INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION IN CHINA, 1899–1991

The rise, fall, and restoration of the Open Door Policy

Bruce A. Elleman

ROUTLEDGE

International Competition in China, 1899–1991

China’s recent economic reforms have opened its economy to the world. This policy, however, is not new: in the late nineteenth century, the United States put forward the Open Door Policy as a counter to European exclusive “spheres of interest” in China. This book, based on extensive original archival research, examines and re-evaluates China’s Open Door Policy. It considers the policy from its inception in 1899 right through to the post-1978 reforms. It relates these changes to the various shifts in China’s international relations, discusses how decades of foreign invasion, civil war, and revolution followed the destruction of the policy in the 1920s, and considers how the policy, when applied in Taiwan after 1949, and by Deng Xiaoping in mainland China after 1978, was instrumental in bringing about, respectively, Taiwan’s “economic miracle” and mainland China’s recent economic boom. The book argues that, although the policy was characterized as U.S. “economic imperialism” during the Cold War, in reality it sought to help China retain its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

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Contents

List of figures

Preface

When I began this research almost thirty years ago now, it never occurred to me that studying the history of the Open Door Policy could be such a challenge. After all, weren't all the pertinent documents public and within easy reach? Much to my surprise, I soon found out otherwise. What followed was more like a murder investigation than a scholarly research project. I started in England, in 1984, at the British Library, then co-located with the British museum. Sitting just down the row from Karl Marx's desk, I tried to figure out why the Chinese Eastern Railway became such a sticking point in Sino– Soviet diplomatic relations during the 1950s. Although it was finally turned over by Moscow in 1955, tensions between the two communist nations worsened quickly, and within five years the Sino-Soviet "monolith" had fallen. This event spurred my interest in the history of Sino-Soviet diplomatic relations.

From 1988 through 1991, as part of my efforts to earn a Ph.D. in history at Columbia University, I conducted research for a year first in Moscow, at the Lenin Library, where I read the Bolshevik propaganda denouncing the Open Door Policy as little better than "economic imperialism," and then for a second year in Beijing, mainly at Peking University's historical library, where I could see first-hand how the early members of the Chinese Communist Party quickly followed suit beginning in 1921. I must have half believed this Comintern-inspired propaganda, because I remember being surprised the next year to discover in the Beijing government's Foreign Ministry Archives, located in Nankang, Taiwan, that the Bolsheviks actively promoted the Open Door Policy in their earliest negotiations with China, and the year after that in Japan, at the Foreign Ministry Archives in Tokyo, that the Bolsheviks also supported the Open Door with regard to Japan. How could I explain this apparent contradiction?

After returning to the United States in 1993, I was fortunate to spend two years at the Hoover Institution, where I found and read Stanley K.

Hornbeck's voluminous papers on the Open Door, including an unpublished book manuscript on this very topic. T. V. Soong's papers were also at Hoover, as were several of his aides including Victor Hoo, who left official transcripts of the 1945 Sino-Soviet negotiations. At nearby Berkeley, I used the papers of Hornbeck's close colleague, E. T. Williams. During several visits to Harvard University, I was fortunate to be able to use the Trotsky Archives. All of these sources reconfirmed that the Soviet policy toward the Open Door was duplicitous, supporting it when it helped protect the Soviet Union from invasion but denouncing it when it interfered with Soviet expansion into China.

Next came the U.S. government archives on the matter, including reading the Averell Harriman and John Hay papers held by the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, as well as conducting endless trips to the NARA facility in College Park, Maryland. By chance, I also heard of the recently opened papers of John Foster Dulles, held at the Mudd Archives at Princeton, and spent several summers there. Finally, I took several summer research trips to presidential libraries, including the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas, and the Truman Presidential Library in Independence, Missouri. To round off this effort, I visited the British National Archives in Kew several times, sometimes for as little as a day and other trips up to several weeks long.

During this three-decade research saga, I spent almost ten years overseas, including one year in Russia, a year in the PRC, a year in England, three years in Japan, and – counting both long and short visits – almost three years in Taiwan. Research trips within the United States were too numerous to keep track of. During this entire period I remained determined to figure out the circumstances surrounding the demise of the Open Door Policy in China. However, I could not wait until my research was concluded to publish. Therefore, this book makes use of material previously presented in several of my earlier published books, including but not limited to *Diplomacy and Deception* (1997), *Modern Chinese Warfare* (2001), *Wilson and China* (2002), and *High Seas Buffer* (2012). Any mistakes are my own, of course, and any virtues are mainly due to the dozens of librarians and archivists who made this book possible, as well as to my constant companion and spouse Sarah C. M. Paine. The opinions expressed in this monograph are the author's alone, and do not reflect those of the U.S. government or the U.S. Naval War College.

Acknowledgments

To conduct the research for this book took decades. I must first thank the librarians and staff of the U.S. Naval War College Library, including Alice Juda, Wayne Rowe, Robin Lima, and Robert Schnare. At Stanford, I owe many thanks to Molly Molloy at Green Library, and to Elena Danielson and Carol Leadenham at the Hoover Institution Archives. At Columbia University's East Asian Library, I want to thank Frances LaFleur. At the Mary Couts Library, Texas Christian University, I owe a huge debt to Joyce Martindale. As for foreign archives and libraries, I am grateful to the staffs at Academia Sinica and the Guomindang Archives, in Nankang and Taipei respectively, the Lenin Library in Moscow, the Peking University Library in Beijing, the Number Two Historical Archives in Nanjing, the Foreign Ministry Archives in Tokyo, and the National Archives in Kew. I also owe a debt to the Library of Congress and the National Archives, in Washington, DC, and College Park, MD, respectively, the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas, and the Truman Presidential Library in Independence, Missouri. Finally, thanks go to the staffs of the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, the Seeley Mudd Archives at Princeton University, the Houghton Library at Harvard University, and the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Columbia University. Without the assistance of all of these fine institutions this book would never have been written.

Introduction

Open Door versus spheres of interest

With the appearance at the turn of the twentieth century of the United States as a major Pacific power, a new *modus vivendi* – the Open Door Policy – came into direct competition with spheres of interest in East Asia. The 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki, which confirmed Japan's military victory over China, had started a struggle to carve out foreign territorial concessions in which Japan, Russia, France, Germany, and England appeared intent on dismembering China. The Open Door Policy was initially created in 1899 by the United States in response to these territorial encroachments. Its goal was to protect China from being divided into a myriad of foreign-controlled territorial concessions that would disrupt free access to Chinese markets.

In sharp contrast to the creation of spheres of interest, the United States favored economic competition. Unlike the other Great Powers, it did not retain any railway or territorial concessions in China. Instead, U.S. interests revolved around commerce and were most concerned with opening China's huge domestic markets to foreign trade. Unlike foreign concessions, which were often under the sole control of a single country and with preferential trade privileges ceded only to that country, the Open Door Policy relied on free trade among China and all of the foreign countries on an equal basis.

The Open Door Policy's emphasis on economic competition tacitly recognized that ownership of territory and natural resources did not alone produce wealth. Wealth was created by efficiently combining natural resources with industry. To promote national growth, therefore, countries had to reduce barriers that might interfere with free trade, to guarantee freedom of navigation on the seas, and to work together through international associations to ameliorate conflicts. This world-view, which is still largely considered valid today, was at the center of America's foreign policy goals from 1899 onward.

The U.S. response to the ongoing partitioning of China was anti-

imperialist, since it opposed territorial annexation and foreign interference in another country's domestic affairs. It was pro-capitalist, however, since all countries would have equal economic access to China. Success or failure would be determined by the efficiency and resourcefulness of each country's businessmen, not by political or military power. General acceptance of the logic behind the Open Door Policy, for a time at least, effectively halted the blatant partitioning of China into territorial spheres of interest. This policy protected China's sovereignty and territorial integrity during the following two decades.

Even though the Open Door Policy helped provide China with a semblance of unity after 1899, it was later portrayed by the Soviet government's anti-imperialist propaganda after October 1917 as just one more type of foreign interference in China's internal affairs. The United States was condemned as being as self-serving as the other capitalist nations. To Vladimir Lenin and the other Bolshevik leaders, the kind of international cooperation that the United States promoted in Asia under the rubric of the Open Door seemed intent on surrounding and containing the Soviet government.

After World War I, both the United States and the Soviet governments proclaimed their opposition to imperialism and imperialist expansion in China. But their respective definitions of imperialism differed, with the United States opposing territorial aggrandizement and the USSR opposing the spread of capitalism. To replace territorial imperialism, President Woodrow Wilson hoped that the League of Nations would allow the victors in World War I to build a new world order around mutual security and cooperation among nations. For the United States, this plan was based on the Open Door Policy. These basic ideological differences made the Open Door Policy an early target of the Soviet government's anti-capitalist propaganda in China, which turned many Chinese professors and their students against the Open Door. Chinese intellectuals, many of whom first learned about communism while studying abroad, especially in Japan, helped the Soviet government undermine and destroy the viability of the Open Door in China.

***

Negative assessments of the Open Door Policy were widely accepted during the Cold War, when the Soviet political and economic system still appeared to be viable. During this period, there was significant criticism of the

economic motivations behind the U.S. turn-of-the-century support for the Open Door Policy in China. For example, one critic portrayed this policy as little more than a U.S. attempt "to secure supremacy in Manchuria through economic penetration."[1] Another concluded that the Open Door was simply a "viable alternative to imperialism," as it evolved from "a diplomatic tactic to its place as holy writ in the shrine of American foreign policy."[2] A third said the United States "could pose as the savior of China while advancing its own economic and cultural interests."[3]

In the wake of the 1991 collapse of the USSR, however, most countries have moved away from the Soviet development model. Even the nominally Communist government of China has embraced market reforms, encouraged foreign investment, and promoted capitalist growth. All such Cold War critiques must be reevaluated, therefore, particularly in light of new evidence suggesting the hitherto underestimated role of the Open Door Policy in protecting China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. During the early 1920s the Bolsheviks even resorted, albeit secretly, to the Open Door to halt Japan's aggression in Siberia and to prop up its puppet state the Far Eastern Republic. At the exact same time, however, Soviet propaganda denounced the Open Door Policy in China as a tool of economic imperialism since this policy directly interfered with Moscow's goal of reclaiming the Imperial Russian spheres of interest and concessions in China and using them as a base to spread Communism.

Thus, while the Bolsheviks resorted to the Open Door in Siberia to defend Russia's territorial integrity, this policy actively interfered with the USSR's expansionist goals. Soviet propaganda equating the Open Door with economic imperialism was used to justify the USSR's expansion into Outer Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, Manchuria, and, later, China proper. Most historians agree that the Open Door Policy supported U.S. economic interests in China, but the territorial protection that China also received under its auspices has been largely ignored or dismissed. This book will argue that the Bolsheviks were cognizant of the territorial guarantees that the Open Door offered to China, and actively worked to eliminate the very protection for China that they sought for themselves in Siberia.

***

From 1899 through the middle of the 1920s, the Open Door Policy helped

prevent the partitioning of China. Following the destruction of this policy, however, the Soviet Union's hold over its own territorial concessions in northern and northeastern China was correspondingly strengthened, which challenged Japan to respond in kind. During almost two decades the Soviet Union and Japan actively competed to extend their territorial spheres of interest in China. This struggle led to an "autonomous" Mongolian People's Republic (MPR) by 1924, and to Japan's formation of Manchukuo during 1931–1932.

Archival materials proving that the Soviet Union worked to discredit the Open Door Policy in China supports arguments that it was Soviet government officials and Communist International (Comintern) agitators that were instrumental in undermining Washington's efforts to protect China and sponsor its subsequent development along capitalist lines. After the end of World War II, these Soviet concessions grew even larger by absorbing former Japanese-held lands. These concessions quickly became the base area supporting the Chinese communist victory in 1949.

An examination of the 1945 negotiations between Averell Harriman and Joseph Stalin proves that while Stalin agreed to adhere to the Open Door Policy throughout Northern China, he later reneged on this promise by taking Outer Mongolia and by refusing to allow U.S. ships to dock at Port Arthur (in Chinese called Lüshun) or Dairen (Dalian). This action helped the Chinese Communists consolidate control over Manchuria before taking all of mainland China.

For most of the next twenty-one years, from 1950 through 1971, when the process of opening diplomatic relations was begun by Mao Zedong and Richard Nixon, China was cut off by a U.S.-led strategic embargo. In 1986, seven years after Deng Xiaoping and Jimmy Carter renewed diplomatic relations, Deng opened up China completely to foreign investment. This began a remarkable economic revolution in the People's Republic of China (PRC) that many Western commentators referred to as China's new "Open Door" policy.

In the twenty-first century, China has progressively turned away from the socialist path of economic development and appears to have firmly adopted the capitalist path. Given this fact, it is especially appropriate to investigate how Soviet efforts to destroy the U.S.-sponsored Open Door Policy cleared the way for a resurgence of Russian and Japanese expansionism in China, ushering in decades of foreign invasion, civil war, and Communist

revolution. In the early decades of the twenty-first century, the long-term damage to China of this early period has yet to be fully reversed.

Notes

1 William Appleman Williams, *American–Russian Relations 1781–1947* (New York: Rinehart, 1952), 106.
2 Michael H. Hunt, *Frontier Defense and the Open Door* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973), 34, 246.
3 Delber L. McKee, *Chinese Exclusion versus the Open Door Policy 1900–1906* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1977), 216.

The origins of the Open Door Policy in China

China's nineteenth-century history was tumultuous, with the first and second Opium Wars opening up China to foreign influence and, in some cases, territorial invasion. The British are usually cited as the worst imperialists, because of their permanent colony on the island of Hong Kong, even though the total territory transferred from China to Britain was minuscule. It was Russia, in point of fact, that took the most land from China. Just as Siberia was traditionally considered to be Russia's final frontier, the Far East was seen as Imperial Russia's best chance for territorial and economic expansion during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[1]

Between 1858 and 1860, Russia signed a series of treaties with China – the Treaty of Aigun, the Treaty of Tianjin, and the Treaty of Beijing – ceding to Russia the Amur region, the Maritime Province, and significant territories in Central Asia adjoining Xinjiang, which together equaled in size France and Britain combined. Russia's territorial appetite was not satisfied, however, with St. Petersburg next setting its sights on Mongolia and Manchuria. If the Qing dynasty collapsed in China, then Russia was prepared to take its share of the spoils. Throughout most of the nineteenth century, Russia's foreign policy in the Far East largely revolved around finding ways to increase its influence. This territorial encroachment, in turn, compelled Japan and the other Great Powers to follow suit.

Only the United States had a different view. When France and Britain started the second Opium War in the mid 1850s, the United States refused to participate in "securing larger commercial privileges by intimidation, or possibly by force;" by contrast, in 1856, Secretary of State Lewis Cass stated that U.S. policy was not motivated by "territorial aggrandizement or the acquisition of political power" in China.[2] The U.S. government promoted free trade throughout Asia. Rather than invading and taking land in China, as many of the other Great Powers were doing, when General Ulysses S. Grant visited Asia in 1879, he stated that U.S. policy supported the territorial

integrity and independence of China. Twenty years later, Secretary of State John Hay proclaimed in 1899 that China should not be divided into competing spheres of interest, but should be open for all countries to invest in and trade with. This doctrine was called the “Open Door Policy.”

America’s friendly relations with China

It is often overlooked that the American Revolution was intimately linked with the China trade. The 1773 Boston Tea Party was protesting the high British taxes on Chinese tea. Soon after the American Revolution, the United States opened direct trade with China when its merchant ship *Empress of China* arrived in Canton (modern-day Guangzhou) in 1784. This event led to the gradual development of triangular trade among Europe–China–America that was highly beneficial to all parties.

U.S. merchants sold a wide variety of goods to China, including opium. U.S. opium sales from Smyrna, Turkey, began in 1805. By the 1830s, opium sales accounted for one-quarter of all U.S. exports to China. However, the U.S. portion of this trade only equaled about 10 percent of the total opium trade. When China cracked down on the sale of opium beginning in 1839, U.S. merchants stopped importing opium. The opium trade was much more important to British merchants. When war broke out between China and Great Britain, the United States remained neutral and did not participate in the first Opium War (1839–1842).

After defeating China, British diplomats opened peace talks in Nanjing. On October 8, 1842, the U.S. representative in China, Commodore Lawrence Kearny, wrote to the Governor of Canton requesting “the attention of the Imperial Government might be called with respect to the commercial interests of the United States, and he hopes the importance of their trade will receive consideration, and their citizens in that matter be placed upon the same footing as the merchants of the nation most favored.”[3] The next year, Kearny repeated that the U.S. government intended to ask for the same rights that China “grants to the traders from other countries.”[4]

Taking advantage of the most-favored-nation clause that was included in the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing, U.S. diplomats negotiated the Sino-U.S. Treaty of Wangxia. This treaty, signed on July 3, 1844 and ratified by President John Tyler on January 17, 1845, included commercial clauses by which the U.S. government acquired many of the same preferential trade privileges that

Great Britain had won two years earlier through military force. This was an important point, and some scholars even argue that the U.S. Open Door Policy dates back "to the most-favored-nations clauses in the first U.S.–Chinese treaty in 1844."[5]

Although U.S. merchants were not major importers of opium when compared to the British, the "American share seems to have been largely distributing the opium up and down the coast in small, fast opium clippers."[6] Unlike Britain's continued support for the opium trade, U.S. trade in opium was declared illegal. The U.S. government even agreed to hand offenders over to the Chinese government for prosecution. The U.S. negotiator, Caleb Cushing, told China: "We do not desire any portion of the territory of China, nor any terms and conditions whatever which should be otherwise than just and honorable to China as well as to the United States."[7] In addition to its merchants, another major U.S. influence on China was its missionaries. Elijah Coleman Bridgman was the first U.S. Protestant missionary in China, arriving in 1830. After the first Opium War ended in 1842, five additional treaty ports were opened to foreign influence, and even more Chinese ports were opened after the second Opium War, 1856–1860. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, about 8,500 Protestant missionaries served in China, almost half of them from the United States. Foreign missionaries had an enormous impact on China, bringing not just religion but Western medicine, education, and scientific thinking. Even more important, once U.S. missionaries returned home, they "enthralled their friends, church organizations, and other groups all over the United States with accounts of their adventures in fabled Cathay." Not only did this create a "deep sympathy" for China, but later "popular enthusiasm" for the Open Door Policy could in part be attributed to "the sentimental feeling toward the Chinese, a feeling inspired by the missionaries."[8]

Cultural exchange did not occur simply in one direction. Thousands of Chinese men came to the United States seeking their fortunes after the 1848 "gold rush." Their numbers increased rapidly during the tumultuous years of the Taiping Rebellion from 1851–1865. Chinese laborers found employment constructing the Transcontinental Railway between 1863 and 1869. Relations were generally good, and China and the United States later signed the Burlingame Treaty on November 23, 1869. Concerned about the large number of contract workers, called "coolies" – meaning "bitter labor" in Mandarin Chinese – this treaty outlawed coolie labor, which often differed

little from indentured servitude or outright slavery.

The Burlingame Treaty was widely considered to be China's first equal treaty. Free trade unhampered by imperialist encroachments was the bedrock of Sino-U.S. relations. U.S. foreign policy decried invading and cutting out foreign concessions in Asian countries. In 1858, Secretary of State William H. Seward even told the Senate how valuable the Pacific Ocean would soon become to America: "The Pacific, its shores, its islands and the vast regions beyond, will become the chief theater of events in the world's great hereafter."[9] In 1879, General Ulysses S. Grant was on a tour of Asia when he stated: "It is likewise the policy of America in the Orient … that the integrity and independence of China and Japan should be preserved and maintained."[10] From this period onward, the United States supported China's territorial integrity.

Relations were not always smooth. The number of Chinese workers in the western United States grew quickly. Newly arrived European immigrants feared what they called unfair competition from the Chinese. In 1882, Congress signed the Chinese Exclusion Act suspending China immigration for ten years. During this period, tensions between the Chinese and other immigrant groups increased. The "Rock Springs" massacre of September 2, 1885, in particular, led to the death of twenty-eight Chinese miners and property destruction exceeding $100,000. Even though it was not required to do so, the U.S. Congress indemnified China $147,748.74 in damages. By 1890, there were approximately 110,000 Chinese men living and working in the United States, compared to only about 4,000 Chinese women. However, Chinese communities, such as San Francisco's "Chinatown," prospered.

Although there were ups and downs, the generally positive early history of Sino-U.S. relations – in particular when compared to the more rapacious behavior of some of the European countries and later Japan – meant that the U.S. government immediately became concerned when foreign powers began to invade Chinese territory during the late 1890s. In fact, historians argue that the Open Door Policy was developed largely in response to Russia's attempts to expand into Manchuria and Japan's parallel actions in Korea. One historian has even dated the origins of the U.S.–Soviet Cold War rivalry to the turn-of-the-century competition over Manchuria.[11]

The division of China into foreign spheres of interest

During the first Opium War, the British Royal Navy forced China's Manchu leaders to open up the country to the West by taking the isolated offshore island of Hong Kong. A number of Chinese ports' cities were opened to international trade, and certain foreign trade concessions were established in these ports, but the amount of territory involved was relatively small. During the mid 1800s, soon after the end of the Crimean War in 1856 and during the second Opium War (1856–1860), the Russian government also turned its attention to the Far East. Unlike the case with Great Britain, the Russian goal was to take from China as much territory as possible.

Between 1858 and 1860, Russia signed a series of treaties with China – the Treaty of Aigun, the Treaty of Tianjin, and the Treaty of Beijing – that are often referred to as some of the most onerous examples of China's so-called "unequal treaties." By these agreements, Russian gained an estimated 1,357,000 square miles of territory, which by one estimate equaled in size all of the United States east of the Mississippi.[12] In 1860, Russia proclaimed its dominance over the Far East by founding Vladivostok, which means "Ruler of the East." When it decided to sell Alaska to the United States in 1867, future Russian expansion turned southward to China. Russia's appetite for new territory was insatiable, and N. N. Murav'ev, the mid-nineteenth-century Governor General of Eastern Siberia, wrote that "in the event of the fall of the Empire of the Manchus our activities must be so aimed as to enable the formation of an independent domain … in Mongolia and Manchuria."[13]

Japan was concerned about Russia's rapid expansion into the Far East, and tried to come to terms with St. Petersburg. Japan's first treaty with Imperial Russia was the Treaty of Shimoda, signed on February 7, 1855. According to its terms, the boundary between Russia and Japan divided the Kuril Island chain between Uruppu and Etorofu Islands, while the island of Sakhalin was split between the two countries. As a result of recurring border tensions, the Treaty of St. Petersburg was signed on May 7, 1875. This treaty agreed that Japan would control all of the Kurils in exchange for granting Russia all of Sakhalin Island.

During this same period, Japan expanded to the south, taking Okinawa in 1872, and making it a prefecture in 1879. Japan also sought to take the island of Taiwan, so as to control the important sea lanes off its shores. As a result of the first Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), Japan obtained Taiwan and the Pescadores (Penghu islands), plus Japan attempted to dominate Fujian province across the strait from its colony on Taiwan. As part of the

negotiations leading to the treaty of Shimonoseki ending the Sino-Japanese War, Tokyo demanded a territorial concession in Liaodong Peninsula in Manchuria. But the triple intervention of Russia, Germany, and France forced Japan to return the Liaodong concession in exchange for a higher indemnity. As one Japanese scholar would later lament: "Here we mark the blunder of diplomacy committed by Japan during the foreign intervention of 1895. Japan should have secured the assurance from the three powers that they would abstain from leasing or occupying the Liao-tung [Liaodong] Peninsula, the refusal of which meant an open declaration of their ambitions."[14] The Sino-Japanese War instead ignited a foreign Scramble for Concessions in China. Some even spoke of dividing up China like a melon.

France had already taken Annam in the Sino-French War of 1884–1885. Taiwan played an important military role during the 1884–1885 Sino-French War, but France failed to take control over it, focusing on the south instead. Now, France acquired a sphere of interest in China on June 20, 1895 that included Yunnan, Guangxi, and Guangdong, which were all Chinese provinces abutting France's colony in Vietnam. On October 17, 1887, France claimed the Paracel Islands as part of French Indochina. And, during 1897, France added Hainan Island to its sphere of interest.

Germany in October 1895 acquired concessions in Hankou and in Tianjin, and in 1897 acquired a large sphere of interest in Shandong Province and, in particular, the port city of Qingdao. Germany had originally seized Jiaozhou Bay, in the province of Shandong, China, on November 1, 1897 in response to the murder of two German missionaries. Berlin forced Beijing to agree to a 99-year lease, beginning on March 6, 1898. In addition to ceding Germany land around Jiaozhou Bay for its concession at Qingdao, German companies were permitted to develop several railway lines in Shandong, and were given preferential mining rights on all land within 10 miles of the railway lines. Finally, German businesses were to be approached first if China wished to develop Shandong, which meant that in reality this province became an exclusive German sphere of interest.[15]

Russia, as a member of the Triple Intervention, also secured significant compensation from China. Russia's position in Manchuria was greatly strengthened in 1896, when Qing government officials agreed to permit the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER). Russia and China signed a secret agreement allowing Russia to build this railway across northern Manchuria linking Manzhouli and Vladivostok, with a second spur to the

south linking Harbin to Port Arthur. The CER cut through the rich heartland of northern Manchuria and controlled over 250,000 acres of land. This final east–west link of the Trans-Siberian Railway was by far the largest foreign concession in China. In terms of mileage it accounted for 45 percent of all foreign-owned railways in China in the 1920s. To obtain China's signature granting this concession, Russian diplomats used a secret 3 million ruble fund to bribe Chinese officials. They also promised to form a secret Sino-Russian military alliance against Japan, an agreement that the Russian government later broke when it occupied the Liaodong Peninsula in 1898, thereby gaining access to the ice-free ports of Port Arthur and Dairen.

Britain was opposed to dividing China into exclusive spheres of interest, but joined the Scramble for Concessions to act as a counterweight to the other powers. During 1898 Britain felt compelled to respond to Russia's acquisition of Port Arthur and Dairen with its own lease of Weihaiwei, directly across the Yellow Sea on the Shandong Peninsula. The concession treaty specified that Britain would withdraw from Weihaiwei as soon as Russia withdrew from Liaodong. This arrangement made Russia and Britain the dual guardians of the sea approaches to Beijing. By February 1898, Britain had also secured a predominant economic interest over the Yangzi River valley. In June 1898, Britain extended its Hong Kong concession by signing a 99-year contract to administer the New Territories on the mainland, and expanded its sphere to include Shanxi, Henan, and Sichuan provinces.

On April 28, 1899, Britain and Russia formalized their spheres of interest by signing the Anglo-Russian Agreement: Britain pledged not to seek railway concessions north of the Great Wall in return for a Russian promise not to do so in the Yangzi River valley. Britain had formerly supported the Open Door in China, but the Russian threat was just too great. After signing the Anglo-Russian agreement, however, London supported three additional diplomatic ventures – Washington's Open Door notes of September 6, 1899, the Anglo-German Agreement of October 16, 1900, and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of January 30, 1902 – to attempt to rein in the "Russian bear."[16]

The United States was one of the very few foreign powers that did not seek to take territory from China. Instead, Washington's dilemma was "how to assert and protect American rights without assuming a burdensome commitment to China."[17] The United States was faced with the partitioning of China into competing spheres of interest controlled by foreign powers, which was diametrically opposed to its goal of supporting free trade. During

early 1898 the British and U.S. governments opened discussions on how to protect China from being divided into exclusive foreign concessions. The two countries came up with an innovative proposal to help save China from outright dismemberment by emphasizing free trade and equal access to China's markets. These early talks eventually resulted in the creation of the Open Door Policy.

U.S. and British talks aimed at protecting China

Faced with what appeared to be the piece-by-piece dismemberment of China, special ambassador to Great Britain John Milton Hay (1838–1905) initiated discussions between the United States and Britain on creating a new China policy. Although nothing substantive came about immediately as a result of these early efforts, these discussions did help set the stage for later talks. Most importantly, it soon became clear that it would be the U.S. government, not Great Britain, which would be responsible for promoting the Open Door Policy.

Born on October 8, 1838, Hay graduated from Brown University and then worked for his uncle Milton Hay in his law office. After meeting the neighboring lawyer, Abraham Lincoln, Hay agreed to become Lincoln's private secretary in 1860. Following Lincoln's assassination, Hay served in various posts in U.S. legations in Paris, Madrid, and Vienna, before becoming assistant secretary of state. Hay worked for the U.S. government for thirty years, until in 1897 he was named U.S. ambassador to the United Kingdom by President William McKinley.

Hay arrived in London in early 1898. On January 12, 1898, Hay stated that "his government had not instructed him to make any communication … with regard to China," but he suggested to Lord Salisbury, the British Prime Minister, that if Salisbury "desired to send any message to them he would be happy to convey it." Salisbury declined to open discussions immediately. But, he did say that if foreign encroachments in China appeared to infringe on the "commercial or other rights of the Treaty Powers," then the United Sates would be "the first country with which Her Majesty's Government would desire to communicate."[18]

Neither message referred to the words "open door" either directly or indirectly. This term dates back at least as early as the 1885 discussions concerning the status of the Congo. In the General Act of the Conference of

Berlin it was determined that there should be an open door policy with regard to the Congo, and this promise was reaffirmed in a treaty signed in Brussels in 1890.[19] As one Chinese diplomat later put it, the "Act of Berlin of 1885 was the first formal attempt to enforce the principle of the Open Door."[20] A similar "open door" decision had been made concerning Morocco. While not being overly specific, therefore, Hay's January 12, 1898 note to Salisbury proves that it was Hay who prompted discussions with Great Britain on initiating an Open Door Policy in China. This is a very different interpretation from those who argue that it was Great Britain that first approached President McKinley with a "proposal for some sort of concerted action in support of the principle of equality of trade throughout all China."[21]

Two months after Hay's note, Lord Salisbury was ready to take him up on his offer. On March 7, 1898, just a day after Germany forced China to grant a concession in Shandong Province, Salisbury wrote a "Very Confidential" message to President William McKinley. He pointed out that foreign powers could use two methods to "restrict the opening of China to the commerce of all nation": (1) "by procuring the lease of portions of the Chinese coast under conditions which would ensure preferential treatment to the Power acquiring such leave," or (2) "by obtaining the actual cession of portions of the Chinese littoral." He ended the message by stating: "Her Majesty's Government are anxious to know whether they could count on the cooperation of the United States in opposing any such action by Foreign Powers, and whether the United States would be prepared to join with Great Britain in opposing such measures, should such contingency occur."[22]

On March 17, 1898, the British Ambassador to the United States, Julian Pauncefote, wrote to Lord Salisbury of his recent March 8 meeting with McKinley to talk about "whether Her Majesty's Government could count upon the cooperation of the United States Government in opposing any action by Foreign Powers which would tend to restrict the opening of China to the commerce of all nations." During this interview, Pauncefote discussed "British and American interests in China, and the great importance of presenting an united front to the designs of certain Powers which menaced the freedom of trade" with China. McKinley assured Pauncefote "that the action of Russia and Germany in China had occupied his attention for some time past," but before responding he requested a delay to consult with State Department officials.[23]

A week later, Pauncefote was informed that Washington did not want to

break with its tradition of "avoiding interference or connection with European complications."[24] Assistant Secretary of State William R. Day told Pauncefote verbally of the President's answer during a March 16 meeting:

> Replying to the unofficial declaration of Sir Julian Pauncefote as to the desire of Lord Salisbury to know the attitude of the American Government on the possible complications in China and the Far East … the President has not been unmindful of the situation in China and its possible effect upon American trade and interests. He is in sympathy with the policy which shall maintain open trade in China, and all his advices indicate that there has been no occupation up to this time which proposes to interfere with that trade. On the contrary, the official communications which he has indicate there is no present purpose to close the Chinese trade to the civilized world, or to obtain exclusive Commercial privileges therein. He does not see any present reason for the departure of the United States from its traditional policy respecting foreign alliances and as far as practicable avoiding any interference or connection with European complications.

Day then went on to say that the president's views were stated cautiously, even though the "views of the President were in complete and earnest sympathy with those of Her Majesty's Government in regard to their policy in China."[25] Scholars have criticized McKinley's failure to respond positively to Salisbury's suggestion that the two nations cooperate: "If a co-operative American– British policy could have prevented the establishment of spheres of influence, that opportunity was now lost."[26] Elsewhere, this same scholar put it more bluntly: Washington "refused these overtures from London."[27] A few months later, Hay even wrote to McKinley from London asking him to reconsider, but the president refused.[28] All of this goes to show that it was Hay who was more interested than McKinley in determining a viable method for the United States government to help protect China from being divided into foreign spheres of interest.

The origin of the Open Door concept

Given the evident reluctance of the United States to come to China's aid, some scholars have given Lord Salisbury full credit for creating the Open

Door Policy during late 1897. This was based on the following three British foreign policy pillars: “maintenance of the Manchu dynasty, commercial supremacy for Britain, and acceptance of leased areas of economic spheres of influence.” Journalist Michael Hicks Beach perhaps helped coin the term during a speech reported in *The Times* on January 18, 1898, when he warned of the division of China: “This country must take care that not so many doors were closed upon us that there should not be sufficient doors to open in their stead.” To offset German and Russian acquisitions in North China, on March 25, 1898 the British leased Weihaiwei, the Shandong port immediately across the Yellow Sea from Port Arthur and Dairen. Meanwhile, Lord Devonshire told the House of Lords on April 5 that Britain did not seek “territorial acquisitions in China” but merely “the protection and maintenance of our commercial position in China.” These events have led authors like Mary Wilgus to conclude: “By the end of April 1898 the open door policy emerged fully matured.”[29]

It is true that Britain’s foreign policy was to protect China from foreign encroachment. To support China’s territorial integrity, the British promoted domestic reform in China to carry out much-needed modernization. Beginning in June 1898, the Qing government attempted to adopt a series of internal government reforms, along lines first taken by Japan during the Meiji restoration. These were called the Hundred Days’ reforms. During the 103 days from June 11 to September 21, 1898, the Guangxu Emperor issued decrees westernizing China’s military, judicial, educational, policing, and commercial institutions. If these reforms had succeeded, they might have allowed China’s central government to oppose foreign interference on its own. However, a September 21 palace coup by the Empress Dowager Cixi halted the reforms prematurely, before they had a significant impact.

China’s unsuccessful attempt to westernize its government institutions invited more foreign intrusions that might undermine its territorial integrity even further. Without a strong central government to oppose them, the foreign powers could continue to divide up China into exclusive spheres of interest. This process, in turn, threatened to jeopardize free trade between the foreign nations and China. Anglo-U.S. communications from early 1898 between Salisbury and McKinley prove that these two governments were concerned about the fate of China. Based on documents held in the British national archive, John Hay appears to have initiated these U.S.–British talks on his own volition, without having received any specific instructions from

Washington to do so. These preliminary Anglo-U.S. discussions became particularly important when Hay was appointed to be the 37th Secretary of State on September 30, 1898.

Focusing mainly on the resolution of the Spanish–American War, Hay did not take any action on China during his first eleven months as secretary of state. During this time a British book titled *China and the Open Door* published by a Colonel Coates during 1899, but undoubtedly written the year before, strongly advocated that the British government give China "unselfish encouragement from without" and that by adopting an "Open Door" it would give "to all nations alike … fair competitive trade."[30] Perhaps influ-enced by this author, on March 1, 1899, the U.S. minister to China, E. H. Conger, warned Washington that while he opposed "permanent ownership of territory" in China, with the possible exception of a coaling station: "But if all China is to fall into the hands of European powers, a strong foothold here by the United States, with something tangible to offer them, might compel them to keep permanently open doors for our commerce."[31]

During April 1899, Hay for the first time outlined his Open Door principles during a speech to the American Academy of Political and Social Science. He discussed the value of the Chinese markets, the commercial needs of its 4 million people, and declared that: "It has always been the policy of China to treat all foreign nations alike. They are all most-favored nations in a literary sense. The maintenance of an 'open door' is exactly in the line of her policy."[32] Faced with a deteriorating situation in China, Hay began working in earnest during August 1899 to fulfill his goal of formulating an Open Door Policy for China. Just a few weeks later – on September 6, 1899 – it was announced.

The process of writing the Open Door notes

Discussions between Britain and America about creating a policy to protect China began in early 1898. Hay's support for the Open Door aligned well with the emerging realization that the United States was a maritime nation. As early as 1890, Alfred Thayer Mahan had argued that maritime nations "will find it to their advantage to seek prosperity and extension by the way of sea and of commerce, rather than in attempts to unsettle and modify existing political arrangements in countries where a more or less long possession of power has … created national allegiance or political ties."[33] Secretary of

State Hay took Mahan's recommendations to heart.

There were other factors to consider. Over a thousand U.S. missionaries were living in China at this time, and many of them supported the Open Door Policy. One in particular, named Gilbert Reid, published several articles during spring 1899 warning that the United States had to face the threat of Russian expansion into Manchuria, German expansion into Shandong, and British expansion into the Yangzi Valley. He advocated that the U.S. government adopt a stronger policy in China, and even "urged the Washington government immediately to join Great Britain in support of the open door policy."[34] Jacob Gould Schurman, at this point the chairman of the President's Philippine Commission but later U.S. minister to China, reported on August 16, 1899 that: "China, it was agreed, should maintain its independent position, but its doors should be kept open."[35]

Although Hay was largely responsible for coming up with the basic points underlying the Open Door Policy, a U.S. state department official named William Woodville Rockhill is widely given credit for actually putting this policy down on paper. On July 25, 1899, one of Rockhill's British friends, named Alfred E. Hippisley, approached Rockhill about adopting the Open Door. Almost forty years later, Hippisley stated: "My own status in the Customs Service at the date (1899) when I drew up my scheme for an 'Open-door Policy' is easily stated. My appointment to the service was dated Peking, 1st January 1867; and in 1899 I had been a Commissioner of Customs for over 17 Years and held Brevet Rank of the Second Degree (Red Button)."[36] It was Hippisley who first made the suggestion that the "United States take the initiative since the other powers were less suspicious of her than they were of England."[37] On August 17, Hippisley wrote a long memorandum to Rockhill on the topic, much of which Rockhill later adopted in his draft.

After being given authorization by Hay to proceed on August 24, Rockhill drafted the Open Door notes and gave them to Hay four days later. According to Paul Varg: "Except for slight changes in word order and in form, the dispatches sent were identical with Rockhill's drafts."[38] Dated 28 August 1899, Rockhill's memorandum included three main principles: (1) the signatories to any Open Door agreement would not interfere with any treaty ports within a foreign country's "sphere or interest" or undermine their interests there; (2) that all ports within these spheres should be free ports, or that the Chinese tariffs should apply equally to all merchandise; and (3) that

harbor dues and railroad charges be the same for all merchandise. In effect, while granting that the "spheres of interest" existed and would remain in effect, these notes asked all nations to recognize "absolute equality of treatment" with regard to trade and commerce, even though at this point it did not specifically offer U.S. support to protect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.[39]

The ultimate goal of such an Open Door policy would be to "prepare the way for concerted action by the Powers to bring about the Reforms in Chinese administration and the strengthening of the Imperial Government recognized on all sides as essential to the maintainence [*sic*] of peace." It was "particularly important for obvious reasons of both domestic and foreign policy that the initiative for these negotiations should be taken by the United States." Not only was this policy "useful and desireable [*sic*] for the commerce of all nations," but: "It furthermore has the advantage of securing to the United States the appreciation of the Chinese Government, who would see in it a strong desire to arrest the disintegration of the Empire and would greatly add to our prestige and influence in Peking."[40]

On September 6, 1899, Hay sent the following three principles to London, Berlin, and St. Petersburg, followed by an identical note to Japan on November 13, Italy on November 17, and to France on November 21, specifying that each country within its respective sphere of interest would:

> First. Will in no way interfere with any treaty port or any vested interest within any so-called "sphere of interest," or leased territory it may have in China.
>
> Second. That the Chinese treaty tariff of the time being shall apply to all merchandise landed or shipped to all such parts as are within said "sphere of interest" (unless they be "free ports") no matter to what nationality it may belong, and that duties so leviable shall be collected by the Chinese Government.
>
> Third. That it will levy no higher harbor dues on vessels of another nationality frequenting any port in such "sphere" than shall be levied on vessels of its own nationality, and no higher railroad charges over lines built, controlled, or operated within its "sphere" on merchandise belonging to citizens or subjects of other nationalities transported through such "sphere" than shall be levied on similar merchandise belonging to its own nationals transported over equal distances.[41]

In his personal letter to Andrew Dickson White, the U.S. ambassador to Germany, Hay went on to say that the commercial interests of Great Britain and Japan would "be so clearly served by the desired declaration of intentions," that their full cooperation could be "confidently expected."[42]

Although Hay sought positive responses to his policy, the lack of clearly stated opposition was taken as an affirmation of his basic points. By March 1900, Hay had received positive replies from France, Germany, Italy, and Japan. Rather than accepting the notes completely, Britain exempted Kowloon, right across from Hong Kong Island, just as Russia exempted Port Arthur, its main port on the Liaodong Peninsula.[43] According to one view, some replies were "evasive" and Russia's reply was "more nearly a blunt refusal than an acceptance." But Hay chose to interpret them as "unqualified acceptance of an Open Door policy." On March 20, 1900, Hay reported that in each case the response was "final and definitive."[44] Russia, in particular, was not enthusiastic about the U.S. proposal. In April 1900, Hay wrote to Ambassador White in Berlin that "he thought Russia only agreed to the open door because it believed that the other nations would decline and thus the whole declaration would come to nothing."[45]

To this point, the Beijing government had not been told about U.S. efforts to insure that the door to trade and commerce remained open in China. On March 22, 1900, Hay reassured China that Washington had received "renewed assurance of the policy of the Treaty Powers not to interfere with the integrity of the Chinese Empire." The main thrust of this policy was to support free trade, but the Open Door also aggressively supported China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Rockhill told Edwin Denby that the United States "holds the balance of power in China," and that this "will undoubtedly help to insure, for the time being, the integrity of the Chinese empire."[46]

This secondary aspect of the Open Door – defending the territorial integrity of China – was of great importance to the United States, since America was one of the few nations without territorial concessions in China, and so "if the partition of China should ever be accomplished, she had everything to lose, but nothing to gain." It also followed in line with those Americans, including the later U.S. minister to China Paul S. Reinsch, who argued in 1900 that a fundamental principle of U.S. foreign policy should be "the fostering of commercial relations and the strengthening of industries at home, rather than the acquisition of vast reaches of territory."[47] This policy

soon took on an importance in America second only to the Monroe Doctrine.

Conclusions

Throughout the nineteenth century, China ceded territory to a number of foreign powers, with Russia taking the lion's share; by contrast, the United States did not seek to take Chinese territory but simply conduct trade. China's 1895 defeat in the Sino-Japanese War caused a dramatic increase in the number of foreign treaty ports, plus the transfer of large territorial concessions to foreign control. The United States was not a major participant in the Scramble for Concessions, in part due to its preoccupation by the Cuban revolt of 1895 and the resulting Spanish–American War in 1898. After winning this war, the United States annexed Hawaii and Guam outright, and took over the administration of the Philippines until such time as it could independently govern itself.[48] Still, America's new possessions in the Western Pacific meant the U.S. government now had a "substantial claim to have a voice in Chinese affairs."[49] U.S. diplomats were well aware of the seriousness of the problems in China. During 1898, the United States and the United Kingdom began talks to determine how to slow the partitioning of China.

Their solution was to advocate that all foreign nations should trade with China as equals, rather than carve up and control Chinese territory directly by means of spheres of interest. During 1899, the U.S. government pushed for the adoption of the Open Door Policy to ensure that China would not be divided up by foreign countries. In public, at least, this policy was well received. The British saw it as an "empire on the cheap," which would allow it to build and sustain its "informal empire in China … through emphasis on private British enterprise, an aggressive man-on-the-spot [Sir Robert Hart], and with the assistance and acceptance of the pro-British Chinese merchants and officials."[50] As one early scholar stated positively of the Open Door Policy: "The beauty of the whole thing was that by declaring a policy so just and so fair, the Powers, though some of them were rather reluctant to its adhesion, gave one by one their assent, and had to recognize the new leadership of a nation that had up to that time been dormant and seemingly uninfluential."[51]

Russian and Japanese expansion into China particularly concerned the United States. Beginning in 1900, Hay sought protection of China's territorial

integrity. This policy's immediate success in slowing foreign imperialist expansion has been described as: "one of the most creditable episodes in U.S. diplomacy, an example of benevolent impulse accompanied by energy and shrewd skill in negotiation. Not one of the statesmen and nations that agreed to Hay's policy wanted to. It was like asking every man who believes in truth to stand up – the liars are obliged to be the first to rise. Hay saw through them perfectly; his insight into human nature was one of his strongest qualities."[52] Even though the U.S. public backed Hay's actions, and hoped the Open Door Policy would increase U.S. trade with China, "they were not prepared to make binding commitments for its support or to back up any effort to uphold it by a show of force."[53] As the next chapter will show, U.S. attempts to support free trade with China and to protect China's territorial integrity by means of the Open Door Policy were quickly undermined by Great Power secret diplomacy.

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ecret diplomacy undermines the Open Door

During the late nineteenth century China was called “the sick man of Asia.” To counter its ongoing division into foreign spheres of interest, John Hay, the U.S. Secretary of State, proposed the Open Door Policy in 1899. He warned that the dismembering of China into foreign territorial concessions could have a devastating effect on the Qing government. Hay hoped to limit foreign rivalry by calling for the preservation of China’s territorial and administrative unity. Although in public the other major countries agreed with Washington, in private they continued to resort to secret diplomacy to try to expand their spheres of interest in China.

Unfortunately for Beijing, so long as there was not an international organization to monitor foreign activity in China, the most the United States could do was exert diplomatic pressure on the other powers; there were no international sanctions for countries that encroached on Chinese sovereignty. While the other Great Powers had staked out their claims to specific territories in North and South China and tried to keep other foreigners out of these areas, U.S. commercial interests were primarily centered in central China and were especially conspicuous along the Yangzi River and in Shanghai, with approximately 65 percent of all U.S. investment in and around Shanghai.

Over time, the enormous U.S. financial investment in central China gave it a pivotal geographic position: its commercial interests were located directly between the Russian, Japanese, and German spheres of interest in the north, and the British and French spheres of interest mainly in the south. Following in line with Hay’s Open Door principles, successive U.S. governments tried to limit foreign rivalry by calling for the preservation of China’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, and administrative unity. However, Great Power secret diplomacy time after time disrupted these goals. With each new foreign demand for additional concessions China’s domestic power was further weakened.

Ten years of turmoil

Even as the U.S. government was trying to preserve China from being carved up into foreign concessions, a disastrous anti-foreign outburst during 1900, called the Boxer uprising, tried unsuccessfully to force all foreigners out of China. The failure of both the Qing government's modernizing reforms in 1898 – the so-called Hundred Days of Reform – and the Boxers' militant opposition to the foreign powers two years later appeared to show that China was incapable of responding effectively to the threat of foreign intervention. The failed reform movement and the Boxer uprising, radically different movements though they were, were both nationalistic responses to the erosion of the Chinese political system by foreign pressure. Eight foreign powers jointly marched on Beijing, quelling the rebellion by force in August 1900.

