Fall from grace: United States images of Japan, 1894--1921

Darryl Scott Hushaw

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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Darryl Hushaw

Entitled

Fall From Grace: U.S. Images of Japan 1894-1921

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Examination Committee Chair

Dean of the Graduate College

Examination Committee Member

Examination Committee Member

Graduate College Faculty Representative
ABSTRACT

FALL FROM GRACE: U.S. IMAGES OF JAPAN, 1894-1921

by Darryl Hushaw

Dr. Sue Fawn Chung, Examination Committee Chair
Professor of History
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

This thesis examines the shifting American perceptions of Japan in the period from the Sino-Japanese War to the Washington Naval Conference, as expressed in the popular press, government statements, missionary speeches, and other printed materials. During this period, the American image of Japan changed dramatically, and the image of the Japanese was transformed from an admirable, if exotic, people, to formidable economic, cultural, and strategic rivals. While Theodore Roosevelt pursued a pragmatic East Asian policy based on the interests and capabilities of the nations in question, his successors altered this policy, with the Taft Administration mounting an economic challenge to Japan in Manchuria, and Woodrow Wilson opposing Japanese domination of China on moral grounds. This process was intimately involved with the change in American perceptions of Japan. After Wilson proved unable to reconcile his idealism with the demands of traditional diplomacy, the Harding Administration used a different approach to defuse tensions in the short term. Throughout the period, perceptions of Japan were a factor in shaping the United States' East Asian policy. While perceptions were usually influenced by policy, popular images of Japan and East Asia played a key role in determining the nature of several foreign policy endeavors, and eventually the government was more likely to play to public opinion than to attempt to shape it.
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INTRODUCTION

The period which began with the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, and ended with the Washington Naval Conference of 1921, saw a major shift in American perceptions of East Asia. There was also a shift in the importance of these perceptions in shaping the conduct of American diplomacy in the region. Nowhere is this more apparent than with regard to Japan. In 1894, when Americans thought of the island kingdom at all, they usually pictured a quaint and exotic land, whose people were alien, but rather amusing. The Japanese were certainly not seen as posing any serious threat to American interests. In contrast, when the Washington Conference drew to a close, most observers breathed a sigh of relief, because the likelihood of war between the two Pacific powers, the United States and Japan, appeared to be substantially reduced.

The years between 1894 and 1921 saw the relationship between perceptions of Japan and government policy reverse itself. Initially, it was policy which tended to influence perception, or the images of Japan and the Japanese which were portrayed in the American popular press. The Sino-Japanese War and the acquisition of a colonial empire in the Pacific by the United States in the wake of the Spanish-American War meant that increasingly, Japanese-American relations were conducted with more seriousness and accorded more importance than had previously been the case. This reinforced the belief of many commentators that the Meiji Restoration had been a resounding success, and that Japan had ‘grown up.’ Thus, Japan was quite often portrayed as the vigorous, enlightened beacon of Asian progress during this period.

The American image of Japan as the shining example of Westernization in East Asia probably reached its high point during the Russo-Japanese War. Traditional American sympathy for the underdog and dislike of Russian autocracy blended perfectly with the realpolitik of President Roosevelt, who made little effort to hide his pro-Japanese sympathies and who
offered American good offices to end the conflict when it became apparent that a war of attrition which would favor Russia would otherwise result. Even when pro-Japanese sentiment in the United States was at its peak, however, there were factors at work which would shift the current of popular perception dramatically.

One of these factors was unrest in Japan, which was caused by popular dissatisfaction with the Treaty of Portsmouth, which ended the Russo-Japanese War. Much of the American press considered this to be sheer ingratitude. While this played a significant role in altering the prevalent image of Japan in the United States, a more important catalyst was the issue of Japanese immigration. West Coast agitation to exclude Japanese immigrants (as their Chinese counterparts had earlier been excluded) caused the first major crisis in Japanese-American relations. It also saw the first serious discussion of the possibility of war between the two countries in the American press, as Japan was transformed in American eyes from a protege into a definite rival and potential adversary.

With West Coast clamor for exclusion becoming a major issue between the United States and Japan, the Roosevelt Administration's East Asian policy, which earlier had aimed at maintaining a balance of power on the Asian mainland, increasingly accepted Japanese primacy in Asia in exchange for an informal agreement which limited emigration from Japan to the United States. The anti-Japanese legislation which was passed in California and other western states during this period would make maintaining this approach fairly difficult, and also serves to demonstrate how popular images of Japan and the Japanese more and more came to influence official policy, rather than the other way around.

While the anti-Japanese attitude prevalent in California and the rest of the West Coast made Theodore Roosevelt's East Asian policy a delicate balancing act, he never lost sight of the fact that, for his policy to be successful, Japan had to be accepted as the dominant military and economic power in Asia, nor that this amounted to little more than accepting the existing state of affairs. His successors did not share this understanding. William Howard Taft tried to maintain the broad thrust of Roosevelt's policy while mounting a challenge to Japan's economic
domination of Manchuria. In doing so, he was influenced by Thomas F. Millard, a journalist who had come to distrust the Japanese as a result of his activities as a war correspondent during the conflict with Russia.

When Woodrow Wilson became President, he expressed dissatisfaction with the East Asian initiatives of his predecessor. Wilson was disdainful of Taft's policy not because it departed from Roosevelt's pragmatism or failed to achieve its goals, but rather because it continued to emphasize material concerns rather than the idealism which Wilson felt should serve as the cornerstone of American diplomacy. His unilateral recognition of the Chinese Republic was an infusion of idealism into East Asian policy, and when Japan issued the Twenty-One Demands to China in 1915, Wilson's opposition was based on moral grounds. This emphasis on morality played well with many members of the press in the eastern United States. While their western counterparts generally had a better feeling for conditions in China, anti-Japanese feeling on the West Coast was so pervasive that most would eventually join their eastern brethren in assuming the Wilson Administration was basing its increasing hostility toward Japan on pragmatic considerations.

President Wilson's ability to convince his countrymen that their participation in the First World War had transformed the conflict into a Manichean struggle between light and dark would come back to haunt him when the war was over and he was trying to hammer out a peace based on his precepts for a new and better world order. This was especially the case concerning the Treaty of Versailles' provisions regarding East Asia. Japan's retention of the Shandong peninsula would eventually spark the May Fourth 1919 movement in China. It also provoked considerable outcry in the United States, and would provide a major rallying point for opponents of the treaty and American entry into the League of Nations. Wilson suffered a crippling stroke while defending the Treaty of Versailles and its East Asian provisions, undone in part by forces he had set in motion.

The popular image of Japan as the single greatest impediment to China's modernization remained a potent force in determining American East Asian policy after Wilson had left the
White House, as can be seen in examining the subsequent Harding Administration's major contribution to the annals of American diplomacy, the Washington Naval Conference. While popular revulsion at continued military expenditure made naval limitation a necessity, Japan was nonetheless perceived as a military threat as well as a blight on China's future prospects. While the Administration was able to achieve its immediate goals by conducting the conference masterfully, this achievement rested largely on playing to the press and its perceptions, rather than trying to shape them.
Upon the conclusion of the Spanish-American War, on August 12, 1898, the United States embarked upon a new and unprecedented course of conduct in its diplomacy. While the war had been intended to destroy the last vestiges of Spanish colonialism in the New World, the guns of George Dewey's squadron had smashed not only a decrepit Spanish fleet in Manila Bay, but also the traditional constraints on American foreign policy. For instance, A. Whitney Griswold wrote in *The Far Eastern Policy of the United States* that prior to the Spanish-American War, "For a hundred years the United States had conducted its relations with the countries of the Far East according to rules and principles that were mainly the product of nature...The racial and cultural strangeness of the peoples of Eastern Asia combined with the geographical situation of their countries to make that region a remote and dangerous frontier for Western enterprise."

With the end of the war, everything was changed. The United States was now a world power, with new responsibilities and a new outlook toward the rest of the globe. The acquisition of the Philippines meant that the American perspective on the Pacific and East Asia was particularly altered. Even before the results of the war with Spain transformed United States foreign policy, however, other events had already occurred, which had caused

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Americans to begin to view East Asia in a different light. Japan and China, two traditionally backward Oriental nations, fought a major conflict over the control of a third, Korea. After that war, the victor, Japan, had to be viewed in a new light, particularly as her new power and influence could now be felt not only in East Asia, but increasingly throughout the Pacific as well.

I.

As the last decade of the nineteenth century began, the major issue involving Japan of interest in American eyes was that of treaty revision. When forced to accede to Western desires and end their isolation in the middle years of the nineteenth century, the Japanese had been compelled to sign the same unequal treaties as the Chinese had earlier (although, to be fair, Western representatives such as Townsend Harris included some of their demands on the Shogunate as bargaining chips, hardly expecting the Japanese to agree to everything asked of them). Treaty revision became something of a cause for the American intelligentsia, who were willing to recognize the efforts that Japan was making to Westernize itself. On May 19, 1894, the Literary Digest noted that

For some time past the Japanese have exhibited more or less dissatisfaction with the Treaties with foreign nations. These treaties were concluded at a time when Japan, like China, had been only for a short time subject to European influences, and the difference between European and Japanese customs was very great. But now Japan, as a civilized nation, claims an equality with the greatest nations of the world.\(^1\)

Another writer pressed the argument further, saying

Perhaps the average American knows little and cares less about the political excitement which prevails throughout Japan, and which has been steadily increasing for twenty years. And yet the one issue which is as all-absorbing with the Japanese as was the slavery question with us in the

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closing days of the fifties, concerns every American who loves justice and values the honor of the republic.²

He further noted that "Since the signing of this treaty, more than thirty years ago, it is safe to say that no nation has made more rapid to uninterrupted progress along the highway of enlightenment than Japan."³ As can be seen, supporters of treaty revision tended to be quite effusive in their praise of the Meiji leadership's policies and their effect upon the island kingdom.

Not all Western observers were quite as impressed with the Japanese, or their process of modernization. A. Henry Savage-Lindfors, for example, dismissed the strides Japan had made, writing "When, as years go on, their capricious and somewhat childish nature has altered...when...they will go to work to adapt Western civilization to themselves, instead of adapting themselves to Western civilization, I am certain that...the Japanese will have a great future before them."⁴ Writing in Scribner's Magazine, George Trumbull Ladd would argue that

the superficial observer (of the Japanese)...may find everything interesting, aesthetically pleasing, promising continued kindness of feeling and unwearied delightful politeness of address. But the more profound student will take note of the clear indications, that beneath this thin, fair crust, there are smouldering fires of national sentiment, uncontrolled by solid moral principle, and unguided by sound practical judgement.⁵

Clearly, some commentators harbored reservations about the depth and extent to which modernization was transforming Japan.

While treaty revision continued to be a point of interest to American commentators, other events in the East were soon to push it aside. The same issue of the Literary Digest, which

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³ ibid., p. 227.
reported Japanese dissatisfaction with existing treaties also noted that the pro-Japanese Korean rebel Kim Ok-Kium had been assassinated at Shanghai, an event which it was felt "may cause great complications in Eastern Asia."\(^6\) For over a decade Japan and China had been girding for a showdown over the control of Korea, and the issue was coming to a head.

The outbreak of open hostilities between China and Japan over Korea was precipitated by the success of the Tonghak insurrection. Virulently antiforeign, the initial successes of the Tonghak rebels forced the Korean monarchy to ask the Chinese government, its nominal overlord according to the tributary system, for military assistance. Citing the 1885 Tientsin Convention, Japan also rushed large bodies of troops to Korea. Since neither Japan nor China would withdraw its forces, tension between the two nations mounted rapidly.

As war clouds gathered, the *American Monthly Review of Reviews* detected "a serious though as yet obscure controversy between Japan and China concerning affairs in Corea [sic]." Looking at the two antagonists' motives, its editors stated that "China has always claimed a certain shadowy suzerainty over the kingdom of Corea, while Japan has long maintained relations of commercial intercourse with that country that have seemed to justify a claim to intervention in behalf of the maintenance of order and good government." The *Review of Reviews* concluded that "the United States has always been the best and the fairest friend to these two governments across the Pacific, and our authorities in Washington should exert themselves to the utmost to aid in preventing war and in securing a just settlement of the misunderstanding."\(^7\)

The Cleveland Administration agreed with this assessment of East Asian affairs, and made a fairly strong effort to prevent the controversy between Japan and China from erupting into war. Assurances were made to the Korean government, Secretary of State Walter Q.


\(^7\) *American Review of Reviews* 10 (1894), p.139.
Gresham protested Japan's actions, and the cruiser Baltimore was dispatched to Chemulpo harbor to protect American interests. As historian Jeffrey Dorwart noted in The Pigtail War: American Involvement in the Sino-Japanese War 1894-1895, Cleveland and Gresham were motivated by feelings of humanitarianism rather than self-interest. Their efforts, however, came to nothing, and in many ways the outbreak of actual hostilities probably saved the Cleveland Administration from having to extricate itself from a potentially embarrassing situation. The protection of American interests in East Asia, which were not extensive at the time, was severely constrained by the fact that American power and influence in the region were even more minimal.

Even before the formal outbreak of the war, on August 1, 1894, some of the American press had anticipated not only that the efforts of the Administration to reach a peaceful settling of Sino-Japanese differences would end in failure, but also were looking forward to the possible consequences of the war itself. An editorial in the San Francisco Chronicle on July 26 was entitled "It Looks Like War," and opined that "neither China nor Japan has any urgent need for Corea, unless to keep it in the attitude it has occupied, that of a buffer state. The one country that does want Corea...is Russia, and if China and Japan fight over Corea it will not be strange if at the end of the contest Russia has the oyster and Japan and China only the shells."

On July 28 the New York Times decided that "there is no longer any doubt that China and Japan have gone to war in earnest," while admitting that "Western judgments of the military features of a war between China and Japan are likely to be somewhat affected by our tendency to look on the people of those two countries as grotesque beings who always do everything just the other way from our way." As the Times' editors realized, most Americans continued to


9 San Francisco Chronicle. 26 July 1894.

view Asians as perforce backward and uncivilized. Of course, not all observers felt this way. British writer Henry Norman argued that "In spite of all that has been written about Japan, and of all the thousands of people who have visited the country, Europe has not yet learned to take her seriously. The war with China...will at last force foreigners to see Japan as she is."\(^\text{11}\) It was generally recognized that the war and its consequences could change the face of East Asia, but the American and European press was unsure as to which direction any resulting changes would take.

As at first unconfirmed reports of Japanese naval victories at the Yalu and elsewhere came in, American newspapers began to 'choose up sides.' For the most part, the side chosen was that of Japan. The Chicago Times felt that "it is not merely that Japan is the most civilized country in the East, and her people the leaders in art and science not only in that hemisphere, but, in some important respects, of the entire world...the United States' material interests seem to lie in this contest beside our sympathies," while the New York Times argued that "It is enough to know that the victory of China would be followed by an enforcement of the Chinese policy of exclusion and stagnation, and the victory of Japan by the enforcement of the Japanese policy of commerce and progress."\(^\text{12}\) If war had to come to the Far East, perhaps Japan could further the cause of progress and Western civilization.

This pro-Japanese viewpoint was by no means unanimous. The Boston Advertiser stated that "Europe and America deprecate Mongolian bloodshed on grounds of humane sentiment and commercial interest," while the New York Evening Post disdainfully noted that "There is...an added interest for the spectator in the fact that the contestants are but half-civilized. They have been playing at the game of civilized life for some years now, but there has been all the while on the part of Western nations a half-amused feeling that it was all a pretty farce.

\(^\text{12}\) Literary Digest, 18 August 1894, pp. 451-452.
How will the veneer of civilization stand the friction of war? 13 While few American newspapers were willing to espouse the Chinese cause, several were still willing to dismiss the entire conflict as a struggle between Asian savages. While this tendency was most pronounced in Democratic papers geared toward a more working class readership, it was by no means confined to them.

While the initial Japanese victories on land and sea, once confirmed, earned the grudging respect of even the more critical American newspapers and periodicals, a widespread feeling existed even among pro-Japanese elements of the press that in a protracted struggle, Japan could not prevail. The San Francisco Chronicle stated on August 17 that

The Japanese people are represented as being so filled with martial ardor that they now dream of wresting Manchuria from China. It is to be feared that the few victories they have gained have turned the heads of the Mikado's subjects. They were far better prepared for war than the Chinese, hence they have won decided victories. But the Mongolians, though they are slow moving, are ugly when their blood is roused, and they have one hundred men for every one that Japan can turn out. 14

The New York Times disagreed, saying

There is no doubt that the Japanese nation is enthusiastically in favor of this war. It has even been charged, and with some plausibility, that the war is an 'electioneering' war, a 'political dodge.' But this charge admits that the war is popular...it is plain that Japan is united and aroused on this issue. China, on the other hand, is incapable of being united and aroused on any issue of foreign politics. 15

Some newspapers also reported that the Chinese government was saving its best troops to quell domestic insurrections, it being felt that China was both unable and unwilling to commit the greater part of her strength to the war with Japan.

13 ibid., p. 452.
14 San Francisco Chronicle. 17 August 1894.
Before the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, those elements of the American press which took notice of Japan had begun to characterize it as a unique society. While steeped in Asian mystique the Japanese were making a conscious effort to Westernize, and American writers in favor of treaty revision felt that the United States owed it to the Japanese to meet them halfway. Once the war had commenced, many observers were willing to look on it as a test case, to prove the comparative worth of Western and Eastern civilization. While most of the American press was favorably impressed by Japan's initial successes in the conflict, it felt that they could not last. Either the European powers or ponderous Imperial China herself would eventually halt the string of Japanese victories.

II.

On September 20, 1894, the Nation reported that a treaty of alliance had been concluded between Korea and Japan. "The zeal of France for American independence was not exactly disinterested," its editors noted, "and it is scarcely probable that the Japanese are motivated by a sense of altruism in relieving the Coreans from a claim of sovereignty that was certainly not very oppressive."16

Opinion in the Western press was divided as to the meaning of this development. In an article in the North American Review, Augustine Heard, a former ambassador to Korea, wrote "opinion in this country runs so strongly in favor of Japan, and against China, and upon what I believe to be such insufficient grounds, that, believing it to be the duty of every one who can add to the general enlightenment, I venture to add my mite." "Japan has unquestionably the predominant commercial interest in Korea," admitted Heard, "and her views regarding the development of the trade are worth of serious consideration; but the manner in which she advances her views...is a fair subject for criticism." Arguing that Japanese designs on Korea

16 Nation, 20 September 1894, p. 300.
were purely predatory, Heard concluded his article by saying "China is anti-progressive, not to say retroactive. She will delay or crush development; but if Korea falls into the hands of Japan, God help her!" Englishman Robert K. Douglas, however, felt that "there remains only Japan to undertake the task of cleansing the Augean stable. The ease and rapidity with which she has put her own house in order augurs well for her power to grapple with the Korean difficulty, and her intimate knowledge of the people and their wants furnishes an additional qualification for the thankless and arduous duty which she has declared herself ready and determined to carry out." While few commentators believed that Korea would long retain any real independence after allying with Japan, many expected the Japanese process of modernization to be applied to the peninsula, with beneficial results.

The treaty itself was part and parcel with the success of Japanese arms. While Japan undertook by its terms to rid Korea of all Chinese presence and force China to renounce any claims to sovereignty over the peninsula, its military successes were such that it was soon able to take the war to China itself. On November 10, the editors of the Literary Digest observed that "The Japanese have entered China. To all appearance there is little to stop them on their victorious course, and the Powers are in a quandary. It will not suit them to have China conquered." Port Arthur, in Manchuria, fell to Japanese forces on November 21. Many American newspaper editorials opined that if Japan were able to take Peking, she should do so in order to be able to dictate the terms she desired to a humbled and prostate China.

Even as the Japanese army marched further into Manchuria in October and November, the American press pondered the likelihood of an intervention by the European powers, designed to prevent Japan from attaining the unlooked-for prize of total domination of China. "China has

19 Literary Digest, 10 November 1894, p. 54.
led a precarious existence for years," observed the Nation on November 15, "owing to the enormous number of European and Western speculators who want to 'develop her resources,' and they will get at her eventually; but nobody supposed that Japan would put in the entering wedge." While the partition of China had long been predicted by European and American observers, the fact that another Asian nation might not only have begun the process, but also be in a position to claim the entire prize, was astonishing.

American newspaper and magazine editors certainly did not expect Japan's bid for total domination of China to go unchallenged. On August 3, the Portland Oregonian had argued that "China and Japan are only players in the game, and Corea is not even a pawn. It is merely the board...China is playing England's game consciously, when she tries to advance her frontier to that of Russia. Japan thinks she is playing her own game... (but) really she is playing Russia's, since the effect of her movement is to keep China out and to maintain an independent, friendly state on the Russian frontier." Upon receiving reports of an attempt by the major European nations to force an end to the war in early October, the New York Times showed outrage, saying "a conference of the powers at this time to arrange terms of peace would simply be a conference of nations that have had nothing to do with the war to rob the nation that has fought the war, alone and unaided, of the fruits of its victory, and to divide the spoil among the outsiders. International morality could not sink much lower than that." European intervention in the war, while looked on with some disgust, was expected by most of the American press throughout its duration.

From the outbreak of hostilities, the Cleveland Administration had extended good offices to both of the belligerent powers. While some difficulties were encountered in performing this

20 Nation. 15 November 1894, p. 353.
21 Portland Oregonian. 3 August 1894.
service, on the whole the United States government was pleased with the success of its efforts, so much so that it was eventually willing to consider mediation to restore peace in Asia. On November 13, the Japanese government took up the question of whether to accept United States mediation of the conflict.

Press opinion on the advisability of American mediation of the Sino-Japanese War was mixed. The American Monthly Review of Reviews earnestly hoped "that President Cleveland may be able to signalize his administration by the accomplishment of a successful mediation in a quarrel that threatens to shake Asia to its very foundations." The New York Tribune agreed, calling the United States "the ideal mediator," while the Boston Herald felt that "it must be satisfactory to those American people who are not carried away by 'jingo' notions to realize that ours is the only great Government of the world to which the Chinese and the Japanese can appeal with the knowledge that disinterested counsel and advice will be given them." The Chicago Herald, on the other hand, considered it "wholly fantastic" for the United States to consider acting as mediator, while the New York Sun felt that "we have no more business to proffer mediation between China and Japan than we would have had to make a like officious proposal to Germany and France in 1870-71. In this case, as in the other, there is no need of mediation. If China wants peace, let her do what France did in 1871: let her apply to her victorious antagonist, and accept the best terms she can get."

Not everyone in the American press felt that China could even get terms. On December 9, an intriguing editorial was published in the New York Times. Entitled, "Looking Forward," it opened by stating that, "When Commodore Perry knocked the mud forts of the Japanese about their ears, he supposed that he was merely opening a new market for Western products. In the light of recent events it begins to look as if Perry's cannons really decided the fate of the entire

23 American Review of Reviews 10 (1894), p. 600.
24 Literary Digest, 24 November 1894, pp. 96-97.
Eastern Hemisphere." "No one," it continued, "any longer doubts that Japan can with ease conquer China and establish a new and greater Japanese Empire, with its capital at Pekin."25 "Under Japanese rule," the writer argued, "China would be covered with railways, and her material prosperity would be greatly increased...(and) with its army and navy Japan would find it a mere holiday task to overrun and take possession of India." This would prove only a starting point, as

Masters of India and China, the time would come when the Japanese would seek to extend their possessions. Following the path of the Turkish hordes that long ago invaded Europe, the Japanese would conquer Turkestan, Persia, and Syria, and the Mediterranean would become a Japanese lake. The invaders would then pass into Europe, which would be powerless in the face of the innumerable soldiers and immense fleets of the Japanese.

"The prospect that the empire of the world may become divided between Japan and the United States," the editorial concluded, "may not at first sight seem a welcome one, but it does not follow that it would be wholly a misfortune were Europe to pass under the dominion of Japan."26 Not only was Japanese domination of the Eastern Hemisphere suddenly possible, on the whole, it might turn out to be rather a good thing.

The Japanese government eventually decided to reject the first American offer to mediate a resolution to the conflict, feeling it improper to accept such an offer before China had even attempted to negotiate with Japan directly.27 Commenting on this initiative and the Administration which proposed it, the San Francisco Chronicle called this rejection perfectly justified, since "There is absolutely nothing in the administration of our foreign affairs since the second and last coming of Cleveland and the discovery of Gresham as a diplomat which warrant any Government in submitting anything to their judgment."28

26 Ibid.
27 Dorwart, The Pigtail War, p. 76.
28 San Francisco Chronicle, 23 November 1894.
persisted in its efforts, however, and the American minister in Beijing, Charles Denby, prodded the Chinese into appointing two peace commissioners on December 20. This turned out to be a delaying tactic. The enthusiastic Denby would later attempt to personally guarantee the credentials of a subsequent Chinese peace mission to Japan, an attempt which proved an utter fiasco. American efforts to mediate an end to the war were doomed to failure.

Contrary to many expectations, the string of Japanese victories which opened the Sino-Japanese conflict had not been brought to an end as the war continued but rather had multiplied, with the result that a good portion of the American press felt that there was a real chance that the Japanese Empire might well become the new Colossus of Asia. Not only was this considered possible, but some writers even possessed the opinion that it might prove beneficial to the progress of the world.

The respect engendered by the success of Japanese arms was also extended to her diplomatic efforts, to the degree that newspapers which derided the Cleveland Administration's attempts at mediating an end to the conflict often had words of praise for the manner in which Japan rejected American initiatives. Japanese military successes in the closing stages of the Sino-Japanese War also achieved a victory with regard to the American press, which increasingly looked upon Japan as having "closed the gap" between herself and Western nations.

III.

On March 23, 1895, the Literary Digest observed that "At last China has found it expedient to send an embassy to Japan fully empowered to treat with the enemy." It was only the arrival of venerable Chinese viceroy Li Hongzhang (Li Hung-Chang) in Japan, coupled with his attempted assassination by a Japanese ultra-nationalist and Japanese awareness of

29 Literary Digest, 23 March 1895, p. 622.
the increasing likelihood of European interference in the conflict, which eventually brought the
Sino-Japanese War to a close. Korea's independence from China was formally recognized,
Formosa and the Pescadores were handed over to Japan, and an indemnity was exacted.
Most controversially, Port Arthur and the Liaodong (Liaotung) peninsula were to be ceded to
Japan.

While the *American Monthly Review of Reviews* regarded the terms of peace as "not more
onerous than had been expected," they were met with much less approval in the chanceries
of Europe. The *Nation* reported that "The grumbling of the Russian press over the terms of the
treaty between Japan and China probably signifies that the Government will use all means
short of war to prevent Japan from getting a lodgement on the mainland of Asia." While
American newspapers had been looking for European and particularly Russian intervention
since practically the war's inception, it appeared that the Tsar's ministers were at last prepared
to make their move.

By May 7, the *New York Times* was reporting that "There seems to be no doubt left that
Japan has agreed, in deference to the remonstrance of Russia, Germany, and France, to
abandon all claim to a continued occupancy of any port of Manchuria, including Port Arthur,"
and concluded that "Western civilization appears to more advantage in this business in the
Oriental copy than in the European original." The long expected intervention of the powers
had at last occurred, and Japan was forced to accede to their wishes with what grace she could
muster.

On June 22, the *Literary Digest* reported that "there was little public rejoicing in Japan when
the ratification of the treaty of peace was announced to the public," while the *American

31 *Nation*, 25 April 1895, p. 315.
33 *Literary Digest*, 22 June 1895, p. 232.
Monthly Review of Reviews felt that "Both the Japanese and the Russians appear to have taken it for granted that the recent war only cleared the stage for the real antagonists to take the field." While the initial reports of the Tripartite Intervention had by and large felt that the Russian occupation of Port Arthur would be a permanent one, an appreciation of the deep resentment felt by Japan toward Russia (as, for example, when Lafcadio Hearn informed readers of the Atlantic Monthly that "It required all the firmness of the government to hold the nation back"), coupled with newfound awareness of Japanese military and diplomatic prowess, led some American observers to feel that the struggle for the control of Manchuria and Korea was not yet over.

In the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War, many reports in the American press concerning Japan and its role in East Asia were optimistic in tone. An article in the Atlantic Monthly stated that

Without losing a single ship or a single battle, Japan has broken down the power of China, made a new Korea, enlarged her own territory, and changed the whole political face of the East. Astonishing as this has seemed politically, it is much more astounding psychologically, for it represents the result of a vast play of capacities with which the race had never been credited abroad, and capacities of a very high order.

In a similar vein, Secretary of the Navy Hilary A. Herbert opened his article in the North American Review by saying that

Japan has leaped, almost at one bound, to a place among the great nations of the earth. Her recent exploits in China have focused all eyes upon her, and the world now comprehends the fact that this small island kingdom, so little taken account of heretofore in the calculations even of students and

statesmen, has within a few decades stridden over ground traversed by other nations only within centuries.\(^{37}\)

While Herbert opened his article by praising the accomplishments of the Japanese, he concluded by reminding his readers that "Japan's people, homogenous and united, are quite equal in numbers to the population of England, Ireland, Wales, and Scotland, and that the United Kingdom is and has been for years the mistress of the seas. Americans must remember, too, that only the waters of one ocean, a wide one, no doubt, but one easily traversed by navies, separate their country from Asia."\(^{38}\) Nor was he the only observer to temper his praise of Japan. Writing about the massacre of Chinese civilians which followed the fall of Port Arthur to Japanese forces during the war, Frederic Villiers, while calling himself a sincere friend of Japan, still felt that "The Japanese are yet young in the ways of civilization and on occasion can be exceedingly cruel; but, like most young children, they are very sensitive on being found out, and will tell the most deliberate and unblushing falsehoods to shield themselves."\(^{39}\) Even in the wake of its greatest international triumph to date, a friend and admirer of Japan was willing to characterize the Japanese as being half-civilized children.

