

The London School of Economics and Political Science

British Opinion and Policy towards China, 1922-1927

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Declaration

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Abstract

Public opinion in Britain influenced the government's policy of retreat in response to Chinese nationalism in the 1920s. The foreigners' rights to live, preach, work and trade in China extracted by the 'unequal treaties' in the nineteenth century were challenged by an increasingly powerful nationalist movement, led by the Kuomintang, which was bolstered by Soviet support. The Chinese began a major attack on British interests in June 1925 in South China and continued the attack as the Kuomintang marched upward to the Yangtze River, where much of British trade was centred. Policymakers in Britain struggled to come up with a workable policy that could meet the new challenge of Chinese nationalism and satisfy its own interests in East Asia. The result was a complete renunciation of the traditional gunboat policy for a policy of friendship and conciliation. Why then did Britain begin its retreat from China? Why, in the face of the contrasting forces of Chinese nationalism and strong opposition from the British community in China, did Britain decide to relinquish its traditional treaty rights? Political, strategic and economic issues determined, to an extent, Britain's China policy, but historians have neglected to see the vital influence of domestic opinion in Britain and to take into account the cultural context within which policy was made. In a time when mass audiences read the news and actively engaged in debates over policy, policy needed not only to be pragmatic and profitable, but also persuasive. An entire section of British thought about China has been neglected in the existing literature. This thesis argues that the confluence of liberal, Labour, business, pacifist and missionary opinion in Britain after the First World War and the victory of its narrative of China provided critical support for a policy of imperial retreat from China.

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List of Abbreviations and Note on Romanisation

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CIB	Chinese Information Bureau
CIM	China Inland Mission
CMS	Church Missionary Society
FO	Foreign Office
HSBC	Hongkong Shanghai Banking Corporation
HMG	His Majesty's Government
IG	Inspector-General of the Chinese Maritime Customs
KMT	Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party)
ILP	Independent Labour Party
IPR	Institute of Pacific Relations
LMS	London Missionary Society
NCC	National Christian Council
<i>NCDN</i>	North China Daily News
Shaforce	Shanghai Defence Force
SMC	Shanghai Municipal Council
TUC	Trades Union Congress
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

For this thesis, I have chosen to follow the Wade-Giles romanisation system rather than using the *pinyin* system for the sake of consistency, since the primary sources consulted usually followed Wade-Giles. Of course, usage of this system was not always consistent or correct. I have tried to minimise and will note specific discrepancies.

Introduction

The cataclysm of the First World War shook Britain's confidence in its past. Millions of young men, representing the hope and future of the country had perished in the four years of incessant, violent slaughter. The past achievements of empire and global power faded out of view due to the waste and destruction that lay in the war's wake. The celebrated legacy of Britain and of Europe was increasingly called into question. Europe was weary, angry and bitter, and as citizens and leaders sought to rebuild, they increasingly rejected the past in favour of a modern vision of peaceful and prosperous co-existence.

Outside of the West, however, potent, organised nationalisms of the Rest sprung forth with alacrity and fresh zeal after the war. Building upon several decades of nationalist organisation, the Wafd party in Egypt, the 'Young Turks' and 'Young China' lay claim to their right to self-determination, opposing European and especially British infringement of their sovereignty.¹ The interwar period was a time of changing power relations and contesting narratives within both the British Empire and its 'informal' Empire.

In China, particularly, the rise of the Kuomintang in the 1920s forced the British to reconsider what kind of people the Chinese were. Since the Renaissance, the West had seen itself as the birthplace of ideas and invention; the West was progressive, moving forward. China, in contrast, had usually been seen as ancient, conservative and unchanging—the embodiment of oldness.² But after the devastation of the First World War and with Chinese nationalism's rising challenge to established Western structures it seemed as if the tables had been turned. Old Europe was gone, but was a new China really rising? Was the ancient 'sleeping giant' finally rousing itself from its centuries-long stupor? The challenge that Chinese nationalism posed to established British interests raised the issue of whether a form of Chinese modernity had now arrived, of whether the nationalist movement co-opted by the KMT constituted 'a fundamental break from earlier civilizational formations'.³ Was Chinese nationalism an authentic manifestation of a modern impulse or was it a Western import conveniently tacked onto a traditional xenophobia? The uncertainty about China's future created a wide space for debate among the British interested in China and their debates became a full, varied

source of assumptions, stereotypes, images and attitudes that would form the context within which Britain's foreign policy towards China was made.

Past histories have not placed the story of Sino-British relations within an explicit understanding of the cultural and ideological shifts taking place in the interwar period. Political, strategic and economic factors have usually been seen as the main determinants of Britain's policy towards China. However, foreign policy was also derived from cultural understandings of China. Racially-based assumptions and stereotypes had always accompanied discussions of China and informed the policymaking process and in the 1920s, the narratives about China that policymakers chose to believe influenced the concrete decisions that they took about Britain's future in China. The narratives chosen were not necessarily accurate, but they were usually convenient. The 1920s thus saw the affirmation and escalation of a policy of relinquishing concessions in China, motivated in large part by the challenge of organised Chinese nationalism and reinforced by the opinions of a war-weary British public. The experience of the First World War had undermined British confidence in the imperial enterprise, cast doubt on the wisdom of a gunboat policy and increased the divide between policymakers and the traditional China lobby. At the same time, a new confluence of liberal, Labour, pacifist and missionary opinion in Britain would provide a favourable domestic context for the implementation of an official policy of imperial retreat.

SINO-BRITISH RELATIONS IN THE 1920s

The British presence in China in the 1920s centred on the treaty-ports along the coast and the Yangtse, although a number of missionaries also ventured inland to preach among the Chinese. Trade had been the government's priority since the beginning of Sino-British relations in the early seventeenth century, when the English East India Company began to trade with Chinese merchants, and trade was the motivation behind the construction of the treaty system through warfare in the middle of the nineteenth century. The opening of the treaty-ports and the most-favoured-nation clause (which gave foreign powers trading equality) had been extracted from China in the treaties signed after the First and Second Opium Wars, which the Chinese labelled the 'unequal treaties'. These treaties also saw the Chinese losing tariff autonomy and being forced to grant foreigners extraterritoriality (immunity from Chinese law, making them

answerable only to their own courts). Throughout the disintegration of the Ch'ing Empire, the revolution of 1911 and its descent into warlordism, the British, along with other Europeans and Americans, continued to live, preach, work and trade in China according to their special privileges. Britain was only one of several Powers who operated the treaty-port system and benefitted economically from China's weakness, but until the interwar period, Britain was considered the leader of the informal imperialists by the other Powers, the Chinese and themselves. British leaders had no ambitions to make China into another India and were content with the structure of their 'informal empire'⁴ in China. Yet, as Gallagher and Robinson have pointed out, 'Refusals to annex are no proof of reluctance to control.'⁵ Empire in China was informal, motivated by trade and finance, and British residency was limited mostly to the foreign enclaves in special areas, but Britain's political will was constantly being imposed upon an unwilling China.⁶

China's unwillingness to continue a system which compromised its sovereignty was openly manifested in the nationalist movement that engulfed the country from the end of the Ch'ing and in the beginning decades of the Republic. Despite the turmoil and chaos prevailing throughout the country, Chinese nationalism became a potent unifying force in the warlord era. In 1919 intellectual ferment, student activism and economic protest combined in the nationalist May Fourth Movement. Angered by the decision at Versailles to give the German concession in Shantung to the Japanese, intellectuals and students joined with merchants and labour unions to protest the decision, in a large nationwide demonstration, strike and boycott movement.⁷ The movement revealed that nationalism in China had powerful political and organisational capabilities. The question of Shantung was finally addressed by the Powers in 1921-1922 at the Washington Conference, when Japan agreed to hand back Shantung to the Chinese. The Powers further promised to uphold the Open Door policy in China and to preserve Chinese territorial sovereignty, addressing issues of tariffs and extraterritoriality in the medium-term. Although the Washington Conference seemed to herald a new era of co-operation and conciliation in East Asia, the lofty rhetoric did not match the existing realities. Most foreigners continued to live in their closed societies immune to Chinese rule-of-law and continued to set their own tariff rates. The Chinese further resented British dominance of the Chinese Maritime Customs and the Salt Gabelle (although they remained Chinese state agencies). The twin cries of the Chinese nationalists,

‘Down with imperialism!’ and ‘Long live the liberation of the Chinese nation!’ thus resonated through the entire decade.⁸

Nationalism’s target was, first of all, the imperialists who had robbed China of its sovereignty. Of these imperial powers, Britain was the most powerful and preeminent. Indeed, Chinese revolutionaries continued to call the British, the ‘greatest enemies of the Chinese national liberation movement’⁹ throughout the 1920s. It was therefore only a matter of time before the contrary forces of imperialism and nationalism would clash.

The clash came in 1925. On 30 May the shooting of several Chinese protesters by British subjects in Shanghai sparked another large-scale protest movement, this time directed against the British. A lengthy boycott ensued and British trade interests began to suffer. Meanwhile, the Kuomintang (KMT), the Nationalist Party founded by Sun Yat-sen, had been strengthened by Soviet exports of advisers and arms since 1923. Bolstered by Comintern support and organisational experience, the KMT actively promoted nationalist and anti-imperial protests, while making preparations to unify the country through military action. The KMT embarked on the Northern Expedition in July 1926, rapidly moving from its base in south China toward the Yangtse. As the KMT’s Nationalist Revolutionary Army approached the concessions along the Yangtse and the coast, policymakers in Britain struggled to come up with a workable policy that could, on the one hand, meet the new challenge of Chinese nationalism and, on the other, satisfy its own interests in East Asia.

The major questions posed by historians studying this period concern why Britain began its retreat from China— why, in the face of the contrasting forces of Chinese nationalism and strong opposition from the British community in China, did Britain decide to begin relinquishing its traditional treaty rights? What was the rationale behind the retreat and how did the structure of informal empire in China come crumbling down in the 1920s? Past historians have focused on political, strategic and economic issues in relation to Britain’s China policy. However, while their views were substantively correct, there has been a major lacuna in the historiography.

Policymakers did not only operate according to strategic exigencies, important as they were, but also according to the cultural context within which they lived. The eventual victory of Chinese nationalism over British imperialism was not only related to

calculated political and economic interest, nor was it only because of Britain's practical constraints on the use of force. It was also related to the victory of one narrative of China over the other in Britain's public sphere. In a time when mass audiences read the news and actively engaged in debates over policy, policy needed not only to be pragmatic and profitable, but also persuasive. Ideas, assumptions and opinion were fundamental elements in Britain's making of Chinese policy in the 1920s. This thesis, then, is the story of how policymakers and opinion-makers created a persuasive narrative that would justify their policy of retreat.

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF SINO-BRITISH RELATIONS IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

The period under review has been studied by a number of international historians. Akira Iriye first set up a framework for understanding this period in his classic book, *After Imperialism: The Search for a New Order in the Far East*, in which he described the undermining of the imperialist old order and its replacement by the Washington system of international cooperation in the Far East. He contended, however, that gaps in the system allowed the Soviets to take the 'initiative' to cultivate relations with Chinese leaders and to lead the active anti-imperialist campaign in China.¹⁰ An ostracised USSR, rather than the Washington Powers, thus shaped events in East Asia, by stoking the flames of Chinese nationalism, radicalism, and antiforeignism. In response to the increase of Soviet influence in East Asia, the Japanese sought to protect their interests in Manchuria. Then in the later part of the 1920s, a series of Chinese successes in attaining treaty revision again changed the nature of international relations in the Far East. The inability then, of the Washington Powers, especially of Britain and the United States, to work out a viable replacement of the old imperial order resulted in the crisis in Manchuria in 1931. Iriye's contribution is very important. However, the imperial retreat of Britain should not be seen only as a last resort, an unpalatable option taken only because of weakness in the face of the initiatives of the other countries. Rather, the process was much more complex, since an outward retreat, it was believed, would in the long-term increase British influence in China.

W.R. Louis also wrote about British policy in the East Asia in his book, *British Strategy in the Far East, 1919-1939*, focusing on the influence of two central policymakers in

the Foreign Office – Sir John Pratt and Sir Victor Wellesley, whose ideas strongly influenced the strategy the British took in the Far East. Louis' book was the first major one to utilise the Foreign Office's archives that had been recently opened for the interwar period and laid out the general lines of British strategy in the region. While he focused on the Washington Conference, the negotiations over the unequal treaties from 1928 onwards and Anglo-Japanese difficulties in the 1930s, he did not provide detailed consideration of the period from 1925-1927.

The opening of the Foreign Office's papers spurred an increase in interest in this period, and along with Louis' book, a group of unpublished dissertations based on Foreign Office archives were written in the early 1970s. They covered similar ground, though with narrower and different emphases. A dissertation by C.J. Bowie addressed the reasons for the British decision to relinquish force in favour of negotiation and compromise with the Chinese, while W. J. Megginson's dissertation entitled, 'Britain's Response to Chinese Nationalism, 1925-1927' and Peter G. Clark's 'Britain and the Chinese Revolution, 1925-1927' both relied heavily on the FO material and moved chronologically, step-by-step, through the diplomatic process, giving detailed accounts of how Britain formulated its new policy. David Clive Wilson (later Baron Wilson of Tillyorn) wrote a dissertation analysing the interaction between British and Nationalist official policies and perceptions, using Chinese materials related to the KMT in addition to the FO material.¹¹

Edmund Fung also included both English and Chinese materials in the only major book focusing solely on Sino-British relations in this time period, *The Diplomacy of Imperial Retreat: Britain's South China Policy, 1924-1931*. Fung argued that events in China from 1924-1931 spurred and accelerated the British retreat from China. He said that the 'retreat, designed by the Foreign Office with cabinet approval, was aimed at meeting Chinese nationalism, at least half way, so that a more peaceful and friendly atmosphere conducive to the expansion of British trade in China could be restored.'¹² Fung charted the change in the Foreign Office's attitude towards the KMT, from consistently denouncing the KMT's Bolshevik ties, to turning around and calling it, 'the one great hope for China's future' and 'the only decent government' for China.¹³ More recently, Harumi Goto-Shibata added to the historical literature, using Japanese diplomatic and military archives to detail Japanese policy in China and Japan's relations with Britain during the Chinese Revolution.¹⁴ Faced with mass upheaval in China, British and

Japanese interests rarely coincided, straining relations between the two countries and her conclusion suggested that the ‘growing conviction that co-operation had failed tilted the balance in Japan in favour of the militarists,’¹⁵ which would lead to the final breakdown of British-Japanese relations.

While these dissertations and books mostly drew from diplomatic sources, they also made use of a number of unofficial sources. Fung drew from the personal correspondence of government leaders and diplomats, and, along with Clark, sometimes placed the FO’s decisions in the context of opposition from a number of right-wing pressure groups, including newspapers, Conservative Party officials and British naval, commercial and diplomatic communities in China. Another dissertation written by Y.N. Thomas, ‘The Foreign Office and the Business Lobby’, written in the early 1980s, ventured further beyond the government archives to firstly analyse the impact of the business lobby on the formulation of government policy and secondly the impact of commercial influence on policy as it related to the treaty-system.¹⁶ Megginson also included a chapter that addressed the views and actions of pressure groups from the left in addition to the traditional China lobby, but focused mostly on reaction to the sending of the Shanghai Defence Force in early 1927.

Not surprisingly, all wrote on the occasional challenges the FO faced from a critical public, but none answered the question of who actually supported and motivated the FO in its China policy. Why, in the face of such oppositional pressure, did the FO continue on its course? Who were the main supporters and advocates of government policy? What were the assumptions and opinions about the Chinese that led the FO down a path of friendship and conciliation? Interestingly, none of these dissertations and books have focused on commonly-held notions of China outside of official circles and beyond the traditional China lobby and their influence on policy.¹⁷ Neither have historians written extensively on missionary views nor dealt comprehensively with Labour protests. Although Megginson wrote as a parenthesis, ‘(Surprisingly, the missionary influence was minimal and generally sympathetic toward the Foreign Office view.)’, he did not elaborate any rationale for the coincidence of views.¹⁸ Also, while these writings—and two books by Roberta Dayer—mention Sir Charles Addis and the China talks at Chatham House, none made explicit his links with missionaries.¹⁹ Much more could also have been written on the Hands Off China movement and the role of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) within it.

Thus, although issues such as the relation of business to policy and the roles of individual diplomats and the question of force have been addressed, these histories of China and Britain have still mostly laid the groundwork for an understanding of *political* relations between the two countries.²⁰ They serve to deepen our understanding of the causes of the Manchurian crisis and the failure of the international system in the interwar period at the upper levels of the government. For some this stemmed from the abiding preoccupation of historians to discover the causes of the breakdown of relations between Britain, America, and Japan in the lead-up to the Second World War. Perhaps the political emphasis was also related to Cold War concerns as understanding interwar China could indirectly explain the rise of Communist China. With political tensions between Communist and non-Communist countries at a high level, Western historians interested in Communist countries were logically drawn to the more political aspects of history.

Yet, policymakers did not operate within a vacuum, divorced from their domestic environment and other coexisting concerns. Politics, diplomacy, economics, society and culture are intricately related to each other and it is difficult to disentangle individual elements when addressing historical experience. Policymakers may be the makers of international relations, the ones who actively research, analyse and decide on strategy, but they are constantly informed and influenced by their contexts. Within each context, domestic economic considerations, social norms and cultural assumptions, in addition to national interest, shape policy towards other countries.

The interplay between human initiative and the broader social and cultural environment was highlighted in Paul Kennedy's *Realities Behind Diplomacy*, in which he addressed a number of background influences on diplomacy, such as the impact of empire, economics, public opinion, military potential and the attitudes prevalent among the political establishment. He continued to emphasise the importance of economics in his *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, in which he looked at wealth, its link with military power and their combined effect on the trajectories of the Great Powers, arguing that wealth was the basis of national power. In relation to the history of British relations with East Asia, Christopher Thorne's *Limits of Foreign Policy* was a landmark work on the Manchurian incident and the foreign response to it. Thorne went beyond writing a traditional diplomatic history to detailing the many constraints placed upon foreign policy, which limited the Western Powers' ability to respond effectively to Japanese

aggression. Domestic public opinion coming from pressure groups, the financial crisis, strategic considerations, political perceptions and even unresolved conflicts on the European continent all curtailed the Powers' scope of action.²¹

The notion of looking at the background influences on diplomacy can also be traced to the influential *Annales* School and specifically, Fernand Braudel's history of the Mediterranean. Although Braudel at first intended his history to be a traditional account of Philip II's Mediterranean policy, he soon moved beyond conventional boundaries of diplomatic history, realizing that politics, policy and diplomacy were only superficial indicators of significant historical processes in the *longue durée*. The processes were the slower-moving currents of history that lay underneath the level of 'events, politics and people'²². First of all was a history of the environment, a slow-moving geohistory of the Mediterranean, concerned with geography, climate and their relation to the inhabitants. Secondly, he addressed economics and society and only finally, did he address the *histoire événementielle*, the history of events. Politics were not studied for politics' sake, but rather he understood politics as being conditioned by time and place, explaining under 'what circumstances, in a particular time,' made a certain thought 'thinkable'²³. Yet the *Annales* historians were careful to avoid the trap of over-determinism; their philosophy, as described by Trevor-Roper, was a 'social determinism limited and qualified by recognition of independent human vitality'.²⁴ The *Annales* school influenced a generation of historians to expand the scope of history and in the 1970s and 1980s, historians of every region began to publish histories of everyday life and turned to social history. The historical significance of the high-power individual was balanced by the realisation that the stories and records of millers, weavers, and even criminals could tell us something about the place and time in which they lived. Kings, queens, government officials, and military officers were no longer the sole or even main agents of history. The contributions of 'ordinary' people to history were thus acknowledged and emphasised. Most of these histories covered a particular region or of a social stratum within a country and did not usually address questions of high-level diplomacy. However, works that were published in the 1980s on compradors and the rise of the Chinese bourgeoisie began to explore the links between the Chinese people and their 'colonizers,' even if their focus was not directly on the relationship itself.²⁵ These advances in social history should not go unnoticed by international historians. Rather, the recorded thoughts of people uninvolved directly in politics can also reveal and illuminate common trends and assumptions that necessarily influenced

policymakers. The era of mass politics, with universal suffrage, widespread literacy and technological advances in communications, from the end of the nineteenth century to today needs to be studied in this light. Policymakers became increasingly constrained by public opinion, not just on domestic issues, but also on international issues.

How then was public opinion framed and from what kind of cultural background did it emanate? What were the parameters of public discourse and where did they come from? Insights from cultural and post-colonial history have prompted international historians, if belatedly, to go beyond traditional diplomatic history and further broaden the analysis of international relations.²⁶ Cultural and post-colonial historians have incorporated ideas about the nature of power relations, influenced by Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. The most famous example, Edward Said's *Orientalism*, pioneered new ground in studies of imperialism by his claim that the Orient was a European invention. Orientalism was thus, beginning from the late eighteenth century, the Western style for 'dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient'.²⁷ Using Foucault's notion of a discursive formation, in which the repetition of certain ideas assigns and confirms meanings to subjects, Said argues that knowledge about the Orient in Europe was a configuration of power, a relation of power and a way of dominating. This is innately related to the history of empire, since orientalist discourse could justify domination. Political subjugation only followed the subjugation of the colonised in the minds of the colonisers.

Though China was never part of Britain's formal empire, it has been argued that China was still subjected to similar tropes in order to justify the existence of spheres of influence. James Hevia's book, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China*, is one effort to understand the culture of colonialism and he argues that imperialism in China was not, as Fairbank and others have suggested, an effort by the West to gently teach the Chinese modern ideas and technology. Rather, for Hevia, it was violent and destructive since domination lay at the center of the imperial mission. It was a 'pedagogical' project comprised of 'deterritorializing' and 'reterritorializing' China. Deterritorialization meant that as the Powers invaded, looted, and took over, the Chinese lost their right to define and determine their diplomacy, art, and language. The European powers reterritorialized China by producing new forms of knowledge about China, creating their own image of China, and reconstructing a new system of power relations in which the Chinese were subordinate to the West.

Hevia's picture, however, was too straightforward. The 'colonisers' were not one homogeneous group united by hegemonic impulses. Rather, the British project in China was composed of disparate and often conflicting interests. One important group was the British ex-patriate community and Robert Bickers has provided an interesting and varied account of their experiences in his *Britain in China: Community, Culture and Colonialism, 1900-1949* and more recently in *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832-1914*. In them, he focuses on the experience of the British and Americans in the treaty ports and in other parts of China, and mentions their uneasy relationship with the government at home. Bickers paints a detailed picture, replete not only with accounts of businesspeople, missionaries, government officials in China, but, in *Britain in China*, especially of the settlers who worked in treaty-port service industries, property owners, and small business operators, many of whom were from working or lower middle-class origins. Although they were influenced by ideas about China at home, once they got to China, they also forged a specific identity and political position that was distinct from the metropole. Rather than melding with Chinese culture, living in China heightened their sense of Britishness and they emphasised the need to maintain a clear distance between Britons and Chinese. This attitude was reinforced and strengthened especially as political events in China began to threaten the rights and existence of the settler community. The rise of anti-imperialist nationalism in the 1920s prompted the British government to become more proactive in taking control of the British presence in China and this, of course, was met with protests by the Britons in China. Theirs was a losing cause, however, and ultimately their special privileges came to an end with the end of extraterritoriality. Paul Cohen gives Bickers credit for breaking down the 'foreign' side of the 'China-foreign' binary by demonstrating convincingly that Britain in China 'was not a unitary, coherent phenomenon, but rather was composed of several fundamentally different and often fiercely contending strands.'²⁸ By exposing the differences and tensions within and outside the British community in China, Bickers complicates the picture of imperialism in China and thus casts doubt on the idea that British aims and opinions about China were all part of a larger project of domination.²⁹

New works on British travel writers in China like Nicholas Clifford's "*A Truthful Impression of the Country*": *British and American Travel Writing in China, 1880-1949*, Susan Thurin's *Victorian Travelers and the Opening of China, 1842-1907* and Jeffrey N. Dupée's *British Travel Writers in China: Writing Home to a British Public, 1890-*

1914 have also added to our consciousness of the diversity of British thought within and about China. The variety of voices and ideas covered in these books reveals that Britons did not all understand China in exactly the same way. Imperial knowledge took many forms. The travellers who ventured to the fringes of the British empire necessarily conveyed a different impression of China to the reading public at home than the settler in the treaty ports or the man in the Colonial Office. They were, on the one hand, part of the empire, but on the other, chose to be alienated from the colonial environment, often seeking to live in closer proximity to the Chinese. Bickers and the others have therefore pioneered the way for further studies in this area, but there is still a need for an understanding of high-level diplomacy from the vantage point of culture and to see how this diversity of voices contributed to debates over policy.

International historians thus need to continue broadening the scope of inquiry by studying historically-based questions from a cultural perspective. Dane Kennedy avers that the historiography of British imperialism has ‘long been coloured by the political and methodological conservatism of its practitioners’.³⁰ It is time to take up the challenge. Although historians would do well to leave ‘the mind-numbing jargon, its often crude essentializations of the West and the Other as binary opposites, and, above all, its deeply ingrained suspicion of historical thinking,’³¹ we also have an opportunity to enrich and fill in a large gap in our knowledge of international and imperial history. To understand the diplomatic process is to understand only one aspect of the imperial encounter. Imperialism was comprised of millions of individual and group encounters between a rich variety of people. International history then, should encapsulate and reflect the diversity of the imperial experience.

Understanding diplomacy without culture then is to see only a partial picture. The cultural approach is not opposed to the ‘power’ or ‘economic’ approaches to history, but complements them. Nations are motivated by self-interest, but, as Iriye has said in his influential article on ‘Culture’, they also develop ‘visions, dreams, and prejudices about themselves and the world that shape their interactions’.³² States are not interchangeable actors in an international system; rather, individuals and groups spin their own webs of significance within and across national boundaries.³³ If culture, in its anthropological sense, comprises the shared ideas, values, common traditions and ways of living, then diplomacy, although it operates in the political realm, is also the meeting-place of various cultures. Not only do diplomats represent and come from the

culture of their respective countries, they also move about in and express various sub-cultures within their countries. The meeting of diverse cultures in the diplomatic sphere can sometimes result in a volatile mix of affronts and misunderstandings, but it can also be a site for finding common ground as a basis for negotiation.

For example, the cultural and racial distinctions within Europe have impinged on intra-European relations. De Gaulle's rejection of the British application to join the European Economic Community was couched in not only economic terms, but also in cultural ones as well: England was, to him, 'insular, maritime,' and had 'very marked and original customs and traditions' that he implied differentiated it from Europe proper.³⁴ Beyond Europe the distinctions are even more apparent. European colonisers' perceptions of differences with the colonised often justified imperial rule and shaped it. Imperial rule, British politicians claimed, could 'free Asians from oriental despotism, Africans from barbaric customs, [and] Maoris from settler rapacity'.³⁵ In extreme circumstances, cultural clashes could also lead to war. Although Fairbank's assertion that underlying concerns over Chinese anti-foreignism among the British in Canton were the final frustration that led to the outbreak of the Second Opium War has been strongly questioned,³⁶ the prevailing perception of Chinese anti-foreignism by foreigners did become a convincing pretext for war.

However, perceptions did not always function detrimentally for the colonised or for those whom the Western Powers sought to dominate. Francis Robinson has provided evidence that British attitudes towards Muslims influenced how they organised colonial rule. Sir Frederick Lugard, the Governor-General of Nigeria (1914-1919), admired the Muslim Fulani and referred to their 'wonderful intelligence, for they are born rulers' in the context of his programme for indirect rule.³⁷ Similarly, Lord Minto, the Viceroy of India (1905-1910), praised a deputation of Muslim nobles, landowners and ministers of native states who called for the establishing of a separate Muslim political identity in India, calling them 'descendants of a conquering and ruling race.'³⁸ Cultural assumptions thus are intricately related to power relations generally and to the construction of the imperial enterprise specifically.

Even with the end of empire, cultural differences continue to mar dialogue between countries. One cannot understand India's displeasure with the conditions of American aid during the famine of 1951 without looking at differing views of giving in both

countries.³⁹ Nor can one understand the present-day Sino-Western fallout over human rights without comprehending the vast gulf between each party's worldview and cultural practise. The study of culture and diplomacy can provide insight into historical problems that politics, economics and strategy alone cannot explain.

METHODOLOGY

This thesis will study the influences of culture on policy by analysing the views of a wide range of opinion-makers and finding the shared assumptions within their perceptions of China, while also taking into account the economic, political and strategic motivations behind policy. The structure will be mostly chronological and address the main issues relating to Sino-British relations that confronted policymakers from 1922-1927. While the focus will still be policymaking in the Foreign Office, it seeks to illuminate the context within which policymakers operated. It pays special attention to the hitherto neglected voices of those who advocated the policy of conciliation—in particular, the domestic Press, missionaries, Labour activists and liberally-inclined government advisers—especially in the years 1925-1927 when events in China prompted much British interest.

THE DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

The first level of inquiry is to discover why individuals or groups held the opinions they did and what other factors affected decision-making. Ideas may have influenced policymakers, but domestic considerations of power and economics were often even more important. Thus it is necessary to understand the domestic as well as the international context of decision-making. Since the British government took more control over policy in China during the mid-1920s, it is necessary to understand the formulation and influence of ideas at home.

The effects of the First World War were still being felt as the Chinese organised against imperialism. Europe was in disarray politically and in the early 1920s the European powers were in an economic slump. Internationally, Britain focused on bridging the divide between the French and Germans and the Eurocentric stance of most policymakers meant that China was not a priority. At the same time, the experience of policymakers in dealing with European affairs also affected their attitude towards other

parts of the world. The ‘Spirit of Locarno’, after the signing of the Locarno peace treaty in 1925, seemed to be contagious and Sir Austen Chamberlain, the Foreign Secretary, would be accused by British settlers of trying to enact his own ‘Chinese Locarno’.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the ‘Wilsonian moment’ provided a site for the rise of anticolonialism around the world. This was also a period of increasing challenges to the imposition of foreign power not only in East Asia, but also in South Asia, Africa, the Middle East and arguably, within Europe.⁴¹

At the same time the domestic economic woes plaguing Britain turned many British businesses towards the East, where they hoped to gain access to the potentially huge Chinese market. The political threat of Labour, the General Strike, increasingly tense Anglo-Russian relations—all these also influenced the making of China policy. Labour, led by Ramsay MacDonald, held office for the first time in 1924 and although its stint in power was brief, the newly-elected Conservatives in 1925 were well-aware of Labour’s potential oppositional influence. Labour tended to take a very sympathetic position towards Chinese nationalism and its more radical wing manifested its opposition to government policy in the ‘Hands Off China’ movement beginning in 1926. At the same time, Britain’s economic and labour troubles in a period of high unemployment and the General Strike of 1926 reinforced the focus on China as the great untapped market for the future. These matters affected considerations about China and, in turn, thought about China could not be disentangled from thought about Britain and its place in the world. Rather, China was discussed usually in relation to Britain, to variously-defined British values, politics and religion. Opinions of China reflected wider beliefs about the fate of empire, nationalism, revolution, industrial issues, the economy, and the trajectory of Western civilisation, while also being based on long-standing notions of China found in historical and current discourse.

DIPLOMACY, DISCOURSE AND DECOLONISATION

Apart from economic and political factors, however, discourse about China within Britain also influenced diplomacy. Diplomacy has often been measured and analysed solely by the decisions and discussions detailed in government archives. The papers of the Foreign Office, Foreign Ministry and the State Department offer a wealth of information to the historians searching for the practical working-out of diplomacy as it happened. Yet, histories of *international* relations need to also take into account the

differences between countries, which stem not only from conflicting power, strategic and economic motivations, but also the very real divergences of cultural understandings. Thus, to find the links between culture and diplomacy within Sino-British relations, the suggestion here is to begin by exploring the discourse, the set of shared assumptions reflected through the symbols, words, phrases and/or actions surrounding diplomacy. Discourse originates from culture and gives expression to the underlying notions that tie a culture together. Thus, locating and analysing the texts that compose discourse on China within interwar Britain can provide insights as to the the cultural milieu against which policy was made.

Although Foucault argued in his *Order of Things (Les Mots ets les choses)* that all modern thought is built upon unspoken assumptions that have changed through the centuries, it would be more useful to focus on the explicit versions of discourse found in the narratives of people interested in China rather than only on the unspoken assumptions. Commentators were not always dissembling, hiding what they believed, but could be rather eager to make their opinions known. Of course, the position of an official could circumscribe his public declarations, whereas radical intellectuals or newspaper editors might be freer to express unpopular views. Nevertheless, their views, taken together, reveal commonalities and distinctions in their assumptions that related to the conduct of international relations.

In a later work, Foucault related these assumptions to the creation of strategies of control, structures of power and knowledge, and came to the oft-cited conclusion that 'knowledge is power'.⁴² It follows that whoever could control the narrative could also influence and practically shape historical events. Said and his followers applied these ideas to relations between the East and the West, and found that Western representations of the East justified and motivated domination. In regards to China, Hevia has asserted that the British imperial project in China was motivated and sustained by a marriage of knowledge and power.

However, this begs the question: what about its retreat from China? How was discourse about China restructured as Britain's actual power diminished? The relationship between decolonisation and discourse thus needs to be further explored. Decolonisation may have been more of a 'puzzle' than a 'pattern',⁴³ and empire may have unraveled without the express blessings of policymakers or without much change in concepts

about the Other. However, decolonisation needed to be justified, made palatable and reasonable to the public. Shared assumptions about the colonised needed to be modified in light of changing political circumstances, and indeed, in face of changing power relations. Empire was being re-negotiated politically, and at the same time, psychologically.

The long-standing racial assumptions and racially-based justifications for empire, one could argue, were not shaken or radically questioned until the end of the Second World War, when the atrocities of the Holocaust were revealed to the public. Or, as Frank Füredi has argued, that war caused racism to become subtler as 'racial confidence' shifted to 'racial fear'.⁴⁴ Yet, the seeds of changing racial perceptions, at least in the Chinese case, were already present in the interwar period.⁴⁵ More broadly, the First World War was a cataclysmic experience which shook Britons' confidence in the certainties of the past. The validity of the idea of progress and the superiority of Western civilisation were questioned in a way and to a degree unimaginable prior to the war. If Britons began to think of themselves differently, it followed that they began thinking of others differently as well. A change in culture, in ways of thinking about themselves and others, then, could have provided the justification for imperial retreat. Although he has questioned the link between racial considerations and motivations for empire, Ronald Hyam still acknowledged that race was a 'useful supporting mechanism for the imperial structure'.⁴⁶ But the dismantling of the imperial structure in China meant that the supporting mechanism could no longer operate the same way as before.

The production of knowledge about the Chinese in this context was not a unitary project, but a series of diverse ones, and hegemony was not always an unquestioned goal. By the 1920s, British commentators were deeply divided and discourse on China was not exactly a 'closed, self-evident, self-confirming' discourse reproduced again and again 'through scholarly texts, travelogues, literary works of imagination, etc.'⁴⁷ Rather, their concerns were diverse and reflected conflicting opinions about their own civilisation. The horrors of the First World War undermined Western confidence in empire's mission to bestow the blessings of the West on the rest of the world. Certain groups of intellectuals became willing to accept China as it was and even praised aspects of Chinese civilization. At the same time, both friendly and hostile commentators still utilised similar long-standing, familiar representations about China to support their positions. Although one could say that sympathetic commentators might

have resisted Orientalism's prejudices, and used their production of knowledge to argue for a decrease in imperial power, they still had their own intellectual and political agenda and thus did not write unbiased, accurate representations of reality – rather, sympathetic commentators also attributed stereotyped characteristics to the Chinese based upon their own preoccupations and concerns. Furthermore, the continued acceptance and reinforcing of an old set of assumptions about the Chinese to a degree supported an agenda for the *decrease of tangible imperial power*.

Of course, as many postcolonial scholars would argue, negative representations of the colonised have remained until the present day, despite the formal dissolution of empire. Yet, seeing a consistent genealogy of negative tropes about the East may mask the diversity of discourse that accompanied each stage of the West's interaction with the East. Dennis Porter has criticised orientalism for its ahistoricity and exclusion of 'counter-hegemonic' thought.⁴⁸ John MacKenzie, in his *Orientalism: History, Theory, and the Arts* also argued that a respectful, even sympathetic discourse existed at the same time as the essentialised derogatory stereotypes of the Other, especially in the realm of high art.⁴⁹ Finding why one view was espoused by the government and others were relegated to the sidelines is another aim of this thesis. Deciphering the similarities and differences within commentary about China in Britain, one can begin to comprehend not only how the British understood China and the Chinese, but also how they understood themselves and their place in the world, to see what Paul Ricoeur called the 'layer of images and symbols that make up basic ideals of a nation'.⁵⁰ Based on these ideals, some Britons sought to export 'British' values to China, to mould China into their own image through religion and/or education. Others sought not to export, but to preserve their values by keeping subversive Chinese influence out of their society. Another group questioned traditional British values and ventured to admire and learn from China. Policymakers had to decide between these and other positions and negotiate their way not only around political, ideological and cultural differences with the Chinese but also among the various views held by their own people.

At the same time, the Chinese were not content to allow British opinion-makers speak for them and about them without submitting their views. Decolonisation was a story not only of imperial retreat but also of nationalist assertiveness. In relation to this, Foucault's notion of discourse as a site of contested struggle for meaning by biased participants in which the subject of the discourse has no say seems too extreme. British

perceptions were not only merely imposed upon a passive subject. Rather, the subject actively contributed to and adjusted the meanings assigned to them. Although this thesis focuses on one part of the story—the making of British policy towards China—and thus uses mostly British sources, that story cannot be told without understanding that the Chinese were active agents who protested the imposition of political, economic and cultural imperialism. Neither can it be told without seeing that it was Chinese initiative that forced policymakers to discuss, change their mind and decide on future policy. Without actual changes in China occurring, there would have not been much need for them to change their mind about it.

PUBLIC OPINION AND POLICY

Discourse about China was manifested in the channels of public opinion, so this thesis focuses on the diverse expressions of ideas about China in the British public sphere and their influence on policymakers in the 1920s. The importance of the views of the British public on foreign relations in the interwar period cannot be discounted by historians, just as they were not overlooked by the policymakers themselves. Sir Victor Wellesley, the Deputy Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in his attempt to account for the government's failure to maintain peace in Europe in 1939, blamed public opinion. He wrote a book published in 1944, towards the end of the Second World War, entitled *Diplomacy in Fetters* in which his main argument was that 'democratic diplomacy' was increasingly fettered by mass opinion, tighter parliamentary control over foreign policy, the need to consult with the Dominions and complicated ties with finance, thus weakening it vis-à-vis the authoritarian diplomacy of dictatorships. Whereas dictators could freely manoeuvre to gain their objectives, democracies were hindered and constrained by the will of the unlearned and uncontrolled masses. Foreign policy was no longer the privileged haunt of a few aristocratic men. It could no longer be determined only by the 'knowledge and experience of statesmen'. Whereas the absolutism prior to the Industrial Revolution had given statesmen a free hand in deciding the foreign policy of the state, industrialization, with its attendant rise in public involvement, complicated and fettered policymaking. As industrialisation intensified economic and nationalist rivalry, domestic and foreign policy were 'rapidly becoming two aspects of one and the same problem.'⁵¹ Thus, Wellesley argued, 'democratic diplomacy and foreign policy in general no longer function effectively because their background has changed while the machinery of diplomacy has remained static.'⁵²

His former colleague in the Far Eastern Department, Lord Strang, expressed similar opinions in a collection of lectures, addresses and a broadcast, *The Diplomatic Career*, in 1962 about the changes in policymaking. The 'pressure and the strain' on the Foreign Office in London was greater than on the diplomats abroad because Parliament, and particularly the House of Commons, constantly kept a watchful eye on the activities of Ministers. When Parliament went into recess, there was 'a distinct relaxation of tension in government departments.'⁵³ Strang was also dissatisfied with the trend of foregoing traditional secret diplomacy in favour of more public and open summit conferences. Ministers' speeches were only polemic, he contended, crafted to satisfy the curious public, whereas the substantive work, the producing of draft resolutions, was only arrived at through the traditional channels of secret, behind-the-scenes negotiations. However, in the 'present phase' of international relations, the 'most important part involving issues of peace and war', were to Strang, 'removed... from the sphere of negotiation and transferred to the sphere of public debate, with its accompaniment at times of public clamour'.⁵⁴ One could only hope then that the world, 'in some new and calmer phase' would 'recognize the merits...of the principle of open covenants privately arrived at'.⁵⁵

These two men, incidentally, were very active in the formulation of China policy in the 1920s. Wellesley, the Deputy Under-Secretary, oversaw the activities of the Far Eastern Department in which Lord Strang worked and both men addressed what they saw as the major problem confronting diplomacy in their day. Their problems were therefore not only the actions of intractable and unreasonable aggressor states, but also the domestic constraints on diplomacy's freedom of movement. For Wellesley, not until after the First World War 'did the electorate seek much control of foreign policy' and it was then that 'foreign policy [became] the battleground of strife in the House of Commons as never before'. Foreign and domestic policy thus became 'one and indivisible'.⁵⁶

Historians of British-Chinese relations in the interwar period thus have neglected the major emergence and increasing importance of public opinion. Foreign policymakers could no longer operate in the public-school educated, elitist strongholds of the Foreign Office separated from mass opinion. The rise of mass media in the nineteenth and early twentieth century coincided with the extension of the vote, prompting elites to take public opinion seriously.⁵⁷ Elites were strongly interested in mass media since what the newspapers, radios, and cinema said about them and their party could affect their

political future. Journals and books were also sources of useful expert opinion and advice. Thus, parliamentary speeches are sprinkled throughout with references to newspaper articles, journal opinions, and popular books. MPs even paid attention to foreign media.⁵⁸ Some MPs also ventured into the other side of publishing. Rather than only reading others' writings, they sought to help shape public opinion by writing their own books. Politicians wrote a number of memoirs in the interwar period, hoping to use the power of the media to their own advantage.⁵⁹

The rise of Labour after the First World War was also indirectly related to the turn to the masses. Its rise spurred politicians—Conservative, Liberal and Labour itself—to bid for the popular vote and to take the increasingly appealing middle ground of politics. Parties needed to expand their platforms in order to pick up additional support. Thus the interwar period saw the major parties moving towards the centre.⁶⁰ Labour's rise was also related to public opinion's revulsion against the First World War and those who had brought the country into the war in the first place. Platforms supporting disarmament, defence cuts and pro-peace measures became mainstream. Conservatives thus had to shift their ground to stem the rise of Labour's popularity and broaden their own public appeal.⁶¹ Thus, public opinion and, I would argue, the assumptions contained within opinion, played an important part in policy decisions. Opinions constrained and restrained politicians, causing them to pay close attention to the barometer of public feeling and tailor their platforms accordingly.

MEASURING INFLUENCE ON POLICY

Historians need to be aware of these kinds of outside influences on foreign policy. Yet the difficulties of substantiating the actual effect of ideas and opinion on foreign policy are multitudinous and potentially insurmountable. Policymakers, presidents and prime ministers have long said that ideas in the shape of public opinion or long-standing beliefs have influenced their decisions, but *how?* And by *how much?*

One way of looking at the influence of public opinion has been provided by Daniel Hucker who has provided an insightful study of public opinion and its effect on the end of appeasement in France and Britain, in which he borrowed the concept of 'representations' from Pierre Laborie. These 'representations' of opinion (created by the press, political pamphlets, demonstrations, correspondence, conversations, etc.)

enabled the policymaking elite to absorb and define an otherwise abstract public opinion. By contrasting ‘reactive’ representations, which were the immediate reactions of the public to situations, and ‘residual’ representations, the residue of long-standing memories, he questioned the widely-held belief that French opinion in the 1930s was ‘pacifist’ and instead argued that the French pursued a firmer policy against dictatorship than the British.⁶² In contrast, in the case of Sino-British relations, reactive and residual representations did not work mostly in opposition to each other, as in Hucker’s case-study, but worked *together* to encourage policymakers to advocate an overall position of peaceful negotiation. These representations were based upon existing discourse about China and often proliferated old assumptions about the Chinese, but could change according to the historical context. This is what happened in the interwar era—public opinion seemed to take a turn, traditional assumptions were questioned and representations of public opinion changed accordingly. This thesis begins with an overview of some of the ‘residual’ representations found in past British literature, travel accounts, philosophical works and political commentary. These representations encompass a wider scope of material whereas coverage of the political response to the events of 1925-1927 will focus on the ‘reactive’ representations created by the groups within Britain who were most interested and affected by relations with China.

Furthermore, in addition to this diachronic view provided by Hucker, it is also possible to view public opinion synchronically, to recognise a hierarchy of representations influencing policy at the same time. Commentary on China took many forms but it is possible to conclude that various expressed opinions wielded differing levels of influence. Of course, this is difficult to measure, as an elected politician may consider a local newspaper editorial a better barometer of his constituency’s opinion than the judgement of a trusted friend. However, in general, one may safely conclude that the most influential group were those whom policymakers spent most of their time interacting and trading opinions with, within their departments, among their peers and between departments. For example, the Colonial Office was very interested in the China issue because of Hong Kong and often made its views known to the Foreign Office. Leo Amery, the Colonial Secretary would write to or converse with other Cabinet members to receive support for his position whenever he disagreed with Austen Chamberlain, the Foreign Secretary. Diplomats from China also made their opinions known through their correspondence with the policymakers in London. Policymakers also discussed policy with each other or with their families outside official meetings and would sometimes

record these interactions in personal diaries or in letters. At another level, policymakers also listened to and needed to respond to Parliament, who, in turn, attempted to express the views of their constituencies. An important influence was the non-governmental representation of banks, businesses and other groups in China who directly visited or wrote to the Foreign Office. Other organisations interested in China may not have had the same degree of access, but still sought to make their voices heard. The Hands Off China group, an offshoot of the Independent Labour Party, campaigned on the side of Chinese nationalism and could not be completely ignored by policymakers. At the other extreme, settlers in China, who also had links to businesses, sought vigorously to defend their extraterritorial rights. Missionaries were less politically active, but had influential supporters who actively wrote to newspapers and contributed to journals and former missionaries like William Soothill, an Oxford professor of Chinese and prolific writer of books on China, who had frequent contact with government officials.

Beyond that, the media was another important influence. It is difficult to pinpoint which articles in which newspapers were read by who at what time, but policymakers undoubtedly paid attention to the news. Many read *The Times*, and if they inclined towards Liberalism, would read the *Manchester Guardian*. At the further extremes were the *Morning Post*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Herald*. Newspaper and journal editors moved in the same elite circles as members of government and their recommendations could not be discounted. Some were particularly interested in the China issue. For example, Lionel Curtis, the editor of the *Round Table* and founder of the Royal Society of International Affairs, also attended meetings of the Institute of Pacific Relations where he mixed with missionaries, politicians and intellectuals who took a liberal stance on China. J.L. Garvin, the editor of *The Observer*—the influential and highly-circulated Sunday newspaper—was in this period writing a biography of Joseph Chamberlain, Austen Chamberlain's father, and thus kept in close contact with the Foreign Secretary.⁶³ His opinions about China and other foreign concerns necessarily seeped through in their correspondence.⁶⁴

The last influence was the wider realm of nonfiction, fiction, poetry and visual art related to Chinese subjects, which though largely non-political, could still be indirectly influential. Novels, non-fiction histories and surveys written by 'experts', popular art, literature—from Sax Rohmer's popular Fu Manchu series to Arthur Waley's highly regarded translations of Chinese poetry to Lady Hosie's accounts of family life in

China—are more evidence of the epistemological order imposed upon China among the British public. These works operated more as residual representations, as long-standing assumptions that had an indirect influence. Thus, it is also useful to look at historical understandings of China in the past as expressed through popular media.

Individuals involved in China policy could participate in discussions at many of these levels. John Maynard Keynes, a member of the Bloomsbury Group, would have known about his friends' interests in Chinese art and poetry, while also advising the government on economic policy for China.⁶⁵ Sir Charles Addis, the chairman of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank and a frequent visitor at the Foreign Office, corresponded with his friend Dudley Mills who discussed with him an article in the *Empire Review* by R.P. Scott, a missionary, on Chinese education.⁶⁶ W.E. Leveson,⁶⁷ Addis' secretary, recorded meetings with individuals as disparate as *The Times*' Foreign Editor (Harold Williams) and Editor (Geoffrey Dawson) and Colonel L'Estrange Malone, a former Communist Party member and founder of the controversial Chinese Information Bureau.⁶⁸ The borders of these levels were fluid and permeable. That so much interaction could take place between these groups gives even more reason to include discussion of a broader range of domestic opinion.

One way of measuring influence would be to gauge how often certain ideas are repeated in print as well as in personal correspondence. For example, the picture of an ancient, unchanging China has been utilised by commentators as wide-ranging as Jesuits in seventeenth century, the poet Tennyson in the nineteenth and twentieth-century intellectuals on both sides of the political spectrum. That this picture continued to be disseminated in published writing and in personal correspondence in the 1920s is strong evidence that it was a commonly espoused assumption. However, another image, that of a dynamic Chinese nationalism espoused by active youth, became increasingly included in writings of the time. It is thus important to discover which narrative was adopted by policymakers as they decided on the course of future relations with China.

One must also pay attention to those to whom people in power listened. For example, J.O.P. Bland, the caustic diehard journalist, may have written a lot about China but the Foreign Secretary and Office preferred to heed Sir Charles Addis' liberal ideas. Access to powerful people and thus personal relations with the elite could determine the effectiveness of an idea, although there were always exceptions. For example, the China

Association actively lobbied the government to take a pro-business position, but a policy more in line with missionary opinion prevailed in the 1920s, even though the missionary presence at the Foreign Office was minimal. Additionally, one can gauge the popularity and power of an idea from the editorial positions of the major newspapers, from what views they chose to print.

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

The organisation of the thesis is largely chronological, with the first two chapters providing historical background for the ideas about and groups interested in China in Britain. The first chapter is a broad survey of accounts about China present in mostly English writings, beginning with the sixteenth century up until the First World War. This is to provide an idea of what kind of historical baggage policymakers may have had, of what images and assumptions they may have inherited from the past.

The second chapter brings the discussion to the 1920s and focuses on the general issues surrounding Sino-British relations and the various groups who were active in discussing China. It looks at the effects of the First World War, the international order set up in East Asia after the Washington Conference in 1921-1922, Russia's increasing presence in China, China's political disunity and the attitudes espoused by the different groups towards these issues. Government officials, treaty-port British and businesses were perhaps the most active groups debating China policy. But beyond politics, trade and strategy, other groups were interested in China from a social and cultural perspective. Missionaries sought to court the Chinese and teach them their values and ways of living. Leftist intellectuals saw Chinese civilisation as a welcome contrast to their own while others were still spoke and wrote of the 'Yellow Peril'. All of this provides a background for the events of 1925-1927 in which resurgent nationalism forced the British to reassess their attitudes and policies towards China.

The following chapters focus on three particularly eventful years in the history of Sino-British relations beginning with 1925, the year of a major anti-British boycott and protest sparked by a shooting on 30 May. Faced with a vocal and debilitating organised nationalism, British policymakers had to reassess their role in the international order in East Asia. The public had a plethora of opinions about British policy and the FO seemed still undecided until 1926, the year the KMT began its Northern Expedition. As

the KMT won military victories and consolidated its power throughout China, the FO moved towards a defined policy position of retreat, which was to result in the December Memorandum, a proclamation of Britain's liberal attitude towards Chinese demands. 1927 saw immediate challenges to Britain's newly announced policy as the advancement of the KMT threatened the safety of foreigners in China's treaty ports. Yet, in the midst of vociferous criticism, the FO stayed its course. The chapter on 1927 will address the public and private debates that took place during this period and the reasons why a policy of conciliation eventually won the day.

¹ See Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford, 2007), which looks at Wilsonian ideas of self-determination and their effect on the 'periphery'—in China, Egypt, India and Korea.

² Interestingly, it is exactly this 'traditional' historical view of China (and other parts of East Asia) that more recent East Asian historiography has sought to debunk. The traditional Fairbankian model of a static Sinocentric world order espoused by the Chinese is detailed in the introduction to John K. Fairbank, ed. *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1973). Works that have argued against this view in various ways include: R. Bin Wong, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1997); James Polachek, *The Inner Opium War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1991); J.L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham, N.C., 2005); Frederic Wakeman Jr., *Strangers at the Gate: Social Disorder in South China, 1839-1861* (Berkeley, California, 1966); and many more.

³ See Peter Zarrow, 'Introduction' in *Creating Chinese Modernity: knowledge and everyday life, 1900-1940*, ed. Peter Zarrow (New York, 2006).

⁴ See John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series 6, no. 1 (1953), pp. 1-15 for an argument for the inclusion of 'informal empire' into the discussion of British expansion.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶ Shigeru Akita, ed. *Gentlemanly Capitalism, Imperialism, and Global History* (New York, 2002). See Niels P. Petersson's contribution in ch. 6 on the more imperialistic tendencies of the British in China before 1905.

⁷ See Zhou Cezong (Chow Tse-tsung), *The May Fourth movement: intellectual revolution in modern China* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), pp. 84-170 for a detailed overview of the movement and Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley, California, 1986).

⁸ For example, Kuomintang Archives, Taipei, Taiwan R.O.C., Han 14539 'Anti-British Declaration (transl.)' by the Central Executive Committee of the Second Joint Meeting of the Party in Kwangtung, n.d. 1927.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Akira Iriye, *After Imperialism: the search for a new order in the Far East*, (Cambridge, 1965), p. 55.

¹¹ See Christopher J. Bowie, 'Great Britain and the Use of Force in China, 1919 to 1931' (unpubl. Ph.D., Oxford, 1983); Peter G. Clark, 'Britain and the Chinese Revolution, 1925-1927' (unpubl. Ph.D., Berkeley, Calif., 1973); W. J. Megginson, 'Britain's Response to Chinese Nationalism, 1925-1927: The Foreign Office Search for a New Policy' (unpubl. Ph.D., George Washington, 1973). Another dissertation written around the same time is Harold Edwin Kane, 'Sir Miles Lampson at the Peking Legation, 1926-1933' (unpubl. Ph.D., London, 1975), which focused on Lampson's personal role in Sino-British relations, covering his disagreements with the FO in the beginning of his time in China to their eventual agreement. Other published works, such as Peter Lowe, *Britain in the Far East, 1819 to the present* (London, 1981); Richard Stremski, *The Shaping of British Policy during the Nationalist Revolution in*

China (Taipei, Taiwan, 1979) and David Steeds, 'The British Approach to China during the Lampson Period, 1926-1933' in *Some Foreign Attitudes to Republican China*, ed. Ian Nish (London, 1982) also relied mostly on FO material and traced the steps leading to the formulation of policy.

¹² Edmund S.K. Fung, *The Diplomacy of Imperial Retreat: Britain's South China Policy, 1924-1931* (Hong Kong, 1991), p. 8.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

¹⁴ Harumi Goto-Shibata, *Japan and Britain in Shanghai, 1925-1931* (Basingstoke, 1995) and 'Anglo-Japanese Co-operation in China in the 1920s' in *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations: vol. 1, The Political-Diplomatic Dimension, 1600-1930*, eds. I. Nish and Y. Kibata (London, 2000).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

¹⁶ Y.N. Thomas, 'The Foreign Office and the Business Lobby' (unpubl. Ph.D., London, 1982).

