it states, on page 38, that: ‘This summary of the long list of Japan’s rights in Manchuria shows clearly the exceptional character of the political, economic and legal relations created between that country and China in Manchuria. There is probably nowhere in the world an exact parallel to this situation, no example of a country enjoying in the territory of a neighboring State such extensive economic and administrative privileges.’

Matsuoka used the Report itself to support his assertion that the Manchurian situation could not be considered based on standard League principles. Strategically, it would have been difficult for the Assembly to disagree with this point in Matsuoka’s argument since his evidence came directly from the Commission’s report.

Matsuoka concluded his address by stating,

As for Japan and China in particular, we look for the time to come when these two nations of the distant East will realise the common origin of their culture and traditions and the common interests of their existence, and will co-operate with a sense of mutual understanding and respect, in the policy of upholding peace in the Far East, thereby serving the cause of world peace, in and with the League of Nations.

Although Matsuoka used the term “Far East” throughout his address in reference to China and Japan, his use of “distant East” appeared to emphasize exactly how far the Manchurian situation was in terms of real distance from the majority of League members. The repeated mention of world peace as the Assembly’s goal was meant to emphasize that Japan was working towards that same goal and supposedly that Japan’s efforts were undertaken in order to support Assembly policies. The purpose of Matsuoka’s address was not only to present Japan’s rebuttal to specific international accusations but also to reassure the Assembly that Japan was loyal and committed to the League.

Although he had concluded the main body of his address, Matsuoka took the time to briefly discuss the Fushun incident of 1932. Matsuoka stated that, “We have already filed

---


342 Ibid.
with the Council the information obtained by us upon enquiry addressed to our Government, and I presume you have that information by this time.” In a footnote Matsuoka explained that the information he was referring to came from a telegram from the Chinese Legation in Washington. In the telegram, the Chinese Legation in Washington claimed that a massacre of non-combatants occurred at Fushun in September, 1932. According to the telegram, “Correspondent Edward Hunter claimed that he witnessed and gained from interviews a clear picture of massacred villagers, burnt villages, and crude burials.” Matsuoka’s explicit mention of filing an official claim with the Council reinforces his claims of loyalty to League procedure and policy. At the same time, Matsuoka added, “Nevertheless, let me point out that our Chinese friends have a habit of exaggerating and thereby misrepresenting.” The use of the word “friends” to describe the Chinese delegation was obviously insincere when combined with the barely veiled insults of exaggeration and misrepresentation. The final statement of Matsuoka’s address implies that the Fushun incident was not of great importance as he asserted, “If any delegate is particularly interested in this affair, I would suggest that he should read these news items in the newspapers. I shall not take up your time now by reading the telegrams and press reports.” Although obviously worth mention, Matsuoka did not consider the situation to be of enough significance to correct the Chinese delegation’s claims on a point-by-point basis.

Based on the content of his address, Matsuoka hoped to convince the Assembly of the legitimacy of Japan’s actions in Manchuria as well as to encourage the League to avoid taking further interest in the situation. The phrasing of Matsuoka’s statements was indicative of Japan’s need to garner international support, while at the same time conducting a subtle struggle with China for influence within the League. Matsuoka was obviously concerned with presenting an image of loyalty to the Assembly’s principles, which can be assumed to reflect the aims of his government. The repetitive references to League policies and Japan’s role in executing those principles along with attempts to create comparisons between


344 Ibid., 151.

345 Ibid.
Japanese actions and past Western decisions appeared to be consistent with Matsuoka’s overall efforts to establish a relationship of sympathy and empathy with the Assembly members. Unlike his Chinese counterparts, Matsuoka took great care to balance criticism of Chinese actions with assertions of Japanese loyalty to the League, and analysis of his rhetoric reveals the difficulties inherent in attempting to influence international opinion.
CHAPTER 5

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS PASSES JUDGMENT

The Sino-Japanese dispute provided the League of Nations with an opportunity to examine and assess the efficacy of the League’s methods and procedures for maintaining peace. Although the conflict was presented as a crisis situation by both China and Japan, Western nations viewed the situation as an opportunity to implement the policies and practices established by the League of Nations. Because the League of Nations desired global peace and cooperation, the Sino-Japanese conflict needed to be resolved quickly via the Assembly in order to bolster the League of Nations position in international politics. Manley O. Hudson, Bemis Professor of International Law and Harvard Law School and an international law advisor to the League of Nations, authored the introduction to a publication of the official documents associated with the League of Nations’ verdict in the Manchurian conflict, and analyzed the decisions of the League and the League’s efforts to dampen the hostilities and arrive at a peaceful conclusion. The Verdict of the League: China and Japan in Manchuria was published in March of 1933 by the World Peace Foundation in Boston, Massachusetts. For Hudson, an American who took great interest in the workings of the League of Nation’s structure and campaigned to encourage the United States to accept the jurisdiction of the League, the Sino-Japanese dispute represented the ultimate test of the League of Nations. Early in 1933, the League of Nations finally determined that Japan did not act legitimately in Manchuria and that China retained sovereignty of the region. The Assembly did not recognize the independence of Manchukuo, and heavily criticized Japan as the aggressor. As a result, Japan withdrew from the League of Nations in February of 1933, and the situation spiraled into the second Sino-Japanese War.


347 Ibid.
A year and a half earlier, on September 21, 1931, the Chinese representative to the League of Nations had requested that the Secretary General of the League of Nations bring the attention of the Assembly to the Sino-Japanese dispute that had erupted in Manchuria on September 18th.\textsuperscript{348} Under Article 11 of the League of Nations’ Covenant, China asked that the Assembly “take immediate steps to prevent the further development of a situation endangering the peace of nations.”\textsuperscript{349} The League of Nations passed a resolution on September 30, 1931 in which the Assembly recognized “the importance of the Japanese Government’s statement that it has no territorial designs in Manchuria.”\textsuperscript{350} In addition, the September 30, 1931 resolution noted that the Japanese government needed to protect its interests and people, while asking both China and Japan to quickly return to normal relations and avoid conflict. This resolution also requested that both China and Japan keep the League of Nations apprised of the situation, according to the League of Nations’ protocols.\textsuperscript{351}

Between October 13, 1931 and October 24, 1931, the League of Nations held a “further session for the consideration of the dispute,” but no decision could be reached because Japan’s representative opposed the resolution proposed at this meeting and therefore prevented the Assembly from reaching unanimity.\textsuperscript{352} The Assembly met again from November 16, 1931 to December 10, 1931 in order to continue study of the situation in Manchuria. It was during this session that the Japanese representative suggested that a Commission of Enquiry should be sent to Manchuria. On December 10, 1931, the Assembly resolved that a five member commission would be sent to Manchuria to determine the status of the conflict.\textsuperscript{353} The Commission of Enquiry was officially approved on January 24, 1932, and included representative from Italy, France, Britain, the United States, and Germany. The Earl of Lytton, Britain’s representative, was elected to chair the commission.\textsuperscript{354}


\textsuperscript{349} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{350} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{351} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{352} Ibid., 6.