The Boxer uprising exacerbated China's domestic problems, as the diplomatic community forced China to agree in 1901 to an enormous indemnity to repay foreigners for the destruction of their property and death of their citizens. To guarantee the safety of the foreign consulates in Beijing, the diplomatic quarter was turned into an autonomous district under the direct control of the Diplomatic Corps and defended by foreign troops. The autonomy of the foreign quarter in Beijing, the extraterritorial rights enjoyed by foreigners, and the foreign concessions were seen by many Chinese as humiliating proof that China was not really a sovereign state, but was virtually a semi-colony. After the failure of the Boxer uprising, animosity toward foreigners, and especially towards Russians, who controlled the largest foreign concessions and received 28.97 percent of the Boxer indemnity, increased and permeated China's intellectual community.

On July 3, 1900, the fifty-sixth anniversary of the signing of the Sino-American Treaty of Wangxia, Secretary of State Hay declared in a circular to the other Great Powers that the U.S. government supported a solution to the Boxer troubles that would not only "safeguard for the world the principle of equal and impartial trade with all parts of the Chinese Empire," but would also "preserve Chinese territorial and administrative entity."[1] There has been much discussion of what Hay meant to accomplish in this circular: was he attempting to expand permanently the scope of the Open Door Policy, or was he simply stating the current policy of the U.S. government? Robert Beisner links the two: "What he was probably trying to do in 1900 was encourage

moderate conduct on the part of the Boxer expedition allies with a conspicuous declaration that the United States would not exploit the crisis by doing anything to weaken the Chinese state or obstruct equal commercial treatment for all parties in China and hoped the others would follow suit."[2]

While this second circular is usually joined with the first as an integral part of the Open Door Policy, Paul Hibbert Clyde has argued that there is "no evidence" that Hay sought "to add to the formal exchange of notes of the previous year upon the open door."[3] If this is the case, then supporting China's territorial integrity should be considered separately from the free trade provisions. However, one author who knew Hay personally during this time period later said: "What he sought to prevent was the dismemberment of China either by avowed concessions of territory or by arrangements which, under the guise of leases or otherwise, left her a nominal title to her domain, without administrative power or control."[4] Twice during 1901 – on August 29 and again on December 6 – Hay warned China not to sign separate agreements with any power that "will permanently impair the territorial integrity of China or impair the ability of China to meet her international obligations."[5] England and Germany backed this provision in their agreement of October 16 1900, as did Japan on January 30, 1902, while France and Russia finally agreed on March 19, 1902.

After the Boxers were defeated, the U.S. government stood alone in supporting a lenient treaty with China, but was overruled by those countries – including most importantly Imperial Russia, which had suffered huge property losses in northern Manchuria. Chinese intellectuals, like Liang Qichao, described the United States as the "most benevolent among the powers" because of its support for "pursuing an open door in China and in preserving China's territorial integrity."[6] Unlike most of the other Great Powers, who retained their shares of the Boxer indemnity, Washington agreed in 1908 to return its portion of the Boxer indemnity to Beijing in order to promote Chinese education, including the establishment of Qinghua University, still one of China's great institutions of higher education.

Northeast China was the most highly disputed region. The ongoing struggle to partition Manchuria into foreign spheres of interest soon ended in war between Russia and Japan. China remained neutral during this conflict, even though the major fighting took place in Manchuria. Chen Duxiu, who would later become the first leader of the Chinese Communist Party, was living in Manchuria immediately prior to the Russo-Japanese War and saw

the brutal treatment of the invading Russian troops during the Boxer uprising. In May 1903, Chen called on the Chinese people to oppose Russian expansion into Manchuria, warning that if Russia succeeded, then "every nation will moisten its lips and help itself to a part of China."[7]

War broke out in 1904 between Japan and Russia over control of Manchuria. After Japan defeated Russia in 1905, Washington offered its services to negotiate a peace treaty. Taking advantage of its role as broker, the U.S. government convinced Russia and Japan to declare that "they have not in Manchuria any territorial advantages or preferential or exclusive concessions in impairment of Chinese sovereignty or inconsistent with the principle of equal opportunity."[8] Thus, the Portsmouth Peace Treaty publicly supported the goals of the Open Door Policy while simultaneously reaffirming that Russia retained the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) and that Japan acquired most of the southern line from Harbin down to Dairen called the South Manchurian Railway (SMR).

The creation of the CER had helped to spark the era of foreign intervention, since it gave easy access to the heart of Manchuria. The CER was 1,073 miles long after the SMR was ceded to Japan in 1905, and represented approximately 45 percent of all of China's railway lines. It was by far the single largest foreign-run railway in China. By contrast, Japan's SMR represented 30 percent and Germany railway in Shandong accounted for 12 percent. France's 289-mile railway in Yunnan Province accounted for just over 12 percent, while Great Britain's Canton (Guangzhou) to Kowloon railway equaled only 1 percent of the foreign-run railways in China.[9] Belgium acquired the Beijing–Hankou Railway concession in 1897. Meanwhile, the United States secured the Guangzhou–Hankou Railway concession the following year, but decided not to go through with it. This meant that America was one of the few major countries that did not have a railway concession in China.

The U.S.-brokered 1905 Portsmouth Peace Treaty terminating the Russo-Japanese War openly supported the Open Door Policy on paper, but Russia and Japan continued to carve up China by signing a series of secret agreements over the next decade in 1907, 1910, 1912, and 1916. These secret treaties further defined their respective spheres of interest in Korea, Manchuria, and in Inner and Outer Mongolia. In practical terms, therefore, most of northern and northeastern China was still divided between Imperial Russia and Japan.

Russo-Japanese secret diplomacy

On July 30, 1907, the Russian and Japanese governments signed the first of what would be four agreements that had secret protocols attached to them. The published portion of this first agreement fit well with U.S. expectations, as the two parties agreed: "The High Contracting Parties recognize the independence and the territorial integrity of China and the principle of equal opportunity in whatever concerns the commerce and industry of all nations in that Empire, and engage to sustain and defend the *status quo* and respect for this principle by all the pacific means within their reach."[10]

Ten years later, however, after the Bolshevik Revolution, secret protocols were published that revealed this treaty's true intentions were not quite so benign. In fact, this first Russo-Japanese secret protocol granted Japan a free hand in Korea in return for Russia receiving a free hand in Outer Mongolia; a special article delineated the two spheres was called the Motono–Iswolsky line. As reprinted by Ernest Batson Price, this line ran from the most northwestern point of the Russo-Korean border to the 122° meridian, passing "by way of Hunshun and the northern extremity of Lake Priteng, to Hsiushuichan; thence it follows the Sungari to the mouth of the Nunkiang, thereupon ascending the course of that river to the confluence of the Tola River."[11] By means of this secret protocol, Russia promised not to interfere south and east of that line and Japan promised not to interfere north and west of it. Furthermore, Russia agreed not to intervene in Korea in exchange for Japan's agreement to stay out of Outer Mongolia. Soon afterward, Japan consolidated its control over Korea by signing the Japan–Korea Annexation Treaty of 1907. On its part, Russia continued its gradual encroachment in Mongolia.

Meanwhile, in its negotiations with the United States, Japan continued to reaffirm the validity of the Open Door. According to the November 30, 1908 American–Japanese Agreement, both parties agreed: "They are determined to preserve the common interests of all Powers in China by supporting by all pacific means at their disposal the independence and integrity of China and the principle of equal opportunity of commerce and industry of all nations in that Empire."[12] Even though this agreement was a simple declaration, not a binding treaty, "it was universally regarded as a momentous event, and a complete answer to the fears – or the hopes – of those who foresaw a great naval struggle with Japan looming up before the country."[13]

International friction over railway concessions in Manchuria was particularly sharp. U.S. Secretary-of-State Elihu Root opposed Russian attempts to strip China's sovereignty over the CER concession. As a result of U.S. pressure, in May 1909 a Sino-Russian agreement "recognized the sovereignty of China in the railway zone as a fundamental principle."[14] Thereafter, in 1910 the United States sponsored a railway consortium composed of British, French, German, and U.S. interests to internationalize the economic development of Manchuria. One of their goals was to put all of the railways in Manchuria under China's central administration.

Both Russia and Japan felt threatened by this plan. This U.S. effort to help China was undercut by a second Russo-Japanese secret treaty, signed in St. Petersburg on July 4, 1910 as a not-so-subtle reminder that the agreement opposed the United States. This treaty agreed "not to hinder in any way the consolidation and further development of the special interests of the other Party within the limits of the abovementioned spheres."[15] Soon afterwards, on August 22, 1910, Japan officially annexed Korea. Meanwhile, Russia continued to make inroads into northern Manchuria and Inner Mongolia.

Ignoring all attempts by the U.S. government to support China's territorial integrity, Russia and Japan continued to carve up China into their respective spheres of interest. In direct contradiction to the stated goals of the Open Door Policy, Russia and Japan secretly worked together to protect their interests in Manchuria, Outer Mongolia, and in Inner Mongolia; Japan also used this occasion to conclude its annexation of Korea. The fact that China could not oppose Russia's and Japan's creeping imperialism further undermined the Qing government and indirectly led to its overthrow the next year during the 1911 Xinhai Revolution.

The 1911 Xinhai Revolution

Washington backed the Chinese government plan to begin the nationalization of all Chinese railways in 1911. Central control over a unified railway network was thought to be an essential precondition for both government reform and national integration. On May 9, 1911, a four-power banking consortium of British, French, German, and U.S. investors signed a 40-year loan intended to buy out and unify the Guangzhou–Hankou and Hankou–Sichuan lines.

However, this centralization plan threatened the expected profits of local

investors, who then accused Beijing of selling out China's interests to foreigners. It also outraged members of the Rights Recovery Movement, whose nationalistic program tapped into widely shared anti-foreign sentiments. Another problem was Russia, which did not want to give up its rights over the CER in Manchuria.

Qing proposals in June 1911 for railway nationalization in Henan, Hubei, Guangdong, and Sichuan all met with considerable local opposition. Hankou was the terminus of the two disputed Sichuan railway lines, and so the local gentry in this area – together with its sister cities of Wuchang and Hanyang called Wuhan – who had invested heavily in train development, wanted to be fully reimbursed for their investments. This spurred the development of political parties, many of them opposed to continued rule by the Manchus. To offset potential unrest in Sichuan, the Qing government deployed large numbers of New Army troops to Wuhan. The arrival of these Han Chinese troops unexpectedly strengthened the anti-Manchu movement.

During fall 1911, an anti-Manchu rebellion was being secretly organized in the Russian concession when an accidental bomb explosion in early October alerted the police. Whether Russia actively supported the rebels is unclear. Russian diplomatic reports from 1911 emphasized, however, that a divided China would best serve their territorial ambitions.[16] For many years the Russian government had tried to increase its influence throughout Northern China, in particular in Outer Mongolia and Manchuria. Certainly Russia had the most to lose if the Chinese railways were nationalized, since it owned the largest foreign railway concession in all of China.

The accidental explosion in the Russian concession in Wuhan precipitated the Xinhai Revolution on October 10, 1911. It was in many ways more similar to a military coup than a real revolution. As later described by Jay Calvin Huston, the U.S. Consul in Tianjin: "The Chinese Revolution was distinctly a military revolution, anti-dynastic in character, unaffected by any general intellectual upheaval among the Chinese as in the case of the French Revolution, which was preceded by the work of Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu and the French Encyclopedists."[17]

The Xinhai Revolution forced the Manchus to abdicate in early 1912. But rather than resulting in a strong democratic Chinese government, the 1911 Chinese revolution divided and weakened China. While Russia and Japan joined the four-power group on June 20, 1912 – making it the Six-Power Syndicate – the ensuing turmoil in China did not make it possible to complete

negotiations for foreign loans. In 1913, the new U.S. administration under President Woodrow Wilson pulled out of the syndicate. This failure actually played into Russia's hands and gave St. Petersburg a perfect opportunity to expand into China's traditional frontier areas with little or no risk. Russia's prime goal at this time was to negotiate Outer Mongolia's political autonomy from China. It accomplished this through a series of agreements, first with Outer Mongolia, second with China, and third in a tripartite agreement signed with both Outer Mongolia and China.

Outer Mongolia's autonomy and the Twenty-one Demands

China's revolution resulted in domestic chaos, which Russia and Japan used to increase their spheres of interest. Prior to 1911, D. I. Abrikossow, a Russian diplomat, acknowledged that Russia considered Outer Mongolia to be an integral part of China, but hoped to increase its influence there.[18] Taking advantage of China's weakness after the Xinhai Revolution, the Russian government negotiated an advantageous treaty with Outer Mongolia in 1912 and then pressured China to sign an agreement in 1913 that limited China's rights in Outer Mongolia.

In addition to separating Outer Mongolia from China, Inner Mongolia was also divided by Russia and Japan in a third secret treaty signed during 1912. The Motono–Iswolsky line was extended "from the point of intersection of the Tolaho River and Meridian 122˚ East of Greenwich … [and] follows the course of the Oulountchourh River and the Moushisha River up to the line of the watershed between the Moushisha River and the Haldaitai River." As a result of this demarcation, Inner Mongolia was divided into a Russian section, west of the 116˚ 27' meridian, and the Japanese section east of this meridian, which ran right through China's capital of Beijing.[19] While the contents of this treaty remained secret, the Japanese Minister to China assured his U.S. counterpart on February 12, 1914 that "Japan could not reasonably have any desire to annex Manchuria… for the annexation by Japan of Southern Manchuria would be immediately followed by Russia's annexing Northern Manchuria."[20]

The secret division of the Russo-Japanese spheres of interest continued unchanged until the beginning of the World War. After August 1914, the European nations became embroiled in World War I, and U.S. attention was also directed mainly across the Atlantic. None of the major powers had either

the time or interest to pay close attention to what was happening in China. This situation allowed for greater Russian territorial encroachments in China during the coming years, as Russia quickly expanded into Outer Mongolia by means of a tripartite treaty. St. Petersburg pressured Beijing to sign this treaty with Russia and Outer Mongolia in 1915, in which Outer Mongolia recognized the *suzerainty* of China in exchange for China recognizing the *autonomy* of Outer Mongolia.

In all questions that pertained to Outer Mongolia's political and territorial questions, this agreement stated that, "the Chinese Government shall come to an agreement with the Russian Government through negotiations in which the authorities of Outer Mongolia shall take part." In addition, Russia was given the right to garrison troops, although their military presence was to be no more than "one hundred and fifty men as consular guards for its representatives at Urga," and the Chinese were allowed similar numbers. But Outer Mongolia did retain the right to conclude its own foreign treaties in which questions of a "commercial" or "industrial" nature were under discussion.[21]

In fact, Outer Mongolia was almost completely cut off from China and quickly fell under the sway of the stronger Russian government.

Japan felt compelled to respond in kind by making similar expansionist moves into southern Manchuria, Inner Mongolia, and, most importantly, into the former German concessions in Shandong. The German concession in Shandong had been in existence since 1898. During fall 1914, soon after the beginning of World War I in Europe, Japan carried out its obligations to Great Britain under the Anglo-Japanese alliance by declaring war on Germany. On August 15, 1914, a Japanese ultimatum specifically called for Germany to "unconditionally hand over the territory [of Jiaozhou] to Japan which she intended to restore to China."[22] When Germany ignored this warning, Japanese forces attacked. After a two-month siege, Japanese troops occupied Qingdao on November 7, 1914. After taking the German fortifications, Japan quickly consolidated its control throughout the former German concession in Shandong Province.

Japan promised to restore this concession to China, but only after the war ended. Meanwhile, Beijing protested Japan's seizure of the Shandong concession and retained diplomatic relations with Germany until 1917. To offset Russia's successful diplomacy separating Outer Mongolia from China, during January 1915 Tokyo presented China with Twenty-one Demands

ceding to Japan a long list of territorial and economic rights, including the transfer of Germany's former rights to develop Shandong Province. Divided into five groups, these points gave Japan the right to dispose of Germany's concessions in Shandong as it saw fit, to increase its influence in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia, to receive special mining and commercial privileges along the Yangzi River, and to stop China from leasing additional coastal bays or harbors to other powers. A fifth group gave Tokyo a wide range of political rights in China proper, including exclusive rights to sell arms to China and to develop Fujian Province, across the strait from the Japanese colony of Taiwan.

When Beijing protested these demands, the U.S. government supported China, condemning the Twenty-one Demands as a violation of "the political and territorial integrity of the Republic of China."[23] The United States issued a declaration on March 13, 1915 stating that it "could not regard with indifference the assumption of political, military, or economic domination over China by a foreign power," and requested Japan to refrain from "pressing upon China an acceptance of proposals which would, if accepted, exclude Americans from equal participation in the economic and industrial development of China and would limit the political independence of that country."[24]

Based on its agreement with Japan from 1908, the U.S. government "protested against the Japanese aggression and exercised moral influence with some success for the protections of China's territorial integrity."[25] On March 30, 1915, Secretary of State W. J. Bryan specifically criticized Japan for trying to force Japanese advisers on the Chinese government, as well as claiming exclusive rights to sell arms and manage Japanese police forces in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia. As a result of U.S. protests, Japan modified its demand about Japanese police, and also retracted the demand to make Fujian Province an exclusive zone for Japanese development. On April 28, 1915, the Japanese government further announced that it had offered to restore Jiaozhou Bay to China in exchange for opening the port of Qingdao to foreigners, allowing a Japanese concession as well as an international settlement, and turning the German public buildings and property over to Japan.[26]

Only U.S. support for the Open Door Policy stood in the way of Japan and Russia openly partitioning China. When it looked as if Beijing might back down and sign, the U.S. government protested again. On May 13, 1915,

Washington stated that “it cannot recognize any agreement or undertaking which has been entered into or which may be entered into between the Governments of Japan and China impairing the treaty rights of the United States and its citizens in China, the political or territorial integrity of the Republic of China, or the international policy relative to China commonly known as the ‘Open Door Policy.’”[27] On the very next day, the Republic of China’s parliament unanimously adopted a declaration stating that “hereafter all ports, bays and islands of the coasts are excluded from lease or cession to any country whatsoever.”[28]

Of all of the foreign powers, only the U.S. government stood up for China. Accusations were soon made that Japan did not force these “demands” on China at all, but that this was merely a face-saving ruse. For example, Sun Yat-sen, the leader of an opposition government in South China, accused China’s president, Yuan Shikai, of only pretending that the Twenty-one Demands were being forced on Beijing in return for Japan’s support for his efforts to become China’s next emperor. Yuan concluded this agreement with Japan without gaining the approval of China’s parliament.

Ignoring repeated protests from the U.S. government that it violated the Open Door, Beijing signed this treaty with Japan on May 25, 1915. This treaty was not ratified by the Beijing government until early June, however, one day after China’s tripartite treaty with Russia and Outer Mongolia was ratified. This timing reflects the fact that officials in Beijing had to balance carefully China’s relations with both Russia and Japan. At this crucial juncture, only the U.S. government stood in the way of Russia and Japan making even further inroads into China.

The 1916 Russo-Japanese secret convention

In 1916, Russia and Japan signed yet another secret treaty intended to keep China from being dominated by a third foreign power and agreeing to work together militarily to carry out their goals. The main focus of this treaty appears to have been aimed at the United States. According to Rajendra Kumar Jain, the “Fourth Russo-Japanese accord extended the spheres of influence of the two countries to the whole of China and contained a provision stipulating that the two Powers would wage war in common against any other Power trespassing on their vital interests. The fourth agreement … was, to all intents and purposes, a defensive and offensive alliance.”[29] On

July 3, 1916, the secret convention was signed, with Article I stating: “The two High Contracting Parties, recognizing that their vital interests demand that China should not fall under the political domination of any third Power hostile to Russia or Japan, will frankly and loyally enter into communication whenever circumstances may demand, and will agree upon the measures to be taken to prevent such a situation being brought about.”
This convention furthermore agreed that in case of war between one of the “Contracting Parties” and a third party, then “the other Contracting Party will, upon the demand of its ally, come to its aid, and in that case each of the High Contracting Parties undertakes not to make peace without a previous agreement with the other Contracting Party.”[30]

Since the only Great Power not at war in Europe at this point was the United States, it seems fairly certain the “Third Party” mentioned in the convention was America. Price has argued that later Russian explanations led to the conclusion that it was directed against “some power other than those with which Russia was then at war.”[31] Russia was currently at war with Germany and Austria, so this ruled these two countries out. Furthermore, ever since 1902 Japan had been closely allied to Great Britain, which suggested that Britain was probably not the third party in question. France was also fully occupied with the fighting in Europe. This left only the United States. As Price concluded, therefore, the United States was the most likely target of this alliance, especially “in view of the history of the preceding decade of international relations in the Far East.”[32]

The real focus of this treaty was to divide up China. One diplomatic historian has stated of the 1916 Russo-Japanese treaty: “The new combination of 1916, therefore, seemed about to launch a third and combined attempt on China.”[33] The U.S. government continued to refuse to recognize Japan’s Twenty-one Demands, even while urging China to end diplomatic relations with Germany and join the Allies as an important first step in having Japan’s demands reversed. On March 14, 1917, China broke with Germany, and then on August 14, 1917, Beijing declared war. Tokyo foresaw the problems that China’s actions might cause to Japan’s position in Shandong. In early 1917, Tokyo signed secret agreements with Great Britain, France, Italy, and Russia that guaranteed it rights to the German concessions in Shandong.[34]

America’s relations with Japan were more complex. Because of Japan’s important role as an ally in World War I, in early 1917 the U.S. government

acknowledged that “Japan has special interests in Manchuria.” Paul S. Reinsch, the U.S. Minister to China, sought to clarify that, in line with the “most favored nation” clause, any special privileges held by Japan should “automatically accrue to the benefit of American citizens desirous of availing themselves thereof.”[35] During November 1917, in the Lansing–Ishii agreement, the United States recognized Japan’s “territorial propinquity” in China. But in a separate protocol, which was kept secret for a while, Japan agreed not to seek special rights and privileges in China. Although this agreement fell far short of recognizing Japan’s Twenty-one Demands, it tacitly admitted that Japan had legitimate economic interests in China. This gave the unfortunate impression that America had abandoned China.

Many U.S. officials opposed this agreement. For Paul S. Reinsch, the U.S. minister to China, “The Lansing–Ishii Agreement became a prime example of the evils of secret diplomacy.”[36] Reinsch later stated: “Instead of support we gave China the Lansing–Ishii Note.”[37] However, the U.S. government was now engaged in fighting in Europe, and it was particularly concerned about Japan taking advantage of the weakened U.S. position in the Philippines. Also, as discussed by Benjamin Gerig, “the United States was in no strong position to recommend the Open Door policy at the [Paris] Peace Conference” in 1919, due mainly to its own exclusionist policies in the Philippines, which was “all but assimilated as regards commercial opportunity.”[38] While the U.S. position in the Philippines was temporary, since it intended to grant the Philippines its independence, Japan’s interests in China were most likely considered permanent.

These already complex arrangements were further complicated on September 24, 1918, when the Beijing government, dominated by the warlord leader Duan Qirui, signed two separate secret agreements with Japan. In return for withdrawing the Japanese civil administration from Shandong and turning this responsibility back over to China, Beijing agreed to manage the former Qingdao–Jinan railway line as a joint Sino-Japanese company. Included in this agreement was the provision that Japanese policemen could patrol the railway. Beijing received a Japanese loan of 20 million yen as an advance on this railway agreement. It later proved difficult for the Chinese government to show that this agreement had been forced on it by Japan, since the Chinese Minister to Tokyo, Zhang Congxiang, wrote to the Japanese government: “I beg to acquaint you in reply that the Chinese gladly agree.”[39]

The Russo-Japanese secret treaties of 1907, 1910, 1912, and 1916 divided

much of China into Russian and Japanese spheres of interest. The United States opposed these efforts, promoting instead an Open Door Policy that backed free trade throughout Asia, thus eliminating the need for specific spheres of interest. Although left unstated by the terms of the Russo-Japanese treaty of 1916, it was almost certainly the United States that posed the greatest threat to Russia's and Japan's long-term territorial ambitions in Asia. The existence of this final secret agreement signed in 1916 is additional proof of the importance these two countries put on the Open Door Policy in supporting China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Conclusions

Secret diplomacy played a major role in determining the balance-of-power relationships throughout the Far East. In the process these secret treaties also undermined the effectiveness of the Open Door Policy. Without a doubt, the primary practitioners of secret diplomacy at this time were Russia and Japan, signing numerous secret agreements with each other, with other Great Powers, and with the Chinese warlord governments in Beijing. As such, Russia's and Japan's secret diplomacy constantly ran afoul of the U.S. government's Open Door Policy, which tried to redirect Great Power competition into commerce and trade rather than into forming and protecting territorial concessions at China's expense.

By 1916, several important trends converged within China. By means of their secret agreements, Russia and Japan successfully used World War I to expand their spheres of interest into China. For example, one immediate effect of Russia's 1915 tripartite treaty was that Outer Mongolia, which was considered by the international community to be part of China, was turned into a Russian protectorate. Meanwhile, the Twenty-one Demands gave Japan additional rights and privileges in southern Manchuria and in Shandong.

Previously, the other Great Powers with interests in China had supported the U.S. Open Door Policy. Now, preoccupied with European affairs, and largely unaware of the secret treaties signed by Russia and Japan as well as those signed by China, these powers ignored China's plight. From 1899–1916, U.S. attempts to enforce the Open Door Policy were never entirely successful in protecting China's territorial integrity, but this policy did help save Outer Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, and Manchuria from being openly annexed by Russia and Japan. Neither country was willing to oppose the

United States directly, so instead they worked together secretly. Meanwhile, the rapid growth of Chinese nationalism after the Xinhai Revolution made this increasingly volatile situation ever more dangerous.

Notes

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3 The growth of nationalism in post-1911 China

The immediate result of Japan's 1905 victory over Russia was to spark a new wave of Chinese students flocking to Japan to study. Because of its geographic proximity to China, and because the language and cultural barriers were not as great as with European nations and with the United States, the largest single number of Chinese exchange students went to Japan. Chinese students were eager to learn from the Japanese how to adapt Western tools and methods in order to strengthen and modernize China.[1] In 1906, for example, it was estimated that over 10,000 Chinese students were studying in Japan, while only about 500–600 Chinese students were in Europe.[2] Even fewer Chinese students went to America, since a Chinese student studying in Japan could live for as little as 250 yen per year, one-tenth of what it would have cost to study in the United States.

Chinese intellectuals were not satisfied simply to sit and wait for the United States to enforce the Open Door Policy. Japan's 1905 victory over Russia had marked the first time since the beginning of the industrial revolution that an Asian nation had defeated a European one. Intellectuals in both Japan and China saw Japan's triumph as a sign of Asia's resurgence to its former pre-Opium War standing. The Chinese revolutionary leader, Sun Yat-sen, even complimented the Japanese on their victory and praised Japan for raising the "standing of all Asiatic peoples."[3]

Japan's impact was particularly important among the young intellectuals who would become the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). For example, Chen Duxiu lived in Japan on three separate occasions between 1901 and 1915, as did the CCP's future chief of propaganda Li Da between 1913 and 1920. Li Dazhao, one of the founders of the CCP, studied at Waseda University from 1913 to 1916, and even Zhou Enlai, later the top political commissar at the Whampoa Military Academy, was in Japan from 1917 to 1919 before he went to Paris to study.[4] Likewise, Wu Zhihui, the leader of an anarchist group in Paris, was first attracted to revolutionary

philosophy during a 1901 trip to Tokyo.[5] The most important example among the Nationalist leaders was Sun Yat-sen, who lived in Japan on numerous occasions while working to found the Guomindang party, while Sun's successor, Chiang Kai-shek, also spent many years studying in a Japanese military school.

The rush to learn from Japan

Russia's unprecedented loss to Japan during the 1904–1905 Russo-Japanese War resulted in the abortive 1905 Russian Revolution. This revolution, albeit cut short by Imperial Russian troops, led to the creation of a parliament – or Duma – in Russia. This political shift toward constitutional monarchy proved to Asian reformers that it was possible to overthrow autocracy and establish constitutional regimes. Socialists in Japan, in particular, looked to the 1905 Russian Revolution as proof that their own efforts would soon be victorious.[6]

Study of the Russian anarchists, and especially Peter Kropotkin, soon increased in Japan. Kropotkin's image of the communal Russian village was particularly compelling to Chinese intellectuals because of China's large rural population. But it was Kropotkin's call to abolish imperialism that was seen as offering immediate benefits to China: "Since all our middle-class civilization is based on the exploitation of inferior races and countries with less advanced industrial systems, the Revolution will confer a boon at the very outset, by menacing that 'civilization,' and allowing the so-called inferior races to free themselves."[7]

This anti-imperialist philosophy offered Asian intellectuals a means of liberating their countries from foreign interference, rather than depending on the vague and largely voluntary protections offered by the Open Door Policy. Chinese students who brought back socialist ideas from Japan were deeply devoted to the anarchist movement. One early Chinese anarchist, Liu Shifu, helped clarify the Chinese intellectuals' anti-imperialist sentiments. Late in 1907, Liu discussed imperialism in an essay titled "Current Conditions in Asia," in which he called on the peoples of Asia to accept socialism in order to struggle to overthrow imperialism. According to Liu, Asian revolutionaries and Western radicals would cooperate jointly to bring about world revolution. He even predicted that "the day that the weak races expel the imperialist powers *will be the day that the imperialist governments are overthrown.*"[8] Liu later also blamed World War I on the capitalist countries, calling

capitalism the “most dangerous authority in modern society.”[9]

Anarchist societies were soon formed in Guangzhou, Nanjing, Shanghai, and several other major Chinese cities. In 1922, a Soviet observer, M. Abramson, acknowledged the central importance of Japanese education to the rapid spread of socialist ideas in China: “The ideas of Socialism began to penetrate into China at the same time as many Chinese students, having received their education in Japan, began to return to their homeland.”[10] This early exposure to Russian anarchist thinking from overseas students in Japan was especially important as an intermediary step on the Chinese intellectuals’ path toward accepting Marxism and, later, Leninism: “The bits and pieces the Chinese revolutionaries picked up from Russia – indirectly through information available in Japan – had nonetheless a long-range cumulative influence on China. Gradually the name of Russia came to be identified in the minds of many Chinese with what revolution action is and should be.”[11] Chen Duxiu, like many other Chinese intellectuals at this time, supported a resurgence of China into an independent and prosperous nation. It was the negative influence of Western imperialism that forced on Chen a sense of nationalistic pride in Chinese traditions. This prompted Chen to call on China’s youth to join the positive features of Japan and the West with the traditional strength of the Chinese people. In 1915, Chen’s opening essay for *New Youth* magazine called upon Chinese youth to adopt the challenge of rebuilding Chinese society. This article helped launch the beginning of the “New Culture” movement inspiring Chinese intellectuals to become politically active in creating a new society. From his position as Peking University’s dean of the School of Arts and Letters, Chen was acclaimed as one of China’s most influential intellectuals. Circulation of the journal *New Youth* rapidly increased.

The anti-imperialist movement in China appeared just in time to witness national humiliations at the hands of Russia and Japan, as both countries used World War I as an excuse to expand into Chinese territory. Previously, the Open Door Policy had kept Russia’s and Japan’s expansionist ambitions largely in check. But, in the wake of Imperial Russia’s tripartite treaty with Outer Mongolia and China, and in particular after Japan’s Twenty-one Demands, it appeared to many Chinese intellectuals that the Open Door Policy had failed to protect China. It was arguably the influence of these two trends – the lure of anarchism’s anti-imperialist program and the apparent failure of the Open Door Policy – that was to have such an enormous impact

on the development of the Chinese intellectuals' later interest and support for the Soviet government's revolutionary policies in China.

U.S.-trained Chinese leaders

Chinese students studying in Japan were not the only Chinese intellectuals who wanted to strengthen China and who would later see improved relations with the Soviet government as a possible way of doing so. A small, but highly trained, group of Chinese students went to the United States and Great Britain to receive their education. Perhaps the most influential of the early U.S.-trained diplomats were Yan Huiqing (better known as W. W. Yan), Gu Weijun (better known as V. K. Wellington Koo), and Wang Zhengting (better known as C. T. Wang).

Yan was born in Shanghai on April 2, 1877, studied at the Episcopal High School in Virginia from 1895–1897, and then received a B.A. and law diploma from the University of Virginia. After working as a professor of English at St. John's University in Shanghai (1900–1906), Yan joined the Qing government's Foreign Ministry, called the Waijiaobu. Following the 1911 Xinhai revolution, Yan was recalled to Beijing where he became the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs. Yan was then stationed in Europe (1918–1920) as the Minister to Denmark. From August 11, 1920 until December 18, 1921, he was the Beijing government's Minister of Foreign Affairs, a position that he relinquished to become the Acting Premier of the Beijing government.[12] Most importantly Yan was Foreign Minister when the first diplomatic contacts with the Soviet government were made during 1920 and 1921.

Yan's secretary and then successor was V. K. Wellington Koo, born on January 29, 1887. Koo received his B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. from Columbia University with a Ph.D. dissertation titled "The status of aliens in China." This dissertation became the first published book examining the development of extraterritorial rights of foreigners in China after 1842. Koo introduced his dissertation by saying that an increasing number of foreigners were daily coming to China to carry out business, to pursue religious reasons, or just to travel, and that the complex problems that might arise from such intercourse demanded an accurate knowledge of the rights, privileges and immunities that the foreigners were entitled to enjoy under laws and treaties. He returned to China in August 1912, in order to take up his post as W. W. Yan's

secretary.

Koo was China's most well-known representative at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 and was China's minister to London right at the time the Soviet government was making contact with China through the Soviet consulate in London during 1920. Beginning in November 1921, Koo was appointed China's representative to the Washington Conference. During the crucial months from September until December 1922, he held the post of foreign minister when the first official Soviet representative, named Adolf Joffe, was in Beijing. Finally, Koo was reappointed minister of foreign affairs from April 1923, all the way through September 15, 1924, which meant that he was head of China's Foreign Ministry during all of the negotiations with Lev Karakhan leading up to the signing of the treaty opening official Sino-Soviet relations on May 31, 1924.

Another important U.S.-trained Chinese diplomat was C. T. Wang, born on September 7, 1882. Wang began his career as a teacher at the Anglo-Chinese College in Tianjin. He then studied in Japan for four years, where he was also the secretary of the Tokyo YMCA. Wang then went to the United States for three years to study law at Yale University, graduating in 1912, the same year that Koo received his Ph.D. at Columbia. In 1919, Wang was a delegate to the Paris Peace Conference, but representing the breakaway Nationalist – Guomindang – government in South China.

During March 1922, Wang was asked to become the Chinese commissioner for the settlement of the Shandong question and to oversee the return of Shandong from Japan to China on December 10, 1922. Although some Chinese criticized Wang, "it is the verdict of foreigners that he obtained far greater concessions than might have been expected" when representing "a weak and constantly changing government."[13] After replacing Koo in the post of Foreign Minister for a short time in 1923, Wang was named the director general of the Commission for Sino-Russian Affairs in March 1923, a position that put him in almost daily contact with the Soviet diplomats until March 1924, when Koo took over the negotiations. After acting as foreign minister during the fall, 1924, Wang was once more appointed director general in charge of Sino-Russian Affairs to try to negotiate new treaties with the Soviet Union. Finally, Wang became one of the first foreign ministers of the Nationalist government in 1928 after its nominal unification of China.

Notably, these three U.S.-trained diplomats hoped to eliminate foreigners' special privileges in China through diplomacy not revolution. They sought

different goals than those of the Chinese intellectuals who had studied in Japan. Unlike these intellectuals' avowed desire to overthrow the imperialist governments and replace them with socialist ones, Yan, Koo, and Wang wanted to cooperate with foreign nations as equals to develop China mainly along democratic and capitalist lines. During the following years, Koo and Wang were delegates at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference and then both were foreign ministers during the most intense period of Sino-Soviet diplomatic negotiations during 1922 and then again in 1924–1925.

From 1919 until 1925, and then once again during 1927 and afterward through 1949, it was these three U.S.-trained diplomats who were largely in charge of the Chinese government's diplomatic negotiations with foreign nations, including the USSR. Even in the middle of the constant cabinet changes that China's government went through during this tumultuous period, its foreign policy objectives remained fairly constant. Between 1912 and 1928, for example, there were forty-five changes in the government's cabinet but only nineteen changes of foreign ministers.[14] According to one of Wellington Koo's later biographers: "This Anglo-American group was in control of China's foreign policy for almost the entire span of the Republican governments."[15]

The early Bolshevik influence on China

The 1917 February and October Revolutions in Russia went largely unnoticed in Asia. Even after the successful conclusion of the October Revolution, it took a long time for even the most fundamental outlines of Leninism, such as the formation of a small party of elite revolutionaries, to come under discussion in Japan and China.[16] As early as 1902, Lenin had advocated a small, disciplined, secret organization of professional revolutionaries to carry out a proletarian revolution. But the Chinese intellectuals' anarchist leanings were opposed to centralized authority and so had never really heard about, much less understood, Lenin's particular contributions to Marxism. For this reason, the October Revolution did not have an immediate impact on China. It was not until early in 1920 that the new Soviet government was generally acknowledged as exerting significant influence throughout Asia.

Chinese intellectuals did not fully understand the most fundamental characteristics of the Bolshevik government. One of the first Chinese journals

to discuss the October Revolution during 1918, for example, referred to the Bolshevik form of government as “anarcho-communism,” and claimed that Lenin had “no conception of national boundaries.”[17] Soon afterwards, Li Dazhao praised the October Revolution for its “universal significance,” but he used traditional anarchist terminology developed by Kropotkin to describe the revolution as the victory of the “common people” over the issue of “bread.”[18]

When trying to explain how a Bolshevik government might function, Li further stated that worker’s Soviets “would not have a Congress or Parliament, would not have a President, a Prime Minister, a Cabinet, a Legislative branch, or politicians” and the full Congress would “decide all matters.”

Bolshevism would soon spread throughout the world, thought Li, and this “new world-wide trend” had several important characteristics, including: (1) a painful transition, but one which should not be feared or evaded; (2) an inevitable conclusion; just as the French revolution was an “impressive start” to the nineteenth-century revolutions, the Russian revolution was the beginning of the twentieth century; and (3) a transition into a world of workers where any person who ate food without working was a “bandit.”[19]

An early awareness of the importance of socialist revolutions in Europe was shown by Chen Duxiu, who emphasized in an April 1919 article that: “Our Chinese people do not fear it.”[20] But instead of seeing the Soviet state as a model for China, most Chinese intellectuals presented Soviet Russia as simply one of the possible revolutionary alternatives. Many Chinese intellectuals, however, were especially attracted to the Soviet government’s anti-imperialist propaganda. When these policies first became widely known in 1920, they began to receive immediate attention in China.

As early as 1913, Lenin had attacked bourgeois nationalism and proclaimed that it and “proletariat internationalism” were the “two irreconcilably hostile slogans that correspond to the two great class camps throughout the entire capitalist world and express the *two* policies (more than that: two world outlooks), in the national question.”[21] During 1916, in *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin concluded that capitalism had reached its peak in the international imperialist system and that it was ripe for overthrow. He called for the replacement of bourgeois democracy with workers’ democracy using *soviets*, or councils, to make all decisions. In the process of overthrowing capitalism, socialist supporters

would have to band together in a “camp” in order to oppose the capitalist countries. This would necessitate the construction of a socialist sphere of interest that would be in direct opposition to the capitalist countries.

In sharp contrast to Lenin, Woodrow Wilson promoted national self-determination in terms of democracy and capitalism. In 1913, Wilson stated that the United States was “not only willing, but earnestly desirous, of aiding the great Chinese people in every way that is consistent with their untrammeled development and its own immemorial principles. The awakening of the people of China to a consciousness of their responsibilities under free government is the most significant, if not the most momentous, event of our generation.” In addition to promoting free government, however, free trade was equally important, and Wilson supported American businessmen who wished “to participate, and participate very generously, in the opening to the Chinese and to the use of the world the almost untouched and perhaps unrivaled resources of China.”[22]

Rather than supporting international cooperation, Lenin demanded the destruction of bourgeois democracy and capitalism as a prerequisite to ushering in a new, socialist period of world history. Arno Mayer has characterized the difference between these two philosophies as: “One [was] the way of the nationalities. The other the way of classes … Peace of nations or Bolshevism, between these perspectives a choice [must] be made.”[23] Whenever the interests of nationalism interfered with the interests of the proletariat, Lenin insisted that it was nationalism that had to yield, while Wilson supported nationalism over all other considerations.[24]

Some scholars even view this conflict between nationalism and class conflict as one of the main reasons for the eventual dissolution of the Soviet Union.[25] It was this philosophical difference that led Leon Trotsky to refer to Wilson and Lenin as “the apocalyptic antipodes of our time.”[26] China would soon prove to be one of the first stages on which Wilson’s and Lenin’s competing philosophies battled, since it was at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference where Wilson’s concept of “national self-determination” would first be tested.

The intellectual divide in China

Chinese views on the Open Door Policy differed radically. Chinese students who received their education in the United States had a much more positive

view of the Open Door Policy than those students who went to Japan. As a result, the U.S.-trained students were more willing to cooperate with foreign governments to achieve the goal of developing China along capitalist lines. On the whole, the Japanese-trained students were more influenced by the revolutionary success of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, and so thought in terms of China adopting some form of Soviet-style socialism.

Since both groups already had compelling reasons for wanting to rid China of the unequal treaties, supporting good relations with the USSR was in many ways a logical extension of both of these pre-existing programs. Most importantly, the members of both groups wanted to see China regain its former power and standing in the world. Both groups also supported development along Western lines that would allow China to become more independent. Finally, they wanted to bring about this change as rapidly as possible. Thus both groups eventually saw improving China's relations with the Soviet Union as a useful prerequisite for attaining these other goals.

The differences between these two groups were even more acute, however. The Western-trained diplomats in the Foreign Ministry were willing to work with the Soviet government mainly as a diplomatic lever to pressure the other foreign countries – Great Britain, France, Japan, and the United States chief among them – to match Soviet promises of immediate diplomatic equality. Equal treatment might then allow China to develop more quickly along democratic and capitalist lines. By contrast, many Chinese intellectuals trained in Japan truly believed that socialism offered China a social and economic system that would allow China to claim for itself equality with other nations.

While on the surface they supported similar polices, these two groups' basic rationale for forging closer ties with the USSR were almost completely opposite. In the case of the Foreign Ministry officials, relations with the Soviet government represented a goad to spur the capitalist nations into making greater concessions to promote China's development along capitalist lines. In the case of the Chinese intellectuals, the Bolsheviks offered a program, as well as tactics for carrying out that program, which could help China to develop along a socialist path.

As explained in a 1923 report by Jay Calvin Huston, U.S. Consul in Tianjin, the "dominant cultural influence in China is America and the political gospel of America is Nationalism." There were two wings in this movement, however, radicals and conservatives: "The radical wing of the

student movement which controls most of the younger student societies under the present influence of Russia, is continually giving vent to anti-foreign and anti-imperialist expressions." The more conservative youth were "largely of returned students from American and Europe, who, while not so violent in their statements, yet as a result of their foreign training, possess a well developed spirit of nationalism and welcome a rapprochement with Russia as an offset to western imperialism." As different as these two groups were, they both hoped "to modernize present day China along nationalistic lines."[27]

The similarities and differences between these two groups helps explain why both the internationally recognized Beijing government and the breakaway Guangzhou government under Sun Yat-sen would be willing to work with the USSR even while remaining in opposition to each other. It also helps explain how Soviet diplomats could successfully play these two opposing governments off each other, since the Soviet diplomats could maintain constant contact with Beijing at the same time as the Soviet-sponsored Comintern representatives worked closely with Guangzhou. Meanwhile, the U.S. government refused to work with Sun Yat-sen, explaining that to open relations with an opposition government while continuing to recognize the Beijing government would simply interfere with Chinese attempts to reunite peacefully. This effectively tied Washington's hands and meant that as Beijing lost popularity, U.S. prestige in China also declined. By contrast, as the United States lost prestige, the USSR could focus more attention on promoting revolution in the Far East.

A new Soviet focus on Asia

The Bolshevik goal after October 1917 of sponsoring European revolutions failed. As a result, Asian revolutions gradually became more important. Lenin began discussing Asian nationalist revolutions during 1919. While giving a talk to a group of Asian Communists living in Russia during December 1919, Lenin emphasized that although China did not have a European-type proletariat it did have a growing nationalist movement. He advised his followers to rely on "bourgeois nationalism, which is awakening these peoples and cannot help awakening them," and then added: "We see that they [the British, French, German proletariat] cannot win without the help of the working mass of the oppressed colonial peoples, especially the people of the East."[28] Lenin advised widening the Bolsheviks' base of

support from Communists of more advanced countries to incorporate workers in all stages of their development, which meant that China's nationalist revolution could now be joined with European proletariat revolutions.

Addressing colonial and semi-colonial peoples, Lenin proposed that the Bolsheviks try to tap into the enormous pool of largely unfulfilled nationalist sentiments. Lenin hoped to channel their bourgeois nationalism into an anti-imperialist revolution that would undermine capitalist countries' colonial base. Lenin sought to join national–bourgeois revolutions in colonial countries with proletariat revolution in Europe, but to accomplish this goal in Europe it was a necessary prerequisite to pull the oppressed colonial peoples into the larger revolutionary movement led by the Soviet Union.

Lenin did not actually support nationalism in the Western sense. According to one scholar, Lenin was actually supporting class struggle, merely on a transnational basis: "Class cut directly across the lines of nationality. The notion of the transnational unity of the proletariat as the progressive leading class was to become the organizing principle of the new Soviet empire. Under such a concept, Lenin could be consistent in continuing to maintain that all peoples had an inherent right to self-determination; however, proletariat solidarity demanded that the exercise of that right had to be subordinated to the higher needs of the transnational class struggle. For the sake of this struggle, it was imperative that the [Russian] empire be kept intact."[29]

By attempting to ally with Chinese nationalists, Lenin would soon compete for support among the same groups of intellectuals that were looking to President Woodrow Wilson for relief. To persuade these Chinese nationalists to back the Soviet government required two things: (1) convincing proof that Wilson's call for national self-determination was a failure; (2) a program proving that the Soviet government was superior to the United States government.

More by chance than by design the Soviet government would soon have the means to do both of these in China. When the Paris Peace Conference convened in 1919, it refused to support China's proposal for the direct restitution of the Shandong concession from Germany. Rather, it upheld China's own treaties with Japan stating that Germany would hand over the concession to Japan and then Japan would return it to China. Indirect restitution of Shandong via Japan was seen as insulting to China, in particular because Japan had so recently been considered merely a Chinese tributary

state. This circumstance made Soviet offers of equality appear particularly attractive.

The Shandong controversy was negotiated largely in secret, and so what the public thought happened in Paris was an inaccurate picture of the real situation. A closer look at what transpired shows that Wilson was undermined more by the lingering effects of China's own wartime secret diplomacy than by the failure of his philosophical views. Since the terms of all of these treaties remained largely unknown to the wider public, however, Wilson received the lion's share of the blame.

Conclusions

After the end of World War I, Chinese intellectuals had high hopes that the victors in the war would assist China in obtaining its rightful position in the international community of nations. During 1919, W. W. Yan was the Chinese minister to Germany, while both Wellington Koo and C. T. Wang were part of the Chinese delegation sent to Paris to negotiate for the return of Shandong to China. These Chinese diplomats supported the Open Door Policy, but also looked to the Soviet government for diplomatic leverage they sought to gain over the Great Powers. This leverage, they hoped, could be used to convince the other powers to abolish the Boxer indemnity, to relinquish all extraterritorial rights within China, to give up foreign concession areas, and to renegotiate their unequal treaties at the upcoming Paris Peace Conference.

