

JAPAN'S FOREIGN POLICY IN THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE NINETEEN-TWENTIES

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I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF JAPAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

An American delegate who attended the Paris Conference in 1919, in commenting upon the atmosphere of the Conference, referred to the attitude of the Japanese delegation with the following remark: "The Japanese were not interested in the European questions that composed most of the business."¹ As these words precisely state he discovered in the Japanese delegate a frankly nationalistic egoism, similar to that displayed by the Italians. In attending the Conference, the basic attitude taken by the Japanese delegate was "to refrain from speaking out needlessly on matters which do not directly concern Japan."² Italy assumed a similar attitude at the Conference, so that although both countries were counted among the "belligerent powers possessing over-all interests" and were referred to as "the principal allied and associated powers," in fact they strove only to secure special advantages that were directly related to their own national interests. As shown by the process through which Japan and Italy became involved in the First World War, their attitudes stemmed from an opportunistic foreign policy peculiar to backward imperialistic powers.

As a result of the First World War, Japan acquired "all interests arising from a state of war" as well as "interests of status of outside the theatre of war." With the First World War, Japanese capitalism developed remarkably. As can be seen from Japan's Twenty-one Demands to China, Japan took advantage of the power vacuum in the Far East and sought frantically to acquire a dominant position there

¹ C. Day, "The Atmosphere and Organization of the Peace Conference," in E. M. House & E. Seymour eds., *What Really Happened at Paris*, London, Hodder, 1921, p. 24.

² Hara Keiichirō 原奎一郎 ed., *Hara Kei nikki* 原敬日記 [The Diary of Hara Kei (Satoshi)], Vol. 8, Tokyo, Fukumura-shuppan, 1964, p. 150.

while the great powers were engaged in the war. Japan's proposals to the Paris Conference, which was convened to put an end to the war, contained three points; claims to German rights in Shantung, and to the German islands in the North Pacific, and a call for the abolition of racial discrimination.³ These proposals were aimed at making the great powers confirm the *fait accompli* of the rights obtained by Japan during the war. These matters which concerned Japan, however, were not necessarily of decisive importance in the over-all context of the problems of concluding peace with Germany. This is consistent with the fact the First World War broke out in the first place as a clash among the imperialistic forces in Europe; the international confrontation in the Far East had not developed to a stage where it could constitute an inevitable factor in the war as a whole, and moreover, the Far Eastern theatre was not of decisive significance in determining the course of the war itself. Nevertheless, the expansion of Japan during and after the war intensified international confrontations, particularly between Japan and the United States, and brought about a situation in which the Far East was pushed into the forefront of international politics.

The Paris Conference was one or the other related to the war of intervention against the Russian Revolution. Japan, taking advantage of the new international environment caused by the Russian Revolution, dispatched a force to Siberia.⁴ The relationship between the dispatch of troops to Siberia and the Peace Conference may be perceived, for example, in the contention by Foreign Ministers Motono Ichirō 本野一郎 and Gotō Shimpei 後藤新平 that as the basis for securing a voice at the Conference "major positive action" was needed and that a "direct and firm foothold must be secured on Russian territory."⁵

The Russian Revolution brought a new ideological element on the international political scene and opened an era of "New Diplomacy."⁶ However, it could not be said that at the time the political and military leaders of Japan fully assessed the ideological impact of the Russian Revolution. Tanaka Giichi 田中義一, Vice-Chief of the General Staff, regarded the spreading of the Russian Revolution to Siberia as the

³ Saionji Kimmochi 西園寺公望, "Fukumei jōsōbun" 復命上奏文 (Report to the Throne).

⁴ Eguchi Bokurō 江口朴郎, "Roshia kakumei—Berusaiyu taisei—Nihon teikoku-shugi" ロシア革命—ヴェルサイユ體制—日本帝國主義 (Russian Revolution—Versailles Order—Japanese Imperialism), *Rekishi hyōron* 歴史評論, May 1950.

⁵ Shinobu Seizaburō 信夫清三郎, *Taishō seijishi* 大正政治史 (Political History of the Taishō Era), Vol. 2, Tokyo, Kawade-shobō, 1952, p. 469.

⁶ Cf. A. J. Mayor, *The Political Origins of New Diplomacy, 1917-1918*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1959.