\textsuperscript{353} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{354} Ibid.
Before the Commission of Enquiry even arrived to assess the situation, the Chinese government submitted an additional appeal to the League of Nations, requesting that the Assembly examine the issues between China and Japan, including the dispute’s causes and development, and consider possible solutions for the dispute.355 The mission of the Commission of Enquiry was thus to determine the origins of the conflict and propose a resolution for the dispute. On February 29, 1932, the Commission of Enquiry arrived in Tokyo, at which time the commission learned of the establishment of the new state of Manchukuo.356 The Commission of Enquiry left Tokyo and arrived in Shanghai on March 14, 1932. From Shanghai, the commission traveled to Nanking, the Yangtze Valley, and Peiping[Peking] in order to become acquainted with the conditions existing in China proper.357 The commission proceeded to spend six weeks in Manchuria, from April 20, 1932 until June 4, 1932. While in Manchuria, the commission interviewed the commander of the Kwantung Army and military officers, the former Chinese emperor who had become the Chief Executive of Manchukuo, and delegations from the local population.358 The Commission of Enquiry then returned to Tokyo to establish communication with the Japanese Government, and then to Peiping[Peking], where the drafting of the Report was undertaken beginning July 20, 1932.359 The Report of the Commission of Enquiry was signed on September 4, 1932 and published in October of 1932. Despite Yosuke Matsuoka’s attempts to take issue with the Report’s findings during his statements before the League of Nations in November and December of 1932, the Assembly formally adopted the Report, accepting its findings, and ultimately causing Japan to withdraw from the League of Nations.

The Report of the Commission of Enquiry outlined conditions in China and Manchuria, as well as addressing Japan’s economic interests in Manchuria. The most important section of the Report, the considerations and suggestions to the Assembly, focused on finding an acceptable solution to the dispute between China and Japan. The Report

356 Ibid.
357 Ibid., 10-11.
358 Ibid., 11.
359 Ibid., 12.
suggested that the “Council of the League should invite the Governments of China and Japan to discuss a solution of their dispute,” and that


The Report then provided a discussion of the advantages for dividing negotiations into distinct treaties and declarations, and although the Report defined each in great detail, the Report’s suggestions were purely hypothetical, with no way to enforce the protocols. The Commission of Enquiry was the League of Nations’ most powerful tool in attempting to mediate the Sino-Japanese dispute, but the Report only provided information and end-goals, not a means by which to achieve peace.

Although the United States sent a representative to the Commission of Enquiry, the United States was not a part of the League of Nations. The rationalization of the United States’ refusal to join the League of Nations was not an issue in Hudson’s work, but undeniably Japan’s positions impacted the United States’ decision. Japan played an important role following World War I in the creation of the League of Nations. In his 1987 study of Imperialist Japan Michael Montgomery stated,

As the delegates of the victorious Allies gathered at Versailles in January 1919 to divide the spoils and to give substance to the Wilsonian dream of a League of Nations, they were thus uncomfortably aware that Japan already held a lien upon the proceedings.

The Japanese claim on the Shantung peninsula was a major issue for the Japanese at Versailles, and Montgomery argued,

Japan could rely on the support of Britain and France which had been pledged to her in the secret treaties of 1917. Finally, as if her hand was not already strong


361 Ibid., 133.

enough, she threw in the threat of staying out of the League if her demand was not met, just as Italy had done only three days earlier.\textsuperscript{363}

Japan’s implied powers over the assembled nations directly contrasted with President Wilson’s beliefs that,

\begin{quote}
To give in to Japan would represent a betrayal of the ‘Open Door’ and all the other principles of independent republicanism that he stood for, but if on the other hand Japan were to follow Italy his cherished hopes of a meaningful world forum would be stillborn.\textsuperscript{364}
\end{quote}

President Wilson originally imagined the League of Nations as a peacekeeping international body, and Wilson “had been looked on as China’s surest protector not only by 400 million Chinese, but also by his fellow countrymen.”\textsuperscript{365} In March of 1920, the United States Senate refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles. The personal and ideological blows that Wilson endured culminated in the creation of the League of Nations without the United States as a member. Hudson chose not to address the sequence of events that led to the United States’ decision to absent itself from the League, but as a proponent of the League of Nations he certainly must have shared ideological beliefs with President Wilson.

Hudson’s efforts to bring the United States into the League of Nations colored his writing, because his interpretation of the Manchurian crisis added to a platform supporting increased international involvement for the United States. Hudson argued that, “the role of the League of Nations in the Far Eastern has culminated, for the time being, in the report adopted by the Assembly on February 24, 1933.”\textsuperscript{366} The lack of enforcement abilities left the League of Nations with few options other than to analyze the situation and make a relatively non-binding assessment of legitimacy. Hudson chose to view the handling of the Manchurian crisis as a success from the perspective of the League of Nations’ procedural implementation, rather than approaching the situation as an ultimate failure of the League to

\textsuperscript{363} Michael Montgomery, \textit{Imperialist Japan: the Yen to Dominate} (London: Christopher Helm Ltd., 1987), 258.
\textsuperscript{364} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{365} Ibid., 259.
\textsuperscript{366} Manley O. Hudson, \textit{The Verdict of the League: China and Japan in Manchuria} (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1933), 1.
effectively suppress international discord through usage of established peace-keeping measures. According to Hudson,

> For the first time since the League of Nations was organized in 1920, a formal report has been drawn up under paragraph 4 of Article 15 of the Covenant, containing a ‘statement of facts’ of a dispute and ‘the recommendations which are deemed just and proper in regard thereto.’