¹⁷ With perhaps the exception of W.R. Louis, *British Strategy in the Far East, 1919-1939* (Oxford, 1971) which addressed the race question. Akira Iriye later dealt extensively with these issues in books such as *Across the Pacific: An Inner History of American-East Asian Relations* (Chicago, 1967); Priscilla Clapp and Iriye, eds. *Mutual Images: Essays in American-Japanese Relations* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1975); and *Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War, 1941-1945* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1981).

¹⁸ W.J. Megginson, 'Britain's Response to Chinese Nationalism, 1925-1927', p. 641.

¹⁹ Roberta Dayer, *Bankers and Diplomats in China 1917-1925: the Anglo-American Relationship* (London, 1981) and *Finance and Empire: Sir Charles Addis, 1861-1945* (Basingstoke, 1988).

²⁰ See for example, Brian Porter, *Britain and the Rise of Communist China: a study of British attitudes, 1945-1954* (London, 1967); Evan Luard, *Britain and China* (London, 1962); James Tang, *Britain's Encounter with Revolutionary China, 1949-1954* (Basingstoke, 1995); Stephen Endicott, *Diplomacy and Enterprise: British China Policy 1933-1937* (Manchester, 1975); Nicholas Clifford, *Retreat from China: British Policy in the Far East, 1937-1941* (London, 1967).

²¹ Paul Kennedy, *The Realities Behind Diplomacy: Background Influences on British External Policy, 1865-1980* (London, 1981) and *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500-2000* (London, 1989); Christopher G. Thorne, *The Limits of Foreign Policy: the West, the League and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1931-1933* (London, 1972).

²² The title of 'Part 3' in Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world in the age of Philip II* (Berkeley, 1995).

²³ H.R. Trevor-Roper, 'Fernand Braudel, the Annales, and the Mediterranean' *Journal of Modern History* 44, no. 4 (Dec 1972), pp. 469-470.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 469.

²⁵ See, for example, Marie-Claire Bergere, *The Golden Age of the Chinese Bourgeoisie, 1911-1937*. Transl. Janet Lloyd; (Cambridge, 1989) and Yen P'ing Hao, *The Comprador in Nineteenth Century China: Bridge between East and West* (Cambridge, 1970).

²⁶ See Antony Best, 'British Opinion-Makers and East Asia in the Inter-War Period' in *Yet More Adventures with Britannia: Personalities, Politics and Culture in Britain*, ed. W.R. Louis, (London, 2005).

²⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1979), p. 5.

²⁸ Paul Cohen, 'Review of Robert Bickers, *Britain in China: Community, Culture and Colonialism, 1900-1949*' *Journal of Asian Studies*, 59, no. 2 (2000), p. 402.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 403.

³⁰ Dane Kennedy, 'Imperial History and Post-Colonial Theory', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 24, no. 3 (1996), p. 345.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 356.

³² Akria Iriye, 'Culture' *Journal of American History* 77, no. 1 (Jun 1990), p. 100.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

³⁴ Charles de Gaulle, 'France's rejection of British EEC membership – 14 Jan 1963' in *Documents on the European Union*, ed. and transl. by Anjo G. Harryvan and J. Van der Harst (New York, 1997), p. 134.

³⁵ A.J. Stockwell, 'Power, Authority and Freedom' in *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the British Empire*, ed. P.J. Marshall (Cambridge, 1996), p. 173.

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- ³⁶ Most notably, see J.Y. Wong, *Deadly Dreams: Opium and the Arrow War (1856-1860)* (Cambridge, 2002) for an argument against Fairbank's assertion in John K. Fairbank, *Trade and diplomacy on the China coast: the opening of the treaty ports, 1842-1854* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1964), p. 279.
- ³⁷ Lugard, prior to his governorship of Nigeria was the Governor of Hong Kong from 1907-1912.
- ³⁸ Francis Robinson, 'The British Empire and the Muslim World' in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 4, pp. 398-420; see pp. 406-407.
- ³⁹ This example was cited in Andrew Rotter, 'Culture' in *Palgrave advances in international history* ed. Patrick Finney (New York, 2005), pp. 285-288.
- ⁴⁰ Cambridge University Archives, Churchill College, Leo Amery Papers AMEL 6/3/89 Letter from Lady Clementi to Florence Amery 27 Apr 1927.
- ⁴¹ Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*. The 1920s saw nationalist movements in, among other places, Ireland, Egypt, Turkey, Iraq, India, China and Korea.
- ⁴² Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London, 2002); Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison* (Harmondsworth, 1979); Francis Bacon originally coined this quote, but Foucault's use of this is radically different than Bacon's in that for Foucault, the negative implications of power are emphasised.
- ⁴³ John Darwin, 'British decolonization since 1945: A pattern or a puzzle?' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 12, no. 2 (Jan 1984), pp. 187-209.
- ⁴⁴ Frank Furedi, *The Silent War: Imperialism and the Changing Perception of Race* (New Brunswick, New Jersey; 1999).
- ⁴⁵ Eleazar Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States between the World Wars* (Cambridge, 1992).
- ⁴⁶ Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918-1968* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 39.
- ⁴⁷ Talal Asad's definition of the 'authoritative structure of orientalist discourse' in his review of Said's *Orientalism*, in 'Review' *English Historical Review*, 95, no. 376 (Jul 1980), p. 648.
- ⁴⁸ Dennis Porter, 'Orientalism and its problems', in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York, 1993), pp. 150-161.
- ⁴⁹ See John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester, 1995).
- ⁵⁰ Paul Ricoeur referenced in Iriye, 'Culture', p. 101.
- ⁵¹ Sir Victor Wellesley, *Diplomacy in Fetters* (London, 1944), p. 27.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.
- ⁵³ Lord Strang, *The Diplomatic Career* (London, 1962), pp. 15.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- ⁵⁶ Wellesley, *Diplomacy in Fetters*, p. 28.
- ⁵⁷ 'Propaganda, Communications and Public Opinion' by Susan L. Carruthers in *Palgrave Advances in International History* ed. Patrick Finney (2005), p. 192.
- ⁵⁸ For example, see contributions by Lord Parmoor in Hansard, *Lords Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 66, col. 50: 09 Feb 1927 and vol. 71, cols. 1607-1608: 02 Aug 1928 in which he mentions extracts from the Chinese press.
- ⁵⁹ See for example, Lloyd George, David, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George*. (London, 1933); Arthur Ponsonby, *Falsehood in Wartime: Propaganda Lies of the First World War* (London, 1928); Joseph Kenworthy, *Peace or War?* (New York, 1927).
- ⁶⁰ Paul Kennedy, *The Realities Behind Diplomacy*, p. 237.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 241-242.
- ⁶² See Daniel Hucker, *Public opinion and the End of Appeasement in Britain and France* (Ashgate, 2011).
- ⁶³ The *Observer's* circulation under Garvin's editorship reached to around 40,000 in 1909. From 'Observer timeline' <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/gnm-archive/2002/jun/11/2>> accessed 29 Oct 2011.
- ⁶⁴ University of Birmingham Special Collections Austen Chamberlain papers AC38/3/8 JL Garvin to Chamberlain 02 Jan 1927 and AC38/3/9 Garvin to Chamberlain 31 Jan 1927.

⁶⁵ Patricia Laurence, *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes: Bloomsbury, Modernism, and China* (Columbia, South Carolina, 2003).

⁶⁶ SOAS Addis Papers Box 24 MS14/219 Letter from Mills to Addis 04 Nov 1925.

⁶⁷ Leveson had also been Bland's deputy in the Shanghai Municipal Council administration and was Bland's successor. He later fell out with Bland, however, partially because of their divergent opinions about China policy.

⁶⁸ HSBC Archives LOH II 247/2 Diary of WE Leveson, 1919-1935. See entries for 04 Feb 1924 and 13 Dec 1926.

Chapter 1: Past British thought about China

Britons inherited their ideas about China from a number of sources. Historical books, fiction, poetry, newspapers, journals, missionaries', diplomats' and travellers' writings and firsthand accounts from friends and families provided the basis upon which they placed their assumptions about China and the Chinese. In the interwar period British perceptions were in some parts creative, but for a large part, they were also inherited from the knowledge-producers of the past who had commented on China, and especially on China in relation to the West. The descriptions of China in past accounts are so diverse that they defy any neat summation,¹ but commonalities and continuities did exist in British accounts through the past centuries. The discursive formation of China as an ancient, anti-modern civilisation-state, especially, was long-lasting, as was the idea of the Chinese as a passive, enduring people. At the same time, these ideas co-existed with the hopes of the missionaries and the would-be exporters of Western civilisation that China had the potential to change. These ideas would be increasingly debated in the interwar period as Britons faced an 'awakened' China, since they constituted part of the intellectual baggage that British policymakers would carry as they discussed the future of Sino-British relations. The following overview is of various British images and attitudes towards the Chinese in the past. It is by no means comprehensive, but attempts to give a sample of the consistencies and changes of British thought about China through approximately four centuries.

EARLY JESUIT AND ENGLISH ACCOUNTS

European trade contacts with China began with the Roman Empire and from that point, knowledge about China began to slowly enter into the European consciousness. The most important and prolific early contributors to this body of knowledge were the Jesuits who began missionary work in China in the late sixteenth century. Matteo Ricci and other Jesuits sought to make their religious teaching accessible to the Chinese and emphasized the similarities between Chinese thought and Christianity. The Jesuits adapted their teachings to a Chinese context and even went as far as seeking allowance

for converts to continue conducting Confucian rituals, which led to the unintentional reduction of their presence in China.² The Jesuit version of ‘Cathay’ was a civilisation with a remarkable pedigree of achievements and cultured philosophy. This version emphasised the similarities and compatibility of the scholarly teachings of the Jesuits and the intellectual attainments of the Chinese. Yet at the same time, their views also expressed notions of European superiority. Ricci wrote in 1600 on Chinese art: ‘The Chinese use pictures extensively, even in the crafts, but in the production of these and especially in the making of statuary and cast images they have not at all acquired the skill of Europeans ... They know nothing of the art of painting in oil or of the use of perspective in their pictures, with the result that their productions are lacking in vitality.’³ In 1600 then, the contrast between Chinese ‘inertia’ and Western ‘vitality’ had already entered public discourse.

The Jesuits’ humanistic interest in China’s civilisation was also reflected in the earliest English accounts of China. One of the first accounts, *Certayne Reports of the Province China, learned through the Portugalles there imprisoned, and by relation of Galeotto Perera, a gentleman of good credit, that lay prisoner in the country many yeres*, was translated from Italian by Richard Willes and printed in London by Richarde Lugge in 1577. It detailed the customs and habits of the Chinese, their worship of heaven and their temples, the examination system, forms of local government, prisons and corporal punishment. Portions of the *Reportes* were included in Richard Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations*, published in 1589, as well as Samuel Purchas’ *Hakluytus Posthumous or Purchas his Pilgrimes*. Purchas’ work would in turn inspire Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Kubla Khan* two centuries later. Sir Walter Raleigh, a close acquaintance of Hakluyt’s, also weighed in on the topic. Raleigh praised the Chinese for their advanced use of guns and their achievements in printing, but at the same time disapproved of their insular and superior attitude, commenting that ‘the *Chinaos* account all other nations but savages in respect of themselves.’⁴ Francis Bacon affirmed this view in his *Natural History*, published in 1627, where he declared that an ancient Chinese law ‘against the admission of strangers without licence’ was a ‘law of pusillanimity and fear’.⁵ Robert Burton continued this line of thought in his compendium, *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), in which he depended much on Ricci for his knowledge of China. He quoted, ‘The *Chinese* say, that we *Europeans* have one eye, they themselves two, all the world else is blind’.⁶ Peter Heylyn echoed both Raleigh and Burton in his *Cosmography*. Chinese

achievements in printing and weaponry were commendable but caused the Chinese to become ‘so well conceited of themselves, that they use to say, They themselves have two eyes, the Europeans one, and the rest of the People of the World not one. A pretty flourish of self-praising.’⁷ Heylyn’s sarcasm reflected the feeling that though the Chinese thought themselves superior, their self-evaluation was inaccurate. That European commentators could mock Chinese insularity meant that actually, it was the European who could truly see things accurately. It was the Chinese who were blind to their own state. They were an example of a people with the ‘arrogant ignorance to hold this or that nation Barbarous’ according to Samuel Daniel. Yet, according to Burton, they were ‘the most superstitious of nations’ and participated in barbaric practises such as eating horse-flesh and infanticide.⁸ Thus the trope of a xenophobic, arrogant yet ignorant China was already instilled in the British imagination and perpetuated through these authoritative sources in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Even more deserving of censure were the Chinese vices of vanity, cowardice and overindulgence. Heylyn’s account is interesting in this respect and includes much evidence for his assumptions. The Chinese wore ‘their Garments very long, with long loose sleeves, and their hair much longer than their neighbouring Tartars ... to which two Fashions so addicted, that more of them took up Arms for their Hair and Habit (when required to conform in those particulars to the will of the Conqueror) than had done either for their King, or their common Liberty.’ Furthermore, they ‘are effeminated with much care and pleasure, they are not much given unto the wars, which make them the more easie prey to the Neighbouring Tartars’. On the one hand, their cowardice and love of pleasure were scoffed at. On the other, Europeans still had benefited from their refined habits: they were ‘much given unto their Bellies, and eat thrice a day, but then not immoderately; drink their Drink hot, and eat their Meat with two sticks of Ivory, Ebony, or the like, not touching their Meat with their hands at all, and therefore no great foulers of Linnen. The use of Silver-Forks with us, by some of our spruce Gallants taken up of late, came from hence into Italy, and from thence into England.’⁹

The ambivalence of British attitudes, however, was also evident in this period. The Chinese were cowards, but they made up for it by their ‘wit’ and were a ‘a politick and judicious people’. They spared no cost or charge in merry-making for many days on

end, yet it did not ‘take them off a jot from their natural industry, and proficiency in Manufactures and Mechanick Arts.’¹⁰ In fact, enthusiasm for things Chinese reached a high point towards the end of the century and Sir William Temple’s commentary on Chinese gardens and government in his essay ‘Of Popular Discontents’ in 1685 reflected this trend. Chinese gardens, even if ‘wholly irregular’, ‘may have more beauty than any others’ and their government was ‘established upon the deepest and widest foundations of any that appears in any story.’ An early translator of Confucius called his writings ‘infinitely sublime, pure, sensible, and drawn from the purest Fountains of Natural Reason.’¹¹ Thus in the seventeenth century, China as a subject could embody a number of conflicting tropes often within the same piece of writing.¹²

In the eighteenth century, these tropes were developed further as the subject of China became subsumed into Enlightenment debates on reason, government and political economy and especially as empirical information about the country increased. The common view among historians of the Enlightenment is to see a dichotomy between the so-called Sinophiles and Sinophobes.¹³ For example, Voltaire’s view of China as an enlightened monarchy based on rational principles is oft-cited to be in direct opposition to Montesquieu’s vision of a despotic, fear-inspiring Chinese tyranny made worse by the dissolute tendencies of Chinese rulers.¹⁴ Yet, as Ashley Millar has shown in her doctoral thesis on Enlightenment views of China’s political economy, it may be unwise to distinguish a clear-cut dichotomy between sinophilia and sinophobia. Millar argues that Enlightenment discourse included both despotic and moderate images in the same texts and that the rigid juxtaposition of categories does not allow for consensus between categorically-opposed texts.¹⁵ Enlightenment thought about China was also more nuanced than historians have claimed. Superiority was not always assumed by European commentators. Rather, Millar shows that in their discussion of political economy, philosophers displayed a high degree of ‘civilizational relativism’, an openness to learn from Chinese political and economic structures. An interesting example Millar cites is David Hume, in his essay ‘Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences’ (1742), in which he stated that the Chinese monarchy was not ‘properly speaking, absolute.’ More surprisingly, Hume wrote in a footnote (interestingly) that ‘perhaps a pure monarchy of this kind, were it fitted for defence against foreign enemies, would be the best of all governments’.¹⁶

They also exhibited ‘genuine engagement with the empirical descriptions of China’.¹⁷ Raymond Dawson, in his study of Chinese images throughout European history has claimed that the endless list of contradictory qualities attributed to China did not necessarily accurately reflect the situation there but were rather ‘merely a response to European needs.’¹⁸ Dawson thus argues that Europeans wrote about China while taking little notice of Chinese reality. Yet, Joan-Pau Rubiés has countered this argument with his claim that while much that was written about non-Europeans was ill-informed and manipulated to fit an intra-European debate, ‘Europeans were often genuinely concerned with understanding the East, for practical and intellectual reasons;...that they developed largely empirical methods to do so;...and that concepts such as the one of “oriental despotism” were not mental schemes that blinded Europeans to the perceptions of the true Orient, but rather, compelling tools for interpreting the information gathered about the Orient.’¹⁹ Enlightenment writers interested in China’s political system relied on, to differing degrees, evidence provided by travel accounts and the work of cosmographers. They may have had political biases and prior motives and fit conclusions into their theses, but at the same time, they were often surprisingly aware of the methodological difficulties involved in their work. As Rubiés has said: ‘to the extent that there was a process of fictionalization from Aristotle to the Enlightenment, it was one that required the concurrence not only of political speculators, but also of intelligent observers and critical historians, and that, in effect, the history of the concept of despotism can only be written by taking account of this empirical dimension.’²⁰ While members of the Scottish Enlightenment, including Hume and Adam Smith, were major propagators of the simplistic binary opposition between a ‘stationary’ China and a ‘dynamic’ Europe that became increasingly embraced in the nineteenth century, yet at the same time, their works were based on a great deal of engagement with the body of knowledge on China available to them, including various travel accounts and works on ethnography and geography.²¹

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

However, prior to the nineteenth century, interest in China fringed ‘the centre of indifference’.²² But the arrivals of Lord Macartney in 1792 and Lord Amherst in 1816 brought Sino-British relations into the sphere of heightened political and economic

relevance. Familiarity also bred contempt and the positive Catholic views of the Jesuits began to sit uncomfortably with the staunchly Protestant British.²³ The efforts of Macartney and Amherst to force trade on the unwilling Ch'ien-lung and Chia-ch'ing emperors anticipated the increasingly acrimonious relations between the two countries. Macartney's famous description of China in his journal was unsympathetic:

The Empire of China is an old, crazy, First rate man-of-war, which a fortunate succession of able and vigilant officers has contrived to keep afloat for these one hundred and fifty years past, and to overawe their neighbours merely by her bulk and appearance, but whenever an insufficient man happens to have the command upon deck, adieu to the discipline and safety of the ship.²⁴

Thomas De Quincey echoed Macartney's epithets of 'old' and 'crazy' in his *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821), taking them to a nightmarish extreme. His commentary on China came in the context of series of drug-induced dreams in May 1818, in which he was transported into an 'Asiatic' scenery of his own imagination. He wrote:

I have often thought that if I were compelled to forego England, and to live in China, and among Chinese manners and modes of life and scenery, I should go mad... The mere antiquity of Asiatic things - of their institutions, histories, above all, of their mythologies, etc. - is so impressive, that to me the vast age of the race and name overpowers the sense of youth in the individual. A young Chinese seems to me an antediluvian man renewed ... In China, over and above what it has in common with the rest of Southern Asia, I am terrified by the modes of life, by the manners, by the barrier of utter abhorrence placed between myself and them, by counter-sympathies deeper than I can analyse. I could sooner live with lunatics, with vermin, with crocodiles or snakes.²⁵

De Quincey's horror and disgust of Asia and especially of China seemed to signal a sharp break from past views of China, but at the same time, had taken common assumptions present from the previous centuries to a logical, if hallucinatory, extreme. Chinese antiquity no longer evoked respect and awe, but disdain. With the rise of British power thus came the decline of regard for the Other.

The small band of travellers, humanists and philosophers interested in China in the previous centuries increased exponentially to include the officials, merchants and missionaries who began participating in the imperial project. They were intent on learning Chinese customs, habits, language and government, not just for interest's sake, but also to secure their political, economic and religious goals. The study of China became professionalised as sinologues compiled translations, dictionaries, set up language schools, wrote trade reports and published authoritative studies. The proliferation of codified, organised knowledge about China was intimately related to the imperial mission. Robert Morrison, the first Protestant missionary to China, landed in Macau in 1807, translated the Bible into Chinese, produced the first Chinese-English dictionary (1815-1823) and set up a language school for missionaries to learn Chinese. Walter Henry Medhurst, another missionary, also compiled dictionaries and wrote *China: Its state and prospects, with special reference to the spread of the gospel* (1838), a handbook about China for aspiring missionaries. John Francis Davis, a diplomat and sinologist who accompanied Lord Amherst in 1816, wrote the first general English book giving an overview of China, *The Chinese: A General Description of the Empire of China and its Inhabitants* in 1836. In the introduction, Davis pointed out the 'decided' superiority of the Chinese over all other Asian nations. He claimed that this superiority stemmed from its geography and favourable climate and could account for China's 'early advancement'²⁶. Yet, a long history of peace had made them a nation of 'incurable conservatives', and it was implied that China had ceased to advance.

As relations with the Ch'ing government frayed, commentators like Davis emphasised the great distinction they saw between the Chinese government and the Chinese people. The government, as Montesquieu had said, was hopelessly despotic and the people so incurably conservative that nothing could be changed. Furthermore, their history, government and philosophy had made them industrious, tranquil, peaceable, docile, mild and respectful to their elders but had not cured them of their vices of insincerity, falsehood and jealousy.²⁷ These vices, it seemed, would only be cured by Christianity. Within these projects lay the accepted assumption that the West could teach China something and the recommendation that Western rule would be preferred. G. Tradescant Lay, a missionary and diplomat, writing his book on the Chinese one year before the First Opium War, drew a clear distinction between the government and the people: 'The Government of China is purposely absurd, but the people are reasonable in

their views and conceptions.’ Upon hearing of the progress of British armaments, he claimed that , ‘as soon as they are practically convinced that the civil administration has been changed, not for the worse, but for the better, they will rank with the most quiet, most happy, and best conducted subjects of the British empire.’²⁸

With the outbreak of war between Britain and China in the First Opium War and Britain’s resounding victory, Britain seemed to be in a position of undeniable superiority. With war also came more interest and involvement from the higher reaches of government. Up until this time, MPs did not show much interest in China, other than in regards to occasional trading issues. In all of the 1820s, China only warranted 61 entries in the debates in the Lords and Commons, but this increased to 987 in the 1840s. Furthermore, the China issue was not only economic, but involved complicated notions of culture, honour and power. Glenn Melancon has argued against traditional interpretations of the First Opium War which pointed to the economic motives of officials for waging war. Instead he has asserted that cabinet officials actually worried less about its economic interests and more about its potential loss of honour and power in relation to Parliament.²⁹ That the Opium War was a ‘drug war’ laid the Cabinet open to charges of immorality and the Whigs had to justify their actions against a strong opposition composed of elements as varied as conservatives and Chartists. Both conservatives and radicals excoriated the Government for taking advantage of a weak opponent on the basis of corrupt motives. *The Northern Star*, a Chartist newspaper published in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, lambasted official policy in August 1839: ‘We, her Majesty’s profit-mongering subjects have, for a long time, been driving on a contraband and most lucrative trade with China, at the expense of the health and morals of the Chinese nation.’³⁰ In April 1840, a young William Gladstone, a rising star among the Conservatives, deprecated the hoisting of the British flag ‘to protect an infamous contraband traffic.’³¹

Despite the opposition, the Government carried through its policy and as political relations between the two countries descended into hostility, many opinions also served to confirm the rightness of the imperial project. Tennyson’s poem, ‘Lockesley Hall’, written in 1835 and published in the middle of the First Opium War in 1842, incorporated the trope of the ‘noble savage’ popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which he ultimately rejects for the progressive virtues of civilisation. In the

latter part of the poem the narrator contemplates escaping back to the Orient, where he had been born, only to reject the idea and engage in some vivid comparisons:³²

‘Fool, again the dream, the fancy! but I know my words are wild,
But I count the gray barbarian lower than the Christian child.

I, to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our glorious gains,
Like a beast with lower pleasures, like a beast with lower pains!

Mated with a squalid savage—what to me were sun or clime?
I the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time—

I that rather held it better men should perish one by one,
Than that earth should stand at gaze like Joshua’s moon in Ajalon!

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us range,
Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change.

Thro’ the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day;
Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.’³³

In this passage, Tennyson’s physiological comparisons (‘I, to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our glorious gains,’) and disapproval of miscegenation (‘Mated with a squalid savage’) were related to scientific beliefs inherited from the Enlightenment and also anticipated the Social Darwinism that was to come. Tennyson’s line on ‘narrow foreheads’ related to craniometrics, the study of human head-shape and size in order to determine common characteristics among races. G. Tradescant Lay also included discussion of craniometrics in his book entitled *The Chinese as They Are: Their Moral, Social, and Literary Character* published in 1841. The shape of their heads, Lay insisted, could tell the observer much about their character and proved his prior descriptions. He said that the Chinese head-shape, especially the ‘well-marked ridge running from the crown to the forehead’ was ‘connected with the instinctive habits of perseverance, good humour, and veneration’³⁴

Tennyson's temporal comparisons (Joshua's moon in Ajalon, cycle of Cathay) also echoed the narrative of a conservative, stagnant, ancient China. These descriptions would become increasingly cited throughout the rest of the century as 'progress' was promoted by liberals and as the accomplishments of the Industrial Revolution propelled British power into new lands. Views of British superiority seemed to be justified by the historical events of that period. British rule expanded in India, the Empire had acquired Ceylon, Malta, Mauritius, Trinidad, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Burma and other colonies within the space of about eleven years (from 1815-1826) and in 1839, Britain declared war on China. The resultant Treaty of Nanking forced concessions, humiliating to the Qing, but proved to the British their own military and civilisational superiority. As Eric Hobsbawm has described, the dual revolution in Europe had made the European masters of their own destiny: 'By 1848 nothing stood in the way of western conquest of any territory that western governments or businessmen might find it to their advantage to occupy, just as nothing but time stood in the way of the progress of western capitalist enterprise.'³⁵ Indeed, progress had won the day.

As China descended into internal rebellion, with the Taiping Rebellion as the most destructive one, and was wracked by natural disasters in the mid-nineteenth century, the contrast between the two countries became starker. The Ch'ing rulers appeared weak and incompetent and the population still passive and ever-enduring. In his treatise *On Liberty* (1859) John Stuart Mill used a 'warning example in China' to demonstrate the dangers of the tyranny of the majority in hindering freedom, original thought and progress. The Chinese were a people of 'much talent, and, in some respects, even wisdom' and had a praiseworthy civil service system. With these endowments, they should have 'kept themselves steadily at the head of the movement of the world. On the contrary, they have become stationary—have remained so for thousands of years;' (and this is telling) 'and if they are ever to be farther improved, it must be by foreigners.'³⁶

Negative portrayals of China also proliferated in the British press. During the Second Opium War, a poem, 'A Chanson for Canton' was published in *Punch* on 10 April 1858. That it was called a 'chanson' most likely referred to joint French participation in the war and its reiteration and reinforcing of crude stereotypes served the purposes of war propaganda:

JOHN CHINAMAN a rogue is born,
 The laws of truth he holds in scorn;
 About as great a brute as can
 Encumber the Earth is JOHN CHINAMAN.

Chorus: Sing YEH, my cruel JOHN CHINAMAN.
 Sing YEO, my stubborn JOHN CHINAMAN;
 Not COBDEN himself can take off the ban
 By humanity laid on JOHN CHINAMAN.’

With their little pig-eyes and their large pig-tails,
 And their diet of rats, dogs, slugs, and snails,
 All seems to be game in the frying-pan
 Of that nasty feeder, JOHN CHINAMAN.

Chorus: Sing lie-tea, my sly JOHN CHINAMAN,
 No fightee, my coward JOHN CHINAMAN:
 JOHN BULL has a chance—let him, if he can,
 Somewhat open the eyes of JOHN CHINAMAN.³⁷

A number of images were incorporated into this song. The Chinaman was a ‘rogue’, a scoundrel who was unpredictable and deceitful. At the same time the Chinaman was brash and arrogant enough to ‘scorn’ truth. The assumption in the second chorus of innate Chinese cowardice and aversion to fighting may have also contributed to British confidence in the war effort. With the end of the war and the ratification of the Treaty of Tianjin in 1860, the victories seemed to confirm the righteousness of the imperial mission to ‘open the eyes of John Chinaman’.

Yet, commentators remained ambivalent. James Legge, the first professor of Chinese at Oxford, was a former missionary and a translator of Confucian and Taoist texts. In 1861, a year after the end of the Second Opium War, he wrote in the preface to his translation of the classics, that Confucius was a ‘second-rate figure’. He wrote that ‘after long study of his character and opinions, I am unable to regard him as a great man. He was not before his age, though he was above the mass of the officers and

scholars of his time. He threw no new light on any of the questions which have a world-wide interest. He gave no impulse to religion. He had no sympathy with progress.³⁸ Echoing Mill, Legge admitted that Confucius possessed wisdom, yet it was a wisdom that was unoriginal and divorced from a progressive impulse. However, in 1883, a generation later, in the second edition of his book, Legge changed his mind and his sentences. He wrote, ‘the more I have studied his character and opinions, the more highly have I come to regard him. He was a very great man.’³⁹

The conflicted and heterogeneous nature of Britain’s interests in China was also further manifested in the anti-opium movements in the latter part of the nineteenth century, in which missionaries, traders and politicians debated the rightness of the imperial mission. DeQuincey’s *Confessions* and Coleridge’s *Kubla Khan* had already brought the trope of China as ‘sleeping giant’ in a narcotic stupor induced by opium into popular perception. The British imperial project had been dependent in large part upon the Chinese market for opium shipped from India, but as the number of British missions increased in China, so did reaction against the opium trade, culminating in the anti-opium movements of the 1870s.⁴⁰ The main organisation, the Anglo-Oriental Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade, had strong missionary links and originated with Quaker campaigners in Birmingham. Sir Joseph Pease, the radical non-conformist Liberal MP and the leading spokesman of this group in the Commons said in 1875, ‘as long as England followed this trade she was doing a huge moral iniquity, and that from the lowest of all motives—the sake of gain. As a nation they were pandering to the vices of the Chinese, and for money they were debauching a whole people.’⁴¹ Images of opium addicts disseminated by missionaries—with ‘lank and shrivelled limbs, tottering gait, sallow visage, feeble eye, and death-boding glance of the eye’⁴²—became a powerful tool in legitimizing their activities.⁴³ Missionary efforts won the sympathy of the Australian G.E. Morrison, who had published a book in 1895 describing a journey on the Yangtze before landing his position as *The Times*’ first permanent Peking correspondent. He described the cruelties of opium, firsthand encounters with opium addicts and espoused a sympathetic view of the work of the missionaries. They were a body of courageous workers, ‘unselfish and kindly men endowed with every manly virtue that can command our admiration’.⁴⁴ Eventually, missionary support helped propel Gladstone to power in 1892 and the government appointed a Royal Commission on Opium in 1893. Testifying before the Commission, Horatio Nelson Lay, the former

diplomat in China, discouraged any yielding to the Chinese but instead encouraged a policy of firmness. He said, ‘the moment you prostrate yourself before a Chinese, his answer is the knife’.⁴⁵ The anti-opium lobby countered by arguing that Britain’s immoral position would undermine Chinese willingness to trade. This divide between political and business interests and religious interests in China would continue into the debates of the twentieth century.

Also related to the image of China as a sleeping giant was the idea of the ‘Yellow Peril’, popularised after Japan’s defeat of China in 1895.⁴⁶ Once the ‘giant’ awoke, it was feared, the Chinese hordes would populate and take over the rest of the earth. The Americans had already taken a preemptive measure with their Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, but the perceived danger of racial conflict continued to stoke popular fears. Fiction, like M.P. Shiel’s *The Yellow Danger* (1898), or the American Jack London’s ‘The Unparalleled Invasion’ (1910) and H.G. Wells’ *The War in the Air* (1908) cast the Chinese in the role of sinister villains intent on invading Europe. The trope was not only evident in fictional writing, but even in travellers’ accounts of China. For example, Constance Gordon-Cumming, an upper-class travel writer and painter, wrote of the Chinese in 1887, praising them for their enduring nature but at the same time warned the West of the potential Yellow Peril: ‘Everywhere they work their way by gentlest but dogged force of will, by imperturbable good-nature... That they will continue more and more to overrun the earth is certain.’⁴⁷

In the same period, Victorian travellers’ accounts also included a wide gamut of impressions that related to the moral concerns of their age. They confirmed and described the vices of the Chinese, yet portrayed them as an innately good-natured people who had the potential to gain from Christianity. The Chinese, for example, were supposedly prone to dissimulation. G.E. Morrison, travelling in China before becoming *The Times*’ Peking correspondent, recounted an incident when a Chinese told him of a town where five thousand had reportedly died from starvation in a year. Morrison doubted this story and used it as evidence that a ‘disregard of accuracy’ was ‘common to all Orientals’.⁴⁸ Another oft-repeated description was that China was dirty. Archibald Little, who had arrived in China as a tea taster twenty-five years prior, said in 1883 that ‘Filth seems inseparable from Chinese humanity, and a total apathy in regard to matter in the wrong place, pervades all classes, from the highest to the lowest.’⁴⁹ After a

Christmas in Shanghai, Constance Gordon-Cumming came away with this impression: ‘Dirt—foulest dirt—is the one impression which remains indelibly stamped on my mind’.⁵⁰ Susan Thurin, in her book on Victorian travel writing, wrote that for Cumming, a staunch supporter of mission work, ‘dirt and bad smells ... become involved in a religious interpretation of culture. They are associated with a disorderly and sinful world that the missionary must root out.’⁵¹ Cumming also focused on the moral ills that blighted Chinese civilisation—overpopulation, infanticide, superstition and gambling. The inability of the Chinese to heal themselves morally and physically was exemplified by the strangeness and illogicality of their medicine—according to her, a child stricken of fever would receive a ‘decoction of three scorpions, while dysentery is treated by acupuncture of the tongue! Pigeons’ dung is the approved medicine for women during pregnancy!’⁵² For Cumming, it was only in the ‘bright clean rooms and orderly dispensaries’ in the medical missions that the people could receive not only physical but also moral healing.

Isabella Bird Bishop repeated similar observations in her travel book, *The Yangtze Valley and Beyond*, published in 1899, but at the same time could also be sympathetic. China was, according to her, loud, cacophonous, dirty, smelly, crowded and brutal. She began her trip from Shanghai and described it thus: ‘Shanghai (Chinese) is a mean-looking and busy city; its crowds of toiling, trotting, bargaining, dragging, burden-bearing, shouting, and yelling men are its one imposing feature.’⁵³ ‘The air’ in all Chinese cities, she said, was ‘full of the discordant roar of the multitude’ and “[a]ncient and fish-like smells” abound, and strong odours of garlic, putrid mustard, frizzling pork, and of the cooking of that most appetising dish, fish in a state of decomposition, drift out of the crowded eating-houses.’⁵⁴ Recounting the days immediately before her encounter with a hostile Chinese mob in Szechuan, Bird wrote: ‘At this time China, with its crowds, its untellable horrors, its filth, its brutality, its venality, its grasping, clutching, and pitiless greed, and its political and religious hopelessness, sat upon me like a nightmare.’ Yet, she continued: ‘There are other and better aspects which dawn on the traveller more slowly, and there is even a certain loveliness about the people...’⁵⁵

It was these ‘better aspects’ that Bird cited and emphasised in her concluding remarks. She drew the distinction, drawn by Lay about fifty years prior, between the government

and the people. 'China' was not 'in decay'. Rather, what was in decay was the government. In the recent war with Japan a 'straight people with a corrupt Government' were easily subdued by 'a corrupt people with a straight Government'.⁵⁶ She wrote:

China bristles with contradictions. The "sick man" ought to be "in decay", but he is not. His innate cheeriness is scarcely clouded by our repeated assertions that he ought to be dead, and he faces the future which we prophesy for him without misgiving! On the whole, peace, order, and a fair amount of prosperity prevail throughout the empire ... There is complete religious toleration ... The Chinese practically in actual life are one of the freest peoples on earth! ... China is one of the most democratic countries on earth.

In her last paragraph, Bird's sympathies lay obviously with China but she linked them with an insistence that Britain should continue to play a leading role in Chinese politics: 'China is certainly at the dawn of a new era. Whether the twentieth century shall place her where she ought to be, in the van of Oriental nations, or whether it shall witness her disintegration and decay, depends very largely on the statesmanship and influence of Great Britain.'⁵⁷ However, in the twentieth century, the statesmanship and influence of Britain would operate much differently than Bird had envisioned. Rather than the other way around, imperial interests would gradually succumb to nationalist demands.

THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY: 1900-1918

These Victorian moral certainties became gradually undermined with the end of the era and at the turn of the century. Two years after the publication of Bird's book and immediately after the Boxer Rebellion, the Cambridge intellectual, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, took this sympathetic narrative of China even further. The Boxer Rebellion (and perhaps Britain's concurrent experience in the Second Boer War) had inspired Dickinson to use China as a foil in a polemic against the restlessness, materialism and ugliness that he saw in his own civilisation. In this way he perpetuated the relativism evident in Voltaire's writings several centuries prior. In his *Letters from John Chinaman* (published 1901), Dickinson wrote in first-person as 'John Chinaman', not necessarily presenting an accurate reflection of Chinese opinion at the time, but a critique of the West and a tribute to his version of Chinese humanism.

Dickinson's interpretation of China is interesting in that he took familiar assumptions but turned the traditional interpretation of those assumptions on its head. The Chinese he portrayed possessed the same characteristics attributed to them for centuries. They were conservative, unchanging, industrious, content to suffer and did not care for 'progress'. But for the pacifistic Dickinson, this was preferable to the unrest, confusion and lack of morality evident in a Europe so intent on progress and struggle.⁵⁸ The Chinese were industrious and hard-working but their innate tendency towards contentment meant that they while they worked they could also enjoy the beauty around them. Dickinson's idealised account of Chinese peasant life was marked by harmony with nature and undisturbed by base greed and constant dissatisfaction.⁵⁹ The Chinese were democratic (he wrote: 'none is master, none servant') and civilised, with an impressive pedigree of philosophical accomplishments, yet were exceedingly tolerant and thus less hypocritical than the Westerners who sought to impose their way of life upon an unwilling population. The West, Dickinson implied, had much to learn from those whom they sought to teach.

Opinions of China, however, were not only influenced by the domestic cultural concerns of left-wing intellectuals like Dickinson. At the turn of the century, the changing balance-of-power in the Far East also became an important impetus to a renewed debate on the role of empire in China. Japan's victory over Russia in 1905, in addition to its defeat of China in 1895, significantly expanded Japan's political and commercial influence in northeast China. The example of G.E. 'Chinese' Morrison, *The Times*' Peking correspondent, demonstrates how much public attitudes towards China could affect British policy. Eiko Woodhouse has detailed his role in shaping British public opinion and diplomacy towards China and has argued that Morrison skillfully used his political connections and journalism to advocate support for Chinese nationalism.⁶⁰ The corollary to this stance was his anti-Ch'ing and anti-Japanese platform, which was opposed not only to the editorial policy of *The Times*, but also to the official policy of the FO.⁶¹ Yet, knowing that British public opinion was already turning against Japan,⁶² Morrison persisted in writing optimistic accounts of China, citing its economic and social progress, causing his sometime assistant and rival J.O.P. Bland to accuse him of seeing China in a 'soft rose tint'.⁶³ In 1907, on leave in London, Morrison addressed a gathering of influential businessmen and representatives of the Foreign and Colonial Offices at the annual dinner of the China Association. His speech

praised the progressive movement in China, lauding the Chinese for rise of nationalism, the spread of Western education, the re-organisation of the army and the growth of the native press.⁶⁴ While a number disagreed with him, Sir Ernest Satow, the Minister in Peking and Charles Addis of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank expressed their appreciation for his speech. Support for Chinese nationalism would not be a completely new phenomenon in the interwar period, but had its antecedents in the founding years of the Chinese Republic. Indeed, during the Revolution in 1911 Morrison's influence over policy caused a Japanese contemporary to comment that, 'In particular, the sympathetic tone of Morrison, correspondent of *The Times*, seemed to have been the most powerful force in bringing about the change in attitude of the British officials in Peking.'⁶⁵

In 1909, Edwin Dingle, an English journalist and traveller, decided to walk across China by foot. Armed with knowledge about China accumulated from Morrison, H.B. Morse (the American customs commissioner) and others, Dingle walked from the Yangtse to Burma.⁶⁶ The historical context of the time was not lost on Dingle and his express goal was to see if the 'reform, if genuine at all, [was] universal in China'⁶⁷ and to see the interior of China before 'modernity had robbed her and her wonderful people of their isolation and antediluvianism.'⁶⁸ Were the forces of modernity powerful enough to 'rob' the Chinese of their 'antediluvianism'? The presence of a 'New China' was evident to Dingle in the provinces above the Yangtse and in the provinces connected to Peking by rail, but to him, 'China in the west moves, if at all, but at a snail's pace'⁶⁹. He wrote that China was 'changing', that although the movement may be hampered by their 'ancient civilization', still 'the Government cry of "China for the Chinese" is going to win.'

Changes in China were also accompanied by corresponding changes in how the foreigner would deal with the Chinese people. Dingle warned his reading public:

In several years of residence in the Far East I have noticed respect for the foreigner unhappily diminishing ... The average European in the East and Far East does not treat the Oriental with respect. He considers that the Chinaman, the Malay, the Burman, the Indian is there to do the donkey work only [He will do it] contentedly and for the most part cheerfully. But he will not always

be so content and so cheerful ... Some day he may hit back ... Indemnities are given, but the Chinese pride still feels the smart.⁷⁰

That 'day' that Dingle warned about did not come, strictly speaking, until the 1920s, when the Kuomintang and the Communist Party actively organised an effective anti-imperial movement and boycott. However, anti-imperialist feeling had always been present and was violently expressed in the Boxer rebellion. Nationalist calls against imperial encroachments on China's territorial sovereignty continued to be unheeded after the 1911 Revolution, when China devolved into a chaotic situation of regional division and warfare. At the same time, Europe turned its attention away from the Far East to fight the First World War against Germany. Japan took advantage of Allied inattention and entered the war, defeating the Germans at Tsingtao in Shantung. It proceeded to impose its Twenty-One Demands on Yuan Shih-kai's government in 1915, confirming and furthering the expansion of its sphere of influence in the northeast. It was telling that the British press and Parliament strongly protested the Japanese exploits, since Britons began questioning imperialist actions in China, even if they were committed by another Power. Eventually Japan was prevented from taking more because of Allied opposition.⁷¹ President Tuan Ch'i-jui followed the United States' lead by entering the war in 1917, hoping to obtain Allied loans to prop up his weak central government. He also believed that China's entry into the war could be leverage for China to take back its concessions. The subsequent controversy at Versailles over Shantung had two significant outcomes. American sympathy for the Chinese was also a major factor in the defeat of the treaty and the League of Nations in the US Congress. At the same time, Wilson's eventual compromise with the other allies at Versailles meant that Japan retained control over the Liaotung peninsula. Additionally, anger over China's treatment at Versailles sparked the student-led May Fourth Movement, which galvanised a cultural revolt and made it political.

The May Fourth Movement, or more generally, the New Culture Movement may not have been as radical a break from the past as has been seen traditionally.⁷² Yet despite its incomplete efforts to overthrow the feudal past, the effect of the movement on Western perceptions of China was significant. Its calls for the renunciation of the past—of Confucian family structures, of traditional governance, of classical literature—and its overt espousal of Western politics and science cast doubt on the enduring assumptions

that the Chinese were unwilling and unable to change. Lu Hsün's vivid portrayal of a cannibalistic traditional culture and Hu Shih's impassioned repudiation of the Chinese classics were acts of dynamic revolt. The name of its flagship publication *New Youth* and the name given to the intellectuals and students pressing for change – 'Young China'—conveyed the message of freshness, youth and vitality inconsistent with past images of an ancient, conservative China.

CONCLUSION

Although the picture that emerges from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries is not a straightforward, uniform understanding of China formed by consistently scornful commentators, yet a consistent thread in British understandings was that China as a whole was ancient and conservative and that the people were passive, long-suffering and persevering. The question then that would preoccupy the British in the interwar period would be whether it was possible for the Chinese to change. Could the Chinese escape the burden and legacy of their history and culture?

Early commentators from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries often praised the Chinese achievements of the past but also popularised the notion of a bulky, inert civilisation unwilling to learn from the rest of the world. In the nineteenth century, this idea was reinforced by the stark contrast between British technological and military superiority and apparent Chinese backwardness. 'Forward, forward, let us range', charged Tennyson's soldier in *Locksley Hall*, but China was trapped in the interminable 'cycle of Cathay'. Yet, underpinning the Christian missions to China from the nineteenth century onwards was the belief that China could change, but only with the assistance and tutelage of the West. From inward salvation could come the salvation of the country – the kingdom of heaven could be brought to the Chinese earth. Similarly, the trope of the Yellow Peril, though starkly different from missionary ideas, implied that China would eventually rouse itself, organise its millions and march forward in quest of world-domination. In both cases, China was on the path of awakening. At the same time, the role of the early twentieth century British left-wing intellectuals was ambivalent⁷³ since they glorified an idealised version of a past harmonious Chinese civilisation. Their views of China were positive, in sharp distinction from traditional

British views, but they hearkened to the past and seemed unsure of how to deal with a China intent on learning from the West and facing the future.

Thus, within the overall narrative of a sleeping, passive China had been an undercurrent of potential revolution, and in the years after the First World War, Young China's nationalism began to upset the status quo. By the 1920s the British and Chinese contexts would change enough for an adjustment of these narratives of China and the Chinese. The challenge of Chinese nationalism came at a time when the clear superiority of British strength had been undermined by the First World War and would open up space for a public-sphere debate over Britain's future role in China. These debates would be based on past descriptions and knowledge of China, but they would also arise from the specific and distinct concerns of the interwar period.

¹ For this thesis, see Jonathan Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent: China in Western Minds* (New York, 1998).

² This was the famous Chinese rites controversy from which spanned from the mid-17th to early 18th centuries, at the end of which Pope Clement XI decided to disallow accommodation of Chinese rituals and which incurred the Kangxi emperor's ban on Christian missionary work in China.

³ Quoted in Susan Thurin, *Victorian Travelers and the Opening of China, 1842-1907* (Athens, Ohio, 1999), p. 35.

⁴ For this quote from Sir Walter Raleigh, *History of the World* (publ. 1614) and the above details, I am indebted to Qian Zhongsu (Ch'ien Chung-shu), 'China in the English Literature of the Seventeenth Century' (publ. 1940) in *The Vision of China in the English literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth century* ed. Adrian Hsia (Hong Kong, 1998), pp. 31, 38-39.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁷ Peter Heylyn, *The Third Book - Asia*, (London,1701) from *Cosmography in Four Books containing the Chorography and History of the whole World: and all the Principal Kingdoms, Provinces, Seas, and the Isles thereof*, (London,1703) , p. 783.

⁸ For 'arrogant ignorance', see Samuel Daniel in *A Defence of Rhyme* (1603) and for Chinese superstition and barbarism, see Robert Burton in *Anatomy of Melancholy* in *The vision of China in the English literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth century*, in *The vision of China*, ed. Hsia, pp. 39-40.

⁹ Heylyn, *The Third Book - Asia*, pp. 784.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 783-784.

¹¹ The first English translation of Confucius appeared in 1691, entitled, *The Morals of Confucius: A Chinese Philosopher* and it was followed by a second edition in 1724. The reference to the translator's note and the quote from Sir William Temple are in *The Vision of China*, ed. A. Hsia, pp. 49-50, 52.

¹² Clifford, "A Truthful Impression", p. 15.

¹³ See Adolf Reichwein, *China and Europe: intellectual and artistic contacts in the eighteenth century* (New York, 1925) and Arnold Rowbotham, 'Voltaire Sinophile' *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 47, no. 4 (Dec 1932). Also see Raymond Dawson, *The Chinese Chameleon: an analysis of European conceptions of Chinese civilization* (London, 1967).

- ¹⁴ Examples abound in both works, but see specifically, Voltaire, *The Philosophical Dictionary* transl. Alan Holmes (London, 1819), pp. 100-105 and Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, eds. A. M. Cohler, et al. (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 151-152; 126-128.
- ¹⁵ Ashley Millar, 'Assessing the Wealth of a Nation: British and French Views of China's Political Economy during the Enlightenment', (unpubl. Ph.D. London, 2010), pp. 14-17.
- ¹⁶ David Hume, 'Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences' in *The Philosophical Works of David Hume* (Edinburgh, 1826) quoted in Millar, 'Assessing the Wealth of a Nation', pp. 145-146.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 133.
- ¹⁸ Dawson, *Chinese Chameleon.*, p. 2.
- ¹⁹ Joan-Pau Rubiés, 'Oriental Despotism and European Orientalism: Botero to Montesquieu' *Journal of Early Modern History* 9, no. 1 (2005), p. 113.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115.
- ²¹ Millar, 'Assessing the Wealth of a Nation', pp. 69-70.
- ²² Qian Zhongsu, 'China in the English Literature of the Seventeenth Century' in *The Vision of China*, p. 30.
- ²³ Robert Bickers, *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832-1914* (London, 2011), p. 37. Also see *Ritual and Diplomacy: The Macartney Mission to China, 1792-1794*, ed. Robert Bickers (London, 1993).
- ²⁴ Extract from *Lord Macartney's Journal, Embassy to China* (ed. J.L. Cranmer-Byng) in the Appendix in Dawson, *Chinese Chameleon*, p. 205.
- ²⁵ Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* from *London Magazine* (London 1821), pp. 98-99.
- ²⁶ John Francis Davis, *The Chinese: A General Description of the Empire of China and Its Inhabitants*, vol. 1 (New York, 1836), pp. 15, 202.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 243.
- ²⁸ G. Tradescant Lay, *The Chinese as they are: their moral, social, and literary character* (London, 1841), pp.vi- vii.
- ²⁹ Glenn Melancon, *Britain's China Policy and the Opium Crisis* (Aldershot, 1988), p. 6.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 118.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 126.
- ³² Alfred Lord Tennyson, 'Locksley Hall' in *Poems. In 2 vols.* in vol. 1, (London, 1842), lines 163-166.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, lines 173-184.
- ³⁴ G. Tradescant Lay, *The Chinese as They Are*, p. 15.
- ³⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: Europe, 1789-1848* (London, 1962), p. 3.
- ³⁶ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (London, 1859), 2nd ed., pp. 128-129.
- ³⁷ Excerpted in Dawson, *Chinese Chameleon*, p. 133
- ³⁸ Excerpted in Dawson, *Chinese Chameleon*, p. 138.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 138.
- ⁴⁰ See Kathleen L. Lodwick, *Crusaders against opium: Protestant missionaries in China, 1874-1917* (Lexington, Kentucky, 1996).
- ⁴¹ Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 225, c. 592: 25 Jun 1875.
- ⁴² G. Tradescant Lay of the British and Foreign Bible Society quoted in Dikötter, et al., *Narcotic culture: a history of drugs in China* (London, 2004), p. 102.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 100.
- ⁴⁴ G.E. Morrison, *An Australian in China*, (1895), ch. 6
<<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks05/0500681h.html#ch-06>>.
- ⁴⁵ Bickers, *Scramble for China*, p. 308.
- ⁴⁶ Gregory Blue, 'Gobineau on China: Race Theory, the "Yellow Peril," and the Critique of Modernity' *Journal of World History* 10, no. 1 (Spring 1999), pp. 93-139.

- ⁴⁷ C.F. Gordon-Cumming, *Wanderings in China* (London, 1887), p. 436.
- ⁴⁸ Morrison, *Australian in China*, ch. 8.
- ⁴⁹ Excerpted from Archibald Little's *Through the Yang-tse Gorges* in Clifford, *A Truthful Impression*, pp. 41-42.
- ⁵⁰ Cumming, *Wanderings*, p. 3.
- ⁵¹ Thurin, *Victorian Travelers*, p. 97.
- ⁵² Cumming, *Wanderings*, p. 169.
- ⁵³ Isabella Bird Bishop, *The Yangtze Valley and Beyond* (London, 1899), p. 25.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 69.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 210.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 523.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 534.
- ⁵⁸ G.L. Dickinson, *Letters from John Chinaman* (London, 1901), p. 7.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 210-211.
- ⁶⁰ Eiko Woodhouse, *The Chinese Hsinhai Revolution: G.E. Morrison and Anglo-Japanese relations, 1897-1920* (London, 2004).
- ⁶¹ See the description of the dispute Morrison engaged in with his editor, Valentine Chirol in *ibid.*, p. 22.
- ⁶² E.W. Grigg, the Acting Foreign Editor of *The Times*, told Morrison this. See *ibid.*, p. 27.
- ⁶³ *The Correspondence of G.E. Morrison* ed. by Lin Hui-Min (Cambridge, 1976), p. 456.
- ⁶⁴ Cyril Pearl, *Morrison in Peking* (Sydney, 1967), pp. 185-186.
- ⁶⁵ Woodhouse, *Chinese Hsinhai Revolution*, p. 129.
- ⁶⁶ Edwin Dingle, *Across China on Foot* (London, 1911), p. 10.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 258-259.
- ⁷¹ See David Stevenson, *The First World War and International Politics* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 131-133 for a discussion of this episode.
- ⁷² For this argument, see Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment* and for a general account of the May Fourth Movement, see Zhou Cezong (Chow Tse-tsung), *The May Fourth movement*.
- ⁷³ See Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment*, pp. 108-109 and Clifford, "A Truthful Impression", ch. 4.

Chapter 2: The end of the First World War to 1924

The parameters of the British debate on the future of Sino-British relations were not only derived from ideas passed down through the centuries, but also from the contemporary context and interests of groups involved with China. The experience of the First World War fundamentally altered perspectives on politics, society, religion and international relations. The war had brought questions of nationalism, self-determination and peaceful co-existence into sharp focus, and its economic effects also forced policymakers to re-think the direction of foreign policy. Indeed, Niels Petersson has pointed out that the failure of European co-operative financial imperialism in China was caused by the same forces that brought about the collapse of the pre-1914 European world order.¹ British policymakers thus faced intense domestic economic, social and cultural questioning of their own past while simultaneously dealing with the question of China's future. Their ideas were also informed by the opinions of those Britons who had invested in and were interested in China.

This chapter begins by addressing some of the main effects of the experience of the First World War on thought about empire. Then it brings the discussion to East Asia and the decisions of the Washington Conference. With this general context established, it focuses on the composition and concerns of the main groups of Britons interested in China, beginning with the FO. Apart from government officials stationed in China, treaty-port residents and missionaries were the main sources of information about China who could pass on their opinions to their connections at home, which included business interests and church groups. Also, in addition to firsthand information, Britons could read publications about China at home, ranging from highbrow commentary to sensational news articles. In the first years of the 1920s Britons had a wide-ranging interest in China and the ideas they carried with them would influence the future trajectory of Sino-British relations. The subsequent turn in British policy needs to be seen within not only the bilateral context of Sino-British relations but also within the domestic context of the aftermath of the First World War.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND EMPIRE

In the early 1920s the British Empire still ruled over one-quarter of the world population and one-quarter of the earth's territory, despite the ravages of the previous decade. Yet the forces unleashed during the First World War had sent tremors through the imperial colossus, upsetting the firm hold London had on its sprawling territories. Traditional ways of governing, living and thinking gave way to the mores shaped by a new order.