“German and Austrian powers’ extension to the East.”⁷ That is to say, the significance of the Russian Revolution was considered in terms of power politics, so that the dispatch of troops to Siberia should be considered to have been motivated by territorial design on Siberia rather than by any anti-revolutionary purpose. This idea was to change subsequently to open antagonism towards the revolutionary ideology. However, as has been demonstrated by the fact that in 1918 the “Imperial Defence Policy” replaced Russia with the United States as the potential enemy, Japan’s confrontation with the United States became a major problem in the post-war period. Thus, in terms of power politics the confrontation with Russia receded to become an issue of only secondary importance. The confrontation between Japan and the United States developed in China, where Japan’s main concern was directed at the suppression of the Chinese Revolution. Japan thus came to assume as its *raison d’être* the role of a *gendarme* opposing national revolution in Asia.

The leaders of Japan expected as a matter of course that Japan would maintain in the post-war period the position of predominance that she had acquired during the war.⁸ On October 19, 1915, Japan participated in the London Declaration together with Britain, France, and Russia intending to “assure us [Japan] of a strong voice in future peace discussions.”⁹ Following this, Japan signed on November 30 the Five-Power Declaration commenting not to discuss peace terms separately, and to hold the meeting regarding the conditions of peace. This was followed on July 3, 1916 by the conclusion of a Commercial Treaty with Russia which, together with the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, was used to attain a firm position in international politics. Through these actions Japan sought to have her status in China recognized by Russia and thus to consolidate a position that would assure her of the fruits of her participation in the First World War. Moreover, in February, 1917, Japan entered into a secret agreement with Britain in which Britain would give assurances of support to Japan’s claims at the Peace Conference to the German rights in Shantung and the German Pacific islands north of the equator. Similar assurances were obtained from France on March

7 Mitani Taichirō 三谷太一郎, *Nihon seitō seiji no keisei* 日本政黨政治の形成 (Formation of Party Politics in Japan), Tokyo, Tokyodaigaku-shuppankai, 1967, p. 250.

8 Kobayashi Tatsuo 小林龍夫 “Pari heiwa gaikō to Nihon no gaikō” パリ平和外交と日本の外交 (Paris Peace Conference and Japan’s Foreign Policy), in *Kindai nihon gaikōshi no kenkyū* 近代日本外交史の研究 (A Study of Modern Japanese Diplomacy), Commemoration of Prof. Kamikawa Hikomatsu, Tokyo, Yūhikaku, 1956, p. 370.

9 Ishii Kikujirō, 石井菊次郎, *Diplomatic Commentaries*, tr. and ed. by William R. Langdon, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1936, p. 99.

1, from Russia on March 5, and from Italy on March 23. It is to be noted that the acquisition of such assurances formed the background of the circumstances under which Japan changed her previous position and came to support China's participation in the First World War. However, the transition in international politics which occurred during the war—from the "Old Diplomacy" to the "New Diplomacy"—and the change in the distribution of world power, did not necessarily work to Japan's advantage. Japan's diplomacy at the Paris Conference indicated her expansionist attitude aimed at maintaining the predominance she had acquired during the war, while the Washington Conference demonstrated her international isolation and the recession of her foreign policy. Thus Japan's foreign policy of the 1920's is characterized by submission and resistance to the Washington régime.

II. FROM THE OLD DIPLOMACY TO THE NEW DIPLOMACY

The plans of the powers which participated in the First World War began to go astray as the war proceeded. The appearance of the Soviet government and Wilson's proposal of the Fourteen Points demonstrated the fact that imperialistic calculations based on numerous secret treaties could not become the principles by which the post-war problems could be resolved. Japan too was later to face an "unexpected obstacle"¹⁰ in the Paris Conference on the question of the "cession of Pacific islands" through Wilson's contention that these islands be brought under the mandate of the League of Nations. The disintegration of Imperial Russia deprived Japan's foreign policy of an important pillar. With Japan's advance into China and world-wide American ascendancy, the confrontation between Japan and the United States came to the forefront of international relations in the Far East. This situation was further aggravated, and Japan was to place the United States on top of the list of potential enemies in a military sense. However, as can be seen from the Ishii-Lansing Notes of November, 1917 the United States did not immediately embark upon a policy of containing Japan. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance also maintained some *raison d'être* until Germany's defeat became conclusive. Furthermore, although the dispatch of troops to Siberia did create a rift between Japan and the United States, it also demonstrated an anti-revolutionary solidarity among the powers.