The reference to passages of the League of Nations’ governing document allowed Hudson to laud the achievements of the Assembly based upon highly specific points of procedure, which taken singly indicate great progress towards the League of Nations’ goal of international peace. As a proponent of the League of Nations who fervently believed that the United States should be a part of the international governing body, Hudson’s bias clearly expressed itself as he wrote, “coming after long months of activity and deliberation, this report furnishes a basis for an appraisal of the value of the machinery for maintaining peace which the present generation is engaged in building.”

Despite Japan’s withdrawal from the League of Nations following the adoption of the Report of Enquiry on February 24, 1933, which Hudson must have been aware of as he wrote the introduction on March 15, 1933, Hudson continued to view the situation as a continuing opportunity for the League to influence the dispute. For Hudson, a Western scholar viewing the Manchurian crisis from a relatively great distance, the significance of the dispute lay in analysis of the League of Nations’ policies as distinct from the crisis, not in the success or failure of the League’s resolutions.

The League of Nations was not without flaws, and Hudson asked, “Has that machinery failed? Have defects in it been revealed? Can it be improved? Have mistakes been made which can be avoided in the future? Can the League of Nations method be adapted for better serving the needs of a world society?” From Hudson’s perspective, the Manchurian dispute provided information from which to draw answers to these questions, and thus effectively determine the best course of action for the League of Nations itself. As

---

368 Ibid.
369 Ibid., 1-2.
Hudson stated, “this is not the first dispute to furnish data for a judgment of the efficacy of the League of Nations method: the Aaland Islands, Vilna, Corfu, Greece-Bulgaria, Mosul – the list of disputes which have come before the Council since 1920 is all too long.” In mentioning previous cases brought before the League of Nations, Hudson demonstrated that the lens through which he examined international politics was primarily focused on analyzing the effectiveness of the League of Nations’ policies and methods, not on the ultimate conclusions of the aforementioned disputes. Hudson’s brief reference to preceding cases served to differentiate the Sino-Japanese dispute, as “in all of those cases, the crisis soon passed. In none of them were the efforts so protracted; in none of them were so many questions raised; in none of them is the record of the League of Nations agencies so replete.” Again, Hudson chose to identify the characteristics of the disputes solely on relevance to the League of Nations’ efforts and not based on the cultural or social environments, the causes of the conflicts, or the conclusions of the cases. Specifically, Hudson stated that, “it is the importance of the Assembly report in connection with future planning for the world’s peace which has led to its publication in this form, with the hope that it may have a wider distribution among students of international relations.” From a historical perspective, Hudson’s single-minded drive to use the Sino-Japanese crisis as an avenue to study the League of Nations was problematic since Hudson primarily sought evidence to justify the League’s policies rather than to prove its real-world efficacy.

Hudson’s strategy consisted of identifying the goals of the Assembly in relation to the Sino-Japanese dispute followed by analysis of the League’s ability to meet each goal. According to Hudson, “it was inevitable that emphasis should be shifted from time to time during the seventeen months of endeavor,” but

Throughout the efforts of the League of Nations with reference to the dispute between China and Japan, certain definite objectives have been kept in mind. Perhaps it may be said that five goals were pursued, to be described as: (1) The effort to halt hostilities. (2) The effort to restore the status quo ante. (3) The effort

371 Ibid.
372 Ibid.
to obtain the fullest possible information. (4) The effort to conciliate Japan and China. (5) The effort to crystallize world opinion.\textsuperscript{373}

Of the five specified goals of the League of Nations, the fifth stood apart as an indication of the Assembly’s perceived role in international relations; to establish consensus. The ability to maintain peace appeared to be based on the creation and continuation of consensus on a global scale, designed to place pressure on nations to conform. Without tangible methods of enforcing League of Nations recommendations and resolutions, the influence of international opinion and pressure existed as the Assembly’s most effective tool to impacting global relations.

The League of Nations was clearly fallible, but Hudson fixated on League resolutions as successes in the Sino-Japanese dispute, regardless of implementation or enforcement. According to Hudson,

\begin{quote}
The Council resolutions of September 30, 1931, and of December 10, 1931, and the Assembly resolutions of March 11, 1932, and February 24, 1933, are the great milestones of the record, for each of them represents success in attaining a measure of agreement.\textsuperscript{374}
\end{quote}

The emphasis on the successful passing of resolutions and the eventual adoption of the Report further supported Hudson’s argument for the League of Nations as an effective means of international governance. Hudson only grudgingly acknowledged failures on the part of the League of Nations, but framed them as steps by which to analyze the evolving goals of the Assembly, rather than recognizing the actual consequences of these botched attempts at resolving the conflict. As Hudson stated, “the changing goals can sometimes be traced only through efforts which have failed. A glance at the chronological table will give some conception of the extent of these efforts.”\textsuperscript{375} From Hudson’s perspective, the goals of the League of Nations could only be understood through examination of its mistakes and unsuccessful efforts, and thus failures served a vital role in comprehending the League of Nations’ diplomatic techniques. Accordingly, failures could be interpreted as catalysts for altering the ultimate goals of the Assembly, and Hudson employed this strategic rhetoric in

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{373} Manley O. Hudson, \textit{The Verdict of the League: China and Japan in Manchuria} (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1933), 3.
\textsuperscript{374} Ibid., 3-4.
\textsuperscript{375} Ibid., 4.
\end{flushright}
order to retain the image of the League of Nations as successful arbiter in the Manchurian dispute.

For Hudson’s efforts to succeed, he had to base his assertions on the assumption that the League of Nations was primarily responsible for instigating all of the peace-process measures. According to Montgomery, as a response to the possibility of sanctions against Japan, “Tokyo decided to reverse its previous stand against outside intervention and invited the dispatch of a Commission of Inquiry.” Hudson ignored Japan’s initiation of the Commission of Inquiry because Japan’s ulterior motives sullied the image of the League of Nations that Hudson was trying to promote. In fact, as Montgomery explained, by inviting the Assembly to send in a Commission of Inquiry,

Japan had succeeded in warding off the threat of external interference in her designs. Not only had the time limit for her withdrawal from the newly-occupied areas now been dropped, but in affirming the resolution establishing the Commission, her delegate had even been able to reserve the right to take military measures ‘against the activities of bandits and other lawless elements in Manchuria,’ giving her carte blanche to complete her absorption of the country at her leisure in the certain knowledge that nothing would be done in the international arena while the League waited for the Commission’s conclusions.