Reservations about the depth of Japan's Westernization notwithstanding, the American press was quick to conclude that one of the war's greatest benefits to the Japanese was that it greatly speeded up the process of treaty revision. According to the American Monthly Review of Reviews, "one of the most creditable acts of the present administration at Washington has been the negotiation of a new treaty with Japan, based upon recognition of the fact that Japan has attained the position of a maturely developed modern power." "War is a terrible thing," continued the Review of Reviews, "and its indirect effects upon the life and character of a


\(^{38}\) Ibid., 698.

nation are always in some respects deplorable and exceeding difficult to outgrow. Nevertheless this particular war would seem in many ways to be a blessing to Japan.\textsuperscript{40}

Counted among the war's benefits were the avoidance of a major political crisis between the popular political parties of Japan and the \textit{genro}, or elder statesmen, of the nation, and increased economic opportunities, both in Asia itself and throughout the world. A British article reprinted in \textit{Living Age} in 1895 argued that "Among the many happy results of Japan's encounter with China is one of the utmost importance that readily eludes the ken of European politicians. For this war has, for the time, averted the utter breakdown of Japan's new constitutional machinery."\textsuperscript{41} The article went on to paint a picture of a nation being increasingly torn by strife between its aristocratic elder statesmen and the new popular political parties, to the extent that a return to dictatorship was possible, until Japan's successes in the conflict brought the people solidly behind the government.

Japanese economic potential was also the subject of increased scrutiny after the war. The \textit{Literary Digest} noted in February of 1896 that "It is evident that Japan is to cut a considerable figure in our Presidential campaign this year. Already the tariff controversy is turning toward the subject of Asiatic competition with American industries, and much editorial ink is being expended in debating whether such competition is genuine or a mere bugaboo—a 'yellow specter,' as a French writer calls it."\textsuperscript{42}

In an article for the \textit{North American Review}, Robert P. Porter asked, "What is Japanese progress and Japanese competition? You hear the question asked on all sides since the war with China, and the answers take as wide a range as the accounts of the eyewitnesses of the battles and sieges of the conflict itself." Looking at a few select industries, Porter argued that

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{American Review of Reviews} 11 (1895), p. 136.


\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Literary Digest}. 27 June 1896, p. 261.
It is not so much the quantities of these articles exported to the United States that has given alarm, but the sudden manner in which the Japanese have, metaphorically speaking, thrown their hats into the American market, and challenged our labor and capital with goods which, for excellence and cheapness, seem for the moment to defy competition, even with the latest labor-saving appliances at hand.\textsuperscript{43}

Porter based his estimate of Japan's industrial potential on economic indicators supplied to him by the U. S. and Japanese governments, as well as his own personal travels. "The large cities of Japan," he stated, "I found filled with industrial energy, while in the country districts through which I traveled the click of the shuttle and the whir of the spinning wheel could be heard in almost every cottage." When Japan is fully equipped with the latest machinery," he concluded, "it will, in my opinion, be the most potent industrial force in the markets of the world." While other economists disagreed with Porter's view, their point of contention was not that Japan did not have the potential to become a major industrial power, but rather that a rising Japanese living standard would prevent the nation from dominating the world's economy with "starvation wage" labor.\textsuperscript{44}

Throughout 1895 and 1896, excitement over the war between Japan and China faded from American consciousness. As it did, American identification with Japan also faded slightly. While most of the American press expressed outrage over the European intervention which deprived Japan of the legitimate spoils of her victory over China, and was pleased to see that the process of treaty revision had been greatly speeded by Japan's improved stature, this new stature also caused the Japanese to be looked at through more critical eyes. Excesses committed by Japanese troops during the Sino-Japanese conflict were no longer so readily


\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Ibid.}, 154-155. For an example of disagreement with Porter's forecast, see "Japan as Our Industrial Competitor," \textit{Literary Digest}, 27 June 1896, pp. 261-262.
excused, and Japanese economic rivalry with the United States was now counted as a distinct possibility. As debate in the United States increased as to whether America should become an imperial power, expansionists and navalists would discreetly raise the possibility that Japan might become a strategic rival as well.

IV.

Looking at the coup of 1893, in which American sugar planters overthrew the Hawaiian monarchy and established a provisional republic, the Literary Digest caustically observed in 1895 that "The world has had a foretaste of what enterprising Americans can do if they are given a chance. Hawaii was a kingdom under a native dynasty. Some enterprising countrymen of ours saw that these islands were ready to become the property of whosoever was bold enough to take them." The Hawaiian Republic had been established with the goal of annexation by the United States in mind, and throughout the last weeks of 1892, the outgoing Harrison Administration had done everything in its power to bring this about before the more moralistic Cleveland came into office. This attempt had failed, however, and the issue of annexation of the Hawaiian islands was one which would provide the basis for a lively debate from 1893 until 1898, when, during the Spanish-American War, Hawaii was brought under the American flag.

While expansionists usually couched their arguments in favor of taking possession of the islands in strategic terms, calling them the "key to the Pacific," and emphasizing that the United States must annex Hawaii before some other power (usually Great Britain) did so, anti-imperialists based their objections to annexation on moral, legal, and also racial grounds. In an article for Harper's New Monthly Magazine in 1893, Carl Schurz argued that "if ever there was a population unfit to constitute a State of the American Union, it is this." "If ever attached

45 Literary Digest, 11 May 1895, p. 23.
to the United States," Schurz argued, "Hawaii would always retain a colonial character." A major factor in Schurz's assessment of the population of Hawaii as having a "colonial" nature was the large number of Chinese and Japanese laborers living in the islands.

As reports of plots and counterplots by Hawaiian republicans and monarchists swirled in the American press, many observers came to consider the Japanese element of the population of Hawaii a major factor in determining the stability of the Dole regime. The Literary Digest noted in 1894 that "The new government of Hawaii, which is almost exclusively in the hands of the American element, is strenuously opposed to the extension of the franchise to immigrants from Asia...the point most seriously to be considered in this question is the attitude of the Japanese." On April 18, 1895, the Nation reported that the Hawaiian republic feared that as Great Britain overlooked her chance to grasp the islands, the possibility of Japan seizing them increased.

While this report was viewed by the editors of the Nation and much of the rest of the American press as a pathetic attempt to drum up further support for annexation, it was widely recognized that the Japanese government had little patience with Hawaii, the Literary Digest observing that "Japan, successful in her struggle with China, will not favor a Government which refuses citizen-rights to Japanese emigrants, and already there is talk in Tokyo of an expedition to the Hawaiian Islands." While most American observers did not yet believe that

47 Literary Digest. 23 June 1894, p. 236.
48 Nation. 18 April 1895, p. 292. On July 8, the New York Times mentioned a report by a Tacoma paper that "Queen Liliuokalani and her followers are plotting to form an alliance with Japan by her marriage to a Japanese Count...the Japanese have 30,000 residents in the islands, and if the proposed alliance should be made, it is alleged that this contingent would be used to overthrow the Hawaiian Republic."
49 Literary Digest. 11 May 1895, p. 23.
the issue was likely to cause conflict, it was widely recognized that in many respects, Japan had justice on her side in any dispute with Hawaii.

On December 18, 1896, the New York Times stated that "The Hawaiian Minister of Foreign Affairs, now visiting this country, is reported as representing the Hawaiian Government to be in fear of what the Japanese may do, and anxious for annexation to the United States on that account." While the Times considered his description of the state of affairs in the islands to illustrate perfectly why the United States should steer clear of annexation, the incoming McKinley Administration did not oppose annexation on principle, as had its predecessor. As a result, the annexationists began to press their case. In a letter to the North American Review promoting acquisition of Hawaii, Arthur Curtiss James stated his opinion that

The Japanese element is by far the most serious difficulty. Since the war with China these people have become exceedingly arrogant and self-assertive, and the spirit of national aggrandizement extends from the Mikado to the lowest coolie. From the standpoint of the Japanese this spirit may be most commendable, but it will have to be firmly met by the United States when our own interests are at stake.

Despite the opposition of anti-imperialists, the process of annexation of Hawaii by the United States moved forward during the spring of 1897. Moving perhaps partly to ensure continued American support for annexation, the Hawaiian government embroiled itself in an immigration controversy with Japan in March, when it refused to allow two shiploads of Japanese laborers to disembark in the islands. Incensed, the Japanese government dispatched the cruiser Naniwa to Honolulu, and also protested the forthcoming annexation of Hawaii by the United States. While annexation was protested on the grounds that it would

50 New York Times. 18 December 1896.


upset the status quo in the Pacific, the main thrust of the Japanese argument was that a transfer of sovereignty would leave the rights of their citizens as guaranteed by the Hawaiian Republic unsecured.

The response of the American press to the Japanese protest was, on the whole, rather mild. The New York Times considered it "a temperate and reasonable statement of solid Japanese interests and real Japanese rights that are imperiled by the treaty." It concluded that "Very likely we can afford to defy Japan. But we cannot afford to do a piece of flagrant injustice to her people."53 Looking at Secretary of State John Sherman's response to the Japanese protest, the editors of the Nation argued that the United States had done just that, saying, "the sum and substance of the whole correspondence is that we snap our fingers at Japan."54

Many American newspapers felt that the strategic arguments advanced by Captain A. T. Mahan and others for securing Hawaii compelled the United States to overlook the Japanese protest. According to the Saint Paul Globe, "Were Japan ten times as strong as she is...the situation would not be in the slightest degree altered, nor could the United States afford to be influenced by the protest. It is perfectly plain that we can never allow any other nation to acquire the Sandwich Islands." The New York Herald felt that eventually "Japan may be trusted to see that, given the fair and equitable dealing under existing treaties which we propose, it is for her advantage that Hawaii should belong to the United States."55 Even among American newspapers which favored annexation, the prevalent tone was a cool correct one, rather than one of outright belligerence.

Unfortunately for the Hawaiian Republic, the controversy engendered by Japan's protest did not create sufficient American support for immediate annexation, and the islands were allowed

54 Nation. 8 July 1897, p. 24.
55 Literary Digest. 17 July 1897, pp. 334-335.
to languish for another year. When Hawaii finally was annexed, during the war with Spain, it provoked relatively little comment by the American press.

After the Spanish-American War, when the decision was made by the McKinley Administration to retain the Philippines, Japan made no protest, prompting Arthur May Knapp to write in the Atlantic Monthly that "To Americans, especially those who gave such ready credence to the absurd stories rife a year ago concerning Japan's ambitious designs upon the Hawaiian group, this indifference to the acquisition of the far richer domain of the Philippines, a group geographically her own, must be surprising, if not incredible." Knapp ascribed Japanese acceptance of American possession of the Philippines to her admiration for the Anglo-Saxon people of the United States. Not all observers shared his optimistic view. In 1897, Thomas Jemigan had argued that Japan had other objectives in mind, writing that "the manufacturers of Japan...do not hope to become rivals in Western markets, but they are ambitious of conquering all rivals in Asiatic markets." In his view, the Japanese were already girding themselves for the struggle for economic supremacy in the increasingly moribund Chinese Empire.

Elements of the American press remarked on a seeming quiescence in Japan in 1897-1898, as if the Japanese were at a loss as to what to do next. The New York Times felt that the Japanese, flush with success, might have succumbed to a national malaise, quoting a Japanese observer "gravely anxious about the consequences of the attainment by Japan of an entirely worthy object for which her most intelligent statesmen have long been struggling," the revision of treaties. Daniel C. Greene, writing in Leslie's Illustrated Weekly, felt that since Japan had achieved all her foreign and domestic goals, the time was ripe for her conversion to

A common question at this time was what Japan's next national objective might be.

Not all commentators felt that Japan's comparatively passive acceptance of an expanded American presence in the Pacific was the result of a national sense of aimlessness after achieving all her major goals. In "The Vivisection of China," Elisee' Recluse argued that "there is but one power, after Russia, which can aim with any chance of success at the permanent annexation of China, or even a portion of her territory, and that power is Japan." C. Pfoundes felt that, while a conservative reaction had set in, nevertheless, "the peoples of the Occident are face to face with a powerful Oriental competitor in the arts of war, diplomacy, industry, and commerce." He also noted the uneasy state of affairs between Japan and Russia, writing, "The Shadow of the Colossus of the North haunts the Japanese, and they feel their isolation." Pfoundes and other writers believed that Japan's next goal would be to find strong allies before attempting to contest with Russia for supremacy in mainland Asia.

While controversy erupted between the United States and Japan over the fate of Hawaii in 1898, the American press was quick to note that any serious difficulty had been avoided and cooler heads had prevailed. Subsequently, even though the United States had unexpectedly joined the ranks of the great powers in Asia, there was little chance of any serious collision of interests with Japan.

Many American observers felt that since Japan had achieved all the major goals of her drive for modernization, the Japanese people would remain unfocused until they found a new sense of national purpose. Some even saw this as a new opportunity for renewed Christian

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62 Ibid., 655.
proselytizing in a hitherto unreceptive nation. The more cynical agreed with the French writer Recluse, who argued that Japanese interests were being directed toward mainland Asia and an eventual showdown with Russia. As a result, all their energies and thoughts were being directed toward the forthcoming struggle. In any case, it was felt that the United States should have little, if any, cause for alarm.

Writing in October of 1898, Mark B. Dunnell stated that "Impelled by irresistible forces we are already beginning to look outward, and are preparing to take the high place among the nations to which our strength entitles us." The United States had become an imperial power, a process which the American press had not observed without misgivings. At least initially, even those who supported expansion seemed aware of the limits of American power, and were willing to avoid confrontation with Japan. Nevertheless, as Akira Iriye wrote in *Pacific Estrangement*, the fate of the two nascent empires was now intertwined. Increasingly in subsequent years, circumspection and generosity in looking at the motives and objectives of Japan would become the exception, rather than the rule, and the two nations' policies in the Pacific and East Asia would bring them onto a collision course.

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For some time before torpedo boats of the Imperial Japanese Navy slipped into Port Arthur to attack the Russian fleet and initiate hostilities in February of 1904, it was clear to observers that the two nations were preparing for a showdown to determine control of Manchuria and Korea. While the Japanese had scored signal successes in their war with China ten years earlier, they were generally given little chance against a military colossus such as Imperial Russia. As a result, when Japan achieved a series of impressive victories over the Russians both on land and at sea, culminating in the decisive naval victory of Tsushima, the American press treated it as a classic David and Goliath story, made even more compelling by the fact that the Japanese had been brought into the modern world by the actions of the United States. Immediately after the conclusion of the war, however, unsettling events occurred, first in Japan and then on the West Coast. These events would make the relationship between Japan and the United States a difficult, rather than a special, one.

When reporting the arrival of Viscount Aoki as Japan's first ambassador to the United States in April 1906, the Literary Digest mused that "It is a curious fact that while Russia was blind to the growing military power and to the preparations of Japan, we, on our side, until a few years ago had not got over the Gilbert and Sullivan idea of the Japanese. Little did we dream of Nanki-Poo as a man behind the gun, or the Lord High Executioner as a capable field marshal subject to quotation in state documents issuing from the office of the White House."¹

¹ Literary Digest. 14 April 1906, p. 558.
The idea that the Japanese could be considered American-sponsored prodigies on the world stage was quite evident in a speech delivered by Secretary of War William Howard Taft in Tokyo on September 30, 1907. In this address, he stated that

The growth of Japan from a hermit kingdom to her present position in the last fifty years is the marvel of the world. In every step of that development, even at the very beginning, we Americans are proud to record the fact that Japan has always had the cordial sympathy and at times the effective aid of the United States.¹

Even with the glowing terms of these remarks, however, by 1907 the state of Japanese-American relations had taken a definite turn for the worse. Japan had become a real power in East Asia, while anti-Japanese agitation in California had made the task of the United States government in conducting its relations with Japan an infinitely more difficult one.

I.

As Japan and Russia moved closer and closer to war in the last months of 1903 and the first weeks of 1904, the American press followed developments with interest. On December 31, the Nation concluded that "the conflict itself seems inevitable," and early in February, the New York Times stated that

Americans who have not followed the course of events in the Far East with any particular attention may be excused for wondering why Japan should be so insistent upon the point of Russian recognition of Chinese sovereignty in Manchuria as to be willing to go to war upon it...for three years Russia has abounded in assurances to which she could not very well be held of the innocence of her intentions with respect to Manchuria and consequently to China. Japan, the limit of whose endurance seems now to have been reached, insists that Russia shall repeat those assurances in a manner which will enable a Power in interest to hold her to them.²


² Nation. 31 December 1903, p. 519; and New York Times, 6 February 1904.
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patriotic duty which is Japanese religion. As Japan achieved one victory after another, Joseph Conrad wrote in the *North American Review* that the Japanese were doing a signal service to humanity by demonstrating the impotence of the armies that supported the Russian autocracy. Although not seen as a Western power, the Japanese were viewed by many as advancing the cause of Western civilization.

While they were generally regarded with approval, the Japanese were not universally seen by the American press as fighting the good fight against the Slavic menace. In an article for the *Arena*, Edward Campbell argued that

> Japan's aim in prosecuting this war, whatever she may declare and affirm as her purpose, can be nothing else than her own swift aggrandizement at the expense of China's national existence...can the American people give to Japan their sympathy and approval in such a marauding venture?

In a similar vein, Thomas F. Millard, a war correspondent, considered Japan's propaganda victory to be as great as any of her military successes, and felt that "the greater, newer Japan, with more territory on the mainland than on the islands themselves, looms up...as the clearly defined aim of a few ambitious Japanese statesmen." For the most part, however, Sydney Brooks summed up the majority view when he wrote

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5 Hearn, Lafcadio, "A Letter from Japan." *Atlantic* 94 (1904), pp. 625-626. American missionaries in Japan still entertained hopes of changing that religion. George F. Pentecost wrote in early 1905 that "I do not think many people know what a profound effect Christianity is having on Japan and the Japanese people...the hundreds of Christian soldiers in the ranks now fighting in Manchuria, with their New Testaments in their knapsacks and their Christian chaplains in the regiments, are doing for that wonderful people what the Christian soldiers in the early centuries did for the Roman Empire." "America in the Philippines." *Arena* 23 (1905), p. 492.


On the edge of Asia, and in a position to dominate that ocean which more and more is becoming the battle-ground of the world's politics, a new Power is irrevocably established...Of that Power, very little is really known...Europe and America in fact have to acknowledge, and to rearrange their diplomacy by the acknowledgment, that Japan is a Power of the very first class, secretive, incognizable, perspicacious, resolute, indomitable, equipped with every quality and every resource that can make a nation victorious and keep her great.9

With Japan exhausted and Russia racked by internal dissension, both nations were willing to accept the President's proposal to begin peace talks at the end of August, 1905. The resulting Portsmouth Peace Conference was a subject of great interest to the American press, since, as F. de Martens wrote in November, "it was evident to everyone that this conference was not only going to stop the war, but, at the same time, was to create a completely new state of things in the Far East."10 Summing up Japan's position after the terms of peace had been agreed upon, another writer felt that

By the war, and by the subsequent negotiations at Portsmouth, Japan gained practically everything she sought, except an indemnity covering expenses in the campaign. It is well to recall that it was Russia's presence in Manchuria, forbidding the mainland of Asia to the rapidly increasing population of the Island Empire, that caused the conflict. Hence, to supplant Russia in the Liao-tung peninsula, to gain proprietorship over Port Arthur and Dalny, a goodly section of the railway line connecting Manchuria with the Trans-Siberian line, and a control over Corea practically amounting to guardianship, are enormous rewards, compared with which failure to secure a money indemnity is insignificant.11

He also believed that a new state of affairs had been created in East Asia, since "the Mikado's Empire emerged from the Russian war with energies enormously aroused, and every condition now favors a speedy realization of the dream of empire, giving to Japan an importance amounting almost to sovereignty over the Far East." The editors of the American Review of

Reviews concurred in this assessment, writing that “the Land of the Rising Sun is now the first nation of the Far East, and Russia’s Manchurian venture is ended for generations—if not forever.”

There were, of course, those who did not share the general enthusiasm over Japan’s emerging victorious from her struggle with Russia. Thomas F. Millard did not write effusively of Japan’s new, dominant position in Asia. Nor did he consider the war to have in any way settled Asian affairs. Instead, he argued, “a new and potent element has been injected into the situation; an element by many long deemed visionary in prospect, and much scoffed at—a waking and capable Orient.” Its possibilities, he wrote, “in a commercial and industrial sense, have not yet been scratched, and that the present century will witness a tremendous evolution there cannot be doubted.” “This,” he concluded, “Is the Far Eastern question. Can we conceive a future for our country in which it will not be brought seriously into contact with this question? I cannot.” To Millard, the Japanese victory made a cloudy future for East Asia only more uncertain.

Since members of the American press both pro- and anti-Japanese felt that the result of the Russo-Japanese War had been to remake East Asia, and to remake it to Japan’s benefit, they generally reacted with puzzlement to Japanese popular discontent with the Treaty of Portsmouth. The Japanese populace still seethed over the Tripartite Intervention with had robbed Japan of the spoils of victory in the Sino-Japanese War, and the failure of her negotiators to gain an indemnity from their Russian counterparts, while considered a minor matter by the Japanese government, served to incense the general public. The San Francisco Chronicle reported on September 9, 1905, that “it is evident that a large portion of the people of Japan are dissatisfied with the terms of the peace negotiated with Russia, and it has resulted

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in popular demonstrations against the ministry in Tokio and neighboring cities, in which violence has been used, lives sacrificed, and property destroyed." The Chronicle also reported that Americans in Tokyo had been stoned.\textsuperscript{14}

The Eastern press also followed these events with interest. The American Monthly Review of Reviews noted that "very bitter resentment was aroused in Tokio when the reports reached the capital—even before the treaty had been signed—that very important concessions had been made to obtain peace." Anti-American aspects of the rioting were downplayed: "during the fracas, stones were thrown at a party of American tourists in Tokio, including the financier, E. H. Harriman, not from any anti-American spirit, but by the lawless elements of the Tokio streets." It concluded that "the Katsura cabinet...which as conducted a great war with such conspicuous ability and brilliant success, has not succeeded in the more important and difficult question of satisfying the Japanese people."\textsuperscript{15} The New York Times agreed, and said of the rioting that

\begin{quote}
It is deplorable, first, because it warns us that, rapid and astonishing as has been her advance in civilization during the last thirty years, and great as has been her eagerness to adopt the Western ways, [Japan] is still far from wholly regenerate. The stoning of eminent statesmen and the burning of Ministers' houses because of the popular disapproval of Government measure is an ugly business.
\end{quote}

The Times editorial further stated that "there is a distinct anti-American tone to the proceedings of the rioters...the evil consequences of a stubborn refusal to recognize American disinterestedness and impartiality that may persist to trouble our relations with Japan for years."\textsuperscript{16} While reservations had already been expressed by a minority with regard to Japan's war aims, the Hibiya Park riots served to provoke resentment at what was seen as ingratitude

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} San Francisco Chronicle. 9 September 1905.
\item \textsuperscript{15} American Monthly Review of Reviews 32 (1905), pp. 404, 538.
\item \textsuperscript{16} New York Times. 8 September 1905.
\end{itemize}
on the part of many American observers, to the extent that the degree of Japanese civilization was called into question.

During the period immediately preceding the Russo-Japanese War, and during the war itself, a substantial portion of the American press expressed strong support for Japan and the Japanese people. This support was expressed in various ways ranging from an expression of national self-interest to emotional attachment to a valiant underdog. Opposing viewpoints did exist, based on reservations about Japanese war aims and questions about the future of East Asia after Japan's resounding victory, but even their proponents admitted that they were expressing a minority opinion. The Japanese defeat of Imperial Russia caused a touch of unease in America's attitude toward Japan, especially when considered in conjunction with the anger expressed by the Japanese people over the terms of the Treaty of Portsmouth, a treaty which owed its existence to the personal efforts of Theodore Roosevelt. The New York Times, which had shown support for Japan throughout the duration of the Russo-Japanese War, expressed strong disapproval of the Hibiya Park riots, and even expressed concern regarding the future of Japanese-American relations.

Many observers recognized that the tension between the Japanese government and people which was evident at the end of the war could easily produce tension between Japan and the United States, particularly if some issue or incident served to provide a spark. The awareness of this possibility was expressed by Eleanor Franklin in an article for Leslie's Weekly, in which she wrote

> Already there is a growing sentiment among Americans against the 'progress' Japan is making in Korea, and a keen and frankly expressed desire by Americans to know if Manchuria is merely to exchange masters...furthermore, Japan, as a matter of pride, resents the threat of American exclusion to her emigration; she would infinitely prefer to forcefully keep her people at home than that the bar should be an American statute. These latter considerations are the father of the prediction that the United States and Japan will some day 'mix it up' out in these parts. 17

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17 Franklin, Eleanor. "Japan's Warm Welcome to Visiting Americans." Leslie's Weekly. 31

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As this article indicated, incipient strains already existed in the relationship between the two nations. Given the importance of these issues to many Japanese and Americans, they awaited only an incident, or crisis, to loom large in the public consciousness. Events on the West coast of the United States which would serve to provide such a spark were already taking place.

II.

In an article for The Nineteenth Century in November 1904, W. Crewdson wrote that "in the character of the Japanese laborer there exists a force that will add not only materially to the inevitable prosperity of the countries bordering on the Pacific, but will also be for the good of the whole civilized world as soon as it is properly appreciated." This glowing opinion was not shared by many citizens of America's Pacific coast, particularly in the state of California, and particularly in the city of San Francisco. Flush from their success in helping to prod the President to recommend to Congress the further exclusion of Chinese immigrants in 1904, opponents of Asian immigration were quick to turn their attention to the Japanese, basing their opposition to Japanese immigration on similar racial, cultural, and economic grounds.

On May 7, 1905, an organization called the Japanese and Korean Exclusion League was formed in San Francisco. The League was to a large extent dominated by the city's labor leaders (organized labor had traditionally been one of the West Coast's most vocal advocates of Chinese exclusion), and one of its leading organs was The Coast Seaman's Journal. For reasons best known to its ownership, however, the Republican San Francisco Chronicle, the August 1905, p. 200.


19 Sydney Brooks would write in 1906 that "an observer may doubt whether there is anything in the politics of the Caribbean or in the turmoil and tangle of Central and South America, or in the inevitable clashing here and there of the interests of Canada and Newfoundland with those of the United States, that holds one-half so grave a menace to the future of American tranquility as the well-nigh ferocious anti-Orientalism of the Pacific Coast." Living Age 252 (1906), p. 323.

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most influential paper on the West Coast, came to support the exclusion movement (speculation then and now centered on the desire of either its owner or editor for political office), and soon became its most effective advocate.

The Chronicle began its campaign against Japanese immigration in earnest on February 23, 1905, when its headline boldly proclaimed "JAPANESE INVASION" to be the "PROBLEM OF THE HOUR." In a sidebar, the newspaper explained that

Since 1880, when the census noted a Japanese population of only 80, not less than 35,000 of the little brown men have come to this State and remained here...as in the case of the Chinese, it is the worse that she has that Japan sends us. The Japanese is no more assimilable than the Chinese and he is no less adaptable in learning quickly how to do the white man's work and how to get the job for himself by offering his labor for less than a white man can live on.20

It also noted that "Japan is intensely intolerant of the white man who visits her in any other capacity than that of the curio-buying traveler. Industrially she has neither room nor welcome for the devil from this side of the Pacific. It would seem to be about time to take a leaf out of the Japanese code of self-protective patriotism."

In the days following its opening broadside, the Chronicle stepped up its campaign against the Japanese and Asians in general. "The Asiatic," it argued, "can never be other than an Asiatic, however much he may imitate the dress of the white man, learn his language, and spend his wages for him."21 A subsequent article was headlined, "CRIME AND POVERTY GO HAND IN HAND WITH ASIATIC LABOR," while others proclaimed that "DISEASED JAPANESE DECEIVE IMMIGRATION SURGEONS" and declared that "JAPANESE SWEAT SHOPS ARE A BLIGHT ON THE CITY."22 On an even more ominous note, the newspaper further averred that "The Japanese in America are practically, as has been said, a Japanese

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20 San Francisco Chronicle. 23 February 1905.
21 Ibid., 24 February 1905.
22 Ibid., 27 and 30 February 1905.
garrison." Once it had begun its campaign for exclusion, the Chronicle left no stone unturned in its fight to sway the hearts and minds of San Francisco's populace, including the specter of a carefully planned and deliberate Japanese invasion of California.

Interestingly, while the newspaper employed a great deal of emotion in its drive for exclusion, its editors attempted to retain a note of rationality as well, saying at one point, "We recognize admirable qualities in the Japanese people. They recognize admirable qualities in us. We may have mutual respect. We may have mutual trade. But we cannot long live together in the same country in peace." The issue, they argued, "no longer admits of delay, if we are to preserve the integrity of our social life not only in California, but throughout the Pacific States and throughout the Union." The question had apparently become not only one of economic competition, but one of cultural survival as well. At the same time, the Exclusion League was applying steady pressure on the San Francisco Board of Education to do something about the crowding of American students by the children of Japanese immigrants, especially in the wake of the Great Earthquake in April of 1906.

