

Department of Humanities, Northumbria University

Honours Dissertation

**‘Cooperation With Expansion’: The Continuity of
Old Ideas and Tensions in Western-Japanese
Interwar Diplomacy, 1895 – 1924**

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Abbreviations

Anglo-Japanese Alliance – Alliance

League of Nations Archives – LNA

League of Nations — League

Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States – FRUS

Paris Peace Conference – PPC

Racial Equality Proposal – REP

Twenty-One Demands - Demands

United Nations Library and Archives – UNLA

Washington Naval Conference - WNC

Introduction

The aftermath of World War One saw the creation of a new 'Far Eastern' international order from 1918 to 1922 which Ryuji Hattori called 'the first wave of international change'.¹ With Russia and Germany's collapse while the war had crippled Britain and France, America emerged as the post-war dominant power 'that could not be ignored'.² According to Ruth Henig, Woodrow Wilson aimed to implement 'a better world' run through 'a universal association of nations' based on 'more just and equitable' international laws where 'peoples...are not...battered about from sovereignty to sovereignty'.³ Thus, Britain ditched her traditional diplomacy of 'balances of power, armed alliances and secret negotiations' to adapt to the post-war order.⁴ Similarly, Japan abandoned Russo-Japanese secret agreements and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance for cooperation with America, alongside Britain, through the League of Nations.⁵ Susan Pedersen, however, argues that geopolitical tensions made the League a stage for the 'first Cold War' between nations that created or challenged the Versailles Treaty.⁶

Western historians, nevertheless, often neglect Japan when discussing interwar 'great power' diplomatic or imperial history, which made interwar historiography 'Eurocentric'. For instance, Henig's *Versailles and After* only dedicated one page to 'the Far East' while Zara Steiner's *The Lights That Failed* and Alan Sharp's *The Versailles Settlement* solely focus on European affairs, especially those related to Germany.⁷ Jordan Sand explains that since Western historians tend to 'bracket off' non-Western history, they usually overlook Japan and her post-colonial legacies in East Asia because Japan was not an 'European empire'.⁸ This might also be due to Japan's relatively limited legacy in the West in World War Two compared to Germany. Sand argues that both Japanese and American historians

¹ Ryuji Hattori, *Japanese Diplomacy and East Asian International Politics, 1918 – 1931*, trans. Graham B. Leonard (Taylor & Francis, 2024), p. 1.

² Ibid.

³ Ruth Henig, *Versailles and After, 1919 – 1933*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 9 – 10.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 11 – 12.

⁷ Henig, *Versailles and After*, p. 28; Zara Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History, 1919 – 1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Alan Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement: Peacemaking After the First World War*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

⁸ Jordan Sand, 'Subaltern Imperialists: The New Historiography of the Japanese Empire', *Past and Present*, no. 225 (2014), p. 273.

‘conveniently’ ignored Japan’s imperial history due to Japan being an American ally during the Cold War.⁹

Besides, historians traditionally view Japan as an isolationist or ‘silent partner’ of the League, but Thomas Burkman argues that Japan was an active participant in the international order where Japanese delegates were vocal in pursuing national interests while trying to maintain universal peace.¹⁰ Therefore, historians should give equal attention to Japan like Western empires when studying interwar diplomacy. This dissertation agrees with Burkman that Japan attempted to gain regional dominance and global prestige through peaceful negotiations in the League.¹¹ The most recent work on Western-Japanese interwar diplomacy was Hattori’s *Japanese Diplomacy and East Asian Politics* which focuses on Japanese strategy of balancing collaboration with the West, specifically America and Britain, and expanding her interests through the Washington Naval Conference (WNC).¹² Hence, Japan adopted a ‘non-interference policy’ to appease the West but this was ‘destabilised’ by Soviet expansionism and China’s Nationalist Revolution which pushed Japan to abandon cooperation to preserve her security and interests through invading Manchuria.¹³

Both Burkman and Hattori identified that Japan’s interwar diplomatic strategy was ‘cooperation with expansion’. This dissertation will expand on both historians by including more British and American perspectives, especially their motivations for ‘cooperation with expansion’, to balance Japan’s perspective from 1919 to 1924. This will primarily focus on the League but will also include minor references to the WNC. Moreover, this dissertation argues that the continuity of traditional ideas, dating back to the nineteenth century, throughout the interwar period could contextualise Western-Japanese cooperation’s hostile nature. These ideas include the West’s ‘yellow peril’ theory, which portrayed Japan as a threat to Western civilisation, and Japan’s racial hierarchal beliefs, where Japan had to ‘leave Asia’

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Thomas Burkman, *Japan and the League of Nations* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008), pp. 63 – 64.

¹¹ Ibid, p. xii.

¹² Hattori, *Japanese Diplomacy and East Asian International Politics*, pp. 2 – 3.

¹³ Ibid, pp. 166 – 174.

and join the Western rank to avoid Western hegemony.¹⁴ After 1918, many Westerners still viewed Japan as a ‘yellow peril’ that could threaten their national security and economic interests through immigration and colonial expansion, respectively. Japan also continued their Meiji policy of ‘becoming Western’ through gaining colonies and Western recognition as self-defence against the West. This shows that the Soviet and Chinese factors were only short-term causes that broke interwar cooperation as there had been an accumulation of long-term tensions that could be traced back to events like Japan’s 1853 encounter with America, the 1895 Sino-Japanese War, 1905 Russo-Japanese War and the 1915 Twenty-One Demands, for instance.

Western-Japanese cooperation involved constant use of Wilsonian languages like equality, justice and self-determination in diplomatic exchanges. Due to mutual distrust, however, Wilsonian languages were only to fulfil post-war ‘requirements’ to avoid alienation rather than a sincere commitment to humanitarian causes. Japan and the West usually preach Wilsonian principles to gain a moral advantage over each other in international disputes and act on them only when they align with national interests which led to hypocrisy. Therefore, this dissertation will discuss Korea and China’s role in Western-Japanese diplomacy. Pedersen’s *The Guardians* argues that the mandate system allowed humanitarian and nationalist groups to ‘internationalise’ imperial brutalities through petitioning to the League.¹⁵ Since Pedersen had overlooked East Asia like traditional historians, this dissertation will expand on Pedersen by showing how Korean and Chinese appeals could put Western and Japanese sincerity to test.

This dissertation will mostly use documents from the League archives which were overwhelmingly from Japanese officials appealing for the REP; Korean nationalists and Western sympathisers appealing for Korean Independence; and Chinese nationalists appealing for Shandong and the Alliance’s abolition. The disadvantage is that these documents were created to gain Western sympathy and provoke controversy. Thus, their details could be exaggerated, selective and inaccurate. With the League’s ‘Eurocentrism’, these petitions were barely cross-referenced and followed up in League meetings or

¹⁴ Stanford M. Lyman, ‘The “Yellow Peril” Mystique: Origins and Vicissitudes of a Racist Discourse’, *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, Vol. 13, no. 4 (2000), p. 684; Fukuzawa Yukichi, ‘On Leaving Asia (Datsu-A Ron)’, *Jiji shinpō* newspaper, 16 March 1885, (<http://tinyurl.com/hbpb4wh>), accessed: 11/12/2024.

¹⁵ Pedersen, *The Guardians*, pp. 4 – 5.

documents, which makes the reactions to the petitions unknown. League documents, nonetheless, can be useful if complemented with other sources. Japanese sources like political documents, periodicals, interviews in newspapers or Korean and Chinese petitions could expose contradictions in Japanese Wilsonian ideals. As for Korean and Chinese petition, regardless of accuracy, the study of Western sources like Arthur Balfour's papers, memoirs from officials like Lloyd George and Stephen Bonsal, Hansards, newspapers and American political documents could show that the West only cared about the petitions if their interests were jeopardised. This dissertation will also use pre-1919 Western and Japanese sources to show the continuity of old ideas in interwar documents.

Chapter One will discuss Western-Japanese disputes over the racial equality proposal (REP) in the Paris Peace Conference (PPC). The REP originated from Japanese beliefs of their own 'racial inferiority' since 1853. Hence, the REP was Japan's 'diplomacy of saving face' according to Naoko Shimazu.¹⁶ The West, however, believed that the REP would allow more Japanese immigration into Western territories which had been a common fear in the West, especially after the Russo-Japanese War, due to 'yellow peril' beliefs. Thus, the West disregarded Wilsonian principles and cooperated in rejecting the REP to safeguard Western national security. Furthermore, America proceeded to further restrict Japanese immigration after the REP's defeat through the Immigration Act of 1924.

While Chapter One had represented the West as hypocritical, Chapter Two will show that Japan was equally as hypocritical based on their treatment towards China and Korea. This will explain that since 1853, the Japanese only wanted racial equality with the West for themselves while excluding China and Korea as seen in the 1895 Sino-Japanese War and colonisation of Korea in 1907. Therefore, Sand called Japan a 'subaltern imperialist' as Japan was a victim of Western imperialism, yet an imperial aggressor against her East Asian neighbours.¹⁷ This chapter will then discuss the League's significance in allowing Korean nationalists and sympathisers to petition for Korean Independence. Western ignorance and Japanese repression exposed their insincerity towards Wilsonian principles.

¹⁶ Naoko Shimazu, *Japan, Race and Equality: The Racial Equality Proposal of 1919* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 68 – 116.

¹⁷ Sand, 'Subaltern Imperialists', p. 275.

Chapter Three will discuss Chinese petitions for rights over Shandong and the Alliance's abolition. Japan tried to gain Chinese territories according to the 1915 Demands like in 1895. Contrary to Korea, the West was quite concerned with Chinese affairs, especially America which manoeuvred to fulfil Chinese grievances through the WNC. Hattori, nevertheless, explained that American intervention was due to the contradictions between American 'Open Door' and Japanese 'sphere-of-influence' diplomacy. Conversely, Britain shares the same 'sphere-of-influence' diplomacy as Japan. Hence, Britain's consistent stance of ignoring Korea and China was for preserving British interests. This chapter will also show that Japan was eager to accept the Washington treaties, but this was only because they align with Japan's 1919 REP.

Overall, this dissertation argues that national interests, which were influenced by traditional ideologies, drove Western-Japanese diplomacy while America, Britain and Japan preached or fulfilled Wilsonian principles only when they conveniently served their interests. This hypocrisy, nevertheless, was exposed by Korean and Chinese petitions. The Western-Japanese disagreements over the REP and Chinese affairs accumulated hostilities which explains why the Japanese prioritised interest over Wilsonian principles by the 1930s when cooperation became detrimental rather than beneficial.

Chapter 1

Japan as a ‘World Power’: the Racial Equality Proposal, 1919 – 1924

This chapter will look at Japan’s attempts at negotiating the REP with the West from 1919 to 1924. This will show that Japanese-Western diplomacy often involved a lot of hostility where the Japanese aimed to destroy Western perceptions of Japanese ‘racial inferiority’. Western sources will show that the West viewed Japan as a threat to their security due to widespread beliefs of the ‘yellow peril’. Hence, Western delegates rejected the REP for the defence of the ‘white race’ while America would reinforce its immigration restrictions in 1924. This chapter will also look at Japanese sources which, overall, presented Japan as a victim of Western imperialism.