The conditions which permitted Japan's imperialistic advance into China were gradually deteriorating. But until the Paris Conference this

¹⁰ Saionji, "*Fukumei jōsobun.*"

process of deterioration had not as yet reached a decisive stage, Japan was still promoting various measures to advance her interest in China, such as the Nishihara Loan, the Sino-Japanese Joint Defence Agreement of March of 1918, the Sino-Japanese Military Agreement of May of that year, and the Sino-Japanese Agreement relating to the Shantung Railway of September 24, 1918. The Hara cabinet which was formed at the end of September, 1918 altered the China policy of the preceding Terauchi 寺内 cabinet whose policy consisted of giving assistance to Tuan Ch'i-jui (leader of the North Faction) and adopted a policy of recommending a compromise between the North and South factions. In spite of this, the basic aim of Japan's policy to acquire a position of predominance in China remained unchanged; the shift merely constituted a tactical change of direction which stemmed from the reasoning that it was necessary to co-operate with the other powers and also that it would be advantageous to have the North and South unified at the time of peace negotiations. In 1917, during the period of the Terauchi cabinet, the Temporary Foreign Policy Research Committee was established. In this Committee, discussions were held at the highest level of national policy making consideration of the problems to be dealt with at the Peace Conference. The participation of Hara Satoshi (Kei) 原敬, President of the Seiyūkai 政友會, and Inukai Tsuyoshi 犬養毅, President of the Kokumintō 國民黨, marked the first appearance of political party leaders as official leaders of foreign policy in Japan, and also the beginning of collaboration between army and party leaders on foreign policy matters.¹¹

The policy of the Terauchi cabinet in regard to the Peace Conference, as seen in the cabled instructions to the Japanese Ambassador in France, called for the claiming of the German rights on the Shantung Peninsula, the cession of the German Pacific islands north of the equator, and the claiming of various rights attached thereto. With respect to those matters which did not directly affect Japan, the delegation was instructed to go along with the majority and to keep in step with them. The Hara cabinet continued this policy.

However, with the revolution in Germany in November, 1918, truce was suddenly established and the Peace Conference was convened immediately. As a result of the presentation by Wilson of the Fourteen Points as principles of the Peace Conference, Japan's preparations for the Conference became inadequate and her demands relative to Shantung and the Pacific islands had to be made on a new basis.

The circumstances in which a choice between two new political

¹¹ Mitani Taichirō, p. 217.

philosophies was presented—between Wilson's or Lenin's thought¹²—made it necessary to give a democratic and humanitarian qualification to the Peace Conference. Accordingly, faced with the Wilson's Fourteen Points, Japan was left with no alternative but to adopt a position which, while maintaining the basic line of securing Shantung and Pacific islands, was to go along with the majority, "refraining as far as possible from assuming an attitude of opposition to peace and humanitarian considerations."¹³

Japan's policy with respect to the League of Nations was to "retard its formation as much as possible." The private misgivings that Japanese leaders had about the League of Nations can be seen, for example, in the statement of Itō Miyoji 伊藤己代治 at the Foreign Policy Research Committee on November 29, 1919.

"This country's accession to the League of Nations is not of course viewed with sincere satisfaction but it comes rather from the unavoidable necessity to escape from the disadvantage of falling into a position of international isolation that would result from refusing to accede and is based on considerations of self-interest for this country's future."

However, if the League of Nations were ultimately to be established it would be in Japan's interests to utilize the humanitarian slogan of this organization and to acquire "some appropriate means of assurance" aimed at removing racial discrimination and thus to enhance Japan's prestige in the eyes of Asian peoples. It was with such a purpose that Japan submitted to the Paris Peace Conference the resolution calling for the "proposal of racial equality."

At the Paris Conference the most important problem for Japan was the Shantung question. This, together with France's question of security with Germany and Italy's Fiume question, constituted one of the difficult issues of the Conference. The fact that the Shantung question became a difficult issue was due to the fact that it did not merely involve the disposal of German territory, but also had become a matter of contention between Japan and the United States.