On October 11, 1906, the Board of Education resolved that

in accordance with Article I, section 1662, of the school law of California, principals are hereby directed to send all Chinese, Japanese, or Korean children to the Oriental Public School, situated on the south side of Clay street, between Powell and Mason streets, on or after Monday, October 15, 1906. Since the Board had previously requested funds for the construction of a Japanese school, it later professed to see nothing untoward in its action. The segregation order went almost unremarked by the San Francisco press, even though it was the logical outcome of the campaign waged by the Chronicle and several other papers.

23 Ibid., 28 and 25 February 1905.

The action of the Board of Education did not go unremarked by the Japanese consul in San Francisco, who challenged it immediately, and both his reports of the incident and the correspondence of the parents of the Japanese children involved caused an immense outcry in Japan. Although the more responsible elements of the Japanese press were willing to admit that the problem was a local affair over which the federal government had no jurisdiction, sensationalist newspapers trumpeted their outrage over American perfidy, and even argued that Japan should avenge the dire insult. An international crisis was in the making, and Ambassador Wright in Tokyo was soon cabling Secretary of State Elihu Root regarding the intense irritation and annoyance felt by the Japanese people toward the United States over this issue.

In June of 1905, Theodore Roosevelt had written in a letter to Henry Cabot Lodge that "the feeling on the Pacific Slope [toward the Japanese], taking it from several standpoints, is as foolish as if conceived by the mind of a Hottentot." He reacted to the new crisis quickly, dispatching Secretary of Commerce and Labor Victor H. Metcalf to San Francisco to investigate the issue. The San Francisco Chronicle responded to both the Japanese and American governments with defiance, saying

the people of this State are not under the slightest obligation to tax themselves to teach Japanese the English language or to admit Oriental students at all into our schools where their presence may be distasteful to our own people...as for giving up our civilization for that of Japan, which must follow the free admission of Japanese coolies, we won't do it and the Japanese and American governments combined cannot make us do it.

25 Bailey, 49-52. This impulse was well understood by members of the American press. The Nation, for example, argued that "the Japanese, flushed by success in one of the world's notable wars, conscious of extraordinary development as a nation, cannot be expected to sit by calmly and see their subjects treated with contumely. With a civilization in some ways superior to our own, they can hardly be blamed if they cry out against what the Japanese minister called the subjection to indignities of "poor, innocent, little Japanese children." 1 November 1906, p. 364.

26 Roosevelt to Lodge, 5 June 1905. Taken from Bailey, p. 16.

27 San Francisco Chronicle. 23 October 1906.

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In a subsequent edition, its editors professed to welcome debate on the issue, although on somewhat contradictory grounds, stating that "the more this issue is temperately discussed, the better...we are not opposed to Japanese labor because it is Japanese, or Buddhist, or yellow, but because our own people cannot maintain their own civilization and standard of comfort in contact with it." Refusing to admit to racial or cultural motives, the Chronicle increasingly attempted to base its campaign for exclusion on purely economic grounds.

Many elements of the Eastern press responded to San Francisco's anti-Japanese agitation and actions with derision. The Nation, for example imagined that "the Japanese Minister...cannot readily explain [to his people] that, the Chinese issue no longer being available as a stepping-stone to office, an unscrupulous California editor began an anti-Japanese campaign a couple of years ago, for the purpose of winning a seat in the United States Senate." It concluded that "the friendship of Japan is not something that the United States can afford to throw away." President Roosevelt would echo this theme in even stronger terms in his Sixth Annual Message.

In this speech, delivered on December 4, 1906, Roosevelt declared that

"It is the sure mark of a low civilization, a low morality to abuse or discriminate against or in any way humiliate such stranger who has come here lawfully and who is conducting himself properly. To remember this is incumbent upon every American citizen, and it is of course peculiarly incumbent on every government official, whether of the nation or of the several States. I am prompted to say this by the attitude of hostility here and there assumed toward the Japanese in this country. This hostility is sporadic and limited to a very few places. Nevertheless, it is most discreditable to us as a people, and it may be fraught with the gravest consequences to the nation."

28 Ibid., 26 October 1906.

29 The Nation. 1 November 1906, p. 264.
Japan, the President reminded his audience, "has a great and glorious past. Her civilization is older than that of the nations of northern Europe--the nations from whom the people of the United States have chiefly sprung."\textsuperscript{30} Looking at her remarkable progress, he remarked that the Japanese have won in a single generation the right to stand abreast of the foremost and most enlightened peoples of Europe and America; they have won on their own merits and by their own exertions the right to treatment on a basis of full and frank equality...but here and there a most unworthy attitude has manifested itself toward the Japanese--the feeling that has been shown in shutting them out from the common schools in San Francisco, and in mutterings against them in one or two other places, because of their efficiency as workers. To shut them out from the public schools is a wicked absurdity...we have as much to learn from the Japan as Japan has to learn from us, and no nation is fit to teach if it is not also willing to learn.

Any failure on the part of Americans to treat the Japanese with courtesy and consideration, argued Roosevelt, "is by just so much a confession of inferiority in our civilization."\textsuperscript{31}

Before turning to other subjects in his message, the President made it clear that he considered the San Francisco school crisis to be a threat to the United States' future as a Pacific power, and also that he was willing to consider using drastic measures to deal with that threat. "Our nation," he concluded,

fronts on the Pacific, just as it does on the Atlantic. We hope to play a constantly growing part in the great ocean of the Orient. We wish, as we ought to wish, for a great commercial development in our dealings with Asia; and it is out of the question that we should permanently have such development unless we freely and gladly extend to other nations the same measure of justice and good treatment which we expect to receive in return.

Roosevelt proposed naturalization for Japanese residents of the U. S., deeming it "unthinkable" that "we should continue a policy under which a given locality may be allowed to commit a crime against a friendly nation, and the United States government limited, not to preventing the


\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 453-454.
commission of the crime, but, in the last resort, to defending the people who have committed it against the consequences of their own wrongdoing."  

Reaction to the President's message was, as might be expected, mixed. The editors of the Nation stated approvingly that "turning to our treatment of the Japanese, the President uses great plainness of speech to denounce anything like discrimination against them. His recommendation that the Japanese who desire it be allowed to become naturalized American citizens will not be popular on the Pacific Slope; but international decency will remain international decency, and President Roosevelt deserves high praise for exalting it as he has done." The American Monthly Review of Reviews concurred, arguing that "even if it were desirable to exclude Japanese laborers from this country as the Chinese are already excluded, the California exclusionists have made such action impossible by their extreme folly, for they have antagonized the whole country." Leslie's Weekly said that "The question of fair treatment to the Japanese is given first place in the President's message. It is a question of prime interest, and the President has handled it strongly and correctly."  

The Western press was not nearly as approving. The Rocky Mountain News felt that "while no man can doubt the President's wisdom in calling for the exact observance of treaty obligations, there are many who think his attack on the motives of the San Francisco school board needless and unwarranted." While the Los Angeles Daily Times called the drive for Japanese exclusion a product of "the dictates of the labor trust which dominates everything in and around San Francisco," it also believed that "the question of excluding the Japanese from

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32 Ibid., 454-457.
33 Nation, 6 December 1906, p. 476.
36 Rocky Mountain News, 5 December 1906.
the public schools in San Francisco is purely local." As to Roosevelt's proposal for Japanese naturalization, "there are two sides to that question, and it will take a good deal of education to bring the mass of the people to look with favor upon this part of the President's programme." 

The San Francisco Chronicle responded to Roosevelt's message in terms of injured outrage. Calling his comments on the school board crisis an "astonishing display of ill temper and indiscretion," the paper went on to state that "this is the first message of an American President of which the American people have had reason to be ashamed." "One evil effect of it," the editors concluded, "we shall attempt to prevent. We shall hope it will lead no one to vituperative attacks on the Japanese. Our controversy is not with them but with the President. We have perfect respect for the Japanese nation...but we do not want Japanese coolies here. If the coolies are excluded, the school question will disappear. And there is no reason but the President why all this should not be quietly and peacefully accomplished." The Chronicle was apparently either unaware of or chose to ignore the controversy the Board of Education's act had ignited in Japan, which, as the editors of the American Review of Reviews noted, made such a solution extremely difficult to achieve.

As it became apparent that Roosevelt hoped to solve the issue of Japanese immigration by negotiating a treaty excluding Japanese laborers from the mainland United States in exchange for some concession, such as the right of naturalization for those Japanese emigrants wishing it, the editors of the Chronicle crowed of his "backdown," while strenuously objecting to "any proceeding which shall imply that permission is required from Japan to enact an exclusion law." The New York Times cautiously stated that "a treaty embodying Japanese naturalization and Japanese labor exclusion ought not to encounter serious objection in this

37 Los Angeles Daily Times, 5 and 6 December 1906.
38 San Francisco Chronicle, 5 December 1906.
39 Ibid., 7 December 1906.
country, while in March, the *American Monthly Review of Reviews*, commenting upon the difficulty the President was encountering in achieving this goal, would observe that "if San Francisco had not affronted the entire Japanese nation by a perfectly useless and foolish order, it would have been comparatively easy...to have arranged several months ago with the Japanese Government for a mutual exclusion of laborers, by direct treaty."^40 It appears that members of the Eastern press shared Roosevelt's exasperation with the West Coast, feeling that ill-considered and high-handed actions such as that of the San Francisco Board of Education only served to prevent an otherwise attainable goal from being achieved.

As aftershocks from the School Board crisis continued to ripple across the public consciousness of both the United States and Japan, stories in the American press began to appear which addressed concerns about their long term repercussions. In an article in the *Arena*, C. Vey Holman stated his belief that

> our country is about to enter upon a series of unpleasant involvements in its relations with the young-old giant of Nippon in which many if not most of the demagogic errors marking our diplomatic intercourse with and legislative discriminations against the ancient empire of China are likely to be reperformed, with results far more humiliating to our national prestige, and possibly wholly disastrous to our ill-starred policy of Oriental colonialism."^41

In an article entitled "Japan and To-morrow" for the *North American Review*, Willard French similarly argued that "there are two absolutely irreconcilable peoples coming into constantly closer contact on the Pacific. Japan has begun a system of development and we of aggrandizement which is bringing us into such close entanglements that settlement will soon become difficult if not impossible."^42 After her victories in wars with China and Russia, Japan, unlike China, was recognized as a power to be recognized with, militarily and commercially.

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^41 Holman, C. Vey. "Our Insult to Japan." *Arena* 37 (1907), p. 11.

Articles like these expressed the fear that unreasoning racial antipathy would at the very least sour Japanese-American relations, and quite possibly do far more harm.

French and Holman were not alone in sharing this apprehension. Osborne Howes further expounded this view when he noted that

with the Japanese Government, even the implication conveyed in the San Francisco school incident, that the subjects of the Emperor of Japan were not considered in a part of the United States to be the equals of the subjects of the Tsar of Russia, the Emperor of Austria or the King of Italy, has been a provocation of sufficient force to call forth a vigorous protest. For our Government to take the extreme step of excluding Japanese would provoke retaliation the part of the Japanese, as certainly as night follows day...should Japan erase our name from her list of commercial friends, one may be sure that the greater part of the markets of the Far East would be directly or indirectly closed to our trade.43

The editors of Harper's Weekly wondered of the government's stand on the immigration issue, "Was the course that we pursued toward China dictated by the knowledge that we were dealing with a feeble power? And is the very different course that Mr. Roosevelt is now pursuing (toward Japan) the outcome of a conviction that in dealing with a strong and sensitive nation, discretion is the better part of valor?"44

Approval for this pragmatism was far from unanimous. The San Francisco Chronicle, for example, was "ashamed to write that the conduct of the President has made it appear as if the American people are afraid of Japan."45 The more sensationalist elements of the press were quick to pick up on this angle, and reports of the probability of war between the two countries soon began to appear with regularity.

In Japan, the newspaper Hochi called the San Francisco incident "worse than the murder of a [German] missionary in China, which resulted in the occupation of Jiaozhou (Kiao Chow)."

45 San Francisco Chronicle. 9 February 1907.
and asked "who would blame an appeal to the last measure if an impotency to protect treaty rights is proved?" The editors of the Nation dryly noted that "timid citizens who foresee a Japanese invasion of Wall Street—bent, presumably, on capturing our currency premium—are not without backing in the press," and the New York Times remarked that "there is quite too much detail and circumstance, too much of plot and subterranean conspiracy, in these rumors of impending trouble between the United States and Japan over our treatment of Japanese residents here." The New York Evening Post took a serious view of the matter, however, arguing that

International clamors artfully and selfishly raised sometimes have evil consequences. They are certain to, if persisted in. An example is the present state of the relations of Germany and England. Such an amount of suspicion and inflammatory insinuation has found a place in the press of either country that the efforts made by public men and professors and the better class of journalists have succeeded in allaying only a part of the ill feeling. Our difficulty with Japan is somewhat similar. It is artificially created, but it may become real.

An article by an English author which appeared in Living Age in 1907 was in some ways typical of the stories which troubled the editors of the Nation and the New York Times. "Actual war," he wrote, "may not be imminent, for both Governments are extremely anxious to avoid it. But the increasing racial antipathy at the root of the trouble is a very difficult force to control...(it) being apt to act on the impulse of the moment with an imperfect appreciation of the consequences." This factor was seen as primarily affecting the conduct of American policy.

46 Literary Digest. 22 June 1907, p. 977.
47 Nation. 18 July 1907, 48; and New York Times. 12 June 1907.
48 Literary Digest. 22 June 1907, p. 979.
Unlike many who predicted a conflict between Japan and the United States, the author of this article (who used the pseudonym "Cruiser") was actually fairly realistic as to the conduct of such a war, considering both homelands immune to attack, with hostilities taking place primarily in and around the Philippines. In such a contest, the advantage would belong to the Japanese, because of the proximity to their home waters (a conclusion shared by the United States Naval War College, which had begun formulating Plan 'Orange,' for a possible future conflict with Japan). "Under the circumstances," he felt, "neither could enter the contest except as a very grave undertaking, and the talk of 'whipping' Japan, which has been indulged by certain organs of the American Press, is in no sense justified." Nevertheless, he concluded, "in a democratically-governed country, the last word rests with the masses, who are little able to comprehend strategic questions, and who are often grossly misled by the newspapers. Herein lies the danger which gives an interest to the study of the situation." While this article was a detached and realistic assessment of the situation between the United States and Japan, articles like it, along with their more sensational counterparts, helped popularize the feeling in America that war with Japan was quite possible, and perhaps even likely.

In an address before the American Society of International Law in April of 1907, Secretary of State Root felt compelled to lay the issue of conflict with Japan to rest. "All the foolish talk of war was purely sensational and imaginative," stated Mr. Root. "There was never even friction between the two governments." The real question, he felt, had been "what state of feeling would be created between the great body of the people of the United States and the great body of the people of Japan as the result of the treatment given to the Japanese in this country?" Although he had dismissed any possibility of war between the two nations in the near future, however, the secretary did have words of warning for his countrymen, saying that "the people who permit themselves to treat the people of other countries with discourtesy and

50 Ibid., p. 73.
insult are surely sowing the wind to reap the whirlwind. Even in discounting the possibility of war, Root's speech made it clear that he considered anti-Japanese agitation in the United States to pose a serious threat to the future of Japanese-American relations.

The controversy arising from the actions of the San Francisco Board of Education in October 1906 had resulted in the first real crisis between the United States and Japan after Japan had become generally recognized as a great power. While there was a great deal of popular agitation over the issue in Japan, both governments tried to minimize the problems which occurred, and in this were echoed by the responsible elements of the press in the two nations. Even the San Francisco Chronicle, whose campaign against Japanese immigration may very well have influenced the School Board's decision and which had attempted to polarize opinion on the issue, repeatedly professed its respect for the Japanese nation and downplayed any likelihood of conflict between the United States and Japan. The possibility had been considered, however, even if as yet it had only been taken seriously by the 'yellow press' of both nations.

CHAPTER 3

“OUR BLUNDERING DIPLOMACY IN THE FAR EAST”:
AMERICAN PERCEPTIONS OF JAPAN, 1907-1910

The San Francisco Board of Education incident and its aftershocks continued to bedevil the Roosevelt Administration well into 1907. Aware of the vulnerability of the Philippines, which had already been transformed in his eyes from the greatest prize of the war with Spain to the Achilles' heel of American Far East policy, the President saw that policy itself transformed in the aftermath of the School Board crisis, from one which attempted to maintain a balance of power in East Asia, to one in which the United States repeatedly assured Japan that West Coast anti-Japanese agitation was in no way encouraged by the federal government. Instead of maintaining a balance of power in East Asia, he had to balance placating the Japanese and settling the grievances of the Californians, if only to prevent further crises which could cause relations with Japan to deteriorate.

Eventually Roosevelt hit upon the idea of sending the battle fleet into the Pacific (as part of a world cruise), a move designed to reassure the West Coast and impress Japan, which in turn reinforced good relations when the fleet visited Tokyo. At the same time, Secretary of War William Howard Taft was dispatched to the Far East, to assure both Japan and China of continued American goodwill. When he decided against trying for a third term in office and instead anointed Taft as his chosen successor, Roosevelt probably felt that Far East policy would prove a highlight of Taft's term in office.
I.

In February, the President took the unprecedented step of inviting the mayor of San Francisco and the members of the school board to Washington, where he conferred with them regarding the steps necessary to resolve the issue. The San Franciscans proved willing to modify their policy when Roosevelt made it clear that he would do what he could to prevent the further immigration of Asian laborers into the country. Meanwhile, however, the California Legislature in February and March embarked on a program of several anti-Japanese measures. The President dealt with this incipient crisis by sending the state's governor a series of peremptory telegrams to be read to the Legislature, which quickly abandoned the measures. The manner in which he resolved the issue moved the Nation to remark that it provided "fresh testament to President Roosevelt's influence. But it brings out likewise the extraordinary lack of perception of the larger situation among the Californians."  

Events in May would act to produce a sense of crisis once again. In this instance, mob violence was directed against Japanese restaurants in San Francisco. The San Francisco Chronicle sneered of the incident that "the miserable little Japanese want to make an international incident out of every case of hoodlum wantonness. They get the same protection that the rest of us get and if they aren't satisfied let them clear out." Reporting that government officials had discovered that Japanese coolies were "pouring into the country in droves," the newspaper argued that "if the execution of our domestic laws involve trouble with Japan the matter may as well be brought to a head now as later." 

The bellicosity expressed by the editors of the Chronicle echoed elsewhere in the United States, so much so that the American Review of Reviews was moved to say that "in view of the high average of intelligence which prevails in this country, it is hard to understand why there

1 Nation. 14 March 1907.

2 San Francisco Chronicle. 28 May and 4 June 1907.
should have been so much talk (recently) about war with Japan," and the Literary Digest quoted a Washington dispatch as saying that "the Administration will thank the American press to let the Japanese situation alone."^3 Speaking of what they called "the Midsummer War," the editors of the New York Times wrote that "this war with Japan, in which it is conjured, or hoped, or believed that we are about to be engaged, represents a very unfair distribution of anxiety and effort. The anxiety aroused is the exclusive portion of those who do not want a war."^4 It was into this atmosphere of uncertainty and anxiety that news arrived that the President had decided to dispatch the battle fleet to the Pacific, a move which would later be known as the cruise of the "Great White Fleet."

Various motives have been ascribed to Roosevelt for sending the battleships to the Pacific: a desire to reassure the citizens of the Pacific Coast, flaunting 'the big stick' at Japan, a desire for the fleet to gain experience in moving from the Atlantic to the Pacific in peacetime, and popularizing the navy in order to gain appropriations for its expansion (the joint, formal strategic planning by the Army and the Navy in the case of hostilities with Japan, which had been initiated in January, had revealed grave deficiencies in naval strength, Pacific bases, and logistical support^5). Whatever his reasons, the die was cast, and his decision was soon learned by the press.

Initially, many pundits dismissed reports of the proposed move of the fleet as idle gossip, the editors of the San Francisco Chronicle, for example, calling it "unadulterated nonsense."^6 Not surprisingly, upon its official announcement, the sensational elements of the press were once

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^6 San Francisco Chronicle, 21 June 1907.
again filled with reports of impending conflict, with the New York Sun announcing that "the Navy is going to the Pacific for war with Japan."\(^7\) The Nation gloomily remarked that "Yellow journalism scored its greatest triumph, or touched its deepest shame, in bringing on war with Spain. The methods were then made familiar. They are now being imitated, almost to a hair."\(^8\) It seemed to many as if the Roosevelt Administration had taken the trumpetings of the sensational press to heart.

Debate over the wisdom of the fleet's move swirled for several weeks in the American press. Harper's Weekly expressed the opinion that "in deciding to denude the Atlantic of all our first-class battle-ships for the purpose of warding off an imaginary danger in the Pacific, Mr. Roosevelt has gone off at half-cock."\(^9\) Once the San Francisco Chronicle learned that the fleet really was being sent to the Pacific, it decided that "such a transfer would be full of significance, perhaps not of the kind many are disposed to attach to it, but nevertheless real. It would in effect be serving warning to the world that it is time to stop talking about the ability of the Japanese to strike a blow at our Pacific possessions or at cities on the Pacific Coast...a fleet of eighteen battleships would put an end to such nonsensical talk." The editors of the American Review of Reviews agreed, writing, "The Pacific Coast is just as much a part of our country as the Atlantic. There is no possible reason why we should not give our navy the experience of this long voyage...we have no militant designs in the Pacific Ocean nor in any other part of the globe."\(^10\)

\(^7\) Literary Digest. 12 October 1907, p. 516.
\(^8\) Nation. 11 July 1907, p. 26.
It was in this atmosphere that Secretary of War Taft made his speech to the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce on September 30. Saying that he was bringing a message of goodwill to the Japanese people from President Roosevelt, Taft went on to say that

War between Japan and the United States would be a crime against modern civilization. It would be insane. Neither the people of Japan nor the people of the United States desire war. The governments of the two countries would strain every point to avoid such an awful catastrophe. Neither would gain anything...It gives me great pleasure to assure the people of Japan that the good-will of the American people toward Japan is as warm as ever and that the reported breach in the amicable relations between them finds no confirmation in public opinion in the United States.\footnote{Dunn, William Howard Taft, pp. 94-99.}

In San Francisco, the Chronicle remarked that "Secretary Taft is strictly in the line of duty in promoting friendly relations between the United States and Japan, and he appears to be making an excellent job of it," while the editors of the Nation believed that "we have gone far enough in our recoil from the Japanomania of two years ago. No admirable quality that the mind of man could devise was wanting to the gallant little nation then; no sinister motive or capacity that the mind of editor can devise is wanting to the Mikado's people at present." "Yet," they argued, "If people would only stop to think on present conditions in Japan and international politics, how clearly it would appear that a shrewd and limitless patriotism itself counsels Japan to peace for years to come."\footnote{San Francisco Chronicle, 1 October 1907; and Nation, 14 November 1907, p. 485.}

While the more realistic elements of the American press downplayed any likelihood of military conflict between the United States and Japan during the summer and fall of 1907, they did not dismiss the possibility of cultural or economic competition. The cultural and racial aspects of this competition were given primary emphasis by many. In an article for the North American Review, Hugh H. Lusk argued that "the real peril of the matter...is in the collision and competition of civilizations."\footnote{Lusk, Hugh H. "The Real Yellow Peril." North American Review 186 (1908), p. 379.} Roosevelt himself echoed this theme in an article for the

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Speaking of the awakening of China, he called it "one of the great events of our age." He did not consider the long awaited rise of Asia to be without potential danger, but felt that "the remedy for the 'yellow peril,' whatever that may be, is not the repression of life but the cultivation and direction of life...now is the time for the West to implant its ideals in the Orient, in such fashion as to minimize the chance of a dreadful future clash between two radically different and hostile civilizations; if we wait until to-morrow, we may find that we have waited too long."\(^\text{14}\)

Although the American Review of Reviews felt that the issue of Japanese immigration was closed, since "we have chosen to hold the United States as a white man's country, and we shall probably succeed," it looked to the future with some foreboding, since "the competition of races is only begun."\(^\text{15}\)

While many observers saw the basis of growing Japanese-American conflict as racial and cultural, others felt that commercial issues were also an important factor. During the period following the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War, Japan completed her domination over the Hermit Kingdom of Korea, eventually annexing it as Chosen. This was looked on benignly by many Americans, who felt that the material well-being of the Korean people could only be improved by this arrangement.\(^\text{16}\) The same was not necessarily true, however, with regard to


\(^{15}\) American Monthly Review of Reviews 37 (1908),p. 393. Leslie's Weekly said of the Japanese, "but for the economic and racial problems which their coming raises, the Japanese immigrants would be welcome; they are certainly far superior to many of the Europeans who bring to this country the principles and practices of anarchy that makes them a menace to our civilization." 13 February 1908, p. 146.

\(^{16}\) The American Review of Reviews, for example: "Not even the most rabid of anti-Japanese will deny that the Korea of to-day is vastly better off than the country before the war." 42 (1910), p. 416. This view was not unanimously held. In a magazine article, F. A. McKenzie quoted a Korean minister as telling him of Japan's appetite, "Korea is the victim to-day, to-morrow it will be Manchuria, and afterwards China. Where will your European trade be then? What then will be the prestige of the white man among the hundreds of millions of Asia?" The Japanese in Korea. Living Age 256 (1907), pp. 329-330.
Manchuria. Looking at Japanese activities there and in Korea, Thomas F. Millard wrote, "I am convinced that from almost the moment a locality was occupied by Japanese armies it has been the deliberate and calculated effort of Japan to use her possession of these territories to establish and advance her commercial interests." "It seems to me," he concluded, "that unless certain points are definitely adjusted by means of, if necessary, international pressure upon the powers in occupation, the 'open door' in Manchuria will continue to be the hollow sham that it is now, and may lead to the dismemberment of China."

An American magazine noted in early 1908 that

The progress of Japan's commercial absorption of Manchuria serves, as time goes by, to deepen the already deep-seated suspicion and animosity of the Chinese, who are bitter against the Japanese Government for the degree of Japanese ascendancy they perceive and for the further encroachments they suspect upon not only their sovereignty in the northern provinces, but their commercial prosperity in the heart of the empire itself.

"This anti-Japanese feeling in China," the writer argued, "is coming to be regarded as one of the most significant political signs of the times." Its significance in the eyes of many observers lay in the fact that Japan was no longer acting as the guardian of the "Open Door," but was instead rapidly becoming the single largest threat to the territorial integrity and commercial potential of China.

Since by 1908, many members of the American press were beginning to regard Japan as a potential commercial and cultural (if not yet military) rival, it is not surprising that articles and editorials supporting the President's call for increased naval appropriations began to appear. In an article for Leslie's Weekly, Sidney Graves Koon wrote that

Japan's foreign policy, and particularly her relations with the United States, render a huge navy indispensable to her. In view of the certainty of a vigorous


struggle in the near future (commercial, surely—warlike, possibly) the only thing for the United States to do in the premises is to become equally prepared for whatever may eventuate.

Koon argued that expanded naval construction was vital if the United States was to keep ahead of Japan, "and keep ahead of her we must—or surrender the control of the Pacific, with its vast markets and its immense future commerce." Although the hysteria engendered by the war scare of the summer of 1907 had largely faded by this time, in its place can be seen the beginnings of a new, more cynical, jaundiced view of Japanese-American relations on the part of the American press, which now seemed to take the teachings of Mahan much more seriously than the romance of the Mikado.

Two events occurred in the fall of 1908 which served to mollify the sensationalist elements of the American press and to confirm its more sober elements in their conviction of the essential amity between the United States and Japan. In September, despite myriad rumors and all fears to the contrary, the American fleet was afforded a tumultuous welcome when it visited Tokyo. The Nation expressed the opinion that "nothing could have better proved the friendliness of the Japanese toward America than the warmth of the welcome to our battleship fleet," and the American Review of Reviews agreed, saying "The Russian ships and fighters at the battle of the Sea of Japan were not more signally routed and scattered than the preachers of an inevitable American-Japanese war have been by the hearty, sincere and unprecedented welcome accorded by the Japanese Government and the entire Japanese people to the American battleship fleet."  

The visit of the Great White Fleet to Japan was followed at the end November by a written understanding between the American and Japanese governments, which became known (after the principals involved) as the Root-Takahira Agreement. In this understanding, the two

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countries agreed to peaceably promote trade in the Pacific Basin, to defend equal opportunity for commerce and industry in China, to respect each other's territorial possessions in the region, to support the independence and territorial integrity of China, and to undertake to communicate with each other in the case of a threat to these principles. Further Japanese immigration to the continental United States was to be voluntarily prevented by the Japanese government.

The press generally responded with approval to the Root-Takahira Agreement, one editor saying that "Mr. Root could leave no better legacy to his successor in the State Department than some formal embodiment of our friendship with Japan," and the New York Times agreed, saying of the agreement that "the mutual pledges exchanged between the United States and Japan transmute the 'yellow peril' into an international guarantee of peace."21 After the crises of 1906 and 1907, the President and the Secretary of State probably imagined with most members of the press that they had nicely settled the issue of Japanese-American relations for their successors, William Howard Taft and Philander C. Knox.

II.