In this new order, Britain had lost its economic dominance. By the end of the First World War, capital had run low in the depressed economy. Intellectuals as various as Lenin, Hobson, Cain and Hopkins and others have argued that capitalism drove the spread of empire in the nineteenth century² and it followed that a constant, dependable influx of capital sustained empire. Yet during the war overseas markets had succumbed to the cheaper goods offered by newly-confident competitors, such as Japan, the United States and even India, who had taken advantage of Britain's concentration on war production to increase their market share. The British share of world exports had fallen from a quarter in the pre-war period to a fifth by 1930.³ Public perception at the time also linked shrinking exports with unemployment, which was persistently high throughout the 1920s.⁴ The economic slump led policymakers to search desperately for a solution⁵ and their decisions had repercussions on the imperial economy. Ian Drummond has convincingly shown that anxieties about Britain's domestic economy led policymakers to give increased economic importance to the White Dominions rather than to the colonial parts of the empire.⁶ But beyond this, a weakened economy also meant a weakened position overall in the world balance-of-power.⁷

Secondly, the overt espousal of the principle of self-determination in the Fourteen Points and the post-war settlement by the victorious Powers after the First World War gave legitimacy to nationalist movements in Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Not only had nationalism in Central Europe contributed to the breakdown of the balance-of-power in Europe prior to 1914, the ensuing war had shattered the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Empire, the short-lived German Empire and the continental Austro-Hungarian Empire. By 1919 only two large empires remained—the British and the French. The forces of modernisation had destroyed empires and constructed nationalisms in their

place.⁸ Germany's imperial ambitions had been destroyed, Austria-Hungary's multiethnic empire had been dismantled and the victorious Powers seemed to embrace Wilson's liberal notions of self-determination. Yet, the tensions inherent in the co-existence of empire and nationalism remained unresolved.⁹

Thirdly, popular ideas about the renunciation of force sat uneasily with the fact of empire. Empire had been gained by force and maintained by, above all, force. Yet Article 8 in the Treaty of Versailles bound the members of the League to disarmament to 'the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement of common action of international obligations'. The military-industrial complex was subject to 'grave objections' and Article 23(d) also gave the League supervisory powers over the armament trade. The League therefore sought to ban arms sales to insurgent movements in Africa and the Middle East in order to preserve imperial security, but British officials also feared that arms regulations would hinder supply of arms to troops throughout the empire.¹⁰ The British government's dictum of disarmament had an uncomfortable relationship with its responsibility to maintain empire.

Disarmament, collective security and the League of Nations were also vital parts of the programmes of the many peace movements that sprung up in the interwar period. Universal suffrage in 1918 had produced a plethora of civic organisations dedicated to mobilising the mass electorate.¹¹ Although many of these groups were politically centrist, the influence of the internationalist League of Nations Union was pervasive.¹² Other pacifist organisations such as the Universal Congress of Peace, the Youth Anti-War Council, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the League to Abolish War and the No More War Movement were also active in spreading their message against war and armaments. Indeed, as Martin Ceadel has claimed, the 'most interesting and influential pacifist movement in modern times [was] that of Britain between the two world wars.'¹³ Widespread public participation in these movements thus pointed to an important social shift in the politics of interwar imperial Britain. Informed and organised citizens were now able to effectively support and protest any decisions policymakers sought to make.

These economic and socio-political changes in the interwar period also point to a deeper inclusive cultural shift in interwar Britain. The familiar list of names— Nietzsche,

Picasso, Freud, Schoenberg, Darwin—were the turn-of-the-century modernist iconoclasts for philosophy, art, psychology, music and science. But it was the war that gave the intellectual impulses of modernism—of liberation and rebellion—full rein. Art, war and technology combined, in Modris Eksteins' thesis, into a modernism that exalted emotion over rationality, chaos over order and a modernism carried over from elite culture into mass culture.¹⁴ The senseless carnage made possible by technological advancement shook faith in the ideal of progress. The creative forces of science destroyed the certainties of the past. Faith in the rightness of the war was exploded by the soldiers and intellectuals who peddled the 'War Myth'¹⁵ and as a corollary, the rightness of the imperial past came into question as well.

Perhaps the typical Briton did not read T.S. Eliot's *Waste Land* or appreciate Roger Fry and Vanessa Bell's post-impressionist art.¹⁶ Perhaps as A.J.P. Taylor said, the 'great contemporary works of literature' were 'beyond' the ordinary people and they preferred more accessible fare. Always the revisionist, he wrote, by the 'prosaic standard, this was the best time mankind, or at any rate Englishmen, had known: more considerate, with more welfare for the whole mass of people packed into a few years than into the whole of previous history.'¹⁷ Yet, the public still had changed its reading habits. The Christian and temperance morality tales popular in the decades before the war were passed over for new spy thrillers and crime novels. Violence, technology, crime, the supernatural and adventure were the prevailing content of interwar bestsellers in Britain.¹⁸ The Christian and Enlightenment ideals of the past were being questioned implicitly, if not explicitly. It followed that the politics of the past would also be questioned. In the period after the First World War, Britons were in not only a political and economic crisis, but a spiritual one. E.H. Carr looked back at the past two decades and called them the 'Twenty-Years' Crisis', the crisis of liberalism, of utopianism against realism and the year in which he wrote, 1939, was to prove him right.¹⁹

But for Carr, the 1920s were still 'golden years' of tranquillity, optimism and reconciliation, and other histories of the 1920s also portray it as a calm interlude before the debacle of the 1930s when the British were more interested in solving domestic economic and social problems than being involved in faraway crises.²⁰ Yet the outward motions of peacemaking, according to Sally Marks, only contributed to the illusion of peace, while tensions still existed.²¹ If one looked further outside of Europe, the picture

was definitely neither quiet nor harmonious. No matter how much the British wished for a respite from the troubles, nationalists, politicians, generals, and warlords in the Middle East, Africa and Asia actively created situations that the British could not ignore. The crisis for Carr was European, national and personal. But one could also link this sense of crisis to Britain's place in the world at large.

This crisis of confidence would be exacerbated during and after the Second World War as the British empire was subsequently dismantled but decolonisation for Britain did not begin *after* the Second World War. Of course, the rapid dismantling of most British colonial structures occurred in the decades after 1945, but this view discounts the process of decolonization for informal empire after the First World War. The end of Britain's system of special rights and privileges in China does not fall comfortably into the rubric which John Darwin uses in his seminal work, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World*, in which he claims that the Second World War and its aftereffects served as the 'trigger for an infinite series of transformations.'²² Rather, in China's case and in other parts of the informal empire, it was the *First* World War that mattered.

In the Middle East, Britain had avoided formal annexation and instead opted for informal empire, keeping the Ottoman Empire as a buffer to protect British India. With the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, Britain became the dominant power in the Middle East, but at the same time, influential nationalist movements countered British authority. The Chanak Crisis in 1922, involving a standoff between British and French troops and Turkish troops, had serious implications not only for Lloyd George's political future, but also revealed the unwillingness of the British public to go to war again. Furthermore, Turkish nationalists won independence and abolished extraterritoriality in 1923. In 1922, Britain also declared Egypt's independence in the aftermath of Egyptian revolution. In Persia, Reza Khan repudiated British power in the same decade, with extraterritoriality coming to an end in 1928.²³ In Southeast Asia, Britain followed the United States, France and the Netherlands to take a conciliatory approach towards Siam, renouncing its 'unequal' rights in 1925.²⁴ Closer to home, Ireland became an independent country in 1921 with the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Decolonisation in China consisted of similar procedures: the process of relinquishing British privileges gained through the treaties signed at Nanjing and

Tianjin after the two Opium Wars, which included the opening of ports to British trade and settlement, for fixed tariffs, ceding Hong Kong to Britain and extraterritoriality, which freed British subjects in China from the rule of Chinese law. China was therefore not a unique problem. Thus, the retreat from China needs to be seen as an example of a larger trend going on in British foreign affairs in the 1920s. The 1920s were a period of tremendous economic, social and cultural flux; it was logical that neither the British nor the Chinese could or would keep relations the same.

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE: THE CHINA ISSUE AND THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

The initial step in this retreat was the first major gathering to discuss the East Asian question after the war. The first major disarmament conference in history, the Washington Naval Conference, was held from November 1921 to February 1922. Nine Powers with interests in East Asia and the Pacific gathered at Washington, D.C. — the United States, Japan, China, France, Great Britain, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands, and Portugal. This gathering focused on shaping the postwar East Asian international order. The conference ushered in a new system of international relations, in which the Powers decided to forego diplomacy based on the traditional balance-of-power, and instead resolved rather to abide by a spirit of cooperation with all of the other Powers.²⁵ The US was wary of Japanese expansionist ambitions in the Pacific and of its naval strength. Britain, on the other hand, was wary of US naval strength and sought to avoid an arms race. The Five-Power Treaty, signed by Britain, the US, Japan, France and Italy, limited naval armaments to a 5:5:3:1.5:1.5 ratio respectively.

The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, dating from 1902, was terminated and replaced by the Four-Power Treaty, in which the US, Britain, France and Japan agreed to maintain the status quo in the Pacific and promised to consult one another in the event of a dispute in the region. On the one hand, Japan received recognition of its special interests in Manchuria and other areas. On the other, the end of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance meant a recognition of the United States' strengthened presence in the region and within the international system after the war. By breaking up the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, the US effectively changed the international order in East Asia.

The decision was not without controversy. Right-wing commentators lamented the end of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The *National Review*, in multiple instances, excoriated the policymakers who were at Washington.²⁶ An editor wrote some years later in April 1925:

The more we reflect upon the abandonment of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, the more we regret that stupendous blunder from the British and the Imperial standpoint. It was one of those demonstrations of political thoughtlessness in which responsible statesmanship abounds.²⁷

In relation to China, the Powers at the Conference signed the Nine-Power Treaty, pledging to uphold the American-advocated Open Door policy of free trade and of respecting China's territorial and administrative integrity. The Conference also promised future modifications for extraterritoriality and the restoration of tariff autonomy in China. The US was wary of Japanese expansionist ambitions in the Pacific and in China, as were the British. Thus the Nine-Power Treaty was not only a friendly gesture to the Chinese, but also a strategy to limit the Japanese.

Participants and observers were hopeful that given this opportunity, China would 'work out her own salvation' and the Powers went home congratulating each other for having done China a good turn. In a talk at the Institute of International Affairs, Admiral Chatfield, the Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff, touted the achievements of Washington: 'Everyone went to the Conference in a spirit of cooperation and everyone left feeling that they had had a square deal.'²⁸ *The Times* headline for 02 February 1922 read, 'Washington's Triumph. A Great Promise Realized... China's Future Secure.'²⁹ Others were not so convinced. Chu Chao-hsin, the Chinese chargé d'affaires in London doubted the sincerity of the Powers. He said, '[H]ad not China views of her own as to how she should be opened up?' China was 'in the position of a joint at a sacrificial feast and guests talking about the best way to carve it up to their own advantage, while pretending that they had no self-interest in the matter.'³⁰ Despite this undercurrent of criticism, an atmosphere of optimism still prevailed. The Powers continued to hope that the Open Door policy would give Chinese leaders freedom to solve their domestic problems and that China would be stable and unified.

THE FOREIGN OFFICE, PARLIAMENT AND CHINA POLICY

Decisions on China policy in Britain were in large part made by the Foreign Office. The Cabinet in the early 1920s was preoccupied with the more pressing issues of Irish Home Rule, reparations, and the rise of Bolshevism, and China was only therefore discussed briefly, when discussed at all. In its deliberations, the Cabinet generally sided with the Foreign Office versus other departments and interests.

The Foreign Secretary (Lord Curzon, from 1919-1924, Ramsay MacDonald³¹ from January 1924 and Austen Chamberlain from November 1924-June 1929) led the process of decision-making in the FO and communicated lines of policy to and from the Cabinet. Under-Secretaries worked with the heads of the territorial departments to formulate major lines of policy and recommendations. Sir Victor Wellesley became Head of the Far Eastern Department in 1920 and was promoted to be Deputy Under-Secretary in 1924 and continued to be responsible for China policy. Since his superiors, the Permanent Under-Secretaries, Sir Eyre Crowe and Sir William Tyrell (after May 1925) were only peripherally involved in Chinese affairs, Wellesley was largely responsible for guiding the FO's China policy. He was conscientious, hard-working and cautiously pessimistic.³² The Head of Department who succeeded him, Sydney Waterlow, was an intellectual whose ambitious schemes could at the same time impress and frustrate his colleagues.³³ Educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge, Waterlow also moved in the same social circles as the Bloomsbury Group and it was said that he had proposed to Virginia Woolf in 1910 only to be refused. Waterlow would be replaced in 1926 by George Mounsey, a more self-effacing but accommodating individual. The clerks in the Far Eastern Department included men mostly in their thirties, with varying degrees of experience in East Asian affairs. Frank Ashton-Gwatkin knew Japanese, had been sent to Japan and Singapore and was a delegate to the Washington Conference. Basil Newton had been based in London and was 'always putting on the brake'.³⁴ William Strang came from the Northern Department without much experience or interest in the region. Later additions in 1926 included two older members of the China consular service with experience in the field: G.S. Moss and J.T. Pratt, both former student interpreters of Chinese and holders of various official posts in a number of Chinese cities. Moss, however, was conservative and pro-imperial, whereas Pratt, the recognised 'expert' in the department, became the

KMT's leading advocate. Moss' departure in 1927 and Pratt's continued influence, along with other personnel decisions, were strong indications of the direction of FO policy.

The Foreign Office received local information about China from the 'men on the ground' including the Peking Legation where the Minister resided and the Consuls in the treaty ports. Attached to the Legation were the First Secretary, the junior secretaries, the Commercial secretary and various attachés. The Governor of Hong Kong stayed in contact with the Colonial Office, which passed information and opinions on to the FO.

Although the public was often more interested in domestic rather than foreign policy, public opinion could constrain or support Government actions. Even if they sometimes allowed the Government free reign over foreign policy, Parliament at least kept a watchful eye on it, always sure to point out contradictions and faults in official rhetoric. The Foreign Office might not always act upon their ideas or opinions, but officials had to refine, thoroughly explain, and most of all, defend policy since every action was thoroughly vetted by concerned MPs. Parliament's role in conducting foreign policy was, in concrete terms, to pass legislation to ratify treaties, but the debates in both houses were a good barometer of public opinion. Lord Strang wrote that the parliamentary questions kept government 'broadly in step' with popular sentiment, as well as warning members if they strayed too far from domestic opinion.³⁵ Parliament's 'vigilance' set up a 'state of tension' among ministers and officials which was only relaxed as soon as it went into recess. However, in the early 1920s China was rarely on the parliamentary agenda and only provoked substantial discussion after 30 May 1925.

CHINESE ISSUES, 1922-1924

For the FO, China was a seemingly interminable mess. The country was in disarray; the Central Government was bankrupt, its Cabinet resigned every few months and provincial armies raised up by the warlords fought each other in a series of civil wars. From 1922-1924 Wu Pei-fu and the Chihli Clique were intermittently at war with Chang Tso-Lin's Fengtien Clique and Sun Yat-sen's KMT.³⁶ In the first Chihli-Fengtien War in 1922 Wu and his forces pushed Chang back to Manchuria, taking over control of the Central Government, only to have Chang return with a vengeance in

1924. In the meantime, Sun Yat-sen was in southern China, president of the self-proclaimed military government in Canton, and laying out plans to unify the country through a Nationalist-led Northern Expedition. The Annual Report from the British Legation in Peking for 1924 began with the following words: 'The story of the affairs in China during 1924, as during 1922 and 1923, is a gloomy one ... Almost every year in the recent history of the Chinese Republic has had its record of civil warfare and internal political disturbance...without...any great prospect of a return to sanity and unity of government.'³⁷ Each report contained detailed accounts of China's problems, which included: 'militarism and brigandage, which in places has become a direct menace to foreign life and property, opium cultivation universally on the increase, the seeds of Bolshevism germinating in the new industrial areas round the large treaty ports, and bearing fruit in strikes and boycotts.'³⁸

In the face of these problems, the FO maintained a passive and non-interventionist stance. The situation in China was seen as hopelessly chaotic and policymakers were loathe to intervene, even if intervention may have resulted in increased trade. Although in early 1923 Robert Clive, *chargé d'affaires* in Peking, still believed that China could not arrange its finances nor disband its soldiers without foreign assistance, writing: 'I do not believe that any foreigner with experience of this country, or any informed Chinese (provided he is not in office at the moment) would pretend that either of these ends can be achieved without foreign assistance,'³⁹ the Foreign Office was much less eager to recommend foreign aid or intervention.

Policymakers were also hesitant to use force to protect British subjects from the chaos and violence in China. Victor Wellesley, Assistant Secretary in the Foreign Office, wrote towards the end of 1923, acknowledging the limits of British foreign policy, that 'there is only one sovereign remedy for all China's ills, and that is that the administration of the country should be in foreign hands. This need only be mentioned in order to be dismissed.'⁴⁰ In 1924 Philip Snowden, the Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer wrote, in response to a proposal to build more Yangtse River gunboats in order to protect British subjects, 'There must be some limit beyond which if British subjects penetrate they must do without complete assurance of naval protection.'⁴¹ The Cabinet agreed that while the provision of gunboats was a 'necessity', they had strong objections against introducing a supplementary estimate for their immediate provision.

Already, the Government was renouncing force as a strategy in East Asia. It was becoming increasingly expensive to defend and protect British interests in the period after World War I. Wellesley explained the change in policy: 'no Power, and least of all ourselves, already with overburdened with commitments in every part of the world and with a depleted purse, is prepared to embark upon a policy of armed intervention on such a scale which of course [the foreign administration of China] implies.'⁴² The First World War had a devastating effect on trade and the economy and Britain was only slowly recovering in the 1920s⁴³ and the high cost of building new gunboats effectively dissuaded the Cabinet from approving the Yangtse Gunboat scheme.

The FO was also increasingly aware of new threats in China, specifically the rise of nationalism, the boycotts that accompanied it and the influence of the Soviet Union. In early 1922 thousands of seamen in Hong Kong went on strike, supported by Sun's provisional government in Canton. British business and life was seriously affected as servants, coolies, cooks, and other workers joined the strike, directing their ire at capitalists and foreign imperialists. Eventually in March the shipowners and seamen arrived at an agreement, which was called by a representative from Alfred Holt & Co., a shipping company in Hong Kong, 'a complete and abject surrender'.⁴⁴

However, the indignation of the business community in China and at home did not cause British policymakers to take a harder line, because they feared exacerbating the anti-foreign sentiment in the treaty ports. The British public and government believed that the strike in Hong Kong and the other strikes in the period were not simply symptoms of economic problems, but were caused by something deeper and more dangerous to established British interests – the ferment in 'ultra-democratic Canton, backed by Bolshevist activity'.⁴⁵ The Foreign Office was also monitoring the movements of Soviet representatives in China and expressed concern about their influence, especially among Chinese students. The visit of Adolf Joffe to China in January 1923 led to concern in Parliament, and Walter de Frece, a Conservative MP from Lancashire, raised questions about Joffe's speeches to students from radical organisations. In drafting a response, Wellesley noted: 'The Chinese Government are understood to have warned M. Joffe.' adding in handwriting, 'keeping a close watch [on?] his proceedings.' However, Wellesley himself was doubtful of the Chinese Government's awareness of the dangers of Bolshevism, as evidenced by his crossing

out a section of the original sentence, which had read, ‘The Chinese Government (*crossed out* - are fully alive to the dangers of Bolshevik propaganda, and) are understood to have made representations to M. Joffe.’⁴⁶ Though the British Government may have been ‘fully alive’ to the danger, it still did not interfere with Soviet activities in China. The Bolshevik threat seemed limited to Sun’s Canton, which they hoped would fall with the advance of the warlord Wu Pei-fu. They also thought that any kind of intervention on their part would only serve to stoke the flames of nationalism and drive more Chinese radicals into the Bolshevik camp.⁴⁷

Formal government policy was then, in the words of a clause in the Nine-Power Treaty: ‘To provide the fullest and most unembarrassed opportunity to China to develop and maintain for herself an effective and stable government;’ which implied support for China’s territorial and political integrity. Yet, there remained the uncomfortable issues of the British concessions in China, British citizens’ extra-territorial rights and China’s lack of tariff autonomy—all direct infringements on Chinese sovereignty. The chaos and uncertainty of China’s political future became convenient reasons for maintaining the status quo in China. Yet, policymakers were also reluctant to irritate the Chinese further and were cautious in their dealings.

For example, an old question raised in 1911 was still being addressed by the Cabinet was the leases for the British concessions. In 1923 the Conservative First Commissioner of Works, Sir John Baird, and the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, William Joynson-Hicks, supported offering lot holders in the British Concessions renewal of their leases for 999 years on a rental basis, which would provide an increase to Government income. The Foreign Office struck back, arguing that this position could be construed by the Chinese government as the British government making money ‘unjustifiably out of concessions received from the Chinese Government, and that the effect will be to weaken the position of H.M. Government as regards the continued enjoyment of extra-territorial privileges.’⁴⁸ In January 1924, the new Labour Secretary of State to the Colonies, J.H. Thomas, ‘strongly urged that the Treasury proposals should not be adopted,’ because in that event the Chinese Government would raise the ‘difficult and delicate question of extraterritoriality’.⁴⁹ Ramsay MacDonald, the Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister, acknowledged that the government would profit by about forty thousand pounds a year by leasing the concessions. ‘But’ he said, ‘the question of the

Crown leases is intimately connected with the much greater question of extraterritoriality in China...The war has diminished the prestige of all the European Powers...The Chinese have been encouraged...to look forward in the near future to a withdrawal of *all* foreign extraterritorial privileges and the surrender of *all* foreign concessions.’⁵⁰ Furthermore, he added, the demands of the Turks for the abolition of the Capitulations had strengthened the Chinese people’s determination to recover their sovereign rights. The Cabinet eventually reached the conclusion that there was not sufficient information to make a decision, and put the matter aside. Thus, the Cabinet, along with the Foreign Office, took a cautious approach towards relations with China, unwilling to lose Britain’s hard-earned privileges in China in face of the rise of nationalism but also unwilling to anger the nationalists.

For the British businesses and residents in China, the chaos that they witnessed in their lives in Shanghai and elsewhere required that the government take action to protect existing interests and they were notably disappointed by the government’s seeming apathy. For example, in 1923 Chinese bandits took train passengers hostage in the famous ‘Lincheng Outrage’. Counted among the hostages were some Englishmen and women who came back with horrifying stories of how they had been woken up in the middle of the night and forced to walk for miles in their pyjamas and without proper shoes, of the filth and squalor of the conditions they were forced to live in, and the debasing attitude of the Chinese bandits towards the foreigners. The incident, of course, caused business interests related to China to bombard the Foreign Office with letters demanding firm action. The telegram sent repeatedly by multiple Chambers of Commerce in Britain and in China read: ‘Future of Foreign Trade dependent upon Chinese realising trade residents here must be protected and failure to regard such outrage as cause for radical alteration attitude and stronger action will be regarded as confirmation of weakness with more disastrous results.’⁵¹

The Foreign Office responded to these demands with curt letters, explaining to these businesses that negotiations were going on with the Chinese and that they were preparing a railway police scheme which would ensure the safety of passengers. Sir Ronald Macleay, Britain’s minister to China, submitted a draft scheme for a Chinese railway police under foreign control. The Foreign Office approved of the scheme and Wellesley even called it ‘the only one of real importance’.⁵² Some of the Powers like

Italy, Portugal, Belgium, and France were willing to give Britain their support, but the Americans and Japanese hesitated to approve the scheme.⁵³ The details were leaked to newspapers, which resulted in the publishing of violently denunciatory articles in the Chinese press accusing Britain of having the deliberate intention of bringing about foreign control of Chinese railways. Macleay suspected the Japanese of leaking the details to the Chinese so that Japan could pose as the protector of China from an aggressive Britain.⁵⁴

This was symptomatic of another problem facing the Powers after the Washington Conference. Concerted action was difficult, and China was a major point of contention. One problem was France's delay in ratifying the Nine-Power Treaty which stalled attempts to build on the decisions of the Washington Conference. Wellesley hesitated to fully support a proposal to hold a further special conference to examine the state of affairs in China because he feared that there would be 'the risk of bringing out dangerous international rivalries'.⁵⁵ Writing to Wellesley, E.M. Gull, former employee of the Chinese Customs and secretary of the China Association, expressed a common British viewpoint when he doubted whether Japan sincerely desired a united and orderly China under a stable Government, because:

[Japan's] interest in China is not confined, like ours and that of America, to the desire to find a market for our goods and a field for the investment of our money, but is governed also by such considerations as the necessity for the economic control of China's resources and even the occupation of her territory for military purposes. These aims which can be attained whilst the country is weak and torn by internal dissension, would certainly be restricted by a comparatively strong and united people.⁵⁶

Eventually, the scheme fell through because of the inability of the Powers to cooperate with each other. On the one hand, the Foreign Office was cautious towards China, never wanting to take potentially antagonising actions towards the country. On the other, even when action was proposed, the new system of international diplomacy tied Britain's hands, preventing her from implementing policy to protect her interests.

BUSINESS INTERESTS IN BRITAIN AND TREATY-PORT RESIDENTS IN CHINA

The leaders of British businesses and the British residents in China were displeased with their government's cautious diplomacy. They were the most vociferous lobbyists concerning Chinese issues and had close ties with the FO and MPs, and thus the means to make their views known.

British interests in China were extensive in the 1920s and the FO could therefore not completely ignore their demands. The Crown Colony Hong Kong outdid all other seaports in the world in terms of total tonnage passing through it. British capital invested in the International Settlement in Shanghai amounted to £63.3 million, twice as much as that invested in the other concessions (Amoy, Chinkiang, Hankow, Kiukiang, Newchang and Tientsin). British investors also had a large stake in the railways, with the British portion of railway loans to China (apart from the Japanese loans in Manchuria and Shantung) being £26.4 million out of a total of £32.5 million. The Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation was the most powerful banking institution in China and had been widely involved in government and railway loans to the Chinese Government. Other British banks included the Chartered Bank of India, China and Australia, the Mercantile Bank of India and the P. & O. Banking Corporation. The firms of Jardine, Matheson & Co., Butterfield & Swire, the British-American Tobacco Company and the Asiatic Petroleum Co. constituted the most substantial mercantile interests. Mining companies (Kailan Mining Administration, Peking Syndicate), shipping firms like the Indo-China Steam Navigation Company and industrial firms made up the bulk of British interests in China.⁵⁷

However, while British investments and trade had made up the largest share of foreign investment and trade in China in the latter half of the nineteenth century, by the 1920s Britain had lost its predominant position. Russian, Japanese, and American interests were rapidly overtaking the British in China although Britain's actual trade and investment steadily increased. By 1920 Japan had outpaced the British Empire as a whole (with the exception of Hong Kong) to corner 31% of the China trade, whereas Britain and its empire made up 20.5%. By 1925 both Japan (28.2%) and the US (16.5%) were ahead of Britain and its empire (14.3%). Similarly the percentage of trade from

Hong Kong had steadily declined from 43.5% in 1896 to only 16.9% of foreign trade in 1925.⁵⁸ Additionally, China still did not constitute a very large market for Britain, despite the almost unlimited promise of the potential Chinese market. From 1923-1929 China was only ranked fifteenth in terms of Britain's export trade.

However, the promise of a market of 400 million convinced British business interests at home that they needed to maintain a foothold in China so that, when a stable government and unified China emerged, Britain would be ready to reap the benefits. The British economy was recovering from the effects of the war, which had left the country more dependent on exports, and the China market was perceived as a potential panacea for Britain's economic ills. China was especially important to those involved in cotton textile manufacturing, because their markets had been much reduced by the war and unemployment had become a problem. Although China in reality was not a large market for British cotton (from 1900-1913 China only made up 4-8% of its import market),⁵⁹ its significance and potential were always somewhat inflated in the British mind. In a letter to Lord Curzon, the Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs, the Manchester Chamber of Commerce wrote to protest the disorder in China in 1923 beginning with their main concern: 'Your Lordship will doubtless be aware of the large trade which in normal times is conducted between Manchester and the China market.'⁶⁰ E.M. Gull also acknowledged that the assumed relation of 'disorder in China to unemployment in Britain' was 'surely real enough in Lancashire and other manufacturing centres'.⁶¹ Hoping that the end of disorder in China would also end unemployment in Britain, business interests pressed the Government to take strong measures to stop the chaos. Unfortunately for them, the import of cotton textiles in China steadily declined from 1913-1930 because of increased Japanese competition in the textile market.⁶² Businessmen also put their hopes in railway building. Once railways linked the major trading centres in China, they believed, trade would be almost limitless.

The large companies therefore watched government decisions on China closely and sought to influence policy so that it would further their economic well-being. In 1889, a group of the largest and most important mercantile and banking bodies in China, Hong Kong and Japan formed the China Association. The Association sought to lobby the government through personal representations, rather than through more public channels,

and adopted a policy of collaboration with the FO. Despite the inevitable disagreements between them (especially in this period), the FO paid close attention to the Association's views, since the traders' general interest largely aligned with the government's desire to improve trade in China and indirectly, Britain's economic state. With representatives from Jardine, Matheson & Co., Swire & Sons, the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank and other large firms, the Association was a formidable conglomerate of vested interests.

The Association's General Committee (London Committee) decided on policy matters and the Secretary communicated their opinions to the FO. They were also in contact with the Chinese Embassy in London, founded a school to teach Chinese to members of the Far Eastern Department and held annual dinners and events in which business leaders and policymakers could mingle and discuss Chinese issues. The Association communicated with various Chambers of Commerce throughout the country and the Federation of British Industries. It also had associate branches in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Japan and members kept in close contact with their colleagues in China.

Business interests were closely linked to the treaty port community, from whom they received much of their information. The British treaty-port community made up most of Britain's presence in China, along with the missionaries who lived and worked inland. Traditionally, the British in the treaty ports were an insulated and isolated community, a remarkably discrete bit of England on the China coast.⁶³ Britons and Chinese were segregated and usually the only contact treaty-port residents would have with the natives would be with coolies, household servants, and compradores.

Many worked for the companies and banks listed above, some worked in government positions and some were stationed in China in the naval and military forces. Journalists, lawyers, accountants, teachers, policemen and other professionals made up the fabric of treaty-port society. For example, Beryl Lewis, a recent Cambridge graduate, went to Hong Kong as a young teacher in 1924 after brief stints in Islington and Kensington to fulfil her desire to 'see a bit more of the world rather than being pent up all the time in a classroom in rather frustrating conditions.'⁶⁴ British life in China, however, was modeled upon life in Britain. Life after work in the treaty ports revolved around British-style activities like dinner parties, going to the clubs, and sports. Lewis recalled that in

the summer swimming parties and yacht races were popular. She ‘would never have sailed a yacht in England.’⁶⁵ but won a few races in China. A tourist tract entitled *Picturesque Hongkong* claimed, ‘all that can possibly be desired; in fact every pleasure that outdoor life and exercise afford, including yachting and aquatic sports generally – on a grand scale – can be had in Hongkong almost for the asking.’⁶⁶ Sports were popular—Dora Wedlock, the wife of naval officer sent to Wei-hai-wei in 1924, took up badminton in China and hoped to pick up golf there. While staying in Hongkong she confessed, ‘No one does any work whatever’ in Hong Kong since all the work was done by Chinese servants.⁶⁷ Stephen Roskill, a midshipman on the *China Station* from 1921-1924, described the Peak in Hong Kong, the hill on which well-to-do foreigners lived: ‘All the houses on the Peak are very large and comfortable, and no Chinese are allowed to live up here.’⁶⁸ There was thus a physical and psychological distance between the British and Chinese, with the British on a spatially higher plane. Those who did engage in intimate contact with Chinese people, or who expressed an interest in learning the language or about the country’s culture, were considered peculiar.

Shanghai, the bastion of foreign privilege and luxury, was also famous for its segregated way of life. A sketch in the American magazine *Vogue* in 1924 described:

Shanghai social life is a cluster of glittering, dashing bodies of foreigners with a nimbus of servants. The Chinese themselves, in daily touch with foreigners, are nonetheless continents away ... [B]oth Europeans and Americans love China, because it is so completely flattering to the Anglo-Saxon sense of racial superiority. Democracy becomes a memory of another clime, while the present is a continuing experience of real supremacy.⁶⁹

Their self-imposed isolation from the Chinese meant that they relied upon a common set of assumptions to form their opinions about them.⁷⁰ As usual, the Chinese were designated with a hodgepodge of characteristics.

Firstly, ‘Chinese’ could be equated with oldness and backwardness. Arriving at Wei-hai-wei, Dora Wedlock wrote, ‘This is the real Wei-hai-wei, a Chinese town, walled in and with two gates. It is very old, and really Chinese. It is weird and quaint, with narrow streets...’⁷¹ Sir Alexander Hosie, a former diplomat in China, received a shock

when he was greeted by his old servants at the Peking Legation in 1919: ‘Seven years’ absence vanished for the moment till the same servants turned their heads and revealed the absence of their pigtails which were certainly more picturesque than the close cropped head they now affect.’ The pigtails were ‘picturesque’, while the close cropped head was an affectation, not authentically Chinese, and unbecoming to the Chinese servants. Hosie, like many of the British in China, was pessimistic about the role of these young Western-educated Chinese intellectuals, and doubted that China could really change for the better. He admitted that to him, the Chinese were ‘not always overclean and they never appealed to me, for in spite of many years residence in China I have never been able to bridge the gulf which separates white and yellow. I am told that within late years much progress has been made in this direction; but I may still be allowed to express my doubts as to the sincerity of the movement. A few educated and English-speaking Chinese do not make a nation!’⁷² The China he had lived in for much of his life was not going to change in an instant by the manoeuvring of a few young upstarts with a veneer of Western education. The designation ‘Young China’ was a contradiction for China was neither young nor growing. China was old, unchanging and unchangeable, at least by the Chinese themselves. It was the British, after all, who had turned a swamp and a barren rock into the profitable port of Hong Kong.

Their isolation also bred an atmosphere of misunderstanding and distrust. Hosie recommended that British merchant assistants learn Chinese, since in their dealing with the Chinese go-betweens, the compradore ‘is too often, I fear, the predominant partner’⁷³. A female correspondent for *The Times* in Peking wrote a series of articles entitled ‘The Woman’s View. Housekeeping in China’. In part one, the writer portrayed Chinese servants as able, willing, and to all appearances, models of obedience. Yet, a Chinese servant’s ‘secret ambition is to gain complete control of his master and his purse, and he has his deepest fellow conspirator in the cook.’⁷⁴ And thus, they engage in ‘squeezing’ the master. ‘According to their standard the Chinese are strictly honest, and “squeeze” is their legitimate right ... Perhaps this doubles his master’s expenses, yet the cook looks guileless and considers himself honest, and indeed, flagrant dishonesty about real valuables is rare, and silver, jewelry, books, furnitures, embroideries, and clothes are safe in most cases.’ The Chinese were a useful for their economic value, a potentially great market for British goods, but once they

entered into European lives, they posed a threat, made even more dangerous because of their subtlety and cleverness.

In the treaty-port mind, it was held that the Chinese and British should be separated and that if any Chinese were to be let into British life, they should be in a subservient position, taught British ways and trained to become less Chinese. Otherwise they could pollute British homes with not only their physical filthiness, but also with their innate corruption. It followed that the new China, insubordinate and defiant, wanting to strip them of extraterritorial rights, was unacceptable since it was these very privileges that enabled Britons to keep their immunity and their superior position.

Although treaty-port residents were in close contact with their colleagues in Britain and often shared similar views, significant discrepancies existed in their attitudes towards China policy. While events in China could only threaten capital flow to London, it threatened a way of life in China. In contrast to their London-based counterparts, this community took a more hawkish and unaccommodating view towards events in China in the 1920s. Though the British government had in the past been a staunch supporter of 'Britain in China,' after the war, opinions increasingly diverged. Whereas the Foreign Office was willing to abide by a non-interventionist policy, the treaty port community smarted from neglect and was nostalgic for the past when the British presence had been feared and respected. By 1922 Britons in China were the target of anti-foreign demonstrations and strikes and brigandage on the railways threatened British lives. Though the situation had changed, the rhetoric and mindset remained similar to the past. The Lincheng outrage, for example, was compared to the Boxer Rebellion. Roland Thornton, a representative of Swire & Sons, expressed his disappointment at the response to the Canton Seamen's Strike in a report to the home company:

The movement spread and finally reached a culmination in an attempted secession of the whole Chinese community of Hong Kong. Faced with this the Colony got a bad attack of nerves, and partly from necessity and partly I daresay under instructions from London the Government capitulated and the end of the business was virtually a peace-treaty between Hong Kong and Canton, largely dictated by the latter! ... The settlement was generally

acclaimed as a great “Chinese victory,” which I am afraid is just about what it was!⁷⁵

This time, the roles had been reversed, and the Chinese were the victors. But policymakers usually acknowledged these opinions only to dismiss them. The 1924 Annual Report on China said that ‘[f]oreign public opinion in the treaty ports is apt...to overlook...aspects of the present day situation’,⁷⁶ and implied that the ill-informed and narrow-minded opinions of British residents in China were a nuisance to the Foreign Office.

Thus, in a contemporary world that was being turned upside-down, Britons in China held onto history in their search for stability. They hearkened back to the past and were conservative in politics, lobbying to keep things the same. Their images of China and the Chinese corresponded to their struggle to preserve their past of superiority and separation from the Chinese.

MISSIONARIES

Missionaries also formed a part of the British presence in China, but they were distinct in their outlook from their compatriots in the treaty ports. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, Christian missionaries constituted the largest single European foreign group identified by a common purpose in China, with Britons and Americans making up the majority.⁷⁷ By 1919, foreign missionaries totaled almost 7,000, with about 350,000 communicants claimed and about 200,000 Chinese students enrolled in missionary schools. More than half of the missionaries lived in the coastal provinces, a quarter in the Yangtze valley and the rest inland. Their sense of mission and their strongly-held beliefs shaped their views of China and the Chinese. They lived in closer proximity and on more intimate terms with Chinese people, but they also engaged in their own version of social segregation, operating according to an entrenched racial hierarchy and frowning upon adoption of Chinese children and intermarriage.⁷⁸ They were not as outwardly active as other groups in seeking to influence government policy, but had influential connections and a solid base of support at home.

Missionaries were attached to a wide gamut of associations. Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians (from both Scotland and England) and Wesleyans operated throughout all of China. The first missionary sent to China was from the London Missionary Society (LMS), which had a Congregationalist outlook. The China Inland Mission (CIM), founded by Hudson Taylor, was inter-denominational and operated in China's interior. The work was primarily evangelical, but missionaries had a variety of means to share their message. The British Foreign and Bible Society had a number of Chinese colporteurs who sold and distributed Bibles and Christian literature. Missions also set up schools with a Western and Christian curriculum. The Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, which was closely linked with the Church Missionary Society (CMS), focused on education for Chinese women in Fukien. They also set up hospitals and part of its work dealt with treating opium addicts. Pastor Hsi, a Chinese Christian, was widely touted as an example of a successful anti-opium work by missionaries.⁷⁹ A former opium addict, he began his own Christian anti-opium ministry in Shansi.

The missionaries' understandings of China and the Chinese were also inherited partially from the popular books in missionary circles. A list in the *Chinese Recorder* compiled from the recommendations of 125 'people believed to be careful observers and discriminating readers' living in China and representing 32 missionary societies was a useful barometer of missionary reading material in 1925.⁸⁰ The books on the list were mostly written from the 1890s up to 1914 by missionaries. At the top of the list was the American missionary, A.H. Smith, with the two most popular books: *Chinese Characteristics* and *Village Life in China*. Smith had divided the first book into convenient categories to describe the Chinese. The first and presumably most important characteristic was the Chinese emphasis on 'face', which Smith extrapolated to mean dissimulation or dishonesty. The Chinese relativisation of truth also affected their behaviour, resulting in disregard of accuracy, time and misunderstanding. Of their 'intellectual turbidity' and narrowness, Smith said, 'Their existence is merely that of a frog in a well, to which even the heavens appear only as a strip of darkness.'⁸¹ The positive characteristics (e.g. 'industry', 'benevolence', 'mutual responsibility and respect for law') merely masked the overall suffering of the Chinese, which only the message of Christianity could relieve. Other books included J.O.P. Bland and Edmund Backhouse's *China Under the Empress Dowager* and *Annals of the Court of Peking*,⁸² which described the decadence, decay and ultimate failure of traditional Chinese

government. The Confucian classics edited by James Legge, missionary contributions by W.E. Soothill (*Three Religions of China*) and CIM publications (*Life of Hudson Taylor* and *Pastor Hsi*) served even more to contrast the blessings of Western civilisation with the hopelessness engendered by the Chinese religions.

Despite their common methods of working and shared ways of thinking, however, Western Christian leaders disagreed about the future of mission work in China. The 1920s saw a definite turn towards ecumenism, an emphasis on a social gospel and a move towards the indigenisation of the church in China. The National Christian Council (NCC), an advisory body for Protestant missions in China, was established in 1922. It was an attempt at ecumenism, of fostering co-operation between different denominations. It was also a strong advocate of the indigenisation of Chinese Church. However, it was too inclusive for the more conservative missions, like the CIM and Christian and Missionary Alliance, who disagreed with the ‘modernist’ bent of many of its members.⁸³ Similarly, the CMS also underwent a split in 1922, with the liberals remaining within the society and the conservative evangelicals forming another organisation.

The Student Christian Movement (SCM), another liberal ecumenical organisation, was active on the universities in England, where they recruited the young for service in China. For example, Margaret Diggle, a first-year undergraduate at Girton College, Cambridge, attended a SCM study on the Gospel of John where, in keeping with its modernist tendency, they began by studying ‘all the other religions of the time’.⁸⁴ Another member, Edith Johnston, who had graduated from Girton several years earlier, was active in the SCM, received YWCA training and went to China to participate in education and industrial work. She came back on furlough and studied economics and sociology at the London School of Economics, later serving on the Industrial Committee of the National Christian Council and writing a survey on Chinese industrial conditions in 1920. Other organisations like the Church of England Zenana Society promoted female education in Fukien. A booklet published about the work revealed much of the worldview of these missionaries before the First World War: “‘Ring out the Old, Ring in the New.’ New Ideas in Old China.’ The contrast between ‘old China’ and the ‘new West’ was emphasized, as was the contrast of ‘dark’/‘light’: Western education along with ‘[l]ight and comparative cleanliness have been introduced into

these antiquated temples and ancestral halls'.⁸⁵ A story like that of Ai-seng, a nine-year-old girl, in which her father, an opium smoker, tried to kill her mother and sell Ai-seng before she was found by missionaries, exemplified the contrast of the bondage of opium versus the freedom of salvation and the misery of typical Chinese life contrasted with the hope and joy of Christian life. These activities were indicative of the turn to a social gospel, in which religious, economic, social and political activism blended into one.

In an environment of brigandage and warfare, the missionaries were reinforced in their belief that their gospel was the only means of salvation from the chaos. One missionary reporting to the LMS in 1922 wrote, 'In looking back over the past, and forward to the future, the more one realizes that the only hope of China is in Christ and His Salvation...Old beliefs and restraints are cast off—it is the people's country; officials are losing power; and life and property are in many places not safe; and we know that until the Kingdom of God comes in power there can be no real lasting peace.'⁸⁶

They also sought to distance themselves from the forces of imperialism that were becoming increasingly unpopular with the Chinese population. Chinese discontent first manifested itself in the student-led anti-Christian movement beginning in 1922, in which they held rallies and protests, published pamphlets, and attempted to burn down missionary schools and church buildings. By the end of 1924 anti-Christian agitation became tightly linked with anti-imperialism and nationalism. Students and labour politicians engaged in a wave of anti-Christian agitation which began on Christmas and Boxing Day in Canton, Changsha, Wuchang and other cities in South and Central China. The identification with imperialism only served to make their already unpopular message less popular. Thus, missionaries therefore attempted to distance themselves by lambasting the West for its hypocrisy in its past dealings with China and portraying themselves as sympathetic to the Chinese cause.

These missionaries, then, laid out their own programme for China's salvation. As part of their solution to China's problems, missionaries dreamed of a fusion of East and West, with the East assimilating and living out Western Christian values. A prominent example who missionaries looked to was the warlord Feng Yu-Hsiang, who was popularly known as the 'Christian General'. The CIM published a tract entitled *General Feng: A Good Soldier of Christ Jesus* in 1922. The tract identified General Feng with

the Old Testament leaders of Israel and with the leaders of the Reformation. In this tract of eighty-one pages, Feng was compared to Cromwell at least five times. One of his formative experiences, according to the tract, was witnessing the cruel actions of the Chinese during the Boxer uprising and contrasting them to the heroics of Western martyrs.⁸⁷ The writer also used General Feng as a counterexample to many of the assumptions held about the Chinese. A common assumption was that the Chinese were a passive and even effeminate race, but, Feng was an ‘outstanding illustration of a robust and manly Christianity’.⁸⁸ He also distinguished himself from the rest of his race by living in a simple way, ‘without any of the usual pomp and show of the Chinese officials’.⁸⁹ Protestantism was thus conflated with Western values of manliness and integrity. The missionaries hoped that these kind of men, these soldiers of Christ Jesus, in the midst of civil war, could rise up and save China from itself. Only later would disillusionment with Feng come.

Part of this programme of fusing East and West was the missionaries’ attempt to accommodate the rising tide of nationalism into their message and appropriate the idea of revolution into a Christian programme. In a section entitled ‘The Giant is awake’, a writer for the 118th Report of the British & Foreign Bible Society declared about the Chinese: ‘A real revolution has taken place in their lives and outlook ... Their eyes are now towards the future...accepting of new ideas, modern inventions...’⁹⁰ The writer claimed that an important cause of these ‘radical and significant changes which have taken place in China...has been the circulation of the Christian Scriptures among the people’ arguing ‘that they have influenced the thought of the people and are helping to mould the nation of the future is a fact’.⁹¹

The SCM published a book in 1922 composed of a series of articles written by Chinese scholars in an attempt to appropriate the revolution for their own programme. *China Today Through Chinese Eyes* included articles by Dr. T.T. Lew, the Dean of the Theological Faculty at Peking University, Professor Y.Y. Tsu of St. John’s College, Shanghai, Dr. Cheng Ching Yi, a leader in the Chinese Church, and Hu Shih, who was not a Christian. By publishing these articles, the Student Christian Movement was expressing its support for the ‘Chinese Renaissance’. In May 1922 the SCM participated in the National Christian Conference in Shanghai, of which Cheng was the chairman. This conference marked an important milestone in these indigenisation

efforts and the emphasis of the Conference was on the importance of Chinese leadership, although it still took twenty-five years before there was Chinese leadership at the executive level.

A.M. Chirgwin, the assistant Home Secretary for the LMS, wrote to the audience back home in the January 1924 issue of the *Contemporary Review*, in which he made bold claims for China:

The history of China has no parallel save in that of the Hebrew nation...China is the key to the future of the world...The time is surely ripe for some outstanding Christian scholar to set forth to these open-minded people the Christian philosophy of life. The throes of intellectual rebirth are just now upon China; it is her hour of travail, and what manner of New China shall be born no man can say.⁹²

The messianic tone and biblical references in these reviews are unmistakable. This was the same message of salvation, but transferred from the more abstract realm of being saved from hell in the future to the more tangible realm of being saved from the present state of chaos and suffering. If China was embarking on a Renaissance, then a Reformation was sure to be near, and it was up to the West to provide a clear example and to continue influencing this positive change. Thus, salvation could be found in Christ and also in Britain. This kind of world-view suggests that these Britons understood China in a limited way and could only draw from and refer to the European experience in the past. This view was also symptomatic of a mindset that was fixated on the idea of progress. China was finally emerging from the Dark Ages and would have her own Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment. The missionaries' and other Britons' goal in China was, above all else, salvation – salvation from a future of perdition and from the present chaos and misery. This regeneration would result in a New China fashioned in Britain's own image – upright, virtuous, manly, and progressive – but at the same time retaining its Chinese soul. East and West would be synthesized and result in a new hope for the salvation of the world.

The Catholic Church, with which a small number of British missionaries were affiliated, also emphasized the indigenisation of the Chinese Church in these years, although

indigenisation began in earnest after 1926. In that year political events in China caused Pope Pius XI to write a letter to the Heads of Missions in China encouraging the establishment of an indigenous Church. Their approach to evangelisation was also distinct from their Protestant counterparts. Although both emphasised social welfare projects and set up schools, the Catholic Church's efforts were marked less by attempts to *change* the Chinese than by attempts to adapt to the needs of Chinese society. According to Cindy Chu, in her article on the Catholic Church in Hong Kong in the interwar period, the Church realised that the 'best way to be accepted was to pay heed to the actual needs of society at large, to be sensitive to local demands, and to see matters from local perspectives'.⁹³ The Catholic approach differed in emphasis from that of the Protestants, which was marked by the desire to radically change society by their message. Thus the Protestant missions found themselves more aligned with the forces of revolution, whereas the Catholic Church was less inherently revolutionary. Since the Chinese Church, above all, was to be Catholic rather than Chinese, the universality of the Church ranked above any kind of national identity. Universality rather than nationality was the goal.

INTELLECTUALS

Although discussions of China were dominated by the above groups, China also inspired intellectual interest in interwar Britain, especially from the left, for whom China became 'a legitimizing source of resistance to...challenge western conventions, introspection and complacency'.⁹⁴ Bertrand Russell, the well-known mathematician, philosopher, and pacifist, travelled to China in 1921, lecturing and touring, and recorded his impressions and prescriptions in *The Problem of China* in 1922. Russell believed that the West had much to learn from China, and not vice-versa. He said, 'If intercourse between Western nations and China is to be fruitful, we must cease to regard ourselves as missionaries of a superior civilization, or, worse still, as men who have a right to exploit, oppress, and swindle the Chinese because they are an "inferior" race.'⁹⁵ Instead of writing about everything wrong with China, Russell used China as a foil to point out everything that was wrong with Western civilization, making statements like, 'The Great War showed that something is wrong with our civilization; experience of Russia and China has made me believe that those countries can help to show us what it is that

is wrong. The Chinese have discovered, and have practiced for many centuries, a way of life which, if it could be adopted by all the world, would make the world happy. We Europeans have not.'⁹⁶ Russell's prototypical Chinese coolie was destitute, but his simplicity and happiness provided a strong contrast to the high-pressured and dissatisfied lives in industrialised cultures. Russell's own prescription for the world was a kind of benevolent, libertarian socialism that would bring an end to the oppression exercised by imperialist countries.

Although Russell's view of China was unashamedly positive, he also utilised the same assumptions as those with whom he disagreed. The Chinese people, to Russell, were the 'most patient', 'laughter-loving', and 'pacific' people in the world. They were also superior because they did not gain by oppression or the exploitation of weaker nations; rather they secured whatever they enjoyed by means of their own merits and exertions alone, which resulted in a peaceable existence and a 'life full of enjoyment'.⁹⁷

Obviously, the Chinese people had engaged in oppression and exploitation in the past, but Russell's world-view was, in a sense, limited by his use of a binary of imperialists and imperialised, of oppressors and oppressed. Russell was advocating his own political platform and prescriptions for the illnesses of the modern world and selected aspects of Chinese civilisation that fitted in with his philosophy.

David Martinez-Robles has written an article on Russell as an orientalist, unable to escape from the scaffolding of thought raised by numerous generations about China.⁹⁸ Still, what is interesting about Russell is that his project was to argue for a cessation of domination. He argued for a decrease of real power manifested in the shape of military force.

Poets, artists, and philosophers who were variously connected with the famous Bloomsbury Group also incorporated Chinese themes into their work, and some of them corresponded with Chinese students living in England in the 1920s. Modernist intellectuals had already incorporated Chinese themes into their work before the 1920s. Ezra Pound, the American poet living in London during the First World War, had published his 'translations' of Chinese poetry in a small volume called *Cathay* in 1915, and became an example of what Imagist poets strove to achieve in their own art. The volume's concrete subject matter and use of free verse were a radical departure and

protest against the formalism and elaborate diction of Victorian poetry.⁹⁹ A few years later Arthur Waley published his own translations of Chinese poems. His purpose was slightly less iconoclastic, but his book was popular among the British reading public. Part of the appeal of the poems lay in their topical relevance. They explored themes of exile, separation, and warfare that were familiar to Britons who had experienced the First World War. An anonymous reviewer of Waley's *One Hundred Seventy Chinese Poems*, published in 1916, remarked that Chinese poets, 'even write about Belgium and the Germans'.¹⁰⁰ From 1922 to 1924 other compilations of Chinese poetry included poems with similar themes. *The Lost Flute and Other Chinese Lyrics*, published in 1923, contained poems about the death of a loved one, a husband at war, and of lovers going to war.

These kinds of poems depicted an 'exotic' China, a China to which one could escape. The preface to *The Lost Flute* described the thought and sentiment of the Chinese poems as 'ethereal' and claimed that the goal of the volume was to help others enjoy their 'charm.' This otherworldly China offered war-weary Britons an imaginary civilization of antiquity and unmatched serenity. To Britons experiencing the cataclysmic upheaval of the First World War, these Chinese poems could be a way to escape the modern world and its troubles. Waley's slim volume was surprisingly popular, and the author attributed its success with 'ordinary people' to its emphasis on concrete subject matter. He said, 'ordinary people in England have very little use for abstractions and when poetry, under the influence of the higher education, become abstract, it bores them.'¹⁰¹ On the other hand, Waley still believed that Chinese poetry was under-appreciated and he wrote: 'the view that something essential was lacking in Chinese poetry was expressed in 1919 by my friend E.M. Forster who said, when reviewing one of my books, that Chinese poems were 'lovely' but not 'beautiful'.¹⁰² At the same time, Forster himself retained and recalled these poems when he began one of his own works with a line from one of Waley's translations.¹⁰³

In the realm of art Roger Fry, the Bloomsbury artist and art critic, incorporated discussion of Chinese art in his lectures on drawing, design, and art history in the early 1920s. Like Russell, Pound, and Waley, Fry also looked to China for an alternative way of representing the world. In his notes, he extolled the virtues of Chinese art while passing comment on the shortcomings of Western painting. He wrote, 'Chinese

painting has shown us [that]...more than half of our representative painting is useless, not merely useless but dead material crushing, succumbing the living idea. That by saying very much less it is possible to arrive at the expression of a great deal more.’¹⁰⁴ Fry had, in the earlier part of the century, experimented with abstraction, along with Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, but in the 1920s he moved back to a more ordered, representational style, which may have been in reaction to the disorder caused by the First World War. Perhaps his search for order and simplicity led him away from the Western world to an ancient, peaceful Eastern one.

Also during the early 1920s, Bloomsbury was already involved with Young China. For example, Fry, his good friend G.L. Dickinson, and the economist Graham Wallas met and corresponded with a young Chinese student named Hsu Chih-mo studying at King’s College, Cambridge. Hsu, who went by the name ‘Hamilton’ (he named himself after Alexander Hamilton), eventually became one of the most well-known Chinese poets of the twentieth century.¹⁰⁵ He attended King’s after a brief stint at LSE, and while in England met with Dickinson, Fry, Waley, Clive and Vanessa Bell, Leonard and Virginia Woolf, Wallas, Russell, and John Maynard Keynes. His letters to Wallas and Fry from 1921 to 1923 are full of effusive compliments (‘the greatest occasion of my life to meet...Mr. Dickinson’, ‘What a pleasure, what a charm, what a comfort, to be just near you and hear your melodious voice!’) and deferential (‘you whose large and sweet personality opened a new vision to me and has always been inspiring me to thoughts and feelings that are large, beautiful, and noble’), but his correspondence also had the pragmatic goal of recruiting these British scholars to lecture in China.¹⁰⁶ As part of his efforts to convince his friends to come to China, Hsu emphasized Young China’s desire to model itself after England. In typical Hsu fashion, he wrote to Wallas, the economist at the LSE, ‘I could hardly suppress my joy when I fancy that the future School of Economics for new China shall be flourishing side by side with the old School of Economics in London, from which it would draw (*inserted* – constant) inspiration and after which it would model.’¹⁰⁷ Wallas went to China later, in the mid-1930s but Fry never went. Although the exchanges between Hsu and the British intellectuals seemed hardly reciprocal, with Hsu doing most of the learning, contact between Chinese and British intellectuals would still contribute to the development of modernism in England.