The Japanese Mission for Racial Equality

Following World War One, Japan was invited as a victorious Allied nation in the PPC to assist in creating a new post-war framework. On 13th February 1919, Makino Nobuaki represented Japan’s delegation to propose an adjustment to the League Covenant, as follows:

“The equality of nations being a basic principle of the League of Nations, the High Contracting Parties agree to accord, as soon as possible, to all aliens nationals of States Members of the League equal and just treatment in every respect, making no distinction, either in law or in fact, on account of their race or nationality”¹⁸

The REP aligned with Japanese foreign policy agendas which, according to Michael Barnhart, aimed to address Japanese-Western confrontations since 1853.¹⁹ In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry arrived in Japan with four American warships to coerce Japan into ending her isolationism; in 1858, Japan was forced to agree with Townsend Harris’s demands to open major ports including Tokyo, Kobe and Osaka

¹⁸ Joseph Fuller, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of The United States, The Paris Peace Conference, 1919, Vol. 3* (Washington D.C: Government Printing Office, 1943), p. 291. (Henceforth FRUS)

¹⁹ Michael Barnhart, *Japan and the World since 1868* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995), p. 5.

while allowing all Westerners extraterritoriality rights in Japan.²⁰ When arguing for the REP on 2nd April 1919 to the Associated Press, Makino referred to the Harris Treaty where Japan, ‘a hermit nation’ was ‘forced’ to join the ‘first league of nations’ by the West, ‘who have so long...sought to clog (Japan’s) efforts’; Makino hoped that Japan could join this ‘second...League of Nations...as equals’ because ‘no Asiatic nation could be happy in a League...in which sharp racial discrimination is maintained’.²¹

Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, correctly observed that the REP ‘was aimed at the restrictions...imposed...against Japanese emigration and Japanese settlers...within (Anglo-American) borders’.²² In November 1918, a Japanese delegate, Konoe Funimaro argued that Japan must eliminate ‘discrimination between Caucasians and Orientals’ in joining the League through abolishing restrictive Western laws on overseas Japanese immigration, employment and leasehold while ensuring that the West ‘show deep remorse for their past sins and change their arrogant and insulting attitude’ for ‘a world based on justice and humanism’.²³ Konoe also emphasised the ‘repudiation of economic imperialism’ for ‘equal use of (Western colonies) as markets for manufactured products and as suppliers of natural resources’ to prevent Anglo-American ‘conquest through wealth’.²⁴ Konoe’s ‘repudiation of economic imperialism’ was inspired by the third of Wilson’s ‘Fourteen Points’: ‘the removal...of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions’ for all nations.²⁵

Konoe’s demands, overall, reflected Japanese national grievances. Japanese Prime Minister Okuma Shigenobu, in 1914, expressed his disappointment with the ‘fortification of...New Zealand and Australia’ and requested for ‘the opening of the (Panama) canal on trade between Japan and America’ while arguing that Western laws on Japanese immigration should have conditions ‘identical with those

²⁰ Ibid, pp. 5 – 7.

²¹ ‘Says Japan Must Join as An Equal: Could Not Tolerate Stigma of Racial Inferiority in League, Says Baron Makino. Accepts Root’s Proviso Would Not Force Immigrants on America--Asks Only Declaration of Equality. Complains of Distortion. Says Japan Must Join as Equal Would Do Full Share in League’, *New York Times*, 3 April 1919.

²² David Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference, Vol. 1* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939), p. 425.

²³ “‘Against a Pacifism Centered on England and America’”, in De Bary et al. (eds.), *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, Vol. 2, Part 2, 1868 - 2000, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), pp. 292 – 293.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ ‘Wilson Proposes a New World Order in the “Fourteen Points”, 1918’, in Elizabeth Cobbs and Edward Blum (eds.), *Major Problems in American History: Documents and Essays, Vol. 2: Since 1865, Fourth Edition* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2015), p. 164.

applicable to the peoples of other...civilised countries' rather than restrictive.²⁶ Besides, Tokutomi Soho, the nationalist periodical *Kokumin*'s editor, responding to California's 1913 Anti-Alien Land Law, said that Japanese-American 'friendship...cannot be preserved...on a basis of discrimination' unless America gave Japanese immigrants 'equal treatment with Europeans'.²⁷

Shimazu argues that the REP was a 'diplomacy of saving face' to confirm the Japanese position as a non-white 'great power' through ending Western discriminatory acts, like immigration restrictions, which have historically symbolised the perceived inferiority of the Japanese race.²⁸ Similarly, Margaret MacMillan agrees that racial equality was symbolic of Japan as 'a world power and their citizens should be treated with respect...to end the badge of shame', yet there were 'public imaginations' in America and British Dominions 'of Oriental immigrants overwhelming white civilisation' that led to the REP's defeat.²⁹

The 'Yellow Peril' and the Rejection of Racial Equality

Japanese 'long standing grievance' was ignored in the PPC as the draft for the League Covenant on 14th February 1919 omitted racial equality; when Makino, again, proposed the amendment on 11th April, it 'failed to be adopted by unanimity, although it obtained...a clear majority in its favour'.³⁰ Wilson had imposed the 'unanimity rule' to quash the REP by recording only the affirmative votes.³¹ Wilson was pressured by Western politicians who saw Japan as a 'yellow peril' which, according to Stanford Lyman, was the perception of Asians 'as personification of a dreaded enemy of...Western civilisation'.³²

²⁶ 'Japan's New Premier', *The Advocate of Peace* (1894 – 1920), Vol. 76, no. 7 (1914), p. 151.

²⁷ Tokoyichi Iyenaga, 'America and Japan', in Tokoyichi Iyenaga (ed), *Japan's Real Attitude Toward America: A Reply to Mr. George Bronson Rea's 'Japan's Place in the Sun — The Menace to America'* (New York: G. P. Putnam's sons, 1916), p. 18.

²⁸ Shimazu, *Japan, Race and Equality*, pp. 68 – 116.

²⁹ Margaret MacMillan, *Peacemakers: The Paris Peace Conference of 1919 and Its Attempts to End War* (London: John Murray, 2002), 325.

³⁰ Fuller, *FRUS, 1919, Vol. 3*, pp. 290 – 291.

³¹ Ian Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 90.

³² Lyman, 'The "Yellow Peril" Mystique', p. 684

According to Erez Manela, racial equality's 'vociferous' and 'virulent' opponents were against the 'flood of Japanese immigrants' into Australia and America.³³

The British Empire

British delegates like Harold Nicolson called the REP a 'painful amendment' because accepting 'the equality of the yellow man with the white man' could suggest 'the terrific theory of the equality of the white man with the black'.³⁴ Britain's main concern, nonetheless, was with the amendment's implications with immigration. British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour called Japan's refusal to join the League without increased 'rights of Japanese immigrants...an attempt at blackmail on the part of (their) Ally'.³⁵ Balfour argued that 'the principles of equal and unrestricted Immigration laws...was not the present intention of either the United States or the British Dominions to carry into practical effect' because he believed that no Anglo-American communities would accept a large Japanese immigrant influx.³⁶ He warned that racial equality would arouse anxieties 'among the English-speaking population in new countries lest they should be fulfilled' while 'burdening the League...with a perpetual controversy incapable of satisfactory solution'.³⁷ Balfour's predictions had precedent as the biggest opposition came from Billy Hughes, Australia's Prime Minister.

Hughes's priority was to preserve the 'White Australia Policy' which included the Immigration Act 1901 – 20 that allowed the Australian Government to prevent immigrants arriving 'from closely populated Asiatic countries'.³⁸ Hughes testified that Australia would not 'invite to (their) home all men equal to (them)'; hence, Japan's racial inferiority was 'groundless imagination...an error which it needs no argument to disprove' because Japan was 'not by any means behind other races'.³⁹ Hughes, however,

³³ Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 182.

³⁴ Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking, 1919* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1933), p. 145.

³⁵ Arthur Balfour, *Papers Relating to Paris Peace Conference, Heligoland to Japan, 1919* (Microform Academic Publishers, 1919), p. 185, Reference: ADD MS 49751 ([https://britishonlinearchives.com/collections/86/volumes/638/papers-of-sir-arthur-balfour-1919?filters\[query\]=&filters\[className\]=document](https://britishonlinearchives.com/collections/86/volumes/638/papers-of-sir-arthur-balfour-1919?filters[query]=&filters[className]=document)) accessed: 06/02/2025.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 186.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 187.

³⁸ Sydney, 'The White Australia Policy', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 4, no. 1 (1925), pp. 97 – 98.

³⁹ 'Problem of the Equality of Races – Mr. PJ Baker transmits cutting from Japanese Advertiser, April 1919 – Interview given by Mr. Hughes to Mr. Suzuki – Japanese newspaper correspondent in Paris', 20 June 1920, File

said these in an interview with the Japanese. In the House of Representative, Hughes hinted Anglo-Saxon superiority and white supremacist beliefs when he boasted about how Australia has ‘little admixture of race’ and ‘was more British than the people of Great Britain’ because of ‘the great principle of White Australia’.⁴⁰ *The Critic* stated that rejection was ‘not from the fact that the Jap is looked down on’, yet it explained that ‘it is not well for the coloured races to mix with the white’; it stated that Japan’s ‘ability to develop the country is feared by some’ and that ‘the intermingling of two races...can only bring evil’.⁴¹ Australian foreign policy analyst Edmund Piesse explained in 1926 that Australians had historically viewed Japan’s increasing strength with anxiety while cartoons and articles have portrayed Japan as Australia’s impending invader; Japanese immigrants’ exclusion was ‘by the belief that Japan was engaged in spying on (Australian) defences and natural resources’.⁴²

Shimazu argued that Britain had to follow Australia’s rejection because the Dominions had autonomous power in immigration issues while Britain prioritised maintaining unity within the British delegation over racial equality which was not yet perceived by Anglo-Saxon society as a crucial matter of international justice.⁴³ Accordingly, the British delegation instructed Robert Cecil, a key drafter of the League Covenant, to support Hughes, but Xu claims that British delegates had ‘cleverly used the Dominions as their running dogs’ to block the REP.⁴⁴ Shimazu emphasised Britain’s opposition for the ‘unanimity rule’ because of Wilson’s *realpolitik* concerns of sustaining Britain’s support’; he believed that ‘with (their) special talents’, a ‘League...dominated by (them) Anglo-Saxons...will be for the unquestionable benefit of the world’.⁴⁵

R544/11/268/268, League of Nations Archives, United Nations Library and Archives, Geneva, Switzerland, (<https://archives.ungeneva.org/problem-of-the-equality-of-races-mr-pj-baker-transmits-cutting-from-japanese-advertiser-april-1919-interview-given-by-mr-hughes-to-mr-suzaki-japanese-newspaper-correspondent-in-paris>) accessed: 19/12/2024. (Henceforth LNA; UNLA)

⁴⁰ Commonwealth, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, no. 37, 10 September 1919, pp. 12174 – 12175 (https://historichansard.net/hofreps/1919/19190910_reps_7_89/) accessed: 18/12/2024.

⁴¹ ‘Open Comment Racial Equality’, *Critic*, 26 March 1919.

⁴² E. L. Piesse, ‘Japan and Australia’, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 4, no. 3 (1926), p. 475.

⁴³ Shimazu, *Japan, Race and Equality*, pp. 120 – 156.

⁴⁴ Nicolson, *Peacemaking*, p. 146; Xu, *Asia and the Great War*, p. 199.

⁴⁵ Shimazu, *Japan, Race and Equality*, pp. 155 – 157.