The Japanese government manipulated the process of the League of Nations in order to best meet Japanese needs, and Hudson undoubtedly deliberately avoided discussing Japan’s goals in order to preserve the concept of the League of Nations as unbiased and incorruptible. Hudson tracked the efforts of the League of Nations and categorically identified each as a successful attempt to achieve the Assembly’s goals. By defining success as the implementation of League of Nations procedures, Hudson distinguished procedural realization from the achievement of the purported peace-keeping goals. Resolution of the conflict was among the goals that Hudson identified, but ultimately it appeared unreachable. Hudson stated that, “the Council sought to find the basis for an agreement between China and Japan. The military occupation of Chinese territory made this difficult, however, though encouragement was given to the initiation of direct negotiations between the parties.”

---

377 Ibid., 327-328.
378 Manley O. Hudson, The Verdict of the League: China and Japan in Manchuria (Boston: World Peace
Japanese military presence provided the League of Nations with a convenient way to explain the failure of peace negotiations, and Hudson utilized this to argue that the Assembly’s efforts were hindered not by League ineffectiveness, but rather by the situation presented by the conflict’s participants. According to Hudson, “with the declaration of independence by ‘Manchukuo’ on February 18, 1932, and with the later recognition of ‘Manchukuo’ by Japan, a new barrier to direct understanding was created.”\footnote{Manley O. Hudson, \textit{The Verdict of the League: China and Japan in Manchuria} (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1933), 8.} The emphasis on barriers to conciliation between Japan and China played an important role in preventing blame from falling on the League of Nations. For Hudson, a strong proponent of the Assembly’s methods, analysis of the conflict required alternative causes for failure in order to maintain international confidence in the League of Nations.

Hudson crafted an argument for the League’s success despite the continuing elevation of tensions in Manchuria by citing the goals of the League of Nations, stating that, “Under paragraph 3 of Article 15 of the Covenant, the Assembly was bound to ‘endeavor to effect a settlement’ before adopting its report, and several weeks were spent in making that endeavor.”\footnote{Ibid., 9.} In specifically referencing the Covenant that governed the League of Nations, Hudson established the role of the Assembly, which Hudson could then assess distinct from the resulting conditions of the conflict. The subsequent list of Assembly efforts identified that,

Seven meetings of the Special Assembly between December 6 and December 9, 1932, were devoted to the report of the Commission of Inquiry and to the Chinese and Japanese observations on that report, before the Committee of Nineteen was asked ‘to draw up proposals with a view to the settlement of the dispute.’\footnote{Ibid.} Hudson deliberately avoided discussing the content of the Special Assembly’s meetings, diverting emphasis to the expended effort, rather than to results. Hudson stated,

The Committee of Nineteen worked from December 15, 1932, to January 21, 1933, in close touch with the parties’ representatives, to discharge that task.
Through continued conversations, it endeavored to find a method of settlement to which the parties would agree.\footnote{Manley O. Hudson, \textit{The Verdict of the League: China and Japan in Manchuria} (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1933), 9.} The Assembly was undoubtedly concerned with the implementation of the specific procedures identified in the League’s Covenant, however, Hudson did not specifically address the success or failure of the meetings to reach conflict resolution. Instead, Hudson argued, “on January 21, it took note of the apparent failure of this effort, and though the negotiations were continued it devoted itself thereafter to drafting a report to be made by the Assembly under paragraph 4 of Article 15 of the Covenant.”\footnote{Ibid.} Rather than absolute failure, Hudson claimed that the failure of the meetings of the Special Assembly and the Committee of Nineteen was only apparent, and indicated a lack of certainty that failure had occurred. In conjunction with this statement, designed to imply that the League of Nations, in fact, successfully utilized procedures and effectively managed the crisis according to established process, Hudson referenced the specific section of the Covenant that dictated the drafting of a report. The success, therefore, was in the employment of the Covenant’s dictates in managing a crisis, not in the actual, practical management of the crisis itself.

Hudson viewed the Manchurian crisis as a test case of the League of Nations’ methods and processes, and in general, the members of the Assembly agreed with his perspective. According to Sandra Wilson’s 2002 study, “for the League of Nations, the Manchurian crisis seemed to become a test case for its new machinery, or for the sanctity of treaties in general.”\footnote{Sandra Wilson, \textit{The Manchurian Crisis and Japanese Society, 1931-33} (New York: Routledge, 2002), 25.} Although Hudson implied that the League of Nations arrived at consensus regarding the appropriate measures to take, Wilson asserted,

\begin{quote}
The larger nations were in reality willing to compromise with Japan, but the structure of the League allowed smaller member nations a relatively strong collective voice, and the small nations saw the Manchurian crisis as a threat in principle: they were anxious that the rights of the ‘weaker’ of the disputants should be protected.\footnote{Ibid.}
\end{quote}
Effectively, the Assembly was not as unanimous in its decisions as Hudson presented, and thus the ultimate choices of the League of Nations could not be used as evidence of the overall success of the League’s policies because of the fractured nature of international opinion.

Significantly, Hudson’s astute analysis of the fifth goal of the Assembly provided access to the generally accepted need for consensus. In a section titled “The Effort to Crystallize World Opinion,” Hudson claimed that, “the Assembly has the duty under paragraph 4 of Article 15 of the Covenant to ‘make and publish a report containing a statement of the facts of a dispute and the recommendations which are deemed just and proper in regard thereto.’”386 The phrasing of the Covenant pointed specifically to the need to be “just and proper,” but failed to identify the statutes by which to determine whether this was achieved. Because of the ambiguity inherent in that statement, Hudson could effectively argue that the Assembly’s actions met the League’s goals. After submitting its report, the Committee of Nineteen then presented it to the Special Assembly, during which,

The Japanese delegation appealed to the Assembly ‘to think twice’ before making its decision. As President Hymans urged that ‘even the appearance of precipitancy’ be avoided, the vote was not taken immediately though there was no doubt as to the outcome.387

Hudson presented the words of the Japanese delegation as an implied threat, making it plausible for Hudson to argue that the outcome of the Assembly’s vote was predetermined. Japan appeared weak before the Assembly, exemplified by the Japanese delegation’s need to resort to threats. Hudson’s argument necessitated that Japan clearly be in the wrong and knowingly act against the Assembly’s general wishes to prove that the Assembly had not been at fault for failing to solve the Manchurian conflict.