Meanwhile, many of the Japanese trained intellectuals, including Chen Duxiu, Li Da, and Li Dazhao, were active in organizing and leading the May Fourth Movement attacking central government officials for even considering signing a Versailles Peace Treaty that did not treat China with equality and justice. These Chinese intellectuals, who over time began to oppose the Open Door Policy as being merely an imperialist tool furthering U.S. interests, saw in Soviet socialism a possible solution to China's problems of disunity and backwardness. As one U.S. official would warn: "The Chinese students have conceived ideas and sentiments whose radicalism would astonish and alarm the world, if [*sic*] more were known about them."[30] This second group turned to the USSR not as a goad to make the great powers change, but as a means of making China herself change. They sought to learn from the Soviet government how to organize their own political parties, how to create a

national revolutionary movement, and how eventually to produce a social revolution that was intended to gain many of the same goals that the Beijing officials were also hoping to achieve, first and foremost among them being an independent and strong China.

Disgruntled government diplomats and Chinese intellectuals both supported closer relations with the Soviet government, which seemed to be offering genuine friendship to China. Once the Soviet government began to promise immediate fair and equal treatment, these two groups eagerly responded. Although the differences between these groups were enormous, the shared feeling of frustration with China's weakness vis-à-vis the Great Powers was sufficient to make closer relations with the Soviet government seem very attractive. If, on the other hand, the Versailles Peace Treaty had satisfied all of China's nationalist desires, then the goal of forming closer links with the Soviet government might never have been considered either desirable or necessary.

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4 The debacle at Paris

The numerous secret agreements signed by the Chinese warlords, Russia, Japan, and most of the other Great Powers retained their validity through World War I. At the war's end, the victors set the terms for the post-war order in Paris, signing the Versailles Peace Treaty on June 25, 1919. As one of the earliest Asian belligerents – declaring war against Germany and Austria during August 1914 – Japan sent a large delegation to Paris. So did China, even though it had entered the war near the end of the fighting in 1917.

At Paris, China hoped to undermine the foreign spheres of interest and reclaim its lost sovereignty. At the beginning of this conference, the Chinese delegation detailed a long list of requests that it hoped the other delegations would agree to. Most of these were in line with the Open Door Policy. Unfortunately, its goals were undermined by a sharp dispute over the status of the Shandong concession, which had been taken from China originally by Germany in 1898, but was forcibly occupied by Japan in 1914 during the opening months of the war. The Japanese delegation requested the Paris delegates transfer this concession from Germany to Japan, after which it would be handed back to China. The Chinese delegation insisted instead on "direct restitution" from Germany to China. For Japan to hand back Shandong rather than Germany would be considered a grave "loss of face."

Wilson backed China and was the sole leader at Paris to argue its case with the Japanese delegation. These delicate negotiations highlighted Wilson's support for national self-determination, which he had originally presented along with his Fourteen Points. Unfortunately for China, the internationally recognized government in Beijing had signed secret agreements with Japan, and had even accepted a down payment, confirming the Japanese "indirect" solution. Chinese intellectuals were outraged at the Versailles Peace Treaty, which ceded the Shandong concession to Japan for eventual return to China. Arguably, it was this less than optimal outcome at Paris that shifted many

Chinese intellectuals away from support for a democratic–capitalist model of development and more toward supporting the Soviet model.

China and the United States prepare for the Paris Peace Conference

The Chinese delegation went to Paris with a long list of proposals that it hoped the other delegates would accept, including the return of foreign concessions, elimination of extraterritoriality, and returning to Beijing of the right to set China's own tariff rates. The first two points on this list stated that if: "The powers engaged to respect and observe the territorial integrity and political and administrative independence of the Chinese republic" then "China, being in full accord with the principle of the so-called open door or equal opportunity for the commerce and industry of all the nations having treaty relations with China, is prepared to accept and apply it in all parts of the Chinese republic without exception." But to carry out this promise, all "existing limitations upon China's political jurisdictional and administrative freedom of action are to be removed."[1]

In short, almost a century of so-called unequal treaties signed by China and the various foreign powers were to be examined and, if necessary, renegotiated in line with the Open Door Policy. However, in 1915 China had signed an official treaty – the so-called Twenty-one Demands – that turned over to Japan certain rights over the German concession around Jiaozhou Bay in Shandong Province. The Japanese delegation at Paris could not only produce this treaty, but also two additional secret agreements signed by Beijing during 1918 validating the earlier treaty. The Chinese delegation argued that all such agreements had been forced on China, even though Beijing government accepted a 20 million yen advance from Japan in 1918. The transfer of funds meant that reversing these agreements would be difficult, if not impossible.

Overturning almost a hundred years of imperialist diplomacy in order to uphold the Open Door principles proved to be an enormously difficult task. In a January 10, 1919 memorandum from Stanley K. Hornbeck to Dr. Allyn Abbott Young, in charge of laying the groundwork for the Paris Peace Conference, Hornbeck's opening paragraph concluded that: "The open door policy has been a failure." According to Hornbeck, the only way to enforce the Open Door would be the establishment of a "positive, definitely

organized supervision of the activities of the individual states which operate in regions of individual 'special interest,' in 'spheres of influence' or in subordinate territorial divisions." Lacking such an organization, there was no "common interpretation" of what the Open Door meant, which resulted in the "constant penalizing of those states which take the obligation most seriously and honestly."[2]

Hornbeck then suggested two possible ways to administer the Open Door. Either the Chinese government should be given the "concerted backing of the powers" to uphold the Open Door, or, if that failed, an international commission should be established "to hear all questions of complaint which may arise in connection with the open door pledge, to ascertain the facts, and to make recommendations to the superior body or to the governments which have subscribed to the agreements."[3] Hornbeck clearly thought the second option was preferable.

Hornbeck concluded his memo by stating that for the Open Door to be effective a "centralized authority" had to be responsible for "interpretation and enforcement." As such: "The creation of such machinery is absolutely essential to the securing of satisfactory observance of such rules of international conduct as apply to realms of activity wherein there are commercial competition, political and economic rivalries, and the possibility of shading individual gains or losses according to individual construction and observance."[4] One of Hornbeck's biographers has characterized his views of the Open Door as somewhat similar to an "international constitution" that "would not work without an instrument of implementation." Unfortunately, "Hornbeck's idealistic proposal never had a chance at the Peace Conference primarily because of the issue of Shandong."[5]

The United States stood alone among the delegations at Paris in its support of China. Purely by chance, U.S. chances of carrying out this program were greatly aided by, first, the Imperial Russian government's collapse in February 1917, and, later, the Russian provisional government's collapse in October 1917, since both governments had fully supported the retention of Russian concessions in China. Prior to the Bolsheviks' consolidating their power during the early 1920s, internal turmoil and political revolution in Russia actually increased Washington's chances of enforcing the Open Door Policy. With Russian expansionism in the Far East temporarily absent, the United States could exert its full influence on Japan to comply with these principles.

In line with Hornbeck's memo, the U.S. delegation to the Paris Peace Talks sought to build a viable international mechanism that could function to preserve China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It was this system that President Woodrow Wilson hoped to create by means of the League of Nations. All U.S. attempts to create in East Asia just such a "centralized authority" were soon overshadowed, however, by the publication of formerly unknown secret treaties that had already been signed by the various Great Powers and also by China pertaining to the post-war disposition of the Shandong concession.

The impact of China's secret diplomacy

Woodrow Wilson was initially optimistic about the Paris talks. He backed China's long list of requests, and hoped that the Chinese government could maximize its leverage at the conference. He especially wanted to make use of the benefits of free trade – in China, characterized by the Open Door Policy – to grow beyond imperialism, encapsulating his goals in Fourteen Points calling for international cooperation rather than the creation of empires. Wilson hoped to use free trade to cure the evils of imperialism. His program was summarized by one historian as no less than "open covenants of peace, absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas, removal of all economic barriers, reduction of arms, and impartial adjustment of all colonial claims."[6] Wilson also supported the national aspirations of ethnic groups. His call for "national self-determination" was particularly attractive to recently established nations, like the Republic of China, which was founded in 1912. To give these new nations an opportunity to influence international events, Wilson advocated the formation of a League of Nations. This organization was intended to give small, weak nations equal representation in a new "community of power" which would replace the old "balance of power" which only the larger nations could participate in.[7]

What Wilson did not know was that China and Japan had already signed secret treaties detailing what would happen to the Shandong concession. Prior to the beginning of the talks in Paris, the Beijing government ordered its delegation not to be the first to bring up the Shandong issue. Once the conference convened, however, the Chinese delegate V. K. Wellington Koo ignored these orders. Transcripts from January 27–28, 1919 show that China's delegates to Versailles did not know of Beijing's 1918 secret

agreements with Japan until after the January 28 meeting.

On January 27, 1919, Baron Makino Nobuaki informed Woodrow Wilson, Lloyd George, Georges Clemenceau, Vittorio Orlando, and Wellington Koo that Japan expected the "unconditional cession" from Germany of the Jiaozhou leased territory with the railways, and "other rights possessed by Germany" in respect to Shandong Province.[8] Koo countered that China expected "the restoration to China of the leased territory of Jiaozhou, the railway in Shandong, and all other rights Germany possessed in that Province before the war." According to Koo, Germany's lease in Shandong had been "wrung out of China by force," and if it was not returned directly to China, but was instead transferred to "any other Power," then the Chinese delegation would conclude that Versailles was "adding one wrong to another."[9]

Makino then told the delegates that Japan and China had already reached agreement on Jiaozhou and the Shandong railway. When Wilson asked whether Japan would present these notes to the council, Makino responded that he would ask his government for permission to do so. But he also pointed out that since Japan had actual possession of the Shandong concession taken from Germany, before disposing of it to a third party it was first "necessary that Japan obtain the right of free disposal from Germany."
Accordingly, the cession of Jiaozhou would have to be "agreed upon by Germany before it was carried out," and that: "What should take place thereafter had already been the subject of an intercourse of views with China."[10]

Koo stated that he "presumed that reference was to the treaties and notes made in consequence of the negotiations on the twenty-one demands in 1915."[11] Koo was clearly not aware at this point that his own government had already signed a prior secret agreement in 1918 concerning Germany's Shandong concessions. This important fact was confirmed by the journalist Liang Qichao, who later quoted Wellington Koo as stating in a private conversation in Paris on May 4, 1919: "[When] I brought up the Shandong Question … I only came to know the details of the secret pact on the evening of that day when I received a cable from the government. I told Mr. Williams (adviser to the American peace delegation) about it, and he told me in reply with great agitation that everything was gone."[12]

Like Koo, the U.S. government was left uninformed about Beijing's treaties. Wilson and Secretary of State Robert Lansing later said that they learned of these treaties only during "the spring of 1919," although the State

Department suspected that such agreements existed, and Hornbeck and Williams had both warned Lansing that various agreements had either been signed, or were under discussion, that impacted China.[13] Once these formerly unknown secret treaties were released by the Japanese government their terms undermined the Chinese delegation's chances for success.

The difference between direct and indirect restitution

The main point of dispute between China and Japan was not whether Germany's Shandong concession would be returned to China, but whether it would be returned directly to China or indirectly via Japan. Prior to the Chinese delegates becoming aware of the existence of the 1918 Sino-Japanese secret agreements, they never disputed that Japan intended to return the Shandong concessions to China. For example, Koo admitted that he trusted that Japan would turn the Shandong concessions over to China. Rather, Koo argued that as an ally since 1917, nothing precluded China from "demanding from Germany direct restitution of her rights." On this point the transcripts state: "There was a choice between direct and indirect restitution. Of the two China would prefer the first. It was always easier to take one step than two if it led to the same place."[14]

The main point of contention was never whether the Shandong concession would be returned to China, therefore, but simply whether restitution would be "direct" or "indirect." In other words, the argument was over form not content. The Chinese delegation's declarations to the press, however, glossed over this important point. During March 1919, one such declaration called for the "liberation or release of China from the burdens and conditions imposed on her in the interests of an aggressive imperialism." This implied that Japan was claiming the unconditional cession of the leased territory of Jiaozhou together with the railway and other rights possessed by Germany in respect of Shandong Province. The Chinese delegation even suggested that Japan would thus gain permanent control over territory "greater in population and area than England [and] as the home of Confucius, it is not only packed with rare historical memories but is also sacred as the cradle of Chinese culture."[15]

Ordinary Chinese were not made aware by their diplomats at Paris that the former German concession would be returned to China no matter what. There was almost universal misunderstanding that the Versailles Peace Treaty permanently ceded this concession to Japan. Significantly, not once in the

seven-page Chinese declaration was it stated that the real issue under debate was not "whether" the Shandong concession was to be returned to China, but "how" it would be returned. Most Americans also took it for granted that Versailles granted Japan permanent rights over the Shandong concession. This basic misunderstanding fueled public opposition to the Versailles Peace Treaty.

China's delegation to the Paris Peace Conference was primarily responsible for stirring up tensions over the Shandong concession. Koo exceeded his instructions when he demanded the direct restitution of Shandong. To make matters worse, he was never told in advance that Beijing had already signed a secret agreement with Tokyo determining the fate of this concession. From the very first day of negotiations at Paris the Japanese delegation repeatedly stated that their intention was to return the Shandong concessions to China, as they had promised to do in 1914, which was fully in line with the Open Door Policy.

China's failed attempts to play the "Soviet" card

China's diplomats in Paris quickly realized that their negotiating position was weakened by the secret agreements. Their response was to resort to an age-old Chinese tactic of trying to play one foreign nation off another. This traditional Chinese foreign policy strategy of using one foreigner to influence another foreigner was called *yi yi zhi yi* or, literally, "using barbarians to govern barbarians."[16] Beginning in the spring of 1919, Chinese diplomats began to sponsor outwardly friendly relations with the Bolshevik regime in Russia in order to try to exert additional diplomatic pressure on the other Great Powers meeting in Paris.

Soon after the October Revolution in 1917, the People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs, Georgii Chicherin, presented a proposal to the Fifth Congress of the Soviets in July 1918 specially tailored to improve Soviet Russia's diplomatic relations with China: "We renounce the conquests of the tsarist government in Manchuria and we restore the sovereign rights of China in this territory, in which lies the principal trade artery – the Chinese Eastern Railway … We agree to renounce all land-rights of our citizens in China, Mongolia."[17]

One of Chicherin's unstated goals was to undermine foreign intervention in Siberia by splitting China off from the rest of the Allies. But when

Chicherin's speech was transmitted to China, Beijing officials received these points favorably. During the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, the Chinese diplomats even referred to these Soviet proposals as a political lever to pry concessions out of the Versailles participants. For example, on April 11, 1919, one official Chinese communiqué proclaimed that China "today confidently believed" that "the Republic of Russia, once internal peace has been re-established, will not fail to satisfy the legitimate aspirations of her neighbor."[18]

Responding to this Chinese declaration, the Soviet regime in Moscow issued an official communiqué to China on July 25, 1919 promising a long list of positive-sounding items, including renouncing all secret treaties, abolishing Russian concessions, and returning the Chinese Eastern Railway in Manchuria to China free of charge. The timing of this declaration right after Versailles casts doubt on one historian's conclusion that the Soviet manifesto abolishing extraterritoriality was "unsolicited."[19]

In fact, Chinese diplomats clearly hoped to use the Bolsheviks' public renunciation of concessions and special privileges to pressure other Western nations and Japan into following suit. During the spring of 1919, however, all Chinese attempts to play the Soviet "card" were unsuccessful. Once the Japanese delegation presented copies of Tokyo's agreements signed with Beijing in 1915 and 1918, as well as additional secret treaties with Great Britain, France, Italy, and Russia, then China's request for direct restitution of the Shandong concession was completely invalidated.

Ignoring Japan's claim that the Shandong problem was really a matter of honor – in Asia typically thought of as gaining face or losing face – the Chinese delegation publicly stated: "If it is intention of Council to restore it [Shandong] to China, it is difficult to see on what consideration of principle or of expediency could be justified the transfer in first instance to [an] Allied Power, which then voluntarily engaged to hand it back to rightful owner."[20] But China's treaties ceding Japan economic and political rights in Shandong were definitive. As Lloyd George was quick to point out, these obligations could not simply be ignored, since "the war had been partly undertaken in order to establish the sanctity of treaties." This meant that so far as Great Britain was concerned, "they had a definite engagement with Japan, as recorded in the note of the British Ambassador at Tokyo, dated 18th February 1917."[21]

When Wilson approached the Chinese delegation and asked whether it was

better to cede Japan the rights Germany had formerly held in Shandong, or whether China's recent treaties with Japan were less onerous, the Chinese delegation insisted that both were unacceptable.[22] This did not go down well with Japan, since it was important to the Japanese sense of national pride and honor that Germany cede Tokyo control over the territory that the Japanese armed forces had taken in battle. It was up to Wilson, therefore, to figure out a way to make the Japanese delegation agree to a less onerous solution.

Wilson's negotiations with the Japanese delegation

To resolve the Shandong conflict in line with Open Door principles, Wilson, Lloyd George, and Clemenceau met with the Chinese and Japanese delegations separately. Both Lloyd George and Clemenceau clarified at the very beginning that they felt obliged to support Japan, since both leaders considered their 1917 secret agreements with Japan to still be in effect. It fell on Wilson alone to determine a suitable compromise with the Japanese delegation between April 22 and 30, 1919. He negotiated this compromise solution protecting China's political sovereignty from foreign encroachments, even while ceding Japan economic benefits that she had not only wrested from Germany in World War I, but had then consolidated by signing official – albeit secret – treaties with China.

Wilson's starting point was Japan's four primary preconditions to China for returning Shandong, published in the *Japanese Chronicle* on November 8, 1917 opening the port to commerce, forming an exclusive Japanese concession similar to the other Great Powers, forming an international concession if Foreign Powers wished it, and opening separate Sino-Japanese negotiations on what to do with the buildings and properties of Germany.[23] Many of the other Great Powers feared that Japan intended to turn Shandong into an exclusive sphere of interest. In the opinion of some U.S. businessmen in China, it was best to either internationalize completely the port of Qingdao, or to restore it to China.[24]

Alone among all of the Great Powers, the United States had consistently refused to recognize the validity either of Japan's Twenty-one Demands, or of the later 1918 secret agreements. On April 22, 1919, Wilson urged Japan to forego these agreements for the good of peace in the Far East: "He was anxious that Japan should show to the world, as well as to China, that she wanted to give the same independence to China as other nations possessed,

that she did not want China to be held in manacles. What would prejudice the Peace in the Far East was any relationship that was not trustful."[25]

On April 23, 1919, the Japanese delegation defended its agreements with China, especially since "the articles of September 1918, which were made more than one year after China's declaration of war, could not have been entered into without presupposing existence and validity of the Treaty of May 1915." That the 1918 agreement was acknowledged by China, was shown by the fact that "China has actually received [an] advance of twenty million yen according to terms of above arrangement." For these reasons "full justice" should be accorded to Japan, based "upon her sacrifices and achievements and upon the fact of actual occupation, involving [a] sense of national honor."[26]

Wilson agreed with Lloyd George that he "did not wish to interfere with treaties," but the "validity of treaties could not be called in question if they were modified by agreements between both sides."[27] In other words, he sought to negotiate a separate agreement modifying Japan's and China's relations over Shandong as set forth in their 1915 and 1918 agreements. To start with, Wilson tried to convince Japan to forego the Twenty-one Demands. His proposal called for Japan to make a statement respecting China's sovereignty, and he recommended the following wording: "Surrender to China of all rights of sovereignty and retention with regard to the railway and the mines only of the economic rights of a concessionaire; to retain however privilege of establishing a non-exclusive settlement at Qingdao."[28]

After deliberation, the Japanese delegation agreed to Wilson's suggestion and on April 30, 1919, formally announced Japan's intended goals with regards to Shandong:[29]

> In reply to questions by President Wilson, Japanese delegate declared as follows: – the policy of Japan is to hand back the Shandong peninsula in full sovereignty of China, retaining only the economic privileges granted to Germany and the right to establish a settlement under the usual conditions at Qingdao.
>
> The owners of the railway will use special police only to insure security for traffic. They will be used for no other purpose.
>
> The police force will be composed of Chinese and such Japanese instructor[s] as the directors of the railway may select and will be appointed by the Chinese Government.

By phrasing Japan's position to align with the Open Door Policy, Wilson convinced the Japanese delegation to retain certain economic rights in Shandong, but not to demand any military or political rights. Even the Japanese police instructors would have to be approved by the Chinese government. This solution completely avoided referring back to, and thereby recognizing, the 1915 and 1918 Sino-Japanese agreements' infringement on China's sovereignty. This method was fully in accord with the Open Door principles. In fact, the Japanese delegates admitted that this new arrangement was not based on Japan's former agreements with China.

The impact of the Versailles decision in China

In the end, the principles of the Open Door Policy were reaffirmed when Japan acknowledged that its much stricter treaties with China would be referred to only as a last resort. Japan's relations with China would be based on the public declaration that had been drafted with Wilson's help. In an attempt to eliminate Japanese encroachments on Chinese sovereignty, Wilson supported this solution as the only plan that might work: "the only hope was to keep the world together, get the League of Nations with Japan in it and try to secure justice for the Chinese not only as regarding Japan but England, France, Russia, all of whom had concessions in China."[30] Wilson was later said to have complained that the Shandong problem had been settled "in a way which seems to me as satisfactory as could be got out of the tangle of treaties in which China herself was involved."[31]

According to a statement made on May 3, 1919, the Chinese delegation received news of Wilson's compromise with disappointment and dissatisfaction. But the Chinese delegates did not attempt to explain why the Beijing government had accepted 20 million yen from Japan the previous year. Nor did they deny that Japan had announced as early as 1914 that she intended to return Shandong to China. But the decision in Paris to have Germany cede Shandong to Japan, and then have Japan return Shandong to China, was perceived as an enormous loss of face by China.

News of the transfer of the Shandong concession to Japan first became public knowledge on April 30, 1919. Throughout China, public demonstrations and student protests indicated that dissatisfaction with this solution was widespread. Protesters marched through the foreign legation quarter on May 4, 1919, and left protests at the U.S., British, French, and

Italian embassies. In addition to wrecking the house of one official, the students severely beat Zhang Congxiang, the ex-minister to Japan responsible for signing the secret treaties. When the police arrested a group of students, one student was accidently killed.

This incident caused the Chinese demonstrations to intensify into a nationwide movement later named after the May Fourth protests. According to the U.S. consul in Tianjin: "The effect was electric and the spirit of national patriotism spread like wild fire from city to city. The disappointed hopes of the intellectual classes at the results obtained at the conclusion of a world war fought ostensibly in the interests of the weaker nations, found expression in a boycott of Japanese goods and the hounding out of office of the pro-Japanese traitors."[32] The Paris Peace Conference's decision also sparked a mass anti-imperialist demonstration in China. This movement was led by intellectuals such as Chen Duxiu, Li Da, and Li Dazhao, as well as by many other well-known Chinese intellectuals such as Hu Shih and Lu Xun. These Chinese intellectuals demanded that China's diplomats at Versailles reject the proposed peace settlement.

While news of Versailles' pro-Japanese decision quickly reached China, Japan's equally important public assurances that it intended to turn the Shandong concession over to China were not widely published. By May 20, 1919, the demonstrations in China had expanded. Students from middle schools and universities in Beijing went on strike. Students spearheaded efforts to organize boycotts of Japanese goods and in early June another thousand students were arrested. The center of the movement then shifted from Beijing to Shanghai, where a general strike of students, workers, and businessmen swelled to 100,000 and paralyzed Shanghai. These demonstrations put extreme public pressure on the Chinese delegation not to sign the Versailles Peace Treaty.

The Chinese delegates' decision not to sign

During June 1919, the Beijing government ignored the public demonstrations when it instructed the delegation in Paris to sign the Versailles Peace Treaty. Hundreds of representatives from different groups opposing the treaty stood outside the Chinese president's office to put pressure on him to change his mind. The U.S. minister to China, Paul Reinsch, was so upset by what he saw as the "president's betrayal of China," that he resigned on June 7, 1919 in

protest. In his letter of resignation he warned that misunderstanding of the U.S. decisions at Versailles might mean that "the fruits of one hundred forty years of American work will be lost."[33]

On June 28, 1919, the day the peace treaty was to be signed, Chinese students and workers surrounded the Chinese delegation at their Paris hotel to stop them from leaving to attend the ceremony. The Chinese delegation in Paris received thousands of telegrams from Chinese students and workers in France who opposed the terms of the treaty. Under this intense public pressure, the Chinese delegation took the unusual step of unanimously refusing to sign the treaty. Once they discovered that they could not sign the treaty on a provisional basis, they then resigned en masse in protest.[34]

The Chinese delegation to Versailles included many members of what would later be known as the "Anglo-American" faction. The delegation's refusal to sign the Versailles Peace Treaty took place before they had received permission from the Beijing government to do so: the Beijing government's original order to sign the Versailles Peace Treaty was sent on June 23, while the second order not to sign the treaty was sent only on July 10, 1919. According to one scholar, this second order merely served to confirm the correctness of the Chinese delegation's decision not to sign the treaty, a decision that later gave the Anglo-American faction great prestige that allowed them to pursue its own foreign policy goals, goals that were largely unhindered by the rapidly changing leadership of the Beijing government.[35]

The Chinese delegation's refusal to sign was partly brought about because of the huge outpouring of Chinese public disapproval. While Chinese delegation's action signaled an end to the student unrest, Chinese anger remained at what many portrayed as a national humiliation. China's loss of face galvanized Chinese intellectuals to lead the movement for change. The May Fourth Movement subsequently directed the frustration of the Chinese populace against the Western capitalist countries and Japan as well as at the Chinese central government in Beijing, which was perceived as having failed in its efforts to gain equal treatment for China.[36] All of these events increased Chinese intellectuals' interest in the grand political experiment even then underway in Soviet Russia.

Conclusions

Public misunderstanding of the terms of the Versailles Peace Treaty sparked a nationalistic upheaval in China. Many Chinese blamed President Wilson for betraying China. But, in fact, it was the lingering effects of secret diplomacy that undermined America's lofty goals at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference of assisting China to eliminate the unequal treaties. The diplomatic debacle at Versailles would prove to be a near fatal blow to America's China policy. The May Fourth Movement marked a new stage in the conflict both for and against the Open Door Policy.

Because of the demonstrations, many positive features of the treaty were overlooked. For example, Japan's agreement at Paris to return the Shandong concession insured that China regained this important territory in 1922, some seventy-five years before Germany's former lease came due in 1997. One Japanese supporter called the general misconception that Shandong's 55,000 square miles and its 36 million population had been turned over to Japan "sheer nonsense," since: "The Shandong settlement does not infringe upon the territorial integrity of China or her independence, rather does it serve to recover China's sovereignty which Germany had overrun at Jiaozhou – for Japan proposes to restore the leasehold to China."[37]

It was the perceived loss of face of receiving Shandong indirectly from Japan rather than directly from Germany that made the Chinese intellectuals more receptive to the anti-imperialist philosophy espoused by the Bolsheviks: "The students inspired by the patriotic hope of freeing their country from the clutches of militarism became willing tools in the hands of the manipulators behind the scenes."[38] Mass action by students, workers, and many other sections of society during 1919 made Chinese intellectuals particularly receptive to reports, which began to be published in China during the latter half of 1919, lauding the Soviet government's political reforms. During the early 1920s the "Chinese publications turn[ed] to the systematic study of the Russian Revolution and its ideology."[39] These publications, in turn, promoted greater Soviet influence in China.

Notes

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25 Gaimushõ, File: 2.3.1–3.4.
26 Gaimushõ, File: 2.3.1–3.1.
27 Gaimushõ, File: 2.3.1–3.6.
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34 Chow, *May 4th Movement*, 165–166.
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37 Toyokichi Iyenaga, "Iyenaga Decries Shantung Charge," *New York Times*, August 1, 1919; misrepresentations of the Shandong solution were commonplace in the U.S. press as well, with the Hearst papers running headlines: "SOLD – 40,000,000 People" (see Thomas A. Bailey, *Wilson and the Peacemakers* [New York: Macmillan, 1947], 283).

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5 The 1917 October Revolution's impact on the Open Door Policy

Soviet Russia criticized the Open Door Policy in China, even as it actively lobbied Washington for political help in stopping foreign intervention on Russian territory. The United States provided this help under the auspices of the Open Door Policy. Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points included special support for Russia. He proposed that Russia should be given "an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her own political development and national policy."[1] This proposal was so attractive to the Bolsheviks that they ordered millions of copies of the Fourteen Points to be printed and distributed.[2]

The Bolsheviks also turned to Washington for territorial protection from Japan in the Far East. During the Siberian intervention, Japanese forces seemed intent on annexing Russian territory permanently. From 1918 through 1920, the U.S. government repeatedly urged Japan to withdraw its troops from Siberia in line with Open Door Policy's territorial integrity principles. Thus, the Open Door Policy became a primary barrier protecting Russia's territorial integrity in the Far East.

It was Moscow's repeated reliance on the Open Door Policy in Siberia that largely discredits the Bolsheviks' simultaneous criticism of this policy in China. Although some U.S. diplomats advocated forming closer ties with the Soviet government, Secretary of State Robert Lansing – referring to the Soviets' revolutionary propaganda calling for the overthrow of capitalism – characterized the Bolsheviks as a "direct threat" to the "existing social order."[3] Similar to Imperial Russia's former incursions, the Soviet-supported spheres of interest in China were soon pitted against free trade.

A new interest in Soviet Russia

The embattled Soviet government was desperate to open diplomatic relations

with Asian countries. The Karakhan Manifesto was issued on July 25, 1919, signed by the deputy people's commissar, Lev Karakhan. Coming right after the peak of the May Fourth Movement, it was addressed to three audiences: to the people of China and to the governments of both North and South China. This manifesto was intended as a propaganda declaration to the people of China in general, an official declaration to the internationally recognized Chinese government in Beijing, as well as an attempt to communicate with Sun Yat-sen's breakaway government in southern China.

The Soviet promises contained in the Karakhan Manifesto were similar to the proposals that the Chinese delegation had presented, and had rejected, by the Paris Peace Conference. Even the ordering of the points exactly followed the Chinese delegation's proposals regarding (1) territorial integrity, (2) preservation of sovereign rights, and (3) economic and fiscal independence, which were themselves largely based on the Open Door Policy. Specifically, the Karakhan Manifesto promised to renounce all of the previous Russian annexations of foreign lands, any subjugation of other nations, and indemnities. The Soviet government also promised to respect China's territorial integrity by abolishing all unequal treaties with China, and in particular, Russia's secret treaty with China from 1896, its participation in the 1901 treaty making China pay the Boxer indemnity, as well as Russia's secret treaties with Japan from 1907 to 1916 dividing Manchuria and Inner Mongolia into Russian and Japanese spheres of interest.

With regards to China's sovereign rights, Karakhan promised to abolish all special privileges and concessions in China, and he furthermore promised to respect China's economic and fiscal independence by cancelling Russia's share of the Boxer indemnity. Finally, Karakhan referred specifically to the Versailles Peace Treaty when he warned that: "If the Chinese desire to become free like the Russian people, and to escape the destiny prescribed for it at Versailles in order to transform it into a second Korea or a second India, it should understand that its only allies and brothers in the struggle for liberty are the Russian worker and peasant and the Red Army of Russia."[4]

The order and type of promises leave little doubt that an important source for this declaration was the Chinese delegation's failed proposals at the Paris Peace Conference. One addition to the Chinese delegation's proposals was a promise to return the Chinese Eastern Railway to China, which was similar to Chicherin's announcement of the previous year but went further: "The Soviet government restores to the Chinese people without exacting any kind of

compensation, the Chinese Eastern Railway, as well as all concessions of minerals, forests, gold, and others which were seized from them by the government of the Tsars, the government of Kerensky, and the brigands Horvath, Semenov, Kolchak, the former generals, merchants, and capitalists of Russia."[5] However, when this document was published in the Soviet press a month later, the August 26, 1919 *Izvestiia* edition did not contain this crucial sentence about returning the Chinese Eastern Railway without compensation. Instead, a line that appeared in a different part of the both manifestoes simply declared that the Soviet government "did not wait to return the Manchurian railway to the Chinese people."[6]

The Bolsheviks used this document in their propaganda. The original version of the Karakhan Manifesto was also included in a widely circulated 1919 propaganda pamphlet written by Vladimir Vilenskii and entitled *China and Soviet Russia*. One section of this Soviet pamphlet called "China and the Lessons of Versailles" harshly compared the friendly offers the Soviet government had made to China and the poor treatment China had received at the Paris Peace Conference at the hands of "America, Great Britain, and France." This pamphlet then proposed that China redeem herself through revolution and offered the Russian proletariat's help in urging "forward and accelerating the beginning of revolutionary movements in the Far East." In addition, it clarified the Soviet government's particular interest in the Guomindang's revolutionary movement in South China: "Everyone is saying that the revolutionary fire in South China ought inevitably to move to the North. Then revolutionary Russia will find for itself a reliable ally in China against the imperialist predators."[7]

The Soviet government repeatedly presented the more generous manifesto to the Chinese people, the Beijing government, and the Guangzhou government between 1919 and 1921, and the less generous version after 1921, when the formation of the Chinese Communist Party gave them a local voice in political debates. Vilenskii's prediction that the revolutionary movement in South China would one day move northward to unite China was a clear indicator that the Soviet government was already positioning itself to form an alliance with the opposition government in Guangzhou. One of its primary goals was to use the Guangzhou government to exert leverage on Beijing so as to regain Russia's former spheres of interest in Outer Mongolia and Manchuria.

Russian spheres of interest vs. the U.S. Open Door Policy

The Bolsheviks sought a world revolution to overthrow the democratic and capitalist states. The Karakhan Manifesto was written in such a way so as to pull China away from the United States, as well as away from the U.S. concept of the Open Door Policy, and to draw China into the Soviet government's sphere of interest, which it called a "camp." This task was made easier by referring to the Paris Peace Conference's failure to turn the Shandong concession directly back to China. Moscow could point to Soviet promises to treat China as an equal as a sign that the Soviet government was acting superior to the U.S. government. Thus, Lenin could offer the Chinese people evidence that his program was better than Wilson's. In the aftermath of Versailles, the Chinese intellectuals' general disillusionment with the effectiveness of the Open Door Policy provided a major opening for Soviet propaganda.

The conflict between the Open Door Policy and spheres of interest predated the October Revolution by more than twenty years, but the ideological division of the world into two opposing camps – capitalist and socialist – took place only in 1917. The October Revolution's success pitted capitalism against socialism. Alexis de Tocqueville put it best when he said: "The conquests of the American are won by the plowshare, those of the Russian by the sword."[8] For some historians this ideological division marked the true beginning of the Cold War.[9] The overthrow and destruction of capitalism worldwide was a theme that remained constant throughout almost the entire history of the Soviet government.[10]

The Soviet viewpoint was that the world was zero sum; only one country could win the spoils. Immediately following the October Revolution, Leon Trotsky stated: "Either the Russian Revolution will create a revolutionary movement in Europe, or the European powers will destroy the Russian Revolution."[11] In 1919, Lenin further said: "We are living not merely in a state, but in a system of states. Ultimately one or the other must conquer."[12] When the Soviet diplomat Adolf Joffe arrived in China in 1922, he explained that as a result of World War I: "The hegemony of the world has been transferred to the United States of America from Europe. As a consequence, the most important questions, like the question of the Pacific, the Far East problems, have been put on the agenda. These convert the struggle for supremacy from an European character to a world character."[13]

The U.S.–Soviet conflict between the Open Door Policy and spheres of interest characterized this battle. As Soviet influence increased in Asia, free access to markets decreased. Thus, wherever U.S. Open Door Policy was enforced, the Soviet Union's ability to compete was jeopardized. From both an ideological and commercial standpoint, therefore, the U.S. and Soviet governments were in direct opposition to each other. It was this dual nature of the Soviet government's conflict with the United States that helped to define the ideological struggle to influence China during the 1920s.

While Washington valued democracy, Moscow relied mainly on its military might. André Fontaine has quoted Saint-Beuve on the inevitability of this clash: "Russia is young. The other nation is America, an intoxicated, immature democracy that knows no obstacles. The future of the world lies between these two great nations. One day they will collide, and then we will see struggles the like of which no one has dreamed of, at least as far as sheer mass and physical impact are concerned, for the epoch of great moral issues is over."[14] Later, the Soviet Union's December 30, 1922 constitution even canonized this struggle: "The world has been divided into two camps – the capitalist and the socialist."[15] During late 1925, Evgenii Varga, a well-known Hungarian Comintern official, announced in a Comintern article that the "final struggle between the world bourgeoisie and proletariat will take place under the leadership of the United States and the Union of Socialist Republics."[16]

Another fundamental difference is the United States was a sea power while the Soviet Union was a land power. The contrast between the needs of a sea power versus a land power was made especially clear from pre-World War I statistics showing that the United States had a standing army of only 50,000 men, while the Russian army at that point exceeded 1.4 million.[17] One of the main arenas of potential economic conflict was in East Asia, since it was in the Pacific that the westward-expanding U.S. free trade zone met with the eastward-expanding Russian, and later Soviet, land empire. Theodore Roosevelt even observed at the turn of the twentieth century that the history of humankind had "begun with a Mediterranean era, continued with an Atlantic period, and was entering upon a Pacific epoch."[18]

When expedient, the Imperial Russian government had paid lip-service to the Open Door. After Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese war, it was the United States that helped broker the 1905 Treaty of Portsmouth. In exchange for Washington negotiating better terms with Japan, the Imperial Russian

government formally agreed to uphold the Open Door Policy in China. Almost immediately, however, Russia disregarded its pledge and carried out secret negotiations with Japan to carve out their respective spheres of interest in Manchuria. This is an early example of how Russia relied on the U.S. Open Door Policy for protection when defeated by Japan, but then opposed the Open Door Policy when it interfered with further Russian expansion.

This behavior continued largely unchanged under the Bolsheviks. With the gradual growth of the Soviet government's power in Siberia from 1918 through 1920, the apparently contradictory policy that had characterized Imperial Russia's attitude toward the Open Door Policy reappeared. Whenever the Soviet government's position was strong, and it felt unthreatened, it ignored the Open Door Policy and worked to rebuild Imperial Russia's former sphere of interest. But whenever the Soviet position was weak, or when it was under attack, it turned to the U.S. Open Door Policy for assistance. This reoccurring pattern is important for explaining why the Bolshevik propaganda condemned the Open Door Policy in 1919 and afterward as being simply another tool of imperialism, even while from 1920 onward Soviet officials relied on America's Open Door Policy to ensure the safety of Siberia, including the Far Eastern Republic (FER), a Soviet-backed buffer state. The Bolshevik leaders repeatedly urged Washington to oppose Japan's military intervention in Siberia, and the U.S. government did so under the auspices of the Open Door Policy.

Soviet reliance on the Open Door in Siberia

Beginning in December 1917, the Soviet government began to promote revolution in Asia. On January 16, 1918, it called for "a complete break with the barbarous policies of bourgeois civilization, which builds the welfare of the exploiters and a few select chosen nations upon the enslavement of hundreds of millions of toilers in Asia, in the colonies in general, and in the small states."[19] This announcement was soon followed by another dated February 22, 1918, in which the Soviet government made a direct appeal to the people of the Far East to rise up against the capitalist countries.[20]

Even while denouncing capitalist states, the Bolsheviks repeatedly relied on the Open Door Policy to retain its own sovereign territory, especially in the Russian Far East. The first example of Soviet attempts to use the Open Door appeared in a note from Trotsky to the Acting Commissar for Foreign

Affairs Chicherin on January 31, 1918. Trotsky suggested opposing Japan by warning Tokyo that its actions would "have a harmful effect not only on the interests of Russia, but on the interests of other countries, in particular and especially – the United States." Since the United States had no concrete territorial interests in Siberia, the only interests Trotsky could be referring to would be Washington's longtime support under the Open Door Policy. Trotsky then suggested that copies of this note should be sent directly to the U.S. embassy, ordering Chicherin: "Prepare a draft of this note, discuss it with Lenin."[21]

Later, on March 5, 1918, Trotsky sent another letter to Washington specifically asking what kind of support it would be willing to make against Japan's proposed intervention into Siberia:

> Should Japan – in consequence of an open or tacit understanding with Germany or without such an understanding – attempt to seize Vladivostok and the Eastern-Siberian Railway, which would threaten to cut off Russia from the Pacific Ocean and would greatly impede the concentration of Soviet troops toward the East about the Urals – in such case what steps would be taken by the other allies, particularly and especially by the United States, to prevent a Japanese landing on our Far East and to insure uninterrupted communications with Russia through the Siberian route?[22]

Several days later, on March 9, 1918, Commissar of Foreign Affairs Chicherin expressed his appreciation to America for restraining Japan: "The People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs warmly thanks the American Embassy for the friendly attitude which is being shown by it at the present critical time and for assistance being given by it in the complications which are arising now in the Far East."[23]

The Open Door Policy guarded Siberia from Japan's threats to invade and even annex Russian territory. When Japan deployed several gunboats and an army of 75,000 men to Siberia, Wilson responded by sending a small contingent of U.S. troops to Vladivostok in order to try to "thwart" Japan's "imperialist designs."[24] A U.S. aide-memoire signed on July 17, 1918 listed three very specific reasons for participating in the Siberian intervention, none of them including the overthrow of the Soviet government: (1) "to guard military stores," (2) "to render such aid as may be acceptable to the Russians

in the organization of their own self-defense," and (3) to help the Czechoslovakian troops trapped in Siberia "to consolidate their forces."[25] One historian of the U.S. intervention in Siberia characterized President Wilson's motives: "Wilson's justification for this policy was his belief that it preserved the Open Door in Siberia and Manchuria, preserved Russia's territorial integrity, and aided him in establishing his League of Nations."[26]

The Soviet government was particularly concerned that Japan might be able to take permanent control of the Chinese Eastern Railway, which ran through Manchuria and was the only direct railway line between European Russia and Vladivostok. During January 1918, the Beijing government had, in league with Japan, jointly assumed responsibility over the administration of the Chinese Eastern Railway. During September 1918, the United States tried to insure that the Manchurian and Siberian railways would not fall permanently into Japan's hands. It called for international control of all of Russia's Siberian railway system. On January 9, 1919, the Allies signed an agreement that set up an inter-allied board to control the use of the Siberian railways so that Japan could not use these railways to occupy permanently or perhaps even annex much of Eastern Siberia and practically all of northern Manchuria. If the inter-allied board had not stepped in to manage these railways, Japan would have almost certainly retained its dominant position, perhaps even permanently.

The inter-allied board continued to administer the main railway in Manchuria, the Chinese Eastern Railway, through November 1, 1922, at which time it dissolved. By keeping Japan in check and then by voluntarily dismantling the inter-allied board in 1922, the U.S. government made it possible for the Soviet Union to later regain control over the Chinese Eastern Railway through diplomatic means. The U.S.-sponsored international effort to manage the Chinese Eastern Railway conformed exactly to the goals of the Open Door Policy.[27] This was yet another example of how the Soviet government directly benefited from this U.S. policy.

The Open Door Policy helped protect the Siberian interests of the besieged Soviet state. In a secret communiqué, dated August 5, 1919, Trotsky even informed the Central Committee that it was only the United States that kept Japan in check: "[T]he favorable conditions for our advance into Siberia were made for us by the antagonism of Japan and the United States." Trotsky further noted that the Soviet government could rely on the continued "direct support of the Washington rascals to oppose Japan."[28] Trotsky's

communiqué proves that the Open Door Policy was crucial to Moscow's efforts to protect Russian territories in Siberia. Without Washington's opposition, Japan might have succeeded in annexing much of Siberia. Even critics of the Open Door fully admitted that Washington's goal during these years was to "proscribe further Japanese expansion" in Siberia.[29] This became particularly important when Moscow authorized the creation of the Far Eastern Republic.

The creation of the Far Eastern Republic

While the Open Door Policy's direct support for Soviet Russia was one example of how the Bolsheviks secretly depended on it for their survival, an even better proof of the Bolsheviks' dual policy was the role the Far Eastern Republic (FER) played in promoting secret diplomatic negotiations with Japan and China. Created during April 1920, the FER claimed to be an independent democratic state, but was in fact a Bolshevik puppet state under the control of Moscow. Although the FER was originally created as a buffer zone between the Red Army and the Japanese occupation forces in Siberia, it served a secondary role as a diplomatic intermediary between the Bolsheviks and these East Asian governments. One of its responsibilities was to open relations with Russia's Asian neighbors. In this role, the FER openly supported the Open Door Policy in its diplomatic pronouncements. By means of the FER, the Soviet government continued to rely on the Open Door Policy to protect its Siberian borders from 1920 until the end of 1922, long after Soviet propaganda had already condemned this policy in China as imperialist.

With the backing of the Open Door Policy, the Red Army's military advance into Siberia was a huge success. The White Russian leader Kolchak was forced to retreat eastwards in January 1920. With his death on February 7, 1920, the buffer zone between the Soviet and Japanese forces ceased to exist. On January 13, 1920, Trotsky and Lenin again advocated relying on the Open Door Policy when they suggested in a telegram to Smirnov, the chairman of the Siberian Revolutionary Committee, that the Bolsheviks must turn to the United States to limit Japan's actions. Specifically, they ordered Smirnov to contact the U.S. representative and make him understand that Japan's absorption of Siberian territories had driven the local populations to "rebellion, military action, and chaos," which ran counter to U.S. economic

interests.[30]

Immediately after the withdrawal of U.S. troops during 1920, the Bolsheviks created the FER buffer zone in Siberia. This buffer served several purposes, including insuring that the Red Army did not come into open conflict with the remaining Japanese troops. But a second, arguably more important, goal was to use the FER as a diplomatic middleman in the Bolsheviks' efforts to open diplomatic relations with Japan and China. On February 18, 1920, Trotsky sent a secret telegram ordering the formation of the FER: "It is necessary to hasten the formation of a buffer so that military and diplomatic negotiations to the East of Baikal will proceed under the banner of this buffer state."[31] In a note signed by Lenin the following day, Lenin also ordered all Bolsheviks to "revile the opponents of a buffer state," and proclaimed the slogan: "Not a single step further in Siberia."[32]

The formation of the FER followed within days of America's final troop departure from Vladivostok on March 30, 1920. On April 6, 1920, A. Krasnoshchekov, a lawyer educated in Chicago, became the prime minister of the "Independent Democratic Far Eastern Republic." Although Moscow immediately recognized this buffer state and opened diplomatic relations with it, the FER's independent status was merely a front. On April 18, 1920, Chicherin acknowledged: "Russia will therefore extend her influence over it in the future, just as she is doing at present. However, we are prepared to recognize the autonomy of this state."[33] On August 13, 1920, Lenin sent the following instructions: "The bourgeois–democratic character of the buffer is purely formal … The Central Committee [of the Communist party in Moscow] will direct the policy of the Far Eastern Republic through a Bureau for the Far East whose members will be appointed from Moscow and which will be directly subordinate to the Central Committee of the party."[34]

The FER's main duty was to conduct diplomatic negotiations on behalf of the Soviet government. On July 16, 1920, the FER government achieved one of its most important goals when it reached an agreement with Japan delimiting temporary borders throughout Siberia.[35] Later, on November 30, 1920, Moscow signed official treaties with the FER securing railway and navigation rights. On December 15, 1920, they established mutual borders. Washington was suspicious of the close relations between the Soviet government and the FER. In 1921, John Kenneth Caldwell was sent to observe the FER's negotiations with Japan. Convinced that the FER was a real state, Washington urged "upon the Government of Japan, in the most

earnest and friendly manner, that all remaining troops be unconditionally withdrawn from all Russian territory."[36]

During May 1921, the United States even told Japan that it could "neither now nor hereafter recognize as valid any claims or titles arising out of a present Japanese occupation or control, that it cannot acquiesce in any action taken by the government of Japan which might impair existing treaty rights or the political or territorial integrity of Russia."[37]

Opening diplomatic relations with the USSR's East Asian neighbors was very important. The FER carried out secret negotiations with the Japanese government during 1921 and 1922 that upheld the Open Door Policy. On August 27, 1921, a FER representative named Ignatii Iurin told the Japanese representative in Dairen that the FER "hopes to adopt the Open Door's equal opportunity policy in Eastern Siberia."[38] Relations between the FER and Japan were built on this foundation. On April 21, 1922, the FER even presented a twenty-nine point plan to open diplomatic relations with Japan, where point twenty agreed to "recognize the principle of the Open Door."[39] Clearly the Open Door Policy was not considered a threat to the FER.