America

During Balfour's conversation with Wilson's closest advisor, Edward House on 10th February 1919, House was sympathetic and showed Balfour a quote from the American Constitution, 'all men were born free and equal', saying that racial equality 'would appeal to American sentiment' and be 'more acceptable to American public opinion'.⁴⁶ Ian Clark, nevertheless, was sceptical of American support, noting that House would change his mind and view racial equality as 'neither possible nor desirable'.⁴⁷ Lyman stated that, following Japanese triumph in the 1905 Russo-Japanese War, Japanese immigrants in America were associated with 'the one nation threatening America's and Britain's designs on a Pacific hegemony'.⁴⁸

For example, Homer Lea's *Valor of Ignorance* warned that the 65,708 Japanese immigrants into Hawaii from 1900 to 1908 were 'veterans of the Russian War' that could overwhelm 'the solitary American battalion' in Hawaii 'within twenty-four hours after a declaration of war'.⁴⁹ Military generals like Adna Chaffee and John Story promoted to 'public officials...and...the mass of intelligent citizens', *Valor's* narrative of Japan's threat towards the Pacific coasts, Alaska, Panama Canal, Hawaii and the Philippines.⁵⁰ *Valor* sold 18,000 copies in America in 1922, reaching a wide American audience.⁵¹ Another literature was George Rea's *Japan's Place in the Sun* which argued that Japan was secretly preparing for war against America, 'her future enemy', thus Japanese immigrants were 'traitors', working as spies to hide 'with malicious intent from American eyes actual facts about Japan'; Rea's pamphlet was influential enough to compel Japanese immigrant scholar Tokoyochi Ineyaga to collect rebuttal essays to ease anxieties.⁵²

Consequently, Nicolson was correct to assume that 'no American Senate would ever dream of ratifying any Covenant which enshrined so dangerous a principle' as America had a history of anti-

⁴⁶ Balfour, *Papers Relating to Paris Peace Conference, Heligoland to Japan*, pp. 185 – 186.

⁴⁷ Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society*, pp. 86 – 90.

⁴⁸ Lyman, 'The "Yellow Peril" Mystique', pp. 698 – 699.

⁴⁹ Homer Lea, *The Valor of Ignorance* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1909), pp. 248 – 250.

⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. xi – xxi

⁵¹ Richard Riccardelli, 'A Forgotten American Military Strategist: The Vision and Enigma of Homer Lea', *Army History*, No. 36 (1996), p. 18.

⁵² Iyenaga, *Japan's Real Attitude Toward America*, p. iii.

Japanese sentiments.⁵³ Californian Senator James Phelan telegraphed to Idahoan Senator William Borah, warning that this could ‘give jurisdiction of League over immigration, naturalisation, elective franchise, land ownership’ and hoped that ‘Western Senators and others will oppose any loopholes by which Oriental peoples will possess equality with white race in United States’.⁵⁴ Borah agreed that Japan tried to manipulate the League ‘to bring about a verdict upon the immigration problem’ which ‘would sacrifice American independence in adjusting its own affairs at home’ by ‘putting into the hands of alien nations, such as Japan, the regulation of...immigration’.⁵⁵ Nebraskan Senator Gilbert Hitchcock also argued that America could not forgo their ‘right to make discriminations between races’ because ‘they are...for the purpose of preserving (American) racial purity and...industrial standards’.⁵⁶

Clark argued that Wilson had to defeat the proposal because the American Senate would not ratify his ‘precious’ Versailles Treaty and League Covenant if they included ‘any rhetoric known to antagonise important Senators’.⁵⁷ Lloyd George, however, explained that Wilson ‘was strongly anti-Japanese’ and anxious with Japanese expansion into Eastern Siberia ‘as if they owned the country’.⁵⁸ Xu Guoqi added that Wilson was ‘a strong racist himself’; Wilson wanted ‘to keep the white race strong against the yellow’ and had previously pledged his support in 1913 on ‘the national policy of (Chinese and Japanese) exclusion’ to preserve ‘a homogenous population’.⁵⁹ This explains the Eurocentrism of Wilson’s ‘Fourteen Points’ as it guaranteed ‘self-determination’ only for Russia, Belgium, Poland and Balkan states whereas African or Asian states were labelled as ‘colonial claims’.⁶⁰ Therefore, Wilson, along with American senators and British delegates, prioritised defending the white race.

⁵³ Nicolson, *Peacemaking*, p. 145.

⁵⁴ ‘Phelan Cables Protest on Japan: Wants Race Equality Kept Out of Covenant as Threatening Immigration Laws. Asks Borah for Support. Idaho Senator Replies That Japan Is Jockeying to Keep Present Concessions - - Hitchcock Dissents. Says Japan is Jockeying. Sees League Idea Growing. Warns Lodge and Knox’, *New York Times*, 25 March 1919.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ ‘Says Japan Has Equality: Only as to Domestic Affairs Are Reservations Sought, Says Hitchcock’, *New York Times*, 4 April 1919.

⁵⁷ Clark, *International Legitimacy and World Society*, p. 90.

⁵⁸ George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference*, p. 116.

⁵⁹ Guoqi Xu, *Asia and the Great War: A Shared History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 201.

⁶⁰ ‘Wilson Proposes a New World Order in the “Fourteen Points”’, pp. 164 – 165.

Immigration Act of 1924

Wilson's 'unanimity rule' had 'caused much excitement in Japanese cities' with possibilities of riots while the Japanese press wanted Japan to abandon the League to create their own 'Monroe Doctrine in the Orient'.⁶¹ The Foreign Office in London reported that Japanese periodicals like *Hochi* and *Kokumin* criticised the League as 'futile' and opposed Japan joining it while the *Niroku* argued that the Imperial Family, who viewed that 'all races are one and the same', should lead the League.⁶² Okuma, who was initially optimistic that racial discrimination 'will terminate in the near future' through mutual understanding, became disillusioned with the West.⁶³ Okuma complained that 'the whites' who saw themselves 'too superior...to be governed by their non-white fellows' viewed Japan's rising military and industrial economy 'as an unjustifiable encroachment upon their own rights' so they created 'a league of the white nations to perpetuate a white supremacy in the world'.⁶⁴

In 1921, a Japanese diplomat, 'Mr Fujisawa of the (League's) Information Section', wrote to the League, requesting the West to 'listen amicably to the protesting voice of the East and take the necessary steps to dissipate their apprehensions' instead of fulfilling 'their greedy appetites at the expense of Asiatic races'.⁶⁵ Americans, however, remained anxious with Japanese immigration after 1919. For example, the Californian governor claimed that Japanese immigrants, by 1920, were 'proving crushing competitors to...white rural populations' because they controlled 458,056 acres of land and produced at least 80 per cent of essential foods while Japanese children 'crowded' classrooms, leading to

⁶¹ 'Racial Equality. Rejection of Japanese Amendment. Resentment in Japan', *The Mercury*, 14 April 1919, p. 5.

⁶² 'Attitude in Japan towards the League of Nations – Foreign Office, London – Transmits Extracts from the Press and various Lectures and Speeches containing adverse Criticism of the League of Nations', 1919, File R1573/40/2427/2427, LNA, UNLA, Geneva, Switzerland, p. 3 (<https://archives.ungeneva.org/attitude-in-japan-towards-the-league-of-nations-foreign-office-london-transmits-extracts-from-the-press-and-various-lectures-and-speeches-containing-adverse-criticism-of-the-league-of-nations>) accessed: 15/12/2024.

⁶³ 'Japan's New Premier', p. 151.

⁶⁴ Okuma Shigenobu, 'Illusions of the White Race', in Kiyoshi Kawakami (ed.), *What Japan Thinks* (New York: Macmillan, 1921), pp. 167 – 170.

⁶⁵ 'Present Attitude of Japan towards the League of Nations – Mr Fujisawa – Sketches the general modern History of Japan, and describes the Opinions now prevailing with regard to the League of Nations', March 1921, File R1573/40/11763/2427, LNA, UNLA, Geneva, Switzerland, pp. 17 – 18 (<https://archives.ungeneva.org/present-attitude-of-japan-towards-the-league-of-nations-mr-fujisawa-sketches-the-general-modern-history-of-japan-and-describes-the-opinions-now-prevailing-with-regard-to-the-league-of-nations>) accessed: 19/12/2024.

‘resentment of...white mothers’.⁶⁶ Hence, there were desires in California to ‘repress a developing Japanese community’, whose ‘fecundity...far exceeds that of any other people’, that ‘will represent a considerable portion of (Californian) population’ without immigration restrictions.⁶⁷ The American government would prioritise the ‘protesting voice’ at home over foreign voices as reflected in the 1924 Immigration Act.

On 5th December 1923, the Immigration Committee’s chairperson Albert Johnson proposed a bill in the House of Representative to restrict alien immigration into America, which could deny Japanese nationals American citizenship.⁶⁸ Japanese Ambassador, Masanao Hanihara, called this ‘an arbitrary and unjust discrimination’ that violated the 1907 ‘Gentleman’s Agreement’ and 1911 Commercial Treaty where the American government guaranteed ‘no discriminatory legislation...against Japanese people’.⁶⁹ Cyrus Woods, America’s Ambassador to Japan, also reported to Secretary of State, Charles Hughes that Japanese newspapers had adopted ‘a resentful tone’ by 14th April 1924 where periodicals like *Yorodzu* accused America for insulting Japan, especially after her recent earthquake while *Jiji* argued that the bill assaulted ‘the very foundation of American-Japanese friendship’; *Japan Times and Mail* also called the bill ‘a most humiliating one to the Japanese race...a wound that will hurt...for generations’, arguing that the Japanese were ‘victims of (the American Senate’s) political maneuvering’.⁷⁰

Thus, three days before President Calvin Coolidge signed the bill on 26th May 1924, Hughes warned Coolidge that Section 13 ©, which excludes ‘aliens ineligible to citizenship’ was ‘entirely unnecessary’ as it could cost Japan’s cooperation ‘through the abrogation of the “Gentleman’s Agreement”’, which Japan had ‘faithfully performed her voluntary undertaking’ of limiting Japanese workers into America.⁷¹

⁶⁶ The Governor of California Tells of the “Japanese Problem,” 1920’, in Elizabeth Cobbs and Edward Blum (eds.), *Major Problems in American History: Documents and Essays, Vol. 2: Since 1865, Fourth Edition* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2015), pp. 189 – 190.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Joseph Fuller, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1924, Vol. 2* (Washington D.C: Government Printing Office, 1939), p. 334.

⁶⁹ Ibid, pp. 334 – 336.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 374; ‘The Senate’s Declaration of War’, *Japan Times and Mail*, 19 April 1924, (<https://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5077>) accessed: 19/12/2024.

⁷¹ Ibid, pp. 391 – 393.

Consequently, the Japanese diplomat Ken Harada reported to the League that the 1924 Act had provoked ‘a most strong anti-American feeling’ in Japan which could create ‘reactionary tendencies against...the League’; he wanted ‘the case...be placed...before the League Council, but these opinions were not entertained seriously by the leading people’.⁷²

In conclusion, Japanese-Western relations from 1919 to 1924 were antagonistic between the oppressor and oppressed where the Japanese were subject to Western discriminations, including restrictive immigration policies, despite their peaceful appeals. Although Western sources demonstrated ‘yellow peril’ beliefs, Japanese sources should be held with scepticism. Like Konoe’s cry for ‘justice and humanism’ in 1919, Hanihara argued that the 1924 Act contradicted ‘principles of justice and fairness upon which the friendly intercourse between nations must...depend’, yet the Immigration Committee justified the Act by citing Japan’s discrimination against ‘Chinese and Koreans...people of her own colour’ which Hanihara denied; Japanese sources had omitted these details to paint a sympathetic self-portrayal.⁷³

⁷² ‘Japan and the League of Nations – Mr Ken Harada – Report on his Visit to Japan and Hawaii’, 10 October 1924, File R1573/40/39622/2427, LNA, UNLA, Geneva, Switzerland, p. 8 (<https://archives.ungeneva.org/le-japon-et-la-societe-des-nations-mr-ken-harada-rapport-sur-son-voyage-au-japon-et-a-hawaii>) accessed: 19/12/2024.