While Theodore Roosevelt may have thought at the close of 1908 that his last few months in the Oval Office would be free of any controversy regarding Japan, this was not the case. In January the Hartford Courant would observe that "California is at it again,"22 as A. M. Drew and Grove L. Johnson introduced in the California State Legislature bills providing for the segregation of Japanese and other Asians in separate residential quarters, prohibiting aliens

\[\text{\textsuperscript{21} Nation, 19 November 1907, p. 478; and New York Times, 1 December 1908. Leslie's Weekly felt that "the understanding between the United States and Japan is the most important news for us which has come from the big western ocean since Dewey's shot in Manila Bay in 1898. This, however, is a victory of peace." 7 January 1909, p. 2. A considerably less euphoric (and probably more astute) observer thought that "the really interesting problem, which is not settled but rather raised by the agreement is whether we can take it as involving a repudiation of further rivalry or whether it is merely an expedient for smoothing over existing grounds of friction." "Japan and America." Living Age 260 (1908), p. 121.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{22} Literary Digest, 23 January 1909, 127.}\]
from owning land in the United States, prohibiting them from becoming directors in California corporations, and segregating Japanese students into separate schools.

Roosevelt's response to this action was to immediately send another telegram to the governor of California, James N. Gillett, to be read to the legislature. In it, he declared that

the policy of the Administration is to combine the maximum of efficiency in achieving the real object which the people of the Pacific slope have at heart with the minimum of friction and trouble, while the misguided men who advocate such action as this against which I protest are following a policy which combines the very minimum of efficiency with the maximum of insult, and which while totally failing to achieve any real result for the good, yet might accomplish an infinity of harm.\textsuperscript{23}

Oswald Garrison Villard of the Nation later asked scathingly, "Do the Californians wish to endanger our trade with the Orient? If they were really in danger of being submerged by an onrush of Japanese, there might be some excuse for their conduct, but that is not the case. All told, the Japanese Government does not know of more than 71,712 Japanese in the whole United States...Surely, it is ridiculous to speak of peril from such a mere handful of Japanese—even though our fear may be a compliment to their industry and ability."\textsuperscript{24} While almost all the Japanese in the continental United States resided in California, the informal exclusion agreement arrived at by Roosevelt and the Japanese government in 1907 had (after some initial bumps) greatly decreased the flow of Japanese immigrants into the country.

In the eyes of the Eastern press, the issue was no longer compelling enough to provoke a crisis, the New York Evening Post saying of it

One large reason for comfort there rests in the present situation. Never again will California, on this question of the Japanese, easily rattle the nerves of the nation. The game has been worked once too often, and with the feeling of relief that accompanies the cessation of the dreadful din, there is mingled a goodly measure of disgust.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{24} Nation, 4 February 1909.
\textsuperscript{25} Literary Digest, 13 February 1909, p. 281.
Surprisingly, several West Coast newspapers agreed. The San Francisco Chronicle called the school bill "foolish and harmful," while the Los Angeles Daily Times remarked rather wearily that "the sentiment of California, outside of a few politicians who easily mistake loud shouting for numbers, is in favor giving the Japanese and Chinese already in the State such treatment as becomes humanity, and leaving the matter of exclusion with the Federal authorities, where it belongs." When the Nevada Legislature passed a resolution applauding the actions of its California counterpart and exorciating the President, the editors of Chronicle dismissed it as a comical body, saying caustically that "the people of Nevada will perhaps hereafter be more careful in their choice of legislators." 26

After leaving office, Roosevelt explained in an article for the Outlook his personal opinion on the issue of Japanese immigration. "I personally," he wrote, "certainly have a profound and hearty admiration for them, an admiration for their great deeds and great qualities, an ungrudging respect for their national character." "But this admiration and respect," he added, "is accompanied by the firm conviction that it is not for the advantage of either people that emigrants from either country should settle in mass in the other country...the fact that it is in the interest of both races that the masses of both races should be kept apart is in no way incompatible with the heartiest feelings of mutual respect and admiration between the two races." 27 After the crises he had dealt with as Chief Executive, Roosevelt had come to the conclusion that the only solution to West Coast anti-Japanese agitation was exclusion.

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26 San Francisco Chronicle, 6 and 10 February 1909; and Los Angeles Daily Times 9 February 1909. The editors of the Chronicle went on to state on 10 February that "there is a time for all things, and just at present is the time for keeping perfectly still about Japanese immigration...the Japanese Government is not under the slightest obligation to continue to refuse passports to its people to go wherever they please, and should it be irritated into returning to that policy Japanese will come to the United States by the shipload without the slightest regard to the wishes of the people of California or the whole Pacific Coast."

accomplished as tactfully as possible in order to avoid irritating Japanese sensibilities. In many ways, the sentiments expressed in his article echoed those that the *San Francisco Chronicle* had expressed in 1905.

Theodore Roosevelt was followed in the Oval Office by William Howard Taft. In his inaugural address, which was delivered on March 4, 1909, Taft touched on the issue of Asian immigration to the United States. He stated, "I sincerely hope that we may continue to minimize the evils likely to arise from such immigration without unnecessary friction and by mutual concessions between self-respecting governments." "Meanwhile," he said, "we must take every precaution to prevent, or failing that, to punish outbursts of race feeling among our people against foreigners of whatever nationality who have by our grant a treaty right to pursue lawful business here and to be protected against lawless assault and injury." On this issue, Taft intended to follow very much in the footsteps of his predecessor. In other areas regarding Asian affairs, however, his approach would be quite different from Roosevelt's, particularly in the field of economic activity in Manchuria.

Among the books published in 1909 which focused on East Asia was one by a hunchbacked, nearsighted American who was also a self-proclaimed general in the Chinese revolutionary armies. Unlike Roosevelt and Taft, Homer Lea did not believe that if kept apart, the Japanese and American peoples could maintain peaceful and friendly relations. In *The Valor of Ignorance*, Lea detailed what he considered to be an inevitable conflict between the United States and Japan for mastery of the Pacific in the near future. Interestingly, he blamed the United States for this state of affairs, stating that "the American people, and not Japan, are responsible for this approaching conflict. In sacrificing the national ideal to that of the individual the expansion of this nation has been determined by his wants." Lea felt that "the true significance of the Republic's position in the world has been put aside" "it is this neglect," he wrote, "that invites

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war and turns into loot the nation's treasure, the high spires of its gods, and the spangled panoply of its greatness."^29

Lea felt that the principal causes of the impending war would be racial difference and economic competition. "Racial difference," he wrote, "creates antagonism. Thus, the Japanese, with their sword-girded gods and militant bonzes, are heathen in the eyes of the Republic, heathen in all the contemptuous, naked inferiority that term in a Christian nation implies." As for anti-Japanese agitation on the West Coast, he argued that "to expect the Japanese to submit to indignities is to be pitifully incomprehensible of their national character." As for economic competition,

The future of Japan depends basically on the possession of a sufficient number of positions, so distributed in the Pacific, that they command all trade routes to and from the East and West. Failure to secure these will, in time, relegate her to the environs of her rocky islands, and, like Egypt, though twenty-nine dim centuries shall pass, she shall not rise up again forever.

"If Japan," said Lea, "holds...the spirit of her samurai unsullied in the Temple of the Forty Ronins, then shall the rest of mankind play Atlas to the Islands of the Eastern Sea."^30 Given these factors, a war between the United States and Japan for Pacific (and thus world) supremacy was only a matter of time, and the Japanese would probably strike quickly, before completion of the Panama Canal allowed the concentration of the American fleet in the Pacific.

Although some observers, like Lea, ascribed to Japan long term goals and aspirations that made a conflict between her and the United States not only inevitable, but quite possibly imminent, she still had her defenders in the American press. D. S. Richardson argued in *Sunset* magazine that "probably no subject of world gossip during the past year has had less basis of real fact or been freer from legitimate menace than the talk of war between the United States and Japan." As for the Japanese predilection for maintaining sizable naval and military forces,


"least of all the great nations to-day can she afford to take risks or leave anything to chance." "It is just as unfair to criticise her from this standpoint," wrote Richardson, "as to criticise her commercial methods. So long as she keeps the doors of Asia open to the trade of all nations, on an absolutely equal footing, it is her right to take advantage of every circumstance which favors the development of her own interests."\(^{31}\)

While the Japanese had their champions, such as Richardson, other Americans continued to make dire predictions about the future of an East Asia dominated by Nippon. In an article entitled "If Japan Wakens China,", Jack London argued that "when one man does not understand another man's mental processes, how can the one forecast the other's future actions? This is precisely the situation today between the white race and the Japanese. "The Chinese mind," he continued, "may baffle us, but it cannot baffle the Japanese. And what if Japan awakens China--not to our dreams, if you please, but to her dream, to Japan's dream?...Here is race-adventure--the first clashing of the Asiatic dream with ours." This dream would be unintelligible to Occidentals, for "it is a weakness of the white race to believe that the Japanese think as we think, are moved to action as we are moved, and have points of view similar to our own."\(^{32}\) In London's opinion, overriding common interests between Americans and Japanese could not be assumed to exist. He did not consider this true, however, of Japanese and Chinese, raising the specter of the "yellow peril."

In a speech given in San Francisco on October 5, 1909, President Taft expressed his administration's views on the question of China. The Middle Kingdom, he told his listeners, "is waking up. It is developing as it never has before. Its future is bright with the prospects of increased activity in its industries and the development of its marvelous resources. Its trade

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31 Richardson, D. S. "Does Japan Want War?" *Sunset*, February 1909, pp. 159, 163.

must grow under these conditions, and its international relationship become more and more valuable.\textsuperscript{33}

In his first annual message, in December, Taft reminded Congress that "in the Far East, this Government preserves unchanged its policy of supporting the principle of equality of opportunity and scrupulous respect for the integrity of the Chinese Empire, to which policy are pledged the interested Powers of both East and West." Of Japan, he simply remarked that "our traditional relations with the Japanese Empire continue cordial as usual."\textsuperscript{34} While the President may have believed that cordial relations with Japan could be maintained indefinitely with little effort, his Secretary of State was about to embark on an initiative regarding China that would put that belief to the test.

In January, the \textit{American Monthly Review of Reviews} reported that

\begin{quote}
A clarifying of the economic and political situation in the Far East has been effected by Secretary Knox's note on the Manchurian Situation. Late in December Mr. Knox communicated to the governments of China, Japan, Russia, Great Britain, France, and Germany the proposal that the railroads of Manchuria be turned over to China and placed in the hands of an international syndicate which should develop them for commercial instead of military purposes, thus ensuring the neutrality of this vast region, which for more than two decades has been the subject of international disagreement and dispute.
\end{quote}

The magazine noted that Mr. Knox made the proposal "in accordance with the policy inaugurated by the late Secretary Hay for the maintenance of the 'Open Door' in Manchuria."\textsuperscript{35} Under the guise of international cooperation to preserve the Open Door, the State Department was making a bid to prevent any possibility of Japanese preeminence in Manchuria, whether it had been arrived at fairly or not.

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Thomas F. Millard exerted a great deal of influence in bringing the Taft Administration to apply what became known as 'Dollar Diplomacy' to the defense of the Open Door in Manchuria against Japan. During Taft's trip to the Orient in 1907, Millard urged the Secretary of War to strongly assert America's determination to uphold the Open Door, which he did in a speech in Shanghai, one month after his speech to the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce. During this period, Mr. Millard had also devoted his energies to promoting public awareness of, and interest in, the issues confronting the nation in East Asia. In America and the Far Eastern Question, he grimly stated that "of wider problems which confront our nation, the question of its present and future position in the Pacific Ocean, and its security, is second to none." Looking at American commercial interests in Manchuria in the Forum, he called them "considerable," and argued that "they have already been injured by conditions due to Russian and Japanese occupation, and may be further impaired by a continuation of it."

The efforts of Millard and the Taft Administration to promote American interests in Manchuria, and to nullify Russian and particularly Japanese interests there, did not escape comment. An article in the North American Review said of Millard, "(his) single desire being that a high-handed American policy be thrust in the face of Japan, sympathetic consideration of the latter's position in Manchuria is, of course, out of the question," and Arthur May Knapp declared in Atlantic that "the sole aim of Japan is to secure the future safety and to enhance the prosperity of its own island realm...its tremendous struggle to secure its safety now over, it is seeking by every possible means its development on industrial and commercial lines through the

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36 Neu, Charles E. An Uncertain Friendship: Theodore Roosevelt and Japan, 1906-1909. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967. Page 153. In this speech, Taft mentioned the assistance of Millard in advising him of the volume of Chinese-American trade, and went on to say that "It is certain, therefore, that the American-Chinese trade is of sufficiently great importance to require the Government of the United States to take every legitimate means to protect against diminution or injury by the political preference of any of its competitors." Dunn, William Howard Taft, pp. 107-108.

lawful channels of trade."^38 Looking at Knox's initiative in light of the actual balance of power in
the Far East, another writer would carefully observe that "whether the proposal is immature or
not is undecided."^39

The Administration's neutralization scheme also aroused the interest of Taft's predecessor.
Annoyed that the President and Secretary of State could not see that efforts regarding
Manchuria would be related by the Japanese to the immigration question and thus would affect
Japanese-American relations as a whole, Roosevelt wrote a letter to Taft in December,
reminding him that

Japan is not rich, her main interests are on the Continent of Asia, and
especially in Manchuria and Korea; and she is obliged steadily to keep in mind
that Russia is a great military power, with rankling memories of injury, with
which power Japan is and must remain face to face...I have reluctantly come to
the conclusion that Japanese immigration must be kept out; but the way which
this shall be done is not only all-important in itself, but must be considered in
connection with our entire Japanese policy.^40

In a second letter, he would state his position even more bluntly, saying, "our vital interest is to
keep the Japanese out of our country and at the same time to preserve the good will of
Japan."^41 In this as well as other matters, Roosevelt would grow increasingly exasperated with
Taft's inability to fully grasp his vision.

Initially, high hopes were entertained for the neutralization proposal, the New York Times
saying, "the failure of the chief Powers to agree about it would be an unpleasant incident in our
diplomacy. As it happened, however, Japan and Russia, acting in concert, were able to deflate Knox's plans for a neutralized Manchuria open to a higher level of American investment and enterprise fairly easily. The secretary exuded a level of confidence in the strength of the proposal all out of proportion to reality, and even Millard was moved to comment that "if the Washington Government really expected Russia and Japan to assent to this proposal at this time, such a state of mind indicates an almost childlike absence of guile." In his second annual message, Taft blandly said of the eventual demise of the proposal, "while the principle which led to the proposal of this government was generally admitted by the powers to whom it was addressed, the Governments of Russia and Japan apprehended practical difficulties in the execution of the larger plan which prevented their ready adherence."

Speaking of the treaty arrived at by Japan and Russia later in 1910, concerning their 'administration' of Manchuria, the editors of the American Monthly Review of Reviews felt that "while it is not true, as suggested in some quarters, that the treaty has resulted directly from Secretary Knox's intervention in Manchuria, it may be a fact that the proposals made by our Secretary of State hastened the conclusion of the agreement." While Roosevelt might have tried to subtly play Russia and Japan off against each other in Manchuria if he felt it necessary to safeguard American interests there, the actions of the Taft Administration had apparently

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43 Millard, Thomas F. "Our Blundering Policy in the Far East." American Magazine 70 (1910), p. 424. For example, Knox failed to consider that Great Britain and France would be unlikely to muster much enthusiasm for a plan so injurious to their allies' interests. In Japan, the Mainichi-shimbun noted that Knox had submitted the plan to England, France, and Germany before Japan and Russia, saying, "it seems as though (he) hoped to bully us by showing how formidable a backing he had obtained." Literary Digest, 26 February 1910, p. 385. Other observers tried to attribute a great deal of guile to Knox, E. J. Dillon writing that "doubtless the American Government foresaw this reception of the project. It would be an insult to their political intelligence to affect to believe that they expected Japan and Russia to close with it."

"Mr. Knox's Manchurian Scheme." Living Age 265 (1910), p. 159.

44 Second Annual Message. Messages of the President on Foreign Relations. p. 2374.

helped to bring the two together. Even the most charitably inclined members of the American press had to regard Knox's attempt to neutralize Manchuria as a failure.

While they would pursue their goal of international cooperation in China proper, and negotiate a treaty with Japan which replaced the expired agreement of 1894 and satisfied both parties, the Chinese Revolution of 1911 would leave Taft and Knox somewhat nonplussed over the proper course to chart for the United States in her relations with East Asia. The new treaty signed with Japan in 1911 included reference to the issue of immigration, but at this time the issue was not of sufficient import to provoke a crisis or even generate much discussion. The Manchurian neutralization proposal was, in many ways, the high-water mark of the Taft Administration's Far East policy.

While the cruise of the Great White Fleet and more anti-Japanese legislation in California caused concern over the possibility of conflict between the United States and Japan in 1908 and 1909, by this time the perception of Japan seems to have shifted, with the Japanese no longer being considered likely to go to war rashly over isolated incidents. Many articles in the press emphasized Japan's heavy economic burdens during this period, and the need for her to concentrate on peaceful economic development. Economic necessity, it was argued, would override any desire to avenge insults to her national honor.

Emphasis on Japan's economic burdens did not bring a complete end to talk of possible conflict. Indeed, Japan's economic activities in her newly expanded sphere of influence in Manchuria and China proper became a source of contention. Japanese actions in Manchuria came to be seen by the Taft Administration as posing a definite threat to its conception of the Open Door, which resulted in a good deal of time, effort, and prestige being devoted to an eventually futile attempt to combat this activity by diplomatic and commercial means.

Those observers who considered impending war between the United States and Japan inevitable, such as Homer Lea, increasingly dwelt on economic competition for Pacific mastery as the basis for such a conflict, with racial and cultural differences between Americans and Japanese being considered to make any attempt at peaceful accommodation difficult if not
impossible. Crises arising from West Coast anti-Japanese agitation were now seen as providing a convenient casus belli if Japan wished to fight for Pacific domination before completion of the Panama Canal worsened its strategic position. Such scenarios became so commonplace in the press that when New York banker Jacob H. Schiff described a coming commercial struggle between the United States and Japan for economic supremacy in Manchuria, the New York Evening Post wearily remarked that "We are forming the Japanese habit, very much as the English have formed the German habit."^46

Neither Theodore Roosevelt or William Howard Taft ever really considered war with Japan likely, but their policies did diverge regarding the existence and nature of economic competition between the two nations. Roosevelt, for all his glowing oratory, saw little or nothing to be gained from the fabled "China Market," and was willing to concede Japanese economic domination of the Asian mainland in return for informal exclusion of Japanese laborers from the United States. Taft's administration, influenced at least in part by members of the press, in contrast embarked on a course of action designed to foster American commercial competition with Japan in Manchuria. Thomas F. Millard, the correspondent who had done so much to push the government into the Manchurian venture, condemned its manner of implementation, but considered its ultimate failure to simply constitute further proof that Japan's domination of Manchuria was detrimental to vital American commercial activity there.

In an article in The Pacific Historical Review in 1984, Sandra C. Taylor wrote that "as long as Japan was quaint, exotic, deprived, it fascinated Americans. Once it became strong and began to act as other sovereign nations of comparable power did in world affairs, it ceased to fascinate and instead became an object of fear."^47 Nowhere is this more evident than in the interaction between American perceptions of and policy toward Japan during this period. In the wake of the

^46 Literary Digest. 19 March 1910, p. 528.

Russo-Japanese War, the Roosevelt Administration saw Japan as a friend but a possible antagonist, while Taft attempted to maintain friendship while treating Japan as a definite commercial rival. This process slowed during Taft's last two years in office, but accelerated measurably once Woodrow Wilson became President.
CHAPTER 4

"THE NEW MENACE IN THE FAR EAST:" WOODROW WILSON, THE PRESS, AND THE 21 DEMANDS

In August 1914, the Great Powers of Europe were inexorably drawn, one after another, into the maelstrom of the First World War. The conflict quickly demonstrated its global nature, with Turkey joining the Central Powers, the Entente moving against German East Africa, and the outlying ships and squadrons of the German High Seas Fleet being brought to bay. This last was in part effected by the soldiers and warships of the Japanese Empire, which upon the outbreak of the war had decided to honor the Anglo-Japanese alliance and help remove the German presence in the Pacific. A major component of this presence was the fortress-city of Zingdao (Tsingtao), in Shandong (Shantung) Province. The city fell to besieging Japanese forces on November 7, 1914.

Japan's entry into the war had been viewed with some trepidation, even by her British allies, since many feared she was simply seizing an unparalleled opportunity to establish her preeminence in Asia.¹ Upon the outbreak of hostilities, the Republic of China solicited American aid in an attempt to declare foreign concessions in China neutral territory. Japanese entry into the war was so swift as to forestall this initiative, however, and with the fall of Zingdao, the Chinese were left to await further developments. These developments were not long in coming. In January of 1915, the government of Japan presented to the government of China a list of

demands and requests, twenty-one in number, designed to promote Japanese economic and political interests in China.

When the existence of the Twenty-One Demands became general knowledge (Chinese officials leaked news of their existence to the Western press, in order to gain the support of world opinion), a storm of controversy arose. Were the Japanese merely seeking a reasonable understanding regarding the extent of their activities in China, or were they attempting to transform the Middle Kingdom into a Japanese protectorate? Nowhere was this controversy more intense than in the United States, the only Great Power not yet entangled in the war, and a nation whose President, Woodrow Wilson, had already made it clear that he wished for the United States to chart a new course in East Asian affairs.

The Wilson Administration and the majority of the press eventually adopted a hard line regarding Japanese intentions and policy in East Asia and about the entire issue of Japanese-American relations. This harsher attitude was adopted for a variety of reasons, but priorities would differ greatly between public opinion leaders and government officials. While the Administration was eager for the United States to assume the mantle of leadership in East Asian affairs in spite of its limited interests and power in the region, the press was more concerned with issues such as trade and immigration. Seeing the government adopt an increasingly more belligerent attitude toward Japan, it assumed that these issues had become of grave concern, and for the most part adopted a more pronounced antipathy for the Japanese. This in turn reinforced the Wilson Administration's determination to "toe the line."

I.

On March 29, 1913, editor George Harvey opened Harper's Weekly by looking at "The New Administration and China." He quoted President Wilson as saying

the awakening of the people of China to a consciousness of their possibilities under free government is the most significant, if not the momentous, event of our generation. With this movement and aspiration the American people are in profound sympathy. They certainly wish to participate, and participate very
generously, in opening to the Chinese and to the rest of the world the almost untouched and perhaps unrivalled resources of China.

Wilson also averred that "the government of the United States is not only willing, but earnestly desirous of aiding the great Chinese people in every way that is consistent with their untrammeled development and its own immemorial principles."¹

While the President's language about China's potential largely echoed that of his Republican predecessors (Theodore Roosevelt had written in Outlook in 1908 that the awakening of China was "one of the great events of our age"²), his projected East Asian policy was quite different. Roosevelt's approach to Far Eastern matters had been derived from a coldly realistic appraisal of American interests and capabilities in the region. During his term of office, Japan achieved the status of a major military power, and Japanese-American trade grew steadily. In contrast, the American stake in China was minimal, and, given the moribund state of the Quing dynasty, was unlikely to increase in the near future. Therefore, it made sense to accept Japan's increasing preeminence in East Asia, particularly when anti-Japanese agitation on the West Coast made it clear to both Roosevelt and the Japanese that immigration to America would not serve as an outlet for Japan's increasing population.

The thrust of Roosevelt's Far East policy can clearly be seen in his actions during the Russo-Japanese War and at the Portsmouth peace conference, which brought the war to a close. As Charles E. Neu noted, although he President repeatedly stated his desire to maintain a balance between Japan and Russia, Roosevelt accepted Japanese control over Korea, the cession of Russian rights in the Liaodong Peninsula to Japan, and the existence of a new, Japanese sphere of influence in southern Manchuria.³ The Root-Takahira Agreement of 1908, in which the United States and Japan agreed to respect each other's possessions in the Pacific.

¹ Harper's Weekly. 29 March 1913, p. 3.
³ Neu, Troubled Encounter, pp. 43-44.
maintain the *status quo*, and uphold the Open Door in China, is perhaps more accurately seen as an informal agreement to respect each other's position concerning the issues of emigration and Japan's position in Manchuria. The agreement was clothed in vague language in order to be acceptable to both the American and Japanese public, a decision which might have made it difficult for subsequent administrations to follow this policy, if they had been so inclined. As it happened, Roosevelt's policy was deviated from almost immediately upon his departure from office.

Neither William Howard Taft nor his Secretary of State, Philander C. Knox, possessed much interest in (or aptitude for) balance-of power politics. Instead, they proposed to use the burgeoning American economy to further American interests, especially in the world's undeveloped regions. This idea of using commerce to achieve foreign policy goals was quickly labeled "dollar diplomacy" by the press. While the Administration disliked the nickname, it worked tirelessly to put the approach to work. Since Taft and Knox deemed China (and particularly Manchuria) to be one of the most suitable grounds for the practice of dollar diplomacy, they considered the Japanese sphere of influence accepted by Roosevelt to instead be a particular menace to American interests.

Much of the history of United States East Asian policy during the Taft Administration is of repeated attempts by the State Department to "neutralize" Manchuria, and also to increase American investment in China proper. These efforts were doomed to failure, in large part because neither the President nor the Secretary of State had any understanding of great power politics in China. Rebuffed in their attempts to reduce Japanese influence in Manchuria, and met with indifference by American businessmen regading investment in China, Taft and Knox were further shaken when the Manchus were toppled in 1912.

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4 Ibid., 64-65.
After the successful revolution of 1911-1912, the new government of China was styled a republic, which quickly gained it American sympathy. A resolution of the House of Representatives was passed on February 12, 1912, which congratulated the people of China on the assumption of self-government, and many members of Congress took the opportunity to express their desire for a quick recognition of the new republic by the United States. Since the government was still pursuing a policy of cooperation with the other powers in China, it was forced to walk a tightrope between domestic pressure for rapid, unilateral recognition on the one hand, and the international desire to ascertain the shaky new regime's survivability and position on foreign interests in China on the other. This was the situation when Woodrow Wilson defeated Taft's Republicans and Roosevelt's Progressives in the 1912 election, and succeeded Taft in office.

One of the first acts of the new Administration was to announce the withdrawal of the United States from the six Power Consortium which had been formed in 1912. Wilson described it as seeming

to touch very nearly the administrative independence of China itself; and this administration does not feel that it ought, even by implication, to be a party to those conditions. The responsibility on its part which would be implied in requesting the bankers to undertake the loan might conceivably go the length in some unhappy contingency of forcible intervention in the financial, and even the political, affairs of that great Oriental state, just now awakening to a consciousness of its power and of its obligations to its people.

The President, along with many others, felt that the work of American missionaries in China was on the verge of tremendous success.

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6 Harper's Weekly. 29 March 1913, p. 3.
George Harvey, an early Wilson supporter, heartily approved this action, writing that "the wit of man could not conceive a worse entanglement than that involved in the matter of the proposed China loan." While Harvey and others did not feel that recognition of Yuan Shikai's increasingly dictatorial government was as yet justified, the President was already moving along this course. Although somewhat chary of Yuan's intentions, Wilson seized upon the imminent seating of the Chinese Constituent Assembly in late April 1913 as sufficient justification for action. On May 2, the United States formally recognized the new government, and thus, in Merieth Cameron's words, "became the first and was for several months the only one of the great powers with major interests in China to accord recognition to the Chinese Republic." As Cameron also noted, this recognition was as much a declaration of independence by the United States in its Far Eastern policy as it was a vote of confidence in the new regime.

Meanwhile, after a period of relative calm following the negotiation of the Japanese American Treaty of 1911, the California state legislature resumed its consideration of anti-Japanese measures, centering on the ability of Japanese to own land. In "California, Japan, and the Alien Land Legislature of 1913," Thomas A. Bailey gave Wilson a good deal of credit for his conciliatory attitude during this crisis, which did much to facilitate an amicable outcome, although the Japanese government did make a formal protest over the incident, and the President felt he was unable to prevent a state from passing legislation in direct contradiction of a national treaty. This credit seems borne out by the trend of American press opinion regarding the issue, as reported by the Literary Digest in July 1914. The comments also seem to reveal a growing truculence toward Japan. The Washington Post, for example, declared that since the

7 Ibid.
United States acknowledged Japan's right to exclude potential immigrants, it was perfectly justified in reserving that right for itself. The *Pittsburgh Chronicle Telegraph* simply asked, "Why doesn't Japan attempt to bully Great Britain?"^10

On the eve of the First World War, both the United States government and the American press, in the light of recent developments, seem to have viewed the new Republic of China with at least a cautious optimism, while their attitudes toward the Japanese Empire were increasingly marked by serious misgivings and even belligerence.^11 Soon, events in East Asia would provide fresh fuel for controversy.

II.

Almost as soon as the First World War commenced, Germany's possessions in the Pacific and East Asia became a focus of concern for both the Entente and interested neutral observers. Foremost among these possessions was the leasehold in China's Shandong province, Jiaozhou, with its fortified port at Zingdao. Great Britain could not allow Zingdao to serve as a base from which Admiral von Spee's Asiatic Squadron could raid British shipping throughout the Pacific. Meanwhile, Japan was more than willing to honor the terms of her alliance with Britain by dislodging the Germans from their leasehold.^12 Aware of their predicament, German diplomats tried to retrocede Jiaozhou to China before their enemies could take it, an attempt which failed

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^11 Nor were these misgivings entirely one-sided. The July 23, 1914 issue of the *Literary Digest* quoted a Japanese correspondent as saying, "There is no doubt that America is anxious to make China her ally in the Far East...the power of the American dollar is a factor which neither China nor Japan can ignore, and it will not be surprising if China will eventually enter into a defensive and offensive alliance with the United States."