Hudson relied on information found in the Lytton Commission’s report to support further claims of the illegitimacy of Japan’s actions. Hudson referenced Part III of the Lytton Commission’s report, which stated,

‘No question of Chinese responsibility can arise for the development of events since September 18, 1931.’ The military measures taken by Japan cannot be

387 Ibid., 10.
‘regarded as measures of self-defense.’ The creation of ‘Manchukuo’ was not due
to a ‘spontaneous and genuine independence movement.’

For Hudson, as with the Assembly, the validity of the Lytton Commission’s report was
unquestionable, and the precise rhetoric of the report identified Japan as the aggressor. The
Lytton Commission assigned blame for the conflict to the Japanese, and took additional steps
to cement Japan’s guilt by asserting that Manchukuo was not created by a genuine
independence movement, but rather at the behest of the Japanese. Diplomatically, the Lytton
Report clearly sided with the Chinese, and the Assembly’s adoption of the Report contributed
to Hudson’s claim that the verdict of the Assembly was determined prior to the vote.

After adopting the Lytton Report, the Assembly’s duty was to make
recommendations for the resolution of the conflict. According to Hudson, “the Assembly
first states the principles which it has decided to follow; observance of the provisions of the
Covenant, the Pact of Paris and the Washington Nine-Power Treaty, is put at the head of the
list.” In order to establish consensus within the League of Nations, the Assembly needed
to ensure that the recommendations were made under the auspices of international
agreements. Hudson referred to this introduction of the Assembly’s recommendations as
evidence of the League’s achievement of a crystallized world opinion. The development of
suggestions intended to aid in resolving the conflict was primarily important to Hudson
because it required international cooperation, the mainstay of the League of Nations. Hudson
added that the Assembly additionally

Proceeds to reaffirm the acceptance of the principle of nonrecognition which had
been set forth by the Government of the United States and had been adopted by
the Assembly on March 11, 1932. No Member of the League should ‘recognize
any situation, treaty or agreement which might be brought about my means
contrary to the Covenant of the League of Nations or to the Pact of Paris.’

By emphasizing that the League of Nations’ involvement in the Manchurian crisis followed
internationally set principles, the Assembly reinforced its position as the mediator of
conflicts, and simultaneously implied that to act against the Assembly’s recommendations

388 Manley O. Hudson, *The Verdict of the League: China and Japan in Manchuria* (Boston: World Peace
Foundation, 1933), 11.

389 Ibid.

390 Ibid.
would be to defy a united international community. In light of the vote to adopt the Lytton Report, which “was adopted unanimously except for the negative vote of Japan,” the subtly incorporated threat was directed towards Japan as the possible renegade actor. The implication of unanimity minus Japan identified a rift between the international community and Japan, as truly unanimous vote would have required the agreement of Japan as a member of the League of Nations. Instead, the line is drawn between Japan and the Assembly at large, which provoked the imminent withdrawal of Japan from the League of Nations.

In the general meeting to review the Report in February 1933, the League of Nations established the parameters under which the Report of the Commission of Inquiry would be adopted before making recommendations based on the principles of the Report. The Assembly made recommendations relating to,

- Evacuation of the Japanese troops in Manchuria outside the railway zone; the organization of Manchuria under Chinese sovereignty, with autonomy; and negotiations between the parties with the assistance of a new Committee of Twelve upon which the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics shall be invited to be represented.

During the Manchurian Crisis, neither the United States of America nor the Soviet Union was a member of the League of Nations, and therefore the recognition and invitation from the Assembly indicated the instability and volatility of the situation. For the Assembly to recommend that the United States of America and the Soviet Union become involved in handling an international crisis indicated that the Assembly’s position was weak and that the League of Nations realized that there was little that could be implemented in Manchuria without the aid of additional powerful nations.

As part of the recommendations of the Special Assembly, Hudson claimed that, “the Members of the League declare that they will not recognize the existing regime in Manchuria, either de jure or de facto, and will refrain from taking isolated action there.” Although effectively denying Manchukuo international legitimacy, the League of Nations’ commitment to avoiding action in Manchuria provided a clear view of the effective

---

392 Ibid., 11.
393 Ibid., 11-12.
powerlessness of the Assembly. The League of Nations did not have a clear method of enforcing resolutions and recommendations, and therefore Hudson’s assertion that the Assembly would not take isolated action in Manchuria attempted to change the narrative from an inability to act to a choice to avoid action. The relative ineffectiveness of the League of Nations was furthered by Hudson’s statement that, “The Assembly also expressed hope that the report may serve to guide the action of the states which are not members of the League of Nations but which are parties to the Pact of Paris for the renunciation of war or to the Treaty of Washington of 1922.” 394 Although Hudson clearly wanted to utilize the outcome of the Manchurian crisis as support for the League of Nations as an effective international moderating body, the Assembly’s appeal to nations outside of the League of Nations indicated the continuing need for strength that could not be found within the Assembly. In addition, by attempting to call upon the Pact of Paris, which was an international agreement signed in 1928 that forbade the use of war to settle disputes, and the Washington Treaty, the Assembly implied that failure to act upon the recommendations of the League of Nations would in fact be reneging upon these agreements. The issue therefore was not an isolated incident in East Asia that happened to appear before the Assembly, but instead an international example in the League of Nations’ quest for peace, giving it greater importance in determining the efficacy of the League itself.

The act of accepting the recommendations of the Special Assembly represented an important step in the League of Nations’ procedures. According to Hudson, “On February 24, 1933, the Chinese Government accepted the recommendations of the Special Assembly, on condition that Japan also accepted them, and claimed her rights under paragraph 6 of Article 15 of the Covenant in the interim.” 395 The significance of China’s acceptance of the Special Assembly’s findings and recommendations lay in the specific guarantees of the Covenant of the League of Nations. Paragraph six of Article fifteen of the Covenant stated, 

If a report by the Council is unanimously agreed to by the members thereof other than the Representatives of one or more of the parties to the dispute, the Members

Thus, China’s agreement to abide by the recommendations of the Special Assembly reflected self-interest, as the Covenant explicitly provided protection for China from any member of the Assembly threatening war.