Additionally, Bloomsbury's interest was not only intellectual, but also spilled over to the political realm. Both Dickinson and Russell were asked by the Labour Government in 1924 to be on the Advisory Committee for the Boxer Indemnity.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, Leonard Woolf worked alongside them to advise the Labour Party and the Union of Democratic Control on international affairs, which often included discussion of China in the 1920s.¹⁰⁹

THE YELLOW PERIL

Aside from the political and intellectual interest from the left, China was a topic that had more popular appeal at home. In October 1922 Roger Fry told his sister that he 'managed to pick up some fresh Somerset Maugham stories at the library. What a swell he is.'¹¹⁰ These 'fresh' Maugham stories may have been some of the author's writings on China, which were published that same year. Maugham had spent the winter months from 1919-1920 travelling up the Yangtse, jotting down notes, and published his observations in *On a Chinese Screen* in 1922. In the same year he also wrote and produced a play, *East of Suez*.

The contrast between these two works is striking. In *On a Chinese Screen*, Maugham is warmly sympathetic to the Chinese people and saves his ire for his fellow British and other foreigners. Maugham mocks the insularity of the treaty-port British and pokes fun at their superior airs. Hardly anyone escapes Maugham's acerbity; the British, other Europeans and Americans, Protestant missionaries, and even upper-class Chinese are all a target while his portraits of the Chinese coolies are compassionate. Ever cheerful, Maugham's coolies accept their plight with resignation and good humour. Furthermore, while the Chinese were already in touch with 'the Eternal', the missionaries, who were trying to bring them to the Eternal, were in inner turmoil themselves.¹¹¹

In *East of Suez*, however, Maugham's protagonists and antagonists are reversed. Although missionaries are still a target, the Chinese become the villains. The main character Daisy is Eurasian, and in the beginning of the play, one can barely see the Chinese in her, but as the plot unfolds and she succumbs to the negative Chinese influences, she appears more and more Chinese, and her actions eventually result in the ruin of the only English people who let her into their lives. The Englishmen and woman

are good-natured, witty, and honest. The Chinese characters are childish, speaking in pidgin English, always smiling, bowing, outwardly subservient, but inwardly cunning and cruel. The Amah, who is Daisy's mother, acts as an evil influence. Eventually Daisy's Chinese identity takes her over and in the concluding scene she tells her lover George, 'China is crowding in upon me; I'm sick of these foreign clothes. I have a strange hankering for the ease of the Chinese dress ... Have you ever smoked opium? ... In my heart there are secrets that are strange even to me, and spells to bind you to me.'¹¹² The East, then, was something mystifying, pernicious, and dangerous. George the Englishman, whose life has been ruined by Daisy tells her, 'I knew that you were truthless and cruel. I've loved you, yes, but all the time I've hated you ... All that was in me that was honest and decent and upright revolted against you. Always, always...'¹¹³ Daisy, then, becomes a symbol of the East and George and the other English people, the symbol of the West, and when East and West met, the West was in a position of danger. Maugham may have written this way to cater to his London audience. Since *East of Suez* was a play, Maugham may have thought that using stereotypes would make his play more entertaining and accessible to a London public used to Oriental tropes. He may also have been playing upon the Yellow Peril fears, which were at a new high in 1922.

Around this time newspapers like *The Times* and the *Manchester Guardian* began printing a series of popular sensational articles about the evils perpetrated by the Chinese community in England. These stories included crafty Chinese men, drugs (cocaine or opium), a Chinese restaurant or laundry and young single English women who became victims of drug abuse. Chinese men were seen as especially dangerous to white women, in view of the large discrepancy between the numbers of Englishmen and women after the War. 1922 was the year of the Freda Kempton case, the case of a dancer who died from cocaine poisoning and it was assumed that she had got the cocaine from Brilliant Chang, a Chinese restaurant owner who 'kept her'.¹¹⁴ Other articles told stories of Chinese at Holborn being found in possession of cocaine and opium and about a dead Chinese man at a laundry found with three unconscious white women.

It was, of course, also around this time that Sax Rohmer was churning out his popular Fu Manchu books yearly. The first Fu Manchu book was serialised in 1912-1913 and

similar themes ran throughout the rest of the series, which was extremely popular in the 1920s. Dr. Fu Manchu was a cruel and cunning Chinese villain, ‘the yellow peril incarnate in one man’.¹¹⁵ He killed in order to arouse the West to the awakening of the East and he used dacoits, snakes, and mysterious potions to accomplish his crimes. In one scene, Dr. Petrie and Nayland Smith – the heroes – encounter one of Fu Manchu’s creatures and Petrie relates how Smith dealt with it: ‘Smith had dashed the thing’s poisonous life out with one straight, true blow of the golf club!’¹¹⁶ These heroes, an English doctor and Commissioner formerly of Scotland Yard, were straightforward, manly, strong, and with a dash of humour. Juxtaposed with these stereotyped Englishmen were the stereotyped Orientals, who were devious, effeminate, and cruel.

By setting his books in London, Rohmer made the danger of the Yellow Peril seem more immediate, more threatening. Opium dens – dark, shadowy, and dizzying – supposedly populated the streets of London and the Thames became transformed into Fu Manchu’s highway. Rohmer’s 1922 book, *Tales of Chinatown*, like its predecessors, was set in London’s Chinatown. In it, Jews and Chinese were linked together as threats to the British.¹¹⁷ Allowing the Chinese into London turned everything topsy-turvy and nightmarish. They even threatened the heart of the British Empire. The protagonists, at one point, think that Fu Manchu ‘has found a new keyhole to the gate of the Indian Empire.’¹¹⁸

In a way similar to the British in China, the British at home kept their distance from the Chinese people. Perhaps it was acceptable to have Chinese objects and appreciate Chinese art. As one of Maugham’s treaty-port women said, ‘you might perfectly well have a Chinese screen in England’.¹¹⁹ But allowing Chinese people, culture, and values into British life was forbidden and dangerous.

CONCLUSION

China, feared or appreciated, thus had an impact on British life. Its future would affect the balance of power in East Asia. Its huge population meant that trade with it could be a panacea for the ills of the British economy, but also that those same population pressures could drive the Chinese to settle in places where they were unwelcome. The legacy of Chinese culture and thought could be an alternative to Western thought, but

the acceptance of Chinese people could undermine Western values and morality. People in Britain were interested in aspects of China, or at least in an idea of an exotic, different, potentially profitable China, which correlated with present-day domestic concerns. When writing about China, depending on the ideas that they were advocating, they selected from and attributed certain characteristics to the country. There was a kind of high-minded appreciation of the idea of historical China and a benevolent sort of condescending attitude that portrayed the 'good' Chinese as hard-working, peace-loving coolies. Disillusionment with the West, with Western values and thought turned intellectuals eastward for answers. But their engagement with the East was constrained by linguistic, geographical, and ideological limits. The historical and subservient Chinas, the good Chinas, were never threatening to the present. If China was distant, far, and ancient, it was seen positively. The present China, China in Britain, the 'Yellow Peril', on the other hand, was threatening. When the Chinese entered British lives or territory their exotic vices threatened to undermine national virtue and uprightness.

On the one hand, Chinese-ness was threatening to British civilisation. On the other, the British themselves had also been perennially unwelcome among the majority of the Chinese. This mutual suspicion had been a prominent and troubling factor in Sino-British relations since its inception. Yet the British, as much as some may have disdained contact with the Chinese people, were still content to stay and trade within China. Many Chinese, however, blamed the 'foreign-devil' imperialists for causing and exacerbating China's political and economic troubles. For centuries the Chinese had been too weak for their discontent to be regarded. The Boxer Rebellion, the most explosive of the anti-imperial movements, had been put down easily by the invasion of Western troops in 1900. But by the mid-1920s, Chinese nationalism began to be a potent force once again and its ire was concentrated on Britain. On the one hand, 'residual representations' held onto by treaty-port China or continued through Sax Rohmer's vivid iterations of the Yellow Peril would inform the British response. Yet, the political, strategic and indeed, cultural affect of the First World War also became increasingly important as the Chinese aimed their attack on the traditional structures of British imperialism in China.

¹ Niels P. Petersson, 'Gentlemanly and Not-so-Gentlemanly Imperialism in China before the First World War', in S. Akita, ed. *Gentlemanly Capitalism, Imperialism and Global History*, p. 117.

² See J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A study* (London, 1902); V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The last stage of capitalism* (London, 1927); P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, 'Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas II: New Imperialism, 1850-1945' *Economic History Review*, new series, 40, no. 1 (Feb 1987), Cain and Hopkins, *British imperialism* (London, 1993), and Raymond Dumett, *Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Imperialism: the new debate on empire* (London, 1999). See also Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1968) and Rosa Luxemburg, *The accumulation of capital* (London, 1951) for Hobson-Lenin-based theories on imperialism. For an argument against the connection between imperialism and capitalism, see Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism in Asia and Africa* (New York, 1970), pp. 4-16.

³ Julian Greaves, *Industrial Reorganization and Government Policy in Interwar Britain* (Aldershot, 2005), p. 8.

⁴ See W.R. Garside, *British Unemployment 1919-1939: A study in public policy* (Cambridge, 1990).

⁵ For a general overview of the debates over the British economy and the role of the government see Rex Pope, *The British Economy since 1914: A Study in Decline?* (New York, 1998) and for detail on the interwar period, see Robert W.D. Boyce, *British Capitalism at the Crossroads, 1919-1932: a study in politics, economics, and international relations* (Cambridge, 1987).

⁶ Ian M. Drummond, *British Economic Policy and the Empire 1919-1939* (London, 1972).

⁷ For an analysis of economics and its relation to state strength, see Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*.

⁸ See Ernest Gellner, 'Nationalism' *Theory and Society* 10, no. 6 (Nov 1981), pp. 753-776 and *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1983) for the causal relationship of modernisation to the rise of nationalism. For an argument against Gellner and one that looks at the pre-industrial roots of nationalism, see Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London, 1991) as well as the Warwick Debates in Ernest Gellner and Anthony D. Smith, 'The nation: real or imagined?: The Warwick Debates on Nationalism' *Nations and Nationalism* 2, no. 3 (1996), pp. 357-370.

⁹ One of the legacies of the postwar settlement is in Article 22 of the Treaty of Versailles, which details the 'mandatory' relationship between the former colonies and territories, advocating 'tutelage' of these territories by 'advanced nations.' The text of the treaty is at:

<<http://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/versa/versa1.html>>

¹⁰ David R. Stone, 'Imperialism and Sovereignty: The League of Nations' Drive to Control the Global Arms Trade' *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, no. 2 (2000), pp. 213-230, esp. pp. 218, 222.

¹¹ Helen McCarthy, 'Parties, Voluntary Associations, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Britain' *Historical Journal* 50, no. 4 (2007), pp. 891-912.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 896.

¹³ Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain, 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith* (Oxford, 1980).

¹⁴ Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (New York, 1989).

¹⁵ See Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: the First World War and English culture* (New York, 1992) and Paul Fussell, *The Great War and modern memory* (New York, 1975) for the impact of the war in British culture.

¹⁶ See J.M. Winter, 'Review: Catastrophe and Culture: Recent Trends in the Historiography of the First World War' *Journal of Modern History* 64, no. 3 (Sep 1992), p. 529 for criticism of applying 'elite' culture to the masses.

¹⁷ A.J.P. Taylor, *English History, 1914-1945* (Oxford, 1965), p. 180.

¹⁸ Clive Bloom, *Bestsellers: popular fiction since 1900* (New York, 2002), pp. 88-93.

¹⁹ Carr had thought about naming his book *Utopia and Reality*. Introduction by Michael Cox in E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (New York, 2001), p. xii.

²⁰ See, for example, Kenneth O. Morgan's chapter on the twentieth century in *The Oxford History of Britain* (Oxford, 1988), A.J.P. Taylor, *English History, 1914-1945* (Oxford, 1965), Ronald Blythe, *The Age of Illusion: England in the Twenties and Thirties, 1919-1940* (London, 1963). They all only make passing mention of foreign affairs in the twenties, and mostly in relation to Europe.

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- ²¹ Sally Marks, *The Illusion of Peace: International Relations in Europe, 1918-1933* (London, 1976).
- ²² John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (London, 1988), p. 24.
- ²³ See Glen Balfour-Paul, 'Britain's Informal Empire in the Middle East' in *The Oxford History of the British Empire, vol. 4, The Twentieth Century*, ed., A.N. Porter (Oxford, 1999), esp. pp. 490-500.
- ²⁴ See Francis Bowes Sayre, 'The Passing of Extraterritoriality in Siam' *American Journal of International Law* 22, no. 1 (Jan 1928), pp. 70-88 for details.
- ²⁵ See A. Iriye *After Imperialism: The Search For a New Order in the Far East, 1921-1931* (Cambridge, 1965) for a masterful study of the breakdown of the old imperial system and the formation of the new system of international relations.
- ²⁶ See, for example, 'Episodes of the Month: the Lost Alliance' in the April 1925 (pp. 174-175), 'Episodes of the Month: Our Friends the Japanese' and 'A First-Class Blunder and its Results' *National Review*, May 1925 (pp. 336-38; 386-387).
- ²⁷ 'Episodes of the Month: the Lost Alliance' *National Review*, Apr 1925, p. 174.
- ²⁸ Royal Institute of International Affairs Archive RIIA 8/10 Meeting Minutes 'Washington Conference', 21 Feb 1922.
- ²⁹ *The Times*, 02 Feb 1922, p. 10, col. A.
- ³⁰ *The Times*, 30 Jan 1922, p. 14, col. F.
- ³¹ MacDonald was also Prime Minister at the same time.
- ³² Wilson, 'Britain and the Kuomintang, 1924-1928', p. 77.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, p. 78 and in 1926, after Waterlow left the Far Eastern Department, William Strang confessed that the department certainly lacked 'the intellectual power that Sydney [Waterlow] provided' but that they worked with less friction than before. University of Oxford St Antony's College Main Library Archives Owen O'Malley 1926-1927 Correspondence Strang to O'Malley 31 Mar 1926.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.* Newton also left around the same time as Waterlow, and Strang admitted that they also lacked Newton's 'official caution.'
- ³⁵ Strang, *Diplomatic Career*, p. 133.
- ³⁶ Arthur Waldron, *From War to Nationalism: China's turning point, 1924-1925* (Cambridge, 1995) wrote that it was a 'profoundly misleading' to see this period only as a 'chaotic interlude'. Rather, the wars of 1924 provided the 'indispensable preconditions' for the success of the May Thirtieth Movement and the Nationalist Revolution.
- ³⁷ National Archives FO371 10955 F2304/2304/10 'Annual Report for 1924' Palairret memo 1925.
- ³⁸ National Archives FO371 9216 F726/726/10 'Annual Report for 1922' Clive memo 1923.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁰ National Archives FO371 9123 F3120/22/10 Wellesley minute, 03 Oct 1923.
- ⁴¹ National Archives CAB 24/167 CP 331 (24) Snowden memo, 02 Jun 1924.
- ⁴² National Archives FO371 9123 F3120/22/10 Wellesley minute, 03 Oct 1923.
- ⁴³ P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Crisis and Deconstruction, 1914-1990* (New York, 1993), p. 31.
- ⁴⁴ SOAS Swire Papers JSSI 4/9 Box 1184 Holt & Co. to Swire & Sons, London.
- ⁴⁵ *The Times*, 06 March 1922, p. 12, col. G.
- ⁴⁶ National Archives FO371/9216 F745/650/10 Wellesley reply, Oct 1923.
- ⁴⁷ For Britain's failure to comprehend the nature of Bolshevik activities in the South, see ch. 4 in Antony Best, *British Intelligence and the Japanese Challenge in Asia, 1914-1941* (Basingstoke, 2002).
- ⁴⁸ National Archives CAB 24/161 CP 362(23) British Concessions in China, 30 Jul 1923.
- ⁴⁹ National Archives CAB 23/3 (24) British Concessions in China, 11 Jan 1924.
- ⁵⁰ National Archives CAB 24/165 CP 111(24) British Concessions in China, 14 Feb 1924.
- ⁵¹ National Archives FO371 9190 F1765/22/10 China Association/ British Chamber of Commerce (Shanghai) to FO, Jun 1923.

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- ⁵² National Archives FO371 9190 F1897/22/10 Minute by Wellesley, 19 Jun 1923.
- ⁵³ National Archives FO371 9192 F2450/22/10 State Dept to FO, 01 Aug 1923.
- ⁵⁴ National Archives FO371 9192 F2524/22/10 23 Macleay to FO, Aug 1923 and F2572/22/10 Macleay to FO, 29 Aug 1923.
- ⁵⁵ National Archives FO371 9189 F1538/22/10 Minute by Wellesley, 15 May 1923.
- ⁵⁶ National Archives FO371 9192 F2392/22/10 E.M. Gull to Wellesley, 10 Aug 1923.
- ⁵⁷ I am indebted to Peter G. Clark, 'Britain and the Chinese Revolution, 1925-1927', pp. xi-xiii for the above statistics.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xxxix from FO 405/233 F3498/3498/10 'Memorandum Respecting British Interests in China and Our Competitors' 10 Oct 1921 and Department of Overseas Trade reports, 1925-1929.
- ⁵⁹ Carl F. Remer, *Foreign Investments in China* (New York, 1933), pp. 368.
- ⁶⁰ National Archives FO371 9190 F1979/22/10 Manchester Chamber of Commerce to Curzon, 26 Jun 1923.
- ⁶¹ National Archives FO371 9192 F2392/22/10 E.M. Gull to Wellesley, 10 Aug 1923.
- ⁶² See Remer, *Foreign Investments in China*, pp. 339-407 for details and statistics of British investments and interests in China.
- ⁶³ For more descriptions of treaty port life, see Bickers, *Britain in China* and Albert Feuerwerker's chapter on 'The Foreign Presence in China' in *The Cambridge History of China: vol. 12, Republican China 1912-1949. Part 1* ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, 1983) pp. 128-161.
- ⁶⁴ Girton College Archive, Cambridge Lewis GCPP 2 Beryl Lewis pt. 1, oral history tapes, tape 3, reel 4.
- ⁶⁵ Girton College Archive, Cambridge Lewis GCPP 2 Beryl Lewis pt. 1, oral history tapes, tape 3, reel 6.
- ⁶⁶ R.C. Hurley, *Picturesque Hongkong (British Crown Colony and Dependencies)* (Hong Kong, 1925).
- ⁶⁷ SOAS MS 380564 Dora and Teddy Wedlock Correspondence Box 1, Letter 12 Dora Wedlock to Helen Heynes, 11 Nov 1924.
- ⁶⁸ Churchill College Archive, Cambridge Roskill Papers ROSK 2/6 Midshipman's Log, HMS *Durban*, China Station, 1921-1924, log for 06 Jan 1922.
- ⁶⁹ Quoted in Nicholas R. Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire: Westerners in Shanghai and the Chinese Revolution of the 1920s* (Hanover, NH, 1991), p. 74.
- ⁷⁰ For details about the results of 'isolation', see Bickers, 'Changing British Attitudes to China and the Chinese, 1928-1931', pp. 100-104.
- ⁷¹ SOAS MS 380564 Dora and Teddy Wedlock Correspondence Box 1, Letter 12 Dora Wedlock to Helen Heynes, 24 Nov 1924.
- ⁷² Royal Society for Asian Affairs Archive RSAA/M/214 'Notes on a Journey to China' Sir Alexander Hosie, Travels Abroad, 1920.
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁴ *The Times* 28 Sep 1922, p.13, col. E.
- ⁷⁵ SOAS Swire Papers JSSI 4/9 Box 1184 R. Thornton (Hong Kong) to G.W. Swire, 06 Mar 1922.
- ⁷⁶ National Archives FO371 10955 Annual Report for 1924 (written in 1925).
- ⁷⁷ See A. Feuerwerker 'The Foreign Presence in China', p. 165 and pp. 165-177 for details of the missionary establishment.
- ⁷⁸ See Chapter 6 in Bickers, 'Changing British Attitudes to China and the Chinese, 1928-1931' for analysis of missionary attitudes and pp. 210-215 on missionary socialisation and its results.
- ⁷⁹ Hudson Taylor's daughter-in-law wrote a popular book about Hsi and his work. Mrs Howard Taylor, *Pastor Hsi (of North China): One of China's Christians* (London, 1903).
- ⁸⁰ SOAS *Chinese Recorder* May 1925, pp. 301-303.
- ⁸¹ A.H. Smith, *Chinese Characteristics* (London, 1890), p. 88.
- ⁸² Backhouse was most likely a forgerer, but at the time his collaborations were widely-read and respected. See H. Trevor-Roper, *Hermit of Peking: the hidden life of Sir Edmund Backhouse* (New York, 1977).

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- ⁸³ SOAS China Inland Mission Papers CIM File No. 76 Minutes of the China Council 16 Dec 1925. Modernists denied the divinity of Christ and the miracles in the Bible. Instead they emphasised following Christ as a pattern of moral behaviour.
- ⁸⁴ Girton College Archive, Cambridge Diggle Papers GCPP Letters home from Girton, 1923-1926 29 Oct 1923.
- ⁸⁵ Birmingham University Special Collections Church of England Zenana Missionary Society (CEZMS) CEZ/G EL 1/6/86 “‘Ring out the Old, Ring in the New.’ New Ideas in Old China.’ Compiled by Miss H.F. Turner (London, 1908).
- ⁸⁶ SOAS 127th Report of the London Missionary Society 1922, p. 58.
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.
- ⁸⁸ China Inland Mission, *General Feng: A Good Soldier of Christ Jesus*. (London, 1922), p. 2.
- ⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- ⁹⁰ Cambridge Bible Society 118th Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1922, p. 217.
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 218.
- ⁹² A.M. Chirgwin, ‘The Chinese Renaissance and its Significance’ *Contemporary Review*. Jan 1924, pp. 62, 66.
- ⁹³ Cindy Yik-yi Chu, ‘Catholic Church between Two World Wars’, in *Foreign Communities in Hong Kong, 1840s-1950s* ed. Cindy Yik-yi Chu, (Hong Kong, 2005), p. 104.
- ⁹⁴ John Mackenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*, p. 10.
- ⁹⁵ Bertrand Russell, *The Problem of China*. (London, 1922), p. 11.
- ⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- ⁹⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 12-13.
- ⁹⁸ David Martínez-Robles, ‘The Western Representation of Modern China: Orientalism, Culturalism and Historiographical Criticism’ in ‘Orientalism’ [online dossier]. *Digithum*. No. 10. UOC (2008). Accessed: 31 Jul 2011.
- ⁹⁹ Ming Xie, *Ezra Pound and the Appropriation of Chinese Poetry* (New York, 1999), p. 93.
- ¹⁰⁰ ‘More Chinese Poems’ *Times Literary Supplement* 15 August 1918 quoted in Ming., *Ezra Pound*, p. 112.
- ¹⁰¹ *170 Chinese Poems* transl. by Arthur Waley, (London, 1916), p. 7.
- ¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- ¹⁰³ King’s College Archive, Cambridge Forster Papers EMF 8/5 vol. 8/19 Autographed manuscript of a poem (with a line borrowed from Waley’s volume,) beginning ‘That the mere glimpse of a plain cap / Could harry me with such longings’ c.1920.
- ¹⁰⁴ King’s College Archive, Cambridge Fry Papers REF 1/31 ‘Drawing or Design’, 1920 to 1929.
- ¹⁰⁵ Hsu’s most famous poem, ‘Goodbye Again, Cambridge’, is still recited in secondary schools all over the Chinese-speaking world.
- ¹⁰⁶ King’s College Archive, Cambridge Fry Papers REF 3/90 Tsemon Hsu to R.E. Fry, 07 Aug 1922.
- ¹⁰⁷ LSE Wallas Papers WALLAS 1/65 Tsemon Hsu to Professor Wallas, 11 April 1921.
- ¹⁰⁸ Britain had decided to remit the indemnity money paid to them by the Chinese Government after the Boxer Rebellion, following the United States and France, who had spent the money on education in China.
- ¹⁰⁹ Both Woolf and Dickinson wrote memos for the Labour Party in People’s History Museum Labour Party Advisory Committee on International Questions Memos 1924-1936. Russell and Woolf were on the General Council of the UDC when it decided to publish ‘Speakers Notes on China’ in Hull History Centre Union of Democratic Control Papers U/DDC/5/42 12th Annual Report 1927-1928.
- ¹¹⁰ Roger Fry, *Letters of Roger Fry*, vol. 2. ed. and with an intro by Denys Sutton. (New York, 1972), p. 527.
- ¹¹¹ W. Somerset Maugham, *On a Chinese Screen*. (London, 1922), p. 56.
- ¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 126.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

¹¹⁴ *The Times*, 25 Apr 1922, pg. 9, col B.

¹¹⁵ Sax Rohmer. *The Insidious Dr. Fu-Manchu*. (London, 1913), p. 26.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹¹⁷ See Sax Rohmer, *Tales of Chinatown* (London, 1922).

¹¹⁸ Rohmer, *Insidious Dr. Fu-Manchu*, p. 125.

¹¹⁹ Maugham, *Chinese Screen*, pp. 15-16.

Chapter 3: 1925

The interwar period was a unique era in Sino-British relations. For the first time in the history of the two countries' relations since the mid-nineteenth century, Britain consistently backed away from enforcing its claims in the face of organised Chinese opposition, with 1925 marking a sharp turning point in the two country's relations. After about eighty years of dominance over a weak China, Britain's hold on its concessions began to slip away as simmering nationalist discontent came to the surface explosively in May of that year. The shooting of several Chinese protesters by British subjects in Shanghai set off a large-scale protest movement directed against Britain. The country soon began to become embroiled in a conflict that involved China, the Soviet Union, the other Powers, and the future of its trade. The events of 30 May 1925 and the subsequent protests were an overt challenge to Britain's traditional interests and policymakers were forced to respond. The intrusion of the Soviets added a further troubling dimension to the Chinese problem.

The events of the year involved not only strategic and economic considerations, but also caused Britons to defend, question and debate widely disseminated ideas about Chinese nationalism. Faced with the direct economic and political challenge posed by activist Chinese, British groups interested in China needed to answer the question of whether Chinese nationalism needed to be taken seriously. Was nationalism a valid, authentic manifestation of grass-roots Chinese feeling or was it a superficial tool used by the Soviets to stir up the Chinese crowds against the British? Policy towards China depended on the answers to this question. If Chinese nationalism was only a cover for Soviet intrigue, then possibly there would be no utility in adjusting policy. Rather, the British should continue using forceful measures to discipline the Chinese and strike at the real enemy. On the other hand, some argued, friendliness would do better to woo the Chinese away from the Soviets. If however, Chinese nationalism was authentic, the prospect was that it was not going to disappear. Rather, forceful measures could only serve to inflame it. The wisest policy would therefore be accommodation and conciliation. Public opinion within Britain thus began to solidify into general camps. Although there were always exceptions, business interests, allied with treaty-port opinion, sought to convince the government to take a harder line with the Chinese,

while progressives, allied with the missionaries, advocated a more liberal position of conciliation.

This chapter begins with a survey of how commentators and policymakers viewed the Far Eastern question in 1925 and Bolshevik influence in China. Then it goes through the year chronologically, beginning with the debate over the Boxer Indemnity issue, in which the ideological battle lines between the opposing groups began to be drawn. The divide then became even more manifest after the events of May 30th, which sparked a flurry of commentary. Focusing mostly on commentary published at home—what policymakers were likely to have read or been aware of—the latter part of the chapter will discuss the impact of those ideas on the government's decisions.

CHINA AND THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER IN 1925

Firstly, it is important to note that policymakers viewed Chinese issues in the context of the international order in East Asia. Despite the decisions made at Washington, tensions between the Powers—especially between the United States and Japan—remained unresolved. The issues were further complicated by the initiatives of a Power not invited to Washington in 1921—the Soviet Union.

Within Britain the decision at Washington to terminate the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in favour of a four-way consultative body continued to be unpopular with the right-wing, who saw the decision as having diminished British prestige and influence in East Asia. However, as Antony Best has shown, the right's position was based not only on friendly feelings towards Japan, but perhaps even more on the recognition of Japan as a racial and strategic threat.¹ In fact, both sides of the political spectrum wanted to contain Japanese ambitions. The continuation of the alliance would keep Japan not as an equal, but as a 'junior partner' in East Asia. On the other hand, those who supported the end of the Japanese alliance believed that bringing Japan into internationalist discussions as an equal would counteract Japanese dissatisfaction over racial issues and stem the tide towards Japanese militarism and imperialism. At Washington, Britain had thrown its lot in with the United States, hoping that the new arrangement would not alienate Japan while maintaining the Open Door in China. Despite the dissatisfaction on both sides of the political divide, the government believed that they had neutralised the Japanese

threat, or at least delayed trouble. While discussing the building of the Singapore naval base in 1925, the Cabinet maintained that Japan would not be a threat within the next ten years and thus that there would be no need to provide a battle fleet at Singapore.²

It seemed that Japan had been contained by diplomacy. However, one Power continued to operate outside the international order arranged at Washington. The Soviet Union, in keeping with the revolutionary impulse of its foreign policy in the early 1920s, was intent upon upsetting the order in East Asia. By 1925 Comintern efforts to export the October Revolution seemed to find fertile ground in China. By co-opting Chinese nationalism into the cause of world revolution, the Comintern glossed over the inherent contradictions in this marriage of convenience. Marx had always been uneasy about the role of nationalism in his formulation of the process of history, as evidenced by the asymmetry of his treatment of nationalism as compared with other aspects of bourgeois ideology in the *Communist Manifesto*.³ But Lenin had tried to incorporate nationalism and make it fit into his worldview, especially in regard to the less developed countries under imperialist occupation. The tensions inherent in this combination would come to the fore only later in 1927. At the second Comintern Congress in 1920 Lenin had argued that Communists should join nationalists in their war for liberation and work together with them until the proletarian class had developed and was ready for proletarian revolution. In 1921 the Comintern agent Henk Sneevliet (Maring) went to China to develop the First United Front of the KMT and the CCP.⁴ The USSR's embrace of the nationalist cause seemed to trump the United States' championing of Chinese self-determination and also threatened to stir up unwanted trouble in Britain's imperial holdings. By 1925 the Cabinet was worrying that Russia would also encroach on Persia and Afghanistan.⁵ In fact, as Best has said about this period, 'the idea that the Soviet Union and communist ideology posed a serious menace to British interests in Europe and the Empire was a constant that never disappeared from the minds of the many politicians and civil servants in Whitehall.'⁶

Thus, Moscow-sponsored Chinese nationalism seemed like yet another iteration of the Yellow Peril. The tide of nationalism, 400 million strong, if successfully directed to the Russian cause, would radically alter the balance-of-power in East Asia. And the tide seemed unstoppable. Diplomats on the ground feared the consequences of Soviet influence. Sir Charles Eliot, the Ambassador to Japan, told Austen Chamberlain, the

Foreign Secretary, that not only were socialism and communism prevalent among Japanese university students but that the lower ranks of the army may have been 'infected' by Bolshevism.⁷ Indeed, Bolshevism was commonly considered 'a disease, not a normal state'.⁸ Furthermore, Eliot, continued, Soviet influence in Peking, Canton and the large Chinese cities could become a 'serious menace'.⁹

Yet some commentators advocated an accommodation with Chinese nationalism in hope of neutralising the negative effects of Bolshevism. J.L. Garvin, the editor of the *Observer*, admitted the futility and indeed, the immorality of stemming nationalism in Asia. His jottings in his notebooks for 1925 were prescient:

[This is the] irresistible advance of the moment. Asia for the Asiatics!...[It is] vain and monstrous to keep half the surface of the earth, and 4/5 of its [liveable?] area under Anglo-American control ... [Observers] agree the balance of the world has begun to turn against the white man. For the war was the destruction of white prestige. The industrialisation of China in spite of the Tuchuns and civil war advances into astonishing strides ... The Chinese will demand and secure the abolition of extraterritoriality and the complete control of the present foreign settlements and of their own tariffs (like India) ... One way or another the future in Asia is to the Asiatics. Europe and America united can be safe.¹⁰

Determining the balance-of-power in East Asia would be dependent on the ability of the Powers to influence China. If Europe and America supported Chinese nationalism, they could undercut the Russian agenda and capture its selling point. Garvin observed: '[T]he Chinese are not an aggressive people: they care too much for livelihood and money. When they abolish extraterritoriality and [recover] their ports and tariffs they will have enough to do for a long time without seeking further causes of quarrel with America [and] Europe.'¹¹

Progressives believed that if America and Europe could band together in support of nationalism, Chinese discontent could be mollified and that China's future development would be in a direction beneficial to them. A China developing under Western tutelage was more benign than one under Bolshevik influence. Missionaries also argued that

Britain had to woo the Chinese away from the Bolsheviks with acts of goodwill and friendship. The religious dimension of the struggle was, after all, reflected in the anti-Christian movement of the 1920s, which was closely allied with the anti-imperialist nationalist movement.¹² The founding manifesto of the Anti-Christian Student Federation in China in April 1922 revealed the strong links between socialist, anti-imperialist and anti-Christian thought:

We are convinced that capitalist society today, tyrannical and cruel, unreasonable and inhumane, ought to be destroyed without mercy. Consequently we declare that Christianity and the Christian church today, demons which aid the merchants to do evil, are our enemies. We must battle them in a war to the death.¹³

In London, the anti-Christian movement was also seen as part of the spread of socialism. About the protesters, *The Times* wrote in January 1925, ‘their reaction against religion and especially Christianity as the ally of capitalism and imperialism, was...clearly shown.’¹⁴ This overt challenge to the Christian project would be critical in acquiring missionary support for the claims of Chinese nationalism, since the missionaries were desperate to save their work. The missionary response to the anti-Christian movement was therefore to deny the linkage between capitalism and Christianity and to demonstrate their willingness to go along with the claims of Chinese nationalism. A Chinese Christian, Francis C.T. Wang, wrote to the *Chinese Recorder* with his suggestion that missionaries should do their best to make clear through their ‘words, attitudes, actions and spirit’ that the ‘religion of Christ’ had nothing to do with the the policies and activities of foreign governments and business interests.¹⁵

The historic divide between business interests and religious interests in China thus became even more delineated as missionaries sought to distance themselves from the forces of imperialism. The government had to navigate its policies in the midst of these contrary currents of opinion. It could attempt to stop the spread of the ‘disease’ of Bolshevism through quelling nationalist discontent by traditional methods—either by force or by supporting a strong anti-Soviet Chinese leader. Or it could focus its energies on winning the ideological battle over the hearts and minds of the Chinese through friendship and conciliation.

THE BOXER INDEMNITY

The discussion over how best to influence the Chinese was focused in a series of debates at the beginning of the year. Back in London, policymakers were drawn into debates about Britain's role in China as they discussed the spending of the Boxer Indemnity money. In the early months of 1925 members of Parliament debated the uses of these funds in China. China had been fined 450,000,000 taels (£67.5 million, 982,238,150 taels with interest) in 1901 after the forces of the Eight-Nation Alliance had defeated the Boxers and the Ch'ing troops. China would eventually pay almost 680,000,000 taels to the Powers, over the course of forty years. However, public opinion in the following decades turned more in favour of remitting the indemnity money. The US was the first to remit the surplus amount of their Indemnity money in 1908 and eventually signed a bill in 1921 that would return the remaining balance of payments to China. Germany's insistence, it was said, had required the US to join with other powers in imposing the indemnity and now, it was time to right the past wrong.¹⁶ The money was used firstly for scholarships for Chinese students to study in the US and later to promote science education and build libraries in China. France and Britain began to follow suit, and Parliament debated a bill on the Boxer Indemnity in March 1925.

The bill met with general approval by all sides of the House, since it had been introduced by a Conservative Government, was re-introduced by a Labour Government, and was now being re-introduced by another Conservative Government. However, dissension arose over *how* the money was to be spent. Labour MPs were insistent that the money should be primarily devoted to educational purposes whereas Conservatives were more interested in seeing the money invested into developing railways, improving roads, communication, and industry. The Labour Party argued that China was 'growing up' and that Britain needed to confer the benefits of its civilisation upon young Chinese intellectuals. Conservatives argued that capital investment would, in the long-run, be of more practical help to the Chinese and, of course, it would also help British interests in China as well. In both cases, these political platforms were based strongly on differing sets of assumptions about the Chinese.

The debate was also an opportunity to dig up past slights and stir up party rivalry. Bertrand Russell and G. Lowes Dickinson, leftist intellectuals who had visited and wrote about China, had been on the Statutory Committee for the bill in 1924, but when the Conservatives took over from Labour in 1925, they were dismissed from the committee. Lord Ponsonby, who had been the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs for Labour in 1924 called the dismissal a ‘public disparagement of the choice of the Labour party’, a ‘form of discourtesy which was unusual and unnecessary,’ and that ‘it left the impression that the educational purposes to which we attach so much importance are to be subordinated to commercial interests’.¹⁷

The Labour position was backed by a network of progressives, liberals, elites and missionaries who had been discussing the Boxer Indemnity for some time and supported spending it on educating ‘young China’. The *Round Table*, the journal founded by Lord Milner, Lionel Curtis, Philip Kerr and Geoffrey Dawson, published its support for these ideas. For example, the article, ‘China in Evolution’, in March 1925 recognised the necessity for Britain to restore goodwill with China. A union of Chinese philosophy with Western scientific thought, could ‘yet produce a new basis of living in the world’.¹⁸ The *Contemporary Review*, in addition, published articles espousing positive, optimistic views of China and the Chinese and emphasised the similarity and compatibility of Chinese and British culture. This was very much in keeping with the worldview of its missionary contributors, whose livelihoods and life purpose were based on the premise that the Chinese would be willing to accept Christian teaching and values. R.P. Scott, a member of the Board of Education with missionary ties, published an article arguing that the improvement of commercial and political relations between the two countries was contingent on finding a basis for co-operation and friendship.¹⁹ Scott insisted that the British and Chinese already had a ‘kindred mentality in certain national characteristics’, and that education would be the best and ‘indeed the only field’ for cultivating a mutually beneficial relationship. The two peoples had close educational ideals (‘compare the qualities of Tennyson’s “grand old name of gentleman” and China’s “princely man”’), commercial probity and a shared sense of humour. However, misunderstanding had thwarted the natural coming together of the two cultures. An offer of goodwill would cause the Chinese to ‘forget our reticence, our stiffness’, and more importantly, it would help to educate a rising group of youth with English values. With these like-minded men, ‘then, as colleagues and friends, animated

by the same hope, England and China will face a brightening future’, and quoting Tennyson’s ‘Lockesley Hall’: ‘Till the war-drum throbs no longer, and the battle-flags are furled, In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.’ Scott’s use of the rhetoric of peace, confederation and brotherhood would likely find a receptive audience in interwar Britain.

Dr. Wilfred Grenfell, a well-known missionary and a ‘household name’ in Christian circles, wrote an article for the same journal later that year about the benefits of English education in China.²⁰ On visiting China, ‘we couldn’t get off at a city anywhere, however primeval looking or smelling, without finding a mission hospital, or school, or Christian effort sweetening the atmosphere.’²¹ In his article he recounted a meeting in Wuchang, one of the main centres of the anti-Christian protest:

[T]he last thing we did in Wuchang was to run down to see an Oxford University football player, who incidentally teaches science in Chinese to Chinese, refereeing at one of their football matches, which looked exactly like an English public school game. “The student governing body,” he said with pride, “have passed a law for themselves that every boy in the school must possess a pair of shorts.” I remembered what the Duke of Wellington said about the Battle of Waterloo being won on the playing fields of Eton.²²

The best of Britain—public school culture, sport and even dress code— was being passed on to the Chinese. Furthermore, he continued, ‘In the last few years, three M.D.’s of London and Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, have laid down their lives for China from typhus alone.’²³ These were sportsmen and doctors, university graduates, giving their lives ‘for China’. This was the ultimate act of selflessness and the true living-out of Christianity.

Grenfell’s linkage of public-school education and mission work was not unique. A group of ‘Old Etonians’ with missionary connections supported the establishment of an Eton for China in order to counter Bolshevik influence. They wrote to *The Times*:

The East is being rapidly permeated by the West and absorbing Western ideas ... The knowledge and skill so gained may be used for evil as well as for good.

If this knowledge is acquired without a background of Christian ideals to guide its application ... Europe may, without warning, have to defend itself against a people richly endowed but without the restraint of Christian morality, capable of overwhelming by sheer force of numbers Christendom and civilization ... There are two ways of meeting this Chinese peril—the old way, by blood and iron, and the new way, of which Arthur and Cecil Polhill and C.T. Studd are pioneers.²⁴

The Polhills and C.T. Studd were members of the famous ‘Cambridge Seven’, a group of upper-class, elite young men educated at Eton and Cambridge who had gone to China as missionaries. Dixon Hoste, another of the Cambridge Seven, was the current General Director of the China Inland Mission.

The diehard backbenchers on the house floor, however, by no means supported donating the entirety of the Boxer Indemnity money to Chinese education.²⁵ They poked fun at the impractical idealism of Labour MPs and their supporters, whose concern for educating the Chinese seemed to belie an ignorance of domestic needs. Captain Brass, a Conservative MP from Lancashire, expressed his concern. ‘If’, he said, ‘we spent some of this money, which is really our money, be it remembered, in trying to develop the lines of communication in China [rather] than in trying to educate some of the more educated Chinese ... we should be able, not only to help the Chinese but to help ourselves in this country, at a time when we have a large number of unemployed. If the £400,000 a year were capitalised in China we could raise a loan. The Chinese could raise a loan of some £8,000,000 in China, which would be very valuable to extend railways over there.’²⁶ Officials in China also bemoaned the British public’s support for spending the money on education. They contrasted their firsthand experience in China with those who only spouted opinions about the country. After a group of Cambridge professors had published their support for education, citing the reason that the Chinese wanted it, the Peking Legation responded by detailing the benefits of railways and conservancy and concluded by saying: ‘we should like to warn the Cambridge Professors against hasty judgments, and dogmatic statements, on subjects of which it is apparent they know little or nothing.’²⁷

Chinese student radicalism was also a cause for concern and some MPs made it clear that they would rather not spend money on educating students who were major participants in the anti-imperialistic movement directed against Britain.²⁸ J.O.P. Bland, an acerbic prolific commentator on Chinese affairs also found no reason to support efforts toward a cultural union between Britain and China. Bland had extensive experience in China, having served as Sir Robert Hart's private secretary, worked on the Shanghai municipal council and eventually as a correspondent for *The Times* and he used his past experience as a basis for strong criticism of China's sympathisers. He wrote to a friend, rather colourfully, in February:

[T]he devilish machinations of the humbugs and carpet-bagging pundits' pushing the Boxer Indemnity Bill "thro" the jungle of apathy and ignorance which is the House o' Commons' was to give millions 'for the benefit of people like C.T. Wang, Bertrand Russell &c. &c. - and to spend it on their ideas of "culture" - from which may God save China'.²⁹

The anti-Christian movement and the 'hopeless corruption and inefficiency' of Young China only indicated the futility of spending money on educating the Chinese. Further, Bland accused the British Government of listening to the 'philo-Americans bleat': 'Why must we follow like sheep in the wake of the American uplifter[?]'³⁰

These debates on how to spend the Boxer Indemnity money were based upon how each group saw the Chinese. Right-wingers were pessimistic about the possibility of changing a deeply conservative people. The traditional Chinese 'vices' of corruption, trickery, lying could not be eradicated by a thin application of Western learning. Rather, it was better to be pragmatic and apply the money to concrete projects that would improve the infrastructure within China, which in turn, would improve trade conditions. One could argue that the views supporting spending the whole amount on education were more sympathetic to the aspirations of Young China. However, those commentators also made use of similar assumptions inherited from the past. China was timeless, unchanging and unable to change on its own. The commentators never mentioned that the Chinese themselves were capable of being the agents of change. Instead they were either the passive recipients of a superior English education or the benefactors of a Western willingness to merge civilisations. They mentioned no specific

Chinese teachers; rather, the teachers were the Western mediators of China, those who could distill selective knowledge about China to the West.

The convenience of placing Britain and China within these stereotyped understandings blinded British commentators to the fact that real changes in China were occurring and that the Chinese themselves would be the agents transforming the nature of Sino-British relations. For some of them, caught up in their own feelings of goodwill towards the Chinese, they were unaware that the Chinese might feel otherwise, that the marriage they envisioned between East and West might not be mutually acceptable and that the Chinese might not feel the same bonhomie towards them. But while China was still the playground of the warlords, undergoing another cycle of chaos and disorder—perhaps it was safer to sit back and dwell in abstractions. However, only a few months following these debates, a large number of Chinese made it abundantly clear to the British that they had overstayed their welcome. The manifestation of their discontent and the British response will be the subject of the rest of this chapter.

UNREST IN CHINA: 30 MAY AND ITS AFTERMATH

The seat of foreign privilege in China, Shanghai, was also a cauldron of Chinese discontent. The governing body in the Shanghai Settlement, the Shanghai Municipal Council (SMC) was foreign-dominated (except for a mostly ineffective Chinese Ratepayers' Advisory Council), as were the military and police. The Mixed Court, which dealt with Chinese cases in the Settlement, was in reality under foreign control. The Chinese Chamber of Commerce lobbied for Chinese enfranchisement, representation on the SMC and Chinese control of the Mixed Court. Other Chinese sought to form unions in the foreign-owned factories, in order to address their complaints. At the end of 1924 Chinese labourers organised multiple strikes against Japanese cotton mills, which continued into the next year. On 15 May a strike at the Nagai Wata Mills resulted in the death of a Chinese worker. This incident sparked a protest on 30 May, in which students marched down Nanking Road, with several thousand gathering in front of the Louza Police Station. During this demonstration the crowd began to rush into the station's charge room, and after attempting to repel the crowd, the Inspector in charge of the station warned them that his men would shoot. Ten seconds later, he ordered the Sikh

and Chinese constables to shoot. In the aftermath, eleven protesters were killed and twenty more wounded.³¹ The shooting resulted in a large-scale protest movement and focused mass discontent against Britain. The next day, Shanghai went on strike. Inflamed by anti-imperial zeal, the strike soon spread throughout the country. Four days after the shootings, 15,000 students staged a demonstration in Peking and attempted to enter the Legation Quarter. Thousands of strikers travelled from Hong Kong to Canton, where they organised further protests and began a boycott of British goods, while being lodged in houses assigned by the Canton government.³² By June Chiang Kai-shek, the head of the Whampoa Military Academy and eventually Sun Yat-sen's successor as the leader of the KMT, had already drafted plans for fighting the British. Besides the boycott, Chiang hoped to embark on a 'long period of [military] struggle against the British.'³³ The situation worsened in the following month. On 23 June student demonstrators marched on the Shameen concession in Canton. Shots came from the Chinese side and British and French forces retaliated, killing over fifty Chinese and wounding even more. These incidents naturally only spurred on the lengthy anti-British boycott. British trade interests began to suffer accordingly. Thus began a comprehensive attack on British political, economic and cultural interests.

The nationalist anti-imperial movement engulfing South China and spreading along the China coast posed serious questions about the legitimacy of the 'informal' empire in the East and Britain struggled to formulate a policy that could respond adequately to the Chinese challenge. Moreover, the Soviet Union and Britain's main interwar partners in the East Asia (the United States and Japan) were also keenly interested and involved in the British response. Nor was it only a political challenge, for the Chinese aimed their attack at the most vulnerable spot in the imperial system, which was, in the 1920s, Britain's weakened economy. Most scholars agree that Britain's economic decline after the First World War was caused in large part by the decrease of world trade.³⁴ The rise of extra-European manufacturers during the First World War and the attendant competition in the world market lessened demand for Britain's staple exports—textiles, coal, shipbuilding and metals production. Without healthy markets for their goods and with an over-valued currency (resulting from Churchill's decision to return to the Gold Standard earlier in May), British manufacturers became financially strapped. As a result, large numbers of men were unemployed in the areas most affected. To address the problems of the domestic economy, policymakers needed to protect Britain's world

markets. In this context, the Chinese market was still considered a potential saviour.³⁵ Take, for example, the hopeful tone in this article on the industrial outlook for Britain:

We have lost valuable markets—lost them irretrievably. But there are other markets awaiting us, markets far greater than any which we have been driven out of. Apart from the population of the Empire, there are in Asia and Africa alone over a thousand million people who in the mass are awakening to needs which only modern industry can supply. Think of the opportunities in China alone with its 400,000,000 people! Can we imagine for a moment that it will not be possible to find compensation and much more for the twenty-five per cent. of export trade which we have lost?³⁶

Yet, the China market's potential was far from being fulfilled in the early 1920s. British imports into China would decrease from £28.9 million in 1924 to £19.7 million in 1925. Ocean-going shipping would also drop 26.1%.³⁷ In fact, the Canton-Hong Kong General Strike/Boycott caused further decline in trade and was hitting the Hong Kong economy hard as it continued from early July 1925 until October 1926. The future prosperity of the China trade thus depended on the introduction on a new effective policy.

British commentators on China and policymakers thus could no longer engage only in theoretical talk about China's inchoate future. Rather, the events of 1925 caused both opinion-makers and policymakers to turn away from the abstract and to focus on the current and potential aspects of the Chinese problem. How could they turn the tide of public opinion in China from zealous anti-imperialism to conciliation or even friendship? How could trade in China continue to be profitable and even expand? In this fateful year, those responsible for China policy were pressed to find solutions and an alternative to a China policy that suddenly seemed anachronistic and ineffective.

THE VIEW FROM WHITEHALL

When the Cabinet began to address the issues related to the May Thirtieth Movement, they did not at first focus on local issues in China, but placed it within the larger context of the Empire as a whole. Coming off the heels of the nationalist movements in Ireland,

India and Egypt from 1919-1922, the Chinese challenge to empire was untimely and unwelcome. The anti-British movement in China clearly had the potential to deal a severe blow to British interests in one part of the Far East, and it was not too far-fetched to imagine that the KMT could influence at least the Chinese in Malaya also to rise up against the British. Thus, Chamberlain and Amery wrote a joint memorandum in June advocating suppression of the Malayan branches of the KMT. Fearing a domino effect from China, they warned that the KMT's aims and organization 'approximate very closely to those of the famous Irish Republican Brotherhood' and 'might at any time hold up the economic life of the Malay Peninsula'.³⁸ The Chinese by themselves, however, were not seen as a viable threat to the British Empire. It was rather that the KMT was being subsidised and in close touch with the real enemy—behind-the-scenes, plotting the downfall of the British Empire—the Bolshevik menace, the Soviet Union.

The Cabinet's fears had a basis in domestic anti-Bolshevism. Indeed, the Zinoviev Letter had been published only in October the previous year. This document was purportedly a letter from Grigory Zinoviev, the head of the Comintern, to the Communist Party in Britain, advocating the spread of world revolution to Britain and its colonies. Though it may not have been the sole reason for the Labour government's fall from power in 1924, the publication of the letter had undeniably sealed its fate. Furthermore, the new Conservative government had dissolved the trade agreement with the Soviets in November 1924, signaling its distance from and dislike of Soviet ideology and activity. Soviet ideology, and especially the world revolutionary doctrine espoused by the Comintern, was therefore seen as posing a substantial threat to the survival of British imperial power. By June 1925, an editorial in *The Times* was using the language of war to describe Soviet activities in China. The Soviet incitement of disorders in China as well as in other lands was 'a step in their methodical war upon civil society, and the blow is aimed more particularly at the British Empire as the guardian of that society'.³⁹

In response, a member of the literary Savage Club, Edward Long, wrote a letter to the editor a day later affirming these fears for empire. He said that the dissemination of Bolshevik thought through KMT propaganda, especially to the overseas Chinese living in Malaya, made it imperative that the British be more assertive in defence of the empire.⁴⁰ As if to confirm the threat, radical members of the left used the outburst in

China as an opportunity to call for the dismantling of empire. The Soviet press applauded 'Comrade' Purcell's speech at Essex Hall on 10 June 1925, in which he summoned the people of India to follow in the steps of the Chinese and 'revolt against British rule'. Britons thus feared: 'after China, India!'⁴¹ As the strike and boycott continued, by early 1926, Sir Victor Wellesley, the Deputy Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office, was warning that, 'Repercussions elsewhere, especially in India, might be very serious.'⁴² Some fears extended beyond empire to surrounding regions. In a parliamentary question, Major Crawford (Conservative – Walthamstow West) asked Chamberlain if he had been aware of the spread of anti-British propaganda to Cochin China and the Dutch East Indies and what steps he would propose to counteract it.⁴³

Could the Soviet activities in China, then, constitute a Cold War by proxy?⁴⁴ Sir Robert Horne, former Chancellor of the Exchequer, President of the Board of Trade and who had signed the original Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement in 1921, said that the 'greatest obstruction to the theory of Communistic government was Great Britain. If they could get rid of the influence of Great Britain in the world, they would have done more than by any other effort to establish the hateful disastrous theories.'⁴⁵ Moscow was, according to the die-hard MP Captain Alfred Knox (Conservative - Wycombe) 'making a special attack on this country because Great Britain is the biggest game at which she can fly. She thinks—she may be right—that if she can bring down one of the kings of the forest that the lesser beasts are far more likely to fall.'⁴⁶ Captain Knox, who had fought in the Allied Intervention in the Russian Civil War, stubbornly held onto his belief that the 'English people always had the best relations with China' and pointed to Moscow as deliberately preparing the anti-British movement.⁴⁷ In a debate on Russia and China in the Commons in August 1925, he said that Russians in Shanghai were 'permeating the whole place' and Canton was 'honeycombed with them'.⁴⁸ The Conservative Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Ronald McNeill, speaking to the Commons, also could not 'otherwise account for the fact that we should be singled out by Chinese opinion for hostility, when, in point of fact, all the presumption would be that we should escape the lightest'.⁴⁹ The *Daily Mail* on 8 June titled an article 'Moscow's Glee' and pointed out that *Izvestia*, a Soviet newspaper, said that the Communists would attempt to seize control and form a Chinese Soviet Republic.⁵⁰ Even *The Times* blamed Russia in its first coverage of the movement: 'the student troubles in Shanghai...are plainly a direct consequence of Bolshevist propaganda and have been

encouraged by Bolshevik money.⁵¹ The Chinese thus seemed to many to be pawns in the Soviet Union's game to bring down British imperial power. According to many Conservatives, since the Soviet Union was manipulating the innocent Chinese to engage in the anti-British movement, Britain was not to blame. These kinds of statements detracted, of course, from the agency of the Chinese people by assuming that the strike was not their original creation. They had valid 'national aspirations' which had been 'misdirected' from an outside source. They were malleable material in the hands of the 'sinister' Soviets who were intent on destroying the British Empire.⁵² The Chinese people were a passive instrument controlled by Soviet intriguers.