^12 American observers noted this, one writing that "the present crisis has reversed the role of the two allies. For ten years Japan leaned on the support of England; now it is England who leans on the support of Japan." Johnston, R. M. "Arms and the Race." *Century* 89 (1914), p. 656.
in large part because the British and Japanese informed the Chinese government that they would not appreciate its taking part in such a transaction.13

Desperate to keep Shandong from falling into Japanese hands, China considered the possibility of declaring war on Germany and joining the impending Anglo-Japanese assault on Zingdao; this course of action was also rejected as unsuitable by the Allies. At the same time, the Chinese government decided to take the Wilson Administration at its word, and enlist its help in a scheme designed to neutralize China and prevent any of its territory from becoming a battleground. A. Whitney Griswold called this "but the first of a long series of not wholly unsuccessful attempts (by the Chinese Republic) to convert long-standing American sympathies for China into instruments of her own national policy."14

While the United States was interested in developing such a scheme, events in East Asia moved to quickly for it. On August 15, 1914, Japan presented Germany with an ultimatum, requiring that her authorities be presented with the Jiaozhou leasehold not later than September 15, in order that they might eventually restore the territory to China, and on August 17, President Wilson returned State Department Counselor Robert Lansing's latest proposal to him, saying, "it is evidently too late to pursue the course suggested by them."15 Zingdao fell to the Japanese (accompanied by a small British contingent) on November 17.

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15 The Foreign Relations of the United States. The Lansing Papers 1914-1920, vol. 1 (Washington: GPO, 1939), 3-6. In Woodrow Wilson and the Far East, Russell H. Fifield makes the point that Japan used much the same language in her note as Germany had in advising her to give up the Liaodong Peninsula in 1895.
As it became clear that all the great powers in Europe would eventually become embroiled in the conflict which grew out of Austria's ultimatum to Serbia, many correspondents turned their attention to related developments in East Asia. While the war would be decided on the battlefields of Europe, its repercussions would completely reshape the existing international system, a development some observers anticipated in the late summer and early fall of 1914. An increasingly acute question was how the United States would respond to what promised to be a radically different state of affairs.

In an article in the *Century* entitled "Arms and the Race," R. M. Johnston considered Japan's prospects in light of the outbreak of hostilities. "It is difficult to believe," he wrote, "that a people as proud and intelligent as the Japanese will not perceive a tendency from which they are almost certain to suffer eventually. At the present day they have achieved a momentary supremacy in Asia. They have imposed their will on China and Russia. Their alliance with England...was one whereby the dominant Pacific power gave them an aid which was indispensable. But the present crisis has reversed the role of the two allies. For ten years Japan leaned on the support of England; now it is England who leans on the support of Japan."

"Undoubtedly," continued Johnston, "the Japanese...perceive the precariousness of England's Asiatic prestige and position. Yet the precariousness of their own position is just as evident, because the future belongs to the great countries, and they are small. The question is, will they attempt to seize a favorable moment and gain expansion while there is yet time?" If Japan were to embark on an aggressive policy, he felt that several avenues lay open to her. Perhaps the most promising of these avenues lay in the direction of China, which "for the moment holds together in the hands of a strong and politic military dictator. But is it worth more than his life? Is not rupture in sight? And may not Japan eventually succeed in creating a great continental empire from the fragments?" "In a general sense," concluded Johnston, "it is true to

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say that Japan feels the spur of the situation and it likely to respond in ways that must in any case constitute a danger.\textsuperscript{17}

With the fall of the fortress of Zingdao on November 7, attention turned to future developments in Sino-Japanese relations. Englishman William Blane wrote that "the capture of Zingdao by the Japanese...was not only an event of first-rate importance in the progress of the present War but one calculated to change the whole aspect of the Far Eastern question."

"When one strong Power," he continued, "fully determined on its course, moves resolutely while other powers are so circumstanced that their interference would result in undesirable conflict, China must stand and deliver.\textsuperscript{18} On November 21, the New Republic, which had recently been founded by Willard Straight, a former State Department official who had resigned to help promote American investment in Manchuria during the Taft Administration, expressed the opinion that "The surrender of Zingdao is significant, not because of its possible effect on the grand strategy of the war, which is negligible, but because it would seem to terminate a period characterized by the balance of power in China, and to mark the beginning of Japan's Far Eastern supremacy.\textsuperscript{19} Both American and British observers felt that the capture of Zingdao was the portent of more significant changes in East Asia.

News of the issuance of the Twenty-One Demands to China broke in the American press on Sunday, January 24, 1915. "JAPAN MAKES BIG DEMANDS ON CHINA," declared the New York Times, which went on to state that "if these demands were granted, it is felt in Beijing that the result would be tantamount to turning over to Japan all the regions in question as spheres of influence, to the detriment of the treaty rights of other nations.\textsuperscript{20} The San Francisco

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{19} New Republic. 21 November 1914, p. 18.

\textsuperscript{20} New York Times. 24 January 1915.
Chronicle's headline on the same day stated "JAPAN STARTS ITS CHINESE CAMPAIGN," and in a subheading that the Japanese government had embarked "on negotiations to determine future status of Chinese trade."  

On January 27, E. T. Williams, head of the State Department's Far East division, sent a memorandum to Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan. The memorandum began by saying, "the telegrams attached and the press telegrams printed in the morning papers disclose in part only the demands made upon China by Japan, but what is revealed shows a serious crisis in Far Eastern affairs threatening not only China's peace but America's interests."  Three days after news of the demands first broke, the government was still relying on newspapers for a large part of its information.

Japan's demands upon Yuan Shikai's government were organized into five groups. The four demands in Group I related to the transfer of German rights in Shandong province to Japan, while the seven in Group II were designed to strengthen the Japanese position in South Manchuria and East Mongolia. Group III dealt with the Han-Yeh-Ping Company, a British-owned industrial complex in which Japan had made a major investment and which was Japan's primary source of iron ore. The single demand in Group IV was that China not alienate or lease any additional ports, harbors or islands to foreign powers. Included among the seven stipulations of Group V (which were termed 'requests') were that China employ Japanese government advisers.

21 San Francisco Chronicle. 24 January 1915. The Chronicle's attitude toward East Asians was themselves was illustrated in a second subheading regarding the government's professed ignorance as to the demands, which stated "State Department has no cognizance of trading between Mongolians."


allow a joint Sino-Japanese police force in sensitive locations in China, purchase at least half her munitions from Japan, and permit Japan specified railway concessions in the Yangzi valley.

Since the Japanese presented only a partial list of the demands to the United States government (which may have been unintentional, and was certainly a tactical blunder), the State Department labored for weeks in some confusion as to both their nature and their number. Thus, the Wilson Administration was in little position to comment either on the issue or on the intense speculation it aroused in the American press. A February 21 editorial in the New York Times opined that "extreme demands made now by Japan upon China would be the subject of deep concern to all western nations." It went on to state that "the principle of the independence and territorial integrity of China enunciated by John Hay is one to which all important nations are committed. In formulating her demands upon China Japan should keep that principle fully in view."24

On the West Coast, Sunset Magazine told its readers

According to press reports of circumstantial detail, though unconfirmed by official sources, Japan has seen fit to make use of the conditions created by the present war to move ten steps forward in her efforts to establish her Asian hegemony. If the reports detailing the twenty-one demands by Tokyo upon Peking are true, China will cease to exist as an independent nation and will become merely a Japanese province. Japanese officials will have the dominant role in the administration of the vast republic and Japanese trade will be extended at the expense of all occidental nations.

In other words, Japan closes China's partially Open Door with a bang, if the report is authentic.

"Will the United States acquiesce quietly in the proposed Japanization of China," asked the article, "If Japan really proposes to take the step attributed to her?"25 Combining commentary on the Twenty-One Demands with an attack on the Administration's earlier withdrawal from the Six Power Consortium, the Portland Oregonian concluded that "when we are the only Nation


free to keep open for American enterprise the single greatest undeveloped field, we find that we ourselves have closed the door and we lack the power to prevent Japan from locking and bolting it against us.\textsuperscript{26}

In a series of editorials in February and March, the \textit{San Francisco Chronicle} also emphasized the commercial implications of developments in the Far East, although it came to a different conclusion. "Under the provisions of the Hay letter," it noted on February 11, "the United States is committed to a measure of participation in the commercial relations of China, but of what earthly use is our insistence on the open door unless our own policy is so framed as to increase our trade with China?\textsuperscript{27}"

On the 17th, it offered the opinion that

\begin{quote}
The integrity of China is a myth, a fanciful dream of more or less interested diplomats. It has not been a reality for more than a quarter of a century, and has as much hope of being realized as the integrity of Africa. Sooner or later, the great powers will divide up the empire to suit themselves, and, all things considered, there is more hope for the peace of the Western world in a Japanese hegemony than in that of any other foreign nation.\textsuperscript{28}
\end{quote}

In March, the \textit{Chronicle} elaborated on this point, defining the Open Door as "a square deal as between themselves of the national exploiters who were engaged in the plunder of the people of China. It was not proposed that anybody should cease plundering, but only that there should be a fair division of the swag." Even if alarmists were correct regarding Japanese intentions, "if Japan takes control of China, she will apply to the new territory a tariff affording America the same benefits we now enjoy in regard to Japanese trade. It would not pay Japan to discriminate against the United States in a Chinese fiscal policy, and that is about all the open door in which we are directly and vitally concerned."\textsuperscript{29}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[26] \textit{Portland Oregonian}. 20 February 1915.
\item[27] \textit{San Francisco Chronicle}. 11 February 1915.
\item[28] \textit{Ibid.}, 17 February 1915.
\item[29] \textit{Ibid.}, 3 March and 20 February 1915.
\end{footnotes}
The press did not overlook the opinions and interests of other nations affected by the demands crisis. Reports were rife of German influence in the increasing intransigence of the Chinese government, for example. Perhaps more important to American observers was the attitude of Great Britain, Japan's ally. The American Review of Reviews reported in March that "Japan's attitude is approved in England and looked upon as merely an attempt to obtain a definite settlement of outstanding claims." In an article in the North American Review, however, Francis Aldridge was not so sanguine. Speaking of the anticipated postwar peace conference and East Asia, he felt that when the conference arrived, "Great Britain will then have to acquiesce—or will be asked to acquiesce—in any concessions which are not at British expense in order to avoid ones which are."

J. O. P. Bland, a British diplomat, newspaper correspondent, and close friend of Willard Straight, may have summarized the view of the Foreign Office when he wrote in a magazine article that "Even if England had not called upon Japan to take part in the war against Germany, thus enabling her to gain a firm foothold in Shandong, there can be no doubt that [Japanese Premier] Count Okuma would have been compelled to take his tide of opportunity at the flood." Looking at Japanese policy regarding Manchuria, he observed that "the Japanese may exceed Occidental nations in certain methods of slimness peculiar to the Oriental, but, on the other hand, they are free from the Anglo-Saxon mind-habit of hypocrisy. If from the outset they regarded the Portsmouth Treaty as a means to an end, as a scrap of paper, doomed to futility almost before its ratification—let the nation which is without sin in this matter throw the first stone." He concluded by saying, "One may sympathise with Japan's ambitions and recognise

33 Ibid., p. 1204.
the imperative necessity of her policy without being blind to its inevitable results."^34 Bland's assessment of the situation in the Far East was a cynical but pragmatic view of East Asian affairs.

It can be seen that even as the Wilson Administration was struggling to ascertain both the nature of Japan's intentions toward China and the proper American response to them, the American press was also growing increasingly concerned. The lack of concrete information as to the number and content of the demands (and official government on them) only provided more fertile grounds for speculation. Attitudes ranged from the idealistic to the deeply cynical. As the President first determined and then embarked on his course of action in response to the Twenty-One Demands, the press eagerly awaited developments.

III.

The inner workings of the Wilson Administration's conduct of its foreign policy have been the subject of a great deal of study, but they remain open to several conflicting interpretations. This is quite evident when looking at its Far East policy, and in its formulation of a response to the issuance of the Twenty-One Demands in particular. This resulted in large part from the differing goals and objectives of key players in the Administration.

The American Minister in Beijing, Paul S. Reinsch, was appointed to the post by Woodrow Wilson specifically for his optimistic assessment of the Chinese republic and his belief in the United States' mission to uplift the nation. Once there, as A. Whitney Griswold tactfully put it, he "stood far in advance of his government in the desire to serve the nation to which he was accredited."^35 Secretary of State Bryan's influence on policy during this crisis is subject to debate, but a fair assessment of his overall aims would be that he "was guided...by a devotion to

\[^34\] Ibid., pp. 1209-1210.

peace that overshadowed the principles of the open door." He eventually resigned when the President felt compelled to abandon a position of strict neutrality and condemn Germany over its use of unrestricted submarine warfare.

The motivations of State Department Counselor Robert Lansing are somewhat more obscure. In light of subsequent developments, it seems clear that he was trying to undercut Bryan's authority and succeed him as Secretary of State, but his actions during this crisis have led to his being described as both an opportunist whose views on the Far East and desire to undermine Bryan led his joining the Chinese advocates in the State Department, and as a pragmatic realist who did what he could to preserve the basis for an accommodation with Japan. This controversy helps illustrate the swirling intrigues and rivalries which surrounded Wilson's implementation of Far East policy.

While the President himself followed the developments of the demands crisis with interest, the conduct of foreign relations in general, and East Asian policy in particular, was not his area of expertise. After his election in 1912, he had remarked that it would be a supreme irony if he were to spend his tenure of office preoccupied with foreign affairs. Upon assuming office, he applied his progressive ideals to the conduct of diplomacy, saying of State Department personnel, "they have had the material interests of individuals in the United States very much more in mind than the moral and public considerations which it seems to us ought to control."

Wilson's belief in the interplay between Christianity and the development of democracy was very much evident when he wrote to Bryan in January 1913, "I warmly concur in your judgement


37 See Reed, The Missionary Mind, for the argument that Lansing was pro-Chinese during the crisis, while Burton Beers, in Vain Endeavor: Robert Lansing's Attempt to End the American-Japanese Rivalry (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1962) asserts that Lansing was trying to at least maintain a basis for understanding between the United States and Japan.

that I ought to send to China and Japan men of pronounced Christian character. These nations are much on my mind, and I think there are certain distinct services which we can render them.39 These factors played a significant role in his choice of Reinsch as minister to China, and would give his correspondence with the President an added significance.

On April 21, Wilson addressed the Potomac Presbytery at the Central Presbyterian Church in Washington. Speaking of missionary activity in China, he said

Why, this is the most amazing and inspiring vision that can be offered you, this vision of that great sleeping nation suddenly cried awake by the voice of Christ. Could there be anything more tremendous than that? And could there be any greater contribution to the future momentum of the moral forces of the world than could be made by quickening this force which is being set afoot in China? China is at present inchoate; as a nation it is congeries of parts in each of which there is energy, but which are unbound in any essential and active unit, and just as soon as its unity comes, its power will come into the world.

He concluded by asking his audience, "Should we not see that the parts are fructified by the teachings of Christ?"40

Since the President and several of his key advisers strongly believed in the potential of a Christian, democratic China, they determined that the United States, acting alone if necessary, would not allow Japan's demands to pass unchallenged and unremarked. They also feared that inaction would cause a loss of American credibility as being China's only true friend, and as employing a higher, more 'moral' conduct of diplomacy. In his 27 January memorandum to Bryan, E. T. Williams had concluded by arguing "China has certain claims on our sympathy. If we do not recognize them, as we refused to recognize Korea's claim, we are in danger of losing our influence in the Far East, and of adding to the dangers of the situation."41

41 Ibid., pp. 32, 137.
As pressure by Reinsch and Williams for the Administration to take a stand on the demands mounted, the New York Times printed a report on February 20 that the government was prepared to issue a note to Japan "making representations based on the obligations of the United States government under its policy of the 'open door' for China" based on the Hay notes and the Root-Takahira Agreement of 1908.\(^\text{42}\) As information continued to come in on the number and nature of the Japanese demands, however, Bryan expressed hope that the 'requests' of Group V could be reworded so as to allow their acceptance by both China and Japan, while at a press conference on February 23, the President told reporters that the United States was "not sufficiently informed" to adopt a policy.\(^\text{43}\) Until a consensus could be achieved on the nature of the demands and the proper response, Wilson was content to play for time.

In early March, Lansing proposed a quid pro quo arrangement, whereby the United States would tacitly accept Japanese special interests in South Manchuria, East Mongolia, and Shandong province, in exchange for Japanese concessions concerning immigration. Wilson decided against this, telling Bryan on March 4 that "My judgement is against this, as yours is. It would seem like bargaining away some of the rights of China in exchange for relief from some of our own difficulties...I think we ought to go straight at the matter of the requests, in the way you and I agreed was opportune and best when we conferred on the subject."\(^\text{44}\) No deal could be made at China's expense.

While the government formulated its policy, members of the press waited and wondered. On March 6, the Literary Digest asked, "What is our duty...when Japan makes demands which China regards as so unreasonable that it lays them before our government? Further, what will

\(^{42}\) New York Times. 20 February 1915.


be the effect of these new developments upon China and the rest of the world, and how has this rather perplexing situation come about?" An editorial in the *New York Sun* argued that

This country can not by any possibility let Japan's forward movement go by default...for the United States to assent even by silence to such an assumption of overlordship in a field where we have definite interests and have asserted the right to be heard would be tantamount to an abandonment of all pretension to be a Power in the world sense.

On the other hand, American policy options in the Far East were limited, as the *Digest*'s authors illustrated by closing their article with an editorial from the *Salt Lake Tribune*. It noted that "While the American people will be inclined to look with disfavor upon the policy of the Japanese Government, they will not be inclined to urge their Government on to any conflict with Japan."

A similar realization left the Wilson Administration somewhat constrained in its choice of possible responses to the issuance of the demands.

Although the President had rejected any idea of a bargain or compromise between the United States and Japan, the first, confidential note, sent to the Japanese government on March 13, was nonetheless something of a watershed. In it, the United States admitted, albeit very grudgingly, that "territorial contiguity creates special relations" between Japan and the regions of South Manchuria, East Mongolia, and Shandong province. The note concluded with the hope that the Japanese government "will find it consonant with their interests to refrain from pressing upon China an acceptance of proposals which would, if accepted, exclude Americans from equal participation in the economic and industrial development of China and would limit the political independence of that country." While the overall tone of the note could be reasonably

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45 *Literary Digest*, 6 March 1915.

46 Quoted in Reed, *Missionary Mind*, pp. 180-182.
interpreted as hostile to the broader aims of the Japanese demands, in it, the United States appeared to accept the existence of spheres of influence. This was not lost on the Japanese.

The Administration's decision to keep its correspondence with Tokyo confidential was reflected in an article in the March 15 issue of Leslie's Illustrated Weekly. Echoing reports from late February, it stated that "President Wilson and his cabinet (have) formally considered the situation, with the idea of sending a note to Japan reiterating adherence to the agreement of 1908, but deferred action to await more definite developments." Commenting on the lack of detailed knowledge concerning the nature and number of the demands, the Nation expressed the opinion that "Japan and China are bargaining after the method of the East, one asking more than she expects to get, the other professing to be harder pressed than she really is."

For a brief period in March, American editors and correspondents were able to convince themselves that with the Chinese and Japanese governments embroiled in negotiations over the demands, nothing of major import had yet occurred. In late March, however, an article appeared in the New York Times which indicated this belief had been unfounded. Entitled "WILSON CORRECTS TOKYO," it described the President as having declared "the only definite thing that could be said at this time as to the Japanese-Chinese negotiations was that the United States had addressed an inquiry to Japan concerning her demands upon China." The article went on to relate that a dispatch "from Tokio, stating that the United States had approved of Japan's explanation of the demands, was brought to the President's attention, and he referred to it as unfounded, pointing out that the United States had neither approved or disapproved, having, in fact, not yet received Japan's reply." While the government admitted the existence of the March 15 note, the fact that it was more protest than inquiry was still being omitted.

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48 Leslie's Illustrated Weekly. 15 March 1915, p. 251; and Nation. 25 March 1915.

While the Japanese negotiators used the March 13 note to prove to their Chinese counterparts that the United States would not offer China any tangible assistance, Bryan continued to search for a way that the two parties could be brought to compromise on the more objectionable articles of Group V. This effort, combined with the note itself, thoroughly alarmed Reinsch, who wired the Secretary of State on March 30 to express his views. "From my knowledge of the Chinese people and government," he stated, "I feel it my duty to inform you that the compromises suggested...are such as the Chinese would feel irrevocably derogate from the principle of administrative independence, and...would definitely set a term to the existence of China as a free country." Knowledge that the United States had advocated such a course would "produce in the minds of the Chinese a conviction that the United States had betrayed its historic friendship and its moral responsibility in respect to principles of China's integrity and the Open Door." He concluded by arguing that "it would at any rate be more expedient to follow a course of passive acquiescence rather than to intervene in such a manner as could scarcely fail to cause revulsion of Chinese feeling against the United States and put an end to our influence here and our opportunities either of assisting the Chinese government or of preserving our own rights in China." 

At almost the same time that Reinsch sent his cable to Bryan, the crisis took a more serious turn, and on April 1 the New York Times reported that failing a break in the deadlock in negotiations, Peking expected an ultimatum from the Japanese government. This was followed on April 6 by news of a purported interview with Yuan Shikai, in which he revealed that the United States had pledged that the war in Europe would not affect China's integrity. While the Secretary of State was described as 'reticent' with regard to the authenticity of the interview, the article concluded that "the statement of Yuan Shikai, and the remarks made today by

51 New York Times. 1 April 1915.
Secretary Bryan, are regarded as...showing that the united States is holding Japan to her promise with respect to the observance of the integrity of Chinese territory. In the absence of confirmed information, the Times correspondent apparently wished to believe that the United States was taking a firm attitude toward Japan.

An event occurred in April on the coast of Baja California, which provided ready ammunition for those who wished to believe that Japan was preparing to take a firm attitude toward the United States. The Japanese armored cruiser Asama ran aground in Turtle Bay, and refloating her proved to extremely difficult. Albert F. Nathan, a correspondent for the Los Angeles Daily Times, went to Turtle Bay, and reported that the cruiser had sustained no visible damage, no efforts were being made to free her, and that Japanese landing parties were behaving in a very suspicious manner. Nathan felt that the Japanese were at Turtle Bay to establish a naval base. Although he admitted in his article that the Japanese Consul at San Francisco "declared my report of my personal observations...a falsehood, and Admiral C. F. Pond, U. S. N.....branded the article as 'ridiculous.'" Nathan stuck to his guns, noting how Japanese officers had surveyed the harbor and concluding that "why they should need the number of moorings which they have put down if they are only trying to salvage does not seem clear."

As press rumors swirled over the increasing likelihood of war between China and Japan, Wilson, in a press conference, denied that the United States had given China assurances of any kind. On April 14, he wrote to Bryan, saying, "I feel that we should be as active as circumstances permit in showing ourselves to be champions of the sovereign rights of China, now as always, though with no thought of seeking any special advantage or privilege for ourselves." Reinsch was authorized to informally 'give out' that the United States had not

52 Ibid., 6 April 1915.
53 Los Angeles Daily Times. 15 April 1915.
surrendered any treaty rights or given up any of its friendly interest in the economic and political welfare of China.

While the Administration played coy, the media increasingly debated the pros and cons of a Japanese 'Monroe Doctrine' for Asia. The *San Francisco Chronicle* argued that China was ripe for conquest, since "partly because of petty revolutions and chiefly because the great mass of China never participated in the so-called democratic awakening, the republic has not been able to provide an adequate defense against invasion." Both the *Chronicle* and the *Los Angeles Daily Times* printed an editorial by Charles P. Steinmetz, who argued that "the closing of China may be disagreeable to American business men who dreamed of riches by exploiting China, but intelligent American sentiment cannot possibly find fault if Japan follows our example and our teaching, and works out the destiny of its race."  

On the West Coast in particular, the press possessed a degree of sympathy, however grudging, for Japanese aspirations in China. For the most part, however, the Eastern press was not so understanding. The *New York Times* editorialized in early April that "Japan evidently is under the tyranny of an ideal of political destiny which she confuses with an economic necessity," while in an article in the *New York Herald*, George Bronson Rea was quoted as saying that "it is on record that every move our financiers or manufacturers have made to expand their influence in China has been met with the undisguised hostility of Japan."  

This attitude was underscored throughout May and June, when the *New York Times Sunday Magazine* published a series of articles by Frederick McCormick, which purported to reveal Japan's design to push the United States out of East Asia. In "Japan's Game in the Far East," he argued that "taking advantage of the European situation, she is pushing her own interests

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55 *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2 April 1915.


57 *New York Times*, 3 April 1915; and *Current Opinion*, 58 (January-June 1915), 386.
through China's helplessness." A subsequent article described Japan's task as "getting rid of the United States in East Asia, because the open door doctrine disposes of the place of mediator between East Asia and the West, and interpreter of East Asia, to all alike." In related articles a leading Chinese financier was quoted as saying, "it has been the 'open door' policy of the United States which has done more than anything else to protect us," while L. R. Wilfley asked, "Does China need the tutelage of a foreign power? No one but Japan seems to think so."

The opinions of the American press regarding Japanese actions in China were not determined solely on the basis of the observer's geographic location. While an editorial in the Portland Oregonian opened by characterizing the demands made by Japan as "such as an energetic, aggressive nation usually makes when seeking control of a backward nation which lacks the energy and unity of spirit to pursue a definite aim," it concluded by saying that, if unhindered, "the Japanese empire would gradually acquire power to convert China into a menace to the peace of the world." Meanwhile, the New York Independent felt that "Japan has the same rights in Asia that we have in America under the Monroe Doctrine—that is, the right to maintain Asia for the Asiatics as we do America for the Americans. When China becomes Japan's equal in power...then she can share with Japan the responsibility of maintaining Asia against the White Peril."

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61 Portland Oregonian. 24 April 1915.

The *Brooklyn Eagle* expressed a more typical East Coast attitude in April, when it argued that "we assumed a moral obligation toward the Chinese people when one of the wisest heads that ever graced our much-afflicted State Department declared our open-door policy." Similarly, *Sunset*, which felt that "so long as legitimate American trade in China is not interfered with, the United States has no cause to interfere," expressed a more common Western view. While the Eastern press tended to emphasize moral duty and adherence to treaty stipulations, as well as the potential of the China market, its West Coast counterparts were more concerned with business realities.

While the American press pondered the nature of Japanese ambitions in China and their effect on American interests, the Administration leaned more and more toward an official expression of support for China. Meanwhile, as Japan threatened war if her demands were not met and China promised armed defiance, Great Britain, which had previously kept a low profile regarding the issue, put pressure on the Japanese to moderate their demands, while simultaneously advising the Chinese that acceptance would probably be in their best interests. The *genro*, or elder statesmen, of Japan also played a part in moderating their government's demands, since they were appalled by what they considered to be populist excesses by Okuma's cabinet. On May 8, the *New York Times* reported that "JAPAN AVERTS WAR WITH CHINA."

"Japan's demands," stated the article, "modified in the ultimatum handed in yesterday afternoon by the withholding for future discussion of the whole of Group V, will be accepted by the Chinese Government." Not to be deterred from making an official statement, the Wilson Administration sounded out Great Britain and Russia about the possibility of a joint communique even as the crisis was ending. Rebuffed, the President accepted a proposal by Robert Lansing to issue a notice

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63 Quoted in *Literary Digest*, 3 April 1915; and *Sunset Magazine* 34 (January-June 1915), p. 748.

64 *New York Times*, 8 May 1915.
refusing to recognize any agreement between Japan and China which impaired American treaty rights in China, Chinese political or territorial integrity, or the policy of the open door. As Lansing admitted when submitting the proposal to Bryan, the notice would have little or no effect on Japan's actions at that juncture, but might be useful "in the future when the conditions are more propitious." 65

Lansing's note was presented to the Chinese and Japanese governments on May 11. Its effectiveness at that time may be judged by a report in the New York Times on May 23 that "the drafting of the new treaty between Japan and China continues without regard to the American communication, it being asserted that China is unable to oppose the wishes of Japan in this regard." Sunset Magazine concluded that "Japan now has her way in China. Since the acceptance of Tokyo's demands by Yuan Shikai, the hegemony of Nippon in the Far East is undisputed... And in this hegemony there lies untold possibility for good or evil." 66 To all appearances, a new day had dawned in East Asia.

IV.

In the spring of 1915, Samuel G. Blythe, editor of the Saturday Evening Post, disturbed by developments in the Far East, embarked on a trip to that region. While there, he conducted a series of interviews with Chinese and Japanese statesmen and financiers. While his articles describing his interviews with Yuan Shikai and Okuma Shigenobu were primarily character sketches, they revealed something of the mindset of the two major players in the Twenty-One Demands crisis. Yuan Shikai avoided the subject of the demands almost completely, saying only


Although I do not desire to express any opinion on the questions now under negotiation, yet I may say that I hope they can be peaceably arranged. Whatever China can concede will be conceded, but she cannot help remaining firm on those articles which encroach on China's sovereignty or infringe the treaty rights of other Powers.