⁷³ Fuller, *FRUS*, 1924, Vol. 2, pp. 337 – 398.

Chapter 2

China and Korea: The ‘Internationalisation’ of the ‘Subaltern Imperialists’, 1895 – 1923

Japan’s idea of racial equality can be viewed as hypocritical because Japan conducted imperial aggression and discrimination against the Korean and Chinese peoples. The PPC and League, however, created opportunities for nationalist and humanitarian agents to expose Japanese atrocities through petitioning to Western elites for their support. Other than undermining Japan’s REP, interventions from below increased Western-Japanese distrust, yet their effectiveness on influencing Western-Japanese diplomacy varied depending on whether Western interests were jeopardised. This chapter will first discuss how the West reacted to petitions regarding Korea’s March First Movement and its consequences on Western-Japanese relations before comparing it with the Chinese case.

Japanese Hypocrisy

The first chapter has shown that Japan’s objective in the PPC was for the League ‘to accord...to all aliens nationals...equal and just treatment in every respect’.⁷⁴ Shimazu, however, noted that ‘aliens nationals’ referred only to ‘Japanese nationals’ rather than ‘universal racial equality’.⁷⁵ Since Perry’s arrival, Japan had developed a ‘national inferiority complex’; hence, debates on Japanese racial identity emerged since 1868 throughout the Meiji Restoration, a period of modernisation where Japan began adopting Western values and institutions.⁷⁶ According to Xu, the debate involved two suggestions: either Japan retain her Asian identity and serve as ‘a model for the rest of Asia’, or ‘imitate dominant white cultures’ and be recognised by the West as equals.⁷⁷

By 1919, Japan had adopted both identities by officially being a Western-style empire but portraying herself as an Asian leader or representative when convenient. Therefore, Sand labelled the Japanese as ‘subaltern imperialists’ who participated ‘in the imperial system yet socially and culturally kept outside

⁷⁴ Fuller, *FRUS, 1919, Vol. 3*, p. 291,

⁷⁵ Shimazu, *Japan, Race and Equality*, p. 166.

⁷⁶ Xu, *Asia and the Great War*, p. 186.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

it'.⁷⁸ Sand argued that Japan would use Western imperial 'models, object lessons and justifications' for aggression against her Asian neighbours but because Western empires never acknowledged Japan as equals, hence their 'outsider status', the Japanese would 'stress racial similarities to (their) Asian subjects...and...co-opt the support of the colonised with claims of brotherhood'.⁷⁹ In 1885, Fukuzawa Yukichi, a Japanese intellectual who promoted Westernisation, advocated for Japan 'to leave the ranks of Asian nations and cast (their) lots with civilised nations of the West' because 'any person who cherishes a bad friend cannot escape his bad notoriety'.⁸⁰ Like Fukuzawa, many Japanese did not want to be associated with 'barbaric' nations like China and Korea, their 'bad friends' who could not 'progress...as a nation', while wishing for Japan to be a Western-recognised colonial 'great power' in the Far East.⁸¹

The Sino-Japanese War was a Japanese imperial aggression that resulted in the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki, which gave Japan territories like Southern Fengtian, Formosa and the Pescadores islands; like the 1858 Harris Treaty, Shimonoseki gave Japanese nationals extraterritoriality right in China while forcing open cities like Chongqing and Hangzhou for trade and rivers like Yangtze for navigation.⁸² The nationalistic journalist Tokutomi Soho celebrated that 'the name "Japanese"' will be 'known by the world' to mean 'glory, courage...and victory'; Tokutomi's phrase, 'before we did not know ourselves', indicated Japan's 'national inferiority complex' which he believed had been destroyed following the Sino-Japanese War.⁸³ France, Russia and Germany, however, continued to treat the Japanese like an inferior nation by pressuring her to return the Liaodong Peninsula back to China.⁸⁴ Tokutomi argued that this intervention had obstructed Japan's 'duty to...bring the benefits of civilisation to (their)

⁷⁸ Sand, 'Subaltern Imperialists', p. 275.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Yukichi, 'On Leaving Asia'.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² 'Treaty of Shimonoseki, 17 April 1895', *Treaties between China and Foreign States, Second Ed., Vol. 2* (Shanghai: by order of the Inspector General of Customs, 1917), pp. 590-596 (<https://www.taiwanbasic.com/treaties/Shimonoseki.htm>) accessed: 14/04/2025.

⁸³ 'Rejoicing Over Victory in the Sino-Japanese War', in De Bary et al. (eds.), *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, Vol. 2, Part 2, 1868 - 2000, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 133.

⁸⁴ Theodore De Bary et al. (eds.), *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, Vol. 2, Part 2, 1868 - 2000, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 133.

neighbours...to guide backward countries...to govern themselves'.⁸⁵ Tokutomi represented frustrated Japanese people in 1895 who viewed Japan as a civilised nation equal to the West yet was still treated unfairly despite being 'an empire in typical Western fashion'.⁸⁶

As discussed in the previous chapter, the British Empire and America also did not acknowledge Japan as an equal. Thus, when negotiating the REP, Japanese officials would avoid mentioning their imperial aggressions while using terms like 'all aliens nationals', 'Asiatic nations' and 'the East' instead of 'Japanese' to achieve a moral advantage as a representative of the oppressed. Many Japanese, however, were aware that Japanese aggression in East Asia, if exposed globally, could weaken Japan's bargaining position with the West. Ishibashi Tanzan, a Japanese liberal business journalist, 'regretfully' discussed this 'shameful' problem by noting how Japan banned Chinese workers, imposed permit requirements for Taiwanese and Koreans to enter Japan while prohibiting foreigners from owning land and conducting coastal trade.⁸⁷ He emphasised that 'the racial discrimination that these public-spirited persons have powerfully criticised...is practised by their own country' which 'will earn only a derisive smile (from the West) directed towards those who are unaware of their own failings'.⁸⁸ There were liberal newspapers that agreed with Tanzan. The *Japan Chronicle of Kobe* found the REP 'certainly grotesque' because Japan's 'arguments are cut from under her feet by the fact that she discriminates very completely herself' while *Asahi* warned that 'the outside world...will undoubtedly stigmatise Japan's claim as selfish' if Japanese discrimination towards foreigners continue.⁸⁹

The PPC and the League's creation had created opportunities for criticisms from below to reach League secretariats and pressure imperial authorities. Pedersen argues that the League 'became the site...of a great international argument over imperialism's claims' where 'imperial statesmen...had to face...interrogations in Geneva, often with experts briefed by humanitarian lobbies or rival foreign

⁸⁵ 'Resentment Resulting from the Triple Intervention', in De Bary et al. (eds.), *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, Vol. 2, Part 2, 1868 - 2000, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 133.

⁸⁶ Xu, *Asia and the Great War*, p. 186.

⁸⁷ 'Before Demanding the Abolition of Racial Discrimination', in De Bary et al. (eds.), *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, Vol. 2, Part 2, 1868 - 2000, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), pp. 190 – 191.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Position of Japan Is Weak, Say Press: While Asking Racial Equality, She Discriminates Against China', *Los Angeles Times*, 3 April 1919, p. 12.

ministries posing questions, and a host of journalists, petitioners, and even nationalist leaders waiting outside the door'.⁹⁰ Pedersen called the mandates system 'a vehicle for...“internationalisation”' where criticisms on imperialism were brought 'from the national...into the international realm'.⁹¹ The mandates system was originally supposed to legitimise 'alien, non-consensual rule' which Japan hoped, through joining the League, would legitimise their own imperialism in East Asia as well.⁹² In practice, nonetheless, the mandates system gave Korean and Chinese nationalists and sympathisers a platform to internationally expose Japanese brutalities which undermined Japan's imperial authority and REP.

Korea's Independence Struggle

Japanese hegemony in Korea could be traced back to after Japan's victory over Russia when the 1905 Portsmouth Treaty formally recognised Japanese 'paramount political, military and economical interests' and right to impose 'measures of guidance, protection and control...in Korea'.⁹³ By 1907, Korea became a Japanese protectorate governed by a Japanese Resident-General, Hirobumi Ito, who had administrative and legislative powers.⁹⁴ Toyokichi Iyenaga justified this with the civilising mission: 'to teach Koreans the science of statecraft' and 'make Korea capable of standing on its own feet', but Koreans rejected foreign rule.⁹⁵ A Korean periodical, *Hwangsong sinmun*, was sceptical of Ito's intention of 'bringing about stability and peace' while calling previous Korean ministers 'dogs and swine' for giving Japan 'a nation with a four-thousand-year history...thereby reducing twenty million souls to being the slaves of foreigners'.⁹⁶ Yi Kangnyon, a Righteous Army leader, wrote to Ito that Korea never wanted to be a Japanese colony as proven by 'many patriotic martyrs' and 'Righteous Armies rising up'; Yi's letter was a warning for Japan, 'an unforgivable enemy', to 'spare (herself) from future

⁹⁰ Pedersen, *The Guardians*, pp. 4 – 5.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ 'The Treaty of Portsmouth, 5 September 1905' in Sydney Tyler, *The Japan-Russia War* (Harrisburg: The Minter Company, 1905), pp. 564 – 568.

⁹⁴ Toyokichi Iyenaga, 'Japan's Annexation of Korea', *The Journal of Race Development*, Vol. 3, no. 2 (1912), pp. 201 – 203.

⁹⁵ Ibid, pp. 203 – 211.

⁹⁶ 'Chang Chiyon: We Wail Today' in Yong-ho Ch'oe, Peter Lee and Theodore de Bary (eds.), *Sources of Korean Tradition, Vol. 2: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 312 – 313.

regret' for subjugating Korea.⁹⁷ Despite oppositions, Japan formally annexed Korea in 1910 because, according to Iyenaga, Ito could not 'cure the cancer that had eaten deep into the heart of Korea' and was assassinated by nationalists who were 'hailed...as heroes' by 'robbers' and 'thieves'; Japan had to eliminate this 'fruitful source of disturbance' by civilising Koreans through annexation 'to ensure lasting peace in the Orient'.⁹⁸

Korean voices remained silent until 1919 when Koreans saw Wilsonian self-determination as applicable to Koreans and utilised the chance for independence which 'had previously seemed remote'.⁹⁹ On 1st March 1919, Korean nationalist demonstrations emerged with a 'Declaration of Independence' in Seoul and, like Makino's proposal to the League Covenant in February 1919, demanded 'equality...of nations'; within months, over a million Koreans demonstrated in hopes of attracting their 'audiences...at the other end of the Eurasian landmass'.¹⁰⁰ Although Japanese officials suppressed the demonstrations, the PPC and League enabled nationalists to inform the West about the March First Movement. Firstly, Kim Kyusik was sent as a Korean delegate to present a petition for Korean independence; Chinese delegates assisted in transporting Kim to Paris through a Chinese passport because the Chinese wanted to 'embarrass Japan at the international forum'.¹⁰¹ The petition, attached with a letter to Lloyd George, was submitted on 14th May 'for the sake of humanity and justice' to expose 'the unspeakable oppression' done to Korea by 'the Asiatic Kaiser' which 'have never been known to the world'.¹⁰² It quoted Wilson's 'principle of justice to all peoples and nationalities', arguing that Japan must nullify the 1910 Annexation Treaty since Japan has accepted the principle 'as the

⁹⁷ 'Yi Kangnyon: Open Letter to Ito Hirobumi' in in Yong-ho Ch'oe, Peter Lee and Theodore de Bary (eds.), *Sources of Korean Tradition, Vol. 2: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 294 – 295.