China’s utilization of the particulars present in the Covenant of the League of Nations did not prevent Japan from similarly employing rights and guarantees found in the Covenant. Hudson contrasted China’s attempts as self-preservation in agreeing to the recommendations of the Special Assembly with Japan’s actions by stating, “On the same day the Japanese Government submitted a statement under paragraph 5 of Article 15 of the Covenant, thus exercising its privilege to ‘make public a statement of the facts of the dispute and of its conclusions regarding the same.’” The disputing parties demonstrated clear understandings of the workings of the Covenant, and Hudson judged the Covenant successful in moderating international conflicts because of the ways in which both China and Japan utilized the Covenant to support a position. Although the Covenant provided privileges which both sides claimed, Hudson grudgingly admitted that, “it is not to be denied, however, that the results have been disappointing. Hostilities on a large scale have not been prevented.” The results were not Hudson’s primary focus as Hudson asserted that, “One may say that China and Japan were obligated by the Covenant to do this very thing; but their action has given new meaning to that obligation of the Covenant,” in reference to the presence of both Chinese and Japanese representatives to the League of Nations. In addition, Hudson argued that, “The authority of the League has not been flouted, and each of the parties has defended its position on the basis of the Covenant’s provisions.” Rather than assessing the success of the League of Nations’ efforts by analyzing the impact on the conflict itself, Hudson presented the handling of the crisis as clear evidence that the League

---

398 Ibid., 15.
399 Ibid.
400 Ibid.
of Nations was effective in implementing its policies and therefore could view the
Manchurian crisis as an effective example of the League of Nations as international
moderator.

The Assembly’s recommendations after reviewing the report of the Commission of
Enquiry early in 1933 outlined that which the Assembly deemed “just and proper in regard to
the dispute.” The “just and proper” designation lent legitimacy to the League of Nations’
methods and recommendations, and additionally provided protection from claims of bias or
prejudiced judgment. Generalizing all League recommendations as “just and proper” made
opposing the recommendations difficult as a rule, because no nation sought to take sides
against the “just and proper” when faced with international concurrence. The
recommendations were published in October 1932, eight months after the formal statement
of Manchurian independence in February of 1932, and thus the Assembly needed to address
Chinese, Japanese, and Manchurian claims to the state of Manchuria. The League of Nations
was founded to enforce international peace through objective means, albeit without the
power to guarantee peace, but the maintenance of the Assembly’s image was a matter of
utmost importance.

As part of the establishment and reinforcement of the League of Nations’ purpose, the
recommendations made by the Assembly were preceded by a statement of the basis for the
recommendations, key among them, “the settlement of the dispute should observe the
provisions of the Covenant of the League, the Pact of Paris, and the Nine-Power Treaty of
Washington.” The reiteration of the foundation that provided the League with the
authority to make recommendations emphasized the documents and treaties that ultimately
outlined the powers and processes of the League of Nations. By explicitly referring to the
basis of Assembly powers and its governance, the League of Nations attempted to avoid
criticisms of partiality and unnecessary involvement. The statement of recommendations
specifically addressed Articles 10 of the Covenant of the League and Article II of the Pact of
Paris, both concerned with the settlement and resolution of conflicts among members of the

401 Manley O. Hudson, *The Verdict of the League: China and Japan in Manchuria* (Boston: World Peace
Foundation, 1933), 74.
402 Ibid.
League of Nations, and Article 1 of the Nine-Power Treaty of Washington regarding the sovereignty of China.\textsuperscript{403} Presumably, the recommendations were presented to an audience consisting of the Assembly itself that would have been familiar with the references to the Covenant of the League and other important international treaties without direct mention of particular articles. Thus, the overt choice to name and summarize each individual article used to justify the Assembly’s handling was a reminder to the member nations of the agreements made between them.

The ultimate overarching recommendation of the League of Nations continued in a similar vein, and explicitly outlined the basis for the Assembly’s decision. According to the League, the

\begin{quote}
\textbf{The Assembly has adopted the principles laid down by the President-in-Office of the Council in his declaration of December 10, 1931, and has recalled the fact that twelve Members of the Council had again invoked those principles in their appeal to the Japanese Government on February 16, 1932, when they declared that no infringement of the territorial integrity and no change in the political independence of any Member of the League brought about in disregard of Article 10 of the Covenant ought to be recognized as valid and effectual by Members of the League.\textsuperscript{404}}
\end{quote}

The appeal to the Japanese government from February 1932 had effectively incorporated the consensus of the members of the Council,\textsuperscript{405} and by reiterating the Council’s united declaration, the Assembly reinforced the international position in its recommendations. The establishment of the Assembly’s legitimate role in moderating international disputes provided the foundation for the League of Nations’ assessment of the dispute and its recommendations for the ultimate resolution of the conflict.

\begin{quote}
The Assembly determined that,
\begin{quote}
In order that a lasting understanding may be established between China and Japan on the basis of respect for the international undertakings mentioned above, the settlement of the dispute must conform to the principles and conditions laid down by the Commission of Inquiry.\textsuperscript{406}
\end{quote}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{403} Manley O. Hudson, \textit{The Verdict of the League: China and Japan in Manchuria} (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1933), 74.
\textsuperscript{404} Ibid., 75.
\textsuperscript{405} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{406} Ibid., 76.
The repeated reference to prior assessments of the Sino-Japanese dispute was necessary in order to justify the League’s position. Despite Japanese protests about the validity of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry, the Assembly based its judgments on the Commission of Inquiry’s evaluation of the circumstances. The goal of the League of Nations was to moderate a return to relative peace, however the establishment of the nominally independent state of Manchukuo altered the East Asian landscape, and thus the Assembly was forced to accommodate Manchukuo. The Assembly’s fourth and seventh conditions governing its recommendations directly addressed the Manchurian issue, the fourth recognizing Japan’s interests in Manchuria and the seventh addressing the need for Manchurian autonomy and the creation of a stable civil regime in Manchuria.407

The final condition presented by the League of Nations in determining the Assembly’s recommendations described in the briefest of terms the Chinese political environment. Despite the relative importance of considering China’s political instability, the League of Nations appeared to adhere to the belief that it would soon be resolved. The tenth condition merely stated,

> Since the present political instability in China is an obstacle to friendship with Japan and an anxiety to the rest of the world (as the maintenance of peace in the Far East is a matter of international concern), and since the conditions enumerated above cannot be fulfilled without a strong Central Government in China, the final requisite for a satisfactory solution is temporary international cooperation in the internal reconstruction of China, as suggested by the late Dr. Sun Yat-sen.408

In a single sentence, the League of Nations expressed a general desire for China to reach a point of political stability through the creation of a strong central government, but offered no explicit plan to reach such stability. By relegating China’s turmoil to the briefest of descriptions, the Assembly indicated its belief that China would soon reach a point of stability, and that implementing Sun Yat-sen’s suggestions for reconstruction would be achieved through short-lived international cooperation. Despite the complexity of the Chinese situation, the Assembly glossed over the specific steps necessary to create the strong central government the League of Nations deemed critical.