The Chinese delegation, consisting of such persons as Wellington Koo and Cheng Yan, contacted the U.S. delegation to consult on measures at the Peace Conference. The demands of the Chinese delegation consisted of: (1) The restoration of the leased territory of Kiaochow and cancellation of all German railway, mining, and other rights in Shantung; (2) The annulment of extraterritorial rights hitherto enjoyed

¹² Cf. A. J. Mayor, *op. cit.*

¹³ Foreign Minister Uchida Kōsai's 内田康哉 statement at the Foreign Policy Research Committee of Nov. 13, 1918.

by the subjects of Germany and Austria-Hungary; (3) The abrogation of all treaties and agreements between China and Germany and Austria-Hungary.¹⁴ In China, student organizations and merchant associations held meetings in various locales calling for the return of Shantung. Messages were sent by these groups to their delegation in Paris while Chinese students studying in Europe demanded the retraction of the Twenty-one Demands. Thus the Chinese people placed their hopes on "the assistance to the small nations" called for in Wilson's Fourteen Points and dreamed of the restitution of China's sovereignty with Wilson's assistance.

Wilson regarded with distrust Japan's advance into China during the war. It was reflected in his words that he did not trust the Japanese.¹⁵ Thus, "At the Peace Conference, meanwhile, the American campaign against Japanese expansion had advanced far long other lines."¹⁶

When China, with the support of the United States, put forward its demand for the return of Kiaochow Bay, it came as a surprise to Japan. With the understanding of the European powers, Japan had established a favourable position through the conclusion in May, 1915 of the Sino-Japanese Treaty, and in September of the Sino-Japanese Agreement relating to the Shantung railway and thus expected to acquire Shantung as a matter of course. Therefore, when difficulties arose concerning the Shantung issue at the Paris Conference the attitude of the Foreign Policy Research Committee hardened and it was decided to send the Japanese delegation the following strongly worded instructions in regard to the return of Tsingtao:¹⁷

"There is fear that the Chinese proposal calling for the direct return of Tsingtao from Germany may obtain the support of the majority as a result of the Chinese campaign, but we should prevail in our contention at all costs because the said island had been occupied by us by force and the Sino-Japanese Treaty had been concluded before China participated in the war. If our contention is not accepted by the majority the Japanese delegate should not sign the League of Nations covenant but seek instructions."

The refutation of power politics and the principle of "self-determination" advocated by Wilson were thus in direct opposition to Japan's type of "Old Diplomacy." For this reason it was natural that the Chinese people followed Wilson's performance with keen interest. However, faced with the crisis brought about by Italy's withdrawal from

¹⁴ T. E. La Fargue, *China and the World War*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1937, pp. 183-184.

¹⁵ La Fargue, p. 203.

¹⁶ A. W. Griswold, *Far Eastern Policy of the United States*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1962, p. 242.

¹⁷ *Hara Kei nikki*, Vol. 8, p. 199.

the Conference, Wilson's position was weakened. Ultimately on April 30, Japan's demands were recognized by a meeting of the Big Three. When news of this development was transmitted the famous May 4th Movement broke out in China and the Chinese delegation did not sign the Peace Treaty with Germany.

It appeared at the time that Japan had prevailed on the Shantung issue at the Paris Conference. Nevertheless, without Chinese and United States participation in the Treaty of Versailles, it became necessary to convene the Washington Conference in order to solve the Far Eastern problems. At that conference the disintegration of the international conditions which assured Japan's advance into China during the war was to be clearly indicated.

III. THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

Unlike the Paris Conference the Washington Conference was characterized by Japan's diplomatic isolation. Under the conditions imposed by the Washington Conference Japan yielded to the unified pressure of the United States and Britain and, what was more, strove to co-operate with these two countries. Thus the characteristics of Japan's foreign policy in the 1920's must be understood both in terms of the international environment and the domestic conditions in Japan. That is to say, Japan's capitalist economy, which had developed by taking advantage of the favourable conditions of overseas markets during the war, began to demonstrate its weakness soon after the end of the war and experienced reverses brought about by the economic depression in 1920. With the return of the United States and Britain to Asian markets after the war, Japan's foreign trade fell off and moreover, under the influence of the Great Earthquake and economic depression of 1923, reached a point of chronic depression. Such an economic situation necessitated the revival of China trade and co-operation with the United States and Britain. Hara had already conceived of collaboration with the United States as the basic policy for the future, replacing Japan's pre-war collaboration with such European powers as Britain and Russia. Soon after the outbreak of war, he wrote in his diary that "whatever the means resorted to, we must modify the American feeling and adopt a policy of collaboration with the United States."¹⁸

Japan, burdened with all her internal weaknesses, could not help attending the Washington Conference. Moreover, she was unable at

¹⁸ *Hara Kei nikki*, Vol. 8, p. 199.