⁹⁸ Iyenaga, 'Japan's Annexation of Korea', pp. 203 – 223.

⁹⁹ Erez Manela, 'The "Wilsonian Moment" in East Asia: The March First Movement in Global Perspective', *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 9, no. 1 (2009), pp. 11 – 13.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, pp. 11 – 16; Fuller, *FRUS, 1919, Vol. 3*, p. 291.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, pp. 14 – 15.

¹⁰² 'Claim of the Korean People and Nation for Liberation from Japan and for the Reconstitution of Korea as an Independent State – Korean Delegation, Paris (J. Kiussic Soho Kimm, Member of the Korean Delegation) – Petition with Memorandum attached', 14 May 1919, File R544/11/302/302, LNA, UNLA, Geneva, Switzerland, p. 2 (<https://archives.ungeneva.org/claim-of-the-korean-people-and-nation-for-liberation-from-japan-and-for-the-reconstitution-of-korea-as-an-independent-state-korean-delegation-paris-j-kiussic-soho-kimm-member-of-the-korean-delegation-petition-with-memorandum-attached>) accessed: 16/03/2025.

“foundation” of the “structure of international justice” with her REP.¹⁰³ The petition included provocative details like Japanese officials obstructing Western Christian missionaries suspected of conspiring against their government.¹⁰⁴ When arguing against Korean history and language’s censorship through ‘controlling’ education, it added that ‘Western learning’ was also suppressed for encouraging ‘dangerous thoughts’ while calling this control ‘the Japanisation of Korea’ that exceeded ‘the Prussianisation of...Schleswig...and Alsace-Lorraine’.¹⁰⁵ It described Japan’s ‘Policy of World-Conquest’ as a ‘menace’ to French, British and American interests in Asia while her ‘Mastery of the Pacific’ could give Japanese immigrants ‘unrestricted entrance...into Australasia and the United States’.¹⁰⁶

In 1923, overseas Koreans in Germany petitioned to the League, detailing how the Japanese brutally suppressed over two million peaceful Korean protesters in Korea and Manchuria by killing, wounding and imprisoning them while burning Korean churches, houses, schools and crops.¹⁰⁷ It featured descriptions of Japanese torture methods including electrocution of nervous system, piercing genitals with bamboo nails, pulling off skin and gouging out eyes; therefore, the Japanese were compared with medieval European inquisitors for Westerners to understand the severity.¹⁰⁸ Overall, Koreans were aware of Western fears of the ‘yellow peril’, hence they compared the Japanese with infamous European examples like Prussia and the Spanish Inquisitors or deliberately mention Christianity’s repression to encourage Western support. The German comparisons were especially significant because the Wilson administration regarded Japan ‘as a second Germany’.¹⁰⁹ Kiyoshi Kawakami had attempted to assure the West in 1919 that Japan’s desire for ‘a place in the sun’ was not an ‘imaginary’ one to rationalise an aggressive policy like Germany, but ‘equality of rights’.¹¹⁰ The Korean testimonies,

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 9.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, pp. 14 – 28.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, pp. 10 – 28.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, pp. 10 – 18.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Petitions Against Japanese Administration of Korea’, October 1923, File R544/11/8687/302, LNA, UNLA, Geneva, Switzerland, pp. 8 – 9 (<https://archives.ungeneva.org/petitions-against-japanese-administration-of-korea>) accessed: 17/03/2025.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Hattori, *Japanese Diplomacy and East Asian International Politics*, p. 59.

¹¹⁰ Kiyoshi Kawakami, *Japan and World Peace* (New York: Macmillan, 1919), pp. 52 – 53.

however, would disprove Kawakami's narrative and confirm suspicions of Japan 'as a second Germany' with the same aggressive nature. This could not only encourage the West to intervene against the new Germany but also undermine Japan's REP.

Western Response: Sympathetic Christians and Indifferent Elites

There were two types of Western responses to the Korean struggle: those from Christian associations and political elites' response. Western Christian associations showed much support for Koreans as they helped to petition and provide testimonies of Japanese brutalities to the League in 1920. On 28th May, the Young Men's Christian Association in Ottawa submitted to the League documents received from Herbert Owens, a medical college assistant in Seoul, 'for the restoration of all men to an equality'.¹¹¹ The documents included Korean victims' testimonies like a 'released girl prisoner' recalling Japanese policemen imprisoning over seventy Koreans where schoolgirls were slapped and smashed into glass windows while schoolboys were trampled and kicked in the faces with heavy boots.¹¹² They also included 'wounded men' describing Japanese gendarmes firing on unarmed demonstrators at Suan Kol which killed at least eleven, including a 12-year-old bystander.¹¹³

Western missionaries in Korea also testified against the oppressions. The YMCA petition had Canadian Presbyterian missionary, Duncan Mcrae's account of Japanese fire brigadiers clubbing Korean demonstrators with their clubs, pick-axe handles, iron bars and fire-hooks before dragging them to the police station 'with blood streaming down their faces'.¹¹⁴ British missionaries like Frank Schofield testified how Japanese soldiers burned down homes in Su-Chon while shooting and

¹¹¹ 'The Movement for Korean Independence – The Young Men's Christian Association, Ottawa – transmits various documents relating to the activities of the Independence movement and the treatment by the Japanese authorities of person suspected of being implicated in the movement', 28 May 1920, File R544/11/4515/302, LNA, UNLA, Geneva, Switzerland, pp. 2 – 3, (<https://archives.ungeneva.org/the-movement-for-korean-independence-the-young-mens-christian-association-ottawa-transmits-various-documents-relating-to-the-activities-of-the-independence-movement-and-the-treatment-by-the-japanese-authorities-of-persons-suspected-of->) accessed: 18/03/2025.

¹¹² Ibid, pp. 6 – 9.

¹¹³ Ibid, p. 25.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 15.

bayonetting villagers; John Thomas and his Korean helpers also described their assault by Japanese policemen in Kokei.¹¹⁵

On 19th November, the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland petitioned against persecution of Korean Christian converts, teachers and Churches; they argued that ‘so enlightened a Government as that of Japan’ should grant Korean Christians and foreign missionaries ‘religious liberty’ and ‘same rights...as...those of Japan’ for the goodwill of Britain, ‘a Christian nation and an ally of Japan’.¹¹⁶ Besides encouraging the West to intervene, the petitions functioned to threaten Japan into halting repressions before angering the West. Canadian journalist, Frederick Mackenzie in his book, *Korea’s Fight for Freedom*, appealed ‘to the Christian Churches of the United States, Canada and Britain’ to reaffirm ‘Christian brotherhood’ with Korea through holding public meetings to pressure Western governments into taking ‘firm action to-day’ because to ‘act weakly now’ would cause a major Far Eastern war ‘within a generation’.¹¹⁷ Mackenzie saw Korea as ‘the key-land...for Western civilisation and Christian ideals’; thus, the West should not ‘shut (their) ears to (Korean) calls’, especially when Western Christian teachings have ‘brought them floggings, tortures unspeakable, death’.¹¹⁸

Thus, Colonel House’s assistant, Stephen Bonsal considered Korea’s ‘complaints against the arrogant Japanese’ to be ‘fully justified’ while arguing that the Portsmouth treaty, where Japan promised to defend Korean independence, had been ‘thrown into the waterpaper basket by the men of Tokyo’.¹¹⁹ Bonsal questioned how ‘the great...treaty-breaker in the Far East... (could sit) ...in the Council of the Great Powers’ without interrogation for her conducts.¹²⁰ The American Senate would reference reports

¹¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 47 – 50.

¹¹⁶ ‘Christians in Korea – Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, London – Transmits a resolution passed at a meeting of the Council of the Baptist Union on 16 November 1920 – About the persecution of Christian churches in Korea, the Council of the Union requests that the Japanese Government guarantees to the Korean Christians their religious freedom’, 19 November 1920, File R544/11/8687/302, LNA, UNLA, Geneva, Switzerland (<https://archives.ungeneva.org/les-chretiens-en-coree-union-baptiste-de-grande-bretagne-et-dirlande-londres-transmet-une-resolution-passee-a-une-reunion-du-conseil-de-lunion-baptiste-le-16-novembre-1920-a-propos-des-persecutions-infligees-aux-eglises-chretiennes-de->) accessed: 17/03/2025.

¹¹⁷ Frederick Arthur Mackenzie, *Korea’s Fight for Freedom* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1920), pp. 315 – 319.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Stephen Bonsal, *Suitors and Suppliants: The Little Nations at Versailles* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1946), pp. 220 – 224.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

of Japanese cruelty to show Japan's untrustworthiness and how Korean subjugation contradicted Wilson's self-determination ideal, but Manela states that this was 'enmity toward Wilson and Japan rather than...sympathy for Korea'.¹²¹ Manela argues that America had mostly disregarded the Korean movement because the American delegation prioritised European matters, hence Wilson 'almost certainly' never read the Korean petitions while resolutions addressing Korea were always buried in the Senate.¹²² On 16th February 1919, the High Court dismissed Korea's appeals despite Bonsal's efforts, Colonel House told Bonsal that it was impractical to address Korea because they might accomplish nothing if they attempted too much; therefore, the League would solve European matters first and then 'curb Japan when it has less pressing matters nearer at hand to deal with'.¹²³

Even then, America tried to disassociate herself from the Korean problem, especially when Japan mistakenly accused Wilson of orchestrating March First with missionaries while allegedly sending American soldiers and warships to aid Korean independence.¹²⁴ American politicians refused to acknowledge that American missionaries 'are...in sympathy with the movement', yet on 8th March 1919, the Department of State's Wilbur Carr approved America's Consulate in Seoul sending letters to American Mission Stations in Korea, ordering 'all Americans in Korea...(to)...scrupulously (abstain) from participating in the domestic affairs of the country'.¹²⁵ When America's Ambassador to Japan, Roland Morris reported to Frank Polk, the Acting Secretary of State, about Japanese gendarmes raiding an American-owned hospital to arrest three Korean patients with gunshot wounds on 12th April; Polk replied that although American interests should be 'jealously' guarded, Americans should avoid encouraging beliefs that America will support Koreans in their Independence movement to ease Japanese suspicions towards America.¹²⁶

British politicians, despite addressing Korea in Parliament, were divided on the issue. One Parliamentary member that tended to be pro-Japanese was Esmond Harmsworth. On 27th April 1920,

¹²¹ Manela, 'The "Wilsonian Moment" in East Asia', pp. 21 – 23.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Bonsal, *Suitors and Suppliants*, pp. 224 – 225.

¹²⁴ Manela, 'The "Wilsonian Moment" in East Asia', pp. 16 – 17.

¹²⁵ Joseph Fuller, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1919, Vol. 2* (Washington D.C: Government Printing Office, 1934), pp. 458 – 461.

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 462.