These attributions implied that the Chinese were unable to think for themselves, which was further supported by contemporary assertions about Chinese character and temperament. A former MP from South Bradford, H.H. Spencer, after a trip to the Far East, observed that 'the Chinaman...is one of the most excitable beings on earth. He has a tradition of anti-foreign feeling.'⁵³ The Bishop of Halifax insisted that he had never known a race 'capable of more emotion, nor one where a crowd can be stirred so easily to fury.'⁵⁴ He testified, 'I myself have seen mobs bent on murder swayed to Homeric laughter by a good-humoured jest.' His recommendation then? 'A calm and courteous firmness of those in authority makes for peace in China.' The Chinese, as temperamental juveniles, were unable to solve matters on their own, or to rid themselves of their Bolshevik teachers. Rather, the Bolsheviks took advantage of their unstable temperament for their own purposes, stirring rebellion against the proper authorities. This trope of the Chinese as naïve, easily manipulated children became a strong basis for various suggestions advocated by government advisers and lobbyists.

GOVERNMENT ADVISORS AND LOBBYISTS

Based upon these understandings of the Chinese, what were the government's response options? Firstly, though some rhetoric surrounding the incident was belligerent, the use of offensive force was not seriously regarded as a response. It was the Soviet Union and not China that was seen as the perpetrator of the attack on British interests. According to a Chiefs of Staff report, China was also too large a country for the British Empire acting on its own. The report did recommend an increase of forces in the Far East, not

to accomplish any military objectives in China, but solely for the purpose of protecting British life and property. It noted: 'We gather that in the view of the FO our military strength in these regions is in no way commensurate with the importance of British prestige and interests in China.'⁵⁵ However, Lord Beatty, one of the writers of the report and the First Sea Lord, confessed to the Prime Minister that even the measures discussed by the Chiefs of Staff would not be of 'any avail', if the upheaval in China intensified. Rather, Beatty suggested, Britain should allow Japan to have a 'free hand' in Asia. Although the United States would be alarmed at Japanese expansion in China, Beatty argued that Japanese influence would be much preferred over Russian. The Chinese, Beatty wrote, were 'the most promising material' for the Soviets' purpose. They were 'ignorant and uncivilised, while their natural dislike of Foreigners makes them readily susceptible to movements designed for their overthrow.' With their large numbers and Russian support, the 'Yellow Peril' would 'become very real.' He asked: 'Would, in fact, Japan as another Prussia be as bad as the whole of the East as another Russia?'⁵⁶

Those in Hong Kong, however, wanted quick action. They were the ones immediately affected by the boycotts and the Governor of Hong Kong, Sir Reginald Stubbs, pressed for strong measures to deal with the boycotts. By early July, his patience had run out and he was even threatening to flog strike intimidators. J. H. Oldham, leader of the ecumenical movement and writer of *Christianity and the Race Problem* (1924), in which he opposed scientific racism, wrote to the Colonial Office to protest.⁵⁷ Still, the Colonial Office, headed by Leo Amery, sympathized with Hong Kong and recommended that the government send the Cantonese an ultimatum and threaten a blockade. Amid Labour protest, the FO rejected this suggestion on the grounds that a blockade would only provide more anti-British propaganda and that the Powers (with the exception of France) were not in favour of action.⁵⁸

Other suggestions came from the China lobby in Britain, who similarly saw the Chinese as unruly children needing force or a strong authority figure to restore order. They found corroboration for this view from certain parts of the government, including the Board of Trade and the diplomats stationed in China who wanted restoration of order. The President of the Board of Trade, Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, claimed that if China had an 'authoritative Government standing for order and able to preserve peace', there

would be a ‘much more rapid revival of the textile trade with that country’.⁵⁹ David Landale, the London director of Jardine, Matheson, & Co., wrote to his colleague in Hong Kong that in light of the extensive press coverage of the May 30th movement, he hoped that the FO would regard the seriousness of the situation and would implement ‘some practical intervention’ and put a stop to the ‘policy of drift’.⁶⁰ In addition, J.O.P. Bland, the former Times correspondent for China, expressed a common view among business interests and treaty-port residents when he wrote, ‘there can be no permanent restoration of law and order until...emerges a Big Man, strong enough to impose his will on the various parties...but if not, the struggle will go on and the “stupid people” will continue to pay for it heavily. Poor old China!’⁶¹ The problem, they argued, ran deeper than superficial Bolshevik influence. The problem was the inability of the Tuchuns (warlords) to establish a stable government. Once a strong man emerged (preferably with British support), discontent would be quashed, peace would prevail and the China trade could flourish. Although the businessmen wanted the government to bring strong pressure on the Chinese government to stop the strikes and boycotts, they were disappointed by the FO’s response. In early July, Landale and Sir Newton Stabb, the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank’s manager in London, visited the FO and engaged in a long discussion with the Head of the Far Eastern Department, Sydney Waterlow. The conversation was ‘rather depressing’ since, according to Stabb, ‘finance’ and ‘feeling in the Country’ constrained government action and strong measures could be construed as unnecessarily spending money and sacrificing lives on behalf of greedy capitalists.⁶²

Another popular solution supported by businessmen was to finance a strong Chinese leader. Landale’s Shanghai colleague, G.W. Sheppard, wrote to the China expert and former Minister to Peking Sir John Jordan recommending backing Chang Tso-lin, the Manchurian warlord, in order to restore order in China.⁶³ Chang Tso-lin himself continued to make representations to the Peking Legation, asking for HMG’s assistance in obtaining foreign arms in order to fight against Feng Yu-hsiang and the Cantonese forces. M. Palairret, the Counsellor at Peking, tentatively offered his support for the scheme, saying, ‘Chang is only leader capable of restoring order in China’ but acknowledged that suspicion of foreign assistance would ‘ruin his chances’.⁶⁴ Waterlow in the FO complained of the interminable lobbying by the ‘leading lights of the China trade’:

The leading lights of the China trade have again urged strongly upon me the policy of coming out in support of Chang-Tsolin [sic]. Indeed they do so almost every day. Thus yesterday Mr. Landale of the China Association and Sir N. Stabb of the Hongkong and Shanghai bank spent an hour with me for this purpose. These interviews are painful, for I sympathise very strongly with the anxiety of our bankers and traders who are losing their money now and fear that it may be lost altogether ... However much I may be convinced of the unwisdom of their remedy – and I have no doubt at all that intervention on behalf of Chang-Tsolin would not in fact produce the desired result – it is impossible to impart my conviction to them. They see the difficulties.., but they reply “Well, what alternative do you suggest? Isn’t even a doubtful and risky policy better than none, in view of what is at stake?” Our tariff conference policy, so far as it can be unfolded to them, leaves them cold, and they [leave]...with a sad sense that we are supine and backboneless. They long for spectacular and forcible action ... The moral of all this is that we can not be inactive much longer.⁶⁵

Pressure from the China traders corresponded with suspicion in the FO that the Soviets would back Feng and the KMT against Chang.⁶⁶ This suspicion caused some in the Far Eastern Department to advocate assisting Chang by providing him with arms or at least allowing the clandestine importation of arms into China. Exporting arms to China had been banned by the international China Arms Embargo Treaty in 1919. However, Laurence Collier, a counsellor in the Far Eastern Department, argued that in view of the large supplies of arms being supplied to Feng and the KMT by the Soviets, Chang could be allowed to receive arms as well.⁶⁷ In connection with this, in Parliament, Captain Benn, the Liberal MP from Leith, claimed that arms dealers were buying British munitions being sold at scrap prices only to sell them on to China at greatly enhanced prices.⁶⁸ The implication was that British arms manufacturers were losing potential business opportunities. Collier argued along similar lines. However, Chamberlain, Waterlow and others were unenthusiastic about lifting the arms embargo and pessimistic that Chang would be able to unite the country. In the end, they refused to be ‘stampeded into a policy’ of which they disapproved.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank had to stave off accusations that it was secretly financing Chang.⁷⁰

Spurned on both these fronts, the business community, along with right-wing politicians, still urged the government for a display of authority by sending a Special Envoy to China to replace the current Minister, Sir Ronald Macleay, whom they viewed as 'out of touch' with both Chinese officials and the British community.⁷¹ Cunliffe-Lister, hearing from David Landale, agreed that the Legation in Peking seemed inexperienced in a note that he sent to the Cabinet.⁷² The new representative should be a man of 'outstanding personality'⁷³ whose name would carry 'immediate conviction to the Chinese that it is our intention to make a serious readjustment of our relations with them in a spirit of justice, frankness and equal dealing.'⁷⁴ L.N. Leefe, the chairman of the General Committee of the China Association, explained its position to the FO, citing two reasons. The first reason was that action needed to be taken to stop the situation from becoming worse. The second was steeped in cultural assumptions:

[E]specially in an Eastern country a man with personality and position carries overwhelming weight. The Chinese set great store by appearances. They are smarting under the humiliating feeling that we regard them as inferiors ... The mere appointment as a Special Envoy of a man of high standing and great personality and position would be accepted as a compliment by them and would do something at once to remove these very serious obstacles to friendly negotiations.⁷⁵

Brigadier-General John Charteris, the MP for Dumfriesshire, and Sir Alfred Knox, MP for Wycombe, both wrote to Austen Chamberlain supporting the sending of a Special Envoy. They suggested sending either Sir Matthew Nathan, the former Governor of Hong Kong, or Sir John Jordan.⁷⁶ Even J.L. Garvin, editor of the *Observer* and a close correspondent of Austen Chamberlain, urged the same.⁷⁷ The China Association further strengthened their case with the support of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, which in turn, drafted its own letter to the FO.⁷⁸

These suggestions were however to no avail as Chamberlain was content to leave Macleay in Peking.⁷⁹ Newton Stabb was very frustrated by this and complained to his colleague, A.H. Barlow: 'I have done my utmost to impress upon the FO the importance and danger of the situation in China but nothing will move them from the course they have decided upon'⁸⁰ and 'It is impossible to bring further effective pressure to bear on

this side.’⁸¹ Still, in the following year, Winston Churchill, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, continued to recommend sending a Special Envoy.⁸²

PUBLIC RESPONSES

To understand why Austen Chamberlain and the Foreign Office were hesitant to comply with the business leaders’ suggestions and indeed, with the wishes of many in the Conservative camp, one must look beyond the activities in Whitehall to the wider public context, since the China issue was a popular issue with surprisingly wide appeal. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), founded only three years earlier, broadcast a wireless talk entitled ‘The Background of the Present Crisis in China’ by the Rev. Nelson Bitten in early June, directly after the 30 May incident. The reason for the broadcast, according to the BBC, was that there had been a recent demand for ‘topicality’ in their talks and that China was a ‘burning question’ on which the public wanted information.⁸³ As such, public opinion, beyond the activities of special interest groups, would constrain and influence decision-making at the top levels. Firstly, sources from China pointed to reasons for the troubles beyond Bolshevik influence. Furthermore, the events of 30 May had captured public attention and sparked much debate about China in Britain, in which the ideas of the business lobby seemed unpopular with the British public. A major reason why the FO could not fully carry out the wishes of the business lobby was the organising and publicising capability of those who advocated a willingness to concede to Chinese nationalism.

FROM CHINA

The FO had access to Chinese newspapers and it was obvious from them that for many Chinese, the anti-British movement was not merely the result of Soviet propaganda and intrigue. Rather, the impulses for their actions lay much deeper.⁸⁴ The protest stemmed firstly from their interpretation of the events on 30 May 1925. To them, the shootings at Nanking Road were explicit proof of British villainy. That the British could still murder innocent Chinese was evidence that, despite all their talk of conciliation, they had not changed. They were still oppressive imperialists willing to use violent means to oppress the Chinese. Official speeches about goodwill and co-operation were thus seen as absurdly and obnoxiously hypocritical. For example, accounts of the May 30th incident

printed in a Chinese newspaper revealed the depth of Chinese anger. A students' memorandum described the encounter with the foreign police in this way:

We protested. They, not only turned deaf ears, but willfully and wantonly captured us. We remonstrated, they beat us with truncheons. Our blood began to boil, our breasts choked ... The matter is of vital national importance ... This atrocious treatment and oppression of students surpasses all former outrageous acts in Shanghai. Our nation's rights, our citizens' lives are at stake.⁸⁵

The students were joined by the merchants, as well as leading members of Shanghai society, in their anger at British actions. The United Merchants' Association wrote a letter to the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce, angered by the brutal tactics of the foreign police: '[The] students...proceeded along Nanking Road, making public addresses and demonstrations. Foreign police beat them with truncheons, then fired on them, killed five, seriously injured many, covering the ground with flowing blood. The sight was most pitiable and heart-venting.'⁸⁶ In this version of events, the British were once again the merciless imperialist aggressor, murderous and without human feeling. The Shanghai Chamber of Commerce put it vividly, 'The lamentable calamity of 30th – Students going about empty handed, innocently and peacefully making public speeches. English police fired at them, pitilessly murdered many, extending injuries to peaceful passers-by. Such wanton cruelty and inhuman oppression, such resultant misery can find no parity in the wide world.'⁸⁷

The protesters remonstrated against Britain's political or economic interests and also objected to the foreign missionary presence. Anti-British anger in the aftermath of May 30th became strongly related to the ongoing anti-Christian protests sweeping the country. The May 30th movement once again focused and expanded anger against the British missionary enterprise, especially in the centres of left-wing power in the south.⁸⁸ The Anhui YMCA, in one act of protest, changed its name to the 'Young Men's Self-Governing Association', severing itself from its Christian ties and wrote a circular telegram urging a strong response to the 'foreign evil' encroaching on China's sovereignty.⁸⁹ The Northern warlord, known for his Christian faith, Feng Yu-hsiang, in a denunciation of British actions, quoted St. Paul and St. Matthew to expose foreign hypocrisy. He wondered if the foreigners 'only bear the name of Christians without the

real teaching of Christ within them'. Of the British he said: '[They] consider Christianity their national faith. But they are doing every kind of mischief. At first they introduced opium, then they took the Customs, and now they are trying to murder Chinese as if they were hens or dogs.'⁹⁰ A Chinese pamphlet on the topic explained reasons for the movement: the Chinese opposed religion and Christianity because 'agents of religion...always preceded the invasion of an imperialistic military power'. Furthermore, to Chinese labour activists, 'Christianity has become a useful tool in the hands of the capitalists for keeping down the labouring classes and persuading them to submit with resignation to the hardships and injustices of their lot.'⁹¹ Chinese anger at the imperialists was thus rooted in perceived historical injustices. Whether economic or religious, Britain's imperial projects were the source for Chinese oppression.

Even more detrimental to British interests was the possibility that the 'intelligent and responsible classes of Chinese' would become estranged.⁹² The FO heard from Shanghai that 'strong anti-British feeling' was held by even the 'best class of Chinese'. The British Returned Chinese Students' Association in Peking had telegraphed its indignation at British actions to the FO, causing George Moss in the Far Eastern Department to fear that their feeling was shared by many of the 'responsible Chinese'.⁹³ Moss recommended to 'do all we can to make our friends in China, and the Chinese public generally, understand 1) that we do care for their esteem, and 2) that we believe that they desire the reign of Law and Order as much as we do.'⁹⁴

ON THE DOMESTIC FRONT

A good number of British commentators also attempted to understand the underlying causes of the troubles and to find possible solutions. The Earl of Gosford in the House of Lords believed that 'The fundamental causes of the present trouble do not lie in anti-foreign feeling, or in Bolshevist propaganda, or in labour unrest ... But the seat of the trouble lies far deeper—in the sufferings of a great people caused by constant unrest, and in a sense of grievance at the attitude of the Treaty Powers since the Washington Conference.'⁹⁵ To Gosford and others, the Chinese were not Bolsheviks by nature. Rather, the Chinese were only turning to the Russians for practical help and not for ideological indoctrination. Dr Henry Hodgkin, the Secretary of the National Christian Council, wrote to *The Times* that the Chinese believed they had a real grievance and that

the troubles were not directly and solely caused by Russian propaganda.⁹⁶ Sir Francis Aglen, the Inspector-General for the Chinese Maritime Customs and highly regarded by the Foreign Office as an expert on Chinese affairs, agreed with this view. Of the FO, he said, 'I think they make too much of the Bolshevik influences. The Chinese, of course, are using Bolshevism for their own ends and it is not impossible that they will burn their fingers.'⁹⁷ The present trouble was not due so much to Soviet intrigue as it was to a 'genuine national agitation for abolition of the powers' extraterritorial privileges'.⁹⁸

Labour

How then, did observers explain the problems in China? The Labour Party seized upon the incidents in China as a political opportunity to emphasise the need of the government to improve industrial and labour conditions. Labour had been in power the previous year and was becoming the Conservatives' main opponent, gradually surpassing the Liberals and was not a force to be ignored. The debates became a vehicle for Labour to express views not only about China but about the direction of their own country. The events of 30 May also resulted in an outburst of grass-roots protest and organization among the left. The provocative mix of anti-imperialism, socialism and pacifism proclaimed by the protesters could not have gone unnoticed by the government.

In Parliament, the British in China were roundly accused by Labour politicians of sparking the May 30th movement. Industrial unrest had been the cause of the May 30th protest movement and the anti-British boycott, and Labour addressed the issue with its usual fervour. The domestic debate over workplace conditions in factories had been going on since the Industrial Revolution and the terms of the argument were the same, although now transferred to a Chinese context. Adelaide Anderson, a member of the Boxer Indemnity Commission, had actively publicised the appalling factory conditions existing in China and advocated banning child labour in Chinese factories.⁹⁹ James Hudson (Labour – Huddersfield) cited her work, pointing out that 50,000 children in Shanghai under the age of ten were working in factories, and said that five-year old children were working for the equivalent of a penny per day or less.¹⁰⁰ China's problems were no fault of its own, but were rather caused by the greed and corruption of the Western Powers, among whom Britain was the leader. China had been unable to

withstand the encroachment of the West. Thus, it followed that Britain should do its best to give back rights to the Chinese to make amends for the past.

It was Britain that should be blamed, and specifically, past British policy that should be faulted. It was politically expedient to blame past governments, since Labour was still relatively new and had had only a brief stint in power in 1924. As such, it could vaunt its own innocence in contrast to the guilty historical records of the Conservatives and the Liberals. Viscount Haldane, who had recently-joined Labour in 1923, in his indictment of the past said:

It has taken us a long time to get away from the sins, the unconscious sins, which Matthew Arnold pointed out to us then Our middle-class outlook, our tendency to confine ourselves to trade, commerce and industry has prevented us from recognising other traits in a people with whom we have been dealing, who themselves have traits which have to be taken into account if one is to get anything like peaceful or stable government ... For the past we are responsible and we cannot divest ourselves of the responsibility and blame.¹⁰¹

Almost immediately after the events of 30 May, the leftist interpretation of events in Shanghai was proclaimed on the front pages of the *Daily Herald*. That ‘Lewis guns and armoured cars’ were being used against Chinese strikers revealed imperialism’s link with force and violence.¹⁰² In a deliberate swipe at the government, and telling of the paper’s pro-American leanings, an article told the public: ‘Readers of the American Press have known for some time that much has been happening in China which has been deliberately censored from the English papers.’¹⁰³ Furthermore, the troubles were a direct result of the racial and economic inequities inflicted by an unfair system. The article reported that China was dominated and controlled by ‘alien Capitalism’. While the Chinese lived in ‘dank and sordid slums’, in a ‘densely populated quarter of crooked ten-foot streets and restless yellow people’, the ‘exploiters’ lived in the ‘very modern and luxurious’ foreign areas.¹⁰⁴

The paper appealed to the international sensibilities of the British working-class by calling the Chinese victims ‘workers’ and by publishing an appeal from the Shanghai Strike Committee: ‘Comrades! Think of your lofty ideals. Think of our international ends as workers!’¹⁰⁵ The Trades Union Congress (TUC) General Council issued a

statement protesting the use of British arms against their ‘fellow-workers’ who were striving ‘to win greater industrial freedom’ in Shanghai and wrote a letter of protest to the Prime Minister.¹⁰⁶

The socialist wing of Labour continued to make intensive propaganda efforts. A month after the troubles, Colonel L’Estrange Malone, a radical Labour MP who had once been a Communist, ordered the printing of 5,000 pamphlets entitled ‘China’s Case’ written by Lowes Dickinson, at a cost of 14 pounds, 5 d. The government believed the pamphlets to be ‘anti-British in nature’.¹⁰⁷ In July, Malone established the Chinese Information Bureau (CIB) with the help of his friend Reginald Bridgeman and a Chinese socialist, Kia Luen Lo. Incidentally, Bridgeman was related to the current First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Bridgeman, and his own father had been a Conservative MP, but he had become a leftwing socialist directly after the First World War, much to the chagrin of his family.¹⁰⁸ Scotland Yard kept a close watch on the activities of the CIB, which supplied news articles to London newspapers (and, it was feared, to Russian news sources) in an attempt to counter treaty-port opinion and deprecate the imperial project. The premise of the Bureau was that the British public needed ‘information’ from the Chinese (and socialist) point of view. Articles were written on labour conditions in mills in Shanghai and on the general inequality existing in Shanghai. A notorious example was the claim by the CIB that until recently the sign ‘Dogs and Chinese Not Admitted’ was displayed over the main gates of the park on the northern tip of the Shanghai Bund.¹⁰⁹ A heated debate also took place between the CIB and the China Association on the pages of various newspapers, with the latter defending the activities of foreigners in making Shanghai prosperous and the former pointing out the disenfranchisement of the Chinese and the industrial abuses by the foreign community.¹¹⁰ Malone and Bridgeman also attended China-related activities like the Annual Dinner of the Central Union of Chinese Students in Britain and Ireland, where Bertrand Russell spoke and they socialized with several official Russians.¹¹¹ These activities continued into the next year, with Malone making a trip to China, advising politicians and publishing articles.

Activists also organised public protests in response to British actions in China. The Independent Labour Party (ILP) organised a protest at Essex Hall on the Strand, the popular meeting place of progressive and left-wing movements on behalf of the Chinese

students and workers. Prominent Labour MPs and union leaders spoke to a packed hall (capacity: 600), with the audience overflowing to a meeting outside the hall. Bertrand Russell, J.H. Hudson, of the National Council for the Prevention of War and A.A. Purcell, of the TUC General Council and President of the International Federation of Trade Unions were among the speakers. Purcell's speech was representative of leftist opinion:

Clearly, European and American militarism are already involved in an attempt to crush the Chinese worker's efforts to ameliorate, in however slight a degree, the industrial conditions forcibly imposed by a soulless capitalism ... What a splendid chance to help forward the cause of international working-class unity.¹¹²

This protest was one of a number of conferences and informative meetings held on China. For example, in October, the novelist Winifred Holtby attended a talk given by Adelaide Anderson on Chinese industrial conditions at the Six Point Group, a new feminist campaign group founded in 1921.¹¹³ Part of the TUC conference from 7-12 September in Scarborough was devoted to China. The report described the plight of the Chinese: 'little children are farmed out from their parents to employers at one to two Mexican dollars per month, i.e., from 2s. to 4s. per month, and are worked as long as 16 hours per day. These children often fall asleep at their work and many of them die young.'¹¹⁴ The General Council subsequently began an inquiry into labour conditions in Eastern countries. Others wrote resolutions. The National Association of Unions of Textile Trades published a resolution calling for the withdrawal of alien troops from Shanghai. One was similarly written at the Labour Women's Day demonstration at Walthamstow in June.¹¹⁵

Labour's objections to factory conditions in China did not make much ostensible impact on policy. The Conservative government continued to insist that the protests did not stem from poor factory conditions but rather from the inability of China to govern itself. According to Waterlow, the 'senseless clamour of the people who are running child labour here to death' only irked the rightists and made them more desperate for forcible action.¹¹⁶ Chamberlain urged his Labour counterparts not to 'jump to hasty conclusions' as to the origin of the trouble, since agitation within Britain would bolster and stimulate

the anti-foreign movement among the Chinese.¹¹⁷ In short, protests about industrial conditions only made the government's task more difficult, but without altering its direction. However, one cannot completely discount the impact of the left on the government's China policy. The recent rise of the Labour party had caused the government to move towards the 'centre', in order to maintain popular support and the eventual espousal of a conciliatory policy towards China was a definite move towards the middle ground.¹¹⁸ For example, the views of Lowes Dickinson publicised in the above-mentioned pamphlet 'China's Case' and about to be widely distributed in England, received the notice of the government. Within the FO a clipping of his 14 July article in the *Manchester Guardian* based on his pamphlet was attached to a draft of a proposed speech in the House of Lords. The part of the article that was specially marked by the FO is telling: 'One thing, at any rate, is clear. There is no hope in the traditional policy of bullying.'¹¹⁹

Christian organisations

The resolution written at the Labour Women's Day demonstration in Walthamstow was supported by the Labour politician, George Lansbury (Labour – Bow and Bromley). The former publisher of the *Daily Herald* (he had recently turned over the paper to the Labour Party and the TUC) and publisher of *Lansbury's Labour Weekly*, he represented a mixture of socialist, pacifist and feminist views based on strong Christian beliefs. Not only did Lansbury support the Women's Day resolution, he also brought attention to the fact that 'American and British missionaries were on the side of the strikers'.¹²⁰ The link between missionaries and the progressive left has already been mentioned in relation to the Boxer Indemnity and after 30 May, the similarities of their positions became even more apparent. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the missionary platform was one of distancing itself from imperialism and of attracting Chinese converts through a message of sympathy and friendship. Thus their message overlapped with and supported that of the left-wing activists, and indeed, their publicising activities were mentioned in the pages of the *Daily Herald*. Missionaries from the more liberal organisations emphasised the existence of social inequities and worked on improving industrial conditions. For example, the YWCA and the National Christian Council sent the FO a copy of the Report of the Child Labour Commission, spurring the Far Eastern Department to instruct the Consul-General at Shanghai to help pass bye-laws to

improve labour conditions.¹²¹ Yet this does not discount the fact that missionaries and Christian clergy had distinct disagreements with many members of the left. For example, Bishop Banister of Kiukiang found Bertrand Russell guilty of doing ‘infinite harm to the moral and intellectual progress of China by his visit to th[e] country.’¹²² Furthermore, the *Chinese Recorder* disapproved of leftist publications that focused blame on foreign industrial conditions and foreign military power: ‘It will do little good to the oriental people for Westerners to shower sympathy on them indiscriminately, and at the same time hurl calumny at their own nations.’¹²³ Thus, the general tone of sympathy with Chinese aspirations was less socialist in nature and, in the long run it seemed, politically more palatable. Interestingly, church organisations eventually became a means and a bridge to bring leftist-type ideas about China closer to the political middle.

Missionary societies and churches were active in expressing their opinions about China. The Bishop of St Albans, speaking at a Diocesan conference in early June, could not agree that Bolshevism was the sole reason for the Chinese troubles and implied that the Chinese had legitimate grievances.¹²⁴ The *Daily Herald* reported the remarks of an American Methodist missionary who thought the police firing was ‘absolutely unjustified’.¹²⁵ Contributions by missionary leaders also appeared in the pages of *The Times*, the *Manchester Guardian* and a number of important journals.¹²⁶ A pamphlet by the China Inland Mission entitled ‘Opposition and Persecution in China; with special reference to the anti-Christian movement’ was distributed in Shanghai in the months following 30 May. Marshall Broomhall, the nephew of Hudson Taylor and the editorial secretary for the CIM, wrote another pamphlet, ‘Notes on the Crisis in China’, in which he attributed Chinese discontent to unfair foreign policies: ‘If we conceive the situation reversed, that Englishmen might not walk down parts of the London embankment or enter Hyde Park, we shall understand the Chinese feeling.’¹²⁷ Regarding the Chinese government’s demands that mission schools be registered with the government, he wrote, ‘If we could think of an equal number [350,000] of British children in our schools controlled by Chinese authorities, and not subject to our own Educational Boards, we should appreciate the position. China now claims that these schools shall be registered and brought under Chinese control.’ Overall, it was necessary to try to understand the Chinese side of things: ‘Whatever our views may be as to the facts and situation, no satisfactory or abiding settlement can be obtained apart from sympathy,

and an earnest endeavour to see the other man's side'. Of course, the endeavour to see the Chinese side was coloured by the missionary impulse. At the CIM's Diamond Jubilee celebration held at Brighton (the 'birthplace' of the CIM), copies of 'Notes on the Crisis' were provided to the crowds of thousands for free distribution. An address by the Reverend J.H. Ritson at the celebration was also indicative of the CIM's views:

The Western nations, seeking open markets, have struck at it—blow after blow. The Chinese students have, themselves, dealt it blow after blow. Lastly comes the influence of Moscow making confusion worse confounded ... The only thing that can save China is religion. Without Christ there is no hope for China.

The Conference of British Missionary Societies held at Swanwick from 17-20 June was attended by leaders of the missionary community, including F.H. Hawkins, Foreign Secretary of the LMS, Dr Henry Hodgkin, the Secretary of the National Christian Council of China and Dr Harold Balme, President of the Shantung Christian University, all of whom were involved with China. In response to the anti-Christian agitation, they suggested ten strategies to 'win China for Christ', which included 'closer co-operation' between the missionary and indigenous Chinese Church, 'closer study of Chinese life and literature', 'crusade against social evils' and finally, the 'shewing of fine Christian love in practice'.¹²⁸

Although more conservative Christians, such as the CIM, preferred to eschew political interference, their progressive counterparts intensified efforts to influence government policy.¹²⁹ A significant development was the first conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR), held in Honolulu, Hawaii from June-July 1925. The IPR was a non-governmental forum to discuss international problems in the Pacific Rim and it was in response to the United States' increasing stake and influence in the Pacific. Based on Wilsonian principles, it had very strong missionary and Christian links. According to L.T. Chen, a secretary of a YMCA, 'The Institute was a new experiment and pointed the way to a new era of international and inter-racial relations. Diplomacy has been too long a monopoly of the government and history abounds with the failures of this practice.'¹³⁰ The founder, Edward C. Carter, a Harvard graduate, had begun his work with the American missionary body, the Student Volunteer Movement and subsequently

became involved with the YMCA. Delegates from China, Japan, Canada, Australia and New Zealand attended the first conference. About 22% of the delegates at the first conference were connected with either the YMCA or the YWCA and 90% could be classed as Christian. Among the American delegates were John D. Rockefeller III, Dr. Ray Lyman Wilbur, President of Stanford University and a Republican congressman, F.M. Davenport. This was an interesting and potent mix of elites, missionaries and social activists who largely agreed that the imposition of extra-territoriality and restrictions on tariff autonomy were unjust. Frank Rawlinson, the editor of the *Recorder* and participant at the conference, summed up its significance with the following words:

[T]here is emerging a new Christian leadership which is seeking for the implications of a socialized religion big enough to include all the problems stretching across the broad Pacific ... It revealed a marked transition in thought from old assumptions and preconceived notions to a fairer estimate of Pacific problems and humans. The necessity of mutual and friendly co-operation pushed aside any attempt to justify existing discriminatory anti-Asiatic legislation. It moved towards reciprocity as a working basis and away from the domination of "rights" based on economic or military superiority... More attention was paid to the necessity of creating a right attitude of spirit than to economic projects.¹³¹

Although the first conference of the IPR did not include British delegates, it would play an important role in the next few years as Britons became involved with its activities. It also pointed to the increasing American influence among the missionary community. In 1905 half of the foreign Protestant missionary establishment had come from Britain or the Dominions, but by the interwar period, Americans were outnumbering them.¹³² The increase in missionary presence also reflected the United States' new role in the balance-of-power in the East Asia. In response to the troubles in China, the US threw its support behind Chinese nationalism, provoking the ire of right-wing commentators. In response to the State Department's recent announcement of its desire to discuss the abolition of extra-territorial rights, J.O.P. Bland lambasted the American position: 'It fails to realize that such abstract moralities as the Wilsonian doctrine of self-determination are wholly inaccessible to races which by reason of their extreme passiveness and spirit of locality are unfitted for self-government under representative

institutions.’¹³³ Although traditionalists were quick to dismiss the US’s brand of idealism, government officials could not dismiss these ideas that easily, in light of America’s new ascendance in East Asia.¹³⁴ In fact, Chamberlain had confessed early in 1925 that ‘whether we like it or not we shall have to be guided very largely by the attitude of America.’¹³⁵

Back in London, missionary bodies communicated their opinions to the government at the request of the FO. The FO had informed mission societies that it would welcome statements from them about treaty revision.¹³⁶ An unofficial meeting of secretaries and members of mission boards and societies had been held in New York on 2-3 October and a similar conference was held with representatives from British missionary societies from 5-6 October. The delegates adopted several resolutions, which were sent to every mission society in Great Britain and Ireland. The most important resolutions concerned the toleration clauses and the issue of extra-territoriality, in which the missionaries proclaimed their desire to forego any ‘rights’ accorded them by the existing treaties between Britain and China and supported the general abolition of extra-territoriality. Another point of contact with the government was the Archbishop of Canterbury, who wrote to the Foreign Secretary in June, expressing his concern about events in China. Chamberlain wrote back that he was grateful for the Archbishop’s care ‘to use [his] great influence to guide public opinion wisely’.¹³⁷ Anglican membership numbered 2.6 million, and membership in Protestant congregations as a whole totalled around 6 million in 1925.¹³⁸ Active Christian church members (counting Catholics) made up about 1 out of 5 people in the UK, not counting the millions of casual worshippers. Indeed, the Foreign Secretary realised that the Archbishop’s influence as the principal leader of the Church of England would be important and, in his draft letter, Chamberlain wrote of his hope that the Archbishop would send a ‘non-political message to the Churches ... to stimulate serious interest in the subject’.¹³⁹ In July, the Archbishop, along with the Archbishop of York, sent a measured communication to the churches. Other than a reference to educational work, the message was non-political, since it was mostly a charge to pray on behalf of missionary work, for countrymen in danger and for the international statesmen involved with China.¹⁴⁰

Still, the Archbishop’s sympathies obviously lay with the Christian organisations advocating liberal policies towards China. For example he urged Chamberlain to get in

touch with Dr Henry Hodgkin, the Secretary of the National Christian Council of China. Hodgkin subsequently submitted a memo for the FO in which he suggested, among other points, the addition of Chinese to the Shanghai Municipal Council, retrocession of the Mixed Court and far-reaching treaty revision for the upcoming tariff conference.¹⁴¹ Wellesley found his suggestions for the tariff conference too ambitious, but wrote, tellingly, ‘Nevertheless Dr Hodgkin’s views are distinctly on right lines and coincide with our general policy.’¹⁴² Hodgkin also publicised his views to an important group of intellectuals, politicians and businessmen who gathered at Chatham House, at the Institute of International Affairs.¹⁴³ He spoke in October, labelling his speech a ‘psychopolitical’ study. Hodgkin was convinced that the ‘psychological element receives too little attention in the diplomatic world.’ Working upon the assumption that the Chinese were psychologically different and perhaps less adept at managing their feelings, Hodgkin said: ‘In dealing with an Eastern people this effect is both more necessary and more difficult than is the case in dealing with those nearer akin to ourselves.’ To understand events in China, one had to pay attention to the youth movement and not dismiss it outright. The Chinese had always given students (scholars) a preeminent place in public affairs and this time it was the youths ‘making public opinion in China to-day’. The main cause of racial antagonism, according to Hodgkin, was not Russian propaganda, but rather British stubbornness in refusing to see things from the Chinese point of view. The dismissive views of the China correspondents for the *North China Daily News* and even *The Times* only stirred up more resentment. The proposed Shanghai inquiry into the shootings, seen as a gesture of justice and fairness by the British, was seen as a ‘chose jugée’ by the Chinese. To the Chinese, the protesters were students and as such, no shooting could have been justified. The solution to the problem, Hodgkin declared was to treat China as an equal with full sovereign rights and support tariff autonomy and the abolition of extra-territoriality and the toleration clauses. China’s goodwill, he said, was an ‘asset of incalculable value in the world both of trade and politics, not only because of what she now is but still more because of what she may become’. The future security of Britain’s citizens, he suggested, depended on a ‘foundation of friendship’, from which trade would continue to expand.

Although they did not necessarily agree with Hodgkin, the China lobby still realised the importance of heeding the opinions of these missionary leaders. David Landale of Jardines was present at the Chatham House talk. During the question and answer period,

Hodgkin was apparently asked about the future of Hong Kong, to which he replied that it should not be regarded as permanently part of the British Empire. Landale was noticeably perturbed by the notion, but had to admit that Hodgkin's pro-Chinese views were more popular with the government:

Leefe and I went this week to hear H.H. [sic] Hodgkin's paper at The British Institute of International Affairs. His views are very pro-Chinese, but as he is listened to by those in authority it is well to be prepared for the acceptance in this country, and to realise that there will be little or no opposition here to radical changes in our Treaties with China.¹⁴⁴

That missionary views and government views were finding common ground is strongly evidenced by the fact that Sir Charles Addis was a trusted and frequent advisor to the Far Eastern Department. His résumé and expertise were extensive; he was the Chairman of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, a Director of the Bank of England and had helped to create the First and Second China Consortium, which had provided loans to the Chinese government and had extended foreign influence in China. He was, according to his biographer Roberta Dayer, 'one of the most influential figures shaping Britain's China policy in the twentieth century.'¹⁴⁵ Yet, in addition to his roles as banker and government adviser, Addis was also a devout Christian. He was the son of a Free Church of Scotland minister and intertwined his religious beliefs with his ideas about China. His good friend T.W. Lamont, of J.P. Morgan, was also the son of a Protestant clergyman and related moral behaviour to material success.¹⁴⁶ The effect of Addis' worldview, however, has not been adequately linked to his policy recommendations.

Despite his position at the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, he was not as active in the China Association as his colleagues, though he often attended its gatherings and consulted with business leaders. Rather, he was occupied with several advisory positions other than his responsibilities at the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank and the Bank of England. He was involved with negotiating post-war settlements in Europe and he was well-known for his interest and expertise in international affairs. Earlier in 1925 he had been asked to be a judge for the Committee of the British Peace Award. Furthermore, the government appointed him to the Boxer Indemnity Committee in an advisory role, along with Dame Adelaide Anderson and W.E. Soothill, professor of

Chinese at Oxford, both Chinese ‘experts’ with strong missionary links. Addis also made a number of speeches to various groups. Several were on finance, but he was also very active in speaking to Christian and missionary groups.¹⁴⁷

Addis was also an avid participant at the Institute of International Affairs and had written a memorandum in February 1925, which indicated his opinions about Chinese affairs. Although he had continued to advocate foreign control over Chinese revenues through the Consortium as recently as 1923, Addis was aware of the changing situation.¹⁴⁸ His opening remarks echoed the precepts of Wilsonian internationalism: ‘The political movement in China is part of a world movement. The democratic impulse, which has overborne many of the thrones in Europe, has spread like wildfire to the East.’¹⁴⁹ He continued, setting himself distinctly apart from the treaty-port view: ‘There is no putting back the hands of the clock in China. The Republic has come to stay ... What is known as the ‘Gun-boat’ policy is as dead as the dodo. Reform must come from within.’ Reform, according to him, would come through educating the young Chinese and he declared his support for ‘China for the Chinese’. Interestingly, he concluded the memorandum with an avowedly religious statement to a secular audience: ‘Here is a rare opportunity for the young and powerful Chinese Christian community to set an example to others and by supporting those in authority to attest the value of their faith and fulfill the precepts of its Founder and of the last and greatest of its apostles.’

One cannot discount the correlation between these widely-espoused understandings of China and government policy. The government took seriously the advice of people like Sir Charles Addis and Dr Henry Hodgkin, and even seemed to heed it, despite blatant opposition from those in their own party. Indeed, it seemed to the business community that they were losing the public relations war against the pro-Chinese faction at home. After a series of disappointing meetings and exchanged letters with the FO, the China Association began to take seriously the idea of spreading propaganda, a proposal which had been made by the Tientsin branch of the Association.¹⁵⁰ Tientsin suggested publishing a newspaper in Chinese but also emphasised the need to educate the ‘home side’. The representative lamented, ‘The ignorance at Home is lamentable’. Similarly, the Shanghai Municipal Council had set up a ‘Publicity Office’ to issue leaflets in Chinese. Brooke Smith, Jardines representative in Shanghai, was not ‘hopeful that they

have been beneficial to our cause' because of the depth of distrust towards the British.¹⁵¹ Still, the Association courted the talents of E.M. Gull, Secretary of the British Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai, to lead propaganda work at home. Gull would come the next year, be paid £1,000 for the year and write articles for the leading newspapers.

Missionaries and their supporters, on the other hand, were pleased with the government's proclamations and actions in China. William Soothill wrote to Austen Chamberlain in September, commending his speech to the China Association. He wrote, 'I have never read a speech on China with greater satisfaction.'¹⁵² Bishop John Hind of Fukien was in Northern Ireland for a six-month furlough and he also expressed his pleasure at the government position to his constituents back in China: 'I am very glad to testify that both our own government officials and the home newspapers have from the very outset spoken with a deep sympathy towards China, which I believe to be sincere.'¹⁵³

Thus, in response to the events of the year, the government attempted to stay a middle course in China, trying to appease those on the right and on the left, but as the year went on, the government's position moved slightly closer to that of progressive opinion. The government, of course, talked of retaining prestige in China, stood firm against charges of industrial abuses by British residents in China and did not move quickly enough for the political and religious progressives. Overall, however, by the end of the year, it seemed as if the government was unwilling and unable to acquiesce completely to the views of the traditional China lobby.

THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Important reasons for this have been mentioned above, including the effects of the First World War on spurring support for nationalism and peaceful relations, the ascendancy of the United States with its accompanying Wilsonian idealism in East Asia, and the influence of active lobbies. However, apart from these influences, diplomacy also took place in the context of other immediate domestic and foreign concerns, as well as within the specific context of the Far Eastern Department that year. It was these particular circumstances that made it conducive to adopt a more liberal approach to China.

On the domestic front, China policy was formulated in an environment of economic unease in 1925. As mentioned in Chapter 2, it seemed as if Britain had lost its economic world dominance, not only abroad, but also at home, Britain was struggling in 1925. Historians have debated at length about the British economy in the interwar period, and whether it was as troubled as traditionally portrayed. Keynesian leftist historians see it as an example of failed British capitalism but revisionist neo-conservatives have claimed that industry adapted fairly well to declining overseas markets.¹⁵⁴ Despite these debates, most would agree, however, that after the First World War, unemployment was an uncomfortable reality and that it was brought on by the failure of the industrial base to adjust to the loss of overseas markets.¹⁵⁵ Though Alan Booth and Sean Glynn, using unemployment statistics revised downward, have asserted that unemployment rates in interwar Britain were not much worse than the national average rates before 1914, others have concluded that interwar unemployment was two or three times more severe than before the war.¹⁵⁶ Even if Booth and Glynn were correct, unemployment was still perceived as a serious problem by politicians in the 1920s. Regardless of the numbers, to them, unemployment was a serious fact and arguably the most important domestic issue with which they had to deal. Although the British economy in the mid-1920s was slowly recovering from the major slump in 1920-1921, unemployment was still close to 10%, with approximately a million unemployed. Churchill's attempt as Chancellor of the Exchequer to shackle the pound to the gold standard in April 1925 only made British exports more expensive in world markets, ensuring further economic loss. Prior to the First World War, Britain might not have feared a boycott from the Chinese, but by mid-to late 1925, a boycott from a populous country with a potentially almost limitless market was highly undesirable. Thus, politicians needed to find a swift way to extricate themselves from the situation. As the China Association underscored in its statement to the public, the China trade was directly related to the employment rate in Britain: 'The loss of our trade with China, even on its present basis, would materially increase unemployment in the United Kingdom. The development of that trade is perhaps one of the surest remedies for unemployment which can be devised.'¹⁵⁷

Despite the perceived urgency of the need for the China market, alternatives to negotiating were impossible. The China lobby in Britain could only press for strong British representation in China and would not go as far as advocating the use of force, although in the past, it was those strong British representatives who had eventually

forced the opening up of China to foreign trade.¹⁵⁸ In Shanghai though, cries were more obviously in favour of action. G.W. Sheppard of the China Navigation Co. wrote to Sir John Jordan that the outbreak of protests and violence mirrored the time of Boxer Rebellion and as such, 'strong action is imperative'.¹⁵⁹ However, it was feared that using force to stop the boycott would be extremely unpopular with the domestic British public. Despite charges of 'flabbiness' from hawkish backbenchers, Conservative government leaders knew that majority opinion would be against military measures. Support for collective security and permanent peace was becoming mainstream. Not only was public opinion against the use of force, but budgetary constraints forbade it as well. Defence spending in the 1920s had dropped significantly. The Ten-Year Rule meant in effect that the armed forces were not planning to fight a major war for at least ten years, and disarmament was a goal of both Conservative and Labour politicians in the mid-1920s (though of course with some opponents). Finally, the FO believed that using force against the boycott would only prolong the influence of Bolshevism, by inciting popular hatred against the British. Just as Bolshevism had defeated itself in Europe, Turkey and Persia in the years after the world war, Newton argued in the FO, the true remedy to the problems in China was to wait and allow Bolshevism to discredit itself.¹⁶⁰

On the foreign front, 1925 was also the year of Locarno. Even during the anti-British movement and boycott in China, the government's main foreign priority in the summer of 1925 was still the future of post-war Europe. The negotiations and eventual signing of the Locarno Pact were the main concern of foreign policymakers and the maintenance of peace in Europe was the primary goal. The Treaty of Mutual Guarantee, signed in October 1925, by Germany, Belgium, France, Great Britain and Italy, promised to uphold existing territorial borders and included guarantees from the signatories not to attack one another. This was a victory for collective security and Austen Chamberlain eventually would share a Nobel Peace Prize for his part in the negotiations. The success and 'spirit of Locarno' no doubt affected the making of policy towards China, a secondary issue. Indeed, Chamberlain's right-hand man at Locarno, Sir Miles Lampson, would be sent to China at the end of 1926 to be the British Minister in Peking when the European situation had been improved. The timing and nature of the appointment seemed to show the importance of the China issue, and also the direction

the British Government hoped to take in China. If Europe could be pacified, one could hope that diplomacy could bring peace with China as well.

Official policy towards China was thus a mixture of idealistic pacifism and realism. Diplomacy was the only option for a power with a depleted defence budget and a public unwilling to exercise force. Not only was the public unwilling to use force, it was questionable whether the Chinese could really be coerced to buy British goods. It thus seemed wiser, if slower, to take the way of negotiation since nothing could usefully be accomplished with the use of force. The first response to the troubles was to assure the protesters that Britain would take steps towards peace. The Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin repeatedly emphasised that peace in China was the chief objective of the government's efforts to negotiate with the Chinese, thus giving 'practical effect to the spirit of the decisions reached at the Washington Conference'.¹⁶¹ In contrast to the previous policy of 'wait and see', the government began pushing forward its plan to hold tariff negotiations with the Chinese and the other Treaty Powers. Tariff autonomy for the Chinese, they hoped, could stem Chinese anger and prove British goodwill.

Although preparations for a tariff conference meant that Britain would take a more active role, British policy was still marked by caution. Policymakers were unprepared and unwilling to deal with China unilaterally, despite recommendations to do so. Archibald Rose, a former Commercial Secretary in China and now at the Board of Trade, was in frequent contact with the FO regarding China policy, and he advised the FO to 'act alone'.¹⁶² Since the blow was aimed at the British specifically, Rose argued, they had a golden opportunity to further their own interests. This would give them the freedom to set the direction of Chinese relations, free from the constraints and prejudices of the other Powers. Rose's other recommendations (e.g. 'be strong', 'cherish courtesy', 'proclaim justice') were 'excellent' to the FO, but the idea of acting unilaterally was, at this time, unpalatable. Yet, the FO's policy of working with the other Powers caused decision-making to move slowly. On the one hand, the US position agreed with the convocation of the tariff conference, but thought the British position was too cautious, and advocated the taking of concrete steps to abolish extra-territoriality. The American Secretary of State, Frank Kellogg wrote to the FO in response to its stated policy:

You state in your Note of July 3, 1925, that the British Government is somewhat apprehensive lest the Chinese Government interpret a promise to expedite the meeting of the commission on Extraterritoriality as a sign of weakness on the part of the Powers. This Government does not share in that apprehension.¹⁶³

On the other hand, the Japanese were opposed to any 'comprehensive revision of the treaties'. Although the Japanese eventually agreed to attend the Special Tariff Conference held in October, they did so with some wariness. Chamberlain was also afraid that China would be an area where French and British policies would diverge. He wrote to Briand urging co-operation at the conference.¹⁶⁴ Tensions between the Powers would only intensify as the conference proceeded into 1926.

The Far Eastern Department's cautiousness, or inaction, as some commentators called it, also stemmed from divisions within the department and the difficulties of navigating through the various opinions. Austen Chamberlain confessed to his sister Hilda, as well as to Sir Charles Eliot, the Ambassador to Japan, that the Chinese situation gave him 'great anxiety'.¹⁶⁵ Not only did he feel that his knowledge of China was 'insufficient', compared to his knowledge of European affairs, but furthermore, was 'profoundly disquieted' by the 'constant conflict of opinion' in the Far Eastern Department.¹⁶⁶ In August, he told his other sister Ida, 'I am not quite sure that the policy which I am advised to pursue is right, my advisers themselves are not sanguine of good results and whatever happens I am clearly in for a row.'¹⁶⁷ Around the same time, even the King was expressing his concern about the continued difficulties and seeming inaction in China to Chamberlain. The King had read that British trade was losing upwards of £240,000 a day and advised Chamberlain to take some action. He approved of the idea to blockade the Pearl River, saying that he could not 'help thinking that some practical proof of our self assertion might have a salutary effect at the present juncture'.¹⁶⁸ 'Practical proof', however, was still wanting as the FO decided against the blockade.

One example of the difficulties facing the Far Eastern Department was the enquiry into the Shanghai shootings. Shortly after the incident, the Diplomatic Body at Peking had sent a commission made up of representatives from the foreign Powers to Shanghai. The commission's conclusions were distasteful to the Shanghai foreign community,

since they blamed the Chairman of the SMC for not taking precautionary measures and the British Commissioner of Police, McEuen, for being negligent in his duties. Under pressure from Shanghai, Chamberlain decided not to publish the Diplomatic Body's report and instead opted for a further enquiry, provoking disagreement within the Far Eastern Department. After months of delay, the enquiry took place in October, and the British and Japanese judges found every Shanghai authority involved in the shootings innocent. The American judge differed, laying blame on the police and the Commissioner. He also ventured to opine on the necessity of Chinese representation on the SMC and the abolition of extra-territoriality. While some British officials took issue with the American judge's report, others, most notably, John Pratt, who joined the Far Eastern Department in October, agreed with it.¹⁶⁹ The addition of John Pratt to the department was significant, since he would soon be widely considered as the resident expert within the department. Pratt (who was the half-brother of Boris Karloff) had been Acting Consul-General in Shanghai from autumn the past year. He was half-Indian, dark-skinned and had once been ousted from a Shanghai park by a constable. He was obviously aware of racial issues and sympathised with the Chinese. Called 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' by his FO colleagues, he was a staunch supporter of Chinese nationalism and noted for his liberal policies.¹⁷⁰ Pratt's joining the department was significant as it anticipated the direction future policy on China would take.

Furthermore, the business lobby at home and in China seemed to be begrudgingly acquiescent to the FO's direction, thus easing the way for the FO to go forward. The Shanghai branch of the China Association and the British Chamber of Commerce passed a resolution at the end of August approving the rendition of the Mixed Courts and allowing Chinese representation on the SMC. Nevertheless, acquiescence had its limits. They wrote: 'We earnestly hope however that our conciliatory attitude will not be used as an argument against the adoption of any measure that may seem advisable in South China.'¹⁷¹ Chamberlain also ventured to ask the China Association how far they would be prepared to make concessions to the Chinese, for tariff autonomy, the abolition of extra-territoriality and the reform of the constitution of the International Settlement at Shanghai.¹⁷²

At the Association's luncheon for the British Delegates to the Tariff Conference, Chamberlain made a widely publicised speech on the current direction of British policy.

Coming off the heels of his negotiations at Locarno, Chamberlain's speech proclaimed his hope that they could also arrive at a peaceful settlement in China:

[The troubles in China] are grave enough, but they are symptomatic of the changes that are taking place in the Eastern, no less than in the Western, world, and, with goodwill on the one side, as on the other, they present no problem which cannot be resolved to the mutual advantage of the Chinese and of the foreign Powers concerned ... I would add that you can deal wisely with no foreign problem unless you can enter to some extent, at any rate, into the aspirations of the people with whom you are dealing, unless you can feel sympathy with their grievances and their hardships, and unless you can realise to yourself some picture of the long history, and, in the case of China, of the even immemorial civilisation to which modern China is heir.¹⁷³

On the one hand, his rhetoric was infused with the internationalist sentiment befitting to the architect of Locarno and his declarations of sympathy surely echoed that of Addis, Garvin and indeed the missionary lobby. He also affirmed his support of Chinese self-determination: 'The salvation of China can come only from the Chinese and the measure of her progress and the extent of her progress will be the measure and the extent of the capacity and goodwill which the Chinese Government can bring to the solution of these great questions.' On the other hand, Chamberlain was still loath to renounce the whole of Britain's traditional leading role in East Asia: 'Unless the signs deceive me, this great nation is rousing herself from sleep and bidding fair to renew her mighty youth. I trust that our country will not play a halting part, but that we shall continue to lead, as we have always led, in China'. Finally, Chamberlain declared:

with our feet upon the solid ground of experience we shall allow our eyes to look towards a broader and brighter Eastern horizon on which China will stand, strong, and self-reliant, as a healthy and helpful partner in the comity of nations ... This great productive country and its sturdy and industrious people have much to offer to a straitened and depleted world, and they hold in their hands the fateful gift of peace or war in Asia.

Chamberlain's hopes for China were echoed by the majority of the British population who hoped that British relations with China would be increasingly peaceful and prosperous. However, the next year brought new challenges, as Chiang Kai-shek readied his troops in Canton for a military campaign against the warlords, as differences between the Powers became more manifest and the attack on British trade in Hong Kong remained unsettled. While Britons became impatient for a solution to the Chinese problems, the government would intensify the search for a viable new China policy.

¹ Antony Best, 'The British Empire's Image of East Asia, 1900-1941: Politics, Ideology, and International Order' unpublished manuscript, pp. 7-8.

² National Archives CAB 23/150 06 Meeting minutes 06 May 1925.

³ Also see Germaine A. Hoston, *The State, Identity, and the National Question in China and Japan* (Princeton, 1994) for thorough treatment and analysis of how Chinese and Japanese radicals dealt with the tension between Marxism and nationalism.

⁴ Previously, the view was that the origin of the CCP predated the United Front and Maring was given the credit for actively developing the United Front. See Tony Saich, *The Origins of the First United Front in China: The Role of Sneevliet (alias Maring)* (Leiden, 1991). However, Bruce A. Elleman has challenged this thesis and argued that the Soviet Union pursued an alliance with Sun and the KMT even before 1921 for geostrategic reasons.

⁵ National Archives CAB 23/150 6 Meeting minutes, 30 May 1925.

⁶ Antony Best, 'We are virtually at war with Russia': Britain and the Cold War in East Asia, 1923-40' *Cold War History*, forthcoming 2011.

⁷ National Archives FO 800/256 Misc. Correspondence Austen Chamberlain Nov-Dec. 1924 C. Eliot to Chamberlain, 14 Nov 1924.

⁸ 'Current Comments' *English Review*, Jan 1925, p. 12.

⁹ National Archives FO 800/256 Misc. Correspondence Austen Chamberlain Nov-Dec. 1924 C. Eliot to Chamberlain, 14 Nov 1924.