that Conference to obtain an ally. The Washington Conference, to put it another way, became an international inquiry probing into Japan's activities on the Chinese continent during the world war. Through the Nine-Power Treaty concerning China, Japan had no choice but to recognize the principle of the "Open Door" advocated by the United States, as well as to return the former German interests in Shantung which she acquired at the Paris Conference. On the other hand, the limitations on naval armaments at the Washington Conference were not necessarily unfavourable to Japan. Japan's military bases in the Pacific could be maintained and in the ratio of capital ships, Japan was not placed at a disadvantage if only the Asian and Pacific theatres were taken into account. However, through Germany's defeat the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had lost its significance, while with the replacement of Imperial Russia by the Soviet Union, Japan was without an ally to support her. Thus it was in a state of diplomatic isolation that Japan was left with no alternative but to submit to the conditions imposed at Washington.

Japan's diplomacy, which sought to promote international co-operation under the terms set by Washington, was faced with the need not only to improve relations with the United States, but also to change its policy towards China. Japan had to execute her China policy in a way that would not harm relations with the United States. Such a notion was already held in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by 1916. Shortly after the formation of the Terauchi cabinet the Political Affairs Bureau of the Foreign Ministry drafted a "Plan on the Disposal of Japan-U.S. Relations from the Standpoint of the China Problem." This document stated :

Japan's policy towards the United States in relation to the China problem has heretofore been aimed primarily at checking United States activities in China. Nevertheless, United States' advancement in China is an inevitable trend, which it would be very difficult to check with our present national capacity. . . . If the advancement of the United States in China is inevitable and if it would be extremely disadvantageous for Japan to come into conflict with that country, it would be vitally necessary to institute measures that could utilize this trend to Japan's own advantage.

However, the Terauchi cabinet carried out measures that ran counter to this policy and it was only in the international conditions after the Washington Conference that this policy was revived under the so-called "Shidehara diplomacy." However, China after the First World War was no longer the old China that remained a passive object to Japan's advances. Japan's attitudes and actions during the war and at the Paris

Peace Conference had stimulated Chinese nationalism and were driving it towards an anti-imperialist movement. The May 4th Movement attests to the fact that the Chinese people no longer held any illusions about the United States. "Non-intervention in China" which was held up as a motto of the "Shidehara diplomacy" called for international co-operation, particularly co-operation with the United States. It was to become the guiding principle of Japan's foreign policy in the period after the Washington Conference. This "Non-intervention" by no means implied that it was not hostile to the Chinese Revolution.

IV. THE SHIDEHARA DIPLOMACY AND CHINA PROBLEMS

Japan's diplomacy in the nineteen-twenties has been called the "Shidehara diplomacy." Shidehara Kijūrō 幣原喜重郎 held the post of Foreign Minister from 1924 to 1927 and directed Japan's foreign policy under the conditions that stemmed from the Washington Conference. Shidehara's policy towards China consisted of "respecting the reasonable position of China but of insisting at the same time on the protection of our own reasonable position" and is apparent in his speech that "we shall refrain from all intervention in China's domestic affairs." Accordingly, Shidehara's policy of international co-operation and Tanaka Giichi's aggressive and strong external policy have often been compared as a study in contrast. However, even in Shidehara's case, Manchuria and Inner Mongolia were not considered as part of China. Therefore, as long as the Chinese revolutionary movement did not extend to Manchuria the attitude of "Non-intervention" would be maintained; but as far as Manchuria was concerned, everything would be done to keep it under Japanese influence.

The characteristic of the international order that emerged from the Washington Conference in the nineteen-twenties was the settlement of differences among the powers at the sacrifice of China. Although the Nine-Power Treaty enunciated respect for China's sovereignty, in fact it was effective only in preventing Japan from exercising a monopolistic influence over China and fell far short of relieving her semi-colonial status. The popular revolutionary movement in China was given a further impetus by the Kuomintang-Communist Alliance, which had the further effect of deepening the friendly relationship with the Soviet Union. Starting with the May 30th Incident of 1925 the Chinese Revolution with its "anti-imperialist and anti-feudal" orientation directed its attack on Britain and embarked upon tactics to destroy its enemies one by one. Britain and the United States countered by a joint inter-

vention in which Japan too joined. It can be seen from these circumstances that it is not easy to distinguish sharply between the "Shidehara diplomacy" and the "Tanaka diplomacy."