Arthur Hayday asked if Britain would aid Korean representatives in presenting their grievances to the League ‘to secure justice and good government’ for Koreans; Harmsworth, nevertheless, stated that the matter was ‘out-side of the province of His Majesty’s Government’ while assuring that Japan would ‘no doubt’ make improvements according to League principles.¹²⁷ In August 1920, a controversy arose where a British Chamber Committee member, George Shaw was suspected of providing asylum for ‘Korean agitators’ in China while allowing them to use his steamers for communication and flight; thus, Japanese policemen raided Shaw’s house and steamer while arresting him.¹²⁸ Harmsworth, however, argued that since there was no official information about Japanese attempts to raid Shaw’s house or board a British steamer, let alone similar occurrences, it was unnecessary to protest ‘against such action on the territory of a friendly power’.¹²⁹ Colonel Josiah Wedgewood argued that the Koreans, which Harmsworth labelled as ‘agitators’, were ‘patriots’.¹³⁰ The British Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai demanded ‘a full...inquiry’ on Shaw’s arrest; contrary to Harmsworth, the Chamber Committee complained that there have been ‘many similar examples’ of ‘unjust conduct’ and ‘molestation’ from Japanese authorities towards British merchants.¹³¹

On 1st March 1921, Frederick Green addressed reports of Korean massacres and Church arsons in Manchuria, asking in Parliament if the government would defend British missionaries accused of aiding Korean independence.¹³² Frederick Kellaway, nonetheless, objected that these reports were ‘from unofficial sources’ designed to compel Britain to act and that no British missionaries ever encouraged malcontents; Viscount Edward Curzon said that Britain should not intervene in Japanese affairs in Korea while Lieutenant-Commander Joseph Kenworthy mentioned that Japan has never complained about ‘similar occurrences in Ireland’.¹³³ Conversely, Lieutenant-Colonel John Ward questioned how Japan

¹²⁷ *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, Vol. 128, 27 April 1920, columns 1007 – 1008 (<https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1920/apr/27/korea>) accessed: 20/03/2025.

¹²⁸ *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, Vol. 133, 9 August 1920, columns 26 – 27 (<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1920-08-09/debates/c911bd33-0a86-4a06-a5a9-db771c48a22d/KoreanRefugees>) accessed: 20/03/2025.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ ‘Arrested British Agent in Korea: Strong Protest’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 21 August 1920, p. 8.

¹³² *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, Vol. 138, 1 March 1921, columns 1579 – 1581 (<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1921-03-01/debates/3cc32a1c-9d56-40bb-903e-5470c4def62e/Manchuria>) accessed: 20/03/2025.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

could invade a foreign territory ‘without some more general protest’ while John Rees asked if the government only cared if ‘a British subject is maltreated’.¹³⁴ Therefore, the Korean issue was buried in Parliament because there was no united British effort to support Koreans, though on 3rd November 1920, Parliamentary members including Major James Edwards, Colonel Tom Perry and John Hinds formed a ‘Friends of Korea’ group to achieve the improvement of Koreans’ religious and socio-political conditions, but no serious actions were ever made.¹³⁵

Overall, American elites were indifferent towards Korean independence while the British were divided. There was also a denial of Western missionaries supporting Korean nationalists although the League petitions suggested otherwise. Western response towards Japan was appeasement, rather than antagonism as with the REP, because Christianity was no longer a Western priority as in medieval times. Despite Korean petitions’ ineffectiveness, they were crucial in exposing Japan as a hypocritical empire while undermining Japan’s REP by giving Japan a ‘public relations nightmare’ with the West.¹³⁶ The following chapter will contrast Korea with the more successful Chinese movement, where the West manoeuvred to aid China in their demands, but this was driven by national interests rather than justice and humanity.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ ‘Friends of Korea: Parliamentary Group Formed’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 3 November 1920, p. 8.

¹³⁶ Manela, ‘The “Wilsonian Moment” in East Asia’, p. 18.

Chapter 3

The Struggle Over China: ‘Sphere-of-Influence’ Verses ‘Open Door’, 1915 – 1922

The previous chapter showed that Western elites were indifferent towards the March First Movement and Korean petitions. Conversely, the West was actively involved in settling China’s appeal for Shandong’s return and the Alliance’s abolition. America was more sympathetic towards China because fulfilling China’s grievances aligned with America’s ‘Open Door’ diplomacy while Britain was less sympathetic because she could preserve British interests through cooperation with Japan. Consequently, America intervened with the WNC to pressure Britain and Japan into abolishing the Alliance and return Shandong to China. This chapter will show that Japan uncharacteristically accepted the Washington order because it aligned with Japanese foreign policy.

China’s Nationalist Struggle

The Shandong dispute originated from the the Demands of 18th January 1915 where after occupying Germany’s Chinese territories, Japan, through Article 1 from Group 1, demanded China to accept whatever concessions and rights that Japan had negotiated with Germany on Shandong.¹³⁷ Despite Japan’s Revised Demands on 26th April, China rejected Article 1 on 1st May, proposing instead for Japan to ‘restore...Kiaochow to China’ and allow China to participate in German-Japanese negotiations regarding Shandong.¹³⁸ Japan responded that the Demands were of ‘good intention’ to strengthen Sino-Japanese ‘cordial friendship’ to preserve Far Eastern peace, but China had ignored Japan’s ‘conciliatory spirit’ and ‘friendly feelings’.¹³⁹ Japan, nonetheless, threatened to ‘take steps she may deem necessary’ and coerced China into signing a treaty on 25th May that would enforce Article 1 and oblige China to open Shandong for commercial ports and use Japanese loans for railway constructions.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Joseph Fuller, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, With the Address of the President to Congress December 7, 1915* (Washington D.C: Government Printing Office, 1924), p. 185.

¹³⁸ Ibid, p. 192.

¹³⁹ Ibid, pp. 194 – 195.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 192 – 197.

To solidify Japanese claims, Japan signed a secret treaty with Britain in February 1917 where Britain would support Japanese claims to Shandong while Japan would ‘treat in the same spirit (British) claims to German islands south of the equator’.¹⁴¹ In 1919, the Allies decided that the Versailles treaty would include Article 156 which would give Japan Germany’s rights over Shandong including Kiaochow, submarine cables, mines and the Tsingtao-Tsinanfu Railway.¹⁴² Japan promised that after obtaining Shandong, Japan would withdraw her troops and restore China’s political rights over Shandong, but Japan would keep economic rights and ‘strictly observe...the Open Door in...spirit’; China’s Minister to America, Alfred Sze, however, expressed ‘disappointment over...the terms of the proposed settlement’ to Balfour on 1st May.¹⁴³ On 10th May 1919, the British diplomat, John Jordan, reported to George Curzon, Britain’s Foreign Secretary, that the 1917 secret agreement had been leaked in China on 3rd May which dismayed the Chinese who had depended on the West for ‘the retrocession of German rights’ and the Chinese government’s extrication ‘from the hopeless pass’.¹⁴⁴

On 4th May, approximately 3,000 Chinese students demonstrated in Tiananmen which led to a nation-wide protest including boycotts of Japanese products and workers’ strikes.¹⁴⁵ May Fourth, like March First in Korea, compelled individuals and organisations to participate in international politics. On 7th May, Chinese students studying in America and Europe petitioned to the Minister of Great Britain to make ‘equitable adjustment’ to the Versailles Treaty for ‘a just settlement’ to adhere to ‘the equality of nations’.¹⁴⁶ On 17th May 1919, the Zhili Citizen’s Convention telegraphed to the Chinese delegates to refrain from signing the Versailles Treaty and instead inform Wilson and Western Prime Ministers of

¹⁴¹ John MacMurray, *Treaties and Agreements with and Concerning China, 1894 – 1919, Vol. II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1921), pp. 1167 – 1168.

¹⁴² Joseph Fuller, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, The Paris Peace Conference, 1919, Vol. 13* (Washington D.C: Government Printing Office, 1947), p. 298.

¹⁴³ Arthur Balfour, *Papers Relating to Paris Peace Conference, Aaland Islands to Greece, 1919* (Microform Academic Publishers, 1919), pp. 93 – 94, Reference: ADD MS 49750 ([https://britishonlinearchives.com/collections/86/volumes/638/papers-of-sir-arthur-balfour-1919?filters\[query\]=&filters\[className\]=document](https://britishonlinearchives.com/collections/86/volumes/638/papers-of-sir-arthur-balfour-1919?filters[query]=&filters[className]=document)) accessed: 06/02/2025.

¹⁴⁴ *Telegram from Sir John Newell Jordan to Lord George Curzon*, 10 May 1919, Catalogue ref: FO 608/210/3 (<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/may-fourth-movement-1919/may-fourth-movement-1919-source-3/>) accessed: 06/04/2025.

¹⁴⁵ Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions: China from the 1800s to 2000, 2nd ed.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 195 – 197.

¹⁴⁶ *Extracts From a Message From Chinese Students Who Studied Overseas to the Minister of Great Britain*, 7 May 1919, Catalogue ref: FO 608/210/3 (<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/may-fourth-movement-1919/may-fourth-movement-1919-source-4a/>) accessed: 06/04/2025.

Britain, France and Italy about China's grievances.¹⁴⁷ The Convention argued that Japanese acquisition of rights to Shandong would disrupt Far Eastern peace while requesting Western leaders to 'uphold (their) avowed principle of justice and fairness' because China, an Allied nation, should not lose territorial rights 'as if she were an enemy'.¹⁴⁸

Despite Chinese oppositions, the Allies signed the Versailles Treaty on 28th June, but Curzon received news by 6th July that Chinese delegates had abstained from signing the treaty; he told Balfour that it was Chinese public opinion, along with boycotts and strikes, which pressured Chinese delegates to withhold signature.¹⁴⁹ On 15th July, Carsun Chang, a Beijing University professor, explained that since Japan's active participation in the war made Article 156 'just and legal', China would not join the League, which would be run according to 'Might is Right' instead of self-determination, justice and humanity which Western statesmen had preached.¹⁵⁰ Chang petitioned to the League to revise the Shandong settlement because 'if...justice and law should rule the world, then China's claim is more valid'.¹⁵¹

Western Response: Concerned Elites

Twenty-One Demands

Pedersen argues that not all territories received equal attention from Western authorities; while Korea's independence movement was 'only fitfully visible', Shandong and the Alliance were 'lightning rods for controversy' because they concerned Anglo-American economic interests in China.¹⁵² The West's response to Chinese grievances was eventually the WNC from 1921 to 1922 which reasserted

¹⁴⁷ *Telegram from the Chihli Citizens' Convention to the Chinese delegation at the Paris Peace Conference*, 17 May 1919, Catalogue ref: FO 608/210/3 (<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/may-fourth-movement-1919/may-fourth-movement-1919-source-4b/>) accessed: 06/04/2025.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ *Telegram from Lord George Curzon to Lord Arthur James Balfour*, 10 July 1919, Catalogue ref: FO 608/210/3 (<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/may-fourth-movement-1919/may-fourth-movement-1919-source-6/>) accessed: 05/04/2025

¹⁵⁰ China and the League of Nations – Professor Carsun C. Chang, University of Pekin – The decision of the Paris Peace Conference on the Shantung Question defers China from joining the League of Nations', 15 July 1919, File R544/11/337/337, LNA, UNLA, Geneva, Switzerland, pp. 4 – 5 (<https://archives.ungeneva.org/china-and-the-league-of-nations-professor-carsun-c-chang-university-of-pekin-the-decision-of-the-paris-peace-conference-on-the-shantung-question-defers-china-from-joining-the-league-of-nations>) accessed: 05/04/2025.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Pedersen, *The Guardians*, pp. 10 – 11.