¹⁰ Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas J.L. Garvin Works Notebook 158 The Thinker I, pp. 130-132 and Notebook 35 The Thinker I, p. 260.

¹¹ Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas J.L. Garvin Works Notebook 158 The Thinker I, p. 140.

¹² See Jessie G. Lutz, 'Chinese Nationalism and the Anti-Christian Campaigns of the 1920s' *Modern Asia Studies* vol. 10, no. 3 (1976), pp. 395-416.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 400 quoted from Chang Ch'in Shih, *Kuo-nei chin-shin-nien-lai chih tsung-chiao ssu-ch'ao* (The Tide of Religious Thought during the Last Decade) (Peking, 1927), p. 188.

¹⁴ *The Times*, 05 Jan 1925, p. 9, col. E.

¹⁵ SOAS *Chinese Recorder*, Feb 1925, p. 126.

¹⁶ *The New York Times*, 21 July 1921, p. 4.

¹⁷ Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 181, col. 287: 03 March 1925.

¹⁸ 'China in Evolution' *Round Table*. March 1925, pp. 276-297.

¹⁹ R.P. Scott, 'England and School-Ideals in China' *Contemporary Review*. February 1925, pp. 179-187.

²⁰ Interestingly, Dr. Wilfred Grenfell received a knighthood (K.C.M.G.) for his missionary work in 1927. This was the first instance a knighthood was bestowed on a missionary in recognition of missionary work. His name was a 'household word' among Christian circles. See entry in bulletin for the Wesleyan Methodist Church (SOAS), Sept 1927, p. 286.

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- ²¹ Wilfred Grenfell, 'Is China Making Progress?' *Contemporary Review*. (written Apr 1925) Sep 1925, p. 336.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. 335.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 336.
- ²⁴ *The Times*, 04 June 1925, p. 13.
- ²⁵ See Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 181, cols. 253-317: 03 Mar 1925.
- ²⁶ Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 181, cols. 287, 289: 03 Mar 1925.
- ²⁷ SOAS China Association Papers CHAS/MCP/31 Circular No. 353 Correspondence for the General Committee Letter from the British Legation, Peking 13 Apr 1925.
- ²⁸ Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 187, cols. 404-405: 29 July 1925.
- ²⁹ University of Toronto, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, Bland Papers MS 81, Box 9 Folder 41, Bland to Leveson, 09 Feb 1925.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, Bland to Leveson 11 Feb 1925.
- ³¹ See Nicholas R. Clifford, *Shanghai, 1925: Urban Nationalism and the Defense of Foreign Privilege* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1979), pp. 14-17.
- ³² Document 8, 'Conditions at Canton after the Events at Shameen on June 23, 1925' by General Bliukher in C. Martin Wilbur and Julie Lien-ying How, *Missionaries of Revolution: Soviet Advisers and Nationalist China, 1920-1927* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), p. 506.
- ³³ Document 7, 'Chiang Kai-shek's letter to Bliukher', 26 Jun 1925, in Wilbur and How, *Missionaries of Revolution*, p. 502.
- ³⁴ See for example, Kennedy, *Realities Behind Diplomacy*, p. 227 and chapters by Jon Lawrence and Dudley Baines in *20th Century Britain: Economic, Social, and Cultural Change* ed. Paul Johnson (London, 1994).
- ³⁵ Policymakers also looked to improved trade with Russia and Germany to alleviate unemployment.
- ³⁶ C.A. McCurdy, 'The Industrial Outlook' *Contemporary Review*. May 1925, p. 549.
- ³⁷ Fung, *Diplomacy of Imperial Retreat*, p. 50.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*
- ³⁹ *The Times*, 10 Jun 1925, p. 15, col. C.
- ⁴⁰ *The Times*, 11 Jun 1925, p. 10, col. C.
- ⁴¹ *The Times*, 24 Jun 1925, p. 15, col. D.
- ⁴² National Archives CAB 24/181 308 (26) Memo on British Policy, Annex II by Wellesley, 30 Jul 1926 (written 09 Feb 1926).
- ⁴³ Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 187, col. 442W: 29 Jul 1925.
- ⁴⁴ See Best, "'We are virtually at war with Russia'".
- ⁴⁵ *The Times* 29 Jun 1925. P. 9, col. B.
- ⁴⁶ Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 187, col. 1825: 07 Aug 1925.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, col. 1816.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, col. 1828.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, col. 1838.
- ⁵⁰ British Library Newspaper Archive *Daily Mail* 'Moscow's Plots in China. Moscow's Glee.' 08 Jun 1925, p. 9.
- ⁵¹ *The Times*, 03 Jun 1925, p. 12, col. F.
- ⁵² *The Times*, 05 Jun 1925. P. 14, col. A.
- ⁵³ *The Times*, 01 Jul 1925. P. 12, col. C.
- ⁵⁴ *The Times*, 20 Jun 1925. P. 10, col. E.
- ⁵⁵ National Archives CAB 24/174 34(25) Chiefs of Staff Report, 06 Jul 1925.
- ⁵⁶ Cambridge University Manuscripts Baldwin Papers 111 Foreign Affairs 7 F.1 Lord Beatty to Baldwin, 01 Jul 1925.

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- ⁵⁷ National Archives CO 129/491 CO32534 J. H. Oldham (Conference of Missionary Societies in Britain and Ireland) to CO, 14 Jul 1925.
- ⁵⁸ National Archives CO 129/491 CO40600 From Collier (FO) to CO, 05 Sep 1925. Labour MPs asked questions in the House about Stubbs' threat. See People's History Museum Labour Party/TUC Joint International Committee Minutes of the meetings of the Joint Advisory Board, 23 Jul 1925.
- ⁵⁹ Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 186, col. 67: 06 Jul 1925.
- ⁶⁰ Cambridge University Manuscripts Jardine Matheson Papers MS JM J11/2/19 Semi-official letters London to Hongkong 1925 D.F. Landale to D.G.M. Bernard, no. 366, 04 Jun 1925.
- ⁶¹ University of Toronto, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library Bland Papers MS 81 Box 11 Folder 155 Bland to Wong, 11 Feb 1925.
- ⁶² HSBC Archives GHO 0176 Letters to Barlow 1924-1925 Newton Stabb to A.H. Barlow, 02 Jul 1925.
- ⁶³ Cambridge University Manuscripts Jardine Matheson Papers MS JM I21/14 Miscellaneous correspondence G.W. Sheppard to Sir John Jordan, 16 Jun 1925.
- ⁶⁴ National Archives FO 371/10921 F3140/2/10 Telegram from M. Palairet, 15 Jul 1925.
- ⁶⁵ National Archives FO371 10920 F 2653/2/10 Minute by Waterlow, 03 Jul 1925.
- ⁶⁶ National Archives FO371 10919 F 2282/2/10 Minute by G. Moss, 15 Jun 1925.
- ⁶⁷ National Archives CAB 24/173 C.P. 218 (25) 'Arms Traffic Conference' A. Chamberlain memorandum 08 Apr 1925 and FO371 10921 F 3140/2/10.
- ⁶⁸ Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 187, col. 243: 28 Jul 1925.
- ⁶⁹ National Archives FO371 10920 F 2653/2/10 Waterlow minute, 03 Jul 1925
- ⁷⁰ National Archives FO371 10919 F 2662/2/10 N. Stabb to Waterlow, 30 Jun 1925.
- ⁷¹ See, for example, SOAS Swire Papers JSSII 2/4 Box 40 From Hongkong Telegram from G.H. Stitt to A.H. Barlow, 05 Aug 1925.
- ⁷² National Archives CAB 24/174 C.P. 401 Trade Outlook. Note by the President of the Board of Trade, 13 Aug 1925.
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*, and SOAS China Association Papers CHAS/MCP/31 Circular no. 356 Correspondence for the General Committee, 11 Aug 1925.
- ⁷⁴ Cambridge University Manuscripts Jardine Matheson Papers MS JM J11/2/19 Semi-official letters duplicates Jardine Matheson to FO, 31 Jul 1925.
- ⁷⁵ SOAS China Association Papers CHAS/MCP/31 Circular no. 359 Correspondence for the General Committee, 22 Sep 1925.
- ⁷⁶ National Archives FO 800/258 Misc. Correspondence Austen Chamberlain May-Dec 1925 J. Charteris to Chamberlain, 22 Aug 1925 and A. Knox to Chamberlain, 23 Aug 1925.
- ⁷⁷ British Library Newspaper Archive *Observer* 'The Crisis and the Need in China', 23 Aug 1925, p. 8.
- ⁷⁸ Manchester Archives County Record Office Manchester Chamber of Commerce M8/4/12 Minute Book: China & Far East Section, 27 Aug 1925.
- ⁷⁹ Cambridge University Manuscripts Jardine Matheson Papers MS JM J11/2/19 Semi-official letters duplicates Landale to Bernard (HK), 30 Jul 1925.
- ⁸⁰ HSBC Archives GHO 0176 Letters to Barlow, 1925-1925 Stabb to Barlow, 07 Aug 1925.
- ⁸¹ SOAS Swire Papers JSSII 2/4 Box 40 file 74 From Hongkong Telegram from Stabb to Barlow, 07 Aug 1925.
- ⁸² Cambridge University Manuscripts Baldwin Papers 111 Foreign Affairs 7 F.1 E. Marsh (for Churchill) to Baldwin, 26 Feb 1926.
- ⁸³ British Library Newspaper Archive *Daily Herald* 'More Marines at Shanghai', 09 Jun 1925, p. 3.
- ⁸⁴ For a thorough study of China's 'awakening' in this period, see John Fitzgerald, *Awakening China: Politics, Culture, and Class in the Nationalist Revolution* (Stanford, 1996).
- ⁸⁵ National Archives FO371 10921 F 3567/2/10 Translation of Shi-Po newspaper dated 01 Jun 1925, 31 Jul 1925.
- ⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ For details of the anti-Christian movement in the 1920s, see Jessie Lutz, 'Chinese Nationalism and the Anti-Christian Campaigns' and for background on anti-Christian thought, see Paul A. Cohen, 'The Anti-Christian Tradition in China' *Journal of Asian Studies* 20, no. 2 (Feb 1961), pp. 169-180.

⁸⁹ National Archives FO371 10921 F 3567/2/10 Translation of Shi-Po newspaper dated 01 Jun 1925, 31 Jul 1925.

⁹⁰ *The Times*. 08 Jul 1925. P. 16, col. C.

⁹¹ Ivan D. Ross, 'The Anti-Christian Movement' *Contemporary Review*. Aug 1925, p. 184.

⁹² National Archives FO 371/10921 F 2414/2/10 Cable from Shanghai from A. Rose, 20 Jun 1925.

⁹³ Ibid., Minute by G. Moss.

⁹⁴ Ibid., Minute by G. Moss.

⁹⁵ Hansard, *Lords Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 62, col. 716: 05 Aug 1925.

⁹⁶ *The Times*. 23 Jun 1925. P. 19, col. E.

⁹⁷ SOAS MS 211355 Aglen Confidential Correspondence, Aglen to Bowra, 14 Feb 1925.

⁹⁸⁹⁸ National Archives FO371 10920 F 2694/2/10 Aglen memo 01 Jul 1925.

⁹⁹ See Adelaide Anderson, *Humanity and Labour in China: An Industrial Visit and Its Sequel (1923 to 1926)*, (Student Christian Movement, 1928).

¹⁰⁰ Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 181, col. 294: 03 Mar. 1925.

¹⁰¹ Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 187, cols. 734-736: 07 Aug 1925.

¹⁰² British Library Newspaper Archive *Daily Herald*, 'Armoured cars used against Chinese strikers', 03 Jun 1925, p. 1.

¹⁰³ British Library Newspaper Archive *Daily Herald*, 'Imperialism in China', 03 Jun 1925, p. 3.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ British Library Newspaper Archive *Daily Herald*, 'British bluejackets landed at Shanghai', 04 Jun 1925, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ British Library Newspaper Archive *Daily Herald*, 'T.U.C. protest on Shanghai', 05 Jun 1925, p. 1.

¹⁰⁷ National Archives KV 2/1905 MI5 file for Cecil John L'Estrange-Malone, Timeline, 10 Jul 1925.

¹⁰⁸ Hull History Centre History Centre Bridgeman Papers U DBN/1/1 Biographical information about Bridgeman, partially excerpted from the FO List, 1924.

¹⁰⁹ In British Library Newspaper Archive *Manchester Guardian* 'The foreigners' position in China', a letter from 'BWA', a Shanghai resident for thirty years, responded to the CIB article, published the previous Monday, by saying that the sign never existed. This is confirmed by Robert Bickers and Jeffrey Wasserstrom, 'Shanghai's "Dogs and Chinese Not Admitted Sign: Legend, History and Contemporary Symbol' *China Quarterly*, no. 142 (Jun 1995), pp. 444-466, which is a detailed inquiry into the (non)existence and significance of the sign.

¹¹⁰ Hull History Centre History Centre Bridgeman Papers U DBN/3/2 Press cutting from the *Peking & Tientsin Times*, 'Facts about China: Some perversions exposed'. This was related to a communication by the China Association published 02 Jul 1925 in *The Times*: 'Facts about China'. The CIB then responded to this article.

¹¹¹ National Archives KV 2/1905 MI5 file for Cecil John L'Estrange-Malone, timeline, 10 Oct 1925.

¹¹² British Library Newspaper Archive *Daily Herald*, 'More marines at Shanghai', 09 Jun 1925, p. 3.

¹¹³ Hull History Centre Winifred Holtby Papers L WH/6/6.1/06/05a Holtby to Vera Brittain, 04 Oct 1925.

¹¹⁴ People's History Museum T.U.C. Reports 1925, 12 Sep 1925.

¹¹⁵ British Library Newspaper Archive *Daily Herald* 'British Labour protests at Shanghai shooting', 08 Jun 1925, p. 1.

¹¹⁶ National Archives FO371 10920 F 2653/2/10 Waterlow minute 03 Jul 1925.

¹¹⁷ National Archives FO371 10919 F 2417/2/10 Notes for speech by A. Chamberlain 20 Jun 1925.

¹¹⁸ See Kennedy, *The realities behind diplomacy*, p. 237.

- ¹¹⁹ National Archives FO371 10921 F3308/2/10 Draft of proposed speech in H of L, attached newspaper clipping 20 Jul 1925.
- ¹²⁰ Ibid.
- ¹²¹ National Archives FO 371/10936 F395/120/10 letter from Waterlow to Chairman (YWCA), 04 Feb 1925.
- ¹²² SOAS Addis Papers Box 17 PP MS 14/25 Bishop Banister to Addis, 01 Oct 1924.
- ¹²³ SOAS *Chinese Recorder*, Aug 1925, p. 525.
- ¹²⁴ British Library Newspaper Archive *Daily Herald*, 'More marines at Shanghai', 09 Jun 1925, p. 3.
- ¹²⁵ British Library Newspaper Archive *Daily Herald*, 'Chinese workers' call to Western comrades', 11 Jun 1925, p. 3.
- ¹²⁶ For example, Hodgkin's contribution in *The Times*. 23 Jun 1925. P. 19, col. E.; *Manchester Guardian* - letter by an educationalist at the Tientsin Anglo-Chinese College, 22 Jun 1925, p. 16 and letter from a hospital in Hunan, 13 Oct 1925, p. 8; Ivan D. Ross in *The Contemporary Review*, Aug 1925 and Dr Wilfred Grenfell in Sep 1925; Bland and Harold Balme, Shantung Christian University professor, engaged in a battle in the pages of the *English Review*, Nov 1925 – Jan 1926.
- ¹²⁷ SOAS China Inland Mission Papers CIM Box 18 File 412/22 General Leaflets. 'Notes on the Crisis in China' by Marshall Broomhall, Jul 1925.
- ¹²⁸ SOAS *Chinese Recorder* Sep 1925, p. 591.
- ¹²⁹ One reason cited by the CIM for its withdrawal from the National Christian Council, outside of theological reasons, was the NCC's 'unwarranted interference...in political matters lying outside its proper sphere.' From SOAS China Inland Mission Papers CIM File No. 76 Minutes of the China Council 1920-1929, 16 Dec 1925.
- ¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 589.
- ¹³¹ Ibid., pp. 585, 587.
- ¹³² Albert Feuerwerker, *The Foreign Establishment in China in the Early Twentieth Century* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1976), p. 44.
- ¹³³ *The English Review*, Sept 1925, p. 340.
- ¹³⁴ For a detailed overview of American policy towards China during this period, see Dorothy Borg, *American Policy and the Chinese Revolution, 1925-1928* (New York, 1947).
- ¹³⁵ National Archives FO 371/10937 F 952/190/10 Minute by A. Chamberlain, 16 Mar 1925.
- ¹³⁶ SOAS China Inland Mission Papers CIM Box 15 Minutes of the London Council, vol. 13 1920-1928, 28 Oct 1925.
- ¹³⁷ National Archives FO 800/258 Misc. correspondence Austen Chamberlain May-Dec 1925, Chamberlain to the Archbishop of Canterbury, 29 Jun 1925.
- ¹³⁸ 'Annual Church Membership in Britain, 1900-1970s' chart from Robert Currie, et al. *Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 25-27. <http://www.brin.ac.uk/figures/#ChurchesandChurchgoers>, accessed 16 Aug 2011.
- ¹³⁹ National Archives FO 800/258 Misc. correspondence Austen Chamberlain May-Dec 1925, Chamberlain to the Archbishop of Canterbury, draft letter, 29 Jun 1925.
- ¹⁴⁰ Reproduced in SOAS China Inland Mission Papers CIM 167 *China's Millions* Aug 1925, p. 132.
- ¹⁴¹ FO 371/10921 F 3631/2/10 Memo by H.T. Hodgkin, 04 Aug 1925.
- ¹⁴² Ibid., Wellesley minute.
- ¹⁴³ Royal Institute of International Affairs Archive RIIA 8/32 Meeting Minute 'Britain and China: a psycho-political study' by H.T. Hodgkin, 13 Oct 1925.
- ¹⁴⁴ Cambridge University Manuscripts Jardine Matheson Papers MS JM J11/2/19 Semi-official letters duplicates Landale to D.G.M. Bernard (Hongkong), 06 Oct 1925.
- ¹⁴⁵ From Dayer, *Bankers and diplomats in China*, p. xix and Dayer, *Finance and empire*.
- ¹⁴⁶ Dayer, *Bankers and diplomats in China*, p. 52.
- ¹⁴⁷ For example, see SOAS Addis Papers Box 44 PP MS 14/533, speech to Hongkong Diocesan Association, 12 Jun 1922; 14/534, to Chinese Education Committee, 14 Jun 1922; 14/546, to Victorian

Diocesan Association, 17 Jan 1924; 14/550 to the Christian Literature Society for China, 01 Apr 1925; 14/551, to the South American Mission, 07 May 1925.

¹⁴⁸ Dayer, *Finance and empire*, pp. 254-259.

¹⁴⁹ SOAS Addis Papers Box 44 PP MS 14/549, Memorandum on China at Institute of International Affairs, 23 Feb 1925.

¹⁵⁰ SOAS China Association Papers CHAS/MCP/31 Circular No. 358, Correspondence for the General Committee, 10 Sep 1925.

¹⁵¹ Cambridge University Manuscripts Jardine Matheson Papers MS JM J1/24/35 Semi-official letters A. Brooke Smith (Shanghai) to D.G.M. Bernard (Hong Kong), 10 Sep 1925.

¹⁵² National Archives FO 800/258 Misc. correspondence Austen Chamberlain, May-Dec 1925, Soothill to Chamberlain, 19 Sep 1925.

¹⁵³ University of Birmingham Special Collections CMS/ACC460 Z4 letter from Hind in Fukien Diocesan Magazine, Jan 1925, no. 30, 20 Oct 1925.

¹⁵⁴ For a summary of the debates, see Patrick O'Brien, 'Britain's Economy between the Wars: A Survey of a Counter-Revolution in Economic History' *Past and Present*, May 1987, pp. 107-130.

¹⁵⁵ See, for example, R.S. Sayers, *A History of Economic Change in England, 1880-1939* (Oxford, 1967); W. Ashworth, *An Economic History of England, 1870-1939* (London, 1960); S. Pollard, *The Development of the British Economy, 1914-1980* (Bungay, 1983); M.W. Kirby, *The Decline of British Economic Power Since 1870* (London, 1981), p. 114.

¹⁵⁶ See A. Booth and S. Glynn, 'Unemployment in the Interwar Period: A Multiple Problem' *Journal of Contemporary History* 10 (1975) p. 614 for one side of the argument, and W.H. Beveridge, *Full Employment in a Free Society* (1944), pp. 328-337 for the other side. See W.R. Garside, *British Unemployment 1919-1939: A study in public policy* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 3-7 for a summary of the arguments.

¹⁵⁷ *The Times* 02 Jul 1925. P. 15, col. C.

¹⁵⁸ See Bickers, *The Scramble for China*, chs. 2 and 3, for example.

¹⁵⁹ Cambridge University Manuscripts Jardine Matheson Papers MS JM I21/14 Miscellaneous correspondence 1872, 1932 G.W. Sheppard to Sir John Jordan, 24 Jun 1925.

¹⁶⁰ National Archives FO 371/11621 F513/1/10 Annex I. Memo by B. Newton on Bolshevik activity in China, 25 Jun 1925.

¹⁶¹ *The Times* 16 Jun 1925. P. 9, col. A and P. 16, col. C.

¹⁶² National Archives FO371 10921 F 3233/2/10 Suggestions by A. Rose for dealing with current Chinese problems, 17 Jul 1925.

¹⁶³ Quoted in Borg, *American Policy and the Chinese Revolution*, p.59.

¹⁶⁴ National Archives FO 800/258 Misc. Correspondence Austen Chamberlain, May-Dec 1925, 29 Aug 1925.

¹⁶⁵ University of Birmingham Special Collections AC5/1/359 Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 18 Jul 1925 and National Archives FO 800/258 Misc. correspondence Austen Chamberlain Chamberlain to Charles Eliot, 23 Jul 1925.

¹⁶⁶ National Archives FO 371/10921 F3446/2/10 Minute by Chamberlain, 27 Jul 1925.

¹⁶⁷ University of Birmingham Special Collections AC5/1/363 Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 23 Aug 1925.

¹⁶⁸ National Archives FO 800/258 Misc. Correspondence Austen Chamberlain, May-Dec 1925 Stamfordham to Chamberlain, 21 Aug 1925.

¹⁶⁹ Clark, 'Britain and the Chinese Revolution', pp. 7-18.

¹⁷⁰ From interviews with Owen O'Malley and Frank Ashton-Gwatkin in 1971 in Megginson, 'Britain's Response to Chinese Nationalism', pp. 213-214.

¹⁷¹ SOAS China Association Papers CHAS/MCP/31 Correspondence for the General Committee Circular no. 357, Sep 1925.

¹⁷² SOAS China Association Papers CHAS/MCP/6 Minutes of the General Committee and Executive Committee, 14 Sep 1925.

¹⁷³ SOAS China Association Papers CHAS/A/8 Annual Report, 1925-1926, 24 Sep 1925.

Chapter 4: 1926

In a review of the previous year, the *Chinese Recorder* proclaimed at the beginning of 1926:

China has passed in 1925 from passive revolution to national aggressiveness. China has found herself. The Chinese have made up their mind. That makes a new situation for the world ... One outstanding feature of 1925 is the kaleidoscopic change in political and Christian opinion with regards to the international treatment of China ... Diplomatic, and to a somewhat lesser extent commercial interests, have also registered a change of attitude. No one sees just where this change of opinion will ultimately lead. It indicates, therefore, a real venture of faith in China. That is encouraging!¹

The change of attitude registered here would become even more solidified throughout 1926. Whereas throughout 1925 the FO still seemed tentative in moving forward with its retreat from China, 1926 saw a steady consolidation of opinion and support for the government's espoused policy and also more willingness on the part of the government to advance its policy. The government faced complex problems with the continuation of the Canton boycott, the difficulties and ultimate failure of the Tariff Conference and the steady advance of the KMT in the Northern Expedition, along with the domestic General Strike. Yet, instead of causing policymakers to question the wisdom of the policy of conciliation, these events helped to affirm policymakers in their resolution to proceed along the lines of eschewing force for friendship.

How then would these difficulties in 1926 motivate policymakers to continue on the way of retreat? Frustration over boycott and tariff negotiations in the beginning of the year plus numerous protests from British residents in China, the Chinese and diehard voices in Britain caused Chamberlain and Wellesley to reassess the situation and deal with divisions in the Far Eastern Department, in hopes that a more united department could produce more effective policy. The conciliatory direction of the department continued along the same lines as in 1925, strengthened by the overt support of the domestic British press and the influence of important advisors. Labour protests also kept the government from moving too far right. Furthermore, previous assumptions

about Chinese unchangeability and conservatism were increasingly questioned by the British public and by policymakers. Their opinions about Chinese nationalism and especially about the Chinese Nationalist Party subsequently underwent a noticeable shift. Thus, the retreat continued steadily even as the British government faced new problems in China in the summer of 1926, supported in large part by a public whose views of the KMT became more positive. Indeed, the government initiative to negotiate and work with the KMT would signal a new era in the Sino-British relationship. The late summer saw the hesitant acceptance of the KMT into the fold of political legitimacy and the British government began to entertain the idea that perhaps it was a modern reformist force with lasting power. British policy thus moved towards an overt recognition of the claims of Chinese nationalism, culminating in the production of the December Memorandum, in which Britain boldly declared its new policy of retreat from China.

THE HONG KONG BOYCOTT AND THE BUSINESS LOBBY

The boycott begun the previous year continued to plague British trade in Hong Kong and necessitated a solution. While the business interests and diplomats in China continued to lobby the FO, the latter continued its policy of waiting, still hoping that, in time, the Bolsheviks would discredit themselves. The failure of the diplomatic and business community in China to successfully influence the FO stemmed partially from the long-term factors mentioned in the previous chapters, but also from their own divergent recommendations. Indeed, the beginning of 1926 was a period of trial, error and setbacks that would convince Chamberlain and the FO of the need for a definite move towards conciliation.

The diplomats and business interests in Hong Kong found it difficult to resolve the conflict with the Cantonese, and indeed the conflicts between themselves. Sir Cecil Clementi, who was fluent in Cantonese and Mandarin, was sent by the Colonial Office at the end of 1925 to replace Stubbs in Hong Kong, in the hope that he could bring order and reconciliation to Hong Kong. Once there, Clementi advocated having Sir James Jamieson, the Consul-General at Canton replaced. Jamieson had secluded himself on Shameen Island since the Shakee Incident the previous June and had not

communicated face-to-face with any Chinese representatives. He was not only 'cordially detested' by all the members of present Canton Council of Government, according to Clementi, he was also on the Cantonese 'assassination list'. Furthermore, he was a notorious drunkard.² It was therefore foolish to attempt conciliation through this diplomatic means. Soon, Jamieson was replaced by J.F. Brennan, who had been in the Far Eastern Department for a year and was thus familiar with the FO's present policy. He would prove himself more willing to negotiate with the KMT as the year went on.³

In the meantime, delegations of Hong Kong merchants and a large party of several hundred Chinese representing various interests (hongs, guilds, hospitals, etc.) went a few times to Canton to negotiate with the Canton Government and strike committee, but the latter proved intractable each time, despite Hong Kong's offer of 3 million dollars to Canton. The delegations continued to return unsuccessful. Even more frustratingly, while Hong Kong suffered, Canton seemed to be doing well economically and was unmotivated to stop the boycott.⁴ By the beginning of 1926, the general feeling in Hong Kong was not optimistic. A telegram from Butterfield & Swire, the shipping company, in Hong Kong to the head office in London had a tone of weariness when it told of British merchants negotiating in Canton. Negotiations were going on, 'but [we] do not think it will succeed...and would strengthen strikers ... We suggest waiting policy until after Chinese New Year.'⁵ The head office in London agreed to wait until after the Chinese New Year, but was impatient for a resolution. They wrote back saying, 'impress upon Governor, Consul speedy settlement essential interest of British shipping.'⁶ In the meantime, while they encouraged their people in China to apply pressure on the diplomats in China, they did not stand by idly. The business interests in London were impatient for a resolution to the boycott of Hong Kong and the resumption of normal trade, and it seemed that diplomacy was failing their cause.

In January, the *Morning Post* commented that British diplomacy in China had 'absolutely failed.'⁷ Not only was Britain's trade 'ruined', but the Empire had also suffered a 'total loss' of prestige. The China Association's chairman, Leefe of Matheson's, concurred with the *Morning Post*, stating that British trade and prestige in China were 'absolutely ruined'.⁸ Trade thus went hand-in-hand with imperial prestige. *The Economist* also published an item on China in its first issue of 1926. The placement

of the item as the second topic of the opening article, 'The Achievements of 1925', was ironic, since the thrust of it was that neither the Central Government in China nor any foreign governments had achieved or were likely to achieve anything substantial in China. The article declared: 'nothing decisive ever does happen, will happen, or has happened in that agitated country—or rather, continent. Spectacular civil wars and international conferences follow one another in an apparently inexhaustible series, and each of them might as well never have occurred for all the effect which it appears to have had upon the situation.'⁹

Faced with this bleak situation, the business interests joined with each other to take matters into their own hands and stepped up the initiative to influence China policy at home. Although the China Association had been quite successful in conveying their opinions and commercial grievances to the government, especially in the years immediately after its founding in 1889, as foreign policy and commercial interests in China seemed to diverge after the First World War, its members became increasingly frustrated with what they saw as the government's weak China policy. After being rebuffed by the government in 1925, some of these leading businessmen decided to form a 'China Co-ordinating Committee', led by Lord Southborough, who had extensive experience in the Board of Trade and the Colonial Office. It was staffed with representatives from the China Association, the Eastern Section of the London Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of British Industries and Home Shipowners. It was hoped that, since it was composed of 'the really big interests in China', it would likely be 'more effective than the China Association'.¹⁰ Its purpose would be not only to convey the business community's grievances to various government departments, but also to 'raise trouble in the Press or in the House'.¹¹ The 'City, Lancashire Yorkshire interests' were 'supplying ammunition for the *Morning Post*', for example, to publicise their desire for 'something strong' to be done about the situation in Canton.¹² These were measures taken to 'revive Britain's sense of imperial purpose' by the 'gentlemanly capitalists' in the interwar period, but their sense of 'imperial purpose', however, differed markedly from their counterparts in China.¹³ While those in London mostly sought stability in China, usually advocating support for any strong military leader who could form a durable government friendly to British trade, they were not completely unwilling to make concessions to nationalism, as evidenced by their changed position the previous year. Those in China continued to advocate their own strategy to restore

imperial prestige. Around the same time the Southborough Committee was formed in London, the treaty-port businessmen in Shanghai formed their own group and named it the Constitutional Defence League. The League's main purpose was to oppose the spread of Bolshevism in China and to use similar propaganda techniques to spread its anti-Communism and message.¹⁴ Its members also belonged to the famous China businesses. The League's representative in London, C. Champkin, was a former manager for the P&O Bank in Shanghai, and T.H.R. Shaw, the Shanghai manager for Swires, was also a very active member of the League.

Despite these attempts to influence the FO, the latter's policy remained distinct from business recommendations and indeed from the recommendations of other branches of the government. Various suggestions were offered to the FO around this time, all to be rejected. The Governor of Hong Kong was perhaps the most adamant in requesting a swift and firm solution to the problems. 'Treaty rights', he wrote, had 'been violated in a most flagrant manner'.¹⁵ The list of grievances were severe: villagers crossing into Canton had been waylaid, women bringing fruit into British territory had been fired upon, drowned and killed, Indian firemen had been seized and a British subject had been thrown in prison. The new Governor, therefore, pressed for the expulsion of the Bolsheviks from Canton. In addition, the French Ambassador in London suggested a naval demonstration, while the Commander-in-Chief of the China Station recommended sending Canton an ultimatum, with the threat of bombing the Bocca Tigris and Whampoa Forts as well as the KMT's Whampoa Military College. Sir James Jamieson, the Consul-General at Canton proposed intercepting vessels obeying the strike committees' regulations; others suggested referring the matter to the League or funding anti-Bolshevik parties in Canton. The FO saw most of the above suggestions as only serving to inflame Chinese antagonism and the idea of referring the issue to the League of Nations as only giving Young China a chance to publicise its grievances thus potentially shaming Britain. Moreover, the Minister in Peking differed from his counterparts in the South, for which he earned the ire of treaty-port British and the China Association. Indeed, much of the reasoning for their support of sending a Special Envoy came from their dissatisfaction with Macleay, who they believed was 'completely out of touch' with the British community.¹⁶ Macleay, however, believed that the policy of 'patient conciliation' had 'borne abundant fruit' in restoring friendship

and goodwill between the British and Chinese peoples and in the resumption of normal commercial relations, except in the few areas of Bolshevik control.¹⁷

Conservative MPs took up the business lobby's cause and protested about the government's passivity in the face of the blatant attack on British commercial interests. Chamberlain, however, strongly defended the Foreign Office's policy by saying that the Chinese themselves were 'far from approving the conduct of the extremist faction in Canton' and that their 'disgust' with the radicals would doubtless spread, 'unless intervention by a foreign Power should strengthen the extremists and unite China against the aggressor'.¹⁸

Leo Amery, the Colonial Secretary, sought to defend and explain this position to Clementi. Of the Bolsheviks at Canton, he wrote that the general policy was to 'leave them alone and let them discredit themselves'.¹⁹ If Britain resorted to force, it would only prolong the influence of the Bolsheviks, he argued. It was much better to let them show their true colours. This belief was based upon the assumption that Bolshevism was only an 'artificial influence' and that as such, it would not have staying power.²⁰ Furthermore, it implied that the Chinese were still unable to think for themselves. China had awakened but it had not grown up.

Some remained unconvinced by the FO position. Churchill, a staunch anti-Bolshevik, asked Baldwin to read the viewpoint of a representative of the Asiatic Petroleum Company, who warned that 'the present policy of weakness, procrastination and vacillation' would reduce British trade in China 'to a vanishing point' if a strong authority was not sent to Peking. He wrote: 'as you know there is nothing the East respects so little as weakness in the men dealing with them.'²¹ On the other hand, it seemed that business leaders could gradually come to terms with with the FO position. In particular, Warren Swire, who became chairman of Swire & Sons in 1927, showed signs of agreement with the government position, earning the astonishment of his fellow businessmen. He defended his position to David Landale: 'I hear indirectly that Henry Keswick [the Hong Kong managing senior partner of Jardine, Matheson & Co.] is firmly persuaded that I am growing hooves and a forked tail. "That fellow G.W.S. is pro-Chinese"!!! Of course I am as I have to go on earning my living in China'.²² He

explained his support of negotiating with Canton and even of Canton receiving its share of customs duties from Peking:

Firms like for instance ours intend to go on trading in China in any case and no one can do that without China's good will ... The present foreign privileged position, if it can be maintained by consent, suits us admirably and makes business as easy as can be; but, if it cannot, we have got to adapt ourselves to new and more difficult conditions.

GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTS AT CONCILIATION

THE TARIFF CONFERENCE IN PEKING

Rather than acceding to the requests of the business lobby to send stronger representation to China, the FO put its hopes in the Tariff Conference, which had convened in the autumn of 1925. Business interests also agreed in principle with the need for eventual tariff autonomy, but preferred to wait until a strong Central Government of China emerged before wholeheartedly supporting the policy.²³ Indeed, as the conference in Peking progressed, the difficulties in effecting concrete measures to accommodate Chinese nationalism were manifested. The difficulties, however, would not convince the FO to take a harder line, but would actually sustain the policy of retreat by motivating Chamberlain to deal with the divisions in the Far Eastern Department that had hindered the full carrying out of a conciliatory policy. The conference also importantly shifted the attention of the FO from Peking to the claims of southern China and the KMT.

Planning for the conference had brought the previously-mentioned conflicts in the Far Eastern Department to the fore. Waterlow supported a large-scale policy of action, believing that foreign intervention and even control of provincial finances, could rehabilitate China. Wellesley doubted the practicality of this plan, and offered the milder objective of gaining the abolition of *li-kin*, the provincial transit taxes which hindered the expansion of British trade. A policy of action necessitated international cooperation and Wellesley doubted that the American and Japanese would cooperate with British aims. Japan, to him, did not want a strong and unified China, and both the

Americans and Japanese appeared more concerned about debt consolidation to take care of their unsecured loans than about *li-kin*. Eventually, the FO settled on a compromise by adopting the Teichman scheme, based on the ideas of Eric Teichman, the Chinese Secretary in Peking, as a basis for policy. Teichman had laid out a plan for China's financial reconstruction in 1924 and called for increased foreign control over the government's salt and customs revenues. The plan included debt consolidation, which catered to the interest of the other Powers, and the abolition of *li-kin*. It sought the allocation of adequate funds to the Central Government, in order to restore its credit, as well as the allocation of revenue to the provinces, insuring their cooperation to abolish *li-kin*. Although Wellesley called the Teichman scheme 'masterly' but impracticable,²⁴ he still agreed to use it as the basis of a constructive policy at the conference. However, while the Foreign Office espoused the Teichman Plan, which allocated some customs revenue to the provinces, representatives from the Peking Legation opposed it. Macleay, who led the British delegation, argued against the provincial allocation of customs revenue, claiming that it would only spur civil war.²⁵ Thus, the difficulties of tariff negotiations were apparent from the beginning of the Conference.

Not only were the British arguing among themselves; Wellesley's memorandum on the Chinese situation, sent to the Cabinet at the end of 1925, also emphasised the difficulties of working with the other Powers. Whereas the British delegation wanted to make Chinese tariff autonomy conditional on the abolition of *li-kin* (China's internal taxes), in order to expand British trade within China, the American attitude was one of 'lukewarmness' and the Japanese of 'sceptical indifference'.²⁶ The other Powers preferred granting tariff autonomy to China unconditionally in the beginning of 1929, and had secured an agreement with Macleay in November. The FO was unhappy with Macleay's action, since it weakened the British position. Although the Chinese promised to abolish *li-kin* the same day they received tariff autonomy, they were not causally related. Wellesley worried that, 'if the Chinese fail to carry out their part of the bargain under the treaty, we shall still find it exceedingly difficult, in fact, impossible, to avoid granting tariff autonomy on the 1st Jan, 1929...This is the real crux of the position....We are fighting a rearguard action and we have got to see that it is not turned into a rout.'²⁷ The politicians in Peking could sign an agreement abolishing *li-kin*, but would most likely be powerless to force the provinces to effectively give up their taxes. However, British policymakers were loath to break up the conference, which would

earn not only the odium of the other Powers, but also invoke the wrath of the Chinese, who might then intensify their boycott of British goods. This would be ‘playing directly into the hands of the Bolsheviks’. The only option for the British was to continue negotiating, hoping to salvage some advantage from an increasingly bleak situation.

At this point, as Edmund Fung has noted, a Foreign Office ‘change of tack’ occurred at the Tariff Conference, from a pro-Peking position to one that paid more attention to Canton’s claims rather than focusing on the capital.²⁸ Thus, Wellesley emphasised the need for the Central Government and the provinces to agree on the division of customs revenue.²⁹ This position was bolstered by the proposal and minutes authored in December 1925 by John Pratt, the Far Eastern Department’s resident ‘expert’, which emphasised the need to bolster the moderate Nationalists against the extremists by allocating customs revenue to Canton. Since *likin* was a result of the non-participation of the provinces in customs revenue, the provinces would need motivation to end *likin* in practicality. In another non-traditional step, the department instructed Macleay to work to allow the provinces more freedom in relation to the Customs administration, thus curtailing the Inspector-General’s influence and power. Macleay defended the Inspector-General Aglen against the charges of abusing his power and wrote in a minute on Pratt’s memo regarding the Customs funds:

If Mr. Pratt were to talk to Sir Francis Aglen about “breach of faith” and “floating loans” in this airy way he would get such “talking to” in reply that if he survived the ordeal he would certainly be a chastened and a wiser man ... It is really most unfair to talk of the I.G. as “floating” a loan, as though he did the whole thing off his own bat!³⁰

Despite the protests, the FO stood by its desire to allow the Chinese more autonomy.³¹ The Foreign Office was increasingly impatient to gain the favour of the KMT in order to end the boycott in the South. Although the Teichman Plan, conceived before 1925, already emphasised the importance of provincial claims to customs revenue in order to encourage the practical abolition of internal taxes, the Foreign Office’s focus by the beginning of 1926 was undeniably on Canton. This was an important adjustment in the focus of the FO, since previously British negotiations had always been focused on Peking. However, the Central Government at Peking had proven itself ineffective again

and again throughout the last decade and its ineffectiveness had been a major reason for British inaction in China. The actions of the revolutionary group in the South now forced policymakers to pay attention to its claims.

O'MALLEY AND WILLINGDON GO TO CHINA

While the tariff negotiations continued to be unproductive in Peking, the British government persisted in its attempts to improve relations by sending representatives to China. The sending of these representatives was evidence that the government was intent on currying Chinese favour, as well as gaining the ear of the Britons in China. However, the two missions that were sent revealed even further the difficulty of persuading both the British residents in China and the Chinese that the government's current policy was on the right track.

The first step was sending Owen O'Malley and his family to China in December 1925 to take up the post of counsellor in Peking. O'Malley had recently made his reputation in the Foreign Office by writing a long account of his trip to Russia in 1924, which had 'had great success'.³² O'Malley took a pragmatic view of Anglo-Soviet relations, writing a memo in 1920 in which he said that the government should 'stop trying to upset the Soviet Government' and restore relations in order to pursue profitable trade with the Soviet Union.³³ O'Malley's account of a trip to the Soviet Union in 1924 was sufficiently impressive to garner him his next post in China, since his background seemed to suit the Chinese situation, in which Soviet-imported ideology and agitation seemed to be hindering trade growth with Great Britain.

Going to Peking, O'Malley was prepared to view China with a fresh perspective, although he shared some similarities with the 'old China hand' perspective. Although he seemed to embrace the post-First World War inclination to view the Chinese with sympathy and appreciation, he also participated in the usual assumptions. 'Face' and 'squeeze' were the two 'regulating factor[s]' in their domestic life and in their dealings with their servants, but O'Malley also found his servants to be 'dignified, genial, competent and attentive and had memories like elephants'.³⁴ Furthermore O'Malley's China was, to use a common image, a puzzle. He confessed, 'it was not easy to bring such conflicting thoughts and feelings into an orderly pattern in my mind.'³⁵ Though

China inspired in him a high degree of affection and respect, he was also shocked by the contradictory brutality of the people. O'Malley described his meeting with a public executioner who, on the way to the gallows, was playing with a cord to pull forward a victim's head, and who, on the way back, was 'chewing dough-nuts'.³⁶ China was thus a mixture of the shocking and mundane; the beautiful and the dreadful. Furthermore, in the political realm, nothing was consistent or constant throughout the whole of China. O'Malley insisted that in north China 'all were polite, helpful and hospitable' and once in Peking, while a crowd of protesters was 'howling' outside the Legation Quarter gates for the 'blood or expulsion of all foreign devils', the protesters, not the police, still made a pathway for a British nurse and perambulator returning from a morning walk on the walls.³⁷

O'Malley began his stint in China by going on a mission to visit the various places of importance – Canton, Hong Kong and Shanghai—interviewing the consuls, the governor of Hong Kong and British subjects in the area. From these conversations he became clear that the local Britons were very unhappy with the FO's current direction. In the beginning, O'Malley's official views were not well-received by the British community in China. At a meeting with the Chamber of Commerce Committee in Shanghai in February, a Swire representative noted: 'There was practically no discussion and there did not appear to be much sympathy with his views.'³⁸

Yet, as O'Malley continued travelling and meeting diplomats and the business community throughout China, his firsthand view of the troubles began to influence his perspective. He told his wife of his experience in Canton, where the foreign community lived 'in a state of siege behind barbed wire and sand bags, with strike pickets at their gates!' and where he saw a strike committee boat sink a sampan and proceed to beat the crew and passengers.³⁹ He wrote back to Strang in the Far Eastern Department and ventured to suggest that stronger measures should have been taken to stop the Canton boycott.⁴⁰ By March, O'Malley was becoming increasingly disillusioned with the FO's avowed aversion to the use of force and sympathetic to the opinions of the British residents in China:

Oh blessed word prestige - how it has been abused! And now the F.O. seem to have reacted so violently from the gunboat policy that they have got stuck in a

treacly sort of Sunday-go-to-meeting radicalism which thinks that Chinese obstruction and Chinese anti-British demonstrations can be killed by kindness ... In a mass of uncertainties and imponderabilia, this at least is clear that in Chinese internal affairs nothing but force cuts any ice whatever ... I am obsessed by the danger of clean-cut theories and I wonder sometimes whether Wellesley and Pratt aren't a little too sure of their premises.⁴¹

Around the same time that O'Malley was travelling in China, the Willingdon Commission was also touring China in another goodwill effort of the British government. Lord Willingdon was the leader of the Boxer Indemnity Commission, which left Britain for China in mid-January 1926. This trip, marketed as an exercise in benevolence, was intended to canvass Chinese opinion about the use of the Boxer Indemnity money. George Glasgow, the foreign affairs writer of *The Contemporary Review*, heartily supported the decision to send him, saying 'No British representative could be more acceptable to Chinese opinion than Lord Willingdon'.⁴² While governor of both Bombay and Madras between 1913-1924 Willingdon had taken steps to improve race relations in both places, including opening sports clubs (named after him) which admitted both Indian and British members. Further proof of Willingdon's good sense was his speech at the Church Congress held at Eastbourne the previous year on the subject of 'Race Problems'. Willingdon had said, 'I am convinced that the white races must realise the necessity of treating all coloured men in a spirit of absolute equality.' 'Providence' had 'placed the white man in the position of a trustee, whose wards, the coloured men, are growing up. The white man must no longer dominate them, even for their own good.'⁴³

The delegation also contained other British men and a woman palatable to Chinese public opinion, including Dame Adelaide Anderson, famous for her industrial activism and her work in China with the National Christian Council; Sir William Clark, the head of the Department of Overseas Trade; Sir Charles Addis and W.E. Soothill, the well-known professor of Chinese from Oxford. Three Chinese members were also added to the Boxer Indemnity Commission. Two spaces had originally been allocated for Chinese members, but with the death of Sir John Jordan in October 1925, the Committee decided to increase Chinese representation. The three Chinese members

were Dr. Hu Shih, Dr. V.K. Ting and Dr. C.C. Wang, high-profile scholars and experts in fields as wide-ranging as linguistics and geology.

Although the inclusion of the three Chinese members was a public relations boon, the delegation soon ran into a barrage of Chinese opinion disagreeing with the current policy of keeping the indemnity funds under London's control. As they proceeded from Peking to Shanghai, interviewing parties interested in the expenditure of the indemnity, Willingdon said that general opinion among the Chinese, and also among the British, supported a handover of control over the funds to a board in China. Keeping the money under the control of London (which was decided in the Boxer Indemnity Act) would be like the Japanese schemes that kept control in Japan, which was 'entirely unacceptable to the Chinese'.⁴⁴ In fact, the three Chinese members were being urged to resign by the public if control was not completely transferred over to China. Additionally, British opinion in China strongly opposed spending on education, and instead supporting spending on railways and conservancy projects.

By April, a couple months after the delegation's arrival, Willingdon began pressing Chamberlain and the FO to issue a statement that control over the money would be handed to the Chinese before the anniversary of May 30th. Willingdon hoped that his rosy portrayal of the Chinese would convince Chamberlain and the FO of the wisdom of transferring control over to China. That action would eradicate the lingering animosity between the two peoples, who were already inclined to view each other with friendly feeling. Willingdon's recommendations received an ambivalent reception at the FO. Advisers in the FO thought that he was going 'too fast and too far' and that transferring control over to China was impossible under the provisions of the Indemnity Act.⁴⁵ However, according to the chairman of the Committee, Earl Buxton, Chamberlain 'went the whole hog with very little hesitation', in defending the need for an Amending Act.⁴⁶

FINDING CONSENSUS

THE FAR EASTERN DEPARTMENT

However, despite these and other government efforts to find a solution to the problems in China—the negotiations over the boycott in Hong Kong and the conference in

Peking, overall China policy seemed largely ineffective, since the boycott continued unabated. This seeming ineffectiveness stirred up a number of domestic protests from both Labour and the diehard wing of the Conservative party, which spurred Chamberlain to make a number of changes within the Far Eastern Department.

In February, Chamberlain faced a string of questions in Parliament about the boycott in Canton. Sir Clement Kinloch-Cooke (Conservative - Cardiff East), the founder of the *Empire Review*, sided with the treaty-port British and asked Chamberlain how the government intended to alleviate the anxiety of British merchants in China. Another imperialist, Eugene Ramsden (C – Bradford North), reminded Chamberlain that the Chinese boycott was having detrimental effects on the textile and other industries at home and urged the Government to take action. From the left, Frederick Pethick-Lawrence (Labour- Leicester West) brought up the embarrassing subject of the Shameen shootings the previous year, in which Chinese protesters had been shot by British troops. He asked about the state of negotiations and also whether a settlement of the boycott was in view. The socialist David Kirkwood (L- Dumbarton District of Burghs) injected ideology into the discussion when he asked: ‘Has it never dawned upon the Foreign Secretary that the troubles we are having in China are the result of the capitalists of this country going out to China to exploit the Chinese because of their cheap labour, and that the Chinese have now revolted against the conditions that we were imposing?’ Kirkwood continued: ‘And ... is he prepared to go to war to force the Chinese to buy British goods?’⁴⁷ Chamberlain ignored the last question, but in response to the others, he continued to insist that relations with China as a whole were progressing. Negotiations with Canton had broken down, but the breakdown was due to the ‘blindly anti-British influences’ over the Cantonese, which were quickly losing ground among most Chinese outside of the city. In fact, trade in the Yangtse valley was improving and would be improving in the North, if not for the civil war.

To add to the unease of the policymakers, the Southborough Committee continued to criticise the FO, expressing their disapproval of the conference negotiations in Peking. The committee came out ‘strongly against’ the elaborate reconstruction scheme that the British delegates had presented at the conference, and the conference itself was called a ‘solemn farce’.⁴⁸ Faced with criticism from the houses of parliament and pressure from the business lobby, the Foreign Office needed to find a workable and acceptable policy.

Though Chamberlain glibly answered the questions lobbied at him from both right and left, his equanimity masked the unease within the Far Eastern Department. Public statements insisted that relations were improving, but a view into the inner workings of the Far Eastern Department reveals that Chamberlain was very frustrated with the pace of progress in China. The divisions in the department came to a head in March 1926, when a series of personnel changes were made.

Frustration with differences of opinion in the department was mounting, and by early 1926, Waterlow, Collier, and B. C. Newton had fallen out of favour with Wellesley and Chamberlain. As mentioned above, Waterlow and Collier had advocated more direct action in China. Newton seems to have also been more conservative, wanting to slow down the pace of concession, whereas Waterlow agreed with the general direction of the policy, but opted for boldness rather than discretion. Waterlow's position was based on what he called 'Chinese psychology', which echoed many of the common assumptions used by business leaders about China:

We are dealing with a people essentially reasonable, but constitutionally averse from taking the initiative. Their peaceful, industrious character, their capacity for business, their anxiety to do business with us, all this makes them singularly responsive to a lead, provided it is at once strong and sympathetic. But it must be a strong lead; there can be no satisfactory result unless the Chinaman is convinced that the foreigner is determined and that he has force somewhere in the background which, at the worst, will be used. Otherwise his face will not be saved ... Our prestige with them is still immense, and if anyone can give them a lead it must be we. Personality, especially British personality, counts enormously in China.⁴⁹

William Strang, in the Far Eastern Department, wrote an account of Waterlow's fall from favour to O'Malley. According to Strang, neither Waterlow nor Collier knew 'very much about or care[d] very much for team work and Newton was always putting on the brake.'⁵⁰ The personality differences in the department did not make for efficient or effective policymaking. Chamberlain once overheard Waterlow complaining about him outside of the office and as the Tariff Conference proceeded, Waterlow's ideas became increasingly unpopular. According to Strang, Waterlow 'hated the policy of do-

nothing, caution and drift'.⁵¹ Rather, he wanted a bold policy, but his 'uncompromising and rather contemptuous advocacy of it; the frequent oddity of his recommendations, advanced with all seriousness;... all these things convinced the powers-that-be that here was a man whose judgment was not to be relied on, however great his powers.'

Waterlow also wrote to O'Malley, saying that Chamberlain had lost all confidence in his political judgment.⁵² He was subsequently shipped off to Bangkok to take up a diplomatic post in exile.

Indeed, the frustrations of working with the other Powers, the continuation of the boycott and the never-ending chaos in Peking wore down British resolve to take forward action in China. Instead, in Strang's account, the 'pusillanimous' policy of acceding to the demands of Chinese nationalism carried the day. 'Fears' of 'what the Bolsheviks and the Chinese Nationalists and the Labour Party and the Mugwumps will say about us', in addition to fears that the League of Nations would condemn any action in China, worked together to put constraints on Britain's China policy. Strang said disparagingly of Chamberlain: 'The S. of S...can be counted on to choose the line that promises the smallest chance of immediate trouble and that is naturally the line usually recommended to him, officials being what they are.'⁵³

The exit of Waterlow, Collier and Newton thus expedited policymaking along the lines Chamberlain hoped for. Yet, while Chamberlain and Wellesley took care of internal divisions in London, they still had to contend with scepticism and criticism from Peking. Strang also mentioned this conflict in his correspondence with O'Malley, describing J.T. Pratt and Eric Teichman as the leaders of the two opposing schools. Pratt advocated a policy that would recognise the South and pay attention to the demands of the KMT. Eric Teichman, the Chinese Secretary in Peking, was the 'expert' in the Legation, and advocated a hands-on policy of facilitating the emergence of a strong Central Government. While diplomatists in London admitted that the people in Peking were better-informed about China, they also believed, as Sir Charles Addis was wont to tell them, that 'Peking warps everybody who goes there'.⁵⁴ Strang defended the FO position, arguing that distance from China could work in the Foreign Office's favour, providing policymakers with a broader perspective including not only North and South China, but also the importance of domestic exigencies. He wrote to O'Malley:

We can't see your Chinamen in butcher blue and we don't get our eyes filled with Gobi dust nor are we members of the Peking club. On the other hand we are far enough to see Peking and Canton within the same field of vision and we see them the better for the absence of Gobi dust; and we know what HMG can and cannot do, which the merchants of Hongkong and the members of the Peking club very understandably do not know.⁵⁵

PRESS SUPPORT

The FO's clarified and renewed sense of direction came in response to the protests against it, but it was shaped and supported by an even larger body of domestic opinion. In 1926 pro-Chinese voices gradually dominated the press at home, leaving less room for those who advocated a firmer policy against the Chinese. While British residents in China continued to read and agree with diehard conservatives, the taste at home had changed. J.O.P. Bland, the acerbic conservative commentator, was becoming increasingly bitter as his opinion and voice was 'shut out' of the China conversation. He wrote to J.L. Garvin early in the year: 'Am I, who have studied it all my life, debarred from giving, over my own name, facts and arguments to prove that our present educational policy is unsound, detrimental alike to Chinese and to British interests? Is there really "no good in arguing about these things"?'⁵⁶ Actually, Bland's opinions were in danger of becoming isolated and out-dated, even by treaty-port standards. By March 1926, Bland was even complaining of O.M. Green's position in the *North China Daily News*, which was the official mouthpiece of treaty-port opinion. Bland asked Rodney Gilbert, an American journalist who contributed to the *NCDN*., to tell him, 'what is the matter with Green and the North China?'⁵⁷ In March, the *NCDN* seemed to be supporting Chinese representation on the SMC and included the text of a speech by the Chairman of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, in which he called for racial equality and sovereign rights for the Chinese.⁵⁸ In protest, Bland told Gilbert that he had stopped his subscription of thirty years to the paper.