The same FER policy was secretly applied to China when Iurin carried out negotiations with Beijing during the spring of 1921. He was careful not to use the word "Open Door," since it was well known that Bolshevik propaganda had already denounced this policy in China. But he presented the Beijing government with a draft treaty of "Friendship and Commerce between the Far Eastern Republic and the Republic of China," which called for mutual relations based on: "Liberty of trade, sea and river navigation."[40] Since freedom of trade was its central goal, Iurin was actually advocating the Open Door Policy in his negotiations with China.

Sino-Soviet secret negotiations on Outer Mongolia

While the FER relied on the Open Door to protect its territorial integrity, Soviet diplomats in China had a completely different interpretation of Outer Mongolia's status. In fact, secret Sino-Soviet negotiations during the 1920s made Outer Mongolia little more than a Soviet puppet state, which undermined the protection of the Open Door for the rest of China. Foreign Ministry documents from the PRC and Taiwan show that even while the Bolsheviks publicly announced that the USSR had abolished the former 1915 Imperial Russian tripartite treaty with China and Outer Mongolia, in private

Soviet diplomats sought to renew the terms of this treaty. This was actually an attempt to recreate Imperial Russia's spheres of interest in China's periphery.

Although China had lost Outer Mongolia to Russia in 1915, the Outer Mongolian government petitioned China to take it back on November 17, 1919, which Beijing agreed to on November 22, 1919. In this petition, Outer Mongolia's leaders renounced the 1915 tripartite agreement with China and Russia. Meanwhile Prince Kudachev, the representative of the Kerensky government in China, reassured Beijing that the 1915 tripartite treaty was void. Soon after Versailles, the deputy people's commissar, Lev Karakhan, promised to respect China's territorial integrity by abolishing all unequal treaties with China. The telegraphed original of the Karakhan Manifesto was received by China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on March 26, 1920. Thereafter, on October 2, 1920, Karakhan met with a Chinese mission in Moscow and presented it with a second manifesto that repeated that all former Sino-Russian treaties were now null and void.

These declarations all seemed to prove that the 1915 tripartite treaty had been cancelled. Following the White Russian Baron Ungern von Sternberg's October 1920 advance into Outer Mongolia, however, the Red Army intervened. On November 11, 1920, Commissar of Foreign Affairs Chicherin sent Beijing a note explaining that Soviet troops entering Chinese territory were merely "friendly troops who would consider their task fulfilled after the final destruction of White Guard bands in Mongolia, and the restoration of Chinese sovereignty, and would then immediately leave Chinese territory."[41] Although Ungern was initially repulsed, his troops retook Urga in early February 1921, whereupon he declared an independent Mongolia under his leadership.

On May 4, 1921, the Soviet representative Klishko in London presented an official letter to Wellington Koo, the Chinese minister to Great Britain, warning him that Japan was backing Ungern in an attempt to make Outer Mongolia into a buffer state between Russia and China. Within Mongolia, a "popular revolutionary party" was trying to oppose this plan by creating "an autonomous Mongolia, independent of Japan, but forming part of the Chinese Republic and remaining under the sovereignty of China." The Soviet letter then acknowledged that Moscow's "sympathies" were with this revolutionary party and warned that: "If the Government of China wishes to prevent the eventual loss of Mongolia, it ought at once to enter into contact with the

above-mentioned popular revolutionary party of Mongolia and concert its actions with the struggle carried on by this party."[42]

The Soviet offer of cooperation was really a veiled threat. The Chinese government immediately protested that a Soviet campaign into Outer Mongolia would involve the "territorial rights of China," and that "it should be mutually understood as a principle that China's territorial sovereignty is to be respected."[43] But the Red Army entered Outer Mongolia in late June and defeated Ungern in a military campaign that ended with the occupation of Urga on July 6, 1921. This Soviet victory led to the formation of the "Mongolian People's Revolutionary Government" in late July 1921. Mongolia's pro-Soviet government then requested that Moscow continue to garrison Red Army troops. The Soviet government agreed. On August 10, 1921, Moscow sent a telegram to the People's Government of Mongolia that promised that Soviet troops would remain until the threat to Outer Mongolia and Russia was removed. More importantly, the Bolsheviks also offered to act as an intermediary between Outer Mongolia and China. Once Mongolia's leaders agreed to this suggestion, Soviet diplomats later implied that it was the Mongols who had requested that they act as the intermediary, not the other way around.

Meanwhile, only four days later, on August 14, 1921, the Bolsheviks supported the creation of the Tuvan People's Republic, a breakaway state that included much of northwestern Outer Mongolia, which proved to be the first step to full annexation of this formerly Mongolian territory by the Soviet Union. On March 5, 1922, Tannu Tuva declared its independence from Outer Mongolia. From this declaration of independence in 1922 until its annexation by the Soviet Union in 1944, this area was completely cut off from Outer Mongolia. Although Tannu Tuva's population was small, its territorial size was as large as Great Britain.[44] Put another way, just as Outer Mongolia was being sliced off from China, Tannu Tuva was being sliced off from Outer Mongolia. Both actions were diametrically opposed to the Open Door Policy's goal of supporting China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

By the fall of 1921, the Soviet government had renewed Imperial Russia's imperialist strategy of mediating Outer Mongolia's diplomatic relations with China. On November 5, 1921, Moscow signed a treaty with the Outer Mongolian government that undermined Chinese sovereignty, giving the USSR many special rights and privileges such as mutual recognition, most-favored-nation status, as well as special privileges to own and lease property.

Since this treaty also specified that the anti-Soviet White Russian armies could not operate within Mongolian territory, Moscow had a perfect excuse to continue deploying the Red Army. By recognizing Outer Mongolia's independent status without consulting China, this treaty directly contradicted the Open Door Policy.

Conclusions

The Bolsheviks' repeated reliance on the Open Door Policy to regain Russian lands in Siberia casts doubt on Moscow's simultaneous condemnation of this policy as simply a tool supporting economic imperialism. High-ranking Bolshevik leaders like Lenin and Trotsky repeatedly relied on the Open Door Policy to prevent Siberia from being annexed by Japan. Furthermore, Moscow later admitted that Washington's role in the Siberian intervention halted Japanese expansionism. When Cordell Hull carried out negotiations with Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinov during 1933, Hull showed him documents that "made clear to Litvinov that American forces had not been in Siberia to wrest territory from Russia, but to ensure the withdrawal of the Japanese, who had a far larger force in Siberia with the intent to occupy it permanently."[45] Moscow's 1933 decision to drop its claims against the foreign intervention was a final admission that the Open Door Policy helped the Bolsheviks between 1918 and 1920 in their territorial conflict vis-à-vis Japan.

More importantly, the USSR made full use of the Open Door's protections for its newly created puppet state in Siberia, the FER, from 1920 through until the merging of this state with the USSR in 1922. The Soviet strategy of creating a Siberian buffer state and relying on the United States for protection worked. Washington urged Tokyo on numerous occasions to pull its troops out of Siberia. The United States also sent an official envoy to Chita, the capital of the FER, to promote trade links with the FER, and later allowed three non-voting representatives from the FER to attend the Washington Conference.

Unbeknown to officials in Washington, however, at the same time that Soviet diplomats actively sought protection from the Open Door Policy against Japan they were secretly trying to recreate and even extend Imperial Russia's former sphere of interest in Outer Mongolia and Manchuria. Soviet propaganda insisted that they had no territorial ambitions in China, but by

1922 the Soviet government had already occupied Tannu Tuva and in 1944 it was annexed outright, even while Outer Mongolia was turned into a Soviet protectorate. Soviet expansionist policies ultimately undermined Western attempts to support China's sovereignty and territorial integrity at the Washington Conference in 1921–1922.

Notes

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3 Williams, *American–Russian Relations*, 123
4 Chu, *V. K. Wellington Koo*, 15.
5 Original French-language telegram from Soviet government to Peking government, March 26, 1920, *Waijiao Dangan* (hereafter WJDA), 03–32, 463(1), 10; English translations have generally derived from the 1924 *China Yearbook* which received a translated copy of the 1920 telegram from the Peking Government's Foreign Ministry.
6 "Obrashchenie Sovetskoi Rossii i Kitaiu" (Appeal to Soviet Russia and China), *Izvestiia*, August 26, 1919.
7 Vladimir Vilenskii, *Kitai i Sovetskaia Rossiia* (*China and Soviet Russia*) (Moscow, 1919), 3, 12.
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19 David J. Dallin, *The Rise of Russia in Asia* (New Haven, CT: Archon Books, 1971), 180.
20 "Iz instruktsii Narodnogo komissariata po inostrannym delam RSFSR Mezhdunarodnym otdelam kraevykh Sovdepov" (From the Instructions of the Peoples' Commissar of Foreign Affairs RSFSR International Department Outermost Soviet Deputies), *Sovetsko–kitaiskie otnosheniia 1917–1957, Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR* (*Soviet–Chinese Relations 1917–1957, Documents on the Foreign Policy of the USSR*) (MID, SSSR, Gospolitizdat, 1957), 109–111.
21 Untitled Two-Page Letter from Trotsky to Chicherin, Acting Commissar for Foreign Affairs, January 31, 1918; Harvard University, Houghton Library, Trotsky Archives, Document T6.

22 "Note from Trotsky, Commissar for War, to Colonel Robins for Transmission to the American Government Concerning the Attitude of the Allies if the Soviet Congress Should Refuse to Ratify the Brest–Litovsk Treaty," March 5, 1918, Degras, *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy* (New York, 1952), vol. I, 56–57.
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31 Telegram from Trotsky to Smirnov in Irkutsk, marked "Koniia. Sekretno." (Copy. Secret), February 18, 1920, Trotsky Archives, 444.
32 Telegram from Lenin to Smirnov, marked "Koniia. S. sekretno." (Copy. Quite Secret), February 19, 1920, Trotsky Archives, 446
33 Published in the April 28, 1920 issue of *Krasnoe Znamia* from an April 18, 1920 interview in the Japanese newspaper *Osaka Mainichi.*
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43 English-language letter, June 20, 1921, WJDA, 03–32, 198(3).
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The Washington Conference, 1921–1922

To strengthen the Open Door Policy in China, Washington announced during the summer of 1921 that it would be convening a conference to discuss issues of importance to the Far East. America ranked first among the foreign powers in the China trade. The naval historian, Alfred Thayer Mahan, discussed in highly pragmatic terms China's economic importance to the United States: "The integrity of the Chinese Empire … is the concern of the United States, of any country asserting the Open Door, not as a matter of benevolence, but because it is essential to free access to the Chinese markets."[1] On July 1, 1921, Secretary of State Charles Hughes reassured the Chinese minister in Washington that America's "whole-hearted support" for the Open Door Policy was "traditionally regarded as fundamental both to the interests of China itself and to the common interests of all powers in China, and indispensable to the free and peaceful development of their commerce on the Pacific Ocean."[2]

In line with its dual policy with regard to the Open Door, on July 17, 1921, *Izvestiia* called on all of the Asian nations to oppose Western imperialism: "Just as we are the hopeful bulwark for oriental peoples in their struggle for independence, they in turn are our allies in one common struggle against world imperialism."[3] But two days later, on July 19, 1921, Chicherin protested that the Soviet government had not been invited to attend the Washington Conference.[4] The Bolsheviks sought to tear down the West in its propaganda, even while seeking to negotiate in public. For example, the Comintern, created by the Bolsheviks in 1919, denounced in its propaganda the upcoming conference in Washington as an attempt by the United States to take control of the Chinese and Siberian markets. It called on China to join with Russia, since it was "the only state which is trying to establish with the Eastern countries … relations based on the principles of equality and fraternal aid."[5]

During the Washington Conference, final negotiations on Japan's return of

the Shandong concession were completed and it was returned to China in December 1922. The future U.S. President, Herbert Hoover, was optimistic, confidently stating: “The major difficulties between Japan and China have been adjusted so that good will may replace hate in the Far East.”[6] Unfortunately, the three-year delay in handing over the Shandong concession allowed for the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921, which was accomplished with the active assistance and under the direction of the Soviet-funded Comintern. If the Versailles Peace Treaty had solved this problem in 1919, communism might never have gotten a foothold in China. As a result of this delay Japan also never got proper credit for carrying out its promise to treat China fairly. In a similar ironic twist, the USSR would later avoid censure for reneging on its promises of equality.

Soviet denunciations of the Open Door Policy

As discussed above, the Bolshevik leaders actively relied on the Open Door to shore up Soviet power in Siberia. But in the rest of the Asia this policy stood in the way of Communist expansion. For this reason, the Comintern was instructed to denounce it in China. On March 6, 1919, one of the two Chinese delegates in attendance at the first congress of the Comintern, Lao Xiuzhao, published an article that claimed that 500 million Chinese were being exploited by the capitalist powers of Europe, America, and Japan under the guise of the Open Door.[7] On the same day, the Comintern further accused America of “the exploitation of weak States and peoples by means of trade and capital investment.”[8]

Soviet propaganda linking the Open Door Policy with economic imperialism called for its destruction in China. In 1920, the Comintern’s main representative in China, Henk Sneevliet (Maring) acknowledged the difficulties, since “the American open-door policy has the appearance of defending oppressed peoples,” but he then insisted that “in reality this policy only serves the capitalist interests of the United States.”[9] Maring warned the Chinese people not to trust the Open Door Policy, since it could be used as an excuse to send “foreign ships, gunships, airships, and troops” to China.[10] Elsewhere, Maring warned the Chinese that the cooperation shown among capitalist countries ensured that “China and Russia will be their victims.”[11]

In one of the first anti-Open Door articles written by a leading Chinese Communist, Cai Hesen similarly described this policy as an imperialist tool

to “dominate” China’s industry and commerce, so that the capitalist powers could “dismember China” and “forever make China a dumping ground for their goods.” China would soon become just like the rest of the world’s colonial countries, Cai warned, and just as the capitalist countries had dominated three-quarters of the world’s economically backward nations, the Chinese people would forever remain capitalist “slaves” if the world proletarian revolution did not free them. Cai then claimed that if China wanted to rid herself of the Open Door Policy and escape from this fate, she should join the world revolution and “work hand in hand with Soviet Russia.”[12]

The Bolsheviks adopted on the surface what appeared to be a contradictory stance towards the Open Door Policy. While the Soviet government relied on the Open Door for protection from Japanese aggression, it denounced this same policy as being harmful to China. In hindsight it is easier to see that the Comintern criticized the Open Door Policy mainly because it interfered with Moscow’s attempts to expand its influence into China. Almost immediately after the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks adopted this duplicitous policy of working diplomatically with the capitalist countries when it was to their advantage to do so while simultaneously supporting revolutionary propaganda advocating the destruction of these very same governments. The Comintern’s call to destroy the Open Door Policy in China was a prime example of this dual policy.

The Washington Conference and the Open Door Policy

The Paris Peace Conference failed to resolve many Asian problems, chief among them the disposition of the Shandong concession. Woodrow Wilson hoped that such problems could be resolved by the soon-to-be created League of Nations. But the Senate refused to allow the United States to join the League, in part because of their disappointment with Shandong. Without U.S. involvement in the League, many outstanding conflicts could not be resolved. This meant that a separate meeting of Great Powers had to be hosted by the United States during 1921–1922 to address, among other important matters, the return of the Shandong concession to China.

At Washington, the U.S. government sought to reaffirm that the Open Door Policy should protect the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of China. Eight countries were invited, including Belgium, Great

Britain, China, France, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, and Portugal, but specifically not Russia. This overlooked that the Soviet government had turned once more to Asia after signing of the Treaty of Riga with Poland on March 18, 1921. The Red Army invaded Outer Mongolia during the summer of 1921, signed treaties with the Outer Mongolian government that revived Imperial Russia's special rights and privileges there, and then put direct diplomatic pressure on Beijing to accept this new situation. Meanwhile, it also took Tannu Tuva, the northwest corner of Mongolia, annexing it twenty years later during the turmoil of World War II.

The Washington Conference convened during late 1921, right as these momentous – but largely unknown – events were taking place in East Asia. On February 6, 1922, a general agreement entitled the "Nine Power Treaty" was signed, which outlined the principles of the participant nations' relations with China. These principles reaffirmed the Open Door Policy:

> (1) To respect the sovereignty, the independence, and the territorial and administrative integrity of China;
>
> (2) To provide the fullest and most unembarrassed opportunity to China to develop and maintain for herself an effective and stable government;
>
> (3) To use their influence for the purpose of effectually establishing and maintaining the principle of equal opportunity for the commerce and industry of all nations throughout the territory of China;
>
> (4) To refrain from taking advantage of conditions in China in order to seek special rights or privileges which would abridge the rights of subjects or citizens of friendly States … and from countenancing action inimical to the security of such States.

The signatories also promised not to sign a "treaty, agreement, arrangements or understanding, either with one another, or, individually or collectively, with any Power or Powers, which would infringe or impair the principles stated in Article I."[13]

Article III discussed the Open Door, stating "With a view to applying more effectually the principles of the Open Door or equality of opportunity in China for the trade and industry of all nations, the Contracting Powers, other than China, agree that they will not seek, nor support their respective nationals in seeking":

(a) any arrangement which might purport to establish in favour of their interests any general superiority of rights with respect to commercial or economic development in any designated region of China;

(b) any such monopoly or preference as would deprive the nationals of any other Power of the right of undertaking any legitimate trade or industry in China, or of Participating with the Chinese Government, or with any local authority, in any category of public enterprise, or which by reason of its scope, duration or geographical extent is calculated to frustrate the practical application of the principle of equal opportunity.

It is understood that the foregoing stipulations of this Article are not to be so construed as to prohibit the acquisition of such properties or rights as may be necessary to the conduct of a particular commercial, industrial, or financial undertaking or to the encouragement of invention and research.

China undertakes to be guided by the principles stated in the foregoing stipulations of this Article in dealing with applications for economic rights and privileges from Governments and nationals of all foreign countries, whether parties to the present Treaty or not.

Article IV furthermore stated that the various powers would not attempt to create spheres of interest or "to provide for the enjoyment of mutually exclusive opportunities in designated parts of Chinese territory."[14]

It appeared that spheres of interest were now dead. At the 18th session of the Conference on Pacific and Far Eastern Questions, the British representative Arthur Balfour optimistically stated that the old practice of spheres of interest were "not only gone but had gone forever."[15] On November 4, 1922, Secretary of State Hughes further reiterated that the United Sates was "not seeking special privileges anywhere at the expense of others. We wish to protect the just and equal rights of Americans everywhere in the world. We wish to maintain equality of commercial opportunity; as we call it, the Open Door."[16]

Hans Morgenthau was positive about the Nine Power Treaty's impact:

> The Nine Power Treaty transformed the American policy of the 'open door' in China into a multilateral policy which the nations mostly interested in trade with China, as well as China itself, pledged themselves to uphold. Its main purpose was to stabilize the distribution

> of power which existed at the time between the contracting nations with regard to China. This meant that the special rights which certain nations, especially Great Britain and Japan, had acquired in certain parts of Chinese territory, such as Manchuria and various ports, should not only remain intact but that no new special rights should be ceded by China to any of the contracting parties.[17]

But a less sympathetic scholar writing during the height of the Cold War criticized Washington's goals as "myopic," because while the goal was for all foreign powers to "cooperate in the modernization of China … along liberal and nonrevolutionary lines," to achieve this goal it opposed "the revolutionary nationalism represented by Sun Yat-sen, and promoted by the Soviet Union."[18] What many Chinese nationalists did not understand was that the United States hoped to use the Open Door Policy to support China's gradual transition into a major world power. The decisions made at Washington were merely the first step in this direction.

U.S. visions for the future of China

Descriptions of the Nine Power Treaty minimize the importance of Washington's long-range vision of granting China full juridical equality once its government unified the country and adopted reforms to modernize its legal system. As explained by Stanley K. Hornbeck, a major goal of the conference was "furthering the efforts of the Chinese Government to create conditions which will warrant the powers in relinquishing their rights of extraterritoriality."[19] By the summer of 1922, the United States had constructed a system at the Washington Conference that was intended to support China's gradual strengthening and transition into a major world power. China would be given this opportunity under the auspices of the Open Door Policy.

As part of this plan, the Washington Conference offered China a breathing space to catch up with the more development nations. The U.S. government's efforts largely followed in line with attempts to prepare the Philippines to act on its own prior to granting it independence. This process was called "preparatory training." In 1918, Sun Yat-sen not only supported this plan in the Philippines, but he called for China to adopt a similar period of preparatory training: "America, when going to the aid of Philippine

independence, also went along the path of establishing a period of training for the Philippines. In the future, we can hope, they will not be distinguishable in culture from the most advanced European nations. All this is the result of preparatory training."[20]

Sun's faith in Washington's Open Door remained firm. On May 5, 1921, Sun even wrote a letter to President Warren Harding, calling for the United States to "save China once more," stating:

> For it is through America's genuine friendship, as exemplified by the John Hay Doctrine, that China owes her existence as a nation. The John Hay Doctrine is to China what the Monroe Doctrine is to America. The violation of this Hay Doctrine would mean the loss of our national integrity and the subsequent partitioning of China. Just as America would do her utmost to keep intact the spirit as well as the letter of the Monroe Doctrine so we in China are striving to uphold this spirit of the John Hay Doctrine. It is in this spirit, therefore, that I appeal to the author of the John Hay Doctrine to befriend the Chinese nation again in this hour of her national peril, by extending immediate recognition to this Government.[21]

Because Washington recognized the Beijing government, it could not respond to Sun Yat-sen's letter; it is not even clear that President Harding ever saw it. However, the confidence that Sun put in the U.S. government, and in particular in the Open Door Policy, is clear.

The United States sponsored many other important decisions that favored China. The Washington Conference immediately raised China's tariff rate and set up two commissions, the first to study ways of revising China's tariff system to make it autonomous of foreign control, and the second to find a way to help China adopt legislation and judicial reforms that would allow for the gradual relinquishing of extraterritoriality rights. The Washington Conference also succeeded in finalizing the arrangements for Japan's return of the disputed Shandong concessions to China. When the nine signatories to the treaties had deposited their ratifications, a lengthy process that took three years to complete, on September 4, 1925 identic notes were sent to the Chinese government. The U.S. government note stated: "The United States is now prepared to consider the Chinese Government's proposal for the modification of the existing treaties."[22]

All of these measures were intended to prop up the Open Door Policy. In 1927, Stanley K. Hornbeck, who was at this point working on the China desk at the State Department, summarized America's China policy into six succinct points: "(1) equality of opportunity, (2) respect for China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, (3) non-interference in China's internal affairs, (4) non-aggression, (5) insistence that China perform the obligations of a sovereign state, and (6) cooperative action."[23] It was Washington's hope that by supporting gradual reforms – as opposed to revolution as the Soviet propaganda advocated – China could soon join the world community as an equal. The Shidehara Foreign Ministry in Japan also fully supported these goals. As late as July 1924, Japan publicly expressed its intention to abide by the Open Door Policy.[24] Unfortunately for China, the participants attending the Washington Conference did not realize that the USSR was already resorting to the use of secret diplomacy to regain Imperial Russia's former spheres of interest in Asia, and so unintentionally weakened some of the mechanisms necessary to stop a resurgent Russia from increasing its influence in China.

The truth behind Soviet secret diplomacy

Like the Imperial Russian government before it, the Soviet government turned to secret diplomacy to obtain its goals. In order to consolidate its territorial gains in Outer Mongolia, the Soviet government sent Aleksandr K. Paikes to Beijing to obtain China's acquiescence. During his very first meeting with the Chinese attaché on January 16, 1922, Paikes suggested that a conference be convened that would include representatives from China, Russia, and Outer Mongolia to resolve all outstanding problems. Paikes's suggestion exactly followed the format of the 1915 Russian-imposed tripartite treaty. The Chinese diplomat immediately replied that the Chinese government could not tolerate a "second party" interfering in China's affairs, and especially "could not tolerate an ambitious country carrying out an aggressive policy," a direct reference to Imperial Russia's earlier imperialism in Outer Mongolia.[25]

The Soviet government's diplomatic strategy for retaining its hold over Outer Mongolia was clarified further during April 1922, when Paikes explained: "My government formerly announced that all of the prior tsarist treaties were abolished, it did not say that the basis for these treaties was

abolished. These matters have to be studied. But your government mistakenly thought that the 1919 [Karakhan] manifesto unconditionally cancelled the 1915 treaty; at the same time it never said that Outer Mongolia's autonomy was abolished."[26] Paikes's statement was the first explanation Beijing had received from a Soviet diplomat on the true meaning of the Karakhan Manifestoes, i.e. the Imperial Russian treaties may have been abolished but the basis for these treaties remained. In practical terms this meant that Moscow expected to renew Imperial Russia's unequal treaties with China, including reaffirming the autonomy of Outer Mongolia under Moscow's aegis.

On May 1, 1922, the Chinese government made a public protest against the Soviet government, accusing it of breaking its promise not to encroach on Chinese territory:

> The Soviet government has repeatedly declared to the Chinese government: That all previous treaties made between the Russian government and China shall be null and void: that the Soviet government renounces all encroachments of Chinese territory and all concessions within China, and that the Soviet government will unconditionally and forever return what has been forcibly seized from China by the former Imperial Russian government and the bourgeois.
>
> Now the Soviet government has suddenly gone back on its own word and, secretly and without any right, concluded a treaty with Mongolia. Such action on the part of the Soviet government is similar to the policy the former Imperialist Russian government assumed toward China.
>
> It must be observed that Mongolia is a part of Chinese territory and, as such, has long been recognized by all countries. In secretly concluding a treaty with Mongolia, the Soviet government has not only broke faith with its previous declarations but also violates all principles of justice.

In particular, the Chinese government condemned the Bolsheviks' return to secret diplomacy, and "therefore we solemnly lodge a protest with you to the effect that any treaty secretly concluded between the Soviet government and Mongolia will not be recognized by the Chinese government."[27]

Paikes met with Foreign Minister Yan on May 23, 1922. Yan berated Paikes for interfering in a Chinese internal government matter, just as if an

outsider were interfering in a family dispute between an “older and a younger brother,” and he told Paikes that the Soviet government had to terminate its role as the “unofficial mediator” of the Sino-Mongolian problem.[28] In a letter dated August 3, 1922, however, Paikes repeated that the USSR’s policies in Outer Mongolia were “by no means in conflict with the triple agreement entered in 1915, which has not yet been revised, and that the revision of the agreement could take place by the participation of the contracting parties.”[29]

Soviet diplomacy, which had supported the total abolition of all former unequal treaties with China only three years before, now reaffirmed that it considered the terms of the 1915 treaty on Outer Mongolia to still be valid. Furthermore, according to Paikes, the only way to revise this treaty would be for all of the contracting parties – including Outer Mongolia – to participate jointly in the negotiations. Since this would have been paramount to recognizing Outer Mongolia’s autonomous status, which was exactly the part of the 1915 unequal treaty that Chinese diplomats disputed, Sino-Soviet negotiations over Outer Mongolia deadlocked.

Transcripts from these early Sino-Soviet talks confirm that the Soviet government attempted to use its negotiations with Beijing to strip Outer Mongolia from China diplomatically, just as it had already taken Tannu Tuva by force. These transcripts provide solid proof that the USSR’s goals included increasing the size of its sphere of interest at China’s expense. These imperialist desires were in direct contradiction with U.S. goals, as set forth in the Open Door Policy, to protect China’s territorial integrity. But, unaware of Moscow’s secret diplomacy, Washington failed to adopt adequate mechanisms to strengthen the Open Door Policy against Soviet machinations.

Failures of the Washington System

Even while promising to support China’s development along democratic and capitalist lines, the Washington Conference unintentionally made several decisions that eventually weakened U.S. efforts to support China. One of these was the termination of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, which had been in effect since 1902. This alliance was at the heart of Great Britain’s policies in Asia, since it guaranteed Britain’s position in South China and Japan’s position in North China. Great Britain’s decision to embrace the principle of mutual security was made during October and November 1920, when the British Foreign Office was confronted with a choice between the United

States and Japan, and felt compelled to side with America: “If the cardinal feature of our foreign policy in the future is to cultivate closer relations with the United States … the renewal of the alliance [with Japan] in anything like its present shape may prove a formidable obstacle to the realization of that aim.”[30]

What replaced the Anglo-Japanese alliance was the Nine Power Treaty. Although the Washington Conference also created a new “Four Power Treaty” among Great Britain, France, Japan, and the United States to help protect China, it only allowed for consultations among the four members.[31] Perhaps heeding Hornbeck’s earlier warning, the signatories did agree to form a “Board of Reference” that would “function as a clearing house for complaints and as a diplomatic shock absorber,” and which – over time – might evolve into an authority to enforce the Open Door.[32] Unfortunately, this Board of Reference was either never formed, or, if formed, never assumed responsibility for guaranteeing the Open Door Policy.

After Great Britain gave up its 1902 alliance with Japan, it joined with the United States in building a constructive program to assist China. In exchange for agreeing to terminate the alliance, Tokyo in turn sought mutual security against foreign aggression. Historically, one of Japan’s greatest rivals had been Russia, and Tokyo’s greatest concern was Soviet Russia’s rapid expansion in East Asia. Since the Soviet government was not invited to attend the Washington Conference, however, it was not included in the resulting mutual security pacts. Once the USSR regained its sphere of interest in the Far East through secret diplomacy, mutual security proved to be devoid of any real guarantees for Japan.

Furthermore, to convince Japan to agree to the Four Power Treaty the British and Americans had to make certain naval concessions. Some authors have argued that the impact of the 1922 naval agreement with Japan made the situation in East Asia more not less dangerous: “To win Japan’s consent to her smaller naval tonnage, the United States and Great Britain further agreed not to fortify their naval bases in the Western Pacific.” Although meant to reassure Japan, in fact: “It meant that we [the United States] surrendered control of the Western Pacific to Japan.”[33] When tensions escalated among the major maritime powers during the 1930s, in large part due to differences of opinion over China, the British and Americans could no longer exert sufficient military, and in particular naval, leverage over Tokyo to alter its policies.

Another major goal of the Washington Conference was to eliminate secret diplomacy. All signatories promised to "file lists of all treaties, conventions, exchanges of notes or other international agreements which they have with China or with other powers in relation to China."[34] But the USSR, by not being invited to Washington, was not obliged to publish its diplomatic agreements, which gave it an advantage over the other Great Powers. Secret diplomacy allowed Moscow to make rapid gains in Asia. By 1922, Moscow's success in stripping Outer Mongolia and Tannu Tuva from China had convinced Tokyo to initiate negotiations with Moscow to discuss their respective spheres of interest.

In hindsight, it is ironic that the U.S. attempt to build a cooperative international system in Asia unintentionally led to the dismantling of the very alliance system that had formerly protected Japan from Russian aggression. Promises not to militarize British and U.S. naval bases in the Western Pacific also eventually undermined Anglo-American military leverage vis-à-vis Japan. These strategic blunders ultimately contributed to the failure of the Washington system. By far the greatest challenge to this system, however, was the impact of the USSR's secret diplomacy.

Soviet secret diplomacy and the Washington system

Perhaps the Washington Conference's greatest failing was underestimating the potential threat of the Soviet Union. Due largely to the lack of media attention and poor communications, the countries attending the Washington Conference either did not know about or underestimated the resurgence of Soviet power in Asia. Thus, all of the early signs of renewed Russian expansion were ignored by the Washington Conference powers. In the case of the U.S. government, State Department reports incorrectly determined that the Mongolian government was too weak to consider breaking away from China and so concluded it would be eager to support the status quo. Later events would prove this forecast to be overly optimistic.

Given this new threat to China's territorial integrity, the Washington Conference powers' decision not to interfere in China actually removed one of the last restraints to Soviet expansion. According to John Fairbank, this was a prime case of "being a little too idealistic and not enough power conscious."

Rather, "in 1922 we could have done something to keep a power structure in

the Far Eastern scene, perhaps tied in with Japan in some way, instead of getting into a nine-power treaty which said that China should be given her chance, but with no sanctions and no power structure, no agreement."[35] The Soviet government's interest in pushing its spheres of interest further into Manchuria, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia was confirmed by Professor Ivanoff's arrival in Beijing during August 1922. According to a letter from the Soviet mission, one of Ivanoff's main duties was "to purchase books and manuscripts in Manchu, Tibetan, and Mongolian languages."[36] In later years, all three areas became prime targets for Soviet expansion.

Thus, the Washington Conference unintentionally left China highly vulnerable to Soviet influence at a point when China was at its weakest and most vulnerable. China's danger was further exacerbated by new restraints that the Washington Conference put on Great Britain and Japan not to interfere in China's domestic affairs; meanwhile, no parallel restraints were applied to the Soviet government. This situation largely replicated Stanley Hornbeck's January 1919 warning against penalizing those states that "take the obligation most seriously and honestly."[37] The end result of this lopsided situation was that the very sphere of interest methods that Britain and Japan had previously used to oppose Russian expansion were now denied to them. Meanwhile, no new impediments were adopted to hinder the Soviet government's attempts to form a military alliance with the Nationalist government in South China, or its attempts to open relations based on secret diplomacy with the Beijing government in North China.

On the surface, the Washington Conference's support for the Open Door Policy appeared absolute. On February 22, 1922, the U.S. Delegation triumphantly reported to the President: "It is believed that through this Treaty the open door in China has at last been made a fact."[38] During spring 1922, the U.S. minister to China, Jacob Gould Schurman, held out a vision of a united China based on federalist principles. He reassured his audience that the United States would never take advantage of China: "Whatever comes out of the Washington Conference you may rest assured that the Government of the United States will never be party to a game of grab in China – or indeed in any other part of the world."[39] But since all of the checks and balances that had formerly contained Russian expansionism were torn down, the Soviet government's goal of increasing its interest in China was greatly enhanced.

Conclusions

The Washington Conference put the Open Door Policy into effect. Herbert Hoover optimistically stated during March 1922: “The open door to commerce and industry of all nations in China has at last been made effective.”[40] But U.S. diplomats in China could only make recommendations to the Beijing government, they had no authority to force China to adopt reforms. Meanwhile, the effectiveness of mutual security was unproven, Hornbeck’s Board of Reference was never established, and no serious thought had been given to the possible need for creating multilateral policing powers in China. As Hornbeck had warned in 1921: “Without such agreement, and ENFORCE-MENT, the situation is almost certain to lead to war.”[41] In a second memo from late 1921, he further clarified that if an “Asia for Asiatics” movement were to attempt “forcefully to expel the European powers” then “we are advancing toward a war compared with which that of 1914–1918 would seem of small proportions.”[42] Decisions made at the Washington Conference had an immediate impact on Sino-Soviet relations in two very specific ways. Before the conference even started, it provided the Soviet government with leverage to convince Beijing to admit an unofficial Soviet representative into China.[43] Once the conference was over, China’s apparent failure to be upgraded immediately to equal standing with the other Washington Conference powers caused greater alienation among the leaders of the Chinese anti-imperialist movement, as well as among certain pro-Western government officials. This dissatisfaction eventually gave the Soviet government more opportunities to influence both of these important groups, and most importantly the U.S.-trained officials who dominated China’s Foreign Ministry.

The Washington Conference’s structure for supporting the Open Door Policy unintentionally worked to the advantage of the Soviet government, since the capitalist governments largely gave up their ability to interfere in China’s domestic affairs. Meanwhile, Soviet propaganda claimed that it had renounced all of its own unequal treaties with China, even while in private Soviet diplomats insisted that the terms of these treaties still existed and should be retained unchanged. In public, therefore, the Bolshevik promises of equality gave the Chinese people enormous “face.” As one scholar of Chinese nationalism concluded: “It should have been clear to American policymakers that a foreign imposed system of tutelage could not compete

against this [Soviet] alternative."[44] Beginning in the early 1920s, Soviet attempts to open diplomatic relations with China and Japan focused on rebuilding the very spheres of interest in Northern China that the Open Door Policy sought to eliminate.

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7 Soviet attempts to open diplomatic relations with China and Japan

Soon after the October Revolution, Lenin predicted: “it is inconceivable that the Soviet Republic should continue to exist for a long period side by side with imperial states … a number of terrible clashes between the Soviet Republic and bourgeois states is inevitable.”[1] Within a decade, in May 1925, Stalin announced that the Bolshevik Revolution had entered a new stage, the “overthrow of the bourgeoisie on a world scale,” and this struggle would be between the two opposing camps: “the camp of capitalism under the leadership of Anglo-American capital, and the camp of socialism under the leadership of the Soviet Union.” Stalin further set the terms of this conflict by announcing that the “workers of the West and the oppressed peoples of the East,” would “unleash the revolutionary lion in every country of the world.”[2]

The Soviet government’s goal of destroying capitalism was much more than just a visionary theory. Beginning in December 1917, Lenin and Trotsky allocated scarce resources to sponsor international revolution.[3] In particular, the Bolsheviks soon began to promote revolution in the East, from Central Asia to the populous countries of East Asia. Reclaiming Imperial Russia’s spheres of interest was just a first step. Opening Soviet diplomatic relations with China and Japan was essential to achieving the Bolsheviks’ long-range goals.

The Bolsheviks’ first objective during 1920 was to renew diplomatic relations with the internationally recognized Chinese government in Beijing. Criticism of the Versailles Peace Treaty and the Open Door Policy helped pave the way for the opening of Sino-Soviet diplomatic talks. This was necessary if the Soviet government hoped to regain Imperial Russia’s former treaty privileges in China. A prime goal would be to confirm Outer Mongolia’s position as the newest member of the Soviet “camp.” Another would be to rebuild Russian influence over the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) in Manchuria. Both objectives would be necessary for Moscow to

reclaim its sphere of interest in China.

Opening Sino-Soviet talks

Beginning in 1920, the Beijing government began to make contact with Moscow. It was especially interested in Karakhan's promise to return, apparently without compensation of any kind, the CER to China. It responded to Karakhan's first manifesto during September 1920 by breaking relations with officials of Kerensky's Provisional Russian government still in China. It also sent a military mission to Moscow to explore opening talks with Soviet representatives.

On October 2, 1920, Karakhan met with a Chinese military mission in Moscow, under the leadership of General Zhang Silin, and presented him with a new program under which the Soviet government would be willing to open relations with China; this is often referred to as the second Karakhan Manifesto, or the 1920 Karakhan Manifesto. While all of Karakhan's former promises from July 1919 remained essentially the same as before, the promise to return the CER was not repeated. Instead Karakhan stated that the Soviet Union wanted to maintain some control over the railway by signing a "special treaty on the way of working the Chinese Eastern Railway with regard to the needs of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic."[4]

While Karakhan's offers looked generous, by 1920 much of the territory in the Russian concessions in China was owned by non-Russians, as confirmed in a letter dated October 5, 1920, from American Minister Charles R. Crane to Foreign Minister Yan, informing him that in the Russian portion of the Tianjin concession the bulk of the property was now owned by Americans and subjects of other nations.[5] To circumvent the Open Door, the Soviet government also publicly renounced special privileges that it was later able to retain secretly under new names. For example, with the nationalization of the USSR's foreign trade in 1923, all Soviet businessmen in China immediately became government officials and were granted diplomatic immunity in place of the former extraterritoriality rights.[6] Karakhan's previous assurances that the USSR would return the CER was the only promise that actually gave China something that it did not have already. But by subtly changing this promise, the Soviet Union was able to benefit from the Chinese people's goodwill while giving up nothing in exchange.

China's preeminent railway expert, Wang Jinzhun, wrote a letter to

Foreign Minister Yan during May 1921, in which he advocated that China take advantage of the current situation to solve the sticky ownership disputes which revolved around the CER: “Today presents the only and most unexpected opportunity for some solution of the problem, for it is the first time for many years that Russia and Japan are really at logger heads, while other Powers are in no position to interfere as they used to do.” In addition, Wang warned that: “The Chinese Eastern [Railway] plays a most important part and constitutes a most important factor in the Manchuria question.”[7]

Karakhan’s new proposal concerning the CER was vaguely worded, so that it did not seem to contradict the intent of his former promise. Only after the Soviet government’s first official diplomat, Aleksandr Paikes, arrived in Beijing in December 1921, did the Soviet government’s true intentions start to become clear. On April 26, 1922, Paikes told a Chinese official that “your government mistakenly thought that the 1919 manifesto unconditionally … said that … the Chinese Eastern Railway was already returned to China’s control. On these matters your government is mistaken.”[8] According to Paikes’s interpretation, the Soviet government’s former promise to annul all of the Russian unequal treaties was meaningless so long as China could be convinced to agree to the old terms. In addition, Paikes hinted that all previous indications to the contrary would be blamed on China’s “misunderstanding” of the Karakhan Manifesto.[9]

When the Soviet diplomat Adolf Joffe arrived in Beijing during 1922 he tried unsuccessfully to convince the Beijing government to agree to the joint management of the CER. He swore that the Soviet government had never promised to return the CER to China, denying that this promise was “contained either in the authentic text of the Declaration of 25th July, 1919, which the Plenipotentiary Mission has in its possession, or in the text of the same published at the time in the official collection of the People’s Commissariat of Nationalities.”[10] Sino-Soviet negotiations deadlocked over this point. Soviet diplomats next turned to Japan in order to break the logjam.

Bolshevik attempts to open Soviet–Japanese relations

Intensive negotiations between Japan and the Soviet government were carried out during the early 1920s, first at a conference in the port city of Dairen with representatives of the FER, next at a conference with Soviet officials held at Changchun, Manchuria, and later still during talks held in Tokyo. The Soviet

official in charge of the final two negotiations was Adolf Joffe, who was also one of the first official Soviet diplomats to visit China. These talks deadlocked over a series of issues, most importantly a Soviet apology for the massacre by Soviet Red Army troops of hundreds of defenseless Japanese at Nikolaievsk, Siberia.

Sino-Japanese relations were particularly tense. In March 1920, approximately 600 Japanese men, women, and children were slaughtered by a detachment of Red Army troops in the Siberian town of Nikolaievsk. The *Peking-Tientsin Times* observed that the massacre "was one of the worst chapters in the appalling history of the Russian Far East during the past few years."[11] Japan blamed the Nikolaievsk massacre on the USSR, referring to a March 23, 1920 telegram signed by the Commissar of Foreign Affairs Chicherin in which he admitted that this incident involved members of the Red Army.[12] In addition, Tokyo asserted that the July 9, 1920 People's Tribunal at the Siberia village of Kerbi had reported that Red Army officers were responsible for ordering the massacre.

Since the death of the Japanese consul at Nikolaievsk violated his diplomatic immunity, Tokyo ordered the military occupation of the northern half of Sakhalin Island, directly to the east of the Siberian town of Nikolaievsk. Previously, the 1905 Portsmouth Peace Treaty, which ended the Russo-Japanese war, had specified that Russia cede all territory in Sakhalin south of the fiftieth parallel to Japan. The Japanese portion of Sakhalin Island was approximately 13,000 square miles in size, but during 1921 Japanese troops also occupied the 16,000 square miles that made up the Russian half of Sakhalin. The Japanese government soon afterwards sponsored oil exploration throughout this former Russian territory. Tokyo justified its actions by announcing that North Sakhalin would be occupied only until Moscow tendered an apology for the murder of the Japanese consul and its citizens.

During the Changchun Conference in fall 1922, the Japanese government linked the Nikolaievsk and Sakhalin issues when it stated: "As for Saghalien [Sakhalin], our retirement from the northern or Russian half of the island will, as repeatedly stated, take place as soon as the Nikolaievsk affair has been settled."[13] But the Soviet position was that Japan must withdraw all troops from North Sakhalin prior to discussion of the massacre. It was reported that Joffe absolutely refused to tender an apology to Japan: "Joffe is reported to have said that he will not offer an apology, as the two countries

were then at war and the Japanese brought the disaster upon themselves by penetrating into a hostile country."[14]

Japan had earlier discussed the Nikolaievsk massacre at the Dairen conference with the representatives of the Far Eastern Republic, but Joffe and his staff denied all knowledge of these talks.[15] As a result, one newspaper reported that the Japanese delegation at Changchun showed "a great deal of patience and forbearance" at the negotiations, and the failure was a result of Joffe's declaration "that he has never heard of the most fundamental conditions upon which these negotiations are based," which in the view of the newspaper was "more than a bluff, it is sheer impudence."[16]

The Soviet government called Japan's position linking an apology for the Nikolaievsk massacre with the evacuation of North Sakhalin an example of "old imperialist methods," and according to Karl Radek, one of the Bolshevik leaders most familiar with the Far East, Moscow would never give up North Sakhalin: "Moreover, it is not clear as how can Japan forward such demands without placing herself [open] to international consideration. Soviet Russia did not sign the Washington treaties but Japan did, and if those treaties have any sense at all, they in the first place provide for the *status quo* in the Far East"[17] The status quo Radek referred to, of course, was the Washington Conference's support for the Open Door Policy.

On October 30, 1922, Tokyo carried through on earlier promises to the U.S. government to withdraw Japanese troops from Siberia. Only North Sakhalin now remained directly under Japan's military control. Negotiations continued in a series of meetings held between June 28 and July 24, 1923 in Tokyo. When all attempts to make North Sakhalin part of an indemnity for the Nikolaievsk massacre failed, the Japanese diplomats offered to buy this territory outright from Moscow for $150 million. Joffe countered by suggesting $1 billion and then later raised this sum to a minimum of $1.5 billion.[18]

Joffe's suggested price for selling North Sakhalin to Japan was ridiculously high. But he now agreed that the Soviet government would apologize for the Nikolaievsk massacre, but only if all Japanese troops were first withdrawn from North Sakhalin.[19] The Japanese government refused to consider this precondition, since Tokyo's main leverage at the talks was control over North Sakhalin. When Joffe stubbornly stuck to this point, further negotiations were called off.

On August 14, 1923, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a

statement explaining why the Russo-Japanese negotiations had failed: “that if the Nikolaievsk affairs and questions related to it were settled, Japan would have no hesitation in making a declaration of her intention to withdraw her troops from North Saghalien.”[20] Future Soviet–Japanese talks were shifted to Beijing, where a new Soviet official, Lev Karakhan, was expected to arrive any day. Beijing soon became the focus of Soviet efforts to open diplomatic relations with both China and Japan. But to win over these two governments, Karakhan needed to leverage pro-Soviet sentiments in South China.

The creation of the united front policy

Soviet promises to treat China as an equal were intended to pave the way for an alliance between the Soviet Union and Sun Yat-sen, the leader of the Nationalist Party (Guomindang) and the head of the opposition Guangzhou government. When Joffe could not get the Beijing government to agree to joint Sino-Soviet management of the CER, he turned to Sun instead. Once Joffe was able to form an alliance between Sun and the Soviet government in late 1922, Guangzhou’s support proved to be a great advantage to the Soviet diplomats.