‘Great Power cooperation vis-à-vis China’; Shin Kawashima traced the WNC to 1915 where the West believed that Japan, through the Demands’ Group 5, was ‘disrupting Great Power cooperation’.¹⁵³ Group 5 would enforce joint Sino-Japanese administration on China in military, financial and political affairs, making China a Japanese protectorate.¹⁵⁴ China was obligated to buy Japanese ammunitions, grant exclusive railway construction rights to Japan and consult Japan on foreign loans.¹⁵⁵ Sochi Naraoka argues that the West ‘considered the...Demands as having gone too far’ and became distrustful towards Japan because Japan tried to conceal Group 5, which violated ‘territorial integrity’ and ‘equal opportunities’ that Japan had promised Britain, under the Alliance, and America, under the 1908 Takahira-Root Agreement, to fulfil.¹⁵⁶

Britain was concerned that the Demands would jeopardise British economic interests. The Demands were raised in Parliament on 9th March 1915 where William Bull and Gordon Harvey expressed ‘uneasiness’ that Japanese commercial privileges in the Yangtze Valley would ‘prejudice...potentialities of British trade developments’ while restricting ‘equal opportunities’ in China would harm the Lancashire cotton trade which profited a lot from Chinese markets.¹⁵⁷ On 11th March, Percy Molteno also mentioned in the House that the Demands violated the Alliance’s terms of ‘equal opportunity for the commerce and industry’.¹⁵⁸ Under-Secretary of State, Archibald Primrose, however, said that the government would not oppose Japanese expansion in China because he believed that Japan would reciprocate ‘and not apply for any concessions which would affect British interests’.¹⁵⁹ Primrose argued

¹⁵³ Shin Kawashima, ‘Transformational Period in Japan-China Modern Relations (1910s to 1930s)’ in Masayuki Yamauchi and Yuichi Hosoya, *Modern Japan’s Place in World History: From Meiji to Reiwa* (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2023), p. 54.

¹⁵⁴ Fuller, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1915*, p. 186.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, pp, 186 – 187.

¹⁵⁶ Sochi Naraoka, ‘World War I and the Origin of Sino-Japanese Conflict’, in Masayuki Yamauchi and Yuichi Hosoya, *Modern Japan’s Place in World History: From Meiji to Reiwa* (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2023), pp. 44 – 45.

¹⁵⁷ *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, Vol. 70, 9 March 1915, columns 1237 – 1238 (<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1915-03-09/debates/2a675278-6966-41c6-8e6e-d3bdae7d7ebd/ChinaAndJapan>) accessed: 30/03/2025.

¹⁵⁸ *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, Vol. 70, 11 March 1915, columns 1718 – 1720 (<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1915-03-11/debates/618ea40d-3b8a-47cb-a7f2-25e2bc5b5671/ChinaAndJapan>) accessed: 16/04/2025.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, column 1722.

that the Alliance would provide consultations to guarantee a 'fair' settlement to Japan without impairing China's integrity.¹⁶⁰ Like the Korean situation, British opinions towards Japan were divided.

American officials saw the Demands as a threat to their economic interests. In January 1915, Paul Reinsch, the American Minister to China, called the Demands 'the greatest crisis yet' because it threatened 'the open-door policy' through excluding 'American participation in economic and industrial development in China'.¹⁶¹ On 10th February, Reinsch opposed Fujian, Shandong, Inner Mongolia and Manchuria's inclusion within Japan's 'sphere-of-influence' because Japanese control over 'the administration and resources of this rich country' would prejudice Britain and America.¹⁶² In response to Japan's 'whole suspicious affair', America telegraphed to China and Japan that America would not agree to any disruptions of China's territorial integrity and American treaty rights in China which pressured Japan into omitting Group 5 from the Demands.¹⁶³ On 2nd November 1917, Secretary of State Robert Lansing represented America to negotiate with Japanese ambassador Kikujiro Ishii an agreement that guaranteed China's 'territorial integrity' but only to 'adhere to the principle of... "Open Door"... for commerce and industry in China'.¹⁶⁴ This agreement ensured that Japan would not have 'any special rights' which would disrupt international trade in China and commercial rights granted by China to foreign nations.¹⁶⁵

Paris Peace Conference

Hattori argues that Shandong exposed the contradictory interests between Japan's 'sphere-of-influence' and America's 'Open Door' diplomacy; hence America adopted a containment policy towards Japan.¹⁶⁶ On 10th April 1919, American commissioners plenipotentiary including Lansing, Henry White and Tasker Bliss 'agreed absolutely' in a meeting that the Versailles Treaty should restore

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Fuller, *FRUS, 1915*, p. 81.

¹⁶² Ibid, pp. 86 – 87.

¹⁶³ MacMillan, *Peacemakers*, p. 338.

¹⁶⁴ *Mutual Interests in China (Lansing-Ishii Agreement)*, 2 November 1917 (<https://maint.loc.gov/law/help/us-treaties/bevans/b-jp-ust000009-0425.pdf>) accessed: 22/04/2025.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Hattori, *Japanese Diplomacy and East Asian International Politics*, pp. 58 – 59.

Germany's former rights in Shandong to China.¹⁶⁷ Lansing 'requested...(the) drafting (of) the text of such an article' which would be presented to Wilson for his approval.¹⁶⁸ Wilson agreed with Lansing and on 21st April suggested that the Japanese delegation should modify the treaty from 25th May 1915 to allow the League 'to make fair and just dispositions' on the Shandong issue.¹⁶⁹ Japan, however, remained 'stiff about it' while insisting on the Allies to 'trust Japan to carry out her bargain with China'.¹⁷⁰ Bonsal, nonetheless, believed that Japan's promise was not 'beyond suspicion' and that China should recover Shandong instead.¹⁷¹ Bonsal advised China to halt her 'crusade of vilification...to persuade the Japanese to take this proper step'.¹⁷² On 24th April, Makino, who was "mad" all through', threatened to not sign the Versailles Treaty unless Japan's request was fulfilled after Italy had abandoned the Conference.¹⁷³ Hence, Japan, 'with exquisite cunning', forced Wilson to fold to Japanese pressure and violate his 'own principles' to avoid further criticisms for causing another defection from the Conference and prevent a possible Japanese military pact with Germany and Russia.¹⁷⁴

British delegates like Nicolson regarded the Shandong settlement as the 'most flagrant' defeat and called Wilson 'pathetic' for giving into Japanese pressures.¹⁷⁵ Nicolson criticised Japan for 'unquestionably' violating Wilson's principles by obtaining 'from a fellow-ally...certain privileges which that ally was determined to refuse'.¹⁷⁶ Previously on 21st April 1919, Lloyd George had told Wilson that Shandong should be ceded to the League like other German colonies because Japan owed her position to the West's triumph; hence Japan 'should be put on the same footing' as other Allied nations and 'not have a special position'.¹⁷⁷ Lloyd George, however, later decided to honour 'the much-

¹⁶⁷ Joseph Fuller, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, The Paris Peace Conference, 1919, Vol. 11* (Washington D.C: Government Printing Office, 1947), pp. 149 – 150.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Joseph Fuller, *Papers Relating to the United States, The Paris Peace Conference, 1919, Vol. 5* (Washington D.C: Government Printing Office, 1946), p. 109.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 110.

¹⁷¹ Bonsal, *Suitors and Suppliants*, p. 235.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid, pp. 234 – 235.

¹⁷⁴ Nicolson, *Peacekeeping*, pp. 146 – 147.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 145.

¹⁷⁷ Fuller, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1919, Vol. 5*, pp. 110 – 111.

vaunted' 1917 Secret Treaty and support Japan's claims.¹⁷⁸ Moreover, Balfour's 'sympathies...were entirely with the Japanese' while believing that China did not 'deserve much sympathy'.¹⁷⁹ Balfour regarded the 1915 Treaty as a 'voluntary transaction...which gave...pecuniary benefits to China', rather than what the Americans had believed as 'extortion', while China, without financial or life sacrifices during the war, owed her rights to 'Japan and her Allies'.¹⁸⁰ Hence, Balfour requested the Chinese delegation on 13th May to accept Japan's Shandong settlement which Balfour hoped 'will commend itself to enlightened public opinion...in China'.¹⁸¹ Hattori argues that Britain acted as a mediator in resolving Japan and America's conflicting stances on Shandong while Balfour was crucial 'in eliciting compromises from America' that ended in Japan's favour.¹⁸² Hattori explained that British officials like Balfour and Lloyd George cooperated with Japan because 'both believed in sphere-of-influence diplomacy' which explains Britain's divided opinions towards Japan since 1915.¹⁸³

The New Washington Order

After the PPC, Japanese nationals defended Japan's Shandong policy against Western hostility. In November 1919, Kawakami explained that the 'yellow peril' resulted in Anglo-American criticisms against Japan's Shandong campaign because Japan had entered the 'White Men's War' where 'the yellow race had no place'.¹⁸⁴ He defended Japan's Shandong campaign, arguing that China had been the West's 'happy hunting ground'; thus, 'Japan had...to play the game as the West had been playing it...to protect her position'.¹⁸⁵ In March 1920, Okuma maintained 'Japan's...desire to preserve (China's) territorial integrity' while accusing the West of being 'jealous of (Japan) as a dangerous (commercial) rival' and '(devouring) one another over' Chinese resources and markets.¹⁸⁶ Okuma

¹⁷⁸ Ian Nish, *Alliance in Decline: A Study in Anglo-Japanese Relations 1908 – 23* (London: The Athlone Press, 1972), p. 274.

¹⁷⁹ Balfour, *Paris Peace Conference, Aaland Islands to Greece*, pp. 96 – 99,

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, p. 95.

¹⁸² Hattori, *Japanese Diplomacy and East Asian International Politics*, p. 37

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Kiyoshi Kawakami, 'Japan's Acts in China', *The North American Review*, Vol. 210, no. 768 (1919), pp. 622 – 623.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 631.

¹⁸⁶ Okuma Shigenobu, 'Japan's Policy in China', *Current History*, Vol. 11, no. 3 (1920), pp. 510 – 511.

maintained that accusations against Japan, as ‘a second Germany’ that wanted ‘the lion’s share of profit out of China’, were Western propaganda and ‘too absurd for honest consideration’.¹⁸⁷

Despite Japan’s victory in the Shandong dispute, Okuma suspected that China would ‘take advantage of the League to propose something absurd’.¹⁸⁸ That ‘absurd proposal’ was the Alliance’s abolition. The Alliance was created on 30th January 1902 to ensure Far Eastern peace through ‘maintaining (Chinese and Korean) ... independence and territorial integrity’ while ‘securing equal opportunities in those countries for the commerce and industry of all nations’.¹⁸⁹ Alfred Sze, nevertheless, saw the alliance as ‘a warlike measure’ to preserve Anglo-Japanese Far Eastern interests without consulting China despite ‘vitally affecting China’.¹⁹⁰ Sze argued that America and China’s involvement in Anglo-Japanese agreements were vital for guaranteeing Far Eastern peace; Sze hoped that Lloyd George, ‘with (his)...statesman like wisdom’, would either involve America and China or terminate the Alliance.¹⁹¹ Accordingly, Chinese associations like the Hunan Provincial Constitution Conference in Chang Sha on 21st June 1921 would petition to the League to ‘do the justice’ by instructing Britain and Japan to abolish the Alliance to maintain world peace.¹⁹²

On 16th July 1920, the Chinese Central Union in London petitioned against the Alliance’s renewal by calling it ‘an extremely one-sided affair’ that provided British diplomatic and financial support to Japan, a ‘far more dangerous menace’ than Russia.¹⁹³ The Alliance recognised Korea’s annexation while

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ *Agreement of Alliance of 1902 (Agreement of Alliance between Japan and Great Britain, 1902, First Anglo-Japanese Alliance)*, 30 January 1902 (<https://worldjpn.net/documents/texts/pw/19020130.T1E.html>) accessed: 07/04/2025.