Rodney Gilbert was sympathetic to Bland's point of view, and had himself published a book on China in March entitled *What's Wrong with China*. It was a political book but its ideas were predicated on an affirmation of Chinese racial inferiority. What was wrong with China was that the Chinese were racially unequal to Europeans and the

European's refusal to recognise their innate inferiority and immaturity resulted in their inordinate indulgence of China's vices.⁵⁹ H.G.W. Woodhead was another prominent treaty-port voice with whom Bland agreed. The editor of the *China Year Book*, Woodhead had also written *The Truth About the Chinese Republic* the previous year. In it, he undercut the claims 'Young China' had to political legitimacy. He argued that they represented only special class interests whereas the mass of Chinese were completely unaware and unconscious of the need to protest against imperialism.⁶⁰ Woodhead followed up the publication of his book with a publication of his lectures in Chicago in 1925, in which he emphasised the lack of progress China had made since the founding of the Republic and the lawlessness and insubordination of the students. He painted a picture of the Chinese as unruly children in a stage of adolescent rebellion and in no way prepared to administer rule-of-law in a way that would protect foreign interests.⁶¹ Similarly, B. Lenox Simpson (under the pseudonym, 'Putnam Weale'), a former employee of the Maritime Customs, wrote that the problem of China was not mainly political but 'pathological'. He continued: 'The most outstanding successes in China's history have been men who were alive to the shifting circumstances of the day and made provision for them in a way the Chinese mind appreciates.'⁶² The reason why China saw 'red' was due to the weaknesses of the Chinese 'mind', to their susceptibility to the germs of Bolshevism and the reluctance of the Western powers (Britain especially) to effect change. The only positive changes in the past ninety years in China, he argued, had been of foreign origin.⁶³

While many British residents in China read Gilbert, Bland and Woodhead,⁶⁴ it was becoming increasingly difficult to disseminate the same kind of ideas in Britain. Gilbert told Bland about a conversation he had with Harold Williams, *The Times*' foreign editor: '[Williams] actually told me that he could not publish bald statements of fact about China and such "catastrophic" opinion as mine because the British reader did not want to believe it, wouldn't believe it ... [It is] impossible to publish opinions to counter the stuff which Malone's Information Bureau was ladling out to the Labour people.'⁶⁵ Bland was himself a former *Times* correspondent, but in 1926, found himself rebuffed by the editor, Geoffrey Dawson, when he offered to contribute to the paper. Bland complained to Dawson that *The Times* was only presenting one side of the picture in its 'policy of patience and conciliation', which was 'bad, not only for British interests, but for China.'⁶⁶ The House of Commons and the 'Big Noises in the Press', Bland

lamented, were ‘inclined to go even faster in the policy of scuttle’.⁶⁷ However, he still found one sympathiser in Ernest Remnant, the editor of the right-wing *English Review* and contributed a series of articles and book reviews to that journal in 1926 about China. In the March issue, Bland wrote an article entitled, ‘Wanted—An Independent Policy in China’, in which he lambasted the government for acquiescing to an American policy marked by misguided idealism and naïveté. The State Department, Bland claimed, ‘shut its eyes to the facts, of the Far Eastern situation’ because theories were ‘very dear to the hearts of that large section of voters whose conception of the Orient is derived from missionary and educationist propaganda.’⁶⁸ Bland believed that the ‘sentimental delusions and ignorant enthusiasms’ inspiring American policy originated from the ‘semi-political propaganda’ of the YMCA, the National Christian Council and other organisations of the modernist wing of the missionary and educationist movement.⁶⁹ The policy they advocated was one of ‘benevolent intentions’ but it was ‘inapplicable and foredoomed to futility’.

Though Bland’s observations were sharply perceptive, they were not popular. Rather, policymakers in London seemed to prefer to listen to those that Bland excoriated—men like Sir Charles Addis and Dr Harold Balme.⁷⁰ Bland himself acknowledged the scope of Addis’ influence: ‘Addis & Co are still strong in the counsels of Downing Street and the tommyrot they talk is worth millions to the Bolsheviks.’⁷¹ For example, in January, Addis and Balme both attended a ‘tea party’ at the Chinese Legation, where they hobnobbed with those most involved in making Chinese policy—including Pratt, Wellesley and the Chinese chargé d’affaires, Chu Chao-hsin. That same month, Addis also sent off Lord and Lady Willingdon to Euston as they departed to China.⁷² And Addis’ views continued to be infused with religious feeling and sense of missionary purpose. This was blatantly in evidence in his March address on the ‘Call of China’ at St Katharine’s Royal Chapel in Regent’s Park, in which he explicitly linked the political future of China with the missionary impulse of the West:

The fact is that we are all missionaries in spite of ourselves, whether we like it or no, “living epistles known and read of all men,” and by none more critically than by the keen-witted and observant Chinese ... From this point of view, foreign missions are not merely the concern of a small body of professional missionaries. They are the national corporate witness to the claim that the

civilisation of Great Britain is based on Christianity.... “The future of the world,” said Canon Barnett, “depends more than anything else upon this: how Christianity is presented to the Chinese.” I believe that to be profoundly true ... We shall not fail to remind ourselves that there is no warrant in Christianity for any inherent superiority of race or distinction of colour ... We shall discard our native airs of patronage and self-conceit and recognise that we have much to learn from China as well as to teach ... We shall find common ground in the brotherhood of man...on which to compete in a friendly rivalry with the Chinese to establish the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and to build up a common civilisation, of a type which consists not in the abundance of possessions or in finer clothes, and better houses, no, not even in stronger iron-clads and swifter aeroplanes, but in a people possessed of a nobler and loftier system of ideals by which alone a nation is exalted and made great.⁷³

Addis’ address was published and even went into a second edition.⁷⁴ Addis’ sense of mission was not obvious in his recommendations to the government. He remained professional and detailed in his advisory capacity, but this undercurrent of deep religious feeling necessarily influenced his view of relations with the Chinese.

Another attendee at the Chinese Legation tea party was Archibald Rose, a director of the British and American Tobacco Company. He was another reputed advisor of the government who had strong business links with China. In the 1930s he would work alongside his university friend John Maynard Keynes on the Chinese Economic Advisory Council. Like Addis, he was also devout, having undergone a conversion experience while in China after an illness, during which a missionary prayed for him.⁷⁵ In March, Rose addressed the National Union of Students at Cambridge, where he advocated patience and respect for the Chinese people. Like most commentators, he painted them as a conservative people struggling to adapt to the ‘new forces, the new knowledge, the new inventions of to-day’. The worst thing would be to ‘intervene with violence’. Rather, what was needed was to allow a people ‘ingenious, gifted, sober, thrifty, courteous, honourable, with a traditional respect for learning and love of peace’ to work out its own problems.⁷⁶

THE LEFT-WING

The men in the FO were also aware of the very vocal and public Labour commentary about British policy in China, even if they were usually disinclined to take them very seriously. However, the General Strike took place in May 1926, forcing officials to pay closer attention to Labour's position on not only domestic but also foreign issues.

The Chinese Information Bureau continued its publicising activities in 1926, submitting letters and articles for the *Manchester Guardian*, and in April, Colonel L'Estrange Malone arrived in China as a special correspondent for the *Daily Herald*. Local Chinese organizations met with him, as did Macleay.⁷⁷ He was put in close touch with the labour unions in China and was also entertained by Cantonese government officials, including Chiang Kai-shek, during his trip, which ended in September.⁷⁸ The activities of the left were a source of concern for the government at home and for the treaty-port community and Malone's movements were closely watched by the FO as well as by Scotland Yard.⁷⁹ The *Shanghai Times* was aghast at 'anti-British propaganda' being 'made in London' and it referred to a handbill compiled by the CIB, which was distributed at an anti-imperialist demonstration in Shanghai and published in Chinese Nationalist newspapers.⁸⁰ The article included the highly doubtful claims that the British government had plans for a war to 'smash the Chinese National Movement', that Chang Tso-lin's support for this conflict had been obtained and that Addis was using his joint positions as Chairman of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank and Director of the Bank of England to send money to Shanghai to begin a vast propaganda campaign.⁸¹ Furthermore, the *Shanghai Times* warned that 'radical papers' were giving 'much space to China stories'.⁸² The *Daily Herald*, it said, devoted more space to China than any other metropolitan journal. Thus China continued to be a popular topic among the British public, and especially among the left. Workers in Britain identified their own struggle against the establishment with that of the Chinese.

Indeed, Labour discontent in 1926 was a potent force and would be dramatically manifested in the General Strike in May. The cleavages in 1920s British society came to the fore in the days of the General Strike, from 4 to 13 May. Britain's domestic coal industry had been badly affected by the entrance of German coal into the British market after the Dawes Plan of 1924, and Churchill's return to the gold standard in 1925 had

further exacerbated the difficulties of Britain's export industries. Coal owners announced their intention to lower wages and extend hours, which earned the ire of the miners. The coal miners' fight against lower wages and extended working hours was joined by transport and railway workers, printers, ironworkers, steelworkers and dockers who were called to take industrial action by the TUC. For nine days the country's logistical capabilities were tried, but the government had made preparations for the emergency. As the strikers protested and things came to a halt, volunteer lorry drivers and special constables were enlisted by the government to transport food and maintain order. As A.J.P. Taylor described it, 'This was class war, in polite form.'⁸³ The strikers eventually yielded to Baldwin's government and the strike ended without any material gain for the coal miners. However, the strike had revealed major issues that would continue to pre-occupy British politicians—the divides between Labour and Conservative and workers and owners, fear of Communism and the struggling export industry and economy.

China was only a side concern during the days of the General Strike, although concern for Britain's export trade was indirectly related to the Chinese situation, as was the Conservative government's fear of leftist organisations. Missionaries though were quick to draw parallels with their own experiences in China. *China's Millions* reported, 'The serious national trouble which has befallen us at home has given us a more lively sense of the conditions under which God's servants are carrying on the work in China, where civil war and strife with brigandage have prevailed now for nearly fifteen years.'⁸⁴ However, the significance of the strike as it related to China was mostly that it distracted policymakers from foreign affairs. David Fraser, *The Times*' China correspondent complained to the Foreign Editor, Harold Williams, of the loneliness of the position of the British in China and the lack of support from the FO: 'It is a cruelly complicated situation and people like Macleay, Aglen and others with responsibilities, including my humble self, are going grey with worrying about it.'⁸⁵ The only beneficial influence for China would be foreign assistance, Fraser insisted, but the foreigners lacked unanimity. He understood that the recent strike and the commitments in Europe limited the government's attention to China, but still, he wrote, 'It seems just bad luck that we didn't happen to have the man at the FO who has the knowledge to handle it.'

THE FAILURE OF THE TARIFF CONFERENCE

In the meantime, the Tariff Conference had largely fallen apart by April 1926, motivating policymakers to decide to go even further in the policy of retreat. The failure of the conference also provided support for the FO's move away from focusing on Peking to paying attention to the KMT in the south. With the Central Government weak and unstable and Canton continuing to threaten to seize the Maritime Customs revenue, the conference was beginning to look more and more like a 'farce'⁸⁶ and the conference had largely failed by April and would be dissolved in July. By April, the collapse of the Tuan government and the attendant desertion of the Tariff Conference by the Chinese delegates confirmed the view that it would be foolish to place one's hopes in the Central Government. Significantly, Wellesley now decided that 'the dominant factor in the present situation is the Nationalist movement, which is the strongest and most coherent force in China to-day ... It is, of course, still an exceedingly small minority; but it is comparatively well organised and well led, and, therefore, a force with which the Powers have to reckon.'⁸⁷ Thus, it would be wiser to win the favour of the moderate Nationalists in the KMT, who could influence the boycotters in Canton. Provincial allocation of customs revenues, however, was rejected by the Japanese and Americans. The only way left, then, would be for Britain 'to take the lead in proposing to the Powers to abandon foreign control over the customs revenues as part of a policy of genuine non-interference in the domestic affairs of China', which one hoped would restore 'our damaged prestige and win back the friendship and confidence of the Chinese.' Furthermore, this position would strengthen the moderate faction of the Nationalists and 'cut ground from under the feet of the Red faction at present in control in Canton'.⁸⁸

The Tariff Conference resulted in two major lessons for the policymakers in London. Firstly, in regard to working with the other Powers, they realised the 'underlying divergence of interests which renders co-operation in practice so difficult'.⁸⁹ Secondly, the re-evaluation of its pro-Peking policy prompted more awareness and acknowledgement of the KMT's actions in south China. Policymakers were becoming impatient for progress in China. Chamberlain may have expressed a common feeling in the FO when he wrote to his sister, 'may the Yellow River blot China off the map'.⁹⁰ Although the General Strike overawed all government concerns in the summer of 1926,

the beginning of the KMT's Northern Expedition accelerated the move toward conciliation and acknowledgment of the ascendancy of the KMT.

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF THE KMT

THE NORTHERN EXPEDITION

More troubles continued to plague the Powers in China in the summer of 1926, eliciting further debates about the direction of British policy. While British voices from China continued to insist on the racial inability of the Chinese to arrive at a proper form of government and disparaged the prospects of the KMT, the Far Eastern Department diverged from these interpretations and decided instead to go even further towards a policy of conciliation supported by those factions of domestic opinions that viewed the KMT favourably.

In May, attacks on the salt revenue by various Chinese provincial military authorities incited fears that the salt revenues were in danger of 'total disappearance', leaving no money to pay off loans owed to Britain, France, Japan and the United States.⁹¹ It further stoked fears for the effects on the much larger foreign-administered Maritime Customs Service.⁹² The Inspector-General Aglen was frustrated with the FO's seeming nonchalance in the face of these threats: 'Nothing now stands between China and complete ruin but the Customs Service, and the pressure on me is becoming insistent. Everything has now given way.'⁹³ The China Committee also actively pressed the FO to take 'joint action' with the Japanese and the Americans in response to the salt seizure and the situation was critical enough that the Cabinet even discussed the possibility of using force in conjunction with the other Powers as a last resort.⁹⁴

The salt seizures were an example of the difficulties stemming from the devolution of power throughout China. Since the Central Government was weak and ineffective and not many expected Wu and Chang to stay in power for long, some policymakers recommended a provincial China strategy. O'Malley had by this time been a Counsellor in Peking for half a year and after visiting a number of places in China, he summarised his views in a long memorandum replete with, as a colleague commented, 'Gibbousque' phrasing. The memorandum reflected O'Malley's striking change of

opinion which diverged considerably from London's policy. Firstly, he doubted the wisdom of the Washington policy, saying that 'little support' could be found in the 'character, history or environment of the Chinese people'.⁹⁵ His view of the Chinese was pessimistic, disparaging and was most likely influenced by the opinions of the British he met in China. He wrote, 'There are no more disloyal, corrupt, and pusillanimous people on earth than the Chinaman in whose hands the immediate future lies.' Their 'poverty of political sense' had been obscured by their aesthetic and intellectual achievements. The prevalent docility of the Chinese meant that autocracy was the most suitable form of government for them. Based on his judgment of Chinese racially-determined political capacity, O'Malley dismissed claims of authentic nationalism among the Chinese:

From the springs of Chinese thought there flows through every channel into the remotest parts of the social life of China a stream of corruption and hypocrisy and selfishness polluting a soil in which not even the bravery of a savage or the natural self-sacrifice of a beast for its young can take root. This is not the field in which the seeds of national life or of any noble aspiration can germinate.

Although he did not deny the rising influence of the KMT, he did not ascribe any hopes to its ascent: 'I do not for a minute deny that this party possessed and possesses more power and vitality than any other section of opinion in China ... [but] reasons based on racial character and a traditional ethic ... prevent me from sharing the popular belief in its potential capacity to govern China.' Whereas the FO was paying more attention to the activities of the KMT, O'Malley's solution was to make regional agreements with the provinces and to engage in closer co-operation with the Japanese.

O'Malley found a number of supporters for his memorandum in the diplomatic service in China, including Clementi, Barton, Brenan and Commissioner Lyall of the Customs, but he had a much colder reception in London. Mounsey wrote to Strang about O'Malley's memorandum, '... I must frankly say that my first impression is that it has taken a great deal of space to say very little.'⁹⁶ His words were even stronger to Macleay, who he asked to 'please impress upon [O'Malley] that all this is sheer waste of effort on his part and waste of time on ours.'⁹⁷ O'Malley's reputation went from bad

to worse when he offered to show the memorandum to Lord Willingdon, recently returned from China. Willingdon, previously reputed to be somewhat ‘radical’, had changed his mind about China and was now, according to Mounsey, ‘attacking us all indiscriminately in particular, and the present policy of His Majesty’s Government in general’.⁹⁸ O’Malley’s and Willingdon’s corresponding divergence of opinion from London was symptomatic of the divide between diplomats at home and abroad. British officials in China were intensely frustrated with the FO’s seeming disconnection from Chinese reality and the impracticality of its policy. The I.G., Aglen, ‘seriously’ distrusted Pratt in the FO and thought that the advice the latter gave was ‘highly dangerous’.⁹⁹ O’Malley’s wife complained, ‘Because the “Locarno spirit” (for what that is worth) has become fashionable in Europe it does not follow that it is either possible or proper to apply it indiscriminately in dealing with Oriental peoples, immediately.’¹⁰⁰ Lady Clementi warned Leo Amery’s wife, Florence, that even with the cries of ‘nationalism’ and ‘Young China’, ‘China is just always the same—...one still is haunted by the succinct tag “Plus ça change – plus c’est la même chose”’.¹⁰¹

London policymakers were, however, loath to go back to the policy of force that O’Malley advocated. Instead they continued to express the need for improvement in relations with China, in order to retain trading interests. The failure of the Tariff Conference had exposed the difficulties of working with the other Powers, and the feeling that Britain needed to strike out on its own apart from the other Powers was growing. Strang wrote of the Office’s disillusionment with past policy: ‘We no longer believe in the doctrine upon which Washington, the Teichman Scheme and the policy of the Delegation are founded, namely that the Powers by doing something can facilitate the emergence of a strong central government or help the course clear until a central government somehow emerges.’¹⁰² According to Strang, however, their frustration was based on traditional assumptions of Chinese topsy-turvydom:

Wellesley always says, and there is much to hear him out, that it’s no good being logical or consistent about China, that things never turn out as you expect, that the most unexpected things happen, that the anomaly is the rule and that things are never really so black as they appear (nothing except the Hong Kong boycott, that is).

An article in *The Economist*, which mainly agreed with government policy towards China, cited the Nine-Power Treaty as a major hindrance in promoting goodwill between the Chinese and Britain: ‘the treaty obligation bears hardly upon us, considering the preponderance of British material interests in China over those of other foreigners, and the troubles into which our own interests have fallen latterly—troubles which demand rapid and vigorous remedies.’¹⁰³ A day earlier, Victor Wellesley wrote out his justification for taking independent action:

The time has now I think clearly come when we must review the whole situation and revise our policy. To continue on the present lines seems to me fraught with the very gravest danger ... Now the way the other Powers are acting at the Tariff Conference in pursuing an entirely selfish policy seems to me to be courting the very danger which it should be the first concern and common aim of all to guard against. *We alone are trying to do the right thing by China.*¹⁰⁴

By allowing itself to be ‘tied to the chariot wheels of an ignorant America and a self-seeking Japan’, Britain was drifting into the ‘ranks of the enemies of China’. If the other Powers could not see the wisdom of the principle of ‘China first’, then the British had every justification for ‘striking out a line of their own’, Wellesley argued. In this way, the FO could conveniently blame the lack of progress in resolving the China issues not on a mistaken policy, but rather on the other Powers. Thus any rationale for reverting to a policy of force or firmness was dismissed. The FO’s current policy had always been along the right lines, just hindered by the others. Chamberlain was in staunch agreement with Wellesley and wrote in July, ‘We must work out Sir Victor’s alternative.’¹⁰⁵

During the summer, events in the south of China further confirmed the necessity of the FO’s coming to terms with Chinese nationalism. In particular, the British public began increasingly to speak of the KMT in glowing terms. Optimistic reports about the KMT’s governing abilities, in addition to its military advance, thus spurred the FO’s willingness to negotiate with it. Despite two tense encounters in the summer which stirred up elements of hawkish British opinion, the British public and government were more inclined to view the KMT positively.

In March, Chiang Kai-shek had emerged as the head of the KMT after the Chung-shan gunboat incident and by July, preparations had been made to embark on a military drive to unify China. The Northern Expedition was officially launched on 9 July. KMT troops moved into Hunan, fighting Wu Pei-fu's armies.¹⁰⁶ The rapid advance of the KMT brought it once more into the limelight. Sir James Jamieson, the former Consul for Canton, had fallen out of favour with the FO and it was decided that he should be sent to Tientsin. Coming from Canton, however, to England, Jamieson had surprised the Far Eastern Department by expressing his high opinion of the KMT.¹⁰⁷ He made those views public when he spoke at a Chatham House meeting chaired by Archibald Rose in the summer.¹⁰⁸ In addition George Sokolsky, an American journalist who had once advised Sun Yat-sen, wrote a series of articles for English newspapers in China, focusing on the positive achievements of the KMT. The KMT was 'praised as the most efficient and best managed Kuangtung has known since the Republic'.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, Sokolsky sought to convince his readers that the students were 'fed up' with the Communists and that the KMT embraced a legitimate, Western-leaning platform. His presentation was strongly reinforced in the FO by Pratt's claim that 'the Nationalists have established in Canton the only really good government ever seen in China'.¹¹⁰ Chamberlain only tentatively agreed with this estimation,¹¹¹ but by the summer of 1926, British policymakers were paying more attention to the KMT's movements and edging closer to considering the KMT as a potential diplomatic partner.

In July, Brennan, the Consul-General at Canton, moved to end the boycott and, in contrast to his predecessor, decided to meet personally with KMT leaders. Negotiations began on 15 July. Eugene Chen, the main negotiator for the KMT, told the British that negotiating from a 'die-hard posture' would not reap any benefits.¹¹² Only a position that recognised a 'changing China with new emerging classes of political workers' and established relations on a basis of 'equality' would be acceptable. The British and Chinese positions were not mutually exclusive. Rather, he said that profitable trade could continue between the two countries, if 'mere considerations of prestige' and 'face' were put aside in favour of practical solutions created with patience, goodwill and good sense.¹¹³

At a meeting at Chatham House on 15 July, the Earl of Gosford also iterated similar ideas about removing 'practical grievances as quickly as possible in a friendly way'.¹¹⁴

However, he based his recommendation *not* on any hope of the ‘new emerging classes’, but rather on the centuries-old assumptions of Chinese unchangeability and character:

China is still a very solid old country; and the Chinese are still a sturdy, honest, and very friendly lot of people. The farmers still sow and reap their crops; the merchants still buy and sell...and China still offers a good market for those who have the courage and imagination and elasticity to adjust themselves to changing conditions. And England cannot afford to ignore good markets just now.¹¹⁵

He recognised the primary issue, however, which was Britain’s desire to trade in China. Gosford said: ‘Trade is, of course, the one thing that matters vitally to England in China, and all these political problems affect trade in a very material way.’¹¹⁶

CHALLENGING CONCILIATION: STRIKE PICKETS IN CANTON AND THE WANHSIEN INCIDENT

Despite the increased willingness to come to terms with the KMT, the FO faced constant pressure from the business lobby, as well as from the Inspector-General Aglen and Lord Willingdon, who had returned from China, to use forceful measures in China in order to end the boycott.¹¹⁷ Even Professor Soothill, previously a staunch supporter of patience and conciliation, returned from China advocating stronger measures. In September he wrote to the FO, ‘Hating the idea of armed intervention as I do, I fear we have been so tolerant of gross insult that the Chinese have come to believe that they can do anything they like to us with impunity’.¹¹⁸ In August and September, two incidents further tested the patience of the policymakers and became convenient opportunities for the British government to show lobbyists that it was not completely averse to the use of limited force. By espousing a two-pronged strategy of overall conciliation with occasional slight shows of force, the government attempted to neutralise protests from both the left and the right.

By August, Feng Yu-hsiang had accepted the authority of the Nationalist Government and the KMT armies continued to advance northwards. In the South, however, strike pickets in Canton and foreigners clashed in one of the more serious confrontations

between the British and Chinese. On 28 August, two foreigners who were ferrying Chinese passengers in Canton harbor were fired upon by strike pickets who subsequently seized their boat. Since one of the foreigners was a British subject, Consul Brenan immediately sent a telegram to London advocating strong measures.¹¹⁹ Wellesley called at the Admiralty the next evening and a hasty meeting of Cabinet ministers was convened. The decision reached was according to Brenan's recommendation: 'In the circumstances forcible measures to prevent acts of piracy by strike pickets would appear to be fully justified and Admiralty have sent orders to Commander-in-Chief to seize and destroy picket boats.'¹²⁰ At the meeting of the Cabinet ministers, Chamberlain implied that the outrages in Canton had reached an 'intolerable' limit. 'Toleration' had been shown to the Chinese in Canton 'partly because of our impotence' and 'partly because China was a Member of the League of Nations.'¹²¹ But there was a limit to the government's toleration and naval action duly took place on 4 September. Seeing the British navy ready for action, the picket boats promptly disappeared and the incident passed off without casualties.

The very next day another incident occurred on the Upper Yangtze which provoked an even larger and deadlier display of force by the British. Two British merchant vessels which belonged to the China Navigation Company had been seized in Wanhsien in August by troops of General Yang Sen, a local commander loyal to Wu Pei-fu, resulting in a standoff between Yang's troops and British naval forces. Negotiations faltered and the Rear Admiral decided to retrieve the ships by force. Fighting erupted on 5 September between two gunboats and Chinese ships and troops on land. Seven British men were killed and the town of Wanhsien was shelled, resulting in a number of Chinese deaths and casualties. The Chinese claimed 'thousands' of deaths, while the British insisted that less than a hundred civilians had been killed. The action provoked varying responses. Right away the General Council of the TUC passed a resolution condemning the naval action¹²² and the ILP published a leaflet demanding an inquiry into the 'massacre' at Wanhsien.¹²³ A missionary educator living in Wanhsien, Clifford Stubbs, wrote to the *Manchester Guardian* calling for sympathy for the Chinese and acknowledgement of the 'far-reaching changes' taking place in China.¹²⁴ From personal acquaintance with General Yang, Stubbs claimed that Yang had actively worked to protect foreigners after the shooting in Shanghai the previous year but that the forceful measures advocated by British residents living 'in an atmosphere of race-superiority'

would only lead to the bitter anti-foreign feeling and harm to trade.¹²⁵ ‘Palaeo’, most likely a pseudonym for W.E. Leveson (Addis’ assistant), wrote in *The China Express & Telegraph*: ‘Any knowledge of the class of weal which a six-inch shell would lay across the back of the little town of Wanhsien is calculated to alienate friendly feelings from England for a century.’¹²⁶

Others saw the exercise of force as an opportunity to finally end the Canton boycott. Clementi sent a telegram to the Colonial Office urging ‘independent warlike action’ in Canton immediately, claiming that the Chinese in Hong Kong and even in Canton had welcomed the action at Wanhsien.¹²⁷ David Fraser urged *The Times*’ editor, Geoffrey Dawson, to continue to emphasise the ‘necessity for greater activities by our Government’ in China.¹²⁸ By September, KMT armies had reached Wuchang on the Yangtze and were nearing Britain’s traditional base of influence. British interests were gripped with the fear that the Cantonese boycott would spread to the Yangtze, which would have disastrous results. The King also expressed his concern about the situation in China to Chamberlain.¹²⁹

Brenan hoped that the recent displays of force would motivate the Cantonese to end the boycott. He told Eugene Chen that

public opinion here and at home had been powerfully stirred up by the Wanhsien incident. The conciliatory attitude towards Canton had been tried for a year and had only brought further insults and injury and, unless he could give me within a day or two definite proof in writing that the Canton Government was sincerely trying to reach a settlement of the boycott, I was afraid of what might happen.¹³⁰

While Brenan was trying to use the recent forceful actions as leverage with the Canton government, both Macleay and Clementi considered that this was a ‘unique opportunity for dealing a blow at the Cantonese Nationalists’.¹³¹ Clementi recommended sending an ultimatum to Canton, followed by a blockade and perhaps offering material support to Sun Chuan-fang, the warlord controlling Shanghai and Nanking, in order to overthrow the Cantonese forces approaching the Yangtze. Despite strong support from Amery in the Colonial Office, the FO rejected these ideas on the basis that a blockade needed

international agreement which would have been nearly impossible to receive and that the policy of non-intervention precluded giving aid to Sun Chuan-fang.¹³² Additionally, the ideas lacked support from the Admiralty, which considered a blockade as dangerously close to an act of war.¹³³ Amery was disappointed with this decision and complained to Baldwin:

Everyone, in fact, on the spot is agreed that unless we act promptly and decisively our whole position is gone. In face of this we have nothing but timidity and technical objections without the shadow of an alternative plan ... What appalls me is our general paralysis in an area of the world which is of vital importance to us. Is it not time that the Cabinet seriously faced the situation? ... To be quite frank I cannot help feeling that Austen is so preoccupied with the League and all these tiresome and trivial European issues (for in the long run they are mostly trivial from our point of view), and his talks with Briand, Stresemann and the rest of them that he is inclined to leave the extra European things to the Department which on this particular matter is hopelessly weak.¹³⁴

David Landale from Jardines, on the other hand, seemed resigned to the government's inaction and tried to explain the situation to his colleague in Hong Kong.¹³⁵ One had to understand Britain's 'connection with the League', the fact that 'our Army and Navy has been cut down to a minimum' and the near impossibility of having the other Powers work with them. Japan was also 'undeviatingly against any intervention and America is a hopeless partner in a difficulty'.

THE MOVE TOWARDS A PRO-KMT POLICY

Towards the end of September Eugene Chen told Brennan that they would end the boycott but that the Canton government would levy additional taxes to compensate the strikers, applying the 2.5 per cent surtax on imports and 5 per cent surtax on luxuries promised at the Washington Conference. The KMT had decided to focus its efforts in central and north China and thus wanted a cessation of troubles in Canton. The weekly bulletin of the KMT's publicity department deemed the boycott a success in having

‘taught’ Great Britain to show ‘self-restraint’ with the Chinese and having ‘made the people of China conscious of their power’.¹³⁶ The boycott thus ended on 10 October.

The decision on the Chinese side was accepted by the FO, which was relieved to have the boycott end, despite the additional tariffs. That the boycott was ended by a unilateral decision by the Chinese revealed the strengthened status of the KMT as well as Britain’s willingness to accommodate Chinese nationalism. The end of the boycott, along with the KMT’s advance northward into Hu-pei province, seemed to indicate that the Nationalists had perhaps more potential than other political parties or persons seeking to rule China. Addis told his friend Dudley Mills, ‘The Government of Canton, the Kuomintang, is the only political party, as opposed to a person, which has persisted since the revolution of 1911, which includes adherents both from north and south, which is able to collect taxes and maintain an army in the field as far north as Peking and whose unit now runs Kwangtung to Hupeh.’¹³⁷ Addis also made his ideas known to Harold Williams and also engaged in a two-hour discussion with Lord Balfour, in which he pressed for *de facto* recognition of the Nationalist Government in order to strengthen the moderates versus the extremists in the KMT.¹³⁸ In addition, Palaeo wrote to the *English Review* affirming the potential of the KMT: ‘The Government of Canton is the head and fount of the first discernible trace of the capacity to govern, in a modern sense, which China has thrown up.’¹³⁹ The Labour Party’s Advisory Committee on international questions held a session in October with Colonel Malone, its resident expert on account of the publication of his *New China* series published by the ILP, in which the KMT was heavily supported and touted as making ‘rapid progress’.¹⁴⁰ While the committee was unsure about officially recognising the Canton government, as was the FO, it supported provincial allocation of customs revenue to it, as well as opening negotiations.

An indication that the FO was also moving towards a pro-KMT policy was the replacement of Sir Ronald Macleay as the Peking Minister with Sir Miles Lampson, a past member of the British delegation at Washington and more recently, a member of the delegation at Locarno. Macleay had been at odds with the FO about the KMT, for his ‘private sympathies were entirely on the side of the more friendly and conservative Chinese elements in their struggle against the Bolshevik menace’.¹⁴¹ Macleay had also been a firm supporter of working in conjunction with the other treaty Powers, while

policymakers in London were seriously considering pursuing an independent line in China. Macleay wrote to London shortly before his departure in November, ‘May I therefore beg you to consider whether, before we finally decide to break away from Washington Treaty policy...it would not be well to invite the principal powers to a frank and full discussion of the situation’.¹⁴²

Macleay’s plea fell on hard ground. Brennan, his colleague in Canton, however, submitted a recommendation to the FO more consonant with its policy direction. Brennan sent a history of the KMT accompanied by his recommendations for future policy to the Far Eastern Department. Brennan’s description of the KMT was based on traditional stereotypes – ‘Chinese reluctance to assume responsibility’, ‘more talk than performance’, ‘the usual Chinese tendency to be satisfied with the drawing up of plans rather than with their realisation’ and ‘age-old Chinese vices of arrogance, injustice, corruptions, and excessive and irregular taxation’—but he balanced this picture with a strong recommendation to take the KMT seriously:

It can, I think, be safely said that the Kuomintang is the greatest political force now actuating the Chinese people. And that it is likely to increase in power as the only party placing a practicable ideal before the people. And working for the welfare of the State rather than the pockets of individuals ... [W]ith all [the problems] there is a modicum of accomplishment, and a public spirit which I have not observed elsewhere.¹⁴³

The KMT could also, Brennan warned, abrogate the treaties ‘*in toto*’ without much attempt at negotiation. Nevertheless, he continued, ‘[w]e cannot arrest the march of events in China’. His recommendation then was that the British government should take its own line in dealing with Chinese affairs, without needing prior agreement with other countries and thus giving it the freedom to deal with regional authorities, *viz.* with the KMT.

THE NEW CHINA POLICY: CREATING THE DECEMBER MEMORANDUM

Frustrated by the attempts at conciliation with the Chinese throughout the year, the Far Eastern Department had begun to contemplate adjusting its policy since the summer. Tariff negotiations had started with the Central Government in Peking at the beginning of the year, but the advance of the KMT caused policymakers to move their focus to southern China. Wellesley wrote at the end of July: 'The dominant factor in the present situation is the Nationalist movement, which is the strongest and most coherent force in China to-day It is, of course, still an exceedingly small minority; but it is comparatively well organised and well led, and, therefore, a force with which the Powers have to reckon.'¹⁴⁴ With these changes, Britain's current policy thus seemed ineffective and out-of-date. It was also unpopular among expert and invested opinion. In August, Wellesley wrote of the growing body of opinion that was dissatisfied with the government's direction in China. Among the critics were Macleay, Aglen, O'Malley, Willingdon, Colonel Peel (who led the delegation at the Tariff Conference), K.D. Stewart (also at the Tariff Conference), Newton in the FO, a 'very large section' of the British community in China as indicated by the resolution recently sent by the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce, and 'many persons interested in China in this country'.¹⁴⁵ Although their main criticism was focused on the 'weakness' of the policy, Wellesley did not attempt to accommodate their views. The gunboat policy was inoperable, according to him, because of the Nine-Power Treaty and the League of Nations. Even if Britain used force in the short-term, the long-term repercussions would be 'ten times worse'. Chinese nationalism, he insisted, was not going away. His solution then was to take the moral high ground and appeal to the Chinese sense of justice:

With all their defects--and they are many--the Chinese, though they may not practise it themselves, have a strong sense of justice, and I cannot conceive anything more fatal in the long run than to play them false ... Personally, I regard the problem as insoluble at the present time, and I feel quite sure that the only policy which offers any hope of ultimate success is the one which is morally unimpeachable. On this point I feel very strongly ... Once we fall from our traditional standard of fair play and straight dealing then we are lost.

Furthermore, since it was impossible to maintain the unequal treaties indefinitely, they should at least go with the ‘best grace we can’.¹⁴⁶

Although Chamberlain said that Wellesley stressed the ‘moral issue’ more than he would have, he supported his policy ideas in substance.¹⁴⁷ Thus, rather than acquiescing to the demands of the China lobby, the FO moved staunchly in the opposite direction. However, policymakers were confident that recognition of Chinese nationalism would be well-supported by the rest of the British public. In a memorandum to the Cabinet in November, Wellesley wrote that they could no longer be blind to the ‘true nature of the forces now at work moulding a new China— ... nationalism’.¹⁴⁸ Interestingly, it seemed that the business lobby in China also moved closer to the FO position after the end of the boycott and the definite emergence of the KMT as a potent political force in the summer. J. Rankine Finlayson, representing the textile industry of Lancashire and the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, spoke to Chamberlain as a member of the China Committee in November.¹⁴⁹ He urged a policy that would effect ‘early restoration of political stability and security’ through recognition of the ‘complete change’ which had taken place in China. They were not against concessions; rather, he said, his colleagues in Manchester had ‘all along supported this attitude of reasonable concessions’, but it was now time to deal with the South.

Wellesley thus cited support for the FO’s position from ‘a large body of responsible opinion representing British commercial interests in China, and by expressions of opinion from sources so far apart as the “Economist,” the “North China Daily News” and the Vatican.’¹⁵⁰ *The Economist* had since the summer advocated a policy of concession along the lines of what had already happened in relations with Turkey. Its position was that by treating the Chinese as equals and making generous concessions to them, Britain would remove the Chinese sense of grievance. If Britain waited, changes would be forcefully by the extorted Chinese, but only in an atmosphere of goodwill would trade increase ‘by leaps and bounds’.¹⁵¹ Meanwhile the *North China Daily News*, the leading English paper in Shanghai, was accused of bowing the knee to the ‘Baal of Flabbiness’ by an irate J.O.P. Bland, who said that, along with other papers, it was dishing ‘sentimental slush’ supporting Chinese nationalism.¹⁵² Wellesley included in his memorandum an account of a conversation with a Catholic who spoke of his conviction that ‘a new China was being born’.¹⁵³ Earlier in the year, the Pope had decided to make

a new departure in its policy in East Asia and to consecrate three native Chinese bishops with his own hands, despite significant resistance from European prelates, some of whom considered the Chinese unfit for positions of heavy responsibility.¹⁵⁴

‘Exceptional significance’ had been attached to the event in Catholic circles. This was a deliberate accommodation with Chinese nationalism in the interests of future evangelisation. Chinese ‘powers of resistance’ were ‘extraordinary’ and by recognising the national impulse, foreigners could reduce the ‘perils of xenophobia’ and more easily influence the Chinese.

With this body of opinion backing it, the Far Eastern Department pressed forward and at the end of November the Cabinet was handed a draft statement of the new policy.¹⁵⁵

The following is an excerpt from the memorandum communicated to the Powers on 18 December:

The situation which exists in China to-day is thus entirely different from that which faced the Powers at the time they framed the Washington treaties ... The political disintegration in China has, however, been accompanied by the growth of a powerful Nationalist movement, which aimed at gaining for China an equal place among the nations, and any failure to meet this movement with sympathy and understanding would not respond to the real intentions of the Powers towards China ... His Majesty’s Government propose that in this joint declaration the Powers should make it clear that in their constructive policy they desire to go as far as possible towards meeting the legitimate aspirations of the Chinese nation. They should abandon the idea that the economic and political development of China can only be secured under foreign tutelage, and should declare their readiness to recognize her right to the enjoyment of tariff autonomy as soon as she herself has settled and promulgated a new national tariff... [HMG propose] that the Powers should agree to the immediate unconditional grant of the Washington surtaxes.¹⁵⁶

The new policy included several important elements. The first was the proclamation of Britain’s willingness to ‘go as far as possible towards meeting the legitimate aspirations of the Chinese nation’. Secondly, the policy was a deliberate departure from the Washington system of consultation with the other Powers. Although the memorandum

was first submitted to the Treaty Powers, it was a purely British initiative to take the lead in making concessions to China. Thirdly, the memorandum called for a practical working-out of this policy by the immediate grant of the Washington surtaxes. This undercut both the American and Japanese positions, which were more interested in debt consolidation than in granting tariff autonomy. This was a policy formulated to satisfy both sides of the debate. It included deliberate, concrete proposals to meet the challenge of Chinese nationalism and thus, the FO could not be accused of staying inactive. On the other hand, the memorandum was supposed to convey a spirit of friendly intentions and goodwill, which would appease the moral conscience of the British public.

The reception in some circles was not very warm. Ida Chamberlain wrote to her brother Neville Chamberlain: ‘The heathen Chinese does not seem to be meeting Austen’s proposals in the spirit in which they were meant, and of course if the Bolshies are really in command of the movement—it won’t, but one hopes that the influence may not actually be as great as is represented, that the Chinese leaders may realize that it is to their interest to meet us in a friendly spirit.’¹⁵⁷ The newly-formed British Labour Council for Chinese Freedom, which included George Hicks, George Lansbury, Bertrand Russell, Colonel Malone and others, welcomed the change of policy, but told the FO: ‘Mere expressions of goodwill towards China would appear to be more genuine if preceded or accompanied by order for withdrawal of foreign troops, warships and aircraft from China.’¹⁵⁸

However, the memorandum had a very good reception overall in Britain, after it was made public on 26 December. *The Economist* said: ‘Its soundness is evident on the face of it, and it deserves the active support of all parties in this country.’¹⁵⁹ For the *Observer*, in its summary of the year, ‘The biggest event in the world by far has been the resumed sweep of the Chinese Nationalist revolution’ and ‘The highest credit is due to the British Government, and especially to Sir Austen Chamberlain, for the steps taken at last, both at Hankow and Peking, to prove that Britain is no "Imperialist" enemy of the national movement, but at least as ready as any Power to make concessions to it.’¹⁶⁰ Garvin went even further than this in his personal correspondence, telling Chamberlain a few days later: ‘to my mind the new China policy is so far your greatest work’.¹⁶¹ Mounsey in the FO reported that even Lord Southborough’s

‘somewhat obstreperous Committee are on the whole quite well disposed towards our policy’.¹⁶²

Thus, by the end of 1926, the government had firmly rejected the diehard position and embraced a policy of conciliation. In November, the *National Review*’s editor, Leopold Maxse, described his frustration with the ‘powers that be’, writing:

The N.R. jogs along its weary and discouraged way constantly trying to get a gallon into a pint pot but very rarely succeeding, not that it very much matters because nowadays it appears to be entirely impossible to interest the powers that be in the matters that most matter and I sometimes think of throwing up the sponge. Look what a ghastly mess has been made in the Far East...¹⁶³

In December, the socialist Colonel Malone met with Sir Charles Addis. Addis’ assistant, W.E. Leveson, recorded an account of the meeting. Malone had listened to Addis’ views at Chatham House and was urging him to publicise his views more. Finally, Leveson wrote, ‘General discussion of our proper course in China showed unity of views.’¹⁶⁴ Although the FO had not bothered to reply to the letter sent by the British Labour Council for Chinese Freedom, of which Malone was a member,¹⁶⁵ it is telling that the views of one of their most trusted advisors, Sir Charles Addis, was in ‘unity’ with Malone’s. By the end of the year, it was an unlikely alliance of bankers, radicals and missionaries that had seemingly won the battle over perceptions about China and Britain’s China policy.

The year 1926 had thus begun with a few unsuccessful government initiatives to court the goodwill of the Chinese. However, the representatives sent to China for the Tariff Conference, on the Boxer Indemnity Commission and to assist the Minister in Peking returned dissatisfied with the ‘weakness’ of British policy. Firsthand contact with the Chinese, or rather, with the distinct and segregated British population in China, had reinforced old assumptions that had lain underneath an ostensible willingness to see the Chinese with a fresh perspective. Yet, in light of the KMT’s military victories, supported by a large section of the British population and aware of the country’s political, military and financial limitations, the British government continued to insist on its policy of conceding to Chinese nationalism.

¹ SOAS *Chinese Recorder*, Jan 1926, p. 2.

² Churchill College Archive, Cambridge Amery Papers AMEL 2/4/12 pt. 2 of 4 Clementi to Amery, 26 Jan 1926.

³ Wilson, 'Britain and the Kuomintang', pp. 361-362.

⁴ SOAS Swire Papers JSSII 2/5 Box 41 Butterfield & Swire, Hong Kong to London. Memo on trade conditions in Canton 29 Jan 1926.

⁵ SOAS Swire Papers JSSII 2/5 Box 41 Butterfield & Swire, London to Hong Kong. Telegrams on political situation in Canton 15 Jan 1926.

⁶ SOAS Swire Papers JSSII 2/5 Box 41 Butterfield & Swire, London to Hong Kong 13 Jan 1926.

⁷ SOAS Swire Papers JSSII 2/5 Box 41 Butterfield & Swire, Hong Kong to London. Excerpt from the 'Canton Gazette' 08 Jan 1926.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ 'The Achievements of 1925' *Economist*, 02 Jan 1926, p. 4.

¹⁰ SOAS Swire Papers JSSII 2/5 Box 41 Butterfield & Swire, London to Hong Kong 13 Jan 1926.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² National Archives FO 371/1620 F179/1/10 Minute by G. Moss.

¹³ P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, 'Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas II: New Imperialism, 1850-1945' *Economic History Review* Feb 1987, p. 15.

¹⁴ See SOAS Swire Papers JSSII 2/5 Box 41 Butterfield & Swire Letter from Shanghai to London. Copy of the Constitution of the Constitutional Defence League 24 Apr 1926 for a statement of purpose.

¹⁵ National Archives CAB 24/179 C.P. 104 (26) Telegram from Clementi to Amery, 06 Feb 1926 in Memorandum by Amery, 05 Mar 1926.

¹⁶ SOAS Swire Papers JSSII 2/4 Box 40 70 copy of telegram from China Association in Hongkong to China Association in London, 05 Aug 1925.

¹⁷ National Archives FO 371/11621 F513/1/10 Ashton-Gwatkin memo, 03 Feb 1926.

¹⁸ Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 191, col. 1008, 10 Feb 1926.

¹⁹ National Archives CAB 24/179 C.P. 104 (26) Amery memo, 05 Mar 1926.

²⁰ Even business interests agreed with this idea. In HSBC Archives SHGI 0470 Ordinary Yearly General Meeting, meeting minutes, 27 Feb 1926 G.M. Young, the HSBC Archives Chairman, spoke: 'Our Chinese friends and neighbours are rational people...I am convinced the vast majority would welcome an early termination to the present artificial—it is nothing else—attitude of hostility towards Hongkong.'

²¹ Cambridge University Manuscripts Baldwin Papers 111 Foreign Affairs 7 F.1 E. Marsh (for Churchill) to Baldwin, 26 Feb 1926.

²² Cambridge University Manuscripts Jardine Matheson Papers MS JM I21/14 Misc. correspondence 1872, 1932, Swire to Landale, 14 Feb 1926.

²³ SOAS Swire Papers JSSII 2/4 Box 40 70 copy of telegram from China Association in Hongkong to China Association in London, 05 Aug 1925.

²⁴ See National Archives FO 371/10937 F 952/190/10 Wellesley memo, 01 Mar 1925 and Teichman's memorandum attached for details.

²⁵ National Archives CAB 24/181 C.P. 308 (26) Wellesley memo, 30 Jul 1926.

²⁶ National Archives CAB 24/176 C.P. 518 (25) Wellesley memo, 28 Nov 1925.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Fung, *Diplomacy of Imperial Retreat*, pp. 75-80.

²⁹ National Archives CAB 24/176 C.P. 518 (25) Wellesley memo, 28 Nov 1925.

³⁰ National Archives FO 228 3084 Macleay minute, 13 Apr 1926.

³¹ See Megginson, 'Britain's response to Chinese nationalism', pp. 237-242 for more details on this.

³² Owen O'Malley, *The Phantom Caravan* (London, 1954), p. 71.

³³ Ibid., p. 66.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 96.

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- ³⁵ Ibid., p. 100.
- ³⁶ Ibid., p. 101.
- ³⁷ Ibid., p. 103.
- ³⁸ SOAS Swire Papers JSSII 2/5 Box 41 General Correspondence From Hongkong, 05 Feb 1926.
- ³⁹ Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas Ann Bridge Box 28 Folder 7 Correspondence, 09 Feb 1926.
- ⁴⁰ St Antony's College Main Library, Oxford O'Malley Papers O'Malley to Strang, 10 Feb 1926.
- ⁴¹ St Antony's College Main Library, Oxford O'Malley Papers O'Malley to Strang, 08 Mar 1926.
- ⁴² George Glasgow, 'Foreign Affairs' *Contemporary Review*. Feb 1926, p. 240..
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ British Library Manuscripts Buxton Papers MSS/Add. 87078 Chinese Boxer Indemnity, Consul-General in Hankow to Buxton, 30 Mar 1926.
- ⁴⁵ British Library Manuscripts Buxton Papers MSS/Add. 87078 Chinese Boxer Indemnity, FO to Buxton, 09 Apr 1926.
- ⁴⁶ British Library Manuscripts Buxton Papers MSS/Add. 87078 Chinese Boxer Indemnity, Buxton to Willingdon, 22 Jun 1926.
- ⁴⁷ Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 191, cols. 1008-1012: 10 Feb 1926.
- ⁴⁸ St Antony's College Main Library, Oxford O'Malley Papers Strang to O'Malley, 31 Mar 1926.
- ⁴⁹ National Archives FO 371/10937 F 1723/190/10 Memo by Waterlow, 13 May 1925.
- ⁵⁰ St Antony's College Main Library, Oxford O'Malley Papers Strang to O'Malley, 31 Mar 1926.
- ⁵¹ St Antony's College Main Library, Oxford O'Malley Papers Strang to O'Malley 12 Apr 1926.
- ⁵² See note on Waterlow to O'Malley 04 Feb 1926, in St Antony's College Main Library, Oxford O'Malley Papers Strang to O'Malley 12 Apr 1926.
- ⁵³ St Antony's College Main Library, Oxford O'Malley Papers Strang to O'Malley 12 Apr 1926.
- ⁵⁴ St Antony's College Main Library, Oxford O'Malley Papers Strang to O'Malley 31 Mar 1926.
- ⁵⁵ St Antony's College Main Library, Oxford O'Malley Papers Strang to O'Malley 12 Apr 1926.
- ⁵⁶ University of Toronto, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library Bland Papers MS 81, Box 7 Folder 55, Bland to Garvin, 11 Jan 1926.
- ⁵⁷ University of Toronto, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library Bland Papers MS 81, Box 7 Folder 61, Bland to Gilbert, 31 Mar 1926.
- ⁵⁸ *North China Daily News*, 'The Situation in China Explained', 19 Mar 1926 in Cambridge University Manuscripts Jardine MathesonMS JM L10/3 Press cuttings.
- ⁵⁹ Rodney Gilbert, *What's Wrong with China?* (London, 1926).
- ⁶⁰ H.G.W. Woodhead, *The Truth about the Chinese Republic* (London, 1925) and Bland's review of the book in the *English Review*, Feb 1926, pp. 274-275.
- ⁶¹ H.G.W. Woodhead et al., *Occidental Interpretations of the Far Eastern Problem* (Chicago, 1926), pp. 1-176.
- ⁶² B.L. Putnam Weale, *Why China Sees Red* (London, 1926), p. 108.
- ⁶³ Ibid., p. 15.
- ⁶⁴ See Bickers, 'Changing British attitudes', ch. 2, esp. pp. 39-44.
- ⁶⁵ University of Toronto, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library Bland MS 81, Box 18 Folder 82, Gilbert to Bland, 14 May 1926.
- ⁶⁶ University of Toronto, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library Bland Papers MS 81, Box 6 Folder 78, Bland to Dawson, 23 Jun 1926.
- ⁶⁷ University of Toronto, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library Bland Papers MS 81, Box 7 Folder 61, Bland to Gilbert, 31 Mar 1926.
- ⁶⁸ J.O.P. Bland, 'Wanted – an Independent Policy in China', *English Review*, Mar 1926, p. 337.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 338.

⁷⁰ See, for example, University of Toronto, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library Bland Papers MS 81, Box 7 Folder 55, Bland to Garvin, 11 Jan 1926 on Balme's 'mischievous propaganda work' and Folder 95, Bland to O.M. Green, 08 Feb 1926. On Bland, see Folder 7, Bland to T.H. Ferguson, 30 Dec 1925, in which he calls Addis an 'egregious humbug' and Box 10 Folder 92, Bland to E.J. Nathan, 20 Nov 1926 on Addis' 'tommyrot' talk.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² SOAS Addis Papers Box 4 MS 14/44 Diary for 1926, 13 Jan 1926.

⁷³ Italics are mine. SOAS Addis Papers Box 55 PP MS 14/556 'The Call of China', 14 Mar 1926.

⁷⁴ His friend Dudley Mills called the address, 'tip-top' and requested to distribute at least two dozen copies to his friends. SOAS Addis Papers Box 24 MS 14/220 Mills to Addis, 01 Apr 1926.

⁷⁵ He sent an account of this experience to J.M. Keynes, with whom he worked on the Chinese Economic Advisory Council in the 1930s in King's College Archive, Cambridge Keynes Papers JMK/PP/45/271/131-135 'Credo' by A.Rose to Keynes, 13 Nov 1934.

⁷⁶ British Library Newspaper Archive *Manchester Guardian*, 31 Mar 1926, p. 8.

⁷⁷ Hull History Centre Bridgeman Papers U DBN/3/2 Press cutting. 'Noted British Labor Leader Visits Here on Way to Capital' in *North China Star*, 11 Apr 1926 and National Archives KV 2/1905 extract from letter written by Malone, 22 Apr 1926.

⁷⁸ National Archives CO 129/493 13938 Minute by P.A. Clutterbuck.

⁷⁹ Ibid. copies of the above communication were sent to the FO and Scotland Yard.

⁸⁰ Hull History Centre Bridgeman Papers U DBN/3/2 Press cutting, 'Anti-British Propaganda is Made in London!' in *Shanghai Times*, 14 Mar 1926.

⁸¹ Ibid. and Cambridge University Manuscripts Jardine Matheson Papers MS JM L10/3 Press cutting, 'The Menace of British Imperialism' in the *Canton Gazette*, 15 Mar 1926.

⁸² Hull History Centre Bridgeman Papers U DBN/3/2 Press cutting, 'Radical Papers Give much Space to China Stories' in *Shanghai Times*, 11 Apr 1926.

⁸³ Taylor, *English History, 1914-1945*, p. 245.

⁸⁴ SOAS China Inland Mission Papers CIM 167 *China's Millions* Jun 1926, p. 96.

⁸⁵ The Times Archive Williams Papers TT/FE/HW/1/1922-1927 Fraser to Williams, 26 May 1926.

⁸⁶ David Fraser, *The Times*' China correspondent wrote in a letter to Harold William, the Foreign Editor that nearly everyone at the conference was beginning to realise that the whole thing was a 'farce'. In The Times Archive Williams Papers TT/FE/HW/1/1922-1927 Fraser to Williams, 04 Apr 1926.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ University of Birmingham Special Collections AC 5/1/380 Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 25 Apr 1926.

⁹¹ *The Times*, 28 May 1926, p. 14, col. G.

⁹² University of Toronto, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library Bland Papers MS 81 Box 10 Folder 55 Bland to Maze, 13 Jun 1926.

⁹³ SOAS MS 211355 Aglen Confidential Correspondence, Aglen to Bowra, 07 Jun 1926.

⁹⁴ Cambridge University Manuscripts Jardine Matheson Papers MS JM J1/2/20 Semi-official letters London to Hongkong, Landale to Bernard, 17 Jun 1926 and National Archives CAB 23/52 39 (26) 2 'Situation in China', 16 Jun 1926.