While Yuan stressed his promotion of education and industry in China, Blythe's article emphasized instead the warning he perceived to be implicit in the statement regarding the demands.67

In his interview with Count Okuma, Blythe quickly discovered that the Premier wished to emphasize two things: Japan's need for economic expansion on the Asian mainland and the impossibility of war between Japan and the United States. Although Okuma denied any Japanese designs on the territorial integrity of China, he was quite forthright with regard to her commercial aspirations, saying "we have now reached a point in Japan where we feel that the time has arrived for the proper realization for ourselves of the tremendous advantages offered to us by the vast territory of China, and we also feel that we are peculiarly fitted for commercial dealings with that nation." Later, the Count described the Japanese approach to commerce in China: "we are not trying to stifle competition, but we are striving to make competition unavailing by fostering and building up that market, and by carefully safeguarding our rights and privileges therein." The emphasis of this article, however, was Okuma's oft-stated conviction that war between Japan and the United States was inconceivable.68 In all of Blythe's interviews in Japan, the possibility of war between the two nations was at least briefly considered by either him or one of his subjects.

Blythe's unease concerning the future of Japanese-American relations was shared by the summer of 1915 by colleagues in the press and government officials alike. With the end of the Russo-Japanese War and the accession of Japan to great power status, the American attitude


toward Japan had shifted from almost paternal affection to fraternal jealousy and suspicion. The issuance of the Twenty-One Demands only exacerbated this trend. After the crisis had ended, while some American observers defended Japanese aspirations in China as legitimate, others seemed to agree with J. O. P. Bland, that it was possible to sympathize with Japan's aspirations and understand the imperatives driving her policy while at the same time deploiring its inevitable results. One result was rising tension between Japan and the United States over the future of China.

American concern for China's future sprang from many sources. For the President and much of the American public, it came from a sincere belief that the country was on the verge of becoming a Christian democracy, needing only enlightened American guidance to successfully proceed along the proper path. Many felt that the United States had a moral obligation to China, not because she was becoming a Christian nation, but because they believed that Hay's Open Door notes had bound all the Great Powers to an observance of the complete territorial and political integrity of China. Some were moved by geopolitical considerations, while the dream of the vast China market had not completely shed its attractions.

A strong American interest in China's potential was balanced for many not only by an awareness of the concrete realities of her situation, but also by an awareness of the importance to American interests of maintaining amicable diplomatic and commercial relations with Japan. While the Western press expressed this awareness most clearly, it in turn was balanced by an almost hysterical West Coast fear of the perceived evils of Japanese immigration. Thus, while throughout most of the crisis, the Western opinion of events was realistic and even cynical (the Los Angeles Daily Times saying on April 7 that "Japan has no need to apologize to the world for her action"), very little was required for it to view Japan as a serious threat. Not even this tempered awareness, however, existed in Washington. For purely moral considerations,

69 Los Angeles Daily Times. 7 April 1915.
President Wilson allowed the China advocates in the State Department to formulate a policy in response to the Japanese demands that was, as James R. Reed and others have argued, probably inimical to American interests in the Far East.\(^{70}\)

This damage was not confined to a single moment in time. Ignorant of the Administration's reasons for choosing its course of action, the press assumed, as the government's position hardened, that it had a solid, pragmatic basis for its opposition to the Japanese demands. Even newspapers which had emphasized the importance of Japanese-American trade and the necessity of maintaining good relations with Japan were won over to this view, and a Japanese cruiser running aground off Baja California became a grave threat to the security of the United States. Prior to this crisis, the Western press appeared to have accepted Roosevelt's strategy of giving Japan a free hand in Asia in return for Japanese restrictions on emigration with comparatively few reservations, but this acceptance seems to have been a fairly shallow thing. Meanwhile, the Eastern press, whose reservations concerning Japanese actions could be traced in large part to Japanese popular displeasure with the Treaty of Portsmouth, increasingly emphasized the immorality of Japanese policy, blithely ignoring the nature of the agreements supposedly violated and the realities of the situation in East Asia.

The United States government and a majority of the American press adopted an increasingly hard line toward Japan during and after the Twenty-One Demands crisis, despite the fact that the United States did not have the means to back up a sterner policy, and despite the fact that it was adopted for reasons that were largely irrelevant to the actual situation. While the press did play an important part in this process, with its constant speculation playing on the nerves of an information-starved government, it was the Wilson Administration which had the leading role, eventually dragging a majority of the press along behind it. Once the basic course had been established, the attitudes of government and press seemed to feed off each other, pushing each other further down a dangerous path.

\(^{70}\) Reed, *Missionary Mind*, pp. 161-162.
CHAPTER 5

"THE NO-MAN'S-LAND OF AMERICAN POLICY:" WILSON, EAST ASIA,
AND THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

On November 11, 1918, the First World War came to a close. With the cessation of hostilities, the future course of European and world events was open to question. A major reason for this uncertainty was the fact that the war had swept away the balance of power which had dominated world affairs. This was particularly apparent in East Asia, where a mad scramble was already taking place to fill the void. The key players here were Japan, determined to assume the leadership of Asia, and China, equally determined not to be victimized by such leadership. The United States had entered this contest to aid the Chinese, but proved unsuccessful in this endeavor. Nowhere was this more evident than at the Paris Peace Conference, where the American delegation tried to persuade the President to give complete United States support to a China united in resistance to Japanese economic and territorial aggression, an approach which flew in the face of political and economic realities.

From the outset of American participation, President Wilson had striven to transform the Great War into a moral crusade. When asking Congress to declare war, he argued that America would fight to make the world safe for democracy, and he later developed the Fourteen Points, which he felt would provide the only basis for a just and lasting peace. Among its goals this program called for an end to secret treaties and imperialism, and its insistence on the need for the national self-determination of peoples caught the imagination of the world.

When the Peace Conference began in January of 1919, the delegations of the Allied powers, seeking the fruits of a hard-earned victory, struggled mightily with Wilson, who fought just as valiantly to enact a just peace, based on the Fourteen Points. Among the Points were "a free,
open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict
observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty, the interests of
the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government
whose title is to be determined" and, nearest and dearest to the President's heart, "a general
association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording
mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states
alike."

Perhaps nowhere was the basis for tension and contradiction between these two points
greater than in East Asia, where the Japanese position in China caused Wilson no end of
difficulty.

At the outbreak of the war, Japan had offered to the Entente powers her willingness to sweep
the Germans out of the Pacific and in particular, out of their leasehold in China's Shandong
Peninsula. The British had reluctantly acquiesced, since the price of this aid was a much
stronger Japanese presence in China proper. Japan subsequently pressured the Chinese
government into transferring the rights and privileges enjoyed by Germany in Shandong to her,
and this, coupled with the rest of the Twenty-One Demands, which were designed to greatly
enhance Japan's position in China, caused a tremendous outcry in the American press and
much furor in the Wilson Administration. The controversy would resurface at Versailles, since
both Japan and China were among the Allied Powers.

While attempting to hammer out a peace treaty, Wilson was confronted by the fact that the
Japanese had no desire to abandon their gains in China, while the Chinese insisted that these
concessions had been forced from them under duress. Further complicating matters was the
fact that Great Britain, France, and Imperial Russia had (however reluctantly) guaranteed
Japan's gains, and that the Japanese threatened to walk out of the peace conference rather than
abandon their position. As if this weren't enough, two competing Chinese governments had

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1 Quoted by Arthur Walworth in America's Moment: 1918. New York: W. W. Norton &
come to exist after the death of the dictatorial President Yuan Shikai, one in the north, and one in the south. Throughout this period, they were on the verge of open conflict, and virtually the only financiers able and willing to risk money on China were Japanese.

Wilson's response to this thorny issue was to work out a compromise in which Japan kept its economic advantages in the Shandong Peninsula, while agreeing to eventually retrocede sovereignty to China. The President himself expressed dissatisfaction with this arrangement, but this was very mild in comparison to the uproar it caused in China (culminating in the May 4th Movement) and in the United States itself, where these provisions provided a major rallying point for the opponents of treaty ratification. Knowing full well that Wilson had gone into the conference determined to avoid any echo of the nineteenth century's Holy Alliance, an opposition senator would say that "The Congress of Vienna never did anything as bad as this deal with Japan over Shandong."²

Russell H. Fifield noted at the beginning of his Woodrow Wilson and the Far East: The Diplomacy of the Shantung Question that "In the Shandong negotiations the conflict between the idealism and realism of Woodrow Wilson reached a climax, leading to a decision that had widespread ramifications in the diplomacy of the Pacific."³ If the President had been more able to reconcile his idealism and his realism concerning this issue, it is at least remotely possible that a better compromise could have been worked out, one which he, the Japanese and Chinese, and the Senate and the American press might have found acceptable. Even if such a compromise could not have been achieved, a modus vivendi which left the key players far less antagonistic toward one another could certainly have been attempted.

I.

When Woodrow Wilson was inaugurated as President, in March 1913, events in China had occurred which seemed to offer opportunities for a new approach in American East Asian policy. In 1912, the decrepit Manchu dynasty had finally been toppled, and a republic proclaimed. While Taft had been willing to wait with the other powers to see if the new Chinese government was a viable entity, Wilson unilaterally recognized the Republic, making the United States the first major power to do so.

Although Dr. Sun's forces soon lost control of the Chinese Republic to Yuan Shikai, a former military official of the Manchu dynasty, this was not seen as much cause for alarm in the United States. Bringing order to the chaos that was China required a strong hand, and Yuan seemed the right man for the job. In any case, any concern over the course in which the new government of China was headed was quickly overshadowed, first by war clouds in Europe, and then, once the fighting had begun, by its consequences in the Far East.

While the fall of Zingdao left Japan in possession of Germany's Shandong leasehold, questions remained outstanding between her and China as to the extent of her rights and privileges there. While the resulting series of notes were originally intended to clarify this situation and prevent any reclaiming German rights to Jiaozhou, the Twenty-One Demands, which were issued to China on January 18, 1915, went far beyond this, attempting to improve Japan's position in Manchuria and central China, and (in Group V, which were not considered demands, but rather 'requests') even installing Japan as the consultant and protector of China. While the requests of Group V were considered negotiable and were included to satisfy those who desired a more aggressive Japanese policy in China, the first four groups of demands were nonnegotiable, to be secured by force if necessary.

The Wilson Administration was determined to do something about the resulting crisis. American options in responding to developments were limited, however, and Robert Lansing proposed that a quid pro quo be arranged, in which the United States would accept Japanese special interests in Manchuria, Mongolia, and Shandong, in exchange for Japanese concessions...
on emigration policy (anti-Japanese laws passed in California in 1913 had strained relations between the two countries).

Wilson opposed making such a deal, feeling it would be bargaining away China's future in return for temporary relief of an American issue. Meanwhile, Japan and China moved closer and closer to armed conflict over the demands, leading Bryan to send a confidential note to the Japanese government on March 13, 1915, in an attempt to defuse the situation. In it, the United States admitted that while it had grounds to object to the Japanese demands on the basis of principle and treaties, it nevertheless recognized that "territorial contiguity" created special relations between Japan and the regions of Manchuria, Mongolia, and Shandong. Bryan concluded by expressing the hope that the Japanese government would not press China to accept proposals which would infringe upon the Open Door.

While it may be argued that the Open Door Notes of 1899 and 1900 had tacitly admitted the existence of spheres of influence, this note, designed to limit Japanese domination of China, alluded to them in terms (for example, "the United States is not jealous of the prominence of Japan in the East or of the intimate cooperation of China and Japan for their mutual benefit") which were open to liberal interpretation. In his concluding paragraph, Bryan also specifically stated that the United States had no wish to embarrass or obstruct the Japanese, "or of influencing China in opposition to Japan." While the Secretary wished to make it clear that the United States was still promoting the policy of the Open Door, he had no desire to use it to antagonize Japan.


5 Reed, The Missionary Mind, pp. 180-182.

Pressure by the genro on the Japanese government to moderate the demands eased the situation between China and Japan, but the death of Yuan Shikai in March of 1916 allowed factionalism to again dominate Chinese politics, with competing centers of power in Beijing (dominated by warlords) and Canton (dominated by Sun Yat-Sen's Guomindang). The Japanese increasingly came to dominate the Beijing government by offering it loans to finance military activities, and even before Yuan's death were able to dictate the course of its major foreign policy initiative, whether or not it should declare war on Germany.\(^7\)

While the United States prodded China to enter the war in order to gain a seat at the eventual peace conference, it was only with Japan's approval that she actually did so, on August 14, 1917. During this period tensions between the northern and southern factions continued to increase, with the northern warlords in particular agitating for military action against the south. Many foreign observers doubted the seriousness of their attitude, however. In a report to the Secretary of State on February 18, 1918, Paul S. Reinsch described a northern military expedition against the southern faction, writing:

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\text{The crisis seemed to be impending when the President, on January 25, suddenly decided to leave Beijing. It was formally given out that he was undertaking an inspection trip, with a view to persuade the "militant" tuchuns to take more active and concerted measures against the South. This is perhaps the most convoluted inversion that Chinese politics has yet produced; that the "militant" tuchuns, supposedly champing at their bits, should need presidential persuasion, and that it should be the pacifist President who started on such an errand is at first sight reminiscent of Alice in Wonderland...Chinese politics has become more and more theatrical, and, as the figures on the stage stamp about and try to make a deep impression by terrifying gestures, so in the minds of both the President and the tuchuns, a terrifying gesture against the South was needed, and it was hoped that this might do the business.}^{8}\]

China and Japan signed a series of military and naval agreements relative to developments in the Far East, in particular regarding Siberia after the Bolshevik rise to power in Russia, and in

\(^7\) Fifield, Wilson and the Far East, pp. 59-60.

September of 1918, after making an agreement which the Japanese government regarded as "a satisfactory settlement of all outstanding questions relating to the Province of Shandong," Japan loaned China a further 20 million yen. Despite the actions of the United States and the concerns of her European allies, as the war drew to a close Japan had done much to make her improved position in China unassailable.

In an earlier part of this effort, Viscount Ishii Kikujiro was dispatched to the United States in September 1917. While Ishii's mission was officially to improve Japanese-American coordination of their war efforts, it centered on arriving at an understanding regarding China. The Japanese were understandably eager to see if the United States would stand by Bryan's note of March 13, 1915, while the Americans were happy have a chance to bring the note into line with other pronouncements. In the resulting Lansing-Ishii Agreement, the two nations agreed to "recognize that territorial propinquity creates special relations between countries...the Government of the United States recognizes that Japan has special interests in China, particularly in the part to which her possessions are contiguous." While the Wilson Administration felt that the new agreement prevented liberal interpretation of Bryan's note, the Japanese believed that Ishii had confirmed the American acceptance of their sphere of influence in China, and were quick to point this out to the Chinese.

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9 The American minister in China touched on this agreement in a report to the State Department in March 1919, saying, "it should be noted that this attempt to vitiate in advance the possible action of the Paris Conference has never been formally ratified by the Chinese Government; this is held to be unnecessary by the Japanese Minister in Peking and by the Chinese Minister of Communications." Reinsch to Polk, 10 March 1919. Foreign Relations of the US 1919, vol. 1 (Washington: GPO, 1934), pp. 281-282; see also Fifield, Wilson and the Far East, pp. 108-109.


11 In 1918 Minister Paul S. Reinsch would write that the prevailing interpretation of the agreement in China was that the United States was abandoning any attempt to exercise influence in China to Japan, a belief "further encouraged by the current Japanese interpretation and by the fact that the Japanese Legation lost no time in acquainting the Chinese Government with the existence of the note before its publication." Reinsch to Lansing, 11 February 1918. Foreign Relations of the US 1918, vol. 1, p. 93.
The one major Japanese-American cooperative effort during the war was the Siberian expedition, which was launched in the summer of 1918. While the expedition was ostensibly designed to assist the Czech Legion in fighting its way to the Pacific, American participation was very likely intended to insure that Japan did not use the excuse of intervention to detach Siberia from the nascent Soviet Union. Relations between the two contingents were strained. A proposal to neutralize the portion of the Trans-Siberian Railway controlled by the expedition by placing it under American control ran afoul of the fact that after the withdrawal of American troops, there would be no way to enforce the proposal. This development was explained to the American delegation at the peace conference in a cable by Acting Secretary of State Frank Lyon Polk. The one coordinated effort by the two erstwhile allies left a legacy of distrust and recrimination, whose repercussions continued to be felt at Versailles.

The American press was well aware of the tension which existed in Japanese-American relations as the war drew to a close. The *New Republic* felt that Japan was aware of one of the real motivations for American participation in the Siberian expedition, and could understand that the Japanese "resent what they feel to be an assumed guardianship over Japan by America." Newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst, on the other hand, saw the tension as portending something more apocalyptic, and in an editorial argued that

> Japanese entry into Siberia is not to aid the Allies, but to entrench Japan. She is taking advantage of the European conflict to build a great Asiatic empire which will be a menace to all the white nations of the world...The yellow man's civilization is being built from the ruins of the white man's civilization just as the Barberini built their palaces with the stone from the destroyed palaces of the Caesars...All the world is threatened by the advancing empire of Japan but especially and particularly is America threatened.

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12 A. Whitney Griswold wrote of American intervention in Russia that "in the Far East its purpose from first to last was to resist the Japanese penetration of northern Manchuria and Siberia." *Far Eastern Policy of the US*, p. 227.


14 *New Republic*, 31 August 1918, p. 126; and *Literary Digest*, 16 March 1918, p. 15.
As the war wound down and the peace conference became its focus, the Wilson Administration found amid its many tasks dealing with an ally whose imperialistic ambitions it was determined to thwart, largely by helping an ally whose potential far outweighed its actual powers and whom the United States could only offer limited aid in any case. While engaged in resolving the Shandong dilemma and other issues, it would be under close scrutiny by a press whose response to an immediately previous and related development in East Asia had run the gamut from worldly cynicism to hysterical warnings of a new and more terrible "Yellow Peril".

II.

In an article for the Century magazine, in early 1919, Glenn Frank wrote of the gathering at Versailles that "Never has a peace conference worked so directly under the white light of popular opinion." Possibly nowhere was this more evident than regarding East Asian affairs, since it was common knowledge that China would try to use the deliberations to ensure that Jiaozhou was returned directly to her possession, while Japan would try to solidify her greatly improved position on the Asian continent. As the conference opened, Herbert Adams Gibbons wrote that "Japan intends to keep Jiaozhou and extend her spheres of influence over all Manchuria and eastern Siberia, as well," while Thomas F. Millard, who would act as an adviser to the Chinese delegation, argued that "Put succinctly, China's petition to the conference amounts to an appeal to be delivered from the old system of predatory penetration by imperialist nations, and to be allowed, and helped, to work out a peaceful national destiny on democratic lines." The American delegation to Versailles was well aware that the Japanese representatives to the conference were armed with imposing legal justifications for their position on the Shandong

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question. In addition to their treaties with China, the Japanese possessed understandings from 1917 with France and Great Britain, in which these two nations had guaranteed their support for Japan on this issue at the eventual peace negotiations.

Further complications also existed. The Chinese delegation to the conference was a split one, representing both the Beijing and Canton factions. In the event it was dominated by Wellington Koo and C. T. Wang, both young, American-educated officials, and achieved a surprising degree of unity, but this was not apparent at the outset. Wilson's unease at dealing with the realities of Chinese politics was evidenced in Washington in November. Upon receiving a telegram from Sun Yat-sen congratulating him on the Allies' victory and beseeching him to save Chinese democracy, the President turned it over to Secretary of State Robert Lansing, writing, "I do not like to correspond directly with Sun Yat Sen, much as I have sometimes sympathized with his professed principles and objects." While the Administration was very much in favor of furthering democracy in China, the man who to many represented Chinese democracy was something of a pariah.

In addition to the unsettled nature of the Chinese delegation at Versailles, there was no guarantee that it would stand with the United States on all issues at the conference. In addition to the Shandong question, a second objective of the Japanese delegation was to achieve the passage of a racial equality clause in the covenant of the proposed League of Nations. While the American ambassador in Tokyo had reported to the State Department that a great deal of importance was attached to this proposal by the Japanese, many observers considered it a

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18 On February 12, 1918, Reinsch had sent a cable to the State Department describing political conditions in China. In it he mentioned an initiative by southern leaders to develop a confederated project which "would involve the elimination of Sun Yat Sen from primary influence." Reinsch to Lansing, 12 February 1918. Foreign Relations of the US 1918, vol. 1, p. 85.

negotiating ploy, the Literary Digest later quoting a Boston newspaper's editorial in which racial equality was called a smokescreen behind which Japan approached her true objectives.\textsuperscript{20}

After arriving in Paris for the peace conference and before the issue of Jiaozhou was presented to the Supreme Council (or Council of Ten), President Wilson was forwarded a telegram from the American minister to China, Paul S. Reinsch. Reinsch was something of a protégé of Wilson's, having been selected for the post for his academic background and his hopes for a Westernized, democratic China.\textsuperscript{21} In his telegram, the minister urged that the United States must do everything in its power to ensure a settlement of the Shandong dispute that was favorable to Beijing. Reinsch said of the Chinese people, "They ask no charity but justice, they ask no succour but the assurance that the constant exertion of evil influences from without and the attempt of Foreign Military Autocrats to seize control of Chinese resources, finance and defenses shall be put an end to." In concluding, he asserted that "Never before was an opportunity for leadership toward the welfare of humanity presented itself equal to that which invites America at the present time."\textsuperscript{22}

Throughout Woodrow Wilson and the Far East, Russell H. Fifield makes clear the sympathy and support which the Chinese delegation received from its American counterparts.\textsuperscript{23} This certainly seems evident in the Council of Ten meeting on January 28, 1919. Before the Japanese and Chinese representatives spoke, President Wilson brought up the Congress of

\textsuperscript{20} Literary Digest. 17 May 1919, p. 16.

\textsuperscript{21} Jerry Israel describes the process by which Reinsch was selected for the post in Progressivism and the Open Door: America and China, 1905-1921 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), pp. 113-116.

\textsuperscript{22} Grew to Close (enclosure), 15 January 1919. Wilson Papers, vol. 54, pp. 78,82.

\textsuperscript{23} In particular Chapter 4, "The Chinese Case at Paris," details the intimacy between the Chinese and American delegations, and A. Whitney Griswold also noted that "no sooner had the Chinese delegates arrived in Paris than they set out systematically to cultivate the sympathies and enlist the support of their American colleagues." Far Eastern Policy of the US, p. 243.
Vienna. Remarking that the Holy Alliance was intended to extend the system of monarchical and arbitrary government in the world, he argued that this enterprise had a different purpose, and he hoped that the Congress of Vienna would not be brought up again, even by reference. Speaking for Japan, Baron Makino Shinken argued that Japan was in possession of the Jiaozhou leasehold, having conquered it from Germany, and requiring the right of free disposal from Germany before it could be given to a third party; in other words, that the issue before the Council was between Japan and Germany. Wilson objected to this interpretation, which set the stage for Wellington Koo's presentation of China's case.

Koo opened his remarks by reminding his listeners that he spoke for "one quarter of the human race." Calling Shandong the birthplace of Confucius and thus the Chinese Holy Land, he went on to thank Japan and the other Allies for their military efforts during the war. Turning to the Sino-Japanese agreements regarding Shandong and other issues, however, he said that China "had always considered all the Conventions made with Japan as provisional and subject to revision by the Peace Conference." In the period leading up to China's declaration of war on Germany, even the State Department admitted that "China was taking this opportunity to play a little international politics...with an eye to making...friends who would be useful in its relations with Japan." After the January 28 meeting, when Koo, known to be intimate with the American delegation, made this assertion, seemingly aided and even prefaced by Wilson, it may well have appeared to the Japanese that the Chinese were pinning their hopes on America proving to be such a friend. The subsequent publication of the accords between China and Japan regarding Shandong, a step that had been urged by the Chinese and American delegations, could have been seen as providing further confirmation.

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25 Ibid., pp. 316, 317.
26 Polk to Wilson, 10 March 1917. Quoted in Fifield, Wilson and the Far East, p. 71.
President Wilson returned to the United States to attend to pressing government business in early February. On February 8, the New York Times reported that "Attempts are being made by the Japanese to induce the Chinese Government to disavow the action of its delegates at the Peace Conference because they are seriously embarrassing Japan." Angered by China's attempt to use the United States to gain direct title to Shandong, the Japanese government was quick to indicate its displeasure to Beijing. As reports of Japanese pressure on China continued to come in, the editors of the Portland Oregonian concluded that "one of the first duties of the five great powers may be to exert the authority of the League of Nations against one of themselves, while the league is still in process of incubation." It appeared as if Japan were using the same methods she had employed during the Twenty-One Demands crisis, this time to ensure their continued acceptance.

Tension would eventually ease between the Chinese and Japanese governments. While the Chinese had believed that publication of the secret 1915 treaty would do great damage to the Japanese position, the Japanese realized that the reverse was true of the 1918 accord, which could not be claimed to have been made under duress. Thus, they accepted publication, and even claimed it had been their idea. The San Francisco Chronicle considered it "a bold, and in some respects, a brilliant diplomatic stroke" for the Japanese government to have decided in favor of full disclosure, saying, "When one man tries to prevent another telling what the other man knows about him the bystander has no option to the impression that it must be something dreadful, though very often it turns out to be nothing of any real concern to other people."

Wilson returned to Paris in early March. Before leaving, he received a memorandum from the Japanese ambassador, which informed him of the importance to Japan of the racial equality

27 New York Times. 8 February 1919.
28 Portland Oregonian. 13 February 1919.
29 San Francisco Chronicle. 14 February 1919.
clause in the Covenant of the League. "Should this great principle fail of recognition," it read, "the Japanese Government do not see how a perpetual friction and discontent among nations could possibly be eliminated." Anti-Japanese agitation on the West Coast had long been a major source of friction between Japan and the United States, and continued to be during this period. American support of the racial equality proposal could conceivably go a long way toward reducing this tension.

At the peace conference, China joined Japan in supporting a racial equality clause, and eventually the United States would, also. The proposal ran into insurmountable opposition from the British Commonwealth, however. While David Lloyd George and his Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, were decidedly cool toward the idea, Prime Minister Hughes of Australia was violently against it. When the issue came to a vote, on April 11, Wilson abstained, and, although a majority had voted in favor, ruled that the proposal required unanimous approval.

At almost the same time, the Chinese delegation made its bid for direct restitution of the Jiaozhou leasehold. In a memorandum to E. T. Williams, Wellington Koo stressed not only the moral aspects of China's position, but tried to play to American and European economic considerations, as well, writing

The denial of China's claim would jeopardize her political independence, territorial integrity, and economic welfare... That such denial would equally


32 E.T. Williams, one of the most vociferously pro-Chinese members of the American delegation, wrote a memorandum to Robert Lansing on March 19, suggesting that American support for the racial equality clause might be linked to Japanese compromises regarding Shantung and mandates for islands in the South Pacific. Cited in Fifield, Wilson and the Far East, p. 167.
prejudice the interests of foreign powers in China has perhaps not been made so
apparent, though it is none the less true.  

Koo's emphasis on the danger to European interests in China, made in a memorandum intended
to be seen by President Wilson, may reflect the fact that no progress had been made by the
Chinese in winning European support for their position. As Griswold puts it, "Intent themselves
on such aggressive projects as stripping Germany of her colonies, partitioning the Turkish
Empire, and "redeeming" Italia irredenta, the victorious Allies could not afford to look askance at
the compensation Japan was seeking in China.  

Italy's territorial ambitions caused a major crisis at the peace conference a week after Koo
wrote his memorandum. Italian entrance into the war on the side of the Allies had been
predicated on a revision of its borders with Austria. With the Austro-Hungarian Empire
dissolved, Italy's delegation pressed for control of several major Adriatic ports, including Fiume.
When Wilson refused to accede to this demand, Vittorio Orlando and his delegation left the
conference on the 24th. While the President stood firm on his decision (on April 22, Ray
Stannard Baker described him as "standing like a rock on the Italian question"), it did leave
his hopes for universal League membership badly shaken.

While Wilson was dealing with this development, he also had to reconcile himself to the fact
that France and Great Britain continued to stand firm in their support of Japan. Knowledge of
the 1918 treaty even seemed to remove what previous sympathy the British and French had
entertained for China, Arthur Balfour later stating that the Chinese "could never be got to
understand that whatever might be said of the Treaty of 1915, the Treaty of 1918 between China
and Japan was a voluntary action between sovereign states, and a transaction which gave
important pecuniary benefits to China." At a meeting of the Council of Four on April 22,

Lloyd George told Wellington Koo that while he had a great regard for China, she could not follow the German example, and regard treaties as scraps of papers. Clemenceau was quick to emphasize his complete agreement with his British counterpart.\textsuperscript{37}

Even before Lloyd George and Clemenceau indicated their impatience with China, Wilson's comments during council meetings appear to indicate he was tentatively looking for some kind of compromise on the issue. On April 15, he noted that since Shandong province was of particular historical importance to China, she was anxious to rid it of foreign influence. "On the other hand," he noted, "what the Japanese most want is not Jiaozhou, which they themselves have offered to return to China, but the concessions in Shandong." Three days later, he said of the Japanese "it is not in their interest to make an enemy of China; the future of the two countries is closely linked."\textsuperscript{38}

On the 22nd, Wilson proposed a new mantle of leadership in Asia for the Japanese, saying that "When the League of Nations was formed then there would be established a body of partners covenanted to stand up for each other's rights. The position in which he would like to see Japan, already the most advanced nation in the Far East...was that of the leader in the Far East standing out for these new ideas." These statements did make some impression, and the Japanese delegates mentioned to the President Japan's willingness to help abolish extraterritoriality in China.\textsuperscript{39} Nevertheless, they held firm to their position; the treaty must turn over German rights in Shandong to Japan, which would eventually return them to China. They also made clear on the 22nd that without a satisfactory resolution of this question, they were under instructions not to sign the treaty, and would in that case leave the conference.