¹⁹⁰ Saoko Alfred Sze, ‘China and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance’, *Current History*, Vol. 14, no. 5 (1921), p. 747.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, pp. 747 – 748.

¹⁹² ‘The Anglo-Japanese Alliance – Hunan Provincial Constitution Conference, Chang Sha – Asks the League of Nations to advise both Japan and Great Britain to suspend the renewal of their alliance so as to maintain the peace of the world’, 21 June 1921, File R574/11/13476/6202, LNA, UNLA, Geneva, Switzerland (<https://archives.ungeneva.org/the-anglo-japanese-alliance-hunan-provincial-constitution-conference-chang-sha-asks-the-league-of-nations-to-advise-both-japan-and-great-britain-to-suspend-the-renewal-of-their-alliance-so-as-to-maintain-the-peace-of-the-world>) accessed: 06/04/2025.

¹⁹³ ‘The Anglo-Japanese Alliance – Hon. Secretary, Chinese Central Union, London – Transmits copy of pamphlet entitled “The problem of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance”’, 16th July 1920, File R574/11/6202/6202, LNA, UNLA, Geneva, Switzerland, pp. 3 – 10 (<https://archives.ungeneva.org/the-anglo-japanese-alliance-hon-secretary-chinese-central-union-london-transmits-copy-of-pamphlet-entitled-the-problem-of-the-anglo-japanese-alliance>) accessed: 06/04/2025.

protecting Japan's 'brutal' methods towards China like devaluing the Chinese currency through bank-note forgery and melting down coins, acquiring land through fraud and conducting guerrilla warfare.¹⁹⁴ In contrast, the Alliance harmed British Far Eastern trade because Japanese influence had closed down South Manchurian and Korean markets while British association with Japan had deterred Chinese consumers from British products.¹⁹⁵ The Union highlighted Japan's violation of the Alliance by making secret treaties with Russia and Germany, limiting aid to the Allies in the war in favour of seizing Kiaochow and Pacific Islands while opposing railway concessions granted to Britain by China in 1907 and 1915.¹⁹⁶ The Union mentioned these details to convince Britain to halt further alliance with an untrustworthy Japan.

Although Assistant Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Victor Wellesley favoured dismantling the Alliance to contain Japanese expansion in China, Hattori argues that top British officials like Curzon, Balfour and Lloyd George favoured its renewal to form 'a new international order in East Asia' with Japan.¹⁹⁷ America, however, opposed its renewal. With the Alliance expiring on 13th July 1921, the Chargé in China, Charles Tenney opposed the Alliance's renewal as it 'would have an unfortunate effect in China' while Polk was concerned that 'the Alliance is...aimed at America'.¹⁹⁸ According to Ian Nish, America 'had developed a neurosis towards the...alliance...becoming the mouth-piece for China's opposition to the alliance'.¹⁹⁹ The American government and public favoured 'using its influence to (end) the alliance' as they believed it could endanger America interests.²⁰⁰ 'Indirectly', America pressured Britain and Japan about the Alliance's unpopularity among Americans while later 'directly' deciding the Alliance's fate through the WNC; Nish called America's intervention 'a blatant intrusion...for purely selfish ends'.²⁰¹ On 13th December 1921, America, Britain, Japan and France signed the Four-Power Treaty which terminated the Alliance while allowing America to intervene

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Hattori, *Japanese Diplomacy and East Asian International Politics*, pp. 37 – 40.

¹⁹⁸ Joseph Fuller, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1920, Vol. 2* (Washington D.C: Government Printing Office, 1936), p. 680.

¹⁹⁹ Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, pp. 281 – 305.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid, p. 396.

through joint conferences if disputes between the other three nations arise over Pacific rights.²⁰² This treaty was to prevent Japan from making exclusive bilateral agreements with Britain or any foreign nations that would jeopardise American interests.

Additionally, America intervened in the Shandong settlement although it should have been a solely Sino-Japanese affair after Article 156. On 4th February 1922, Japan and China signed a treaty in Washington where ‘Japan shall restore to China...Kiaochow’, including rights over mines, salt industries, submarine cables, wireless stations and the Tsingtao-Tsinanfu Railway.²⁰³ The treaty, nevertheless, required China to open Kiaochow ‘to foreign trade and (permit)...foreign nationals...freely to reside and...carry on commerce, industry and other lawful pursuits’ while allowing ‘the foreign community...fair representation’ when operating laundry, stockyard, electric light and telephones.²⁰⁴ On 30th March 1922, the Nine-Power Treaty was ratified to ‘safeguard the rights...of China’ by guaranteeing her ‘sovereignty...independence...territorial and administrative integrity’; this was, however, to fulfil Western interests by ensuring ‘equal opportunities in China for the trade and industry of all nations’.²⁰⁵ Foreign powers could not establish spheres-of-influence, monopolies and superiority of rights in China or make secret treaties that could violate ‘Open Door’ while China was obligated to ‘not exercise or permit discrimination of any kind’ when operating her railways.²⁰⁶ In contrast, Esmond Harmsworth informed the Parliament on 29th March that the WNC did not discuss Korea’s case while no ‘resolutions...affecting Korea were arrived at’.²⁰⁷

Despite America’s intervention, Japanese officials were keen on accepting the Washington order. In January 1920, Emperor Taisho issued a royal rescript celebrating the ‘new (Washington) treaty...(for establishing)...perpetual peace’ while encouraging his subjects to work with ‘friendly nations’ to

²⁰² ‘The Four Power Treaty’, *Advocate of Peace through Justice*, Vol. 83, no. 12 (1921), p. 424.

²⁰³ *Treaty Between Japan and China for the Settlement of Outstanding Questions Relative to Shantung*, 4 February 1922 (<https://worldjpn.net/documents/texts/pw/19220204.T1E.html>) accessed: 24/03/2025.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *Nine Power Treaty on China* (Washington D.C: Government Printing Office, 1922), pp. 3 – 7 (<https://li.proquest.com/elhpdf/histcontext/SED-67-2-5.pdf>) accessed: 28/04/2025.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 7 – 8.

²⁰⁷ *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, Vol. 152, 29 March 1922, p. 1304 (<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1922-03-29/debates/f8d51468-0739-476e-b462-98171e3d637c/Korea>) accessed: 27/03/2025.

achieve ‘universal justice...human progress...peace and tranquility’.²⁰⁸ Admiral Baron Tomosaburo Kato was also eager for Japan to ‘unequivocally’ accept the Washington treaties; Kato ‘was impelled to accept’ his promotion to Japan’s chief delegate in the WNC because ‘there was danger to the treaties unless he became premier’.²⁰⁹ One of the treaties was the Five-Power Treaty which set a 5:5:3 ratio for naval armament for America, Britain and Japan respectively.²¹⁰ Viscount Uchida Kosai, however, ‘welcomed (disarmament) for the general welfare of the human race’ on 23rd January 1921 while Okuma boasted that ‘Japan will be second to none in...disarmament...for the peace of the world.’²¹¹

Japan’s positive response, nonetheless, was due to the WNC’s consistency with Japanese aims rather than a desire for ‘universal justice’. Frederick Dickinson argues against the traditional interpretation regarding Japan’s distress towards the WNC, suggesting that it guaranteed Japanese prestige as a ‘world power’ which was the Japanese REP’s aim in 1919.²¹² Dickinson argues that the Four-Power Treaty made the Japanese in charge of the Pacific alongside three other powers while Japan ‘stood at number three...with the third largest navy’ behind America and Britain under the Five-Power Treaty.²¹³ With America’s post-war dominance, Hattori argues that Japanese interests could be better preserved under the Washington System than the outdated Alliance.²¹⁴ This shows that interests drove Japanese diplomacy towards China, like the West, rather than Wilsonian principles.

²⁰⁸ ‘The Treaty of Peace Signed: Signatory Allied Powers Define Attitude — Germany’s Mood for the Future — Japan’s Imperial Rescript’, *The Advocate of Peace*, Vol. 82, no. 1 (1920), pp. 26 – 27.

²⁰⁹ ‘The Signs in Japan and China’, *Advocate of Peace through Justice*, Vol. 84, no. 7 (1922), p. 270.

²¹⁰ *Limitation of Naval Armament (Five-Power Treaty or Washington Treaty)*, 6th February 1922, p. 353 (<https://weaponsandwarfare.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/m-ust000002-0351.pdf>) accessed: 28/04/2025.

²¹¹ Henry Satoh, ‘Militarism and Navalism in America’ in Kiyoshi Kawakami (ed.), *What Japan Thinks* (New York: Macmillan, 1921), pp. 125 – 126.

²¹² Frederick Dickinson, *World War I and the Triumph of a New Japan, 1919 – 1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 75.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Hattori, *Japanese Diplomacy and East Asian International Politics*, pp. 61 – 62.

Conclusion

This dissertation has shown that that Japan was, as Sand stated, a ‘subaltern imperialist’: a hybrid between a Western-style imperialist and oppressed Asian victim.²¹⁵ This offers a unique diplomatic case study that is not present in Western empires; Japan used her former status to colonise East Asian territories but utilised her latter status to demonise Western hegemony. This presented a ‘Far Eastern racial hierarchy’ with the West on top; Japan in the middle; Korea and China in the bottom. This means that while Japan could denounce the West, Korea and China could also criticise Japan. According to Pedersen, this was done through petitioning to the League to ‘internationalise’ Japanese brutalities and hypocrisy.²¹⁶ The different Western treatments towards China and Korea also exposed Western hypocrisy as they only act on Wilsonian principles to preserve their interests.

Burkman and Hattori were right in saying that Japan and the West tried to expand their interests through peaceful cooperation.²¹⁷ ‘Cooperation with expansion’ was driven by the persistence of old ideas during the interwar period. Western-Japanese diplomacy stayed the same as before the PPC, the difference is that Wilsonian languages became mandatory in diplomacy. Thus, Japan tried to use Wilsonian principles to justify the REP and gain Shandong peacefully to fulfil her Meiji policy of fending against Western hegemony. Although the West preached ‘equality’, they rejected Japan’s REP but claims to see Japan as an ‘equal’ and only cared about China’s ‘self-determination’, but not Korea’s, because the ‘yellow peril’ could threaten Western interests in China.

Therefore, cooperation was not a genuine commitment to Wilsonian ideals; Japan and the West distrusted each other since the mid-nineteenth century; they only cooperated for benefits and to avoid alienation. Japan joined the League to negotiate racial equality and then welcomed the Washington System to achieve ‘world power’ status. Hence, Japan ended cooperation and invaded Manchuria for a

²¹⁵ Sand, ‘Subaltern Imperialists’, p. 275.

²¹⁶ Pedersen, *The Guardians*, pp. 4 – 5.

²¹⁷ Burkman, *Japan and the League of Nations*, pp. 63 – 64; Hattori, *Japanese Diplomacy and East Asian International Politics*, pp. 2 – 3.

buffer state when Soviet expansionism and Chinese anti-Japanese sentiments threatened Japanese interests; cooperation with the West became restrictive rather than beneficial.²¹⁸

²¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 166 – 174.

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