---


408 Ibid., 78.
The League of Nations’ needed to define extant conditions before recommendations were made to establish a basis for the legitimacy of the Assembly’s proposals. The emphasis placed on justifying the League of Nations’ role in the resolution of the conflict was indicative of the Assembly’s uncertainty in handling the situation. Although the League of Nations’ was intended to monitor and moderate international peace, the Sino-Japanese conflict was the first major test of the League’s power and position. Thus, the Assembly was extremely cautious in following the specific and exact policies and practices as written in the Covenant. Specifically, the “provisions of this section constitute the recommendations of the Assembly under Article 15, paragraph 4, of the Covenant.”

The Assembly obviously wanted no questions about the source of its right to become involved in the resolution process, and although this appeared to be an action grounded in confidence, the numerous references to particular articles of the League of Nations’ Covenant, the Pact of Paris, and the Nine-Power Treaty suggested that the Assembly was in fact unsure of its role and needed reassurance of its position in international politics.

The organizational pattern utilized by the Assembly in presenting its points adhered to a strict pattern of identifying an issue followed by the League’s recommendations. By doing so, the League of Nations attempted to eliminate any possible confusion about what it considered the main points of contention and the individual responses to each issue. The League of Nations determined that China had sovereignty over Manchuria. In order to return sovereignty to China, the Assembly argued that a multi-step process was necessary, beginning with a consideration of “the presence of Japanese troops outside the zone of the South Manchuria Railway and their operations outside this zone” as “incompatible with the legal principles which should govern the settlement of the dispute.”

Again, the Assembly established a foundation from which to make pointed remarks about the “evacuation of these troops” by asserting that “the first object of the negotiations recommended hereinafter should be to organize this evacuation and to determine the methods, stages and time limits

---


410 Ibid.

411 Ibid.
thereof.” The seemingly obvious statement regarding the necessity of removing military forces nonetheless did not provide a method for achieving this goal. In light of the Japanese claim that the military forces were necessary to provide safety for Japanese citizens and interests, the absence of a cohesive, cooperative plan to evacuate the Japanese military made achieving this goal highly unlikely.

The League of Nations recognized Japan’s perceived need to keep troops in Manchuria, but the Assembly determined that Japan’s need did not outweigh China’s sovereignty. The Assembly’s recommendations stated that with regard to,

The particular rights and interests possessed by Japan therein, and the rights and interests of third state, the Assembly recommends the establishment in Manchuria, within a reasonable period, of an organization under the sovereignty of, and compatible with the administrative integrity of, China.

Aside from an appeal that the new organization take into account the interests and rights of Japan, the Assembly did not grant Japan’s military actions any legitimacy, and supported a return to a Chinese governed state, contradicting the Assembly’s original guiding conditions requiring the establishment of true Manchurian autonomy. Japan’s interests were to be considered just as any other foreign power’s rights and positions would be without special treatment, and the Assembly clearly demonstrated that the international community believed in China’s claim to sovereignty in Manchuria. In concert with recognizing China as sovereign, the Assembly chose to deny claims of Manchurian autonomy, stating that “the determination of the respective powers of and relations between the Chinese Central Government and the local authorities should be made the subject of a declaration by the Chinese Government having the force of an international undertaking.” Offering a government with “a wide measure of autonomy” to Manchuria did not equate to real autonomy with Manchurian sovereignty, and the Assembly appeared to have made significant attempts to couch the statement in conciliatory terms without actually guaranteeing Manchuria independence. The League of Nations additionally offered power to

412 Manley O. Hudson, The Verdict of the League: China and Japan in Manchuria (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1933), 78.
413 Ibid., 78-79.
414 Ibid., 79.
415 Ibid.
the Chinese Central Government over Manchuria, despite earlier admitting that China experienced great political instability, reinforcing the idea that the Assembly believed stability in China could be reached quickly without major upheaval.

The second major issue identified by the Assembly after adopting the findings of the Report in February 1933 was, “settlement of the dispute set out in Second I (c) [of the report of the Commission of Inquiry] above certain other questions affecting the understanding between China and Japan, on which peace in the Far East depends.”416 The League of Nations, in its peace-keeping mission, clearly understood that China and Japan needed to reach a resolution for peace to exist in East Asia, although the impact of wholly siding with China with regards to sovereignty apparently did not come into consideration in the Assembly’s analysis of the results of its recommendations. While recognizing that peace was the end goal, the Assembly spent little effort in outlining the particular details of the dispute or on recommending resolutions for those points of contention. Instead, the “Assembly recommends the parties to settle these questions on the basis of the said principles and conditions.”417 When considering the lengths to which the Assembly went to reiterate the specific Articles of treaties and the Covenant of the League that outlined the League of Nations’ part in international disputes, the brevity of recommending that China and Japan simply settle the dispute appeared at odds with the general rhetorical style of the Assembly’s statement. With no mention of the contributing factors in the dispute, the Assembly referenced the Report of the Commission of Inquiry without context.

The Assembly similarly treated the means by which to reach settlement with incongruous terseness. The third issue addressed by the Assembly’s recommendations, “whereas the negotiations necessary for giving effect to the foregoing recommendations should be carried on by means of a suitable organ,”418 was met with the League of Nations’ suggesting “the opening of negotiations between the two parties in accordance with the

---

417 Ibid.
418 Ibid.
The negotiations “should take place with the assistance of a Committee set up by the Assembly” and “the Committee will, whenever it thinks fit, report on the state of the negotiations.” The Assembly did not identify specific subjects to be discussed in the negotiations, nor the types of negotiations that should take place, but instead reinforced the power of the League of Nations, itself, in directing the negotiations. Rather than offering clear, concise steps to conduct and moderate negotiations while working towards established goals, the Assembly focused on determining the capacities in which other member nations might participate in the negotiations.

For negotiations to be successful, both China and Japan needed to agree to participate, however the League of Nations’ decision to grant recognition to China’s claims of sovereignty along with the clear denial of the independent government of Manchukuo, made it unlikely that Japan would willingly participate. The Assembly recognized that, in view of the special circumstances of the case, the recommendations made do not provide for a mere return to the status quo existing before September, 1931. They likewise exclude the maintenance and recognition of the existing regime in Manchuria, such maintenance and recognition being incompatible with the fundamental principles of existing international obligations and with the good understanding between the two countries on which peace in the Far East depends.421 Japan supported the independent state of Manchukuo, and thus the Assembly’s declaration of its illegitimacy alienated Japan, an outcome contrary to the League’s stated goal of working towards resolution and conciliation.