Already by the end of the Russo-Japanese War, Yamagata Aritomo 山縣有朋 had named China as Japan's second imaginary enemy after Russia in his report to the Emperor. He thought that for Japan, China's potential power was greatly to be feared. Japan's leaders realized that the process of revolution in China had to be stopped at any cost. In that realization Shidehara was by no means an exception among the leaders of modern Japan. The régime which emerged from the Washington Conference could be said to be based on a new form of suppressing China. Under such a régime Japan too had been given a role in suppressing the revolution. However, when national revolution in China under the leadership of the proletariat became intensified as a struggle against imperialism and feudalism, the landowners and the bourgeoisie dropped out of the revolutionary front. Chiang Kai-shek's *coup d'état* of April, 1927 was successfully carried out, and this division of the resistance front of the Chinese people meant that the way was opened to new possibilities for aggression towards China by the imperialist powers and the aggravation of the conflict of interests among them. Positive assistance to Chiang Kai-shek began to be given by the United States and Britain, with America's advance being particularly strong. As the process of unification of China accelerated, the clash of interests among the United States, Britain, and Japan intensified. At this stage the pattern of dividing China did not take the old form of more violent and direct colonial domination but instead changed to the much more flexible and effective method of winning Chiang Kai-shek. In this financial battle, Japan was faced with the prospect of having to drop out of the contest due to her lower financial capacity. In this situation the anxiety and frustration of Japanese militarism were very deep.

Japanese capitalism, by reason of the special weakness of its foundation, was constantly troubled by depression and fluctuation even in periods of relative stability of world capitalism. Thus Japan had already experienced a financial crisis three years before she became involved in the world depression. Japan's finance capital overcame the crisis with over-all support from the state and drastically strengthened its control. Since the major portion of her trade was directed towards Manchuria and North China and was protected by stipulation of military and colonial control (the so-called special rights and interests) it sustained a critical blow with the rise of national capital in China and the intensification

of the people's movement towards anti-imperialism. Sundries and textile products, which constituted the major items of export to China, were also the first items that the Chinese bourgeoisie undertook to produce in their national industries. Consequently the desire to prevent the spread of the Chinese revolution to North China and Manchuria and to defend at all costs Japan's special rights and interests was, on the eve of Chiang Kai-shek's Northern Expedition, felt unanimously among all Japanese leaders. In particular, the Chinese revolution which occurred under the influence of the Soviet Revolution was doubly odious to Japan's leaders because of their fear that at the time of the financial crisis a class struggle carried out by workers and farmers might occur in Japan under the same Soviet influence. It was also natural that the drastic suppression (March 15 and April 16, 1928) of the Japan Communist Party which constituted the vanguard of the class struggle at home should be closely tied to the dispatch of troops to Shantung which sparked the military intervention in the Chinese revolution.

It might of course be added that the dispatch of troops to Shantung during 1927-1928 by the Tanaka government and the assassination of Chang Tso-lin were part of a plot to set up an "independent Manchuria" by adventurists within the army and certain Fascist groups within the existing political parties who, without waiting for the decision of the leaders of the ruling class, decided to move one jump ahead. In accordance with the wishes of elder statesmen and finance capital such "precipitate action" had to be pulled back to the Shidehara diplomacy line under the Hamaguchi cabinet. Up to then the anti-imperialist struggle of the Chinese people had been actually directed towards Britain, but with these incidents forming a turning-point the struggle was directed towards a boycott of Japanese goods. As a result, Japan's China trade suffered the most staggering losses. After Chiang Kai-shek's counter-revolutionary *coup d'état* the ties between the Chinese bourgeoisie and imperialist powers were strengthened. It was in this context that Japan hoped to maintain her rights and interests in China by co-operating with Britain and the United States and without risking a head-on-clash with the Chinese revolutionary movement. In order to acquire colonies or to sustain aggression towards neighbouring areas in Asia, Japanese capitalism could not free itself from dependence upon international capital—British and American imperialism. In a sense these two factors of aggression and dependence formed the foundation for Japan's existence. They were also the weapons that enabled Japan to maintain an independent international position in the Far East. While Shidehara's