\textsuperscript{38} Meeting of Council of Four, 15 April 1919; Meeting of Council of Four, 18 April 1919. \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 358, 454.

\textsuperscript{39} Meeting of Council of Four, 22 April 1919; and Matsui to Uchida, 22 April 1919. \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 606,584.
On the 22nd, the Council of Four first presented the Chinese with what Lloyd George and Clemenceau considered to be their only option: strict transfer of German rights in Shandong to Japan, or execution of all the provisions of the 1915 and 1918 treaties between Japan and China. In this connection, Wilson raised the possibility of a League commission to explore ending extraterritoriality. This did little to assuage the feelings of Koo and the Chinese. After they withdrew, Wilson stated to his British and French counterparts, "Concerning Japan, it is necessary to do everything to assure that she joins the League of Nations. If she stands aside, she would do all that she could want to do in the Far East...I am above all concerned not to create a chasm between the East and the West."

Shandong was one of the few issues at Versailles on which the President consulted with his fellow American commissioners Colonel House, Robert Lansing, Henry White, and Gen. Tasker Bliss. With the exception of House, all were opposed to legitimizing Japan's position in Shandong. Lansing wrote to Wilson on the 22nd that "The conditions which...seem so simple (to the Japanese) would leave the kernel to Japan and restore the shell to China," while Bliss would go even further, arguing on the 29th that "if we support Japan's claim, we abandon the democracy of China to the domination of the Prussianized militarism of Japan...We shall be sowing dragon's teeth...It can't be right to do wrong even to make peace." The imagery employed in these arguments suggested methods which the conference was expressly designed to prevent from recurring.

Wilson seemed aware of this in a conversation with his physician, Admiral Grayson, on the 25th. "Japan," he noted, "has the strategic advantage of occupying Jiaozhou...if we demanded that she withdraw, and she refused, it would mean that we would have to resort to arms...My only hope," he concluded, "is that I can find some outlet to permit the Japanese to save their

40 Meeting of Council of Four, 22 April 1919. Ibid., pp. 625-626.
41 Lansing to Wilson, 22 April 1919. Ibid., p. 597; and Bliss to Wilson, 29 April 1919. Ibid., vol. 60, p. 234.

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face and let the League of Nations decide the matter later. Unfortunately, circumstances were to deny the President even this opportunity. At the Council of Four meeting the same day, he mentioned the possibility of Japan and the other powers relinquishing their unequal positions in China. In exchange for this, Japan might be ceded Jiaozhou as an inducement. Lloyd George would have none of this, objecting that Britain had no desire to compete with Japan in the Yangzi Kiang (her sphere of influence), and attacking Japan with such vehemence that Wilson was forced to her defense. While the British were willing to support Japan's claims to Shandong, such support would not be allowed to jeopardize their own political and economic interests in China.

On April 28, the President in essence acceded to the Japanese position regarding the leasehold at Jiaozhou-. At the Council of Four meeting, he told his colleagues that he had informed his fellow commissioners that "If Japan will return Jiaozhou and Shandong to China and relinquish all sovereign rights and will reduce her claims to mere economic concessions...I would regard it as returning these possessions to China on better terms than Germany had held them." While contention would continue over matters such as the length of time that would elapse before Japan retroceded sovereignty, and the composition of railway police force, Wilson in the end accepted the Japanese position on Shandong almost completely, taking refuge in only accepting Japan's position through the peace treaty, and not as a result of her accords with China. After attempting to sign the treaty "with reservations," the Chinese delegation was told by

42 Grayson Diary, 25 April 1919. Ibid., pp. 112-113.

43 The Prime Minister went so far as to say, "Make no mistake, the Japanese are working on a plan of conquest...I was struck the other day to see Baron Makino handle with perfect dexterity and a certain disdain the phraseology of the West about the rights of humanity and the League of Nations. The Japanese are truly the Prussians of the Far East," while the President replied, "We must remember that their country is too small and much too infertile for their growing population. They found room in Korea and Manchuria, but that is not sufficient for them." Meeting of Council of Four, 25 April 1919. Ibid., p. 131.

44 Meeting of Council of Four, 28 April 1919. Ibid., p. 180.
Clemenceau its choice was to sign the treaty as written or not at all. Given this choice, the Chinese refused to sign, and their delegation did not attend the ceremony on June 28.

III.

On April 30, 1919, President Wilson sent a telegram to Joseph P. Tumulty, in Washington, describing the terms of the Shandong settlement. "The Japanese-Chinese matter has been settled," he wrote, "in a way which seems to me as satisfactory as could be got out of the tangle of treaties in which China herself was involved." After receiving the cable, Tumulty wired Admiral Grayson, saying, "Am sorry about the Japanese settlement. Am afraid of the impression it will make." As he predicted, the American press had an immediate reaction to the news. On May 17, the Literary Digest described "The Japanese Victory at Paris," quoting a story in the Christian Science Monitor as saying "It is plain that China was sacrificed that the League might be born." On the other hand, the editors of the New Republic ironically observed that "it has remained for the Peace Conference to reunite China. For many months there has been warfare between the government in the North and the government in the South...Now, however, both governments unite in instructing their delegates in Paris not to sign the peace treaty."

Before leaving France for the United States, President Wilson gave several press conferences. On June 27, he told reporters that the final treaty "adheres to the Fourteen Points more closely than I had a right to expect," and expressed his confidence in the ultimate judgment of the American people. Many of their representatives in the Senate, particularly


46 Literary Digest. 17 May 1919, p. 16; and New Republic, 17 May 1919, p. 66.

those of the Republican persuasion, were not as confident in Wilson's judgment. Before his return to the United States, the battle lines over ratifying the Treaty of Versailles and joining the League of Nations were drawn. The Shandong provisions of the treaty provided one of the main battlegrounds.

On July 23, the New Republic stated that "It is possible that in the Senate the Republicans will insist on making a reservation in respect to Shandong...with a reservation on Shandong, nearly all Americans will be in sympathy." On the 30th, it noted that the issue had given the Republicans the moral high ground: "For the first time in many years the Republicans have morality on their side, and Mr. Wilson is compelled to appear as the hard-headed man of expediency." Perhaps the crowning blow was the comparison to the Congress of Vienna mentioned by Jeremiah Jenks in his North American Review article.48

Japan did have some defenders in the American press, even after the details of the settlement became known. The editors of the American Review of Reviews felt that the issue had been discussed "in the American press and in the United States Senate with a carelessness of assertion that can hardly contribute to the strengthening of American influence in any quarter." "The best policy for the United States," they felt, is to work in the closest harmony with both Japan and China, and to help to find a way to harmonize the interests and policies of these two great nations.49

At the same time, Wilson was also attempting to combat opposition to the Shandong settlement and the League of Nations with a common sense approach. He told an audience in San Francisco on September 17, "If we choose to say that we do not assent to the Shandong provision, what do we do for China? Absolutely nothing." In Reno on the 22nd he told his listeners, that with regard to Shandong, they had two choices, "to keep out of the treaty, for we

cannot change it in that respect, or go in and be an effective friend of China. It was during this speaking tour that the president suffered a stroke and collapsed at Pueblo, Colorado, on September 25th. In the aftermath of his stroke, he was unable to drum up further support for the treaty or agree to any compromise agreement, and the Senate eventually rejected its ratification.

Much has been made of Woodrow Wilson's seeming inability to compromise on matters of principle by historians, and this inability did eventually play a leading role in preventing American acceptance of the Treaty of Versailles and participation in the League of Nations. With regard to the Shandong issue at Paris, however, he showed a surprising degree of flexibility, proving willing to accept a setback on a position held on moral grounds in order to achieve a greater good. This flexibility is all the more surprising in light of his previous East Asian policy, the counsel of his advisers, and the relations between the American delegation to the peace conference and its Chinese counterparts.

When Wilson arrived in Paris in January of 1919, his Administration had for almost six years fought a long and bitter diplomatic struggle to limit the expansion of Japanese power in Asia. To this end, he had rescinded his earlier opposition to American participation in an international financial consortium in China, protested Japan's acquisition of Jiaozhou, overcome his misgivings and joined in the intervention in Siberia, and attempted to make adherence to the Fourteen Points a viable diplomatic option in the Pacific and East Asia. Where Roosevelt had accepted Japanese primacy on the Asian continent and Taft had attempted a commercial challenge for moral purposes, Wilson had employed a vigorous moral offensive. West Coast anti-Japanese legislation had further complicated the conduct of policy during this period.


51 Griswold, Far Eastern Policy of the US, p. 223.
Wilson’s pragmatic approach to solving the controversy over Shandong is also surprising in light of the advice he received during this period from his fellow American commissioners and other members of the delegation. Men like E. T. Williams and Stanley Hornbeck were very close to Paul Reinsch, the American minister at Beijing (Hornbeck having been one of his students at the University of Wisconsin), who was so pro-Chinese it is a matter of debate whether the Chinese government was able to simply use him to further its own policies. Robert Lansing later claimed that the Japanese had no intention of leaving the conference over Shandong (in Woodrow Wilson and the Far East, however, Russell Fifield cited Japanese diplomatic archives to prove that the delegation was under strict instructions regarding the Shandong issue), while Tasker Bliss wrote a letter to Wilson in support of the Chinese position that was quite bellicose in nature. While the President also held a pro-Chinese viewpoint, he did not allow it to completely cloud his judgment as to what was actually achievable at the conference.

Relations between the American and Chinese delegations at Paris were very close, as both Griswold and Fifield noted in their studies. Since the affinity of the two delegations was no secret, it may actually proved counterproductive at the conference, making the Japanese less amenable to compromise with the United States and more forceful in their attitude toward China. While any argument along these lines is speculative in nature, it could help explain Viscount Chinda’s intransigence over the relatively minor issue of guards for the Shandong Railway at a Council of Four meeting on April 29, as well as the Japanese refusal to designate any timetable

52 Even when Reinsch was so disgusted with the state of Chinese politics that he would write in an official report that “under the circumstances, a firm stand in defense of China’s rights (by the Chinese Government) is impossible,” he could still argue that “every effort should be made to give some tangible proof of the sincerity of American enterprise in China.” Reinsch to Polk, 10 March 1919. Foreign Relations of the US 1919. vol.1, pp. 281,282.

for their eventual retrocession of the leasehold or to consider making any explanation of their position to the Chinese populace.

This is not to suggest that Wilson's approach to the Shandong controversy was a model of adaptability. He shared with other members of his delegation the propensity to proceed from his ultimate goal to attempting its immediate achievement, rather than looking for what could be achieved in light of the realities of the situation. While at times Wilson appears to be the only member of the American delegation who admitted to himself that the Japanese were in physical possession of Jiaozhou, he also seems willing to have engaged in some petty obstructionism of his own when it became clear that the Japanese would have their way on the settlement of the issue.54

Although the president showed reasonable flexibility on the Shandong question, it is important to realize that this adaptability existed within a limited range. The Council of Four meeting on the 25th makes it evident that Wilson was not willing to antagonize Great Britain regarding the abolition of extraterritoriality and special privilege in China. This may have cost him in his attempt to fashion a compromise solution to the controversy. Another constraint may have been unwittingly self-imposed; as Griswold suggests, an affirmative vote on the proposed racial equality clause, which in its final form was innocuous and which would not achieve unanimous passage in any case, might have gained Wilson at least some Japanese goodwill.55 This would have run up against a more basic difficulty, however: as much as Wilson needed the Japanese for the League of Nations to work, he did not trust them.

Both Wilson and the members of the American press who defended the conference's solution to the Shandong question labored under the handicap of adopting a rational, common sense


55 Griswold, Far Eastern Policy of the US, p. 249.
approach to an issue when a competing, irrational viewpoint could claim to have morality on its side. Given the existence and attraction of such a viewpoint, Wilson should probably have done more to clothe his position with an air of moral purity, although he did try to argue that expediency in the short term would lead to the eventual triumph of principle. It was perhaps his curse that he was unable to do so more effectively, and with more conviction.
CHAPTER 6

"ARE WE GIVING JAPAN A SQUARE DEAL?"
THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE,
EAST ASIA, AND THE
AMERICAN PRESS

When World War One finally ended in the late fall of 1918, it appeared to many observers that the population of the world could breath a deep sigh of relief. Civilization had narrowly averted self-destruction, and new ideals and principles had come into being and gained currency which seemed likely to prevent any recurrence of the carnage and devastation of the Great War. Unfortunately, these ideals and principles did not sufficiently survive translation into practice to prevent rivalries and sources for potential conflict from arising among the victorious Allied powers.

This was especially the case concerning the United States and Japan, where American opposition to Japanese policy in China was if anything increased as the result of the Treaty of Versailles. In addition, while Woodrow Wilson had caught the imagination of the world with his Fourteen Points, he had intended to be able to back up his idealism with armed force if necessary, and had gained authorization from Congress to embark on a program of naval expansion designed to make the United States the world’s foremost naval power. This program was in direct opposition to Britain’s traditional maintenance of maritime supremacy, and a similar German policy had been met with defiance and increasing hostility. Thus, within two years of the armistice, it looked as if the world might be once again sliding down the precipice to war.

The Washington Naval Conference, which was convened in November 1921, was an attempt to stop a naval arms race from developing among the victors of the First World War. While
much of the conference was devoted to reconciling the American quest for parity in overall naval strength with Great Britain and the British desire to maintain maritime supremacy, perhaps the major problem it attempted to resolve was the burgeoning Japanese-American naval competition. This competition in turn revolved around key issues between the two nations, particularly those regarding their policies and goals in East Asia.

As one of the first major attempts to arrive at an international arms limitation agreement, the conference was subject to intense scrutiny by the American press, which closely followed almost every aspect of the proceedings. In addition, the Harding Administration took the press and public opinion into consideration when planning and conducting the gathering. Harding and Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes were determined to avoid what seemed a major failing of the Paris peace conference; its adherence to the norms of traditional European diplomacy. Although disillusioned by the diplomats who had created the Treaty of Versailles and suspicious of Japan and her policy in Asia, the press for the most part expressed a cautious optimism about the Conference's prospects and its results, an optimism which unfortunately would not be borne out by subsequent events. The Western press was generally more cynical about the prospect of China's awakening than its Eastern counterparts, which also expressed somewhat more optimism about liberalism in Japan and its future prospects.

The Harding Administration was able to use this hopefulness and the intense press interest in the conference's proceedings to help create an agreement which headed off a naval race and supported the United States' East Asia policy in the near term, although its consequences in the long run were less beneficial. For a moment, though, it appeared that the governments of the United States and Japan realized the consequences of their increasing antagonism, and made an effort to halt the process. Secretary of State Hughes made the American press a partner in this effort, employing its influence in both direct and indirect manners.
I.

As the First World War unfolded, it left Japan in possession of Germany's Shandong leasehold, although questions remained outstanding between her and China as to the extent of her rights and privileges there. Whatever their original purpose may have been, the Twenty-One Demands of 1915 were clearly aimed at improving Japan's position in Manchuria and central China, and even seemed to call for Japan's installation as the protector of China. Despite the actions of the United States and the concerns of her European allies, Japan had done much to solidify her position when the war ended.

Meanwhile, although the United States had eventually entered the war on the side of the Allies, this had by no means been a foregone conclusion during the conflict's early years. While there had never been much likelihood of America and Germany making common cause, British violations of American neutrality were also quite extensive, so much so that the idea of an armed American neutrality was considered by the Wilson Administration. Although this policy was not adopted, one of its major elements, a program for massive naval expansion, was. The Naval Act of 1916 was intended to ensure that the American battle line and its auxiliaries would outstrip any possible rival. While tensions with Japan played a role in the development and passage of this bill, they were secondary in importance; the primary focus was on the war in the Europe and the threat which might be posed across the Atlantic by either a German or British victory.¹

At the peace conference in Paris after the war, the Wilson Administration found East Asia a pressing concern. Amid its many tasks were dealing with an ally, Japan, whose imperialistic

ambitions it was determined to thwart, largely by helping another ally, China, whose potential far outweighed its actual powers at the time. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the United States could only offer limited aid to the Republic of China in any case.

During the peace conference at Paris which resulted in the Treaty of Versailles, Wilson found that the Japanese had no desire to abandon their gains in China, while the Chinese insisted that these concessions had been forced upon them under duress. Further complicating matters was the fact that Great Britain, France, and Imperial Russia (however reluctantly) had guaranteed Japan's gains, and the Japanese threatened to walk out of the peace conference rather than abandon their position. As if this were not enough, the two competing Chinese governments verged on open conflict throughout this period and virtually the only financiers able and willing to risk money on China were Japanese.

While attempting to arrive at a just and lasting peace and to ensure that World War One would be "the war to end all wars," the Wilson Administration did not abandon its plans for massive naval expansion. The ships authorized by the 1916 Naval Act had been delayed by the need to concentrate efforts on building destroyers and antisubmarine craft to combat the U-boat menace. In consequence, a revised version of this program was presented to Congress in 1918, which repeated the most important aspects of its predecessor. In Toward a New Order of Sea Power: American Naval Policy and the World Scene 1918-1922, Harold and Margaret Sprout argued in 1940 that the Administration's major purpose in presenting this program to the House and Senate "was primarily to fashion a club to hold over the European Allies in general, and over Great Britain in particular, pending their adherence to President Wilson's comprehensive plans for reduction of armaments and creation of a new world order."²

The use of the threat of massive naval expansion as a lever to force concessions at the Paris Peace Conference achieved limited results, and when Wilson returned to the United States, he was confronted with considerable opposition to the Treaty of Versailles. Opponents of the treaty

² Sprout, New Order of Sea Power, p. 59.
considered its provisions allowing Japan to maintain control of the Shandong peninsula particularly onerous. While the President admitted to his critics that the Treaty of Versailles was not all that he could have wished, he considered its ratification and American entry into the League of Nations the best possible course of action.

With the Treaty of Versailles and membership in the League of Nations rejected, both the Wilson Administration and its Republican successors pushed for naval expansion. Although Warren Harding opposed the internationalism of Wilson and the Democratic Party, he looked favorably on the prospect of the United States soon possessing the world's most powerful navy. It appeared to many that not only had the United States set its face against greater involvement in world politics and a new system of collective security, but also that it was willing to risk setting off the same kind of arms race and naval competition which had played a role in causing the First World War.

While at first glance it might seem that isolationists and those who had opposed the Treaty of Versailles would be among the strongest proponents of naval expansion, this was not always the case. Senator William E. Borah of Idaho, one of the Senate's 'irreconcilables,' who were inveterate opponents of the Treaty and the League, quickly became one of the most outspoken critics of naval expansion. In addition, several politicians who supported increased naval spending did not rule out exploring arms limitation. This group included the President himself.

In his inaugural address, on March 4, 1921, Harding declared that

We are ready to associate ourselves with the nations of the world, great and small, for conference, for counsel; to seek the expressed views of world opinion; to recommend a way to approximate disarmament and relieve the crushing burdens of military and naval establishments.

3 New York Times. 1 January 1921.

The 1916 Naval Act itself had contained a clause in which the President was requested at the end of hostilities to invite the great powers to participate in a conference intended to set up a method for discussing international disputes and to "consider the question of disarmament." By 1920, the program of naval expansion had developed an impetus of its own. Even so, an escape was built into it from the beginning, and many congressmen's support was more qualified than it might at first appear.

As the Wilson Administration prepared to pass the reins of power to its successors, popular and congressional concern mounted over the scale of American naval spending and the possible response of Great Britain and Japan. Senator Borah came to the fore of a new disarmament movement, introducing a resolution on December 14, 1920, that asked the President to reach an agreement with Japan and Britain to reduce naval building by fifty percent during the next five years. The widespread support gained by Borah and other proponents of disarmament placed the naval expansion program in serious jeopardy.

The uncertain state of Japanese-American relations was a major factor in the debate over the question of naval expansion versus arms limitation. Anti-Japanese agitation on the West Coast was unabated during this period. An article by California Senator James Phelan, for example, was published in Atlantic in March 1921. Entitled "The False Pride of Japan," it used conditions in Hawaii to prove that Japanese could not be assimilated into American society and to justify California legislation to prevent a recurrence of this situation on the West Coast. "Come what may," Phelan vowed, "we will make our stand, like Sobieski at Vienna and Charles Martel at Tours, against the rising tide of color."

Commentators expressed concern with other aspects of affairs between the two nations. The Nation felt that "it is not as easy to champion Japan before America as it was a few years

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5 Quoted in Sprout, New Order of Sea Power, p. 115.


ago," while the editors of the New Republic were so disgusted with Japanese East Asian policy that it published an article concluding that "the Orient is the field of the next harvest of peace or war—if war, Korea would be its Belgium, China its France, Siberia its Russia, and Japan its Germany. And they wonder out there if they are to benefit by the principles for which we fought in the war or if all that blood and treasure was spent in vain." Even the American Review of Reviews, which was charitably inclined toward Japan, admitted that "there is danger now that Japan may yield to the dangers that go with power and ambition." The disagreements between the United States and Japan over immigration questions and strategic concerns had produced a volatile situation, exacerbated by the incipient naval race.

As a result of these factors, several leading elements of the American press were quick to jump on the disarmament bandwagon. In a special issue devoted to the state of Japanese-American relations, the Nation included an article entitled "Our Armament Race with Japan," whose author stated that "the Governments of the United States and Japan are both suffering from an acute case of navalitis. Both sufferers greatly need a mild injection of common-sense." When British officials wished to publicize that Great Britain was willing in principle to consider a rough parity in naval strength with the United States, Adolph Ochs, publisher of the New York Times, was enlisted to help transmit these views to Washington. As momentum built for the disarmament movement, the Administration gracefully bowed to the inevitable. On July 1, the Times informed its readers that congressional pressure had convinced Harding to "call a conference with representatives of Great Britain and Japan as soon as the

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8 The Nation, 2 February 1921, p. 66; and Marsh, Cody "Japan's Place in the Sun." New Republic, 8 June 1921, p. 48.

9 American Review of Reviews, vol. 64 (July-December 1921), p. 17.


11 Davis, A Navy Second to None, pp. 274-275.
preliminaries have been arranged.*12 While American participation in the League of Nations was unacceptable to Congress, international negotiations to relieve the burden of massive naval expansion and avoid setting off an arms race was not.

II.

The immediate impetus for the Harding Administration to issue invitations to the great powers to attend a conference at Washington was not domestic pressure, but instead the British Imperial Conference, which began in June 1921. A major topic of discussion at this meeting was the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, which was causing increasing disquiet in the Dominions. Earlier, in 1920, Great Britain and Japan had agreed to maintain the alliance for at least one more year, but admitted that the treaty would have to be revised to conform with the principles of the League of Nations. This may have been done to allay American concerns about the alliance, since even though the United States was not a member of the League, the adherence of the Anglo-Japanese alliance to its principles and charter would mean that the alliance would operate in accordance with American Far Eastern policy.13

It soon became quite clear at the Imperial Conference that the reservations expressed earlier by the United States about the alliance were no greater than those held by the leaders of several Dominion nations. Since Canada, like the United States, wished to restrict or prevent Japanese immigration, and also had no wish to become a theater of operations in a Japanese-American war that Great Britain might be dragged into by the alliance, Canadian Prime Minister Arthur Meighen firmly opposed renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

12 New York Times. 1 July 1921.
13 The United States actively sought at this time to ensure that it was specifically excluded by the provisions of the alliance. Gritswold, The Far Eastern Policy of the United States, pp. 274-280.
Although initially alone in opposition to renewal, Meighen brought his colleagues around to his point of view, and it was agreed that the alliance must be relinquished.14

This decision left Lloyd George's British government in a quandary. While it desired close ties and good relations with the United States, Anglo-Japanese relations were also important, and it could not be allowed to appear that a friendly nation and valued ally was being dismissed at the beck and call of the United States. Fortunately, earlier diplomatic correspondence regarding both the alliance and the question of Anglo-American naval parity provided the British a way out of their dilemma. Since the Americans were increasingly interested in holding a disarmament conference, an agreement between Great Britain, Japan, and the United States regarding the Far East would not only facilitate such a discussion, but also allow the British to step out of the Anglo-Japanese alliance without appearing to abandon an ally.

Accordingly, Lloyd George adapted a course of action in early July 1921 that may have been designed to force the American hand. On July 5th, the British Foreign Minister, Lord Curzon, requested that President Harding issue invitations to all concerned powers to a conference on naval disarmament and Far Eastern questions. On July 7th Lloyd George announced that on Monday, the 11th, he would issue a statement regarding international response to British inquiries on this subject. The U. S. ambassador to Great Britain, George Harvey, believed that if this was allowed to occur and the United States merely replied to the British initiative,

The President would then be in a position, which I consider harmful and distasteful, of acting at the instigation of Lloyd George...I suggest this be forestalled by the President issuing statement...to this effect: Having ourselves conceived as a result of inquiries that nations vitally or intimately concerned in questions relating to Pacific Ocean and Far East would favorably respond to invitations to meet in conference ...to insure peaceful relations through safeguarding equitably and fairly the interests of all and thus make possible suitable limitation of armaments, the President has decided to issue such invitations as soon as time, place, and other necessary preliminaries can be arranged.15

14 Ibid., pp. 287-289.
When informed of the decision to implement this proposal, the British government agreed to the arrangement.

On July 11, 1921, the State Department made the officially announced the decision to issue invitations to the "Principal Allied and Associated Powers," Great Britain, France, Italy, and Japan, to discuss arms limitation. In addition, the announcement stated that since

It is manifest that the question of limitation of armament has a close relation to Pacific and Far Eastern problems, ... the President has suggested that the Powers especially interested in these problems should undertake ... the consideration of all matters bearing upon their solution with a view to reaching a common understanding with respect to principles and politics in the Far East. This has been communicated to the Powers concerned and China has also been invited to take part in the discussion relating to Far Eastern problems.¹⁶

While the British argued that a preliminary meeting involving Great Britain, the United States, and Japan on Pacific and East Asian matters would streamline the Washington conference and facilitate the discussion of armament limitation, the Harding Administration refused. Hughes cabled Harvey his opinion that the "British Government cannot fail to realize that it is vitally important to satisfactory settlement of large issues involved and to success of conference that conference should be closely in touch with American opinion."¹⁷ Not only could the success of the American initiative not be contingent on a preliminary agreement, but the Administration also considered it important to avoid all suggestions of traditional European diplomacy, and memories of the Treaty of Versailles.

Western newspapers greeted news of the invitations to Washington warmly. The Portland Oregonian felt that "A prospect of incalculable good for the peace and progress of the world is opened by the proposal of President Harding,"¹⁸ a sentiment generally echoed in the nation's press. Inclusion of Far Eastern questions in the conference's agenda also met with approval.

¹⁷ Hughes to Harvey, 13 July 1921. Foreign Relations of US, 1921, I, pp. 28-29.
¹⁸ Portland Oregonian, 12 July 1921.
The Rocky Mountain News argued that "the United States has its chief interest in the Pacific; its naval policy must depend on that of the other powers, particularly England and Japan." Before concluding that "President Harding's proposal is the most hopeful thing that has ever happened," the San Francisco Chronicle noted that its substance "in respect to the Far East is that all treaty preferences in respect to the undeveloped Eastern countries shall cease and all the doors be opened to all on equal terms. Japan can not object, for she has the advantage of propinquity and racial sympathy." While welcoming news of the invitations, the Los Angeles Daily Times struck a somewhat more ominous note, arguing that failure of the conference to establish international understandings regarding the Pacific and East Asia meant that any agreements reached would rest on force. It concluded by saying, "if force is to dominate, then the question surges upward whether the Pacific is to be a white or a yellow ocean, a question that can be settled only by force of arms." Clearly, much was felt to be riding on the success of the conference.

After the invitations were sent to the 'Allied and Associated powers,' and to those others particularly interested in Far Eastern affairs (China, Portugal, the Netherlands, and Belgium) to take part in discussions at Washington beginning on or about November 11, the subject of the upcoming conference was the source of a great deal of speculation and comment by the American press. The New York Times felt that "the inclusion of China in the list of countries invited to take part in the Washington Conference is of happy augury for the attainment of the dual object the President has in view." While Japan immediately accepted the invitation to discuss naval limitation, she initially reserved judgment on agreeing to consider Far Eastern questions, arousing a good deal of suspicion. According to the New York American, "Japan does not want to discuss anything that will threaten its 'special position' in the Far East, which is

19 Rocky Mountain News. 11 July 1921; and San Francisco Chronicle. 12 July 1921.

20 Los Angeles Daily Times. 12 July 1921.

that of land and trade grabber and terrorizer of weaker peoples." The New York Evening Post explained Japanese reticence by noting that

Japan has always preferred to negotiate specific issues with one nation at a time. She hesitates apparently to abandon this policy and to commit what she has always considered her special interests to the hands of a general conference. The controversy over Shandong, for instance, she has always regarded as one between herself and China. The controversy over Yap [an island in the Pacific] she has always been inclined to regard as between herself and the United States. Now these matters are likely to come to a showdown.

The Baltimore News was also fairly moderate, but concluded, "whatever Japan does now must be done with the eyes of a critical world wide open." Perhaps sensing this also, the Japanese government shortly thereafter agreed to the Far Eastern portion of the conference, although it did designate certain questions, most notably the Shandong controversy, as accomplished facts and not open to discussion.