Ultimately, the League of Nations chose to support the Chinese claims of unprovoked victimization by Japan, and upheld China’s sovereignty in Manchuria. Throughout the League of Nation’s examination of the situation, both the Japanese and Chinese delegates to the Assembly engaged in diplomatic attempts to gain international support. The Japanese consistently claimed that the Kwantung Army acted to protect Japanese interests and citizens, and that the state of Manchukuo had been created by and for the Manchurian people. In

420 Ibid., 80.
421 Ibid., 81.
contrast, the Chinese delegates argued that Japan had been pursuing expansionist and imperialist goals and that the Mukden incident had merely provided a pretext for Japan’s military intervention. By denying Manchuria independence and recommending the evacuation of Japanese troops, regardless of Japan’s argument that the military presence in Manchuria was necessary to protect Japanese citizens and interests, the Assembly essentially ensured that Japan would not participate in negotiations nor adhere to the Assembly’s recommendations. The Assembly protected China’s interests, which predictably provided security for the assets of many foreign powers within China, and simultaneously left Japan feeling bullied and without allies. In February of 1933, Japan withdrew from the League of Nations, ending hopes that the League would be able to negotiate peace in East Asia.\textsuperscript{422} The League of Nations had hoped to use the Sino-Japanese conflict as a way to prove the usefulness and effectiveness of the Assembly’s Covenant, but failed to produce any real impact on the situation.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The Mukden incident proved to be the catalyst for the first true test of the League of Nations’ policies and principles. The development of an international body intended to monitor and mediate between nations required that member nations alter their diplomatic and political tactics to achieve their goals. The Sino-Japanese conflict over the territory of Manchuria occurred because Japan believed that Manchuria was its economic lifeline to the global economy, and China could not afford to lose its sovereignty in Manchuria. The League of Nations attempted to serve as a mediator in the conflict, and thus provided a stage for the dispute. The rules and policies of the Assembly dictated the progression of League involvement, and the influence of the international community pressured Japan and China to conform to accepted international norms.

Chinese and Japanese representatives arrived in Geneva following the September 18, 1931 crisis with the same mission, to garner international support. Each party presented carefully crafted arguments designed to play upon the sympathies and histories of the Assembly member nations. The deliberate rhetorical choices made by Chinese and Japanese diplomatic representatives revealed tensions between maintaining national pride while appealing for support. Because anti-imperialism movements were gaining traction, Japan needed to prove that military intervention in Manchuria had been purely self-defense in protection of Japanese citizens and economic interests. The creation of the nominally autonomous state of Manchukuo complicated Japan’s storyline, because Japan could not acknowledge government involvement in the Manchurian independence movement. Japan stubbornly held to the idea that Manchukuo had been created for the Manchurian people, and the benefits to Japanese interests had occurred purely as a byproduct. The international community recognized protection of economic interests as a legitimate rationale for military intervention, and Japan emphasized self-defense repeatedly throughout the Japanese delegate’s statements.
In contrast, China drew support from the rise of international anti-imperialist thought. According to the Chinese delegates, Japan had infringed upon Chinese sovereignty, and, without righteous justification, undertaken military action. Chinese nationalism found kindred movements in the international community, and the League of Nations was careful to examine sovereignty issues. For this reason, the Chinese delegate was charged with convincing the Assembly that China had been victimized by an overly aggressive Japanese military, and that Manchuria had been unjustly wrested from Chinese rule. Chinese rhetoric emphasized the relationship between the Han Chinese and the Manchu people to support the argument that Manchuria was, in fact, an integral part of China rather than a culturally distinct territory.

The existence of the League of Nations forced China and Japan to fit their arguments to the international audience. The Japanese and Chinese delegates gave speeches and statements before the League of Nations that were intended for the international community. These public statements provided insight into the machinations required to negotiate for political support. Aside from the United States and the Soviet Union, the other major powers in the pre-World War II world were represented in the League of Nations, and both China and Japan repeatedly proclaimed loyalty to the League.

A clear contradiction between Japan’s actions and Japan’s purported adherence to the League of Nations’ principles was visible through analysis of the Japanese statements before the General Assembly of the League of Nations. Taken in conjunction with the military acts of the Kwantung Army, there appears little doubt that Japan acted to pursue expansionist, imperialist goals, not out of self-defense. Membership in the League of Nations required a type of rhetoric that otherwise would never have appeared, because Japan believed that Assembly support was important to determine the legitimacy of its actions in Manchuria. The Japanese government was concerned about garnering internally sanctioned legitimacy, and therefore the Japanese delegate planned every word of every statement.

The League of Nations was ultimately unable to prevent war from erupting between China and Japan. The Assembly’s failure to maintain peace through mediation reflected the League of Nations’ impotence, as the Assembly could pass resolutions and make suggestions, but had no way to enforce them. Although the League of Nations determined that China retained sovereignty over Manchuria and that Japanese troops should be evacuated
from the territory, the Assembly possessed no tangible means to ensure that the conflict would be resolved in the suggested manner. Rather than accepting and adhering to the Assembly’s resolutions, Japan withdrew from the League and continued its imperialist efforts in East Asia.

Historians have typically focused on the dramatic upheaval that the Manchurian incident produced and the inability of the League of Nations to prevent the second Sino-Japanese War. The diplomatic statements and speeches of the Chinese and Japanese delegates have often been overlooked, but discourse analysis reveals how desperately both parties attempted to gain international support, regardless of whether they actually supported League ideals. The League of Nations was intended as an effective means of global governance on the surface, and member nations obviously felt that League approval was necessary to participate in the international system. The appearance of nominal authority vanished with analysis of the ultimate impact of the League of Nations’ resolutions. The Assembly was imminently concerned with following established protocols, and yet failed to achieve a resolution to the conflict. Rhetorical analysis of the Manchurian crisis exposes the ease with which delegates manipulated rhetoric to appeal to the League of Nations, while their respective countries pursued independent goals. The Sino-Japanese conflict tested the League of Nations, and the Assembly was unable to preserve international peace.
REFERENCES