Moscow’s goal was to play Sun’s Guangzhou government off the Beijing government so as to open relations with China, and then to play Beijing off of Tokyo. This policy is clearly stated in Joffe’s correspondence with the Comintern representative in South China, Henk Sneevliet (Maring). During the fall of 1922, for example, Joffe discussed at length the need for Sun Yat-sen to change “his passive policy to an active one,” so as to intervene “in affairs of the central government.”[21] The importance of gaining Sun’s assistance in reneging on earlier promises to give up Soviet control over Outer Mongolia and the CER was mentioned in a second letter, when Joffe said: “Moreover, I ask you to inform Sun that I rely strongly on his support at the negotiations (especially on the Mongolian and East-China railways questions).”[22]

Meanwhile, Karakhan’s original manifesto was still being used for propaganda purposes. It helped the Soviet-supported Comintern sponsor the creation of the Chinese Communist Party during 1921, and then promoted its rapid growth in the following years. The Soviet Union’s generous promises to China were a mainstay of the Comintern’s propaganda. The offer to return the CER to China without compensation was repeated not only in the April

24, 1921 journal of the Comintern's own Far Eastern Secretariat, but during August 1922, Vilenskii published an article in *Izvestiia* stating that the CER was being returned "to China without redemption."[23] At the same time, the Chinese Communist Party journal, *Guide Weekly*, claimed that the Soviets had offered to return to China all of the tsarist holdings in Manchuria, including, "land, mines, and the Chinese Eastern Railway."[24]

Sun's decision to back the Soviet diplomats in 1923 would prove crucial to the USSR's success in retaining Outer Mongolia and in regaining majority control over the railway, both of which undermined the Open Door Policy's protections for China. On January 26, 1923, Sun and Joffe signed a four-point public declaration in which Sun agreed to allow the Soviet occupation of Outer Mongolia to continue: "Dr. Sun Yat-sen, therefore, does not view an immediate evacuation of Russian troops from Outer Mongolia as either imperative or in the real interest of China."[25] This declaration also explained that Sun Yat-sen did not consider the Soviet Union to be carrying out an imperialist policy in Outer Mongolia.

While Outer Mongolia was already occupied by Soviet troops, the CER had been under Chinese management since March 1920. In sharp contrast to Beijing's insistence that this Manchurian railway belonged entirely to China, since it was built on Chinese land, Sun backed the Soviet position over China's own government when he agreed that this railway should be managed jointly by Russia and China. Sun's decision implied that each country would have five seats on the board of directors, since all decisions were to be made on the basis of "true rights and special interests."[26]

By agreeing to this declaration, Sun tacitly acknowledged that even though Moscow had formerly promised to return the railway to China without compensation, it could now be managed jointly. Considering that this railway was valued at between 500 and 700 million gold rubles, Sun's backing for the Soviet position was in conflict with China's national interests. Moreover, even though the Sun–Joffe declaration implied that the railway would be managed equally by the two countries, Moscow actually sought to obtain Sun's support in regaining majority control. Soon after Sun agreed to the USSR's terms, Maring visited Zhang Zuolin, the main warlord in Manchuria, in order to discuss the railway's return to Soviet control. On February 15, 1923, Maring reported to the Politburo: "I gained the strong impression that a lot can be achieved with Zhang through Sun Yat-sen. This situation should be made use of."[27]

In exchange for Soviet promises of military and financial aid, Sun Yat-sen actively helped the USSR regain majority control over the CER. On May 31, 1923, Maring wrote a report addressed not only to Joffe but also to Zinoviev, the head of the Comintern in Moscow, explaining that Sun had sent two important Guomindang officials to talk to Zhang about the Soviet Union's intentions of obtaining seven of the ten seats on the ruling board of the railway and he could now report: "Zhang Zuolin has declared that first Russia wanted 5–5 and he thinks that Wu Peifu could very easily agitate against him if he adopts 7–3."[28]

Maring's report confirms that Sun gave crucial assistance to Moscow to regain seven of the ten seats on the managing board of directors of the CER. One historian has indicated that perhaps Sun did not "have a clear understanding of the aims and tasks of the Soviet state's foreign policy," and that he therefore did not understand the differences in the Soviet Russia's foreign policy from the policies of other countries.[29] But in the 1917 edition of *The Vital Problem of China*, Sun had described how "Russian influence extends over Outer Mongolia, Sinkiang, and North Manchuria, representing approximately 42 per cent of the whole of China." Sun even denounced these foreign spheres of interest in China: "If we desire further encroachments upon our land, we might as well proclaim to the whole world that we are offering it for sale."[30]

Acting on Maring's recommendation, the Soviet government ordered him to back Sun's government in Guangzhou. On May 1, 1923, Joffe sent a telegram authorizing Maring to offer Sun "ideological and political" help, a loan of up to 2 million gold rubles, and then "assistance in organizing an outstanding military unit," which would be trained in Northwest China and provided with "eight thousand Japanese rifles, fifteen machine-guns, four 'Oriska' guns, and two armored cars." Joffe clearly realized that public knowledge of these terms would tarnish Sun's political credibility, he cautioned Maring to make sure that news of this aid would "remain strictly secret."[31]

By playing the southern breakaway government off Beijing, Soviet diplomats were able to reclaim Imperial Russia's sphere of interest in China. Specifically, the USSR gained Sun's permission for the Red Army to remain in Outer Mongolia, an objective that Joffe had spent months fruitlessly trying to convince Beijing to accept. In Manchuria, Soviet attempted to regain majority control on the CER's board of directors. Sun's support gave

Moscow crucial leverage in its negotiations with Beijing. In late 1923, Karakhan threatened Beijing that if it did not cooperate he could go south to Guangzhou in order to open formal diplomatic negotiations with Sun Yat-sen.[32]

Most importantly, these Soviet advantages undermined the goal set forth at the Washington Conference of eliminating special rights and privileges to foreign powers. Moscow's diplomatic success proved that all previous promises to return the CER without compensation were merely ploys intended to open diplomatic relations with China. Sun signed away China's rights to the CER – which at the time represented over 40 percent of all of the foreign-owned railways in China – in exchange for promises of Soviet military and financial support. This gave Soviet diplomats powerful leverage when they turned once again to the Beijing government to open talks on normalizing Sino-Soviet relations.

Secret Sino-Soviet negotiations

During late 1923, the Soviet government appointed Lev Karakhan as the Soviet Union's plenipotentiary extraordinary to China, charged with strengthening the "friendly bonds" between the two countries.[33] After arriving in Beijing, Karakhan gave a speech in which he emphasized that two manifestoes of 1919 and 1920 were still in force and were "the basis for his future work in China."[34] But, on December 2, 1923, Karakhan sent the Beijing government an English-language copy of his 1919 manifesto based on the text published in *Izvestiia* on August 26, 1919. It was marked "True to the original," was then stamped with the official Soviet seal, and signed by the first secretary of the mission.[35] It did not include the promise to return the CER to China without compensation.

On January 9, 1924, the Chinese negotiator, C. T. Wang, pointed out the discrepancy between the copy which the Soviet mission had given to him and the original telegram the Beijing government had received on March 26, 1920. Wang suggested that Karakhan might want to clear this problem up before the Chinese people began to doubt the "sincerity" of the Soviet offers.[36] In reply, on January 17, 1924, Karakhan argued that he had just "handed over authentic texts of the 1919 and 1920 declarations." Karakhan then called the original telegram that Beijing had received a "false version of the 1919 declaration," and stated that it did not "give any kind of rights to

China."[37]

On February 27, 1924, Karakhan indicated his willingness to exchange mutual recognition simultaneously with a general agreement resolving Sino-Soviet problems. Karakhan agreed that China would have full authority over the CER as well as over the territory along the railway line. He also stated that China could buy back the railway from the Soviet government in exchange for continued Soviet use of the CER to transport goods from Manzhouli to Vladivostok. Until the terms of its return were decided, however, Karakhan suggested temporary joint management of the railway with China, with a managing board composed of five Russians and five Chinese members. Karakhan further proposed that the price and the terms of the sale and return of the CER to China should be decided at a Sino-Soviet conference that would follow one month after official relations were opened.[38]

Since the Soviet government had already convinced Sun Yat-sen to support joint Sino-Soviet management of the CER, Koo accepted Karakhan's proposal. Once the Beijing government agreed to this solution, Karakhan and Wang quickly hammered out a draft agreement by March 1, 1924. The Beijing government's cabinet met on March 13, 1924. It agreed with the basic points of this March 1 draft, although it suggested that all previous Sino-Russian treaties be abolished immediately.[39]

Meanwhile, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs had circulated top secret copies of the March 1 draft Sino-Soviet agreement to the different ministries in the Beijing government. Responses were returned from several ministries. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance both warned that all former treaties should be abolished immediately, and the Ministry of Education further recommended that an additional clause be added: "Prior to the convening of the conference, all treaties, agreements, protocols, contracts, will no longer be in effect."[40] The problem with this suggestion was that the draft treaty stated that annulling the old treaties and replacing them with new treaties should happen simultaneously, insuring that treaty relations would continue unbroken. The Chinese officials were worried, however, that if it was not made clear that the old treaties had been abolished prior to recognition, then the Soviet Union might try to retain the former treaties at the upcoming conference. This left a one-month gap during which time both China and the Soviet Union would have recognized the existence of these treaties. This gap undoubtedly appeared to be a minor

problem at the time. Following what seemed to be almost total support within the Beijing government, Karakhan and Wang met again to finalize the draft treaty.

When Karakhan and Wang met on March 14, they decided to add a new clause stating that all former agreements would not be enforced. This change was not made in the text, but in a separate secret protocol. This protocol was very simple, since it stated that all former conventions, treaties, agreements, protocols, contracts, etc., would be annulled at the upcoming Sino-Soviet Conference, at which time new treaties would also be adopted, but then added: “It is agreed that pending the conclusion of such new Treaties, Agreements, etcetera, all the old Conventions, Treaties, Agreements, Protocols, Contracts, etcetera, will not be enforced.” This protocol was then signed by Karakhan and Wang, but it was not dated, and did not have a seal, which meant that this protocol would only take effect if ratified by the Beijing government[41] (see Figure 7.1). This secret protocol was never previously published along with the treaty, but the original signed copy is included with the other treaty provisions.[42]

/Secret/

PROTOCOL

Upon the signing of the Agreement of General Principles for the Settlement of the Questions between the Republic of China and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of March , 1924, the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics declares as follos:

Whereas Article III of the aforementioned Agreement provides as follows:

"The Governments of the two Contracting Parties agree to annul at the Conference, as provided in the preceding Article, all Conventions, Treaties, Agreements, Protocols, Contracts, etcetera, concluded between the Government of China and the Tsarist Government, and to replace them with new Treaties, Agreements, etc., on the basis of equality, reciprocity and justice, as well as the spirit of the Declarations of the Soviet Government of the years 1919 and 1920";

It is agreed that pending the conclusion of such new Treaties, Agreements, etcetera, all the old Conventions, Treaties, Agreements, Protocols, Contracts, etcetera, will not be enforced.

In witness whereof, the respective Plenipotentiaries of the Governments of the two Contracting Parties have signed the present Protocol in duplicate in the English language and have affixed thereto their seals.

Done at the City of Peking this day of March One Thousand Nine Hundred and Twenty-Four.

A. Yoffe

L. Karakhan

Figure 7.1 Text of the March 14, 1924 Karakhan-Wang Secret Protocol

By including only one of the Ministry of Education's two suggested amendments, Wang altered the whole intent of these suggestions. Now, the draft agreement stated that all former Sino-Russian agreements would be recognized but not enforced until after the official Sino-Soviet conference convened and concluded new treaties, thus making the revision of China's and the Soviet Union's commercial, consular, and border relations all dependent on the convening of the conference. The Beijing government actually recognized the legitimacy of these earlier agreements, even though both sides agreed that they were suspended. If the Soviet Union violated the old agreements, as later happened, the Beijing government could do nothing about it since the two governments had already signed a secret protocol reaffirming the suspension of these former Sino-Russian agreements. Beijing was trapped by its own treaty.

The recreation of spheres of interest

Recognizing the special privileges Imperial Russia had formerly obtained from China unintentionally recreated spheres of interest. According to one view of the Open Door, the "first necessary condition" for its success was that China "obeys the doctrine." In particular: "For China can grant special privileges and thus violate the principle of the equal opportunity of trade, with
the consequence that the Powers thus discriminated against will be obliged to claim similar or equivalent privileges, in which case, the United States will be helpless to check the Powers from a scramble."[43] If the Soviet government refused to negotiate new treaties, as later happened, then by default the former special privileges remained in place. This, in turn, placed pressure on other countries, especially Japan, to match those privileges.

Once Beijing agreed to this secret protocol, therefore, it became of great interest to the USSR to insure that it remained in the final treaty. By signing the protocol that specified that all new agreements could only be made at the upcoming Sino-Soviet conference, China unintentionally placed enormous power in the Soviet government's hands. This protocol allowed the Soviet Union to expand enormously its influence in China from 1924 through 1927, when the Beijing government broke off diplomatic relations with Moscow.

During this period, the Soviet government was completely unfettered by the myriad of treaty restrictions that applied to other countries. The Beijing government made dozens of secret protests to the Soviet government during the following years about its numerous treaty infractions, but Moscow could and did ignore them.

Karakhan understood the power that this secret protocol gave him. The USSR was willing to take many risks to make sure that the draft treaty was ratified without changes. When it looked as if the Beijing government might not accept this draft agreement, Karakhan sent an ultimatum to Foreign Minister Koo on March 16, insisting that the Beijing government recognize the draft treaty unchanged within three days or else all further negotiations would end. To align Chinese public opinion on his side, Karakhan arranged to have the March 14 draft treaty published in the local Chinese press – minus the crucial secret protocol. The Chinese Communist Party and the Nationalists led the way in condemning Beijing officials for caving into foreign pressure not to ratify the draft Sino-Soviet treaty. As a result, the Beijing government was subjected to enormous public pressure to sign the treaty. As one foreign diplomat commented about the Chinese student movement: “Instead of devoting themselves to the elimination of certain undesirable features in the old order they became the dupes of a world wide scheme which has for one of its objects the expulsion of the western powers from China and the overthrow of capitalism.”[44] The Soviet government marshaled Chinese public opinion against the Beijing government so as to secure the ratification of the secret protocol.

The Sino-Soviet treaty was signed on May 31, 1924 by Lev Karakhan, ambassador extraordinary of the USSR, and Dr. Wellington Koo, the minister of foreign affairs, Republic of China.[45] The final treaty included all of the March 14, 1924 draft treaty verbatim, plus seven declarations that incorporated minor changes to the original text. On the day before this Sino-Soviet agreement was signed, the president of the Republic of China, Zao Gun, issued Wellington Koo complete powers to sign the agreement in the name of China. Koo’s powers included the signing of a fifteen-article “Agreement on General Principles,” an eleven-article “Agreement for the Provisional Management of the Chinese Eastern Railway,” as well as “one Protocol, seven Declarations, and one exchange of Notes.”[46] The secret protocol stating the former treaties had been recognized but would not be enforced was used by Karakhan to reclaim the Soviet spheres of interest.

Conclusions

The Beijing government refused to agree to Soviet demands in Outer Mongolia and Manchuria. However, Sun Yat-sen proved willing to cooperate in return for Soviet military support. At this time, Sun's power base in Guangzhou was precarious. He was desperate for outside aid. Since Sun was from South China, making concessions on Outer Mongolia and Manchuria probably meant little to him. But his concessions to Moscow were completely at odds with the Open Door Policy's protections for China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, which Sun on various occasions had said that he supported.

For its part, the Soviet government broke its numerous promises never to conduct secret diplomacy when it made the March 14 protocol secret. Once the former treaties had been recognized, albeit not enforced, then the Soviet government did not have to do anything to continue enjoying its special rights and privileges in China. All it had to do was delay the convening of the official Sino-Soviet conference, which it did for fourteen months after signing the official treaty.

So long as the conference did not convene, then the Soviet government's promise under the May 31, 1924 treaty to sell the CER to China was blocked. Talks on the status of Outer Mongolia were also delayed, and eventually given up altogether. The Beijing government's only recourse was to try to satisfy Karakhan's numerous preconditions so that he would finally agree to convene the conference. Even when the Sino-Soviet conference finally met in August 1925, however, new treaties and conventions were never completed, thus leaving the secret protocol in effect. This Soviet diplomatic success completely undermined any territorial protections for China under the Open Door Policy. It also gave Karakhan additional leverage to convince Japan to resort to secret diplomacy with the USSR.

Notes

1 Carr, *Bolshevik Revolution*, Vol. III, 123.
2 "Extracts From a Report by Stalin on the Work of the Fourteenth Conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," May 9, 1925, Degras, *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy*, Vol. II, 25–28.
3 December 26, 1917, WJDA, 03–32, 34(2); also see *Pravda*, 213, December 26, 1917.
4 WJDA, 03–32, 479(1); these proposals were officially dated September 27, 1920, but seem to have been publicly announced in Moscow on October 27, 1920, which caused a certain amount of

confusion about the dating of this second Karakhan Manifesto, not dissimilar to the dating problems of the first Karakhan Manifesto, but for entirely different reasons; it is even possible that this second dating problem was intended to help cover up the intentional use of two versions of the first Karakhan Manifesto the year before.

5 WJDA, 03–32, 438(1).

6 The Soviet government had no qualms about revoking extraterritoriality since it soon gave all Soviet businessmen diplomatic immunity. The Beijing government protested this in a January 10, 1926, English-language note: "The Chinese Delegation is astonished to learn that the Soviet Delegation is seeking to invest the so-called Russian Trade Mission in China with a diplomatic character" (WJDA, 03–32, 536(4)).

7 Commonly called C. C. Wang, he received his education at doctorate level at Peking University, Yale University, and the University of Illinois, and in January, 1920, was appointed Director-General of the CER. 3 May 1921, English-language letter from C. C. Wang to W. W. Yan, WJDA, 03–32, 242(2).

8 WJDA, 03–32, 200(3).

9 WJDA, 03–32, 470(2).

10 *New Russia*, 1(10), January 6, 1923, 305.

11 "Changchun at the Barrier," *Peking-Tientsin Times*, September 22, 1922.

12 Gaimushõ, File 2.5.1.106–18, 043–044.

13 "Jap Government Regrets Failure of Conference," *Gazette* (Montreal), October 4, 1922.

14 "Prospects of Changchun," *North China Star*, September 7, 1922.

15 "The Deadlock of Changchun," *North China Daily News*, September 28, 1922.

16 "Breakdown of Changchun Conference," *North China Standard*, September 28, 1922.

17 "Saghalien and Nikolaiesk Examples of 'Old Imperialistic Methods,'" *Peking Daily News*, November 7, 1922, quoting Karl Radek from October 16, 1922 edition of *Izvestiia*.

18 Gaimushõ, File 251-106-11, 452–483; Maring confirmed this in a July 18, 1923 letter to Joffe, citing "the 150 million and the billion for North Sakhalin" (Saich, *Origins of the First United Front in China*, Vol. II, 689).

19 Gaimushõ, File 251–106–4, 2.

20 Gaimushõ, File 251-106-11, 380–386.

21 Letter from Joffe to Maring, dated November 7, 1922, Saich, *Origins of the First United Front in China*, Vol. I, 352–353.

22 Letter from Joffe to Maring, dated November 17, 1922, ibid., 356–359.

23 Whiting, *Soviet Policies in China*, 210.

24 *Xiangdao Zhoubao*, 3, September 27, 1922.

25 "Soobshchenie ROSTA o kommynike polnomochnogo predstavitelia RSFSR v Kitae A. A. Ioffe i Sun' Iat-cena po povogy sovetsko–kitaiskikh otnoshenii" (ROSTA Report on the communiqué of the full representative of the RSFSR A. A. Joffe and Sun Yat-sen concerning Soviet–Chinese relations), *Sovetsko–kitaiskie otnosheniia*, 64–65; Chinese version, Archives of the Historical Commission of the Central Committee of the Kuomintang Party, 047/2; English translation: "Joint Statement by Sun Yat-sen and Joffe on Soviet–Chinese Relations," Degras, *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy*, Vol. I, 370–371.

26 Degras, *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy*, Vol. I, 370–371; Sun Yat-sen's agreement caused no little embarrassment to the Guomindang party after it became anti-Communist. To try to soften the Sun's responsibility in this matter, the version of this four-point agreement published in vol. IX of *Geming Wenxuan* [*Ko-ming Wen-hsuan*] translates this point by saying that decisions on the railway would be made "temporarily." Meanwhile an original Chinese-language copy of these four points in the Archives of the Historical Commission of the Central Committee of the Kuomintang Party (047/2) uses the word "definitely."

27 Secret Report from Maring to "Comrades Karakhan and Joffe, Copy for Members of the

Politburo," entitled "Report Concerning My Trip to Mukden and My Discussions with Marshall Chang Tso-lin," February 15, 1923, Saich, *Origins of the First United Front in China*, Vol. I, 407–408.

28 Letter from Maring to "Comrades Joffe, Davtian, and Zinoviev," May 31, 1923, Saich, *Origins of the First United Front in China*, Vol. II, 545; see also telegram from Maring to Joffe, April 30, 1923, ibid., Vol. I, 414.

29 C. Martin Wilbur, *Missionaries of Revolution: Soviet Advisers and Nationalist China, 1920–1927* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 56.

30 Sun Yat-sen, *The Vital Problem of China* (1917; reprint, Taiwan, 1953), 13–14.

31 Telegram from Joffe to Maring, 1 May 1923, Saich, *Origins of the First United Front in China*, Vol. II, 527.

32 *North China Herald*, November 14, 1923.

33 WJDA, 03–32, 470(3).

34 WJDA, 03–32, 467(1).

35 WJDA, 03–32, 481(3).

36 WJDA, 03–32, 477(1).

37 WJDA, 03–32, 483(2).

38 WJDA, 03–32, 487(1).

39 Chu, *V. K. Wellington Koo*, 107–108.

40 WJDA, 03–32, 488(1).

41 WJDA, 03–32, 506(5).

42 Sow-Theng Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations, 1917–1926* (Honolulu, HI: University Press of Hawaii, 1976), 264–265.

43 Mingchien Joshua Bau, *The Open Door Doctrine in Relation to China* (New York: Macmillan, 1923), 183.

44 Jay Calvin Huston, "The Chinese Renaissance and Its Relation to Soviet Policy in the Far East," August 8, 1923, 17, JCH Papers, Box 13, HIA.

45 WJDA, 03–32, 454(1).

46 WJDA, 03–32, 495(2).

oviet–Japanese secret diplomacy undermines the Open Door Policy

In hindsight it is perhaps easier to see that renewed Soviet and Japanese expansionism was the greater threat to China than the so-called economic imperialism sponsored by the Open Door Policy. During 1924 and 1925, however, the Chinese people were convinced otherwise and demanded the Open Door Policy's abolition. The expansionist threat was discounted mainly because the Soviet government carried out its policies in China in absolute secrecy. During 1924, the Soviet Union resorted to secret diplomacy with both the Beijing government and Zhang Zuolin's Manchurian government to regain majority control over the Chinese Eastern Railway. It then used similar methods to insure that Outer Mongolia would remain "autonomous" from China, and by November 1924 the Mongolian People's Republic (MPR) had become a full-fledged Soviet "puppet state." Finally, the Soviet government carried out secret negotiations with Japan that resulted in the January 20, 1925 convention, which, by recognizing the validity of the 1905 Portsmouth Peace Treaty and the various secret agreements from 1907–1916, actually reaffirmed the former Russian and Japanese spheres of interest in China's periphery.

When Tokyo agreed to sign this treaty, it ignored not just the Nine Power Treaty signed in Washington during 1922, but at least six other promises – one in 1905, two in 1907, one in 1908, one in 1911, and one in 1917 – to adhere to the "principle of equal opportunity."[1] Beijing immediately protested this new agreement on February 11, 1925, declaring that it would not "recognize any provision of the above mentioned Treaty if it should affect the territorial sovereignty, rights or interests of the Chinese Government."[2] All of China's protests were ignored by the USSR, of course, since the secret protocol it had signed in 1924 stated that the treaties were not operative.

By spring 1925, Soviet and Japanese diplomats had secretly returned to the

pre-World War I *status quo* whereby large swaths of China were divided into competing spheres of interest. The Comintern then worked to undermine the delicate balance that was at the heart of the Washington Conference's plan to draw China into the community of Western capitalist nations by claiming that the Open Door Policy advocated the foreign economic domination of China. Influenced by this Soviet propaganda, a powerful anti-foreign movement developed in China during 1925 that demanded that the capitalist countries end all economic and political interference in Chinese affairs.

The secret protocol's crucial leverage

Following China's recognition of all prior Sino-Russian agreements beginning on May 31, 1924, the Soviet government was in a strong position to force China to put the Chinese Eastern Railway under joint control. Simply by delaying the Sino-Soviet conference Karakhan continued to suspend all of the benefits that this treaty guaranteed Beijing, such as the promised sale and return of the CER to China and the evacuation of Soviet forces from Outer Mongolia. This left the Soviet government in de facto control of much of Northern Manchuria and Outer Mongolia.

Several articles in this May 31, 1924 treaty later proved to be the key to Karakhan's successful delaying tactics: Article I stated that all former Russian consulates and government property should be turned over to the Soviet government, while article IX specified that the CER would be jointly managed by the Soviet Union and China until its status was determined at the upcoming Sino-Soviet conference. In Karakhan's opinion, the wording of the agreement showed that all Russian property had to be returned first and the joint management of the CER had to be in effect prior to the convening of the Sino-Soviet conference. When he delayed the conference Karakhan publicly blamed the Beijing government for these delays, citing its inability to carry through on its treaty obligations.

Karakhan used his new leverage to force the Beijing government into instituting joint management of the CER. At a June 6, 1924 meeting with Wellington Koo, Karakhan demanded that the railway immediately be put under joint management. Karakhan proposed that the new joint board of directors be named and he asked Koo to provide him with the names of the Chinese nominees, so that "the control of the Railway might pass into Russian and Chinese hands."[3] The main obstacle to this plan was Zhang

Zuolin, the strongest warlord in Manchuria, and on June 13, Karakhan proposed negotiating a separate agreement between the Soviet government and Zhang's government in Mukden that would cover the CER and "one or two other minor matters." Karakhan then reassured Koo that should the Soviet government be "obliged" to sign a separate agreement with Zhang the agreement with Beijing would still be considered valid. But, negotiations were clearly already underway, since Karakhan informed Koo that in this new agreement the original lease on the CER would be reduced from eighty years to sixty years, and the cost of purchasing the railway from the Soviet Union would be determined as the "original cost" of building the railway, or some 200 to 300 million rubles, instead of the current appraised value of 700 million rubles.[4]

Meanwhile, Karakhan had been carrying on active negotiations with Zhang for some time prior to the signing of the Sino-Soviet agreement. Sun Yat-sen even urged Zhang to agree to a 7–3 division of the CER during the spring of 1923. Karakhan now pressured Foreign Minister Koo into agreeing in advance to a separate agreement to be signed between the Soviet government and Zhang's autonomous government in Mukden. Koo refused to consider this suggestion, since any new agreement might undermine the Beijing government's rights over the CER.

On June 28, 1924, as the official deadline – one month after the signing of the agreement – for opening the Sino-Soviet conference neared, Koo gave Karakhan three reasons why he thought the conference should convene as scheduled: (1) the agreement specifically stated that the conference should convene within a month's time; (2) the conference would address questions "of equal interest to Moscow and Beijing"; and (3) a delay in opening the conference would hurt Koo's position within the Beijing government since he had personally supported the signing of the treaty. But Karakhan disagreed, suggesting that as an excuse they could always say that his "experts and secretaries" had not yet arrived from Moscow, while "between themselves they knew the cause for the delay," i.e. the joint management of the CER had not yet begun.[5] Karakhan then left the door open for even further delays when he informed Koo that the conference could be convened only "upon the receipt of instructions from my Government."[6]

Koo retorted that "the Chinese Government had ever so many obligations under the Agreement while the Soviet Government had only one principal obligation, namely, the Conference." Koo pointed out that Karakhan's

policies had placed them all in a dilemma, since all three parties were working at cross-purposes:

> Mr. Karakhan held that the CER question must be settled first before the Conference. Mukden held so long as the Conference was not opened then there was hope of a separate agreement, to which the Central Government would object … On the other hand if the Conference was started Mukden's hope of a separate agreement would be dashed to the ground. He wished to break up this vicious circle.

Karakhan countered by stating that the "only question on which the Soviet Government wished to keep its rights was the CER."[7]

To allow the Soviet government to regain majority control over the CER, however, would violate the Nine Power Treaty signed at the Washington Conference, in so far as this would give to the USSR special privileges that other countries did not enjoy. As one Chinese scholar warned during 1923, the successful fulfillment of the Open Door Policy required three things: "the cooperation of China, the direct participation of the United States, and the cooperation of the Powers interested." Certainly, the USSR was not cooperating, which meant that it would "render the application of the Open Door Doctrine in China unsatisfactory, if not entirely unsuccessful."[8]

Karakhan's promises could be acted on only when the Sino-Soviet conference met, and repeated delays ensured this would not happen. The Soviet government's reliance on these kinds of pressure tactics continued until the official Sino-Soviet conference met fourteen months later in August 1925, at which time negotiations quickly deadlocked over the terms of new Sino-Soviet treaties. During this delay, the Beijing government repeatedly protested Karakhan's secret diplomacy but to no avail. Beijing also opposed ongoing negotiations between Japan and the USSR to divide up Chinese territory into spheres of interest.

Ongoing negotiations between Japan and the USSR

Soviet–Japanese negotiations began once again during the spring 1924 and continued for nine months before the Soviet Union and Japan actually signed an official treaty opening diplomatic relations. During this time, Lev Karakhan and Yoshizawa Kenkichi, the Japanese representative, held a total

of seventy-seven meetings in Beijing. As a starting point, these two diplomats referred back to Joffe's agreement that an official Soviet apology for the Nikolaievsk massacre would be forthcoming. Japan no longer attempted to purchase North Sakhalin outright, but tried to obtain long-term leases on Sakhalin's oil concessions instead. While Nikolaievsk and Sakhalin continued to be important topics of discussion, the Karakhan–Yoshizawa negotiations were primarily concerned with reaching agreement on what to do with the former Russo-Japanese treaties.

Talks started up once again in early 1924 in Beijing. During February 1924, Baron Matsui, the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, emphasized that relations with the USSR would be opened only after agreement had been reached on an apology for the Nikolaievsk massacre. The Soviet government's negotiating position was strengthened by the completion of a trade agreement with Great Britain during February 1924 and by ongoing negotiations with China that resulted in the signing of a Sino-Soviet treaty on May 31, 1924. Both of these diplomatic victories put pressure on Japan to come to terms. In early August 1924, the Japanese government clarified about the Nikolaievsk massacre, "Japan will be satisfied with a simple expression of regret by the Soviet [Union], not demanding a formal written apology."[9]

During early talks between Yoshizawa and Karakhan, Yoshizawa suggested that the Soviet apology for the Nikolaievsk massacre should include the following wording:[10]

> On behalf and in the name of the Government of the U.S.S.R., the undersigned, the Plenipotentiary of the said Union, in proceeding to sign the Basic Agreement relative to the Establishment of Friendly Relations between the Imperial Japanese Government and the Government of the U.S.S.R. hereby expresses to the Imperial Japanese Government the sincere regrets of his Government for the brutal and criminal incidents which took place in the town of Nikolaievsk on the Amour in the year 1920. (signed)

At Karakhan's suggestion, however, this apology was softened a bit during October, 1924, when the final sentence was cut short: "the undersigned Plenipotentiary of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, has the honour to tender thereby to the Government of Japan an expression of sincere regrets

for the Nikolaievsk incident of 1920."[11]

In addition to making this change, Karakhan convinced Yoshizawa to agree to a rather vague clause, in which Tokyo would acknowledge its own regrets, if it were later shown that Japan was responsible for any similar incident: "if the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics will bring for[ward] the facts analogous to the incident which took place in the town of Nikolaievsk-on-the-Amour in the year 1920, the Japanese Government shall agree to express its regrets to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for such acts."[12] This addition seems to have been made merely to fulfill Karakhan's desire for equal treatment, since apparently at no time during the negotiations did the Soviet delegation present evidence that Japan had committed acts in Siberia comparable with the Nikolaievsk massacre.

Karakhan still insisted that Japan withdraw all troops from North Sakhalin, demanding a complete evacuation within two weeks of the signing of a final agreement compared to Yoshizawa's proposal that Japan should have three months.[13] Meanwhile, to put additional leverage on Japan to accept Soviet terms, Karakhan turned to the Mukden government to sign a separate secret agreement on joint management of the CER with Zhang Zuolin. This protocol transferred power over the CER away from Beijing, and gave the USSR majority control. Karakhan's diplomatic success in Manchuria greatly enhanced his leverage over Yoshizawa.

Karakhan's negotiations with Zhang Zuolin

After the Beijing government failed to initiate joint management over the CER, the Soviet Union signed a supplemental agreement with the Manchurian "Autonomous Three Eastern Provinces" on September 20, 1924. This agreement actually transferred full control of the Chinese share of the CER to Zhang Zuolin by means of a secret protocol. The secret protocol clarified that where the term "China" appeared in clauses six and seven of the first section of the agreement, its actual meaning was the "Government of the Autonomous Three Eastern Provinces of the Republic of China," the official name of Zhang Zuolin's government.[14] The inclusion of a second secret protocol meant that the agreement with Zhang superseded Karakhan's agreement with Beijing. This secret protocol gave Zhang the power to choose which Chinese officials would represent China in the joint commission that ran the railway, thus giving him absolute control over the Chinese share of

the CER.

In addition, while the agreement with Beijing stated that joint management would continue only until the Sino-Soviet conference met, at which time terms for purchasing the railway from the Soviet Union would be determined, the supplemental agreement only admitted that China had the “right” to buy back the railway, effectively negating the Soviet government’s promises that it would give or sell the railway back to China. Even when the Sino-Soviet conference was finally convened in August 1925, therefore, Moscow no longer felt obliged to discuss terms for selling the CER to China.

In exchange for helping it retain control over the railway, the Soviet government rewarded Zhang by changing the terms of the 1896 railway contract to reduce the original eighty-year lease to sixty years. At the end of sixty years – by 1956 – the Autonomous Three Eastern Provinces of the Republic of China would receive back the railway and the surrounding railway property free of charge. Other changes included the provision that all profits from the management of the CER would be divided equally between the Soviet Union and the Mukden government, thereby cutting Beijing out of the arrangement.

The clauses describing joint management of the railway were patterned on the May agreement with Beijing. A committee composed of five Russians and five Chinese, with the executive manager being selected by the Chinese and the assistant manager selected by the Soviets, would manage the railway. All details pertaining to the management of the railway were to be decided by special commissions that were to meet within a month after the agreement was signed, and would finish their work within six months.[15] Delays in the convening of these special commissions, however, would have given the Soviet government significant leverage over Zhang Zuolin, similar to that which Karakhan had exerted against Wellington Koo.

Although this second secret agreement made it appear that Zhang Zuolin would retain half control over the management of the CER, the Soviet government used two techniques to take majority control away from Zhang. In the May 31, 1924 CER agreement with Beijing, Article V stated that: “The employment of persons in the various departments of the railway shall be in accordance with the principle of equal representation between the nationals of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and those of the Republic of China.” In order to circumvent this provision, in the separate agreement with Zhang an additional note was added that stated “the employment of the people of

both nationalities shall be based in accordance with experience, personal qualifications and fitness of the applicants."[16]

Since Russians had traditionally run the railway, it was a foregone conclusion that they would take the majority of the positions on the railway, claiming that any other solution would interrupt or injure the railway. In the months following the signing of this supplemental agreement, therefore, the Soviet government rapidly reorganized the administration of the railway so as to increase the number of Russian employees of the CER from 10,833 to 11,251, while the number of Chinese employees fell from 5,912 to 5,556.[17]

A second method of taking full control of the CER was simply to make use of the secret protocol with the Beijing government, which specified that all former contracts between China and Russia would not be enforced. Zhang most likely did not know about this secret protocol, because the September 20, 1924 supplemental agreement specified that the 1896 CER contract would continue to be valid during the first four months of operation, even though Karakhan knew it was no longer active. Although the president of the railway was Chinese, he was little better than a figurehead and he never even went to the railway headquarters in Harbin. Real control resided in its eight main committees and eighteen subcommittees. Soviet officials eventually took charge of twenty-four of these twenty-six committees and they also greatly outnumbered their Chinese counterparts; there were a total of 120 Soviet officials to 80 Chinese officials in the railway administration.[18]

By playing the two secret protocols off of each other, therefore, the Soviet government was able to regain majority control of the CER, plus reclaiming Imperial Russia's property throughout China, even while the other foreign powers were being accused by Soviet propaganda of retaining their much smaller concessions. The Soviet government soon not only controlled the most important positions within the railway management, but its officials outnumbered the Chinese officials by a ratio of three to two. This was hardly the equal joint management that had been promised in the treaty, since the Soviet government now controlled approximately 67 percent of all of the positions on the railway. This almost exactly fulfilled the 1923 goal of gaining seven of the ten seats on the CER's board of directors. It was at this time that the USSR had sufficient leverage to confirm its new sphere of interest in China by turning back to Japan.

Soviet–Japanese talks to divide China

Karakhan's success at playing off Wellington Koo and Zhang Zuolin helped him pressure Yoshizawa to sign a Soviet–Japanese treaty with terms that were more advantageous for the Soviet Union. On January 20, 1925, Karakhan and Yoshizawa signed the official Soviet–Japanese convention recognizing the validity of the Portsmouth Peace Treaty, and agreeing that the other unequal treaties could also be renegotiated at some point in the future. In essence, the USSR and Japan recognized the validity of all previous Russo-Japanese treaties, including the numerous secret agreements that the Bolsheviks had previously denounced. The 1925 renewal of the Russo-Japanese treaties of 1907, 1910, 1912, and 1916 was destined to have an enormous and lasting impact throughout Asia by renewing the Russian and Japanese spheres of interest.

Previously, the Soviet government had transferred authority over the CER away from Beijing by making use of a separate agreement with Zhang Zuolin. Now, it used almost the exact same tactic with Japan to ensure that Zhang could not interfere with the Soviet Union's management of the railway. Earlier Soviet attempts to open official diplomatic relations with Japan had all failed, but, with the CER back in Soviet hands, Japan was forced to come to terms with the new situation in Manchuria. During March 1924, the Japanese Foreign Ministry discussed its goals with regard to the former Russo-Japanese treaties. On March 14, 1924, it had promulgated a list of treaties that Japan hoped to retain included the 1875 Treaty of St. Petersburg, the 1905 Portsmouth Peace Treaty, the 1907 Fishing Convention, and the 1907 Secret Treaty.[19] It did not include the other secret treaties, in particular the 1916 treaty aimed at the United States.

In its negotiations with the USSR, Japan's goals included renewing only some of the former Russo-Japanese treaties, and in particular the Portsmouth Peace Treaty. Yoshizawa proposed on May 17, 1924 that the following article appear the future treaty: "Treaty of Peace of 1905 shall remain in force in its entirety. Other treaties and agreements concluded between Japan and Russia shall be replaced by new treaties and agreements so as to conform to new situation, it being understood that all rights and interests secured through old treaties and agreements to the High Contracting Parties and respective nationals shall be respected."[20]

Japan hoped to retain the old treaties so that it would not lose control over

its “rights and interests” in Korea, Manchuria, and Inner Mongolia. Later, Yoshizawa changed his proposal on 25 May 1924 to make it clear that the *status quo* should not be affected:

> As regards the other treaties and agreements concluded between the Imperial Japanese Government and the former Russian Government … the Governments of the two Contracting Parties agree to revise them at a future conference in a manner corresponding to the altered circumstances, on the basis that the rights and interests enjoyed by the respective governments, citizens or subjects of the two countries by virtue of these instruments shall be fully respected, and that accomplished facts accruing from them shall not be affected.[21]

In addition to insisting that the Portsmouth Peace Treaty be recognized once again by both countries, Yoshizawa also made two further proposals intended to guarantee Japan’s sphere of interest in China. The first was a denunciation by both sides of any “military alliance, nor any secret agreement of military alliance, nor any secret agreement entered into with any third party,” which was “calculated to infringe upon the sovereignty or territorial rights of or to menace the safety of the other.”[22] The second proposal was that neither the USSR nor Japan should conclude any “treaty or agreement with any third party looking to the cession, transfer or lease of any portion of their territories adjacent to the territory of the other, which is likely to be used in a manner affecting the security or vital interests of that other.”[23]

Soon after Lev Karakhan signed the Sino-Soviet treaty on May 31, 1924, which in effect recognized the validity of all former Russo-Chinese treaties, albeit unenforced, he advocated recognizing all of the former Russo-Japanese treaties as well, including all of the secret agreements. In a manner that closely paralleled how the USSR and China had approached the same problem of what to do with their old treaties, Karakhan and Yoshizawa agreed to recognize these former Imperial Russian treaties even while promising to convene a conference to renegotiate them; in fact, this solution guaranteed that if no new terms were ever negotiated then the status quo in Soviet–Japanese relations was maintained. In July 1924, an early draft treaty read: “It is agreed that the Treaties, Conventions and Agreements, other than the said Treaty of Portsmouth, which were concluded between Japan and Russia prior to November 7, 1917, shall be re-examined at a Conference to be

subsequently held between the Governments of the High Contracting Parties and are liable to revision and amendment as altered circumstances may require." Perhaps this wording made it appear too obvious that the former Russo-Japanese treaties would continue unchanged, however, and so in a July 21, 1924 draft the term "amendment" was changed to "annulment."[24]

By October 30, 1924, soon after Karakhan confirmed majority control over the CER by signing his separate agreement with Zhang, a final draft was negotiated with Yoshizawa that stated: "It is agreed that the Treaties, Conventions and Agreements, other than the said Treaty of Portsmouth, which were concluded between Japan and Russia prior to November 7, 1917, shall be re-examined at a Conference to be subsequently held between the Governments of the High Contracting Parties and are liable to revision and annulment as altered circumstances may require."[25] Although to most outsiders this article may have seemed harmless enough – appearing on the surface to be supporting the annulment of the former Russo-Japanese treaties – in fact the negotiating records make clear that the underlying intent of the term "liable" was in fact not to eliminate but once again to recognize all former Russo-Japanese treaties, and in particular the secret agreements from 1907, 1910, 1912, and 1916.

By this action, Moscow and Tokyo formally recreated the Russo-Japanese spheres of interest. Japan, on the one hand, retained unhampered control over Korea, Southern Manchuria, and eastern Inner Mongolia, while the USSR, on the other hand, received Japanese assurances that its claims over Outer Mongolia, Northern Manchuria, and western Inner Mongolia would not be challenged. Japan also now recognized the Soviet claim to the CER, which greatly helped the USSR. Karakhan later admitted that "without the resumption of normal relations with Japan," it would have been "impossible to hope for the full resumption of our rights on the Chinese Eastern Railway."[26]

As a result of the Soviet–Japanese convention, Soviet and Japanese relations with China were immediately impacted. For example, there can be little doubt that Karakhan carefully orchestrated the timing of this whole affair so that the Beijing government could not interfere. This is perhaps best shown by the fact that on January 19, 1925, Zhang sent a copy of the September 20, 1924 supplemental agreement's secret protocol to Beijing to make sure that it realized that it had lost all power over the CER and that it could not make a public protest.[27] This would seem to indicate that the

Beijing government's Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not know about, or did not have a copy of, the second secret protocol before January 19, 1925. When Beijing protested, it did so secretly, and Moscow could and did ignore the protest.

Confirming Soviet control over Outer Mongolia

By carefully balancing its negotiations with Guangzhou, Beijing, Mukden, and Tokyo, Moscow successfully used secret diplomacy to consolidate Soviet power in the former Imperial Russian spheres of interest, including Outer Mongolia. Soviet efforts to renew the former treaties were successful in 1924, when Karakhan convinced Foreign Minister Wellington Koo to recognize the existence of the former treaties, albeit unenforced. This meant China had recognized the terms of the 1915 tripartite treaty. All Moscow had to do was delay the convening of the Sino-Soviet conference in order to continue occupying Outer Mongolia under the pretext that the 1915 treaty still existed. Moreover, a timetable for withdrawing the Red Army could also not be determined without the Sino-Soviet conference. So as long as a new treaty concerning Outer Mongolia was never negotiated and the timetable for the Red Army's withdrawal was not set, the Soviet troops could technically remain in Outer Mongolia indefinitely.

Repeated delays in convening the conference during the next fourteen months gave Moscow time to consolidate its control throughout Outer Mongolia. Following a series of purges to eliminate anti-Soviet leaders, the Mongolian People's Republic (MPR) was founded on November 25, 1924. The MPR became the first member of the Soviet socialist camp. The origins of the Cold War can be traced to this event. Twenty-five years later, Hu Shih attributed Stalin's enormous success in China mainly to secret diplomacy, and he compared it to the USSR's actions in Europe: "What seems to differentiate China from the seemingly much easier conquests in Central Europe and Eastern Europe had been the much greater complexity and difficulty of the conquest, which made it necessary for Stalin to resort to the most cunning forms of secret diplomacy in order to overcome the resistance that Nationalist China had been able to summon for over two decades."[28]

Renewal of relations with Japan on January 20, 1925 helped the Soviet Union assert its political, military, and economic authority over Outer Mongolia. On March 6, 1925, for example, Karakhan announced that

Moscow had decided to withdraw its troops and that the Red Army had already left Outer Mongolia. But U.S. officials in Kalgan reported that about 500 Soviet troops had actually remained in Outer Mongolia, and that these advisers had helped train an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 Mongolian soldiers.[29]

That Moscow had no intention of returning Outer Mongolia to China's control was confirmed in a May 7, 1925 meeting between Chicherin and the Chinese consul in Moscow. In response to Beijing's plan to garrison troops in Outer Mongolia to replace the Red Army, Chicherin immediately warned that if Chinese troops were sent into Outer Mongolia, the "Mongolian people would certainly resist and the Soviet Union would not just sit by and watch but would immediately support them."[30]

Meanwhile, the fiction was maintained by insisting that all Red Army troops had already been withdrawn from Outer Mongolia. In fact, the Soviet troops remained, but Beijing could not force the USSR to discuss a timetable for withdrawal, since Moscow now claimed that such a timetable was no longer necessary. Although negotiations for withdrawing the Red Army from Outer Mongolia were of the greatest importance to China, when the official Sino-Soviet conference finally convened after more than a year's delay during summer 1925, this question was never even raised: on August 26, 1925, Sino-Soviet negotiations focused only on the following six topics: (1) commercial relations, (2) damage claims, (3) the Chinese Eastern Railway, (4) boundaries, (5) navigation, and (6) legal matters, such as consular relations, etc.[31] Whereas in June 1924, Outer Mongolia was listed as being one of the most important issues to be raised at the forthcoming Sino-Soviet conference, by August 1925, the Soviet Union had managed to have this issue removed from the negotiations altogether.