diplomacy of "co-operation" and Tanaka's diplomacy of "aggression" conflicted as to the timing of expansionist measures as even the Lytton Report recognizes, they were different merely in the "degree" of the actions to be taken; both policies continuously possessed "a common element." Basically, as the two sides of the shield of Japan's diplomacy they performed a naturally supplementary role. However, the Hamaguchi-Shidehara diplomacy "received a critical setback"¹⁹ when confronted with the strong demand to return the rights and interests by the Nationalist government of Wang Cheng-yan backed by a heightened people's movement. In particular, the Chinese plan to construct a parallel railroad to South Manchuria posed a grave danger in a military as well as economic sense. The solution to this issue could only be found ultimately in the use of force. Moreover, the great world depression which began at the end of October, 1929 in America shook the entire capitalistic world and the stability of the twenties disintegrated all at once. Japan under the Hamaguchi cabinet was also drawn into the midst of the depression and was plunged into a disastrous economic crisis.

V. THE MANCHURIAN INCIDENT AND JAPAN-U.S. RELATIONS

The international situation in 1931 appeared to the Japanese military to provide an admirable opportunity to embark upon military aggression. At that time Japan had acquired a "right to act"²⁰ such as it had never had in any other period after the First World War. Every capitalist country had been drawn into the world depression, production had decreased sharply, the number of unemployed was rising, and social unrest was becoming increasingly acute. Class struggle was intensifying in the various capitalist countries, nationalist movements were becoming stronger in the colonies and dependent countries, and the confrontations among the capitalist powers were becoming sharper. Such were the typical phenomena at the time of the world depression. In this situation the greatest concern of the political leaders of America was the deteriorating domestic economic condition. Moreover, attention had to be given as a matter of course to the worsening of the financial situation in Britain in September, 1931 and the fluctuations and confusion in the international economy. On the evening of September 18, President Hoover, Secretary

¹⁹ Shigemitsu Mamoru 重光葵, *Shōwa no dōran* 昭和の動亂 (Turbulence in Shōwa Period), Vol. 1, Tokyo, Chūōkoronsha, 1952, p. 47.

²⁰ T. A. Bisson, *American Policy in the Far East*, New York, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1940, p. 30.

of State Stimson, and Secretary of the Treasury Mellon had gathered to discuss the British financial situation which, according to reports, was about to go off the gold standard. It was at that moment that the first news of Japan's military action at Mukden was announced. Even before then the United States government was not unaware of the state of tension in Manchuria, but the attention of American leaders was directed mainly at the American domestic scene and Europe, and the Kwantung Army took advantage of this lack of attention by the world powers to expand its military action.

Upon the outbreak of the Manchurian Incident, Stimson attempted to assess the situation in terms of the relationship between the Japanese government and the Army. That is, according to Stimson "The conclusion we at the Department reached by Monday, September 21st"²¹ was that the Japanese government did not plan the military clash in Manchuria nor was it in a position to have anticipated such action. The manner of solution as conceived by Stimson was: "My problem is to let the Japanese know that we are watching them and at the same time do it in a way which will help Shidehara, who is on the right side, and not play into the hands of any nationalist agitators."²² In other words, Stimson looked to "the wisdom of giving Shidehara and the Foreign Office an opportunity, free from anything approaching a threat or even public criticism, to get control of the situation."²³ On September 22, Stimson summoned the Japanese Ambassador Debuchi Katsuji 出淵勝次 and handed him a memorandum to the effect that the Japanese government should bring the matter under control. It also stated that "the United States government is not desirous of making clear its conclusions immediately nor to assume a specific position."²⁴ Thus the American position was left vague.

At the outset of the Manchurian Incident those who pushed through the military aggression were rightist military officers of the Kwantung Army who ignored the views of political and economic circles.

The ravages of the great depression had brought hardships to the farming villages which constituted the source of military man-power. The irresponsibility and corruption of Japan's leaders (frequent occurrence of corruption, selfishness of the political parties, and the hoarding and

²¹ H. L. Stimson, *The Far Eastern Crisis, Recollections and Observations*, New York, Harper, 1936, p. 34.

²² Stimson, p. 37.

²³ Stimson, p. 34.