In early August, both the Nation and the New Republic responded to criticism in the Freeman that they were far too enthusiastic about the prospects of the Washington Conference. The Freeman argued that since the same diplomats would be involved who participated in drafting the Treaty of Versailles, little or nothing could be expected from the conference. The New Republic's editors retorted that "We are under no illusions that the conference...will forge a perfect agreement, one that will set at rest forever all fears of a disastrous naval war on the Pacific." The Nation admitted that there was a real possibility that the conference could come to naught, but felt that "we would rather it should be held and fail than never be held at all." "As matters stand," it argued, "we have nearly all the cards in our hands, and how many tricks we shall take will depend entirely up to our players." The New Republic asked, "Can the existing issues not be moved closer to a satisfactory settlement...by an exchange of views and even a nominal agreement among governments as they are? We believe this is possible. And even if

22 Literary Digest, 30 July 1921, pp. 13-14.
the coming conference attains no material results, we believe that the precedents set by it will be
useful in a later time.23

In September, Current Opinion offered a rejoinder to the qualified optimism expressed by
the editors of the New Republic. Looking at the Far East, it argued that with its existing system
of government, Japan could not possibly make the concessions and accept the principles
required for American East Asian policy to work. As a result, "what we are asking from Japan,
therefore, is a political revolution. Such a revolution would involve not only the military class but
the very foundations on which the throne is based." Speaking of the New Republic, it felt that its
rival

has been enthusiastic over the Conference and what it may accomplish; but
in canvassing the difficulties...it seems to fall back upon the fact that even if the
Conference does not secure any definite results it will have aroused a
world-wide desire for disarmament...to a man up a tree it looks as tho the
principal basis for hope in the Washington Conference is faith in the Lord
Almighty and faith in Secretary Hughes.24

With these views on the changes needed in Japanese politics and society for the conference to
have lasting benefit, the editors of Current Opinion were hardly setting great store by faith.

As the convening of the conference neared, a complication arose concerning the Canton
government of Sun Yat-Sen. At the Treaty of Versailles, the Canton government had formed a
joint delegation with its Beijing rivals; it demanded the right to send its own delegation to
Washington. Many American observers were sympathetic to this demand, since the Beijing
government was dominated by warlords and very much under Japanese influence. The New
York Times opined that "Dr. Sun's government is not only de facto, but it appears to have a
much better claim to be called a de jure government than the creature of the war lords in the
North. It should be represented at the conference."25

23 Nation. 3 August 1921; and New Republic. 3 August 1921, p. 257.


In an article for the *Nation* in October, Nathaniel Peffer disagreed. While he deemed the Canton government more promising than its Peking counterpart, the Peking regime enjoyed international recognition as the legitimate government of China. By insisting on separate representation, Canton was playing into the Japanese government's hands and making China appear even less unified than was actually the case. "There is involved," he concluded, "more than the interplay of domestic factional rivalries. There is involved the prospect of a better world position for China. There is involved also the success or failure of America's policy in the Far East--an independent, self-sufficient China free from foreign molestation--and therefore the peace of the Eastern Hemisphere." On the eve of the Conference, a cautious optimism prevailed as to its prospects for success in the American press. While the more hopeful felt its mere convening was a good sign for the future, pessimists dwelled on the significant and difficult issues that stood between the conference and success, although for the most part, they too hoped for the best.

III.

The Washington Conference opened on November 12, 1921. Its deliberations were open to the public and the press, a group consciously played to by the American delegation. Unanimously chosen as the chairman of the conference, Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes made its opening address. In it, he explained the reasoning behind having five nations discuss armament limitation and nine discuss Far Eastern questions, and emphasized that

> The inclusion of the proposal for the discussion of Pacific and Far Eastern questions was not for the purpose of embarrassing or delaying an agreement for limitation of armament, but rather to support that undertaking by availing ourselves of this meeting to endeavor to reach a common understanding as to the principles and policies to be followed in the Far East, and thus to greatly diminish, and if possible wholly to remove, discernible sources of controversy.

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27 *Messages and Papers*, vol. 17, p. 9045.
Hughes then moved on to specific and detailed recommendations for scrappings and contract cancellations that would produce significant limitations in the naval strength of the United States, Great Britain, and Japan, with a 5:5:3 ratio as the ultimate goal.

Press response to Secretary Hughes’s opening address was immediate and positive. The New York Times stated that “the first impression made by the proposal of the United States for a limitation of naval armaments is that Great Britain has been dealt with generously, Japan fairly.” The Los Angeles Daily Times called Hughes’s opening statement “brilliant both as diplomacy and as world politics.”

According to the Rocky Mountain News, “wise men urged that to take up the question of armament reduction and limitation before determining on the policies to prevail in the Orient...would be to reverse the proper order and put the cart before the horse, but now that it has been done, we are sure the American people will heartily approve the bold step of their secretary of state in going to the very heart of the business at the first moment.”

By opening the conference with concrete proposals on the more tractable of the two main issues, Hughes ensured broad press support for the American delegation and its actions at the conference.

Somewhat surprisingly, France caused the most difficulty over Hughes’s naval proposals. The French delegation refused to consider restrictions on French capital ship tonnage (she and Italy were each to be allowed 175,000 tons of capital ships) until they grudgingly accepted that if they derailed the conference over this objection, even a massive building program would not improve their position relative to the three major naval powers. Even so, the obduracy of the French delegation made any limitation of land armaments impossible to discuss at Washington, was largely responsible for the failure of the conference to outlaw submarines, and put restrictions on the numbers of naval auxiliaries (a somewhat confusing term, since it actually


29 Rocky Mountain News. 14 November 1921.
means those warships not of capital rank) out of reach (although this development was not entirely unwelcomed by the British or Japanese delegations).

The Japanese representatives to the conference expressed reservations concerning the American proposals. They were particularly anxious to retain the new battleship *Mutsu*, classified as unfinished by the Americans but which they insisted had been placed in commission. In addition, the Japanese delegates expressed some displeasure with the ratio of the Hughes plan, feeling that a 10:10:7 formula would more satisfy Japanese requirements. Upon this development, the *New York Times* commented that "when it is intimated that Japan would much prefer to increase somewhat her ratio of naval armament, the inevitable question is 'why?'"

As it became apparent that the exact ratio acceptable to Japan was tied to the question of fortifications in the Pacific, the *Times* quoted Hector C. Bywater, a British writer on naval affairs, on the *status quo* in the Pacific, and indignantly noted that "the Japanese have counted upon availing themselves of a great strategic advantage to overcome the disparity of capital ships in favor of the United States." Since the Japanese were negotiating from what was widely considered to be a position of strength, the fact that they were trying to increase their advantage was a source of irritation and hostility. The *Seattle Daily Times* felt that "Nippon is playing a dangerous game...Because it stands to lose so much through rejection and because the other nations stand to gain so much through acceptance, it must bear the entire responsibility if the conference fails to get anywhere...JAPAN IS AT THE BAR!"

Japanese strategic concerns at Washington were in large part shaped by the fact that a major goal of the conference was to arrive at a new arrangement superseding the Anglo-Japanese alliance. British lobbying for a preliminary meeting looking toward a tripartite

30 *Davis, A Navy Second to None*, p. 292.


32 *Seattle Daily Times*. 19 November 1921.
agreement between Japan, Britain, and the United States had been rejected by the State Department as having the air of traditional diplomacy as well as having the feel of a formal alliance. Even so, some sort of agreement to replace the Anglo-Japanese treaty and reduce tensions in the Pacific was vital to the success of the conference. As matters stood in 1921, the only important American naval base in the Pacific was at Pearl Harbor, and it was not sufficiently developed to support a major offensive into the Western Pacific. The navy's General Board desired major bases at Guam and the Philippines, but these had not been begun, and much question existed as to whether Congress would even fund them. Meanwhile, Japan had been awarded League of Nations mandates for former German holdings in the Marshall, Marianas, and Caroline islands, which if fortified would make any naval base at Guam untenable and which would render defense of the Philippines even more problematic. Although Hughes was aware of naval and military opposition to renouncing the right of fortification on Guam and the Philippines, he was also aware that the right possessed very little actual value. Therefore, renunciation might help provide agreement both on the question of naval limitation and also on the question of the Pacific. As a result, maintaining the status quo in Pacific fortifications was made a part of the Five Power Treaty on Naval Limitation, which was signed on February 5, 1922. In addition to removing the question of naval bases in the Western Pacific as a possible source of contention, Secretary Hughes also added France as a power concerned with Pacific questions. As A. Whitney Griswold stated in 1938, this was designed to soothe French pride and help induce them to accept naval limitations while simultaneously generalizing any treaty concerning the Pacific sufficiently to be acceptable to Congress and American public opinion without making it so general as to offend Japan. In the resulting Four Power Treaty Pacific Treaty, signed December 13, 1921, the four nations agreed to respect each other's rights in their

33 Sprout, Toward a New Order of Sea Power, pp. 171-172.
34 Griswold, Far Eastern Policy of the US, pp. 311-312.
insular possessions in the Pacific, to settle any differences by diplomacy or conference, and to consult with one another if an outside party threatened hostile action. During the drafting of the treaty, there was some controversy as to whether the Japanese home islands were covered by it, and a minor furor occurred on December 20 when President Harding told a press conference they were not, when in fact they were.

Echoing fears expressed in Congress, Oswald Garrison Villard of the Nation focused on the vagueness of the treaty, arguing that "against such dangerous ambiguities in future years the verbal assurance of Senator Lodge (a member of the American delegation) that there is no provision for the use of military or naval force is in vain." Meanwhile, the New Republic was more optimistic, feeling that "it will create an atmosphere of general security which will permit armaments as an instrument of national policy in the Far East to be abolished." The San Francisco Chronicle called the Four Power Treaty "a great step forward," concluding "it is probably as far as the nations are now prepared to go." The New York Times noted that "two main consequences flow from the conclusion of the agreement. One is that it brings together upon a basis of firm understanding...nations deeply concerned to remove the danger of discord and strife in the Pacific. The second is that it makes an end of the Anglo-Japanese treaty of offensive and defensive alliance." The Times concluded, however, that

Before the conference met it was well understood that conditions in China were the main peril, the chief source of difficulties in the Pacific. The removal of dangers to peace in that quarter was one of the purposes set forth in the call. It would be lamentable if, after a record of brilliant success in other undertakings, the conference should fail in that vital matter.

The editors of the New York Times were not alone in considering the fate of China to be perhaps the most crucial question before the delegates at the Washington Conference. In

35 Nation. 21 December 1921, p. 720; and New Republic, 21 December 1921, p. 88.
36 San Francisco Chronicle. 12 December 1921.
criticizing the Four Power Treaty, the Nation objected primarily to the fact that "this treaty cannot be rightly understood until we know what terms will be embodied in the proposed nine-Power convention as to China." In a series of articles for the American Review of Reviews, Frank H. Simonds examined the prospects for the conference, its work in progress, and its final accomplishments. Writing during its deliberations, he repeated an earlier assertion, that "the United States is undertaking an Asiatic policy which must inevitably lead to war, unless in...the development of the policy there shall be a mutual understanding between the three Great Powers—Great Britain, Japan, and ourselves." Turning to China, which he considered the crux of the issue, he wrote that "conceding to all three Great Powers complete good faith...we shall get nowhere with our present policy unless something is done to restore China itself." No agreement could have lasting significance if conditions in China were not improved sufficiently for her not to present irresistible opportunities for stronger nations.

On the whole, the American press was not particularly sanguine about the state of affairs in China at the time of the Washington Conference. The New York Times did reverse its earlier position and expressed qualified optimism about the Peking government, saying, "the capacity of the Chinese to maintain a constitutional Government able to fulfill its duties at home and abroad is at present somewhat in question because of the feebleness of the Peking Government and the pretensions of the opposition Government in the south." West Coast newspapers, however, were less benevolent. According to the San Francisco Chronicle, "it is mere diplomatic argot to solemnly declare an intention to respect the sovereignty of China if there is no such sovereignty, and that does not exist today...For the present it is necessary to consider China proper as it is, a collection of eighteen practically independent provinces, each ruled by an

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38 Nation. 21 December 1921, p. 720.


40 New York Times. 16 November 1921.
independent despot.* The Portland Oregonian stated that the "Chinese delegates at Washington affirm an unqualified claim to independence and integrity as though the Pekin government already exercised these rights or were in a position to exercise them as soon as the foreigners got out." Few illusions existed as to the current state of affairs in China; the press simply differed as to whether the Chinese could overcome these difficulties if allowed to do so.

It was against this background that the Nine Power Treaty, which was signed on February 6, 1922, was negotiated. In this treaty, the signatory nations pledged themselves to respect the sovereignty of China, to provide the upmost opportunity for her continued and stable development, and to maintain the Open Door in China. While characterizing the Nine Power Treaty as yet another expression of traditional American East Asian policy, A. Whitney Griswold felt that "the language of international law admitted of no more explicit pledge of respect for the open door and territorial integrity of China...But within these traditional limitations, the self-denying ordinance was assuredly the most stringent yet applied to the competing exploiters of China."^2

Although news of the Nine Power Treaty was generally greeted with approval by the American press, concerns were expressed throughout the conference that something concrete must be done to reduce the stranglehold Japan was generally felt to hold over China. While the American delegation strove to reach agreements with Japan over reducing her presence in Siberia and concerning cable facilities on the island of Yap, a more pressing concern as far as the press was concerned was the issue of the Shandong peninsula. In December, the New York Times argued that

the problem presented by China is most difficult because of unstable political conditions, but difficulties that might be surmounted would become positive dangers should Japan be allowed to retain her grasp on Chinese territory and railways and her influence on the Government.

^2 Griswold, Far Eastern Policy of the US. pp. 325-326.

41 San Francisco Chronicle, 13 December 1921; and Portland Oregonian, 21 November 1921
42 Griswold, Far Eastern Policy of the US, pp. 325-326.
The *Times* reiterated its position later in the month, stating that "the importance of getting Japan out of Shandong must be clear to anyone who recalls the Versailles negotiations on that point." When the Japanese delegation expressed the belief that adhering to the principles that would become the Nine Power Treaty did not necessarily mean that they would be applied to existing issues, the *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot* observed that "before the ink was dry on the Root proposals, some of the parties agreeing to them in principle were in sharp disagreement as to their import in practice." Meanwhile, the *Washington Post* argued that "China has two cardinal needs—First, a guaranty against further encroachments by...the Powers assembled at Washington; and second, an opportunity to recover the ground lost by previous encroachments on the part of the Powers." The issue of Shandong still rankled many elements of the American press, to the extent that they would not consider the Conference a success unless it was resolved to China's satisfaction.

With much of the American press and public clamoring for a more satisfactory resolution to the Shandong question, and the Japanese government insisting the matter was between the Chinese government and themselves, the American delegation to the conference joined with its British colleagues in offering good offices to their Japanese and Chinese counterparts, in order that they could work out an agreement. This process took several weeks, since the Japanese would not give up their position on the peninsula without some form of compensation, while the Chinese insisted on an unconditional withdrawal. The *New Republic* ascribed this negotiation to Senate intimations that the Four Power Treaty would not be ratified without a resolution of the Shandong issue, and concluded that "the Senate is almost always an obstructive part of the mechanism whereby the American nation deals with other nations, but it certainly does prevent the Executive from falling into serious mistakes." Eventually, the Japanese agreed to return

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43 *New York Times*. 22 December 1921; and 29 December 1921.

44 *Literary Digest*. 17 December 1921, p. 17.

administrative control of the peninsula to China, retaining control of its major railroad until the Chinese were able to buy it through means of a Japanese loan.

When it learned of this agreement, the New York Times opined that “the final settlement of the controversy about the return of Shandong to China by no means clears up the other matters at issue between the Chinese and Japanese Governments, yet it must be welcomed as a fortunate and auspicious event.” The Baltimore News said it removed “the key-log of the jam at Washington.” With this achievement, the Conference came to a close on a high note.

In his closing address to the delegates of the Washington Conference, President Harding said

> My own gratification is beyond my capacity to express...This conference has wrought a truly great achievement...It is hazardous sometimes to speak in superlatives, and I will be restrained. But I will say, with every confidence, that the faith plighted here to-day, kept in national honor, will mark the beginning of a new and better epoch in human progress.

For the most part, editors and writers were more guarded in their praise. The Rocky Mountain News felt that “all that could be done has been done at the Harding-called Washington conference,” while the Los Angeles Daily Times was much more optimistic. Although it admitted that the conference had not achieved total success in all the matters discussed, it still felt that “as a record of peaceful achievement it stands without a parallel in the history of nations.”

Writing in the Nation on February 15, Oswald Garrison Villard, while dubious about the consequences of Japanese imperialism, stated that “the agreement to build no more fortifications on the Pacific together with the definite limitation of the Japanese navy has

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46 New York Times, 1 February 1922.
47 Literary Digest, 11 February 1922.
49 Rocky Mountain News, 2 February 1922; and Los Angeles Daily Times, 3 February 1922.
undoubtedly decreased the possibility of war between us and the Mikado's people." Meanwhile, the *New Republic* declared that

President Harding and Secretary Hughes have managed to do away with the immediate causes of international friction between the United States and both Japan and Great Britain, to limit naval armaments by agreement and to somewhat improve the position of China. They and their associates...are entitled to congratulations for these substantial achievements. But congratulations should not provide any excuse for complacency. These achievements are only beginnings.  

Writing even before the Conference had ended, in January, the editors of *Current Opinion* touched on a common theme regarding the overall accomplishment of the conference: "The Versailles Conference was the first big international affair in which we ever participated. We entered it in a stellar role. We emerged from it in a guise that pleased nobody...The Conference at Washington has given us again a sense of pride in ourselves." Even if all the issues on the agenda of the Washington Conference had not been conclusively settled, a beginning had been made, and acrimony avoided.

IV.

Although it appeared for a time that ratification of the Four Power Treaty in particular was doubtful, all the agreements entered into by the American delegation at Washington were accepted by the Senate. In May, the *New York Times* observed that

Previous to the Washington conference, talk of an entente cordiale with Japan would have had a ring of insincerity, but the spirit and success of that historic meeting have brought about an improvement in the relations of the two nations.  


It expressed this opinion despite the fact that in February it felt that even if Japan became more liberal, "an industrial Japan will cast as covetous an eye upon China as ever did militarized Japan." Apparently, the conference succeeded in at least temporarily creating a better atmosphere, particularly in the area of Japanese-American relations.

Atmosphere and appearances also seem to have been an area with which the Harding Administration was concerned when it decided to adopt this approach to arms limitation and the discussion of Pacific and East Asian issues. The growing sentiment for disarmament made it apparent by the summer of 1921 that there was little chance of completing the naval expansion program or improving the United States' strategic position in the Pacific. Great Britain was even able to enlist the aid of the New York Times in an attempt to head off any chance of an Anglo-American naval race. Even so, tensions between the United States and Japan had reached the point where something had to be done. Secretary of State Hughes seems to have been guided in large part during the summer and fall of 1921 and during the conference itself by the concept of making a virtue of necessity.

Since a major portion of the press and public felt that some steps had to be taken toward arms limitation and thus had forced the Administration's hand, it therefore went out of its way to as much as possible give them what they wanted, while getting what it could for its concessions. The conference provided an opportunity for Great Britain to gracefully step out of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, and the British may have maneuvered the Americans into finally committing to the idea. In exchange, Hughes vetoed the idea of a preliminary conference, making the British operate on American terms.

Hughes's opening statement at the conference not only threw the other delegations off guard, it also made any criticisms or counterproposals they may have made subject to the harsh glare of adverse publicity. The Secretary of State's attention to the American press was an important part of his overall conference strategy, and should not be underestimated. On December 29, for

53 Ibid., 6 February 1922.
example, he wrote Frank H. Simonds, the correspondent, and took him to task for stating in an article in that morning's *Washington Post* that a member of the French delegation had left the Conference in disgust over France's treatment during the negotiations which resulted in the Four Power Treaty.\(^{54}\)

Operating under the eye of the public and the press had other advantages for the American delegation beyond the impact of Hughes' opening statement. The Americans were able to hold the threat of press disapproval over the recalcitrant French on more than one occasion. It also proved possible to give the fairly bland principles which formed the basis for the Four and Nine Power treaties a little more substance than they had previously possessed when expressed in secret understandings such as the Root-Takahira Note and the Lansing-Ishii Agreement.

Popular and press disapproval of Japanese policy in China played a part in Senate rumblings about ratification of the four Power Treaty, which helped the Americans and British to induce their Japanese counterparts to make an agreement with China over the Shandong peninsula. Similarly, press indignation over the Japanese desire to improve her ratio of capital ship tonnage while possessing the strategic advantage in the Western Pacific may have helped bring about her eventual acceptance of the smaller percentage.

For its part, the press seemed overall to approve of the Administration's program and its goals at Washington, influenced by both the consequences of the Paris peace conference and the fact that this conference was conducted with the American press in mind. It expressed serious concerns over the trend of Japanese-American relations before and during the discussions, but seems to have been largely mollified by their results. Even the harshest critics of Japanese East Asian policy, for example the *New Republic*, adopted the attitude that the conference had reached attainable goals, and that further developments would be the outcome of future policy. The *New York Times* was so pleased by the thaw in Japanese-American

relations which resulted from Washington that three months later it had largely abandoned its pessimism over what even a liberal Japan might do to China.

As for the question of China, her treatment at the hands of Japan and the other great powers was a source of major concern for the American press on the eve of the Washington Conference and during its proceedings. Many articles and editorials expressed the view that potential developments in China posed by far the most significant threat to world peace. Both the Western and Eastern press approached Chinese conditions fairly realistically during the conference, but usually differed as to the likely prospects if she were allowed to work out her destiny untrammeled. West Coast papers like the San Francisco Chronicle felt that any government, even a restoration of the Manchu dynasty, that could provide order and central control would be acceptable, but considered its establishment unlikely. On February 4, the Seattle Daily Times opined that "with all due respect for this great, helpless, jelly-fish nation, its situation must inspire more of contempt than of hopeful consideration." 55

Meanwhile, many segments of the Eastern press were more optimistic about China's future. The New Republic, influenced by John Dewey and others, believed that Japanese domination of China would only fuel a growing spirit of nationalism that would awaken the country. 56 After initially championing the desire of the Canton government for separate representation at Washington, the New York Times eventually abandoned its cause, and defended the Peking government, although it did not hesitate to admit to that government's faults. This may have been due in large part to the caliber of representation of the Beijing government at the conference. An article in the American Review of Reviews entitled "Human Aspects of the Conference" expressed the opinion that "the Japanese are infinitely more alien to the American than the Chinese." 57 This assertion seems to have been based largely on the

55 Seattle Daily Times, 4 February 1922.

56 See, for example, Dewey, John "Public Opinion in Japan." New Republic, 16 November 1921, pp. 15-18; and New Republic, 15 February 1922, p. 318.

comparison of the eloquent, American-educated Wellington Koo of the Chinese delegation to the dour, austere naval officer Baron Kato of Japan. Even the author of this article was forced to admit, however, that while the individual members of the Chinese delegation were compelling and persuasive, the nation that they represented unfortunately was not.

Overall, the Washington Conference can best be seen as attempt by the government of the United States to achieve a reasonable set of objectives concerning naval limitations and the Far East, while operating within fairly restrictive constraints. Secretary of State Hughes was able to accomplish a great deal within these restrictions by making a virtue of necessity and frequently using the constraints to the United States' advantage. The American press, concerned over international developments, accepted this approach and even cooperated in its implementation, although much of it did not fully agree with the Administration's position. Partly as a result of this cooperation, a period of respite from worsening Japanese-American relations was created. The major factor in the creation of this respite, however, was the policy of moderation adopted by the Japanese government at this time, a policy which (due largely to international economic trends) unfortunately did not survive the decade.
CONCLUSION

United States East Asian policy changed dramatically from 1894 to 1921, as the region changed from being seen as distant and unimportant to being considered vital to American interests. The United States gained colonial possessions in the Pacific as a result of the Spanish-American War. China, initially viewed in much the same light as Japan, became seen as fertile ground for economic exploitation and cultural initiatives. Meanwhile, the Japanese, with stunning victories over Imperial China and Russia, achieved great power status, and increasingly were looked on as the major impediment to a Sino-American 'special relationship.' While these changes in the geopolitical situation would have drastically altered the relationship between the United States and Japan on their own, the popular image of Japan was not only affected by these changes, but became a significant factor in determining the course of Japanese-American relations in its own right.

The changing relationship between the United States and Japan during this period was further complicated by the issue of Japanese emigration to the American West Coast. Its inhabitants had earlier been successful in prodding the federal government to exclude Chinese immigrants, and now attempted to do the same with the Japanese. While Chinese outrage over this treatment would eventually result in economic boycotts, Japan's response in similar circumstances could have included military action. Since the Spanish-American War saw the United States become a colonial power, the vulnerability of her new Philippine possessions meant that this was not a threat to be taken lightly.

As Japan's international stature improved at the turn of the century, the initial tendency in the United States was for government policy to influence popular perceptions. Government actions during and after the Sino-Japanese War reinforced the feeling among observers in the press that Japan had 'grown up.' Some even began to express concern about Japanese economic
prowess, which may indicate the degree to which respect for Japan's modernization had grown. This tendency was, if anything, more pronounced during the Russo-Japanese War, when it combined with the traditional American sympathy for the underdog. Several writers, including Joseph Conrad and Lafcadio Hearn, played on this sympathy, with articles describing Japan as valiantly holding the Slavic hordes at bay and in doing so saving Western civilization. In the aftermath of the conflict, however, the popular image of Japan changed.

West Coast agitation over Japanese immigration caused a crisis in U.S.-Japanese relations in 1906. President Roosevelt was able to defuse it by working out a quid pro quo arrangement. In exchange for giving Japan a free hand on the Asian mainland, the Japanese government voluntarily placed restrictions on emigration to the United States. Roosevelt felt that maintaining this arrangement was of paramount importance to a successful East Asian policy. The failure of his successor to do so was a factor in Roosevelt's eventual split with Taft.

While most of the press in the Western United States initially resented the President's actions, the Eastern press supported him, and eventually its western counterparts came around as the arrangement proved successful. Even so, the 'worst case' scenarios that were formulated during the crisis helped fuel the shift toward seeing Japan as a dangerous rival, as well as the shift toward popular perceptions influencing policy. As an anonymous British writer observed during the crisis, since the United States had a democratic form of government, the people would have the final say in determining policy. What gave the situation an air of danger was the fact that the people relied upon the popular press for their information.

Both these shifts were given increased momentum by the decision of the Taft Administration to compete economically with Japan in Manchuria. While the Manchurian initiative ended in dismal failure because its proponents greatly overestimated their chances, the press assumed they had a sound basis for their actions, and was even more inclined to see Japan as an economic rival and military threat. Initially, this tendency was more marked in the eastern press than on the West Coast.
Although Taft placed the United States and Japan on a collision course over Manchuria, his
tenure in the Oval Office was not marked by any serious dispute over immigration. The informal
system set up by Roosevelt was still working. The western press made no attempt to stir up
anti-Japanese feeling during this period, and even pro-exclusion papers like the San Francisco
Chronicle were liable to criticize anti-Japanese legislation as likely to ruin the arrangement.
West Coast papers were also as a rule more accurate in their descriptions of conditions in Asia
during this period. Their East Coast counterparts were prone to look at East Asia in terms of its
future prospects. While the American press' attitude toward East Asia was not determined solely
by geographic location (attitude toward labor certainly played a significant role), when the Taft
Administration embarked on its Manchurian enterprise, eastern newspapers tended to assume
that the government had concrete grounds for assuming it would be a success, based in part on
long standing dreams of the "China market."

This process was further accelerated when Woodrow Wilson became President. Although he
eschewed both realpolitik and "dollar diplomacy," Wilson set great store by American ideals, and
like many of his countrymen, believed that China was a fertile ground for their cultivation. When
Japan tried to use the chaos of World War One to ensure her economic domination of China, his
response was based primarily on moral grounds. Even though many members of the press,
particularly on the West Coast, knew that conditions in China were far different than Wilson
wished to believe, the addition of a moral element to East Asian policy caused a further
deterioration of U.S.-Japanese relations. Both western and eastern observers assumed that the
government had pragmatic grounds for its hostility toward Japan. In this atmosphere, the
circumstances of the grounding of a Japanese warship off Baja California easily assumed
ominous proportions.

Although he avoided it as long as he could, President Wilson eventually had to bring the
United States into the First World War. When American entry into the war became inevitable,
he tried to transform the conflict into a moral crusade. While this may have played some part in
winning the war, it made winning the ensuing peace problematic, as Wilsonian idealism clashed
with the demands of more traditional diplomacy. This was particularly evident in East Asian affairs, as controversy over possession of the Shandong peninsula between China and Japan became a major issue in the peace conference at Versailles. Wilson's plans for American entry into the League of Nations and his own health eventually fell victim to the compromises he was forced to make at the conference, including that over Shandong. In this case, the injection of morality into the conduct of foreign affairs had backfired, since the popular perception of Japan as an inveterate aggressor and the major obstacle in China's path to democracy and Christianity meant that any policy of accommodation was fraught with peril.

The dispute between the United States and Japan over the future of China was one of the major factors behind the Washington Naval Conference, which was convened in November 1921. American membership in the League of Nations, a major component of Wilson's plans for the postwar world, had already been defeated. Public opinion had also turned against naval expansion, another important element of these plans, feeling that it only made conflict with Japan, or even Great Britain, more likely. The conference saw Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes bow to the inevitable and make a virtue of necessity, playing to the press and using the demand for arms limitation to achieve at least a temporary reduction of tension in the Pacific. Popular perceptions of Japan and the state of Japanese-American relations, a topic which had once seen little popular attention, now in large part determined the nature of those relations.
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