This is an excellent example of "negative space," since something that was supposed to happen did not happen. Not only was the deadline for withdrawing Soviet troops from Outer Mongolia never discussed, but since this treaty was not renegotiated the unequal terms of the 1915 tripartite treaty continued to be the basis for the Soviet Union's and China's relations with Outer Mongolia. Moscow outmaneuvered Beijing by convincing it to recognize the 1915 tripartite treaty at the same time that both countries agreed not to enforce it. When the USSR then refused to renegotiate a new treaty, China had little choice – short of war – but to accept that Outer Mongolia was now a Soviet protectorate. According to one historian, links between the

Soviet government and Outer Mongolia soon became so close that beginning in 1925: “Stalinist restrictions, controls, and political radicalization unfolded in Mongolia with seeming inevitability, just as they were developing in the Soviet Union itself.”[32]

Although Japan had supported America’s mutual security pacts at the Washington Conference, Tokyo made it quite clear that if changes in China directly threatened its economic interests then Japan was prepared to “protect to the utmost her legitimate and important rights and interests in China through reasonable means.”[33] Soviet secret diplomacy did just that, by pressuring Beijing and Mukden to recreate the former Imperial Russian spheres of interest in China. Once the Soviet Union succeeded in regaining these concessions in China, then Japan felt compelled to match the USSR. In the process, the Japanese government ignored its promises at the Washington Conference not to create spheres of interest in China. It was this decision that ultimately undermined the Washington’s goal of protecting China from being partitioned.

Conclusions

The United States government was highly suspicious of Soviet Union’s motives in China, but all of its warnings to Beijing were ineffectual. America’s minister to China, Jacob Gould Schurman, even told Foreign Minister Wellington Koo on September 19, 1922 not to trust the Soviet government’s offers of equality, cautioning that once Bolshevik teachings became widely disseminated among China’s intellectuals and students, the Beijing government could do nothing to stop it: “If China’s four hundred million people ever adopt Bolshevism, then it would be a disaster for China.”[34]

Soviet secret diplomacy with Beijing succeeded in reclaiming Imperial Russia’s pre-war spheres of interest in Outer Mongolia and Northern Manchuria. Karakhan then used this new position of strength to maneuver Zhang Zuolin into granting the USSR majority control over the CER. On October 14, 1924, the Beijing government condemned Karakhan for signing this supplemental agreement with Zhang Zuolin.[35] In particular, it denounced as untrue a statement made by Chicherin on September 27, 1924 that the supplemental agreement had been negotiated with the previous approval of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Koo.[36] As soon as Karakhan had signed

the treaty with Zhang, he turned back to Yoshizawa and they signed the Soviet–
Japanese convention of January 20, 1925. When China's new foreign minister, Shen Ruilin, secretly protested on February 11, 1925 that the new Soviet– Japanese convention violated China's sovereignty, Karakhan accused Shen of "fully ignoring those acts which the Chinese Government has itself concluded with Japan," and pointed to Chinese agreements with Japan signed from 1905 and 1915 that reaffirmed the Portsmouth agreement.[37] The reference to a 1915 treaty was to the Twenty-one Demands, which the U.S. government had consistently refused to recognize because it violated the Open Door Policy.

The Soviet government successfully used secret diplomacy to undermine China's territorial integrity in Outer Mongolia and encroach on China's sovereignty in Northern Manchuria. Both actions were in direct opposition to the goals of the Open Door Policy. These Soviet diplomatic victories helped usher in a period of unprecedented human suffering in China, which experienced almost constant domestic and foreign wars during the next two-and-a-half decades. Instead of helping China develop unhampered by foreign interference, the destruction of the Open Door Policy merely strengthened the Soviet Union and Japan. Without the Open Door Policy to halt the ongoing division of China, the Soviet–Japanese competition over Manchuria ultimately resulted in a Sino-Soviet war during 1929 over control of the CER and Japan's formation of its puppet state of Manchukuo in 1932. The rest of the 1930s and early 1940s saw almost constant warfare in China as the Soviet–Japanese struggle to partition China continued to intensify.

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The Soviet–Japanese struggle to partition China

It was well known that the USSR and Japan were competing to increase their spheres of interest in China. But previous accounts of Japan's relations with the Soviet Union have concluded that the 1907–1916 Russo-Japanese secret treaties, which had formally divided China into Russian and Japanese spheres of interest, were abolished either during, or soon after, the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917. After World War II, the Japanese Foreign Ministry collected and published in 1951 a list of all of Japan's pre-war treaties with various countries. Under the heading Russia/USSR, the secret treaties of 1907, 1910, 1912, 1916 were not listed. This publication further noted that in 1925 the Soviet and Japanese governments agreed that all treaties "prior to Nov. 7, 1917, shall be re-examined at a conference to be subsequently held between the two governments," but then added that "no such conference was held between Japan and the USSR nor was any measure taken by either party to revise or denounce these treaties."[1]

Although admitting that an official Soviet–Japanese conference had never actually convened to revise these earlier agreements, this post-war publication then jumped to the incorrect conclusion that the four secret Russo-Japanese treaties had been "deemed void under obvious circumstances."[2] In fact, the Karakhan–Yoshizawa negotiating records prove that the former Russo-Japanese secret treaties were secretly renewed by means of the 1925 Soviet– Japanese Convention. The terms of these four treaties remained largely in force through 1945. In 1937, a secret Japanese Foreign Ministry publication reprinted the 1907–1916 treaties as valid, with certain changes made necessary by the Soviet Union's recent sale of the CER to Manchukuo.

As a result of the extreme secrecy surrounding these events there has been a basic misunderstanding of the true nature of Soviet–Japanese diplomatic relations. Most Western scholars, for example, have wrongly viewed the 1925 Soviet–Japanese Convention as primarily economic in nature, and have

therefore overlooked the seminal political and military impact of the various secret agreements on China. The renewal of the Russo-Japanese secret agreements once again divided China into Soviet and Japanese spheres of interest. This situation eventually put Japan, and later the USSR, on a collision course with the U.S. Open Door Policy.

The impact of the Soviet–Japanese secret agreements

Western histories of Soviet–Japanese diplomatic relations have incorrectly assumed that the 1907–1916 secret treaties were abolished. Their authors argue that the 1925 Soviet–Japanese Convention impacted primarily economic rather than political and military relations. For example, Rajendra Kumar Jain states that the secret Russo-Japanese treaties were "nullified by the Russian Revolution of 1917."[3] George Lenson openly denied that the 1925 Convention had a political purpose, stating: "The basis of the convention was economic – the joint exploitation of Russia's natural resources."[4] Finally, Savitri Vishwanathan concluded that for "a brief time [in 1916] it looked as if Russia and Japan would make the Far East their exclusive domain," but that the USSR in the 1925 Convention "succeeded in preserving peaceful relations with Japan," most importantly in economic matters, including the 1935 "sale of the Chinese Eastern Railway by the USSR to Manchukuo, fisheries concessions, and oil and timber concessions in North Sakhalin."[5]

There was an important political and security dimension that was overlooked by these historians. At the Washington Conference, the United States had guaranteed Japan protection through mutual security. However, there was no mechanism to carry out this promise, and no formal procedure for coordinating actions. Washington had even advocated the end of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, which might have offered just such a mechanism in times of trouble. When Moscow's success in consolidating power in Outer Mongolia and regaining majority control over the CER pushed Japan into renewing the pre-World War I secret treaties, Tokyo ignored its promises at the Washington Conference not to create spheres of interest in China.

As for the United States protecting China's territorial integrity, Washington's support for the Open Door Policy also did not include any set organization or method for implementation. One Chinese scholar even warned: "Nor must China hypnotize herself into the belief that the United

States will fight for Chinese integrity, and acting upon this belief, fail to provide her own means of national defense," since by means of the Open Door Policy the U.S. government "simply states its own policy" but "does not pledge the enforcement thereof by her own military and naval forces."[6] As Stanley K. Hornbeck clearly stated: "The open door policy is, like the Monroe Doctrine, not a rule of law but a declaration of attitude and an assertion of intention."[7] As such, the United States was under no obligation to come to China's rescue, especially if China made poor decisions.

China was trapped by its own secret diplomacy. From the beginning of June 1924, all the way through until September 1924, Foreign Minister Koo repeatedly warned Karakhan not to interfere with Beijing's efforts to convince Zhang Zuolin to accept the May 31, 1924 agreement concerning the CER. But Karakhan's separate negotiations with Zhang effectively sabotaged the Beijing government's attempts to carry out its obligations under the agreement, as well as put pressure on Koo to recognize in advance a separate Soviet agreement with the Mukden government, which would have given the Soviet Union a free hand in its negotiations with Zhang Zuolin, something Koo was unwilling to do.

Thus, it was China's own actions that allowed the Soviet Union to turn Outer Mongolia into a puppet state and renew its special rights and privileges in Manchuria. The U.S. government tried to convince the Chinese government to preserve the Open Door Policy, but its pleas were ignored. In January 1925, for example, Douglas Jenkins, the U.S. Consul-general in Guangzhou, met with C. C. Wu, the Nationalist government's foreign minister, who was advocating close ties with the Soviet Union. When Jenkins warned that closer relations with the USSR threatened China's long-term national interests, Wu disagreed, saying that "friendly relations with the Soviets did not mean the sacrifice of Chinese interests to the Bolsheviks."[8] Meanwhile, the Soviet government basked in its success. A. I. Rykov, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, bragged to the Central Executive Committee on March 3, 1925 that Tokyo's decision to recognize Moscow undermined Washington's policy of isolating the Bolsheviks, and that "it is the United States policy towards the U.S.S.R. which turns out to be isolated."[9]

Immediately prior to the May Thirtieth Movement in 1925, which opposed the Great Powers and ignored Soviet "Red imperialism," the Soviet government was able to make even further gains. On May 21, 1925,

Karakhan sent a confidential letter to Foreign Minister Shen Ruilin reiterating that the concession lands belonging to the Chinese Eastern Railway had to remain under the control of that organization.[10] This letter followed up on other earlier Soviet communications that listed Imperial Russian buildings, movable property, and empty lots in seventeen Chinese cities that the Soviet Union expected the Beijing government to hand over to the Soviet embassy, as well as a Soviet protest that local Chinese authorities in Tianjin had thus far refused to "hand over the ground lots of the former [Russian] War Department."[11]

By summer 1925 it appeared to many foreign observers that the Soviet government, the Beijing government, and the Chinese revolutionaries based in South China had jointly worked together to force the Great Powers to renounce a significant part of their privileges in China. Central to the Soviet propaganda's success was the claim that the Open Door Policy was simply a capitalist tool to advance foreign economic domination of China. By the end of 1925, Great Britain, France, and Italy had joined the United States in turning their portions of the Boxer indemnity over to China to promote education; the Beijing government had now accounted for over 98 percent of the Boxer indemnity.

Because the myth of Sino-Soviet equality was generally accepted, it looked like China was well on the way to eliminating all of the unequal treaties that had been forced upon it during the previous century. But the real picture was very different, since Moscow had not really given up its special privileges and concessions in Outer Mongolia and Manchuria. Secret diplomacy had once again divided China into Russian and Japanese spheres of interest. Ultimately this undermined the guarantees promoted by the Open Door Policy, which then left China defenseless against future Soviet and Japanese aggression. In fact, the Soviet government considered the destruction of the Open Door Policy to be an essential precondition to carrying out a Communist revolution in China. Because tariffs impacted trade, the final piece of the puzzle was for China to obtain tariff autonomy.

China gains tariff autonomy

Right as the United States, Great Britain, and the other Great Powers were being forced by public demonstrations to reduce their influence in China, Moscow's secret diplomacy succeeded in strengthening the USSR's

influence. Even though the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs was too weak to force Moscow to adhere to its promises, it constantly referred to the Soviet promises as if they had been fulfilled when negotiating with the capitalist countries. Thus China successfully used the myth of Sino-Soviet equality to push the United States and Great Britain into making greater and greater concessions. Even though the dismantling of the Washington system endangered China, the democratic governments felt obliged to respect what appeared to be the legitimate demands of the Chinese public and government for equal treatment.

An essential component of the Open Door Policy was the continuation of a tariff policy that would allow for increased international trade and foreign investment in China. The Washington Conference promised that China could one day regain control over its tariffs, but only after it solved its domestic problems and adopted important modernizing reforms, such as a modern legal system. By 1925, the capitalist governments' economic position in China was under threat, as the Soviet government promoted and supported a revolutionary movement that demanded that China be allowed to raise tariffs immediately on foreign goods being imported into the country. China's decision to charge different tariff rates to different countries was at odds with the equal opportunity clause promoted by the Open Door Policy.

To accomplish its task of undermining the Open Door the Comintern worked closely with the Chinese Communist Party and the Nationalists in a United Front to channel the Chinese people's anti-Western feelings against Great Britain, Japan, and the United States. The Chinese anti-imperialist movement was directed against the small British concession in Guangzhou, and in the meantime ignored the much larger Soviet concession in Manchuria. In the middle of the anti-imperialist demonstrations that began during May 1925, known as the May Thirtieth Movement, the Beijing government sent a note on June 24, 1925, to the other nations that had signed the Washington Conference's Nine Power Treaty during 1922, requesting that they agree to renegotiate all unequal treaties with China and further declaring that the foreigners' "rights and interests can be better protected and more effectively advanced without, rather than with, the enjoyment of extraordinary privileges and immunities."[12] Since it was widely believed that the Soviet Union had already abolished its unequal treaties with China, Moscow was not invited to these negotiations. Public opinion in the United States firmly supported the Beijing government's actions. The General

Secretary of the YMCA, U.S. missionaries in China, and Senator Borah, the Chairman of the Congressional Foreign Relations Committee, joined together in condemning foreign mistreatment of China. A missionary journal *Christian Century* explained that the anti-imperialist demonstrations in China were a direct result of a "mounting exasperation" on the part of China's youth to their country's exploitation "both politically and economically by other states."[13]

When Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg met with the Chinese minister to Washington on June 30, 1925, he promised that the United States would not only support returning to China full tariff autonomy but also eventually eliminate all extraterritoriality rights. Such extensive promises would never have been made if he had known the Soviet Union had resorted to secret diplomacy to regain and strengthen its own special privileges in China. With Washington's backing, the foreign powers that had earlier attended the Washington Conference recognized on November 19, 1925 that in three years China would be given the right to set its own tariffs, steps which they had previously refused to consider because of China's social and political instability: "The contracting powers other than China hereby recognize China's right to enjoy tariff autonomy, agree to remove the tariff restrictions which are contained in existing treaties between themselves respectively and China, and consent to the going into effect of the Chinese national tariff law on January 1st, 1929."[14] An important component of this agreement, however, was that China for its part had to adopt fundamental reforms.

China's obligations to reform

At Washington the Great Powers had agreed to a long list of restrictions on their behavior, but in return China had obligations too. Stanley K. Hornbeck, the Chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs, Department of State, said that the Great Powers agreed on "insistence that China perform the obligations of a sovereign state."[15] By not telling the major powers of the USSR's secret diplomacy, Beijing was not holding up its end of the bargain. In fact, it was undermining Washington's goal of having all of the foreign powers cooperate on an equal basis with China.

The various Chinese groups, including the Chinese Communist Party and the Guomindang, claimed that tariff autonomy would solve all of China's problems. But this treaty revision actually removed some of the final levers

that the West had to protect China from Soviet and Japanese expansionism. Soviet propaganda had supported tariff autonomy so that China could – in theory at least – raise its tariffs to obtain much needed funds, but the Soviet government at the very same time secretly tried to renew Imperial Russia's old tariff agreements giving Russia one-third lower tariffs than any other foreign power.[16] On January 10, 1926, the Beijing government secretly protested that this Soviet proposal was "unacceptable inasmuch as it runs counter to the general policy of the Chinese Government to abolish the system of reduced tariffs obtaining at the land frontier."[17] While China signed new treaties with the United States, Great Britain, and Japan, a source published in November 1929 acknowledged that Moscow had ignored thirty Chinese requests from 1924–1929 to renegotiate the former Sino-Russian treaties.[18]

Granting preferential tariff rates to the USSR undermined the goals of the Open Door, which attempted to guarantee equal treatment among all nations trading with China. With changes in China's tariff structure also came increasing uncertainty for foreign investment. Over time, these new tariffs actually resulted in a sharp decrease in China's trade with the Western capitalist countries, while China's trade with the Soviet Union continued to increase. Between 1924 and 1930, for example, Soviet exports to China more than tripled, from 31 million rubles to 99 million rubles, while China's total trade with the capitalist nations stagnated and then dropped by 50 percent through the middle of the 1930s.[19] Furthermore, by 1933, only 2.5 percent of Britain's total exports were sold in China and this number decreased even more during the 1930s.[20] China's export trade was also eventually adversely affected, as China's share of world trade hit a record high of 2.3 percent during the early 1930s before dropping again. Sixty years later, China's 2 percent share of world trade in 1992 had yet to match its peak in the 1930s.

Not everyone was ignorant of what was happening in China. Members of the foreign press had warned that the Soviet–Japanese Convention was "tantamount to a league of the East facing an unleagued West across the Pacific."[21] But Soviet–Japanese relations were still tense even after the signing of this treaty. Jain has even remarked that the 1925 Convention "did not bring about any change in the basic Japanese attitude of distrust, suspicion, and hostility towards the Soviet Union."[22] By redividing China into Japanese and Soviet spheres of interest, this convention put the United States and Japan on

a collision course. It became more and more difficult for the U.S. government to continue its support for the Open Door Policy without putting additional pressure on Japan. As one U.S. book from the early 1930s even warned: "Enforcement means a war with Japan."[23]

The 1925 tariff agreement for all intents and purposes signaled the end of the Open Door Policy in China. Soon afterward, Great Britain broke with the United States in order to open its own private negotiations with the Nationalist government in Guangzhou during June 1926. The Open Door Policy was no longer seen as a viable mechanism to oppose Soviet and Japanese expansionism, since the Chinese people demanded that this policy be ended so as to eliminate the unwanted economic imperialism that Soviet propaganda accused the Open Door Policy of supporting. In the process of halting U.S. economic investment, however, the Chinese people also lost U.S. guarantees to uphold China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This quickly led to a series of foreign wars, beginning with the Sino-Soviet conflict over control of the CER.

Sino-Soviet War over the Chinese Eastern Railway

The Western powers agreed to grant China tariff autonomy beginning in January 1929. Under extreme pressure from a Nationalist–Communist United Front, in late 1926 the British government began negotiations leading to the return of concession areas along the Yangzi River. After obtaining one of its prime goals, the renegotiation of the unequal treaties with Great Britain, the Nationalist Party under Chiang Kai-shek split with the Soviet Union and purged the Chinese Communist Party from the United Front during April 1927. Chiang went on to reunify China in 1928, on paper at least since he had to acknowledge Manchuria's autonomous standing, with his new government based in Nanjing. Following this victory, most of the Great Powers agreed to renegotiate their remaining unequal treaties with China. The main exceptions, of course, were the USSR and Japan.

Tension in Manchuria remained high throughout the 1920s, with Zhang Zuolin's son, Zhang Xueliang, attempting to balance the Russians and Japanese against each other. In May 1929, the Nanjing government and Zhang Xueliang tried to force the USSR to adhere to its 1924 promises to sell the CER to China. Fighting increased until an undeclared state of war existed. Rather than taking advantage of the USSR's distress, Tokyo remained neutral

during the 1929 Sino-Soviet conflict over the CER, just as Moscow would remain neutral two years later during Japan's so-called "Manchurian Incident."

According to the official Chinese communication to the signatories of the 1928 Kellogg–Briand Pact renouncing war, the 1929 conflict over the Chinese Eastern Railway began as the result of a May 27, 1929 police raid of the Soviet Consulate in Harbin. This was in response to "reliable reports that a propaganda conference of the Third International (Comintern) was to be held at the local Soviet Consulate between 12 noon and 3 pm. that day." As a result of the raid, thirty-nine suspects were arrested and taken to the local police headquarters for interrogation. The head of the Soviet consulate, Melnikoff, and forty-two members of his staff were allowed to remain in the consulate building under house arrest. Meanwhile, Kuznetzoff, the Soviet Consul-General at Mukden, was escorted back to Mukden.[24]

Based on their interrogations of the arrested suspects, plus documents seized at the Soviet consulate, the Chinese government announced that it had proof that the USSR intended to carry out "its secret plans to nullify China's unifi-cation, to overthrow the Chinese Government, to organize secret forces for destroying the Chinese Eastern Railway and to carry out a policy of wholesale assassinations and thereby bring about a world wide revolution." These Soviet actions were not new:

> Moreover, ever since 1927, repeated Soviet attempts have been unearthed in North and South China to conduct Communist propaganda from the vantage point of the Soviet embassy, consulates, and state enterprises as well as organizations, to use the revenues of the Chinese Eastern Railway for supplying funds to the counter-revolutionary elements in China, to overthrow the Chinese Government, and to destroy China's political and social systems. The documents and evidence[s] found recently in the Soviet consulate at Harbin establish the further fact that important Soviet officials of the Chinese Eastern Railway are important Communist leaders for conduction [of] such propaganda. Under the umbrage of their special status as railway employees and relying upon the support of the labour unions to tighten their hold upon the said railway, they have conspired to obstruct the smooth working of the Chinese Eastern Railway and sacrifice its true interests, as well as endanger the safety of China.

The Chinese further claimed that these documents showed that the Chinese Eastern Railway and the other Soviet state enterprises in Manchuria "were being utilized as the base for carrying out the nefarious schemes of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics."[25]

On July 10, 1929, the Chinese took action against the CER, dissolving its labor union and closing the offices of the Soviet Far Eastern National Trading Bureau, the Soviet Far Eastern Petroleum Bureau, the Soviet Mercantile Shipping Bureau, and the Soviet Central Commercial Federation. The Soviet manager and assistant manager of the railway, in addition to many Communist leaders of the labor union, were then dismissed from their posts and escorted to the Sino-Soviet border to be expelled from Manchuria. The Chinese based their actions on the 1924 Sino-Soviet treaty which, in article 6, stated that acts of propaganda could not be carried out against the other by either of the contracting parties.[26]

On August 27, 1929, in the middle of this railway conflict, Stanley Hornbeck addressed the Institute of Politics in Williamstown, Massachusetts. He discussed how the Chinese police raid of the Soviet consulate, the closing of the Soviet trade organizations, and the discharge of all Russian heads of departments on the railway had precipitated a situation full of "gravity and potential danger." Hornbeck declared that the U.S. government had expressed its hopes during July 1929 that a Sino-Soviet conflict could be remedied through negotiations. He furthermore stated that "the governments of the world would unanimously depreciate resort to hostilities by either China or Russia."[27]

China tried its best to use diplomacy to resolve this conflict. The Nanjing government proposed a four-point joint declaration to end hostilities. It not only called for the USSR to sell the CER to China, as Moscow had promised to do in 1924, but to chose a new manager and a new assistant manager. Nanjing also advocated all prisoners arrested by either party during or after May 1, 1929 should be immediately released. On August 29, 1929, the Soviet government responded to China's proposal, formally accepting the offer to hold an official Sino-Soviet conference to "settle the conditions for the redemption of the CER in accordance with article 9 of the (1924) Beijing Agreement." But, instead of agreeing to discuss the appointment of a new manager and assistant manager, the Soviet version called for China to appoint "immediately" the Soviet candidates.[28] This ultimatum deadlocked further negotiations and the military conflict quickly intensified.

Diplomatic resolution of the CER conflict

In July 1929, Nanjing closed down most of the organizations representing Soviet economic interests in Manchuria. The Soviet government protested on July 13, 1929, giving Zhang Xueliang's Mukden government and the Nanjing government three days to respond. When they failed to do so, the USSR severed diplomatic relations with China and organized a Special Far Eastern Army. The Sino-Soviet War of 1929 was short, but intense, lasting from July 11 through December 22, 1929. On the Soviet side, the Special Far Eastern Red Army consisted of 100,000 troops, supported by tanks and aircraft. On the Chinese side, Zhang Xueliang could deploy 60,000 men and the Nationalist Army stood ready to support him. But the fighting was one-sided, with the Chinese sustaining enormous casualties and the loss of significant territory along the Sino-Soviet border.

On September 9, 1929, the Nanjing government sent a declaration through the German consulate informing the Soviet Union that it was prepared to convene a conference to discuss ways to resolve the Sino-Soviet conflict. The Chinese agreed to allow the Soviet government to recommend an assistant manager for the Chinese Eastern Railway, who would then be "immediately" appointed by the railway's board of directors, but it refused to consider appointing either a new manager or assistant manager as a prerequisite to this conference. Nanjing also declined to hold these talks in Moscow and instead suggested that Berlin was a more appropriate venue.[29] Negotiations again deadlocked.

What followed was almost two more months of conflict, during which time the Soviet Union enjoyed decisive victories over the Chinese troops. It was reported during December 1929, that the Red Army had taken the Manchurian cities of Hailar and Manzhouli.[30] A new round of negotiations were now initiated between Moscow and Mukden, instead of the between Moscow and Nanjing; this negotiating method exactly paralleled Karakhan's separate negotiations with Zhang Zuolin in 1924. During this two-month period, Moscow's proposed terms to begin peace negotiations changed dramatically, reflecting the stronger Soviet military position.

On November 22, 1929, Mukden received the three following Soviet conditions for ending the conflict:[31]

1. Official consent by Chinese side to restoration of situation on Chinese

Eastern Railway existing prior to conflict on the basis of the 1924 Peking and Mukden Agreements.

2. Immediate reinstatement of the manager and assistant manager of the Railway recommended by the Soviet side in accordance with the 1924 Peking and Mukden Agreements.

3. Immediate release of all Soviet citizens arrested in connection with the conflict.

Most notable among these three conditions was that the sale of the railway to China was not even mentioned. Instead, the USSR insisted that conditions should be restored to the status quo existing before the conflict. China would get nothing.

On November 26, 1929, the Mukden government accepted these conditions. This prompted Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs Maxim Litvinov to telegraph on November 29, 1929 his expectation that the Soviet manager Emshanov and the assistant manager Eismont be reinstated immediately and that the Nanjing government transmit its "official confirmation" of this fact.[32] Only after this took place, did Litvinov propose that China send a representative to meet with Mr. Simanovsky at Khabarovsk in order to discuss the technical questions relating to the three Soviet preconditions for ending the war, as well as to settling the question of when and where the official Sino-Soviet conference should take place.

The Nanjing government denounced Mukden conducting separate negotiations with the Soviet Union. On December 3, 1929, the Nanjing foreign minister, C. T. Wang, even sent a note to the Japanese Charge d'Affaires accusing the Soviet Union of reverting to force to resolve the dispute, a clear violation of the Kellogg–Briand Pact renouncing war. Wang described the Soviet policy as "waging undeclared but actual war on China," and then went on to describe how the Soviet "armed invasion" of Manchuria had resulted in the occupation of the cities of Manzhouli and Hailar during the middle of November.[33] While the Soviet victory had precipitated Mukden's decision to open negotiations, Nanjing simultaneously tried to gain the foreign community's condemnation of the USSR's actions. Japan, which normally might have felt compelled to help China, remained neutral because of its 1925 convention with the USSR.

After six months of war, Sino-Soviet negotiations succeeded in ending the conflict. During the middle of December 1929, the *Japan Advertiser* stated

that a draft agreement had been reached by the Mukden and Moscow representatives, Cai Yunsheng and Simanovsky, respectively. In a pattern that exactly followed the 1924 Beijing and Mukden treaties, this treaty agreed that a formal Sino-Soviet conference would meet within a month after the agreement was signed and that all outstanding points would be decided within six months. Later points agreed that while the Soviet government would pick new men to fill the posts of manager and assistant manager, Emshanov and Eismont could be appointed by the Soviet government to fill other posts on the railway. Both governments promised to run the railway on the "principle of reciprocity and equality," to release their prisoners, not permit political activities, restore consulates and commerce, and to withdraw their troops back to their original positions along the Sino-Soviet border. Finally, a joint committee would investigate and determine losses claimed by each party.[34]

When the final version of this treaty was announced one week later, however, even the pretense of fixing a six-month time limit was dropped, although the official Sino-Soviet conference was announced as being scheduled to convene in Moscow on January 25, 1930. Unlike the draft treaty of the week before, even the reassurance that the railway would be run as an equal joint venture was eliminated, as it specified the: "Restoration of the former proportion of offices held by Soviet and Chinese citizens," including the reinstatement of "Soviet citizens, officers, chiefs and assistant chiefs of departments." Since Soviet citizens had formerly filled almost 70 percent of the top positions on the railway, this agreement merely returned to majority Soviet control. Furthermore, although the Soviet government had formally agreed to abolish extraterritoriality rights in 1924, this new treaty reasserted that its consulates in Manchuria would enjoy "full inviolability and all privileges to which international law and custom entitled them."[35]

In the end, the Soviet government not only retained its hold over the CER, but it obtained additional special rights and privileges, including extraterritoriality. As a result, the Sino-Soviet Khabarovsk agreement greatly enhanced "Russian prestige and influence in Manchuria."[36] Negotiations over the status of the CER ended in deadlock. After eight months of Sino-Soviet talks in Moscow, China retained its position that discussing the sale of the Chinese Eastern Railway was the primary issue, while the Soviet Union insisted that a wider agenda be accepted.[37] It was during this crucial period that Japan decided to take matters into its own hands.

The 1931 Manchurian Incident

Tokyo was conscious of the fact that any Sino-Soviet agreement on the CER might undermine the Japanese position in Manchuria. During June 1931, it was reported that Soviet and Chinese diplomats had decided that China would be able to purchase the CER by allowing all Soviet goods into Manchuria duty-free. This solution meant that no money would actually change hands, which was a boon for the cash-strapped Chinese government, while Soviet goods could now easily undersell Japan's, a clear violation of the Open Door Policy. One newspaper noted: "This agreement, if it is completed, will probably arouse protests from the principal trading nations, particularly Japan. But its inventors believe the formula is air-tight, and that protests will be ineffective."[38] In fact, this reported treaty was considered highly threatening by Japan, in particular since it violated the agreed-upon Soviet–Japanese division of China into spheres of interest.

On September 18, 1931, in the so-called Manchurian Incident, officers of the Japanese Army in Manchuria used an explosion on the Southern Manchuria Railway south of Mukden as a pretext to invade and occupy all three provinces of Manchuria. Interestingly, on September 15, 1931, just three days before the Manchurian Incident, Chiang Kai-shek ordered the bulk of Zhang Xueliang's Northeastern forces to leave Mukden and move further south. Chiang perhaps hoped that, in retribution for the 1929 Sino-Soviet War, the Japanese would eliminate the Russians from Manchuria and then withdraw.

Instead, after the Japanese military took control over Manchuria, Japan consolidated its position during the winter with the creation of the puppet state of Manchukou on February 18, 1932. Japan's actions undermined China's territorial integrity, which violated the Nine Power Treaty signed in 1922. Plus, its use of force undermined the 1928 Kellogg–Briand Pact renouncing war. Washington quickly protested. On January 7, 1932, the U.S. government announced that it would "not recognize any situation, treaty or agreement entered into by those Governments in violation of the covenants of these treaties [Nine Power Treaty and the Kellogg–Briand Pact], which affected the rights of our Government or its citizens in China."[39] This U.S. government act became known as the non-recognition policy, or "Stimson Doctrine, which broadcast the U.S. refusal to recognize Manchukuo and its demand for adherence to the Open Door Policy in China – a pointed and

public rebuke of Japan."[40]

On January 25, 1932, Stanley K. Hornbeck wrote a lengthy memo warning that Japan's actions in Manchuria endangered U.S. policy in China: "If by the 'Open Door' the United States means some chance to participate in railroads, public utilities, mining, banking, and so on, the door to Manchuria is already closed to American enterprises, and the only question now is how far and in what respects can it be pried open." Hornbeck advised that if the U.S. government could help "restore Manchuria to China" it would not only "bring to the United States the undying gratitude of 400,000,000 Chinese," but would "be worth a billion [dollars] in additional trade to the United States in the next few years, with possibly a cumulative growth."[41]

The Chinese government turned to the League of Nations for help, and a commission was sent to China to investigate. During March 1932, the head of this commission, Victor Lytton, bluntly criticized the Chinese for their role precipitating the Manchurian conflict. He warned that "it is not possible for any nation to cultivate hatred and hostility toward other countries and then expect the League of Nations to step in and save it from the consequences of that attitude."[42] When the League tried to force Japan to withdraw from Manchuria, however, Japan immediately withdrew from the League instead. Without the United States as a member, the League of Nations simply did not have sufficient clout to force Japan to cooperate.

Desperate, the Chinese government turned back to the Soviet Union for help. With the resumption of relations between the USSR and China during December 1932, one U.S. newspaper acknowledged: "By her conquest of Manchuria, Japan has driven China into the arms of Russia." It further warned: "Divided by Civil War, its central provinces in the hands of the communists, the authority of its government extending weakly only over the northern and central provinces, China is in no condition to prevent gradual spread of Russian influence until she may ultimately be dominated by Russia."[43] Faced with Japan's expansion into central China, by 1936 the Nationalists and the Chinese Communist Party had formed a second anti-Japanese United Front.

U.S. attempts to save the Open Door Policy

Following the creation of Manchukuo, and in line with Hornbeck's warnings, U.S. trade in Manchuria was severely damaged. Citing China's previous

secret diplomacy with Russia, a pro-Japanese book by George Bronson Rea warned that "Japan intends to open the door of Manchuria … defending herself against a [Soviet] menace that can no longer be ignored with safety."[44] In fact, Manchukuo officially declared itself in support of the Open Door, but "of a purely commercial character."[45] Rather than halting all foreign influence, therefore, Japan was willing to continue to accept Western investments, but only in Japanese-run development companies.[46] The Open Door was still open, but only on Japanese terms.

Of course, this proposal undermined the very idea of free trade. Only the existence of free trade guaranteed China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Facing problems of their own, in particular the Great Depression, U.S. State Department officials largely acquiesced to Japan's demands. This was not because they agreed with Japan, or no longer supported China, but for practical reasons: "Hornbeck believed that the United States had to 'speak softly' with Japan because it did not have 'a big stick' – the U.S. Navy was not ready to back up a strong diplomacy of confrontation with Japan."[47]

There was an important naval component to this security system. In 1902, the U.S. Navy had upgraded the former Asiatic Squadron into the Asiatic Fleet, and from 1910–1942 this fleet supported U.S. commerce in China. In 1923, the very year after the Washington Conference, U.S. Navy Rear Admiral W. W. Phelps had warned local Chinese warlords along the Yangzi River not to interfere with U.S. trade: "Although it is not our policy to interfere in any manner with the political or military affairs of the Chinese people, it is the function of the Yangtze Patrol fully to protect American interest along the River and we intend to fulfill that function at all hazard."[48] While sufficient against minor Chinese warlords, this small U.S. fleet was not capable of taking on another Great Power navy, especially Japan's. Without a sufficiently large naval deterrent stationed in Asia, the U.S. government had no real leverage over Japan.

Much of the responsibility for the Open Door Policy's failure was due to the U.S. government. On March 15, 1932, Hornbeck submitted a memo entitled "American Responsibility for the Subversion of the Nine Power Treaty," in which he stated: "The United States is responsible for its failure to maintain its position relative to the naval strength of Great Britain and Japan." By too closely relying on the Washington and London naval ratios and tonnages, Washington "has permitted considerations of budget economy and popular interest in the conception of disarmament as an end in itself to

undermine American naval power and to upset in fact the established ratios of naval strength." This decision not only "subverted" the intentions of these treaties, therefore, but it further contributed to the "subversion of the basic strategies and political considerations upon which the Nine-Power Treaty was negotiated." Hornbeck ended the memo by warning of future complications: "Unless the American Government is prepared to maintain its relative naval strength in the Pacific it must expect to be forced to modify its policies with regard to the Pacific and the Far East in favor of those Powers which are prepared to maintain their naval forces up to the limits contemplated in international agreements."[49]

Lacking the naval forces to exert pressure on Japan, all attempts by the United States to halt Japanese aggression in China failed. There was even discussion in Washington about abandoning the Open Door Policy completely. In an April 13, 1935 memo Hornbeck argued against this trend, stating the U.S. policy was merely applying the "principle of equality of opportunity" throughout East Asia plus upholding the territorial integrity of China. This policy did not need to be abandoned, since the U.S. government had never promised to use force to uphold these principles. It was under no obligation to go to war to secure the Open Door. But, just because it was not obliged to use force to uphold it, did not mean it had to agree to violations of the Open Door. Acquiescing to Japan's actions in China was very different from assenting to them.[50]

Conditions soon worsened in China following the Marco Polo Bridge incident of July 7, 1937, which prompted a full-scale Japanese invasion of central China. America condemned Japan's actions, but did nothing to interfere. Hornbeck, upholding the Open Door principles, offered it as the "most equitable and the most practicable" method for bringing about "stability and peace, and the American Government has consistently urged universal adoption of and adherence to it."[51] However, with the intensification of the war in China the economic situation continued to decline.

The closing of the door in China

Even though Tokyo many times assured Washington that it would respect the Open Door in China, on October 6, 1938 the U.S. Ambassador to Japan, Joseph C. Grew, protested Japanese actions in China that were "in

contravention of the principle and the condition of equality of opportunity or the ‘Open Door’ in China.” Specifically, Grew gave examples of how Japanese authorities in China preferred “special companies which are controlled by Japanese nationals and which are established under special charters according them a preferred or exclusive position,” thereby interfering with U.S. trade: “It is hardly necessary to add that there can be no equality of opportunity or Open Door in China so long as the ultimate authority to regulate, tax, or prohibit trade is exercised, whether directly or indirectly, by the authorities of one ‘foreign’ power in furtherance of the interests of that power.”[52]

To resolve these tensions, Grew asked the Japanese government to order:

> (1) The discontinuance of discriminatory exchange control and of other measures imposed in areas in China under Japanese control which operate either directly or indirectly to discriminate against American trade and enterprise;
>
> (2) The discontinuance of any monopoly or of any preference which would deprive American nationals of the right of undertaking any legitimate trade or industry in China or of any arrangement which might purport to establish in favor of Japanese interests any general superiority of rights with regard to commercial or economic development in any region of China; and
>
> (3) The discontinuance of interference by Japanese authorities in China with American property and other rights including such forms of interference as censorship of American mail and telegrams, and restrictions upon residence and travel by Americans and upon American trade and shipping.[53]

Tensions with Japan continued to worsen. A month later, Hornbeck wrote a second memo to the Secretary of State discussing the relationship between the Open Door Policy and war:

> Denial of commercial opportunity, discrimination against the United States in the field of commercial opportunity, by whatever foreign people or country, will always be resented and to greater or lesser extent be resisted by the American people. Such denial will, therefore, always be a potential factor among those factors which may make up a casus

> belli. Toward preventing friction between this and other countries, toward keeping this country out of war, the American Government should, whenever denial of equality of commercial opportunity to this country is made by another nation or country, resolutely resist such denial.[54]

During 1939, the U.S. Congress began to hold hearings related to Far Eastern Legislation, which included the Open Door. Mrs. George A. Fitch, wife of a noted U.S. missionary who was head of the YMCA in Nanjing during Japan's December 1937 "Nanjing massacre," testified on July 19, 1939 that while U.S. investment in China was $250 million, the United States had a "prospective market in China and the Philippine Islands combined of a billion dollars per annum." She warned that the "Open Door is more pertinent to our future prosperity than anything that happens across the Atlantic," and that if Japan won in China it would not be possible for U.S. businesses to compete with the Japanese companies. Therefore:

> Adherence to the Open Door agreement constitutes an insuperable obstacle to Japan's objective. She will try to call the Nine-Power Treaty obsolete. She will say it conflicts with this or that previous general treaty. She will seek to guarantee us three times our present trade with Japan if we will forget the Open Door and give her certain trade monopolies. We must insist on respect for the treaty and free access to the China market.[55]

On October 30, 1939, Dr. Hu Shih, China's ambassador to the United States, reiterated many of these economic points, but also referred in particular to the political protections offered by the Open Door Policy of upholding "the political independence and territorial and administrative integrity of China." In order to obtain a "just and enduring peace in the Far East" three conditions had to be obtained:

> (1) It must satisfy the legitimate demands of the Chinese people for an independent, unified, and strong nation. (2) It must not result in vindicating any territorial gain or economic advantage acquired by the use of brutal force in open violation of international law and solemnly pledge treaty obligations. (3) It must restore and greatly strengthen the

> international order for the Pacific region so that orderly and just international relationships shall prevail and recurrence of such an aggressive war shall be impossible.

Since these three conditions had not yet been met, the Chinese people were "determined to fight on until such a peace is achieved."[56] Faced with determined resistance by China, the Japanese government sought talks with the USSR to guarantee Soviet neutrality if the war in China should escalate.

Soviet–Japanese neutrality talks

Even as economic relations between Tokyo and Washington were becoming more tense, Japanese and Soviet troops clashed in Manchuria. Although the Bolsheviks profited from Japan's neutrality during the CER dispute in 1929, the USSR's neutrality worked to Japan's advantage in 1931 following the Manchurian Incident. Ikuhiko Hata discussed this period in terms of a "hidden crisis" between the Soviet Union and Japan. The Japanese Kwantung Army was initially "apprehensive and cautious about invading the Soviet sphere of influence," and only later became bolder once it became clear that the USSR was "exercising a policy of general retreat."[57] When the Soviet government proposed that the two countries sign a non-aggression pact, the "Japanese declined, stating that there was no need for a nonaggression pact." Not realizing that the 1916 Russo-Japanese alliance had been secretly renewed, Lenson incorrectly assumed that Japan's attitude was due solely to the 1925 Convention and to the Kellogg–Briand Pact.[58] Soon after sponsoring the formation of Manchukuo in 1931–1932, Tokyo and Moscow agreed to convene a conference to negotiate the terms of sale of the CER. Chinese protests opposing the sale were ignored. Following the 1935 sale of the CER to Manchukuo, a 1937 secret Foreign Ministry publication reprinted the 1907–1916 treaties and claimed that their terms were still valid. The 1907 secret treaty was substantially altered, however, since a crucial section on the CER was eliminated. The presence of this 1937 alteration confirms that the 1925 article renewing all Russo-Japanese treaties until changed by an official Soviet–Japanese conference was still considered to be valid.

Japan continued to make inroads into China. For example, Tokyo justified its July 7, 1937 invasion into central China as necessary to oppose Moscow's parallel efforts in Xinjiang. Throughout the 1930s the Soviet–Japanese

struggle to divide China intensified. But, the Russo-Japanese treaties led to a stalemate. Tokyo opposed the USSR's so-called "Red Influence" and even published maps (see Figure 9.1) in its propaganda showing how Tokyo was fighting Soviet expansion in China.[59]

ese map of the USSR's "Red Influence in the Far East"

Soviet–Japanese tensions eventually erupted in conflict during 1938 at Changkufeng (to the Russians, the battle of Lake Khasan) in northeastern Manchuria, and a much larger conflict during 1939 at Nomonhan (to

Russians, the battle of Khalkhin Gol) on the border between the Soviet Outer Mongolian puppet state and the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo. The Soviet military victory at Nomonhan "coincided *precisely*" with Soviet–German negotiations that resulted in the signing of the August 23, 1939 Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact.[60] This pact served to undermine Japan's diplomatic leverage, putting pressure on Tokyo to open negotiations with Moscow to once again delineate their spheres of interest in China.

By 1940, the USSR and Japan had begun negotiating a non-aggression pact that divided almost the whole of China between the two countries. On October 3, 1940, Soviet and Japanese diplomats secretly agreed in the transcripts to these talks: "The USSR will abandon its active support for Chiang [Kai-shek regime] and will repress the Chinese Communist Party's anti-Japanese activities; in exchange, Japan recognizes and accepts that the Chinese Communist Party will retain as a base the three [Chinese] northwest provinces (Shensi, Gansu, Ningxia)."[61] Tokyo also agreed not to oppose future Soviet southward expansion into Afghanistan, in return for Moscow's agreement not to oppose Japanese expansion into Indochina.

On April 13, 1941, the USSR and Japan signed the non-aggression pact. Soon afterward, Japan began its invasion south into Indochina. The tightening of the U.S. oil embargo, rather than deterring Tokyo, soon put Japan on a collision course with the United States. In sharp contrast to being a break with earlier Japanese foreign policy, as many authors suggest, these events are perhaps best seen as the end result of the 1925 Soviet–Japanese Convention's renewal of the 1916 Russo-Japanese secret alliance. War between Japan and the United States not only was not contrary to Soviet interests, but in fact helped make possible the enormous Soviet gains during the years immediately after the Pacific War ended.

Conclusions

A major goal of the Open Door Policy was to defend China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Many Chinese opposed the Open Door, portraying it as simply a new form of economic imperialism. But the renewed Soviet–Japanese struggle to partition China during the late 1920s and 1930s proved to be a much greater threat to the Chinese people than any imaginable foreign investment. Following Beijing's tariff reforms, and the accompanying elimination of the final territorial protection offered by the Open Door Policy,

Moscow continued to expand its sphere of interest in Manchuria unhampered by U.S. opposition. Without the Open Door Policy to halt this slide toward destruction the Soviet–Japanese struggle intensified, resulting in the formation of the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo in 1932.

Following the USSR's sale of the CER in 1935, Soviet–Japanese tensions erupted in war during 1938 in northeastern Manchuria and in 1939 at Nomonhan, but the opposing forces quickly deadlocked. Once the 1941 Soviet–Japanese non-aggression pact was signed, and with Tokyo's subsequent decision to expand southward, Japan was put on a collision course with the United States. The Open Door Policy failed to halt this eventuality.

Stanley Hornbeck's generally supportive policies toward China in the 1920s turned "passive and negative" in the 1930s: "The main reasons were changed attitude toward the Nationalist revolution, his frustration with the chaos in China, his devaluation of the China market, and his realization of American naval weakness in the Pacific."[62]

Moscow's non-aggression pact with Tokyo in 1941 enabled the Japanese military forces to turn their full strength against the United States. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor later that year actually fulfilled a Soviet foreign policy goal that Lenin had enunciated during the early 1920s of promoting war between the United States and Japan. William C. Bullitt, the U.S. ambassador to Moscow, had even warned Washington in a July 19, 1935 dispatch that the USSR's real goal was to promote a war between the United States and Japan, and that if this happened, the Soviet Union would try to "avoid becoming an ally until Japan had been thoroughly defeated and would then merely use the opportunity to acquire Manchuria and Sovietize China."[63] After defeating Japan in 1945 the United States had one last – and what would soon appear to be futile – chance to revive and enforce the Open Door Policy in China.

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10 The Open Door Policy and China's post-war territorial integrity

Formerly secret diplomatic transcripts from 1945 show that the geopolitical framework in post-World War II East Asia can be traced back to the terms of the secret treaties signed by Russia in Japan in 1907, 1910, 1912, and 1916, and to their subsequent renewal and alterations by the USSR and Japan in 1925, 1935, and with the signing of the Soviet–Japanese non-aggression pact in 1941. The fact that these Imperial Russian-era secret treaties were not abolished following the 1917 October Revolution was also destined to have an enormous impact on the Cold War struggle for Asia during the mid-to-late 1940s, as the Soviet Union regained not only its own, but absorbed much of Japan's sphere of interest in Korea, Manchuria, and central China.

A major U.S. goal in World War II was to uphold Chinese territorial integrity. Just a week after Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt reminded Congress on December 15, 1941 that America had "consistently and unfailingly advocated the principles of the open-door policy throughout the Far East."[1] In negotiations leading up to the February 11, 1945 Yalta agreement, Stalin promised to support the Open Door Policy. As reported by Averell Harriman on July 18, 1945: "Stalin had agreed on a number of occasions to support America's open door policy for China."[2] In the final weeks of World War II, however, the USSR moved into northern China virtually unopposed. As soon as Moscow consolidated its control, then its propaganda once again accused the Open Door Policy of supporting U.S. economic imperialism.