²⁴ *Paper Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan 1931-1941*, 1943, pp. 7-8.

illegal purchase of dollars by wealthy businessmen) impressed upon right-wing military officers the need for "reforms" to bring about Japan's reorganization along totalitarian lines. However, such "reforms" were conceived of strictly within the framework of strengthening the *Tennōsei* 天皇制 (Emperor System) and were thus diametrically opposed to the Chinese revolution. Supported by such a Fascist mood, the officers of the Kwantung Army advanced positively on the continent and by placing Japan under a state of war-time tension sought to open the way for "reforms." The United States in the meantime placed expectations on the Japanese government statement that it would "seek to prevent further deterioration and expansion of the situation." However, the government was unable in any way to control the military activities of the Kwantung Army and merely followed in the wake of military *fait accompli*. This impotence on the part of the government was actually in keeping with the pattern of Japanese diplomacy under the conditions imposed by the Washington Conference. To the extent that it sought to prevent the spreading of the Chinese revolution to Manchuria and to the extent that it was sought to meet the domestic crisis brought about by depression through external aggression both the government and the business circles were by no means negative or passive. The confrontation or difference between the government and the military—which Stimson had expected—could be regarded as a tactical difference on the extent to which consideration would be given or not given to Japan's relationship with the other great powers.

Stimson's diplomacy did not regard Japan as an aggressor in the first place, as he sought to limit the incident as much as possible. On the other hand, China quickly submitted the Manchurian issue to the League of Nations. The small countries in the League attached importance to this case as a test for the League as a peace-keeping organization. In October, 1931, when the Japanese forces bombed Chinchow without warning, the world was shocked by the news. Through this act, Japan lost the excuse of "self-defence" which she had claimed until then. With this incident the relationship between the United States and the League of Nations became closer. Nevertheless, the United States government did not immediately adopt a positive attitude to restrain Japan. One of the reasons for this was the stringent domestic socio-economic situation, and the inadequacy of military preparation; the other was the notion among leading Americans that Japan was a bulwark against communism in Asia. President Hoover stated in preventing an emergence of a possible Bolshevik China, Japan's position must be regarded with

sympathy.²⁵ Consequently, as the military activities of the Japanese forces in Manchuria were expanded, the attitude of the United States government to Japan hardened, but it was kept to within limits that would not immediately bring tension to the breaking point.

However, in another respect, the confrontation between Japan and the United States had an economic basis—Japan stood in a competitive position with the United States over the vast potential market that China offered. As a reason for restraining Japan's activities Stimson cited "the direct material damage to our trade which would inevitably be caused."²⁶ In October, 1922 he further remarked "that the present Manchurian crisis was not only a blow to American commercial interests but a threat to the authority of the various peace treaties which were concluded after the World War by various peoples of the world who resolved not to repeat such a tragedy. Across the Pacific lie the huge potential markets of the Orient. Our trade in this area had been rapidly increasing by comparison to other areas in recent years."²⁷ He thus hinted at the relation between American economic interests and the formula of the Washington Conference.

VI. CONCLUSION

The principle of American Far Eastern policy of the twentieth century has been known as "Equal Opportunity" and the "Open Door" in regard to China. In reality, such a principle was espoused to enable the United States, with its great economic power, to achieve economic predominance in China. As far as Japan was concerned, given a weak economic foundation, it was disadvantageous to compete for the China market under conditions of free economic competition. Thus Japan took full advantage of her favourable geographic position and also in many cases, resorted to military means to achieve her objective. For this reason the military advance by Japan was for the United States a matter of the most serious concern.

However, in cases where circumstances were not favourable to the United States that country did not necessarily launch a decisive offensive. At the time that Japan delivered her Twenty-one Demands to China, the United States did not retaliate immediately but chose to wait for a

²⁵ Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover, The Cabinet and the Presidency 1920-1933*, New York, Macmillan, 1952, p. 369.

²⁶ Stimson, p. 89.

²⁷ The Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Survey of International Affairs, 1934*, London, Oxford University Press, 1935, p. 557.

change in the situation after the First World War and then launched a diplomatic offensive at the Washington Conference.

The deterioration of the domestic economy under the world depression, the absence of decisive military superiority over Japan and an anti-communist ideology, are the factors which explain why the United States did not launch a diplomatic offensive in connexion with the Manchurian Incident.

Britain, which had the largest rights and interests in China, looked upon Japan with favour so long as Japan's expansion moved in the direction of Manchuria and the north—that is, towards confrontation with the Soviet Union and the United States. Thus the denunciation by the League of Nations of the occupation of Manchuria by Japanese forces and the setting up of "Manchukuo" was not effective. The characteristics of Japan's foreign policy since the Meiji Restoration may be summed up as the utilization of international confrontations and of gaps in international confrontations to carry out aggression on a neighbour country. During the nineteen-twenties this characteristic was latent, but with the Manchurian Incident it exploded in the full view.