As Japan's defeat loomed, the USSR resorted to secret diplomacy with China to extend its sphere of interest. In 1944, Tannu Tuva was absorbed into the USSR. In 1945, Stalin convinced Chiang Kai-shek to recognize Outer Mongolia's independence from China in exchange for his assurances that the USSR would only support the Nationalist government, not their Communist rivals. Because this transaction was carried out in secret, many Chinese were

convinced that the Yalta agreement had made this decision. A Soviet-dominated Outer Mongolian puppet state, with a border only one day's drive from Beijing, undermined China's territorial integrity. The failure to uphold the Open Door Policy in China was followed by decades of internal chaos, civil war, and international war, resulting in the deaths of millions of Chinese. In the end, the Soviet government retained control over Outer Mongolia well into the late 1980s.

The Yalta talks and Outer Mongolia

The U.S. government attempted to renew the Open Door Policy as World War II was winding down in Asia. But the very brevity of the thirteen-word February 11, 1945 Yalta resolution on Outer Mongolia – "the *status quo* in Outer-Mongolia (the Mongolian People's Republic) shall be preserved" – doomed its efforts to ambiguity. The widespread misunderstanding of what the Yalta agreement meant by status quo subsequently led one U.S. scholar of Soviet history to conclude: "The status quo, i.e., virtual Soviet possession of Outer Mongolia, was also to be included in the future Soviet–Chinese treaty."[3] U.S. scholars were quick to criticize President Roosevelt for this failing, stating: "Roosevelt did not drive a hard bargain at Yalta."[4] One diplomatic historian even accused FDR of specifically agreeing to Stalin's request for "recognition of the independence from China of Outer Mongolia."[5] Another claimed that it was Yalta which dictated that "a plebiscite to be held in Outer Mongolia."[6] Chinese scholars quickly followed suit, blaming Roosevelt for giving Stalin a "powerful pretext" for encroaching on Chinese national interests, mistakenly blaming Outer Mongolia's loss on Yalta's direct reference to the "Mongolian People's Republic."[7]

In fact, the USSR's diplomatic victory at Yalta was made possible by its intentionally vague use of the word status quo. On July 13, 1951, Averell Harriman, the former U.S. ambassador to the USSR, testified to the Senate's Committees on Armed Services and Foreign Relations that when Stalin and Roosevelt met at Yalta on February 10, 1945, Stalin requested China's "concurrence also to the *status quo* in Outer Mongolia." Roosevelt endorsed this proposal the following day because he did not know about the secret protocol and so was convinced that the status quo referred back to the published sections of the May 31, 1924 Sino-Soviet treaty stating that Outer

Mongolia was an integral part of China. This helps explain Harriman's later testimony that once Sino-Soviet negotiations began: "Stalin, at the outset, made demands that went substantially beyond the Yalta understanding."[8]

Dr. T. V. Soong, Chiang Kai-shek's brother-in-law as well as China's official envoy to Moscow during the summer 1945 Sino-Soviet negotiations, defended the U.S. definition of status quo in his initial talks with Stalin: "When I left Washington I had no idea that Outer Mongolia question would be a problem. I told Truman that we might settle this question by not discussing it. I said status quo was that juridical sovereignty remains with China. It is true we cannot exercise this sovereignty. Truman agreed and also Secretary of State. In Chungking I discussed with Chiang. None of us had any idea that Outer Mongolia would be an obstacle in our discussions." Elsewhere, Soong repeated that the U.S. and Chinese understanding of status quo did not mean Outer Mongolian independence: "That was not my understanding when I discussed [it] in Washington." Soong also explained why his government hesitated: "If we are to recognize *status quo* in Mongolia which has many times been recognized by Soviet Union as integral part of China our position as a government will be badly shaken before our people."[9]

During these secret talks, however, Stalin insisted that preserving the status quo meant that China would recognize Outer Mongolia's independence. Stalin bluntly stated "*Status quo* is formal recognition of independence," and argued that the Yalta agreement backed up Moscow's demand that China had to recognize Outer Mongolia's independence: "It's our formula. They signed. I am prepared to repeat that." This interpretation of status quo led the USSR's foreign minister, V. M. Molotov, to warn that leaving Outer Mongolia's status undecided might hamper and eventually spoil Sino-Soviet relations. Molotov then reiterated: "That's how the matter stood. Independence was meant."[10]

The talks quickly deadlocked, but resumed after Soong communicated by telegraph with Chiang Kai-shek in Chungking. Chiang also backed Washington's interpretation of status quo: "[Chiang] Agrees with Yalta formula signed by the Three, i.e., preserve *status quo* of Outer Mongolia. We cannot recognize the independence of Outer Mongolia. Reason simple: self preservation is first law of nature. No Chinese government can last if it signs agreement amputating Outer Mongolia. But we agree to *status quo.*" Soong then cited Chinese public opinion, warning that public sentiment in China would not support this action: "No Chinese government can recognize

independence of Outer Mongolia and survive." After consulting with Chiang and his advisers, Soong concluded: "My Government cannot recognize independence and remain in power," and so "cannot recognize independence of Outer Mongolia."[11]

China did not agree to grant Outer Mongolia its independence merely because of the Yalta agreement. Harriman's later testimony confirms this important point. Harriman explained that Soong told him during July 1945, that China "was prepared to make concessions which we [the U.S. government] considered went beyond the Yalta understanding." Harriman further testified: "At no time did Soong give me any indication that he felt the Yalta understanding was a handicap in his negotiations. I repeatedly urged him not to give in to Stalin's demands. At the same time, during this period, I had several talks with Stalin and Molotov in which I insisted that the Soviet position was not justified. This action I took on instructions from Washington. Also, on instructions, I informed Soong that the United States would consider any concessions which went beyond our interpretation of the Yalta understanding, would be made because Soong believed they would be of value in obtaining Soviet support in other directions. Soong told me that he thoroughly understood and accepted the correctness of this position." Although Harriman warned Soong not to try to make a separate deal with Stalin, his advice went unheeded: "The fact is that, in spite of the position I took, Soong gave in on several points to achieve his objectives."[12] In his July 10, 1945 conversation with Molotov, Soong admitted as much: "Yalta is not sacred. On Outer Mongolia it said quite a different thing. We made a sacrifice."[13]

The negotiating records not only undermine claims that FDR advocated Outer Mongolian independence at Yalta, but they also provide compelling evidence that it was China's own secret diplomacy during the 1920s recognizing the 1915 tripartite treaty that ultimately allowed Stalin to pressure Chiang into recognizing Outer Mongolia's independence. Sino-Soviet negotiating records furthermore prove that the Soviet Union's foreign policy ambitions in Outer Mongolia remained remarkably constant from 1912 through 1945. Soviet diplomacy was simply the most recent manifestation of a much older tradition of Russian imperialism. By contrast, the U.S. government's support for China's sovereignty in Outer Mongolia was in line with the Open Door Policy.

Sino-Soviet negotiations on Outer Mongolia

Chiang Kai-shek's August 14, 1945 decision to hold a plebiscite granting Outer Mongolia full independence from China has been blamed on the February 11, 1945 Yalta agreement.[14] But Roosevelt never intended to push China into granting Outer Mongolia its independence. He sought to preserve Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity. What undermined this goal was Beijing's 1924 secret protocol with the USSR, which recognized – albeit unenforced – the 1915 tripartite treaty signed by Russia, China, and Outer Mongolia granting Outer Mongolia autonomy from China. Although the 1924 protocol specified that the 1915 treaty was not enforced, Outer Mongolia's autonomy was assured so long as Moscow refused to negotiate new terms. Until a new agreement was negotiated, therefore, this secret protocol actually recognized Russia's de facto control over Outer Mongolia.[15]

Stalin referred to this alternative interpretation of status quo to demand that Chiang Kai-shek recognize Outer Mongolia's full independence from China.[16] Outer Mongolia's strategic importance prompted Stalin to explain on July 2, 1945: "Outer Mongolia has a geographical position from where one can overthrow Soviet Union['s] position in Far East." Soong appealed to Stalin not to force the question of Outer Mongolia's independence from China. According to Soong, it was a matter which the Chinese people had been concerned about ever since "Sun Yat-sen brought up integrity of Chinese territory." Therefore, it was an issue which: "We cannot present to Chinese people."[17]

Stalin presented two reasons why the USSR's predominant position in Outer Mongolia should be confirmed by treaty: (1) to strengthen the Soviet "strategic position against Japan," and (2) to justify Stalin's decision before the Soviet people to attack Japan, an action which he claimed was particularly difficult considering that the Japanese government had already made substantial offers to the USSR to stay out of the war. Stalin further admitted that the "Soviet Union recognized Outer Mongolia as a part of China. True. But lesson of war changes our views. It will be better for China and Russia if Outer Mongolia is independent with right of passage for Russian troop in case threat from Japan." Stalin emphasized that the Outer Mongolian question was really a "question of defence," therefore, because the "geographical position is important." Since the Soviet Union "cannot

station troops on Chinese territory," it was especially important to Stalin that Soviet troops be stationed in Mongolia.[18]

Soong replied that it was not just the stationing of Soviet troops in Outer Mongolia that worried China's nationalist government, but the question of interfering with China's "territorial integrity," a clear violation of the Open Door Policy. Stalin tried to rationalize his position by referring to Outer Mongolia's long-term strategic importance to the Soviet Union: "I think of future. Japan will be crushed but she will restore her might in 20, 30 years. Whole plan of our relations with China is based on this. Now our preparations in Far East in case Japan restore might is inadequate … Therefore we want alliance. Mongolia is part of this plan. We cannot send troops to Chinese territory… Strange to maintain garrison in China but to maintain it in a small state is natural." But, when Soong refused to concede Stalin's point, Stalin claimed that his position was "not realistic."[19]

By referring to Outer Mongolia's strategic value to the USSR, Stalin merely rationalized Russia's ongoing efforts to make Outer Mongolia part of the Soviet sphere of interest. To consolidate his diplomatic victory, however, China's Nationalist government had to first recognize this new status quo. Cornered by China's own 1924 diplomacy, Chiang reluctantly agreed, but only in return for Stalin's additional guarantee that the USSR would in the future "give to central Chinese Government alone all moral and material support."[20] In other words, the price for Outer Mongolia's independence was Stalin's promise not to aid the Chinese Communist Party.

The Chiang–Stalin secret pact

Chiang Kai-shek agreed to grant Outer Mongolia its independence in return for Stalin's pledge that all future Soviet aid would be given only to the Nationalists. As soon as Stalin obtained what he wanted from the Nationalists, however, he broke his promise and threw his support behind the Chinese Communists. This tactic led the United Nations to condemn Moscow on February 1, 1952 for violating the USSR's August 14, 1945 friendship treaty with the Nationalist government.

Even before Soong traveled to Moscow, one of his advisers recommended that Soong negotiate a secret agreement with Stalin to ensure that the Chinese Communists would be excluded from power in postwar China. In a letter dated May 30, 1945, Lee Weiguo, a member of China's delegation to the

United Nations Conference on International Organization, suggested that Soong quickly visit Moscow, since the Soviet government "will either make a deal with the National Government, or enter into some kind of arrangement with the Yenan [Communist] regime … I have the feeling that Russia is now ready for a deal with us." According to Lee, therefore, the Nationalists' best hope of defeating the Communists was to sign a secret pact with Moscow: "If we are able to come to an understanding with Russia, we shall be able also to solve the Communist problem, at least to a large extent, *but never vice versa*."[21]

On July 2, 1945, the very first day of Sino-Soviet talks, Soong began to negotiate just such an "understanding," by confiding to Stalin the Nationalists' real political goals: "We want united army, 1 central government. We don't want Chang Tso-lun [*sic*] war lords or any other party with separate government and army." This admission then led to the following exchange:

SOONG: … Guomindang wants to be leading part in Government. Therefore does not want coalition government which may be upset when other parties withdraw.
STALIN: This is rightful wish of Guomindang. It's obvious from history of China. What other parties?
SOONG: To be brutally frank, no other party … So-called democratic front: communists, national socialists, youth is only a fiction to set up in juxtaposition to central government.

Later, when Soong attempted to ascertain whether Stalin would agree to support only the Nationalists, Stalin responded: "There is the Guomindang. Other forces are communists. Can communists overthrow Guomindang? If China makes alliance with Soviet Union nobody will overthrow government."[22]

Based on Soong's reports of his talks in Moscow, Chiang Kai-shek sent a telegram to Moscow on July 9, 1945, which stated: "Chinese government now willing make greatest sacrifice in the utmost sincerity to find fundamental solution of Chinese/Soviet relations," by agreeing to grant Outer Mongolia its independence in return for Soviet guarantees to uphold China's territorial integrity in Xinjiang and Manchuria, in addition to the following condition: "Because of Chinese communist administration and army, who are not united within the central government, wish Soviet Government to give to central Chinese Government alone all moral and material support. Any assistance given to China should be confined to the central government."[23]

Trapped by the 1924 secret protocol, but also legitimately worried that

Mao Zedong and his Communist followers might take power in China, Chiang agreed to recognize Outer Mongolia's independence in exchange for Stalin's promise not to support the Communists in their struggle against China's Nationalist government. In the discussions that followed Soong's reading of Chiang's telegram, Stalin emphasized that he would support only the Nationalists:

> As to Communists in China we do not support and don't intend to support. We consider China has one government. If another government calls itself Government it's [a] matter for China. As regards assistance, Chiang told us to send to Central Government. We did so. If we can render help, of course it will be given to government of Chiang. We do not want to play with China. We want to deal honestly with China and allied nations.[24]

Chiang's decision to exchange Outer Mongolian independence for Stalin's promise of support was risky, since news of this decision might actually push Chinese public opinion further towards the Communists. Soong was surprised: "Chiang made concession on Outer Mongolia which I did not dare believe he would."[25] In the Sino-Soviet treaty of friendship and alliance, signed on August 14, 1945, the following note appears: "the Government of the USSR agrees to render to China moral support and aid in military supplies and other material resources, such support and aid to be entirely given to the National Government as the Central Government of China."[26] Transcripts from the Sino-Soviet negotiations prove that only after Chiang agreed to Outer Mongolia's independence did Moscow promise its support.

The Chinese and Soviet governments exchanged notes on August 14, 1945, providing for a plebiscite in Outer Mongolia, after which China promised to recognize Outer Mongolia's independence. This plebiscite was merely for form's sake, which helps explain why China did not dispute the results when it was later reported that 98.14 percent of Outer Mongolia's electorate, many of them nomadic herdsmen, voted in the hastily arranged plebiscite, virtually all of them for independence.[27] The Nationalist government thereafter officially recognized Outer Mongolia's independence from China on January 1, 1946.

Many Nationalists later blamed the United States for forcing China to grant Outer Mongolia its independence. Ironically, after the Nationalists' 1949

defeat, Washington took the lead in denouncing Moscow for breaking the very pact that had secretly sealed Outer Mongolia's fate. On January 31, 1952, John Sherman Cooper, the U.S. delegate to the UN's Political Committee, accused the USSR of violating its August 14, 1945 promise: "Pledged to friendship and alliance, the Soviet Union was hostile. Pledged to assist, it refused assistance. Pledged to cooperate, it obstructed. Pledged to provide material resources, it gave none, but seized those of China. Pledged to support the legal Government of China, it gave its aid to the Communist armies."[28]

Mao Zedong's expectations vis-à-vis Outer Mongolia

In order to obtain Outer Mongolia's independence from China, Stalin played the Chinese Communists off the Nationalists. Prior to their coming to power, the Chinese Communists clearly did not know about the USSR's many secret agreements recognizing the terms of the former unequal treaties. The head of the Chinese Communist Party, Chen Duxiu, even wrote an article immediately after the signing of the May 31, 1924 Sino-Soviet treaty in which he called those people who had consistently opposed Outer Mongolia's autonomy "short-sighted." Chen explained that the recent agreement, in which Moscow publicly acknowledged that Outer Mongolia was an integral part of China, showed that it had all been "a big uproar over nothing."[29] The Chinese Communists truly believed that Outer Mongolia's autonomy was only temporary. The CCP's 1922 Second Party Congress stated that this autonomy would continue only up until the time when China formed a Chinese Federal Republic, at which time Outer Mongolia would join this new federation. In exchange for supporting Moscow in its negotiations with Beijing, therefore, the CCP's leaders were convinced that they would later regain Outer Mongolia. But the USSR's true intentions were made clear in one party resolution acknowledging that China should not try to reunify too quickly, since Outer Mongolia, Tibet, and Turkestan (Xinjiang) had different economic needs from China. Accordingly, the CCP's second congress's manifesto warned: "If these different races with their different economic phases be compulsorily united under the military control of those who even cannot unite China as it now exists, the result is only to expand the domain of this military control and interrupt the progress of these people towards self-determination and autonomy, with little profit to China

proper."[30]

In line with this resolution, the Chinese Communists agreed to recognize Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang as autonomous states. The autonomy of these areas was intended to be merely temporary, however, as the CCP's resolutions further specified that once the Chinese people overthrew the militarists and were able to establish the real republic by the union of the people themselves, then the next priority would be to "reunite" China Proper, Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang, and "to establish them as the United States of China, a Republic."[31] The CCP's resolution implied that this so-called "United States of China" would be the result of a successful Communist revolution, which meant that the CCP agreed to support Moscow's occupation of Outer Mongolia only as an interim measure until they came to power in China.

This interpretation is supported by referring to a speech given by Adolf Joffe on August 19, 1922 in Beijing: "As regards Mongolia, it is only natural that Russia herself cannot have any imperialistic aims." Joffe furthermore promised China: "Although the Mongolian question cannot be taken out from many other questions, Russia will be most pleased to withdraw the few troops that are now there when the proper moment in the interest of the whole Chinese nation really comes. Accept my assurances that when all of us agree that the moment has come, Russia will not retain her Red Army in Mongolia even one second longer."[32] In hindsight, Joffe's assurances implied that Moscow would take this action only after China carried out a Communist revolution. In other words, the Soviet government promised that Outer Mongolia would be handed back to a Chinese national government under the CCP's leadership.

The CCP also supported Soviet military control of Outer Mongolia. The CCP journal *Qianfeng* (*Vanguard*) published a long article discussing Outer Mongolian independence during 1924.[33] Titled "The status quo of Outer Mongolia's Independence," this article did not condemn the 1915 tripartite treaty for making Outer Mongolia a Russian protectorate, but instead praised it. Thereafter, when discussing Outer Mongolia's 1921 treaty with the Soviet Union, it lauded the fact that Russia's former right to station troops in Outer Mongolia had been renewed. By contrast, Beijing's former rights to garrison troops had been revoked. The author warned that if China "succeeded in sending troops, the moment they crossed Outer Mongolia's border hostilities would be unavoidable."[34]

The Chinese Communists fully expected to regain control over Outer Mongolia. In 1936, Edgar Snow quoted Mao as saying: “The relationship between Outer Mongolia and the Soviet Union, now and in the past, has always been based on the principle of complete equality. When the people’s revolution has been victorious in China the Outer Mongolian republic will automatically become a part of the Chinese federation, at their own will. The Mohammedan and Tibetan peoples, likewise, will form autonomous republics attached to the China federation.”[35] In the meantime, however, Snow warned that Outer Mongolia was already “definitely under the Red banner,” even though China’s suzerainty was still “nominally recognized, even by Russia.”[36]

After the formation of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Outer Mongolian independence continued over the protests of the Communists, who felt that Outer Mongolia had previously been promised to them. Since the Soviet-funded Comintern approved these resolutions, the Chinese Communists could not help but feel cheated when the USSR retained Outer Mongolia after negotiating the 1950 Sino-Soviet “Friendship” treaty. What is more, Soviet leaders later refused to reopen negotiations on Outer Mongolia’s borders with China, a dispute that continued to plague Sino-Soviet relations during the following decades. Before traveling to Moscow in 1950, Mao apparently took it for granted that Stalin would support the Chinese Communists and that “CCP–Moscow relations were much closer than we previously assumed.”[37] The very fact that Outer Mongolia was not mentioned in the February 1950 friendship treaty signed by Mao is another example of “negative space.” Years later, Zhou Enlai reported during 1964 that he had approached Khrushchev in January 1957 with a request to discuss territorial concerns, but that Khrushchev refused to comply.[38]

Stalin allied with Chiang only until the Nationalists granted Outer Mongolia its independence, after which Stalin agreed to help the CCP in return for their acquiescing to Outer Mongolia’s permanent loss. In 1950, the Chinese intellectual and diplomat, Hu Shih, wrote in the pages of *Foreign Affairs* that the USSR’s post-war victories in Eastern Europe and Asia really had nothing to do with Marxist-Leninist philosophy, but were simply one more episode in the long history of Russian expansionism. As such, it was “no more and no less than a strategy of naked militarism aided from time to time by the most unscrupulous use of all possible forms of trickery and deceit.” Hu Shih attributed Stalin’s enormous success to the Yalta agreement,

where Stalin was responsible for "deliberately deceiving and blackmailing Roosevelt," a transgression that Hu Shih condemned: "History will not forgive the man who played such deliberate tricks on the generous idealism of a great humanitarian."[39] Western authors agreed, citing the success of the Soviet secret diplomacy in China during the 1920s as foreshadowing "their policy in Europe after World War II, nearly a quarter of a century later."[40]

Conclusions

Moscow's use of secret diplomacy to separate Outer Mongolia from China undermined the territorial guarantees embodied in the Open Door Policy. On February 16, 1950, Maxwell Hamilton and Nelson T. Johnson warned: "The record of the facts in relations between Russia and China makes clear the persistent efforts of the Czarist Russian Government and the Communist Russian Government to expand at the expense of China and neighboring countries. The formulas used in Russian formal documents throughout this period bear striking similarities and show that, no matter what the words, the effort persists." With regard to Outer Mongolia, since 1912 Russia had been attempting to take possession of Outer Mongolia and the "1945 and 1950 alliances between China and Russia fulfill the Russian objective of detaching Outer Mongolia."[41]

Stalin's decision to resort to secret diplomacy completed the Imperial Russian plan of separating Outer Mongolia from China. The diplomatic records not only show that Imperial Russia's and the Soviet Union's foreign policy in Outer Mongolia remained remarkably consistent from 1912 through 1945, but that many of the Soviet government's greatest victories were due to secret diplomacy. Transcripts of the 1945 secret Sino-Soviet negotiations prove that Soviet "Red imperialism" was largely in line with the Russian imperialism that had preceded it.

The 1945 Sino-Soviet agreement on Outer Mongolia violated the Open Door Policy, since it undermined Chinese territorial integrity. Once Outer Mongolia's independence was confirmed, Stalin broke his promise to Chiang and backed Mao. Moscow was then able to use its privileged position to provide the Chinese Communists with a secure base in Manchuria from which the CCP expanded its power throughout all of mainland China. The USSR actively intervened in the Chinese Civil War by adopting a sea denial policy that interdicted all Nationalist troop movements attempting to enter

Manchuria by sea, in the process violating China's sovereignty.

Notes

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3 Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion & Coexistence: The History of Soviet Foreign Policy 1917–1967* (New York: Praeger, 1968), 371; a second historian concluded that status quo "implied Soviet domination of the area." George A. Lenson, "Yalta and the Far East," in John L. Snell ed., *The Meaning of Yalta* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1956), 157, while a third claimed that "Outer Mongolia, as arranged at Yalta, gravitated completely within the Soviet orbit" (Thomas A. Bailey, *America Faces Russia* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1964), 332).
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19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., 17.
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The Open Door Policy and the Chinese Civil War, 1945–1949

As World War II was ending, Washington's support for the Open Door Policy in Manchuria once again intensified. After Japan's defeat, it was an important U.S. goal to make the Manchurian port cities of Port Arthur and Dairen into international ports open to all countries. On July 18, 1945, Harriman reported to President Truman that "Stalin had agreed … to respect the sovereignty of China in Manchuria." But, Harriman further warned that if Stalin succeeded in gaining control over the Manchurian railways and the port city of Dairen, then "such control would violate the established policy and principles which the United States has held for a long period of time."[1] This reference to "established policy" was, of course, to the Open Door Policy.

On August 14, 1945, China and the USSR signed a treaty including a secret protocol stating that the USSR would not only have predominant control over the Manchurian railways, but that the port of Dairen would "be leased free of charge to Russia."[2] This secret Sino-Soviet agreement violated the Open Door Policy, since it gave the USSR special rights and privileges in Manchuria that the 1922 Nine Power Treaty had tried to eliminate. By halting Nationalist troops shipments by sea, Moscow was also able to provide the Chinese Communists with a secure base in Manchuria from which the CCP expanded its power throughout all of mainland China.

An important success of the post-World War II Sino-Soviet naval coalition was the Soviet denial of Nationalist access to the Liaodong Peninsula's seaports at Port Arthur and Dairen. Conversely, the USSR allowed Chinese Communist forces to enter and be supplied by sea, which gave the CCP a clear advantage over the Nationalists. Manchuria soon became the main theater in China's evolving Civil War. Thus, the USSR's intervention helped its Chinese Communist allies win the Chinese Civil War.

Negotiations on the Chinese Eastern Railway

During the 1920s, the Soviet victory in regaining majority control over the Chinese Eastern Railway had undermined the Open Door Policy. After World War II the USSR wanted once again to obtain majority control over the CER. At Yalta, Stalin convinced FDR and Winston Churchill to grant the USSR a "preeminent" position in Manchuria, emphasizing the CER's crucial role in traversing the region and linking to the naval base at Port Arthur and the nearby commercial port in Dairen. The term "preeminent" was widely understood to mean "in regard to other powers, not to China." But during his summer 1945 negotiations with T. V. Soong, Stalin insisted that Yalta's resolution giving the USSR "preeminent interests" along the Manchurian railways really meant greater than "China and other countries."[3] In fact, this interpretation exceeded the terms put forth by the Yalta agreement.

In regaining control over the Chinese Eastern Railway, the Soviet Union hoped to reset the clock on the terms of the lease. During Sino-Soviet talks held in July–August 1945, Stalin reminded Soong that the original railway contract was for 80 years, only to have Soong remind him that in: "1924 changed to 60 years." In response to Stalin's demand that the USSR resume its contract in full, Soong, speaking for Chiang Kai-shek, stated: "Chiang's views were 20–25 years for Port Arthur and railway," to which Stalin responded "Too short," and proposed a compromise of 40–45 years, after which the railway would return to full Chinese control. Stalin also made it clear that while operation of the Chinese Eastern Railway might be joint, the ownership would not: "Soviet Union first owner, then China will take over." In addition, the chief of the railway should be a Russian.[4]

Although the Yalta agreement guaranteed the internationalization of the port of Dairen in line with the principles of the Open Door Policy, Stalin made it clear to Soong that the administration of the port would be strictly between the Soviet Union and China. In fact, he actually wanted majority control of Dairen in Soviet hands, stating: "What's the use of Chinese Eastern Railway if we do not have certain rights in port?" Soong countered, however, by suggesting that "Dairen be administered by China and be an open port," to which Stalin replied: "Then there would be no need to make treaty."[5] For this reason, Stalin recommended using the 1898 Sino–Russian treaty as the basis of the new relations, advocating that it would be: "Best to take old treaty and improve."[6] Stalin's insistence that relations over Dairen be governed by the

1898 treaty was perhaps the clearest evidence that all previous Soviet declarations that it had abolished the former unequal treaties with China were false.

Negotiations were suspended on July 7, 1945, in order to give Dr. Soong time to communicate the situation to Chiang Kai-shek. By July 9, Soong had received Chiang's telegraphed reply, which emphasized that China's greatest task was to "secure administrative integrity and territorial sovereignty and real unity in China." With regards to the Chinese Eastern Railway, Chiang's telegram to Stalin and Molotov stated:[7]

> (1) Sovereignty and administrative integrity of Manchuria. Stalin has expressed his respect of this point for which we are very grateful. For common interest of China and Russia, China is ready to afford joint use of Port Arthur. Dairen declared an open port for period 20 years. As to administration of Port Arthur and Dairen this should go to China so that China has real sovereignty and administrative integrity in Manchuria. Chinese Eastern Railway and South Manchurian Railway main lines to be operated jointly by Soviet Union. Profits to be divided equally. Right of the Railways should belong to China. Branch lines, other enterprises not connected with exploitation of railways not included in joint administration. Period also 20 years.

This telegram proves that Chiang only agreed to joint Sino-Soviet control of the Chinese Eastern Railway, not total Soviet control.

The offer of twenty years did not satisfy Stalin, however, who immediately argued that the term of the lease should be at least 30 years, not 20: "Re terms for Port Arthur, Dairen and Railways, 20 years do not accommodate us. It's too little. We could accept 30 years. We cannot accept less than 30 years instead of 40. That would be the final solution." Stalin furthermore disputed Chiang Kai-shek's suggestion that Port Arthur and the railways should be controlled by China: "as regards Port Arthur administration is Russian. Someone should be master and command. As regards railway Chinese possession is not correct. Assumption that railway to be Chinese not correct. Russians built it."[8]

On July 10, 1945, Molotov made it clear for the first time that joint control of the Chinese Eastern Railway did not mean a 50–50 split. Based on the Yalta agreement's resolution that the Soviet Union was to have a

“preeminent” stake in the Chinese Eastern Railway, Molotov proposed that the Soviet Union have four members on the board of directors to China’s three. This prompted the following acrimonious exchange:[9]

ONG: If ownership 50–50 why should board of directors be 4 and 3.
LOTOV: Yalta spoke of preeminent point of Soviet Union. We conceded joint ownership you conceded us on this point. In 30 years you get railway.
ONG: We made concession 50–50. On this point real difficulty. In 1924 there were 5 + 5 directors.
LOTOV: There were conflicts all the time. You accepted Yalta agreement.
ONG: Preeminent in regard to other powers, not to China. You must be more fair to us.
LOTOV: Even 1924 provided for majority of Soviet. Urge you to accept.
ONG: Cannot accept.

The argument continued with Soong insisting that Molotov should be willing to compromise since, unlike the earlier Russian agreement, there was no clause specifying that China could redeem the railway ahead of the 30 year limit to the lease. Molotov acknowledged this fact, saying “We appreciate it,” but reiterated that Yalta gave the Soviet Union preeminent rights over the railway. Still, Soong insisted: “Yalta provides full sovereignty [for China]. But if commonly owned railway is dominated by foreigners there is no sovereignty.”[10]

Negotiations on this important point continued the next day, at which time Soong repeated that a 5+5 split on the CER board was necessary. Molotov quickly warned: “The board will not be able to carry on. They may be divided.” But, Soong retorted that the agreement had to be based on “good will and understanding.” Stalin then suggested that the chairman of the board should have the casting vote:

ALIN: Then chairman must have casting vote.
ONG: Who is to be chairman?
LOTOV: In our draft we have Soviet chairman.
ONG: Telegram of Chiang says “all administration must be Chinese.”
ALIN: This is not right.
ONG: These are my instructions: Chinese chairman and Chinese manager.
LOTOV: Impossible.

Negotiations were suspended until July 12, at which time Soong read a telegram from Chiang Kai-shek suggesting the following arrangement: “Railways. Chiang’s idea, Chairman should be Chinese. No casting vote. Only courtesy to China. Chinese chairmanship. Manager. Russian Manager for Chinese Eastern Railway, Chinese Assistant. South Manchurian Railway:

Chinese Manager, Soviet Assistant Manager. Chiang agrees to 30 years." As this proposal indicated, the Chinese chairman would have no real power, but would merely be a "courtesy to China."[11]

In other words, the Chinese chairman would only be a figurehead – as during the 1920s – whose sole purpose was to help China "save face." All real power would, once again, rest with the Russian manager of the CER. This method was adopted to cover up that the USSR's demands encroached on Chinese sovereignty in Manchuria, and in doing so violated the Open Door Policy.

What the Railway concession included

Once the management of the CER was determined, the discussion switched to defining the size of the railway concession. When negotiations resumed, it became clear that the Soviet Union's definition of "railway" actually included much more than the main railway line itself. For example, when discussing the coal mines which had formerly belonged to the Russian railway concession, Stalin argued for control over "enterprises essential to railways," since there "are enterprises without which Chinese Eastern Railway cannot subsist." Taking control over the Chinese Eastern Railway actually meant gaining much more than just the railway tracks – Stalin also wanted to obtain the subsidiary industries that had traditionally been connected with the railways in Manchuria.[12] This point was discussed further during the following day, when Molotov explained that the subsidiary industries included all: "Depot[s], factories, forests allotment." But, in addition, he implied that it would also be necessary to have control over the branch lines of the Chinese Eastern Railway as well, at least if they were linked to coal mines: "Coal formerly not sufficient. Therefore we suggested that Chinese government ensures supply of coal. Coal mines which we had formerly may have branch lines. Use of the branches is to be reserved." According to Soong, the Yalta agreement on the CER did not include subsidiaries and branch lines. When he asked if these would be used only for the railway, Molotov stated: "Yes, exclusively for railway." Soong telegraphed Chiang Kai-shek for his decision, and he agreed.[13]

Sharp disputes next arose over the administration of Port Arthur, the major military port in Manchuria. Molotov called for Port Arthur to be administered by the Soviet Union. To this, Soong replied that there seemed to be little

difference between the Soviet plan and the Imperial Russian lease of Port Arthur and so completely ignored the Soviet promise that Manchuria was fully under Chinese sovereignty. According to Molotov, however, for military reasons Port Arthur needed to be fully under Soviet control.[14] Soong grudgingly agreed.

The nearby commercial port of Dairen was a different matter. At Yalta, Stalin had requested an exclusive lease on the port city of Dairen, but "President Roosevelt declined to agree to Stalin's original proposal for a Soviet lease of the port of Dairen and insisted upon its internationalization as a commercial free port."[15] Now, the Soviet proposal was to have Dairen be a port for use of Soviet ships and commerce, with the administration of the city of Dairen split, half Chinese and half Soviet. In times of war, however, its administration would fall under Port Arthur.[16] Again, Soong agreed.

The resulting August 14, 1945 Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty put the USSR in a position to dominate most of Manchuria's littoral, since Port Arthur would become a Soviet concession area for thirty years, and in times of war the USSR would also administer the nearby civilian port of Dairen. A secret protocol signed on August 14, 1945 stated that the USSR would not only have predominant control over the Manchurian railways, therefore, but that the port of Dairen would "be leased free of charge to Russia."[17] This protocol gave the USSR special rights and privileges in Manchuria that violated the Open Door Policy.

As the Pacific War neared its end, Stalin quickly consolidated his gains in Manchuria by militarizing Port Arthur and taking administrative control over the nearby civilian port at Dairen. Beginning in August 1945, the Soviet Navy helped move tens of thousands of Communist troops into southern Manchuria by ship from Shandong Peninsula, which allowed them to reach this important region before the Nationalist troops. Soviet intervention in the Chinese Civil War also included supplying areas further to the South, where Communist forces were reportedly being aided by "Soviet ships from Dairen."[18] These Soviet actions practically insured that the Chinese Civil War would not end well for the Nationalists.

Post-World War II renewal of the Chinese Civil War

In the two previous wars fought in Manchuria – the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905 – a combined sea–

land strategy proved crucial to victory. Two lines of attack against Port Arthur by sea and central Manchuria by land allowed Japan to obtain victory not just once, but twice, first against China in 1895 and then second against Russia in 1905. Later, during the 1930s, the Japanese Navy assisted the Army's successful invasion of Manchuria, as well as blockaded the rest of China from 1937–1945.[19] From 1945–1949, the Soviet sea-denial strategy prevented the Nationalist Navy from orchestrating a joint sea–land invasion of Manchuria, and also helped deter the U.S. government from intervening in the war.

The Communists' victory against the Nationalists in 1949 was assisted by the USSR's unchallenged sea control over Dairen, Port Arthur, and along the Manchurian littoral. Without the Sino-Soviet naval coalition, the Communists might never have been able to take power in Manchuria, and from there spread southward to conquer all of China. Once in Manchuria, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) used the Soviet-controlled railways to move quickly into the major cities. In addition to assisting the Chinese Communists to spread throughout Manchuria, Soviet troops also made available weapons from Japanese arms dumps. Due mainly to Soviet control of sea and rail transportation, by fall of 1945 the "Communist armies, equipped from Japanese stockpiles and assisted by the Soviets, had already moved with surprising ease into the metropolitan centers of Shenyang, Changchun, and Harbin as well as smaller cities."[20]

When the Soviet Red Army began to withdraw from Manchuria during spring 1946, the Communists were left in control of many important cities. This strategic advantage would have been untenable, however, without the maritime protection afforded by the USSR's sea denial off the coast of Manchuria. Sea control meant that the Nationalist Navy could not land troops in Manchuria. It also made U.S. naval intervention too costly to be desirable either militarily or politically.

The Soviet government's continued administration of Dairen was linked to the terms of the Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty, which specified that in case of war the civilian port would fall under the control of the nearby military port at Port Arthur. Moscow claimed that without a signed peace treaty with Japan, Dairen fell under the military "administration of the Port Arthur naval base" and it "sees no basis for a change of the regime."[21] On August 29, 1947, Tass published a Soviet communiqué citing Article 4 of the Sino-Soviet Agreement: "in accordance with that agreement, Dairen during the

existence of a state of war with Japan falls under the regime which has been set up in the Naval base of Port Arthur. Inasmuch as the state of war with Japan is not terminated because there is as yet no peace treaty with Japan, naturally, the regime of the naval base continues to prevail over Dairen."[22] Meanwhile, Soviet ships were free to enter Dairen to deliver much-needed armaments, oil, and other supplies to the CCP.

The Nationalist government angrily denounced Moscow's interpretation of the treaty, stating that Dairen should fall under Port Arthur "only in event of war against Japan not as Tass alleges until a signature of peace treaty with Japan."[23] Nanjing argued these terms "had been conceived on the basis of two allies taking precautionary measures against the possible re-emergence of an aggressive Japan and not as means of fostering aggressive competition between them."[24] But Moscow stood firm behind its reading of the treaty terms: "This port for reasons independent of the Soviet Union has still not been opened for trade and navigation of all countries."[25]

Since the Soviet Navy cut off access to Port Arthur and Dairen, the Nationalist Navy tried to use the alternate port of Newchwang. The Chinese Nationalist Ambassador to the United Kingdom told Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin how the USSR was able to foil this plan: "When, however, the Chinese troops were already on the way, the Russians withdrew from Newchwang, which was thereupon occupied by [Chinese Communist] guerilla forces and the Russian authorities had notified the Chinese Government that they could not guarantee a safe arrival for the Chinese [Nationalist] troops."[26] Thus, by either denying Nationalist ships direct access, or by allowing selected ports to fall into Communist hands, the Soviets could effectively halt the flow of Nationalist troops by sea to many of the most strategic areas in Manchuria.

Soviet intervention in the Civil War proved to be crucial to the Nationalist defeat. During fall 1947, British observers in China, such as A. L. Scott, wrote of this quandary: "The Soviet Government will not permit Chinese troops to enter Dairen, and the Chinese Government say they [the Nationalists] cannot take over the administration of the port until that is conceded. Chinese occupation of Dairen would much strengthen their [the Nationalist's] position in Manchuria and this is not likely to be welcome to the Soviet Government … the situation is therefore at a deadlock."[27] As Chiang Kai-shek pointed out to British officials during May 1947, the Soviet position on Dairen was completely "dis-ingenuous."[28]

By late 1947, the Chinese Civil War focused on the resource-rich and highly industrialized region of Manchuria. The Soviet government had repeatedly denied access and use of Manchuria's main ports to the large Nationalist Navy, which by this point included hundreds of vessels, many of them given to China by the United States and Great Britain. From 1945–1948, the USSR fully fortified and administered Manchuria's premier ports, as well as the extensive railway networks that linked them with the interior. Proclaiming that the 1945 treaty forbade use of these ports for military purposes, therefore, Moscow refused to allow Nationalist ships landing rights.

The USSR's actions helped to determine the victor in the Chinese Civil War, since its control over Manchuria's port access helped tip the military balance in Manchuria in favor of the Communists. During April 1947, the Soviet Ambassador "went so far as to intimate verbally to the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs that a landing of Chinese troops at Dairen would be resisted." Since any Nationalist strategy to take Dairen by force would necessarily "involve joint land and naval action," the Soviet threat to defend this area risked a wider war.[29] To show their determination, 20,000 additional Chinese Communist troops were stationed in the area around Dairen. They were described as "completely supplied with Japanese weapons" while "some of their middle grade officers are Russian."[30] One U.S. War Department report stated that even if the Soviets left, the CCP had been given enough Japanese ammunition to last "for five years."[31]

By November 1948, the Civil War was going poorly for Chiang Kai-shek. The Nationalist government concluded that "the most fundamental factor in the general deterioration of the military situation [in Manchuria] was the nonobservance by the Soviet Union of the [August 1945] Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance."[32] The Soviet access denial policy was in direct violation of the Open Door Policy's principle of guaranteeing Chinese sovereignty in Manchuria. This deteriorating maritime situation in Manchuria also had a direct impact on the U.S. decision not to intervene in the Chinese Civil War, since no U.S. naval ships were permitted to land.

Soviet sea denial and the U.S. decision not to intervene in China

Following the end of World War II, the U.S. government was committed to helping the Nationalist government reunite China. In December 1946,

Washington signed an agreement with the Nationalists providing U.S. forces air terminal rights in Dairen and Mukden, and U.S. planes began to fly Nationalist troops into Manchuria.[33] But the number of Nationalist troops that could be delivered and supplied by air was small compared to what would have been possible by ship. U.S. ships attempting to transport Nationalist troops to Manchuria were repeatedly denied permission to dock and offload troops in Dairen. As a result, Nationalist troops had access to only a single train line from Beijing to Manchuria, which could be easily cut.

This situation severely limited the amount of assistance that U.S. naval forces could provide to the Nationalists.[34] Even before World War II ended, suggestions to establish U.S. naval bases in China were rejected due to rising nationalism: "The growing nationalism of China has made its people and government extremely sensitive to any actions or attitudes which might be considered as impairing China's sovereignty."[35] To fight the Communists effectively would have required a joint Nationalist land–sea campaign, aided by the U.S. Navy landing troops. However, on January 3, 1947 and then again on August 14, 1947, the U.S. State Department fruitlessly protested to the USSR that "although nearly two years have passed since the signature of the instrument of surrender by Japan, Dairen has not been reopened to world trade."[36]

According to a May 13, 1947 report by H. Merrell Benninghoff, Consul General at Dairen, Soviet forces were in complete control of Port Arthur and Dairen and this was unlikely to change:

> The Yalta Agreement and the Sino-Soviet Treaty have given Russia a strong position in the railroad, port, civil administration and exercise of police power even in Dairen as long as 'war with Japan' exists. This position is tantamount to extraterritoriality in the Naval Base Area … In any event, as long as Russia keeps a large garrison in the Area, controls the local administration and prevents the entry of Chinese troops or the effective exercise by China of police power, Chinese sovereignty within the Area will be purely nominal.[37]

Since the U.S. Navy could not leverage its maritime power without access to Manchurian ports like Port Arthur and Dairen, this factor undermined the possibility of U.S. intervention in the Chinese Civil War.

A second obstacle to U.S. intervention was Washington's renunciation in

1943 of its former treaty rights to send U.S. naval vessels into Chinese sovereign waters. To reacquire this right from the Nationalists might smack of imperialism. On February 20, 1948, Secretary of State George Marshall explained to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs that: “Strong Chinese sensibilities regarding infringement of China’s sovereignty … argues strongly against attempting any such [naval] solution.”[38] Therefore, when in December 1948 the U.S. Consul at Qingdao sent a memo to the Secretary of State Marshall discussing the final withdrawal of U.S. Naval forces from Qingdao, he specifically referred to the fact that the U.S. Navy had “no legal standing” in China while the Soviet naval forces occupying Port Arthur and Dairen were “legal.”[39] This Soviet advantage was due, of course, to its secret diplomacy with China.

Even if the Nationalists had managed against all odds to win control over most of the major cities in Manchuria, the U.S. government could not supply them adequately by means of the single railway line from Beijing or by air. Sea access was crucial to deliver military logistics. Without a dependable sea route linked to Manchuria’s railway there was no guarantee that the Nationalists could have ever consolidated full control over the territory they occupied in Manchuria. In this regard too, the loss of sea control and the logistical advantage it would have provided to the Nationalist-controlled areas in Manchuria proved vital.

Soviet assistance to the Chinese Communists during the Civil War took many forms, but sea denial was one of the most important. The maritime factor proved to be extremely important to the Communist victory in Manchuria. Soviet sea denial protected the Communists by stopping not only the Nationalist Navy, but also its ally the U.S. Navy:

> In short, the failure of the Chinese [Nationalist] Government thus far to take over Port Arthur and Dairen has been due to two factors: (1) The repeated refusal of the Soviet Government to agree to the stationing of Chinese troops in Port Arthur and Dairen and (2) the formation by the Chinese Communists of strongly armed forces in the vicinity of Port Arthur and Dairen to hinder the take-over of these regions by the Chinese Government, the existence of such armed forces having resulted from the first refusal in October 1945 of the Soviet Government to agree to the landing of [Nationalist] Chinese troops in Dairen.[40]

Needless to say, Stalin's actions contradicted his earlier promise to Harriman to uphold the Open Door Policy in Manchuria.

Conclusions

During the Chinese Civil War, which was initially fought mainly in Manchuria, Soviet intervention on the CCP's side ensured that it would not face a combined land–sea attack from the Nationalist Army and Navy. With sea access cut off by Soviet forces, the PLA gradually surrounded and destroyed the isolated Nationalist troops. Soviet control over the Manchurian ports on the Liaodong Peninsula effectively undercut the usefulness of the Nationalist Navy. As a result of this Soviet sea denial strategy, the Nationalists could never stage a two-prong land–sea attack against the Communist forces, which might have changed the course of the war.

While the USSR's exclusionist tactics were extremely successful during the late 1940s, and so worked to the advantage of the Chinese Communist Party, these tactics eventually contributed to undermining the USSR's relations with the CCP. In August 1948, British officials were already reporting that Russian officials in Dairen had begun to exclude not just Nationalist forces from the port facilities, but also "the armed forces of the Chinese Communists."[41] During the early 1950s, Stalin successfully retained control of Dairen and Port Arthur over Beijing's heated opposition. These strategic ports were only finally returned to Chinese control during the mid 1950s after Stalin's death.

The Soviet sea denial strategy in Manchuria defied all U.S. government attempts to uphold the Open Door Policy. As one specialist warned at the time: "In this struggle between the Open Door and the Iron Curtain, the critical sector today is Asia rather than Europe."[42] The U.S. government was so upset with Chiang Kai-shek that it refused to support him on Taiwan. Only with the beginning of the Korean conflict in 1950, did the United States send the Seventh Fleet into the Taiwan Strait to "neutralize" the area, and thereby halt any future PRC invasion of Taiwan. This naval force allowed the U.S. government to apply the Open Door Policy just to the Republic of China on Taiwan, even while adopting a strict maritime embargo against the PRC.

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The Open Door Policy in the era of the two Chinas

During late 1949, the Nationalist government relocated en masse to Taiwan, creating a divided China. While the Open Door Policy continued to apply to the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan, it was no longer applied to the People's Republic of China (PRC). It turned out that it was much easier to make the Open Door work with a small island, as versus an enormous continental country. From 1950 through 1979, and arguably until the mid 1990s and sporadically even to the present day, the U.S. Navy has defended the ROC's sovereignty and territorial integrity by sending ships to patrol the Taiwan Strait separating the PRC from Taiwan in order to ensure that the PLA could not invade and take the island by force.

In sharp contrast to its policy of continuing to apply the Open Door to Taiwan, the United States government imposed a strategic embargo against the PRC intended to cut Communist China off from international trade. After the beginning of the Korean War in June 1950, this strategic embargo was tightened further to put additional pressure on Beijing. On December 23, 1950, the U.S. Secretary of Commerce announced that "effectively immediately no vessel or aircraft registered under the laws of the United States shall enter Chinese Communist Port or any other place under control of Chinese Communists." In effect, "No cargoes shall be transported to such ports …"[1]

The U.S. embargo focused against the PRC applied pressure to break apart the Sino-Soviet alliance, and then after that occurred, to convince China to open relations with the United States. It was carried out at varied intensities over a period of twenty-one years through 1971. In line with this policy, the U.S. Navy vessels often cooperated with ships from the Nationalist Navy in enforcing the strategic embargo. Just as the PRC suffered under the embargo, Taiwan benefited enormously from U.S. grants and preferential trade. While the PRC's economy lagged, the Taiwanese economy prospered, eventually growing to the point where it entered the ranks of the developed nations.

The creation of two Chinas

The division of China into a Taiwan-based Republic of China and the mainland-based People's Republic of China was a direct outcome of World War II and the Chinese Civil War. Following their victory in Manchuria, Communist forces spread south into China proper. During the Huaihai Campaign, the largest battle of the Civil War involving well over one million combatants, Communist forces moved into Jiangsu and Anhui provinces. On December 15, 1948, after sixty-three days of fighting, the Communists took Xuzhou, opening the road south to the Yangzi River.[2] Although they lost North China, the Nationalists retained their traditional power base in South China. Many foreign commentators assumed that China would now be divided into a North and South, with the Yangzi River acting as the new boundary.

On February 25, 1949, the Nationalist flagship, *Chongqing*, mutinied, becoming another symbol of the waning Nationalist mandate to rule. By the end of April 1949, much of the rest of the Nationalist fleet guarding the Yangzi River also defected.[3]

The Nationalists could no longer halt a riverine invasion by the PLA. On April 20, 1949, Communist forces crossed the Yangzi River, overrunning Nanjing three days later. Thereafter, the PLA quickly consolidated control over all of mainland China, taking Shanghai and Wuhan in May, Xi'an and Changsha in August, Guangzhou in October, and the Nationalist wartime capital of Chongqing in November 1949. The PLA's rapid advance forced the remaining Nationalist units to retreat to Taiwan. In late September 1949, Mao Zedong assembled a new Political Consultative Conference that elected him chairman of the central government and once again made Beijing the capital. On October 1, 1949, Mao officially proclaimed the creation of the PRC.

While the Nationalists were forced to flee, they were not defeated. After relocating his government to Taipei, Chiang Kai-shek claimed that the ROC remained the legitimate government of all of China. The Nationalist retreat to Taiwan was a major maritime undertaking, during which the Nationalist Navy and other ships impressed into service transported approximately 2 million civilians and soldiers to Taiwan.[4] More importantly, the Nationalist Navy helped fortify and protect a large number of offshore islands, which were to become the first barrier defending Taiwan from an expected PRC

invasion. These military and political developments faced off the two competing Chinas across the Taiwan Strait, which made this roughly 80-mile wide stretch of water strategically important.

The U.S. government refused to take sides in the Chinese Civil War. However, following the beginning of the Korean War in June 1950, the Taiwan Patrol Force – created with ships from the U.S. Seventh Fleet – was used to "neutralize" the Taiwan Strait. The PRC condemned the U.S. neutralization policy as an aggressive action and demanded the Seventh Fleet's withdrawal. Beijing claimed the U.S. policy favored Taipei. But, according to British statistics covering the first nine months of 1950, the value of PRC imports from Hong Kong were 3.5 times imports during 1949. Therefore, prior to China's decision to intervene in Korea during November 1950 the U.S. neutralization plan actually stabilized cross-strait relations, which helped promote international trade with China.

At this stage, the U.S. government tried to apply its neutralization policy in an even-handed manner. As reported by British officials, this policy seemed to work. Anglo-Chinese trade was booming during most of 1950, since there was active trade between Hong Kong and the major PRC coastal ports, at first through a Nationalist naval blockade, but even more freely since "President Truman's declaration neutralizing Formosa."[5] This situation suddenly changed following the beginning of the Korean War, when the United States decided to tighten its strategic embargo of the PRC.

Tightening the strategic embargo

After the PLA's intervention in the Korean War, the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered adopting a total naval blockade against the PRC. But a U.S. naval blockade was politically infeasible due to the possible retaliation of the USSR, on the one hand, and to Hong Kong's sensitive strategic position, on the other hand. So instead of a blockade the U.S. government tightened its embargo on strategic goods. This policy was largely in line with a U.S.-sponsored strategic goods embargo, first adopted in January 1950, which listed a large number of goods into restricted Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (COCOM) I, II, and III categories. The fifteen-country COCOM group was composed of the United States, all of the NATO countries, minus Iceland, and then also Japan. This U.S. embargo lasted in varying degrees of intensity for twenty-one years, through June 1971.

To persuade other countries to conform to these proscriptions against China, Congress adopted the Mutual Defense Assistance Control Act of 1951. Commonly called the Battle Act, after its sponsor Congressman Laurie C. Battle, this legislation would terminate economic and military aid to countries that refused to cooperate with the control program.[6] During fall 1952, China Committee (CHINCOM) controls were instituted that were even tighter, embargoing industrial machinery, steel mill products, and metal of all types. Meanwhile, the U.S. embargo was also broadened to include more countries in COCOM and CHINCOM, such as Greece and Turkey in 1953, and bolstered by pledges of cooperation from Sweden and Switzerland, both important neutral countries.[7]

The U.S. Navy assisted the Nationalists in trying to prevent the movement of specific goods into the PRC. Although less effective than a full naval blockade, the U.S. government worked closely with the Nationalists to help enforce the strategic embargo. In early 1951 a Norwegian-owned ship, *Hoi Houw*, was reported to be carrying U.S.-made medicines and other manufactured to China.[8] When *Hoi Houw* failed to stop in Hong Kong, where it was expected to land, this ignited a widespread search for the ship. Four U.S. Navy destroyers and planes operated in the Taiwan Strait, and another three Nationalist destroyer escorts and planes patrolled east of Taiwan. When *Hoi Houw* passed 60 miles to the east of Taiwan, it was intercepted by the Nationalist Navy on February 11, 1951. Its cargo was impounded at Keelung, while the ship and crew were released on February 20, 1951.[9]

Royal Navy Commander M. E. Lashmore described the close cooperation between the Americans and the Nationalists: “There can be little doubt that the Americans were behind the seizure and whatever the cargo was, were determined to stop it reaching China. They were in the happy position of being able to get the Chinese Nationalists to do their work for them, and thus in theory being in no way connected with the incident.” Later, U.S. officials took their “ingenuous bluff” even further by asking authorities in Hong Kong for information on what was happening to *Hoi Houw* on Taiwan, “on the grounds that the U.S. authorities there did not know anything about her!”[10]

According to a report from the British Consul in Taiwan, when U.S. government officials were asked about the matter they said they could not “officially … approve the interception which contravened both International Law and the agreement between Nationalist China and America over the protection of Formosa, [but] they consider it most unlikely that they will be

instructed to make any protest as American public opinion obviously approves of the Nationalist action."[11] In fact, the U.S. Navy and the Nationalist Navy were actively cooperating to put extreme economic pressure on the PRC. Meanwhile, the U.S. government actively assisted the embattled Nationalists with political and economic aid.

Political and economic impact of U.S. aid

The Nationalists were well aware of the precariousness of their existence on Taiwan. The Open Door Policy helped to protect Taiwan's territorial integrity, even as it supported rapid economic growth by means of free trade. The Nationalist Party was urged by the U.S. government to create a hybrid government mixing elements of democracy with one-party rule, even while adopting a market-driven economy. To support this transition, between 1952 and 1960 approximately $100 million in U.S. economic aid were given to Taiwan each year.[12] In 1951 alone, U.S. government grants to Taiwan amounted to 10 percent of the island's entire Gross National Product (GNP).[13] One estimate of total U.S. funds transferred to Taiwan between 1950 and 1969 was $2.2 billion.[14]

The U.S. government played a major role in spurring Taiwan's economic growth. However, it was assumed that this U.S. support could not last forever. During 1953, the U.S. embassy in Taipei reported that the Nationalists had just adopted a four-year plan that sought to make the ROC economically independent of the United States by 1957.[15] This plan was highly ambitious. To promote rapid industrial development, the Nationalists focused on import substitution. By erecting a tariff wall to protect new industries, they could gradually substitute locally made consumer goods for imported ones. In line with Open Door principles, however, they also sought to develop export industries to profit from value-added processing of raw materials. Taiwan focused on the development of light industry and the production of consumer goods. It would not focus on heavy industry until the 1960s. These economic policies stood in stark contrast to the Soviet model for industrial development followed by mainland China, which emphasized developing heavy industry over light industry.

Learning from their many mistakes fighting the Chinese Communists, the Nationalist government on Taiwan successfully merged basic democratic principles and low government corruption with high economic growth rates.

For example, in 1948 the Nationalists started land reform in Taiwan by selling public land that had formerly belonged to Japanese landlords. By the early 1950s, the percentage of farmers on Taiwan owning their own land had grown from 25 to 35.[16] This Nationalist redistribution policy paralleled the highly successful Communist land practices on the mainland, but without fomenting class hatred or social turmoil.

The U.S. government's economic support had a dramatic impact on Taiwan. On May 3, 1951, E. H. Jacobs-Larkcom, the British Consul in Taiwan, reported on the positive benefits of this American aid: "The Americans have insisted on political and social reform – e.g. a measure of democratic self-government has been granted, and land rentals have been reduced to fair levels. In addition, American material aid really reaches the common people, and at fair prices. I think it may be stated, therefore, that what the bulk of the native population desire is a continuation of the present American colonial regime."[17] In March 1955, British observers remained impressed, positively concluding that the Nationalists were gradually bringing about a more democratic climate, although the government "is still a dictatorship, albeit a benevolent and – insofar as the President was elected and his emergency powers were approved by the National Assembly – a constitutional one."[18]

These years of extremely high economic growth in Taiwan corresponded with U.S. government grants and preferential trade. Taiwan's local standard of living was higher than most other Asian countries. While political rights in Taiwan were non-existent, the British consulate found no large-scale corruption, so the average person on Taiwan could "enjoy considerable freedom otherwise."[19] Eschewing a simple military solution to China's unification, Chiang Kai-shek prophetically told an Australian newspaper that Taiwan would focus on economic development: "We shall continue to build up Taiwan as an example of what free men can do."[20]

Not only did the United States protect Taiwan's territorial integrity under the auspices of the Open Door Policy, but it supported rapid economic growth. Because Taiwan was an island nation, this proved to be a much easier task for the U.S. Navy than protecting all of China would have been. By the mid 1980s, Taiwan's GNP was approximately half the PRC's, even though it had less than one-fiftieth of China's population. Taiwan was also well on its way to adopting a true democratic government. Meanwhile, political and economic relations between Beijing and Moscow were steadily

worsening, as the tightening strategic embargo against the PRC pushed the two closer together.

Breaking the Sino-Soviet alliance

Washington's long-term goal was to deny the PRC a wider range of trade partners, thereby forcing Beijing to rely more on its trade with the USSR. Over time, it was hoped that this would add additional friction to the already tense Sino-Soviet relations, which had taken a turn for the worse when it became clear to Mao during early 1950 that Outer Mongolia would not be handed back to China, nor would the USSR return its concessions in Manchuria. The best possible policy would be to allow Moscow to "demonstrate, if they could, that they were able to give a communist China the assistance she will need." Once Beijing realized that China's development was faltering, then "China would have to turn to us again and we might then be able to come back on terms which would suit us."[21]

Due in large measure to the U.S.-led economic embargo of China, the PRC's economic dependency on the USSR grew rapidly. By the mid 1950s, the PRC had signed over 100 trade treaties and agreements with the USSR and Eastern European countries, as compared to only 20–30 treaties with the rest of the world. A British report from February 1951 concluded that the U.S. sanctions program was quite effective, and had produced a great shock to the mainland Chinese economy.[22] The Swedish ambassador confirmed that the strategic embargo was having the desired effect, since international "shipping was the Achilles heel of China and that if the amount of shipping engaged in trade with China would be drastically reduced it would have a serious effect on the Chinese economy."[23]

While a confidential 1955 U.S. Navy report admitted that the strategic embargo was incomplete and that China in fact obtained many goods through triangular deals and transshipments, the overall success of the embargo was shown by the fact that higher costs had reduced the total amount of goods purchased.[24] On July 18, 1955, the U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong reported that Chinese officials were admitting that the U.S. embargo had slowed down their industrial program, causing a sudden loss of an estimated 75 percent of their foreign trade. Desperate, China was "forced to turn to the USSR as a source of supply and as their prime market, which resulted in highly adverse terms of trade and required an increase in the over-all volume

of trade in order to maintain the desired pace of industrialization."[25]

During March 1956, the British intelligence services gave the U.S. Navy credit for keeping the peace throughout the region, predicting the PRC would not invade Taiwan "as long as the Seventh Fleet remains in the area."[26] An equally important political goal was to reassure America's East Asian allies, including Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Australia, that the PRC could not invade the first island chain. The Japanese were especially worried about Chinese expansionism. During 1955, a Japanese official in Taipei clarified that it was the physical location of Taiwan, dominating the sea lanes from Japan to the south, that mattered most to Tokyo: "for the future the real problem of Taiwan was the strategic value of the island itself and the importance of keeping it from the Chinese Communists rather than the Chiang Kai-shek government."[27]

In 1950, Mao went to Moscow to beg for money. The PRC borrowed U.S. $300 million from the USSR, but this was insufficient to solve China's many economic problems. The PRC's fall 1950 intervention in the Korean War not only led to huge military losses but to even greater debts to the USSR since, to "add insult to injury," Stalin also demanded that China pay for all the Soviet military equipment sent to Korea.[28] Throughout the 1950s, Beijing fell progressively more in debt to Moscow. By the late 1950s China's debts to the USSR had grown to almost $2 billion, roughly equal to the U.S. government's economic aid to Taiwan between 1950 and 1969.

During August 1958, Mao initiated a new phase of the Great Leap Forward. Mao was forced to rely mainly on Soviet imports. To increase grain sales to pay for the Great Leap Forward, Beijing desperately needed to increase its maritime trade. Mao put pressure on Taiwan to give up its last offshore island bases.[29] By attacking Jinmen Island, Mao hoped to force the ten-year Nationalist blockade to end, which would help the PRC economy to prosper. Following the end of the Nationalist blockade, China's international maritime trade gradually began to recover. For example, during the years between 1957 and 1959, there was almost a doubling of imports from Britain and almost a tripling of imports from West Germany.[30] Mao began in 1959 to export millions of tons of grain, worth an estimated U.S. $935 million, largely to fund its foreign purchases.[31] Once the Sino-Soviet split occurred, there was a complete shift away from the Soviet Union towards the West beginning in August 1960.

The Nationalist blockade and the U.S. strategic embargo together were highly successful in furthering the Sino-Soviet rift. One Dutch official confirmed during 1957 that there had been a profound deterioration in the PRC's economic situation and in living conditions since he had arrived in China eighteen months before. This sharp decline could not help but create tensions between China and its Soviet advisors, and "the Russians he met while traveling in China were very frank about their contempt for the Chinese, their dislike of their assignments in China and their eagerness to return to the USSR as soon as possible."[32] Such feelings of distaste soon resulted in a split.

The Sino-Soviet split

When Mao visited Moscow in early 1950, Stalin refused to discuss Outer Mongolia's return to China and he insisted the USSR retain control over the CER plus Port Arthur and Dairen. The USSR proved to be no more friendly to its Communist allies when it came to China's sovereignty and territorial integrity than when the Nationalists were in charge. This "Red imperialist" policy exacerbated political tensions between Beijing and Moscow. After Stalin's death, the ports were returned to China beginning in 1953, but the final Soviet forces were evacuated from the Manchurian ports only in 1955, when control over the CER was finally turned over to China. This timing largely corresponded with Karakhan's September 1924 agreement signed with Zhang Zuolin.

By the late 1950s, political tensions between the PRC and the Soviet Union had worsened dramatically. During a face-to-face meeting with Mao in 1958, Nikita Khrushchev, in what proved to be a failed attempt to convince Mao of the value of retaining the floundering Sino-Soviet alliance, reminded Mao that the Chinese Communists might not have come to power without their sea denial strategy: "On the issue of Port Arthur … it was advantageous for you that the Soviet Army was in Port Arthur and Manchuria."[33] But Mao Zedong was tired of taking orders from Moscow. In order to try to begin to pay off China's enormous foreign debt to the USSR, Mao adopted radical economic policies, including the Great Leap Forward.[34]

Some historians have argued that the resulting Sino-Soviet rift took Washington by surprise, and that the U.S. government did not adopt policies to widen the rift.[35] But, others have confirmed that Dulles actively sought to

split the Chinese and Russians by driving them closer together.[36] Washington had to be careful this plan did not backfire. Eisenhower refused to even talk about Sino-Soviet tensions so as to avoid saying something that might undermine the development of the Sino-Soviet split.[37] In fact, the Sino-Soviet monolith's collapse in 1960 was fully in line with Washington's strategic objectives.

By 1960, the PRC was facing financial disaster as a result of the Great Leap Forward. As soon as the Sino-Soviet split became public, however, Beijing insisted on repaying its estimated billion-ruble-plus debt to the USSR. Mao's actions were reportedly a desperate attempt to break away from the USSR-dominated economic system.[38] Enormous Chinese grain exports in 1959 and 1960 helped fund these repayments. The end result of Mao's ill-conceived economic policies was a nationwide famine in China. About three-quarters of all famine-related deaths in China occurred during 1960, which corresponds with the highest grain exports.[39] Almost half a billion rubles were repaid to the USSR during 1960–1962, right as tens of millions of Chinese died during the famine. By ignoring the dire plight of the Chinese people, Beijing managed to repay its entire debt to Moscow ahead of schedule by 1965.[40]

As a result of the split, Sino-Soviet trade began to decline just as China's trade with the West began to grow. During 1961, the PRC finally began to import more grain than it exported. According to one view of the U.S. embargo:

> China's dependence on Soviet assistance inevitably created heavy economic burdens on Moscow and could slow down Soviet development, thus making the Moscow-Beijing alliance quite costly. On the other hand, Sino-Soviet economic leverage placed the Kremlin in a politically favorable position from which to dictate relations within the alliance and influence the CCP's domestic and foreign policies. This paradoxical situation turned out to be a major contributor to the collapse of the Soviet economic cooperation and the eventual deterioration of the alliance between the two Communist powers.[41]

The indirect and long-term effects of the U.S. strategic embargo produced tensions in Beijing's economic relations with Moscow. Before World War II, only 1 percent of China's foreign trade was with the USSR, while by 1957

this figure skyrocketed to over 50 percent.[42]

Beijing's overwhelming reliance on Moscow restricted China's economic options, thereby exacerbating friction within the international Communist movement. During the decade-long Cultural Revolution from 1966–1976, China's economy stagnated even while Taiwan's boomed. During the late 1960s, Sino-Soviet tensions erupted into open fighting along the Amur River to the north. There were even valid concerns that this conflict might grown into a nuclear war. These border conflicts helped prompt the PRC government's political decision to begin the process of opening diplomatic relations with the United States. Perceiving the USSR to be the greater threat, Washington proved eager to reciprocate.

Opening Sino-U.S. diplomatic relations

By the late 1960s, Sino-Soviet tensions had gone from bad to worse, including active fighting along their lengthy borders. Facing the threat of nuclear war with the USSR, in 1972 Mao invited President Richard Nixon to visit Beijing to begin opening Sino-U.S. diplomatic relations. Seven years later, on January 1, 1979, Jimmy Carter completed the gradual transition from Taiwan to the PRC by officially recognizing Beijing. Increased Sino-Soviet tensions during the late 1960s gave Washington a long-awaited opportunity to combine forces with China to exert greater military and economic pressure on the USSR.

As early as 1956, the British Embassy in China had speculated on the possible effect of rising Sino-Soviet tensions on improving Sino-U.S. relations. It concluded that any relaxation of PRC ties with the Soviets could lead to improved relations with the U.S. rather than with the UK. In support of this view, the paper cited the "traditional American friendship for China as opposed to the traditional British imperialist role in China."[43] The "traditional American friendship" referred to, of course, was the Open Door Policy.

Even though the Sino-Soviet monolith publicly split in 1960, U.S. leaders patiently waited until Sino-Soviet relations reached a crisis. Washington's policy was to force China to play by international rules. In March 1969 a series of border incidents along the Ussuri and Amur rivers pitted the Chinese PLA against the Soviet Red Army.[44] There were valid concerns that a Sino-Soviet conflict might even escalate into a nuclear war.[45] Although neither side was victorious, the 1969 clashes gave the PLA confidence that it could

counter the Red Army. This set the political stage for China's leaders to adopt a new foreign policy initiative by promoting the opening of diplomatic relations with the United States.

Beginning during February 1969, Henry Kissinger began to "explore possible rapprochement with China," and during June "certain trade controls against China were modified" allowing for expanded Sino-U.S. trade.[46] On August 4, 1969, during the height of the Sino-Soviet border conflict, the time seemed ripe. President Nixon made his intentions to Beijing clear when he called Moscow the main aggressor, and suggested that the PRC's defeat would not be in the best interests of the United States. This statement indicated a dramatic shift from the former U.S. policy of isolating China. Kissinger sent the PRC a potent signal when he ordered the suspension of the Seventh Fleet's regular patrols of the Taiwan Strait.[47] On November 15, 1969, a U.S. Navy order changed the Taiwan Strait Patrol "from a continuous patrol … to a random patrol composed of various combatant and auxiliary units."[48]

Changing the U.S. Navy patrols defending Taiwan was a highly visible sign that Washington was willing to open talks. In addition to making this message clear via unofficial discussions in Warsaw, the State Department made the same "pitch" to a Chinese official in Hong Kong, just to "make sure that Beijing gets the message."[49] So as to ensure that the PRC did not misunderstand what the U.S. intended, "Kissinger told Beijing, via Pakistani President Yahya Khan, that the basic U.S. commitment to Taiwan's defense remained unchanged." The termination of the patrols was intended more as a "gesture intended to remove an irritant in relations."[50] In fact, Kissinger's offer to end the patrol was intended more to give Beijing leaders "face," rather than reflecting any substantive change in U.S. policy.[51]

This diplomatic ploy proved to be highly successful, and in 1971 Henry Kissinger made a secret trip to Beijing in order to prepare for Nixon's historic visit the next year to meet with Mao Zedong. As a second concession to Beijing, the U.S. embargo on strategic goods, which had been adopted on December 8, 1950, was finally terminated on June 10, 1971.[52] During February 1971, Washington publicly reiterated that America's commitment to Taiwan's defense remained unchanged.[53] Intermittent naval patrols were still being conducted, but the new "Commander U.S. Taiwan Patrol Force is largely a planning function" whose job was to plan and provide "designated

forces as the Naval Component Commander of the Taiwan Defense Command, in the event that wide ranging hostilities break out between the Communist and Nationalist Chinese."[54]

Nixon's visit to China resulted in a rapid change in U.S. foreign policy. During Sino-U.S. meetings in 1972, the U.S. and China signed the Shanghai Communiqué. In this agreement, the United States acknowledged that there was only one China and that Taiwan was part of China. This led to the PRC obtaining Taiwan's seat at the United Nations. Nixon next visited Moscow, where he warned General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev that attacking China would adversely affect U.S. interests. Beginning in the mid 1970s, the U.S. and Chinese militaries began to work together against the Soviet Union. Increased military and naval cooperation enabled China and the United States to encircle the USSR on the East and the West, forcing higher rates of Soviet militarization than its woefully inefficient economy could support.

With Jimmy Carter's and Deng Xiaoping's January 1, 1979 mutual recognition, the United States' 1955 Mutual Defense Treaty with Taiwan was unilaterally terminated. This elicited an angry Nationalist statement on January 2, 1979.[55] During its almost thirty year history, the Taiwan Patrol had supported America's Asian alliances and coalition partners by making it more difficult for the PRC to invade Taiwan. While constant patrols were replaced with intermittent patrols in 1969, U.S. Navy vessels continued to transit the Taiwan Strait on a regular basis through the mid-to-late 1970s. The USS *Midway* was the last U.S. Navy aircraft carrier to visit Taiwan as part of the BLUESKY combined exercise on November 18, 1978.[56]

The Taiwan Patrol Force was terminated on January 1, 1979.[57] That a war never broke out between the PRC and Taiwan was due to the certainty of military intervention by the Seventh Fleet. Maintaining the military balance meant that the PRC and Taiwan's economic development became the most important measure of success. While U.S. Navy ships continued to steam through the region, it was economic factors – as advocated by the Open Door Policy – that were now considered to be more important. As such, Taiwan was well on its way to achieving an economic miracle.

Taiwan's economic miracle

The rapidly growing economies of Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, and South Korea collectively became known as Asia's Little Tigers. During the

1950s, real GNP growth in Taiwan exceeded 7 percent growth per year, while in the 1960s and 1970s it reached almost 10 percent. Taiwanese businesses were among the first in Asia to emphasize developing hi-tech industries and soon became third behind the U.S. and Japan in computer hardware manufacturing. In particular, Taiwan took advantage of the East Asian sea lanes passing by its shores to create a globalized domestic economy; its Evergreen Shipping Company soon became one of the largest container companies in the world. Today, by far the largest single sector in the economy is the service sector, which now makes up almost two-thirds of its GNP.

The Open Door Policy had an enormous impact on Taiwan's success. With U.S. assistance Taiwan took a completely different development path from the PRC. Taiwan was prosperous due to United States aid: its standard of living was higher than most other Asian countries. While political rights in Taiwan were negligible, the British consulate reported no large-scale corruption, so the average person on Taiwan "enjoyed considerable economic freedom."[58] U.S. support for Taiwan was absolutely crucial to its success.

Taiwan's GNP grew 72.7 percent between 1953 and 1961, which was an average increase of 7.1 percent per year, with a high of 8.4 percent in 1954. Even more importantly, Taiwan's industrial growth rates between 1953 and 1978 averaged 15.9 percent annually, with a 25.4 percent increase in 1978 alone. Without a doubt, Taiwan's enormous growth rates were made possible by the security provided by the U.S. Navy, backed up by a large infusion American economic aid and scientific expertise.[59]

Taiwan worked hard to adopt international law so as to be able to work efficiently in the global economy. Contract law under the jurisdiction of a duly appointed judiciary became standard. By contrast, the PRC did not reform its legal system until after its application in 1984 to join the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT), the predecessor organization to the World Trade Organization (WTO). It would take China fifteen years to implement the required legal reforms allowing it to become a full member of the WTO on November 10, 2001. Taiwan secured its membership one day later, but only because the PRC used its international influence to make sure that it was admitted first.

The most spectacular change in Taiwanese society was the rapidly growing prosperity of the general population, to the point where the International Monetary Fund reclassified Taiwan in 1997 as an advanced economy.

Although there are many rich people on Taiwan, fully half the population considers itself to be part of the middle class. In 2000, Taiwan's 22 million people had created a GNP over one-quarter that of the PRC with its 1.2 billion people. This translated into a GNP per capita in the ROC of $16,000 versus only $1,000 in China, putting Taiwan on a par with Spain. Even accounting for the greater purchasing power of $1,000 in the PRC than in Taiwan, the difference in standards of living remains dramatic. Taiwan's foreign exchange reserves became so large in the late 1980s (hitting $70 billion) that it approximated half the GNP of the PRC at that time. Some joked that Taiwan could soon buy back the PRC piece by piece.

American support for Taiwan was in line with the Open Door Policy. These economic policies proved highly effective, and became known as the Taiwanese economic miracle. A small island with few natural resources catapulted itself in two generations from poverty into the ranks of the most developed nations. The miracle was a hybrid of Han culture, primarily originating from South China and Fujian Province; Meiji Japanese agricultural and business models; technical expertise from U.S. higher education; and Nationalist Party leadership. Although the Nationalists lost the civil war, they won the peace, which put enormous pressure on the PRC to follow suit.

Deng Xiaoping's Open Door reforms

The PRC's economy had largely stagnated as a result of the Nationalist blockade, the U.S. strategic embargo, the Sino-Soviet split, and the chaotic decade of the Cultural Revolution. Meanwhile, the economic miracle in Taiwan showed what capitalism and foreign trade could accomplish. It was living proof that the Open Door Policy could work. This put enormous pressure on the PRC to change. To compete with Taiwan, Deng Xiaoping coupled Mao's foreign policy of Sino-American rapprochement with radical economic reforms. During August 1977, the Eleventh Party Congress adopted Deng's reform program, known as the Four Modernizations.

Under Deng Xiaoping, China's economy quickly shifted from heavy to light industry. In December 1978, the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Party announced that PRC would be "actively expanding economic co-operation on terms of equality and mutual benefit with other countries" and that to expand its economy would be "striving to

adopt the world's advanced technologies and equipment."[60] In 1979, enterprises were allowed to retain a portion of their profits to fund wage incentives, while from 1979–1981 state procurement prices for agriculture continued to rise.

Deng oversaw the dismantling over a five-year period of the commune system. Individual families once again became responsible for agricultural production. The decollectivization of agriculture from 1978–1984 created an unusual one-time improvement in agricultural productivity. Crop and livestock production increased by 49 percent, lifting at least 100 million Chinese out of poverty. Rural poverty fell from 33 percent to 11 percent of the rural population during 1978 and 1984. In 1985, the government relaxed its procurement rules to introduce contract purchasing, creating a mix of state and market prices for agriculture. Households rented land with the obligation to sell a proportion of the crop output to the state but could dispose of any surplus as they saw fit. This led to the appearance of private markets. Eventually land was once again assigned to families and became inheritable. This helped make possible the capital accumulation necessary for further economic growth.

In industry, Deng introduced the Industrial Responsibility System, allowing companies to retain a percentage of profits to reinvest at their own discretion. Plant managers could hire, fire, and set wages and prices within certain ranges. By 1984 only 30–40 percent of industrial production remained under central planning, while 20 percent was entirely market driven. The rest was under some degree of central control: "The market system did not replace central planning but was grafted on to it, and was the complement of the open door policy."[61] As a result of these reforms, China experienced double-digit industrial growth rates and urban wages increased.

The opening of Special Economic Zones made this growth rate even higher. One of the most vilified aspects of the foreign domination of China in the nineteenth century had been the treaty port system. In 1980, China opened four Special Economic Zones to experiment with market-oriented reforms and to attract foreign investment. These zones were placed next to overseas Chinese communities: (1) in Shenzhen on the border with Hong Kong; (2) in Zhuhai outside of Macao; (3) in Xiamen located in Fujian the native province for many Taiwanese; and (4) in Shantou the native place of many other overseas Chinese. These locations maximized connections with the vast Chinese Diaspora, while the regulations administering the zones

were intended to attract Western and Japanese investment. Tax exemptions, low wages, the freedom to hire and fire, and the prospect of joint Sino-foreign company ownership, distinguished these zones from the rest of China.

Likewise, 14 coastal cities were opened to foreign commerce. To Communist ideologues and the Stalinists, many of these changes smacked of the treaty port era: "By the standard of Stalinist economies, China has taken giant strides in institutional reforms in order to open its door."[62] But to many in the West, it seemed that China was merely taking up where it had left off in the late 1920s and early 1930s by once again relying on the Open Door Policy. By the end of 1993, when the government prohibited the creation of additional Special Economic Zones, there were 9,000 of them. By then, land and labor prices in the zones were not always competitive with those outside so that there was increasing foreign investments in the PRC's regular economy.

The Special Economic Zones provided a filter for the introduction of more market-oriented economic policies. Successful practices were then spread nationwide. The innovation proved breathtakingly successful. On the eve of the reforms, foreign trade had accounted for 13 percent of the Chinese GDP, while in terms of international trade, China ranked thirty-second in the world. Two decades later in the late 1990s, trade had grown almost three times to 38 percent of the GDP. On average, exports increased at an annual rate of 16 percent while imports grew by just over 15 percent.[63] China ranked tenth in international trade and possessed one of the world's largest merchant marines to deliver its bounty throughout the globe.

In just two decades China's foreign trade had grown over ten times. Its Gross National Product (GNP) rose 259.30 percent from 1977–1989.[64] The southern coastal provinces – near Hong Kong and across the strait from Taiwan – led the way, with Guangdong Province achieving a 12.3 percent annual growth rate during this decade.[65] China was no longer exporting just natural resources, but manufactured goods. China also attracted enormous foreign investments. In the late 1990s China absorbed 40 percent of the foreign investments made in all developing countries. Sino-foreign ventures accounted for half of China's imports and one-third of its exports. About two-thirds of this investment came from overseas Chinese, mainly from Hong Kong and Taiwan.

To train professionals necessary to run a modern economy, for the first

time since the 1930s China sent thousands of students to study abroad. During an interview with CCTV, former president Jimmy Carter explained how he was woken up one night by an "emergency" call from the U.S. embassy in Beijing asking whether the United States would accept 10,000 students from the PRC; irritated at being woken up, Carter retorted: "Send 100,000!" Within a year, 100,000 Chinese students, including many children of China's civil and military leadership, were studying in the United States.[66]

Deng also sought to reduce tensions with the West. On January 11, 1982, he made clear that the One Country, Two Systems doctrine applied equally to Hong Kong and Taiwan, thus keeping tensions with Taiwan low. His main legacies would be foreign policy continuity with the realignment of Mao's final years, the abandonment of Mao's ideological bent in domestic policy, an emphasis on technical expertise, and the market-oriented economic reforms that lifted millions of Chinese from poverty. In many ways, Deng's reforms followed in the footsteps of the economic model provided by Taiwan. The success of this model was made possible by the Open Door Policy.

Conclusions

Even while upholding Open Door Policy principles with Taiwan, the United States worked hard to bring the PRC into the community of nations. The combination of a ten-year Nationalist naval blockade plus the twenty--one-year-long U.S. strategic embargo limited the PRC's foreign maritime trade, which forced Beijing to rely more heavily on the USSR, both as a trade partner and a conduit – by way of the Trans-Siberian Railway – with other trade partners in Eastern Europe. Over time, China's economic overreliance on the USSR exacerbated underlying political tensions that eventually resulted in the collapse of the Sino-Soviet monolith. The 1960 split met with Washington's expectations: forcing the two Communist countries to work together meant that increasingly bitter tensions eventually ripped them apart. The U.S. goal of using an economic weapon to break up the Sino-Soviet alliance was achieved, even while Taiwan was well on its ways to creating its own economic miracle.

The PRC's huge growth rates since the adoption of the open door in the early 1980s largely replicated Taiwan's earlier experience during 1950–1978. The PRC's economic reforms focused on five key elements, including (1) technology transfer from the West; (2) expanding exports; (3) foreign

finance; (4) focus on the energy sector; and (5) developing the coastal region first.[67] Unlike the USSR, which collapsed in 1991 after attempting to adopt political reforms prior to economic ones, the PRC's communist structure was "less institutionalized and more decentralized," thus making economic reform easier to accomplish.[68] Likewise, the "adoption of both the market mechanism and open door policies has meant more freedom to make decisions at lower levels in industry and agriculture."[69]

Although the PRC's economic growth has been dramatic, China's 2 percent share of world trade in 1992 had yet to match its peak in the 1930s. Furthermore, as a percentage of global wealth China is still only about halfway back to where Qing China stood in the early nineteenth century. According to one economic analysis, in 1820 China's share constituted an estimated 33 percent of global GDP, as versus 11 percent in 1900, and only 4.6 percent in 1950.[70] During the early 1990s, therefore, Nicholas R. Lardy, a professor of the Chinese economy at Washington University, cautioned: "Even at [China's present] much higher levels of total world trade, China's share of total world trade is lower than in the 1930s … What we are seeing is a recovery."[71] This restoration corresponded with the end of the sixty-year gap when the Open Door Policy was not being enforced.

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Conclusions

A reassessment of the Open Door Policy's impact on China

The Open Door Policy attempted to safeguard China's territorial integrity, even while giving it a chance to adopt much-needed Westernizing reforms. As one observer of these Asian events warned, only Japan had so far made this modernizing transition successfully, and that: "The inevitable doom of those who cannot or will not come into the new world system is that they must perish."[1] But there is a widespread misunderstanding that the United States signed treaties in 1899 and 1900 to protect China, when in fact: "The United States has signed no treaty guaranteeing the integrity of China and the principle of the 'Open Door.'"[2] Two decades later, soon after the 1921 creation of the Chinese Communist Party, Washington did attempt to adopt a mutual security system for East Asia by means of the Nine Power Treaty. But this security system failed, largely because it was based on the false assumption that all of the major powers would refrain from interfering in China's domestic affairs. The USSR and Japan proved to be the main exceptions.

As this work has shown, Great Power interference in China's internal affairs continued unchanged, only this time in secret, with the secret treaties once again dividing northern China into Soviet and Japanese spheres of interest. Soon after the overthrow of Imperial Russia and the October Revolution, the Soviet government showed that it was unwilling to abide by the Open Door Policy. One of the first sign that Moscow had adopted an expansionist foreign policy into China's periphery was the 1921 Red Army invasion of Outer Mongolia, which once again became a Russian protectorate. Attempts to turn northern Manchuria into an exclusive Soviet sphere of interest also met with success, as the USSR used secret diplomacy to regain majority control over the Chinese Eastern Railway in 1924. In

addition, because the checks and balances by which Great Britain had formerly deterred Japanese expansionism disappeared, Tokyo's opportunity to increase its sphere of interest in China was also greatly enhanced. The reemergence of the Russo-Japanese struggle to partition China ultimately undermined the Open Door Policy.

Although on the surface contradictory, the Soviet government's apparent ambivalence towards the Open Door Policy after the October Revolution and during the early 1920s can largely be explained by its dual policy in Siberia and China. Whenever the Bolsheviks were threatened by Japanese expansionism, they turned to Washington for protection under the Open Door Policy and the U.S. government repeatedly gratified Moscow's desire. But, whenever the Open Door Policy interfered with the Bolsheviks' attempts to expand their influence into China's traditional borderlands, such as in Outer Mongolia and Manchuria, then Moscow was quick to criticize the Open Door Policy as a capitalist tool supporting the economic exploitation of China.

The two sides of Moscow's dual policy in fact promoted the same goal: the preservation and expansion of the Soviet sphere of interest in the Far East. Rapid shifts between secretly supporting and publicly denouncing the Open Door Policy proved to be a reoccuring theme in the Bolsheviks' foreign policy in the Far East. While Soviet propaganda first began to criticize the Open Door Policy in 1919, claiming that underdeveloped countries like China were being exploited by the capitalist powers under the guise of the Open Door, archival documents prove that Trotsky turned to the U.S. government on at least three different occasions, both before and after 1919, to pressure Japan into withdrawing troops from Siberia. Furthermore, with the formation of the Far Eastern Republic in 1920, Washington supported this Soviet puppet state and offered similar territorial guarantees until its formal incorporation into the USSR in 1922.

During 1919, the Bolsheviks turned to Asia in order to further their goal of undermining capitalism and spreading revolution in the Far East. Because of the Soviet Union's later defeat when the Nationalists purged the Chinese Communists in 1927, the importance of this early turn toward Asia has been largely written out of Soviet history.[3] But during the years following the October Revolution, military and political developments in Europe undermined all attempts to promote revolution there. This meant that any immediate expansion of the October revolution would have to take place in Asia. The Comintern's official journal the *Communist International* later

defined these early years as a preparatory period for colonial revolutions, since it was during this period that new propaganda and tactics were developed in China.[4] The USSR's criticism of the Open Door Policy as a tool of economic imperialism was one such tactic.

The Soviet propaganda quickly began to bear fruit in China due to widespread disappointment with the Versailles Peace Treaty. In 1920, Rodney Gilbert reported from China that a great many "are now convinced that something as terrible as Bolshevism in its early manifestations is imminent … We have done nothing for them … a change of policy, even if it came, would come too late to avert trouble."[5] Two years later, in April 1922, George Sokolsky accurately predicted that China's troubles would continue until the time that it underwent fundamental reform:

> After giving as much thought and energy to this country as I have I see no way out of the present situation except in a fundamental revolution which can only come after the Chinese people have suffered to a much greater extent than they are now suffering. Until there is a fundamental revolution, until the peasant and laborers and intellectuals get together and make a stand against the militarists and officials and destroy them through fighting, the present situation will continue indefinitely.[6]

But all of the Soviet criticisms of the Open Door Policy were disingenuous. Only after the Comintern's propaganda helped undermine and destroy the Open Door was Moscow free to expand its sphere of interest into Outer Mongolia, Manchuria, and eventually the rest of China. Although the Bolsheviks undoubtedly thought that they alone would profit from this action, it was Japan that actually gained the most in the struggle to divide China. After sponsoring the formation of Manchukuo in 1932, Tokyo even justified its 1937 invasion into eastern and central China as necessary to oppose Moscow's parallel efforts further west. Only with the United States' entry into World War II were Japan's gains in China reversed.

As World War II was ending, the U.S. government tried yet again to enforce the Open Door Policy in China. Stalin promised his support. Although American companies hoped to profit from trade with China, the Open Door Policy was not just concerned with trade. As one firm advocate argued at this time, there were three goals this policy hoped to attain: (1) "it is only by all nations observing the Open Door that the markets, the raw

materials and the finished products of each nation can be pooled and made available on a fair basis to mankind as a whole;" (2) "the Open Door promotes the well-being of any nation, especially of a backward nation, by making it possible for foreign enterprises to participate on equal terms in its economic development;" and, in particular, (3) "where conditions of equality of commercial opportunity do not exist, where some nations are denied access to markets which are open to others or where any nation enjoys privileges denied to others, there one will find international friction and ill-will and perhaps the seeds of war."[7]

By supporting spheres of interest over the Open Door Policy, the Soviet government helped precipitate the Cold War. In fact, rather than helping China, the USSR's campaign to discredit the Open Door Policy ushered in a period of unprecedented human suffering in Chinese history. With the destruction of this policy, China lost all protection from foreign invasion and domination. By equating the Open Door with the evils of capitalist exploitation, Soviet propaganda convinced many Chinese to turn away from capitalist development and to support China's development along socialist lines instead. It has been estimated that between 1900 and 1928, years when the Open Door Policy was largely being respected, a total of 737,000 Chinese people died in the turmoil associated with the end of the Qing dynasty, warlordism, and the Republican governments. This average of 26,000 deaths per year pales by comparison to the average 2 million casualties per year from 1928 through until 1987, when an estimated 115,000,000 Chinese people died in the middle of China's political, economic, and military turmoil.[8] This huge increase was to a significant degree a result of the Soviet Union's and Japan's struggle to enlarge their respective spheres of interest in China.

Although it took more than twenty years for the USSR to sponsor a Communist revolution in China, with that victory in 1949 China finally set out on the socialist path. The Soviet ideology of global domination continued along lines similar to spheres of interest. Andrei Zhdanov repeated the "two camp" thesis during 1947, and Khrushchev threatened to bury capitalism by preaching the "victory of socialism over capitalism."[9] Following the Sino-Soviet split and the Sino-American rapprochement, however, China largely resumed its economic development along capitalist not socialist lines.

Books published in the early 1970s proclaiming the failure of the Open Door must be reevaluated in light of China's subsequent economic reforms.

[10]Almost sixty years after what appeared to be the final destruction of the Open Door Policy, China of its own accord returned to capitalism. In 1978, Deng Xiaoping revived and promoted the Four Modernizations program, which included opening China to the West. Travel to and from China by Chinese and foreigners alike became far more common than at any time since the Japanese occupation. Thousands of Chinese students began to study overseas, many of them in the United States. China's economy began to boom for the first time since the Qing dynasty.

Economic reforms were more important to the PRC than political reforms. Deng Xiaoping, like Chiang Kai-shek had done earlier in Taiwan, rejected political liberalization. While he initially decided to move his economic reform program forward, he rejected the popular demands for democracy. In March 1979, after a successful trip to the United States normalizing relations and the end of the Sino-Vietnamese War, Deng rapidly suppressed the Democracy Wall movement, removing the posters and silencing their authors. In September 1980, he even had the constitution amended to revoke the right to display big-character posters.

Deng may have been correct. Only a decade later in the USSR, President Mikhail Gorbachev's call for *glasnost* (openness) would end in the collapse of the Soviet government. Unlike Deng's economic reforms, Gorbachev soon lost control over the political reform movement, which moved rapidly in unintended directions. In 1989, the Berlin Wall fell and, in a reverse domino effect, a cascade of Communist governments in Eastern Europe broke away from Moscow. In the early 1990s, the Russian economy collapsed, the Communist Party fell from power, and in 1991 the Soviet Union disintegrated. The Cold War ended on Western, not Soviet, terms. Thus, Gorbachev's reform movement, which emphasized political openness rather than economic growth, fatally compromised Communist rule and also precipitated the collapse of the Soviet economy.

Communist leaders in China watched Gorbachev's reforms with concern. Deng's economic reforms gave Chinese citizens a wide variety of economic freedom but little corresponding political freedom. Students, starting in Beijing in 1989, spearheaded demonstrations throughout China. They brought to their government's attention the flaws in its administration, which precipitated a government crackdown resulting in the Tiananmen massacre on the night of June 3. According to Chinese government accounts no one died. Unofficial early estimates reported 4,000 dead and 6,500 wounded,

while Russian sources reported 10,000 deaths.[11]

As a result of the government crackdown, China's autocratic rule has tightened over the years, rather than loosened, even while China's yearly economic growth rates of around 8 percent have continued to be robust. At the time of writing China is set to become the largest economy in the world. Without a doubt, China's modern political history would have been very different if the Open Door Policy policies promoted by the United States during the 1920s had continued unhindered. Millions of innocent Chinese might not have perished as a result of wars, famines, and domestic repression, and China's economy might have grown consistently from year to year, rather than endured the chaotic ups and downs that were highly detrimental to all Chinese.

Beginning with Deng Xiaoping, China has finally abandoned the economic foundations on which Communist theory and politics were based in favor of the Open Door Policy. Free market economic relations are now common. The tide has turned. During April 2012, for example, Marek Szostak, an official with the Polish Information and Foreign Investment Agency, assured China: "We have open-door policies to attract capital, whether it's from the West or East."[12] Negotiations between the PRC and Taiwan have also been described in these terms, as the Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou's efforts to lower tension in the Taiwan Strait were lauded as visionary: "such open-door engagements are wise tactics to safeguard our overall national interests."[13]

The history of the Open Door Policy has been highly controversial. For many years it was condemned by critics as little better than a candy-coated version of imperialism. As a result, this policy's inherent safeguards for China's sovereignty and territorial integrity were largely ignored. Even during almost sixty years when the Open Door was imperiled, the U.S. government continued to support it as the best chance for Chinese development. Deng Xiaoping's reforms in the 1980s have even been referred to as China's new "Open Door." Now that the PRC has embraced market reforms, encouraged foreign investment, and promoted capitalist growth, critiques of the Open Door must be reevaluated in light of evidence suggesting the hitherto underestimated role of the Open Door Policy in protecting China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

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Index