⁹⁵ Churchill College Archive, Cambridge Strang Papers 4/4, O'Malley to Strang, 10 Jun 1926.

⁹⁶ Churchill College Archive, Cambridge Strang Papers 4/4, Mounsey to Strang, 17 Jul 1926.

⁹⁷ Churchill College Archive, Cambridge Strang Papers 4/4, Mounsey to Macleay, 14 Aug 1926.

⁹⁸ Ibid. For Willingdon being a 'radical soul', see St Antony's College Main Library, Oxford O'Malley Papers Peking 1926, O'Malley to Strang, 08 Mar 1926. O'Malley said: 'And now the F.O. seem to have reacted so violently from the gunboat policy that they have got stuck in a treacly sort of Sunday-go-to-meeting radicalism which thinks that Chinese obstruction and Chinese anti-British demonstrations can be

killed by kindness. Even Willingdon's soul which is supposed to be a radical one, revolts at this. In a mass of uncertainties and imponderabilia, this at least is clear that in Chinese internal affairs nothing but force cuts any ice whatever.' Also, see Cambridge University Manuscripts Jardine Matheson Papers MS JM J1/2/20 Semi-official letters, Landale to Bernard, 23 Jul 1926 on Willingdon's agreement with business interests upon his return.

⁹⁹ SOAS 211355 Aglen Confidential Correspondence, Aglen to Bowra, 07 Jun 1926.

¹⁰⁰ Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas Ann Bridge Box 19 Folder 9 Lady O'Malley to "Angus", 10 May 1926.

¹⁰¹ Churchill College Archive, Cambridge Amery Papers AMEL Papers 6/3/89 Correspondence with Florence Amery, Lady Clementi to F. Amery, 11 May 1926.

¹⁰² St Antony's College Main Library, Oxford O'Malley Papers Strang to O'Malley, 18 Jul 1926.

¹⁰³ *Economist*, 'The Problem of China,' 17 Jul 1926, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ Italics are mine. National Archives FO 371/11690 2818/2485/10 Minute by Wellesley, 16 Jul 1926.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* Minute by Chamberlain, 26 Jul 1926.

¹⁰⁶ For details of battles and negotiations, see C. Martin Wilbur, *The Nationalist Revolution in China, 1923-1928* (Cambridge, 1984) and Donald A. Jordan, *The Northern Expedition: China's national revolution of 1926-1928* (Honolulu, Hawaii, 1976).

¹⁰⁷ SOAS Addis Papers Box 4 MS 14/44 Diary for 1926, 18 May 1926; St Antony's College Main Library, Oxford O'Malley Papers 1926-1927 correspondence (red) Strang to O'Malley, 15 Jun 1926.

¹⁰⁸ St Antony's College Main Library, Oxford O'Malley Papers 1926-1927 correspondence (red) Strang to O'Malley, 18 Jul 1926.

¹⁰⁹ Cambridge University Manuscripts Jardine Matheson Papers MS JM L10/3 Press cuttings, *The China Express and Telegraph*, 'A Visit to Hongkong & Canton', 17 Jun 1926.

¹¹⁰ National Archives FO 371/11658 3033/10/10 Minute by Pratt, 16 Jul 1926.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, Minute by Chamberlain, 16 Jul 1926.

¹¹² SOAS Swire Papers JSSII 2/5 Box 41 Butterfield & Swire, Hongkong to London, 1st official communiqué of Canton negotiations, copy of Eugene Chen's opening speech, 23 Jul 1926.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Royal Institute of International Affairs Archive RIIA 8/38 Meeting minutes, 'Reconstruction in China', 15 Jul 1926.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ SOAS MS 211355 Aglen Confidential Correspondence, A.F.H. Edwards to Bowra, 19 Jul 1926: 'I hope Lord Willingdon and the I.G. were able to din something into the heads of the Government at home. It is extraordinary what our people out here will put up with...' and National Archives FO 371/11658 3033/10/10 Minute by Pratt, 28 Jul 1926: About a conversation with Willingdon, 'He considered that the policy of the Foreign Office had been unduly supine in South China; we should not have allowed our officials to be maltreated and we should have promptly used force'. For business lobby, see for example, National Archives FO 800//258 A. Chamberlain Papers, Chamberlain to Charteris, 25 Aug 1926.

¹¹⁸ National Archives FO 371/11658 F3671/10/10 Soothill to Gwatkin, 01 Sep 1926. Strang wrote in a minute, 'Can *no one* come back from China without advocating force?', 09 Sep 1926.

¹¹⁹ For details of this incident and the Wanhsien Incident, see Wilson, 'Britain and the KMT', pp. 373-379.

¹²⁰ National Archives ADM 116/2511 M 02110/26 China. Anti-British boycott in Canton, Case 1693.

¹²¹ National Archives CAB 24/181 C.P. 322 (26) Minutes, 30 Aug 1926.

¹²² See People's History Museum Communist Party (of Britain) Archives CP/IND/TORR/04/02 Press cuttings. *Workers' Weekly*, 'Canton Government's Progress despite Imperialist Foes', 01 Oct 1926 for criticism of the resolution.

¹²³ British Library Newspaper Archive *Manchester Guardian*, 'The Wanhsien Incident', 18 Oct 1926, p. 8.

- ¹²⁴ British Library Newspaper Archive *Manchester Guardian*, Corresp.: 'England and China: Futility of a Policy of Force', 15 Sep 1926, p. 16.
- ¹²⁵ Ibid.
- ¹²⁶ Cambridge University Manuscripts Jardine Matheson Papers MS JM L10/3 Press cuttings, *The China Express and Telegraph*, 'The Bolshevik Bogey', 28 Oct 1926.
- ¹²⁷ National Archives ADM 116/2511 M 02249/26 China. Anti-British Boycott in Canton, copy of telegram from Clementi to CO, 16 Sep 1926.
- ¹²⁸ The Times Archive Dawson Papers TT/ED/GGD/1 Fraser to Dawson, 04 Sep 1926.
- ¹²⁹ National Archives FO 800/258 A. Chamberlain Papers, Stamfordham to Chamberlain, 25 Aug 1926 and Cambridge University Manuscripts Baldwin Papers 111 Foreign Affairs 7 F.1 Memorandum from FO, 18 Sep 1926 which was sent to Stamfordham at Balmoral.
- ¹³⁰ Wilson, 'Britain and the KMT', p. 376 from FO 405 252 F4624/1/10 Brenan dispatch to Peking, 27 Sep 1926.
- ¹³¹ Cambridge University Manuscripts Baldwin Papers 111 Foreign Affairs 7 F.1 Memorandum from FO, 18 Sep 1926.
- ¹³² Ibid.
- ¹³³ National Archives ADM 116/2511 M 02298/26 China. Anti-British boycott in Canton, 20 Sep 1926.
- ¹³⁴ Cambridge University Manuscripts Baldwin Papers 115 Foreign Affairs F.2 Series B. 1925 Amery to Baldwin, 18 Sep 1926.
- ¹³⁵ Cambridge University Manuscripts Jardine Matheson Papers MS JM J1/2/20 Semi-official letters London to Hongkong, Landale to Bernard, 23 Sep 1926.
- ¹³⁶ People's History Museum Communist Party (of Britain) CP/IND/TORR/04/02 Kuomintang Publicity Department Information Service, weekly bulletin, vol. 1, no. 5, 15 Oct 1926.
- ¹³⁷ SOAS Addis Papers Box 21 MS 14/186 Addis to Mills, 16 Oct 1926.
- ¹³⁸ SOAS Addis Papers Box 21 MS 14/220 Addis to Mills, 17 and 19 Nov 1926.
- ¹³⁹ *English Review* 'Correspondence. Our Policy in China.' Nov 1926, p. 484.
- ¹⁴⁰ People's History Museum Labour Party Advisory Committee on International Questions Memos 1924-1936, no. 350, 'China. Questions raised at meeting to Col. L'Estrange Malone', 20 Oct 1926.
- ¹⁴¹ Wilson, 'Britain and the KMT', p. 422 from FO 371/11660 F 4618/10/10 Record of interview with despatch, 19 Sep 1926.
- ¹⁴² Wilson, 'Britain and the KMT', p. 424 from FO 371/11661 F 5404/10/10 Telegram from Macleay, 24 Nov 1926.
- ¹⁴³ National Archives FO 676/39 China 1926 Kuomintang (General) by Brenan, 23 Nov 1926.
- ¹⁴⁴ National Archives CAB 24/181 C.P. 308 (26) Memo by Wellesley, 30 Jul 1926.
- ¹⁴⁵ National Archives FO 371/11653 3456/8/10 Memo by Wellesley, 20 Aug 1926.
- ¹⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁴⁷ Ibid. Minute by Chamberlain, 24 Aug 1926.
- ¹⁴⁸ National Archives CAB 24/182 C.P. 399 (26) Memo by Wellesley, 23 Nov 1926.
- ¹⁴⁹ Manchester County Record Office Manchester Chamber of Commerce M8/4/12 Minute Book: China & Far East Speech by J. Rankine Finlayson, 04 Nov 1926.
- ¹⁵⁰ National Archives CAB 24/182 C.P. 399 (26) Memo by Wellesley, 23 Nov 1926.
- ¹⁵¹ *Economist* 'The Problem of China' 17 Jul 1926, p. 4; 'Great Britain and China – I', 16 Oct, p. 4; '– II', 23 Oct, p. 7; '– III', 30 Oct, p. 7; 'Important Developments in China', 13 Nov, p. 6.
- ¹⁵² University of Toronto, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library Bland Papers MS 81 Box 8 Folder 118 Bland to Percy H.B. Kent, 08 Nov 1926.
- ¹⁵³ National Archives CAB 24/182 C.P. 399 (26) Memo by Wellesley, 23 Nov 1926.
- ¹⁵⁴ National Archives FO 228/3431 9643/26/84, also F 3189/3027/10 A.W.G. Randall (Chargé d'affaires Holy See) to Chamberlain, 31 Aug 1926.
- ¹⁵⁵ National Archives CAB 24/182 C.P. 403 (26) Policy in China, 30 Nov 1926.

¹⁵⁶ The Note was printed in *The Times*, 28 Dec 1926 and re-printed elsewhere. For example, in SOAS China Association Papers CHAS/A/8 Annual Reports, 1926-1927, 'British Note to the Powers', appendix V.

¹⁵⁷ University of Birmingham Special Collections Neville Chamberlain NC18/2/526 Ida Chamberlain to Neville Chamberlain, 31 Dec 1926.

¹⁵⁸ National Archives FO 371/12398 F21/2/10 Letter from British Labour Council for Chinese Freedom, 31 Dec 1926.

¹⁵⁹ *Economist*, 'The British Memorandum on China', 01 Jan 1927, pp. 4-5.

¹⁶⁰ British Library Newspaper Archive *Observer*, 'The History of 1926', 26 Dec 1927, p. 7.

¹⁶¹ University of Birmingham Special Collections Austen Chamberlain AC38/3/8 Garvin to Chamberlain, 02 Jan 1927.

¹⁶² National Archives FO 371/11664 5735/10/10 Minute by Mounsey, 27 Dec 1926.

¹⁶³ University of Toronto, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library Bland Papers MS 81 Box 20 Folder 51 Maxse to Bland, 12 Nov 1926.

¹⁶⁴ HSBC Archives LOH II 247/2 Diary of W.E. Leveson 1919-1925, 13 Dec 1926.

¹⁶⁵ National Archives FO 371/12398 F21/2/10 Letter from British Labour Council for Chinese Freedom, 31 Dec 1926. In the minutes, Mounsey wrote '...I have considerable doubt whether it is proper or dignified for the S. of S. to embark, uninvited, on a defense of his China policy, to an organisation of this kind.' 06 Jan.27 and Chamberlain replied: '...It is not of the question that I should reply by letter to a statement concluded in such language and sent to me in such a form.' 12 Jan 1927.

Chapter 5: 1927

At the beginning of 1927, it seemed as if the Foreign Office's policy towards China was preeminent and unassailable. Towards the end of the year, Chamberlain, in a letter to his sister Ida, had expressed his relief at having hammered out a new China policy. Six months previously, he had confessed to her that 'China is a constant source of anxiety to me. I see no way through its troubles or the troubles it causes me',¹ and in November he called China one of the 'flies in my ointment'.² However by December, after a 'huge labour',³ Chamberlain had worked out the basis of a new policy toward China and received Cabinet approval for it. The premise of this policy, embodied in the December Memorandum, was that Britain was willing to accede to Chinese demands for treaty revision in a spirit of friendship and conciliation and to negotiate with the Chinese about taking gradual steps towards Chinese tariff autonomy and the eventual relinquishment of Britain's extraterritorial rights. Chamberlain had left London in a 'happier frame of mind' in early December, but any euphoria that accompanied this liberal and optimistic policy was destined to be short-lived. Less than one month after the proclamation of its new policy, in a sharp turnaround, the government ordered 13,000 troops to depart for China in response to the outbreak of trouble and violence in the British concession of Hankow.

The sudden events at the beginning of 1927 provided an expedient opportunity for the group of China lobbyists, diplomats and treaty-port residents opposed to government policy to reassert their stance. Many of them had been and were still dissatisfied with the perceived weakness of the Foreign Office's policy and sought to convince the government that it was folly to concede to the Chinese. The resurgence of opposition to government policy was also accompanied by substantial challenges from the higher reaches of political power—from the Cabinet and members of Parliament. In the face of these attacks from members of his party, how then would Chamberlain and the FO continue to push forward a policy of conciliation and retreat?

THE 'HANKOW INCIDENT', THE SHANGHAI DEFENCE FORCE AND THE PUBLIC RESPONSE

The violence in China at the beginning of 1927 caused a revival of vocal diehard and hawkish protest and an attempt to influence policy. The seriousness of the incident drew much attention from the Conservative Cabinet and especially from its more hawkish members. Indeed, in the short-term, much of the public supported the sending of troops to China and the government's decision was thus not out of step with opinion in the country. However, after the events of January, the FO continued to insist on its policy of steady retreat, deflecting criticism from both right- and left-wing groups.

By January 1927 Chinese troops fighting in Chiang Kai-shek's Northern Expedition had made their way to Hankow and were nearing Shanghai. In late December 1926 the KMT had declared a general holiday from 1-3 January 1927 to celebrate its victory over Wu Pei-fu's troops. Hankow had already been the scene of labour unrest for several months and orators used the holiday to continue stoking anti-foreign resentment. On the morning of 3 January, a Chinese crowd, stirred up by the speeches, gathered near the concession and began to rush the barricades. The municipal authorities feared for the safety of the concession and naval landing parties were ordered ashore, while the crowd rained down bricks and stones on the British forces. The marines and armed volunteers continued to defend the concession, but were withdrawn by a local order given by the Consul-General, Herbert Goffe, in the hope that their departure would alleviate any violence.⁴ On 5 January, Goffe gave way to the KMT troops, who proceeded to take over the concession on the pretext of establishing order.

RIGHT-WING OPINION: SENDING THE SHANGHAI DEFENCE FORCE

The incident at Hankow unleashed a major debate about Britain's future in China and became an opportunity for right-wing opinion-makers to publicise negative views of the Chinese, press for more forceful measures in China, to bring up considerations of prestige and to keep alive fears of Russia. Although the government would not go as far as forcing the return of the Hankow Concession, the public's concern for the safety of British residents and for the maintenance of British prestige in China did not go

unheeded. These views ultimately contributed to the Cabinet's decision to send a defensive force to protect British interests in Shanghai.

One day after the incident, Lampson pressed the FO for the return of the concession and advocated the use of force if necessary. The FO ignored this proposal.⁵ Chamberlain disagreed with Lampson, as did Wellesley, who wrote, 'So long as we refrain from the use of force there is always hope. Once we use it the situation will probably get out of hand altogether.'⁶ Although the *Daily Telegraph* disapproved of the inaction in Hankow, other major newspapers reluctantly agreed that it had been necessary and lauded the 'magnificent restraint' of the naval forces and the 'tact' of the authorities who had prevented any shooting.⁷ Still, the incident was a 'heavy blow' to British prestige⁸ and policymakers had to field questions about what protection existed for British residents.

Furthermore, negotiations had begun between Lampson and the Nationalist's Foreign Minister Eugene Chen in December and Chen now used the KMT's control of the Hankow concession as leverage to continue pressing for recognition of the Nationalist regime as the national government of China.⁹ The FO, however, was ready to offer treaty alteration but not recognition, as Nationalist power only extended from southern China to the Yangtse valley. The KMT's actions had ostensibly increased its bargaining power, but actually caused domestic opinion to push the British government for a tougher stance towards it. The Hankow incident re-ignited fears of the Red Scare and newspapers pointed to the machinations of the Soviets as the source of the troubles. *The Times* criticised British policy for ignoring the 'dangerous Bolshevist factor'¹⁰ while the *Daily Mail* portrayed Chen and other KMT leaders as deracinated intellectuals and as *faux* nationalists manipulated by Russia.¹¹

Fears of Russia thus added another dimension to the issue and this concern about the Reds continued to push some to recommend a tougher position in China. Assumptions about Chinese ignorance and immaturity also supported their position. Residents at home and abroad were shocked at this blatant abuse of British interests and desecration of British property and the incident also aroused fears for the safety of the settlement in Shanghai. Since Shanghai constituted the most significant single element of British interests in China, it was vital that it be kept safe. Representatives and residents in

China therefore largely supported the sending of troops to protect their interests and were impatient with the FO, whom they viewed as tentative and weak (although Chamberlain himself was in favour of sending troops). Lampson recorded his frustration with the FO in his diary: '06 January - telegrams with FO who seem determined to throw every British interest overboard! Their centre of interest moved to Shanghai and question of its defense. Here Admiral Tyrwhitt introduced a welcome breath of reality by saying at least a division of troops necessary! Splendid!'¹² Lampson made his views known to his cousin, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary Locker-Lampson.

There never was a truer word spoken than Brennan's dictum ... that the only way to deal with these people is with reason in one hand and force in the other. And I would add the greater the force the more reasonable will they be. Hankow capitulation cannot possibly be acquiesced in: if we were to let it go it would be the beginning of the end. There are degrees of national degradation in which no decent Englishman can acquiesce. Humility does not pay out here.¹³

A British resident from Tientsin wrote for *The Economist* along similar lines. The Chinese had 'an entirely different mentality than our own' and thus, one could not expect them to understand the rules of honesty and fair play as the British did. Also for three thousand years, he argued, the Chinese had not known any other rule except the rule of force. They were 'a nation of children who stopped growing up at about the commencement of the Christian era.'¹⁴ He wrote that they possessed 'all the traits of children'; they were even 'lovers of fairy tales as children are'. They were 'kindly and yet insensately cruel', 'theatrical in almost everything they do, and yet capable of keen human emotion' and 'cowardly and cringing and yet utterly self-sacrificing and loyal in service'. His recommendation therefore was, it followed, to discipline the Chinese as unruly children: 'Acts of obstreperousness must be met by a show of force, and by actual force if necessary. There must be no hesitation and no show of compromise.' The Hankow incident thus became an opportunity for treaty-port British to finally express their disapproval of government policy and to ensure an audience for their derogatory racial assumptions about the Chinese.

Furthermore, these hawkish commentators emphasised that the nationalist movement was unauthentic. David Fraser from *The Times* saw the nationalist movement sweeping through the country as ‘alien’ to the Chinese character.¹⁵ The Russians had manipulated the ‘impressionable students’ and the ‘ignorant’ lower classes to attack British interests. J.O.P. Bland, in an article in *The English Review* entitled ‘Plain Truths about China’, wrote that policymakers had erred in regards to China because they failed to realise that the modern principles they believed in were not universally applicable.¹⁶ They had ignored the ‘dominant morality’ of Chinese leaders, which was motivated by ‘money-lust’. The KMT was no different from the parties of the past, Bland argued. None of the Cantonese leaders had ever ‘consistently placed the welfare and needs of his country before the gratification of that deep-rooted instinct which impels every Chinese to place himself and his family beyond the reach of want.’ His editor, Ernest Remnant, confirmed this position, opining that those who believed that the KMT represented ‘a new, nationally conscious China’ were mistaken.¹⁷ The ‘truth’ was that there was ‘absolutely nothing to distinguish’ it from the other rulers and political adventurers ‘ruining China’. Bland’s writings received a new lease on life in the aftermath of Hankow and he published several articles in the *English Review* and the *National Review* in 1927, but still continued to fear that the ‘influence of Addis and Co at the FO’ would outweigh what he and his allies would say.¹⁸

After the events in early 1927, government decisions were also influenced by similar assumptions of Soviet guilt and Chinese immaturity and susceptibility to Bolshevik schemes. The Home Secretary Joynson-Hicks wrote to Chamberlain telling him that if any British nationals were killed in China, ‘there will be an outcry for another Palmerston and I am afraid I should be on the side of those who would uphold the B[ritish] position by arms.’¹⁹ ‘Jix’ was a notorious anti-Bolshevik and, like the right-wing *Daily Mail* and the commentators above, he framed the Chinese issue in terms of Anglo-Soviet antagonism. His view was more intensely Manichean, however, than those who saw Bolshevism as only a superficial influence. He did not agree with the FO who believed that the Chinese would get rid of the Bolshevik advisers as soon as nationalist aims were fulfilled. The Chinese were ‘Bolshies in heart’, and unless they were careful, they might find ‘the Bolshio-led Cantonese’ in command of all of China. The threat from Chinese nationalism thus appeared intimately linked to Bolshevik maneuvering in China. Negotiations with Eugene Chen, the Foreign Minister for the

Nationalist Government, had begun in the last year, but now, the Cabinet was unsure of how to carry on negotiations with him regarding the Hankow Incident, since they feared that he may have been heavily influenced by Borodin.²⁰

Cabinet members gathered in London in mid-January and spent several days debating and deciding what to do in China. The loss of Hankow was unfortunate, but the loss of Shanghai would have, according to a Chiefs of Staff report, ‘owing to the magnitude of our interests there ... lasting disastrous consequences on our position in Asia’.²¹ Shanghai needed to be protected and the government moved towards sending troops to China. Chamberlain tended to agree with Lampson, who advocated protection of British interests in Shanghai.²² However, Wellesley expressed hesitation about sending a division to Shanghai: ‘As regards the protection of British interests the presence of a division would no doubt be sufficient for those located in Shanghai, but...it might very likely be at the expense of all our interests in the rest of China.’²³ His hesitation stemmed from the fear that any retaliatory tactics would only incense the Chinese and cause them to force the rest of the British out of China, just as they had done in Hankow. But at the same time, he mentioned, ‘the wholesale evacuation of British subjects and the abandonment of our interests at the hands of the Chinese...would shake our prestige to its foundations’.²⁴ His hesitation was ultimately overruled, however, by Chamberlain and the Cabinet.

The Cabinet overwhelmingly believed that it was necessary to send British forces to protect Shanghai. Although he would later change his mind about the Rear-Admiral’s decision to retreat at Hankow, Chamberlain was at first unhappy that the forces were inadequate to hold the British concession.²⁵ Similarly, he had no question as to the necessity of holding on to Shanghai. His colleagues leaned towards an even stronger position. Several days after the incident, Baldwin received a letter from the chairman of the Conservative Party, J. Davidson, with whom he was close politically. Davidson’s confidential letter (which he asked Baldwin to burn²⁶) expressed his concern about the weakness of present China policy and especially of the divide between the views of the ‘men-on-the-spot’ and those of Chamberlain and Wellesley in the FO.²⁷ Everyone knew that ‘Austen does not care for anything that is not labelled “Locarno” or tastes of Briand’, Davidson wrote, yet China was a matter of ‘extreme urgency’ and it was necessary to deal strongly with the Power stirring up trouble behind-the-scenes –

Russia. Churchill also wrote to Baldwin from his winter holiday in Malta, indirectly questioning Chamberlain's policy: 'We shall soon have no more cheeks to turn.'²⁸ Prior to Hankow, Chamberlain's colleagues had been content to leave China policy in the hands of Chamberlain and the FO, but the seriousness of the takeover of the British concession stirred up doubt concerning the FO's direction.

At first, the response of business leaders was to circulate the idea of enforcing an economic blockade in China, which Lord Balfour also suggested.²⁹ Balfour, the Lord President of the Council, had been recuperating from illness at his estate in Whittingehame, Scotland, when he heard about events in China.³⁰ While expressing support for Chamberlain, Balfour also included his own detailed recommendations for steps to take on China, which consisted primarily of enforcing a blockade as an alternative to landing an army to fight on Chinese soil.³¹ The blockade, though garnering support in the beginning, eventually was never enforced. Sir Charles Addis was one of several examined by the Imperial Defence Committee concerning the use of a blockade, but he considered it costly and ineffective.³² The Committee, after its enquiries, agreed with Addis that a blockade could only be effective in the short-term and could not be relied upon to permanently affect Cantonese policy.³³

In taking action to protect Shanghai, the British government was also intent on working closely with the Washington Conference Powers. Lord Salisbury, the Lord Privy Seal, wrote to Baldwin expressing his concern that without Japanese help, the Chinese could drive them out of Shanghai.³⁴ But when officials contacted the Japanese and the American consuls-general at Shanghai in the hope of securing international cooperation to protect foreign interests, the Japanese and American responses were half-hearted, or as a Foreign Office official put it, 'characteristic but wholly unsatisfactory'.³⁵ Chamberlain implied that the Japanese were 'disinclined to take the lead in any way in China, and were perhaps not ill-pleased at seeing the boycott, from which they themselves had suffered in the past, transferred to the British'.³⁶ It seemed to the British government, then, that its partners were reluctant to render it any help and content to leave Britain as the sole target of Chinese anti-imperialism. Despite their reluctance, however, the Japanese government eventually agreed to military conversations about the defence of Shanghai.³⁷

Finally, in the face of these threats to British interests, the Cabinet unanimously decided to send the Shanghai Defence Force, which included troops, tanks, and aeroplanes to Shanghai, towards the end of January. Although Chamberlain did not see this as contravening the previously conciliatory December Memorandum,³⁸ the abrupt turnabout in policy became evidence of British hypocrisy for Chinese nationalists. The King's Speech, drafted by members of the Cabinet, on the opening of Parliament expressed the essence of this two-sided policy:

My Government have felt it necessary to dispatch to the Far East a sufficient force to protect the lives of My British and Indian subjects against mob violence and armed attack. But I earnestly desire a peaceful settlement of the difficulties which have arisen, and My Government have caused proposals to be made to the Chinese authorities which should convince public opinion in China and throughout the world that it is the desire of the British people to remove all real grievances, to renew Our treaties on an equitable basis, and to place Our future relations with the Chinese people on a footing of friendship and good will.³⁹

On the one hand, current events necessitated action; on the other, Britain's long-term goal and policy was still conciliation and good-will. The policy was summed up by a tongue-in-cheek cartoon by David Low in the evening newspaper, *The Star*, in which 'China policy' was written on a large gunboat.⁴⁰ A naval officer is shown offering Bridgeman, the First Lord of the Admiralty, a basket of 'fertile Doves Eggs' and the caption reads: 'The Country's compliments, sir, and here are the shells you are to fire.' Though the incongruities of the policy were duly pointed out, it seemed to the Cabinet and FO that they had arrived at a compromise that could placate those who wanted a firm policy as well as those who supported the December Memorandum. On 22 January 1927 Austen Chamberlain wrote to his sister Ida about the Cabinet decisions and of his 'great satisfaction that for all the crucial decisions, we have had absolute unanimity among us.'⁴¹

RIGHT-WING OPINION: THE CABINET AND THE HANKOW NEGOTIATIONS

In the short-term, the government approved in complete agreement and it seemed that the diehard position had received its due notice. However, their protests, once unleashed, only grew as the months went on. The temporary unanimity of January thinly masked the wide divergence of the FO's position with that of Cabinet members and others who sought a more hardline method of maintaining British interests in China. As negotiations with Eugene Chen over the future of Hankow proceeded, criticism of Chamberlain and the Foreign Office increased. Baldwin had usually given Chamberlain a free hand in foreign affairs and tended to support him in fighting off strong attempts at interference by other Cabinet members.⁴² However, in regards to the crisis in China, he faced intense criticism led by Amery, Churchill and Birkenhead.

Amery's stance was strongly influenced by his close correspondence with Clementi in Hong Kong, who consistently stood at odds with the Foreign Office and Chamberlain. Clementi had complained to Amery previously saying, 'I cannot help thinking that our Foreign Office has gone completely off the rails in China.'⁴³ His wife was even more outspoken in her criticism of the Foreign Office, writing to Amery in January: 'The common cry is that the FO are more hostile to British interests than the enemy...No help has been forthcoming etc. Their [Christmas] Memorandum, published on Boxing Day read like a voice for another world.'⁴⁴ The Clementis disapproved of the Foreign Office's policy of conciliation ('Conciliation is misunderstood by Orientals, almost always.'⁴⁵) and urged Amery to take a tough line with the Chinese. In their version of events, British prestige was going 'down and down...[and the Cantonese] now talk of Great Britain as a "paper tiger".'⁴⁶ Clementi's reasoning was also based on his understanding of Chinese mentality, which was 'not unlike that of the Chinese chow-dog, namely much barking and showing of teeth and even biting at those who look frightened, but a helter-skelter flight from the man who stands his ground and brandishes a stick'.⁴⁷ Chinese warfare was 'largely a game of bluff, intrigue, treachery and money bargain'. The intractable Chinaman would only understand the language of force, and for the Clementis, as for other residents in Hong Kong and in China, a Shanghai 'defence' force would not be forceful or offensive enough. Months after the crisis, Lady Clementi would continue to assert, 'the FO drives its defeatish spirit into

most of its servant...The Locarno spirit is fatal applied to the Oriental! As long as Sir A. Chamberlain conducts our foreign policy, we shall only court increasing disaster, for he does not apparently realize the Eastern mind at all.⁴⁸

In response, Amery sought to justify moderation to Clementi, urging him to remember the immense reluctance of the public, 'of all political views', to contemplate anything like war and that the wish to meet the 'genuine aspect of Chinese nationalism' with sympathy was widespread.⁴⁹ But within the Cabinet, when in February 1927 Chamberlain sought to arrive at an agreement with Eugene Chen regarding Hankow and the smaller concession, Kiukiang, Amery and others took a harder line. Chamberlain had previously insisted on the return of the concession, but as time went on, he gradually backed down. Eugene Chen also played on Britain's delicate position by presenting an ultimatum at the beginning of February, threatening to end negotiations regarding Hankow and Kiukiang unless the British diverted their troops from Shanghai. To make things more difficult, the US and Japan were also unsupportive of the landing of troops at Shanghai. Amery recorded his reaction to Chamberlain's proposal in his diary entry:

To my horror, Austen proposed that...we should tell [Chen] that if he signed the Hankow agreement we would agree not to land the troops. I at once pointed out all the dangers of a proposal which inevitably implied our giving way to Chen's threat and showed that it was entirely inconsistent with the attitude recommended by O'Malley at Hankow, and Lampson at Peking. I also took the opportunity of reading a scathing personal telegram from Clementi about the whole policy of scuttle and surrender as he considers it, not identifying myself with his criticism but pointing out that that was the view that an able and responsible person inevitably took from the Hong Kong angle, and suggesting that we really could not go indefinitely in that direction without creating a reaction here. I think I was carrying the majority of the Cabinet with me...⁵⁰

At the next Cabinet, Amery 'led off the opposition' against the Foreign Office's suggestion that the first Brigade should stop at Hong Kong. Churchill stepped in, suggesting that they leave the decision to the Commander-in-Chief of the China Station, Admiral Tyrwhitt, who would order the ships along from Hong Kong. This proposal

secured a majority. The original FO plan was not further discussed. Amery recorded, ‘Austen took it all with good grace and everything that has happened since has confirmed the wisdom of the decision, but it fills me with fear as to what the FO may wish to do next.’⁵¹ He would later describe these Cabinet discussions as times ‘when FE [Birkenhead] and I had to fight for our lives to prevent the FO stopping the troops at Hong Kong’.⁵²

Churchill and Birkenhead joined Amery in affirming the need to take firm action in China. Though he was away on vacation in Malta in January, Churchill still offered his opinion regarding the situation to the Prime Minister. Baldwin later told Churchill that the Cabinet had decided on a course of action, ‘[f]ired by your statement that we ought to have a policy and recognising that we shall soon have no more cheeks to turn’.⁵³ Churchill asserted his opinion again to the PM:

Short of being actually conquered, there is no evil worse than submitting to wrong and violence for fear of war. Once you take the position of not being able in any circumstances to defend your rights against the aggression of some particular set of people, there is no end to the demands that will be made or to the humiliation that must be accepted ... There is nothing so costly as inadequate forces. Must we always have to learn that lesson fresh every time? ... I write this because I am so very anxious you should not get involved in *unsuccessful* military operations.⁵⁴

Churchill’s private secretary, P.J. Grigg, expressed his concerns that the ‘heavily armed neutrality’ in China would cause difficulties for the following year’s budget.⁵⁵

Churchill, however, dismissed these concerns, and continued to press for ‘plenty of Tanks’.⁵⁶ He was more concerned with the maintenance of Britain’s supremacy in the Far East in relation to Japan and he interpreted latter’s lack of support as evidence of its ill-will toward Britain. He told Grigg, ‘I am sure the way to force the hand of the Japanese is to send plenty of British troops. The real wish of Japan is to see all British, American and European influence eliminated in the yellow world’.⁵⁷

In February, when Chen began threatening to cut off the Hankow negotiations, Churchill stood his ground. He wrote to Baldwin: ‘[W]e have gone to the full

limit... Therefore if Chen refuses to sign... I think we should let the negotiations languish, saying "We have done our best to meet you, and this is all that has come of it."⁵⁸ Churchill, Amery, and Birkenhead were firm in their refusal to divert the troops. Churchill told his wife, Clementine, about one of the Cabinet discussions in February in a short note: 'I returned to find the Cabinet divided into 2 equal halves on whether the troops shd go on to Shanghai or stop at Hong Kong: & I am glad to say I provided a formula—wh B[aldwin] read out in Parl on wh all agreed, & wh has been approved alike by the Manchester Guardian & the Morning Post.'⁵⁹

LEFT-WING PROTESTS

Although the violence in Hankow had provided a useful opportunity for the more hawkish members of the right to assert their stance, the left-wing was also galvanised to protest the sending of troops to China. On the one hand, vocal right-wing opinion enabled and supported the government's sending the troops, then, but active left-wing protest also proscribed the extent of the British government's action in China. The protests by Labour and by Christian organisations, as in the previous years, were based on political expediency, belief in the genuineness and potential of Chinese nationalism and anti-war sentiment.

In February, Churchill thought that Chen or those behind him were 'trying to take a hand in British Party politics, playing off our Labour Party against us and endeavouring to humiliate HMG to our advantage.'⁶⁰ The Cabinet conjectured that 'Chen may have been encouraged to seize upon troop movements as an excuse for not signing by the published resolution of the Joint Labour Council and speeches by certain Labour leaders.'⁶¹ Lampson had written to Chamberlain in the aftermath of the Hankow incident of the difficulties of dealing with China. It was 'despairing work'.⁶² Not only was the Far Eastern Department 'out of tune' with the men-on-the-spot, whatever line they took was apt to be 'riddled with adverse criticism from home'. Christian groups engaged in a campaign to publish statements in the British and American press, countering those demanding more 'vigorous action'.⁶³ It was the 'duty of the Church' to see the hopeful side of the situation, Henry Hodgkin of the National Christian Council said. While a few Christian groups such as the Methodists and Baptists supported the 'war policy of Austen Chamberlain', the secretary of the Presbyterian Foreign Missions

committee insisted that the majority of 'thinking people' did not.⁶⁴ A number also supported the idea advocated by prominent Labour leaders of bringing the matter to the League of Nations.⁶⁵

Labour took advantage of the political opportunity to portray itself as a friend to the Chinese Nationalists, and undercutting the already tense relations between the Conservatives and the up-and-coming would-be Chinese leaders by publishing resolutions against troop movements. The government decisions provoked a nationwide protest against the sending of forces to China. Nation-wide Labour demonstrations for a peaceful settlement in China were opened by a Royal Albert Hall meeting on 6 February. Meanwhile the *Daily Herald* called for every member of the Labour movement to counter-act the 'war spirit' and defend the 'rising spirit of a genuine spirit of Chinese nationalism'.⁶⁶ The British Labour Council for Chinese Freedom had been formed in December 1926 as an attempt to generate closer co-operation between the British and Chinese trade union and labour movements. It supported the Cantonese Nationalist movement and advocated the recognition of the KMT as the National government of China. It also supported the end of extra-territoriality, the replacement of the old treaties and the prompt withdrawal of British armed forces and warships from China.⁶⁷ The government decision to send more forces to China thus gave cause for further protest. About five hundred delegates from more than one hundred trade unions and Labour and socialist organisations gathered on Farringdon Road on 12 February to oppose the decision and discuss means for the prevention of war with the Chinese. Protests were also held in India and Australia by workers' organisations to protest the dispatch of troops from there.⁶⁸

The KMT and other Chinese also took advantage of the political rift. Eugene Chen wrote a letter to the 'Workers of the United Kingdom' appealing for their support and encouraging them to 'restrain the aggressive people within the British Government' so that the Hankow negotiations could be completed in a peaceful manner.⁶⁹ Feng Yu-hsiang, who had merged his armies with those of the KMT the previous year, wrote to George Lansbury in March.⁷⁰ They had met in Leningrad the previous year and Feng asked Lansbury to 'tell the British people' to withdraw its forces from China and to abolish the present-day treaties. Although the 'Christian General' alienated some of his missionary support, especially of the China Inland Mission, by receiving Soviet

backing,⁷¹ his leftist leanings had won him friends in the British labour movement.⁷² Of course, Lansbury was well-known for his leftist Christian politics. Chinese Christians also appealed to their 'Christian brothers' to protest the dispatch of troops.⁷³ This combination provoked the ire of a right-wing publication, *The Patriot*, which labeled the YMCA, a politically active Christian body, as 'Bolshevised Christians'.⁷⁴ The National Christian Council in China, another activist group, wrote to the Conference of Missionary Societies in Britain and Ireland asking for strong support for a friendly attitude.⁷⁵ Chinese leaders also understood the importance of currying favour with MPs and sought to make their case known to the British public. Professors in Peking National University sent a cable to British MPs urging them to press for the renunciation of British special privileges in China and to oppose the current action, saying, 'If you be truly determined on world peace you must understand the new awakening of the Chinese Nation.'⁷⁶

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

The events at the beginning of the year also brought China to the attention of the British public and sparked lengthy debates in Parliament about the ruling potential of the KMT, the viability of the new Chinese government and the role of the Bolsheviks in China. Many of the same arguments and assumptions about the Chinese used in previous years were brought up again. Some argued that the vices of Chinese character precluded the possibility of a workable government and that Britain needed to continue protecting its own interests in China. Others argued for a non-interventionist stance and for sympathy toward nationalism. The debates purportedly focused on the sole issue of whether the Shanghai Defence Force should be despatched, but they also revealed a good deal of latent assumptions about the Chinese among prominent British politicians. At the same time, the venting of opposing opinions by MPs also made the job of the FO more difficult since the KMT attempted to take advantage of the rift in public opinion.

Unlike the more extreme members of the British Labour Council on Chinese Freedom, most Labour politicians sympathised with the rise of Chinese nationalism and were sceptical of sending troops to China, but they were not completely opposed to it. They were, however, quick to point out, exploit, and exacerbate the discrepancies in the Conservative policy in their debates. Ramsay MacDonald, the Labour Party leader, in

the Debate on the Address, said that he saw two schools of thought competing on China policy – the Foreign Office and War Office schools. The Foreign Office school was, according to him, responsible for ‘two most excellent pronouncements’, the December Memorandum and another pronouncement on 22 January which affirmed the government’s conciliatory attitude, which MacDonald supported. However, he expressed doubts about the line that the War Office school was adopting, that of sending troops to China, wondering if they had ‘increased the risk or, on the other hand, the security of our people at Shanghai’, and implying the former.⁷⁷ He was not alone in expressing this fear that sending troops to China would only incense the Chinese people and result in more damage to British property and the endangering of lives outside of Shanghai. Wellesley had expressed this same view, fearing that the Chinese would then concentrate their anger on the other 50 per cent of British interests outside of Shanghai.⁷⁸ MacDonald also stressed the need to work with the other Powers, since the troops would be landing in an international concession.

For other Labour MPs, however, this ‘defence’ force was really an ‘expeditionary’ force in nature and they did not hesitate to claim that protecting British citizens in China was only a pretext to fulfil imperial ambitions. MacDonald himself was either waffling or cleverly mixing up his rhetoric when he switched between calling it an ‘expeditionary’ and ‘defence’ force.⁷⁹ The whole position in China was, according to William Kelly (Labour – Rochdale), a ‘condemnation, not only of this Government but of all the Governments we have had of the two historic parties for the last 60 years.’⁸⁰ Conveniently, his own party had not been in existence for most of this sordid history. The rhetoric of the ruling party may have changed, but its actions and motivations had not. John (Jack) Jones (Labour – West Ham Silvertown), with his characteristic wit, said that the King’s Speech had said ‘we are carrying out our usual policy of not interfering in the internal affairs of China. Everybody knows that that is perfectly true grammatically, but that it is not true from other points of view. We have always interfered in the external affairs of China.’ Referring to the ‘Hands off China’ movement, he caricatured Chamberlain as saying, ‘we will not take our hands off China, but ... we will take off six of our fingers out of the ten.’ Jones also dredged up the historical record again to prove his point by bringing up the opium issue: ‘The Chinese [in this country] have been put in gaol because they dared to sell opium. Yet we went to war ... have sacrificed thousands of lives and spent millions of money to

compel the Chinese in China to do that for which we sent them to gaol here in England. I hope hon. Members opposite like that kind of medicine when it is doled out properly by a respectable Foreign Secretary.’⁸¹ Capitalist greed and imperialist ambitions were still, in his eyes, the prime motivators for China policy.

Left-leaning MPs also implied that the inability to move beyond age-old Chinese stereotypes hindered Conservatives from thinking progressively or sympathetically. They were at pains to show that they were no longer dealing with the ‘slow-thinking Chinaman’ or the ‘“heathen Chinese” depicted on the music hall stages of this country’, but rather an ‘enlightened and very largely educated China...behind a machine gun’.⁸² George Hardie (Labour – Glasgow Springburn) put it rather vividly: ‘We seem to forget that China was a civilisation long before the Briton was running about with a goatskin to cover him.’⁸³ Now that China was ‘awakened’, the Chinese people were no longer ignorant of or passive in response to British hypocrisy. In this way Labour MPs could condemn ‘conservatism’ and its failure to acknowledge authentic changes in China.

On the other side, the government and its backbenchers were not going to let these charges go unanswered. If Labour was going to take the high moral plane, it also needed to be grounded in realities. Baldwin made a jab at MacDonald’s aspirations to leadership of the country, wondering if, ‘The rt. Hon. Gentleman...would [not] have made exactly that speech had the responsibility of action as the head of the Government rested upon him. It is so easy to criticise when you have not the responsibility ... Where you have lives in the scale it is very difficult perhaps to weigh calmly all the factors on the other side.’⁸⁴ One could thus discuss past mistakes but for the present, British lives were at stake, and it was the primary responsibility of the Government to protect them. Baldwin implied that appearances in China reminded ‘those of the greatest experience’ of ‘what they saw shortly before the Boxer trouble’. The danger was not only going to be limited to Shanghai if the British did not act in time. But though he made the comparison to the Boxer Rebellion, Baldwin was firm on insisting that the troops were solely for the protection of British lives and nothing else. He was supported roundly by his fellow frontbenchers and backbenchers who insisted that the defence force was not an expeditionary force.⁸⁵ Churchill, unperturbed by accusations of capitalist greed, stated that Britain was indeed a nation of shopkeepers and that the 400 million of Chinese were potential customers. But, he said: ‘Almost the last thing you wished to do

with a potential customer was to shoot him. The last thing you wished was that your potential customer should shoot you.’⁸⁶

Widely-held assumptions of Chinese character were also tossed around by MPs to support their arguments. The validity of these assumptions was bolstered by the ‘expert’ credentials of those who espoused and disseminated them. Any MP who had spent time in China or near China would cite his personal experience and encounters with the Chinese, providing legitimacy to his political opinion. For example, some who had lived in the Far East extolled the virtues of Empire and contrasted it with the chaos in China. Frederick Penny (Conservative – Kingston-upon-Thames), formerly Managing Director of the Eastern Smelting Company in Penang, Malaysia, said that in the Straits Settlements, the ‘poorest Chinese can obtain justice, and the richest Chinese cannot bribe a British Court ... They can form companies and banks, they own steamships, and they come there very often as paupers and go away wealthy people and have the same privileges and advantages as the Europeans.’⁸⁷ Sir Gerald Strickland (Conservative – Lancaster), drawing from his experience as the Governor of Western Australia, compared work conditions in China with those in Australia. To him, in the ‘real China it is not a question of rates of wages...it is the question of the possibility of living at all, so congested is the population, so low is the standard of life, and so terrible is the struggle for life at all. There are no bank holidays, no Sundays...’ In contrast, in Australia, which had bank holidays, ‘every genuine hard-working labourer is a capitalist in the making’ and the environment was fit for the ‘development of British culture, British ideas, British freedom and British love of equality of opportunity...’⁸⁸ The implication was that China would be better off if the British were in charge, though that prospect was seen as over-ambitious and unfeasible, given Britain’s current economic and military situation. The very idea, according to Balfour, was ‘absurd’ and ‘no sane man’ would conduct an aggressive policy in China.⁸⁹ Still, these arguments served to purport that there was no viable government in China with whom the British government could properly negotiate. Unless there was a fundamental change in China’s institutions and governance, they were content to have British subjects continue trading and living in China with their attenuating extraterritorial rights.

And change was not close on the horizon. China, to Strickland, was so ‘eminently conservative’ that the democratic aspects of the present disturbances ‘have as

superficial a relation to the life of China as the froth on the top of a pint pot of beer'.⁹⁰ Conservative MPs thus argued that extraterritoriality should not be negotiated away while Chinese criminal law was still somewhat 'equivalent to 'mediaeval law' and there was no government strong enough to change the legal system. Europeans should not be subjected to an outdated and cruel Eastern criminal code.⁹¹ Their interests had to be protected against the invading Eastern forces that threatened to upset their civilized way of life. Any good or progress in China was limited to the treaty ports and could be attributed to Europeans. It was unfortunate that 'conspirators' poisoned the ignorant Chinese population with anti-British propaganda. However, the truth was, according to George Pilcher (Conservative – Penryn and Falmouth), a former resident of India, '...there is nothing to be apologetic at all'. It was, after all, the 'white race' which had 'done infinite good' in the East.⁹² Since residence in the East was a positive social and economic force, it was necessary to protect it. As Sir Edward Campbell (Conservative – Camberwell North West) , who had been a Vice-Consul in Java, put it: 'Let us remember that whatever our politics may be we are Britishers, and that the people who are working in Shanghai are just as white as any of us.' Perhaps twenty-one years of residence in the Far East had made Campbell more conscious of racial differences. Of the Chinese he said: '...of all the people I have ever dealt with I would rather have commercial dealings with the Chinese than with any other, notwithstanding the fact that I was nearly murdered by them twice and caught typhoid fever in Canton. Still I say that if they were not a yellow race they would be one of the whitest races in the world.'⁹³ On the one hand, MPs took pains to compliment the Chinese, but on the other, exposed their veiled sense of superiority. No matter how refined or educated the Chinese became, they could never overcome the fundamental barrier of colour or bypass the hierarchy of race.

The popular view of the Chinese as innately passive people was also used by Conservative MPs, who still largely took a benign view of the Chinese people, though not of their government. The problems in China were through no fault of their own. Their makeup was essentially agricultural and democratic government was not suited to their disposition. Thus, the rising force of the KMT was ephemeral, destined to pass away, just like the other local rebellions before it. It would be better then to adopt a line of strict neutrality, since there was no government representing the whole of China and the Chinese people were unlikely to change.⁹⁴

For many Tories the real enemy was the Soviet Union. Thus the Conservatives and especially the die-hard backbenchers used the Chinese issue to support their argument for cutting off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. The government had been shaken by the General Strike the previous year and backbenchers were constantly wary of Red influence. Frederick Penny said that there was a ‘very strong and growing feeling that one of the greatest reasons why we cannot come to a satisfactory settlement is the intriguing influence of Russia behind the scenes...’ and urged the government to make it clear to Russia that unless they stopped the ‘pernicious, persistent, and poisonous propaganda against us’, they would break off diplomatic relations with it.⁹⁵ John Remer (Conservative – Macclesfield) saw the situation as a ‘war on capital in China’ and ‘those who are supporting the attack made from Russia upon our country are making an attack on our working people in Lancashire who are enabled by... orders from China to earn their daily bread.’⁹⁶ In this way, politicians linked Russia and domestic unemployment to China policy, and blamed many of Britain’s problems on Russia. In February, Churchill wrote a Cabinet Memorandum concerning relations with the Soviet Government. In it he advocated sending a warning to the Soviet Union, that ‘if bloodshed should unhappily occur in China as a result of a policy instigated by the agents of Soviet Russia, a breach might become inevitable.’⁹⁷

Labour MPs argued in response that the revolution in China had occurred before the Soviet Government had been set up, and that the agitation stemmed from their terrible living and labour conditions.⁹⁸ Lord Parmoor was convinced that ‘the nature and temperament of a Chinaman do not tend in the direction of Bolshevism’ and his conviction was bolstered by Addis’ assertion that ‘if every Russian in China were thrown into the Yellow Sea it would not affect the national movement’.⁹⁹ Lloyd George, speaking for the Liberals, also warned that there was the danger of being diverted by this ‘Red obsession.’ The ‘See-Reds’ were, to him, more ‘mischievous’ than the ‘Reds’ themselves. He said, ‘the movement in China is not in the least a Bolshevist movement ... The movement in China is essentially nationalist. The educated Chinese is not a Communist: in fact, the Chinese are the only Tories left outside the Liberal Council.’¹⁰⁰

The debate on the despatch of troops of China therefore became a forum to debate about the authenticity of Chinese nationalism, its staying power and how the government should deal with it. It also became an opportunity to talk about domestic politics,

empire, and the Red Scare. Labour politicians used the debate for political purposes, exposing the fissures in the ranks of the ruling party. Conservatives used the problems in China as a pretext to extol the virtues of empire. Although the previous year had seen the FO move towards acknowledging the KMT as an authentic expression of nationalism, the stereotypes of the Chinese as passive, unchanging, and unable to properly govern themselves remained in force among many politicians. The public airing of these assumptions convinced these MPs that Britain had to protect its treaty rights and residents against encroaching Chinese chaos and that it was necessary to defend against Soviet intrigue in China. Based on these arguments, the defence force was despatched to Shanghai with the approval of Parliament.

THE CHEN-O'MALLEY AGREEMENT

The Chinese Nationalists were extremely displeased with the decision to send the Defence Force, and as mentioned above, threatened to cut off the Chen-O'Malley negotiations regarding the future of Hankow and the smaller British concession at Kiukiang. By 29 January, a text had been agreed, but two days later Chen said that he was unable to sign it on the basis that the Nationalist Government could not conclude an agreement if British troops were concentrated at Shanghai. O'Malley told Lampson that they were not negotiating with Chen but 'through Chen with the extremists'.¹⁰¹ O'Malley was notably irritated with the situation and expressed his criticisms of the KMT to Lampson. While the FO considered the Nationalist movement to be a valid expression of 'awakening political consciousness', O'Malley saw it as a reiteration of corrupt Chinese politics with a veneer of nationalism. He also had harsh words for his fellow negotiators:

I find Eugene Chen, a creole of Trinidad with some admixture of Chinese blood in his veins but unable either to speak or write the language. The only other participant ... is Chen's son, a West Indian mulatto. Behind these come the T.V. Sung and the Sun Fos, weedy little things, full of brains and hysteria, but so far as I can see, without any of the masculinity which makes even Chang Tsung Chang or the Fengtien crowd in some sense admirable. Like all

Chinese, at any rate like Central and Southern Chinese, they are cowards and liars at heart.¹⁰²

Despite Chamberlain and the FO's hesitation, but at the rest of the Conservative Cabinet's insistence, the troops were sent on ahead. However, the FO continued pushing forward negotiations with Chen as the fulfilment of its policy of conciliation. During negotiations between 7-8 February, Chen proposed including a mutual assurance clause in the treaty. The Nationalists would not 'use or countenance the use of force to effect changes in the status of concessions and international settlements' and the British would declare that the forces were intended 'solely for the protection of life and property in the foreign settlement' and reinforcements en route would not be landed unless an emergency arose.¹⁰³ The Cabinet accepted this and Chamberlain made a public statement in the House of Commons regarding the assurance.¹⁰⁴ During his statement, Chamberlain enjoined the MPs not to give the impression that the House was divided 'upon so peaceful and liberal a policy'.¹⁰⁵ The debates over China policy were clearly causing difficulties for O'Malley's efforts to conclude an agreement with the Nationalists, as the latter sought to take advantage of the domestic political split within Britain.¹⁰⁶

The Nationalists accepted Chamberlain's statement on 10 February and negotiations proceeded. After about two weeks, both the Hankow and Kiukiang agreements were ready to be signed by both Chen and O'Malley. The main items of the agreements were the dissolution of the British municipalities and their subsequent handover to the Chinese local authorities set up by the Nationalist Government in both Hankow and Kiukiang. Chamberlain had told the Commons that the concession would be handed over to a new 'Sino-British Municipality', which was technically correct, since the Council in charge of the districts would be composed of a chairman and three Chinese and three British council members. However, the agreement called it a 'Chinese municipality'.¹⁰⁷ In addition, the Nationalists included a protest against the presence of the British troops.

Business leaders were unhappy about the Chen-O'Malley Agreement and sought to make their complaints known to the government. The China Association, supported by telegrams from Shanghai and Tientsin, found the agreement unsatisfactory and

unworkable since it lacked adequate safeguards for foreigners.¹⁰⁸ The risk of a boycott, they said, was preferable to ‘yielding to intimidation’. The Association was also against plans for a similar arrangement with the Peking government regarding Tientsin. It strongly protested against the agreement and advocated a ‘definite and firm attitude’ in dealing with the Chinese. However, it was increasingly aware of the limits of its protests. The British position had been ‘irretrievably prejudiced by the extent of the concessions made at Hankow.’ They could continue to protest, but the government would continue in its policy of retreat.

Austen Chamberlain, however, had no doubt regarding the fundamental principles of his policy. He told an audience in Birmingham earlier in the year that ‘going more than half-way’ to meet the claims of Chinese nationalism was the ‘right, and the only right, thing to do’.¹⁰⁹ Chamberlain was also sure of having the backing of the majority of the British people. Despite the Labour protests, Chamberlain believed that MacDonald knew ‘the truth’ but was too weak and could not control the extremists in the Labour Party. Chamberlain wrote to Lampson: ‘Nevertheless, by dint of great patience and by adopting a very liberal policy - you perhaps think a too liberal policy - I have in fact succeeded in securing an almost united British public opinion.’¹¹⁰ The sending of the Shanghai Defence Force had mollified the cries of the backbenchers and the more hawkish members of the Cabinet, and despite continued protests from business interests, general public opinion backed the two-sided policy. The major press organs firmly defended the government policy from attacks from both the right-wing and the left-wing. *The Economist* deflected a Peking resident’s criticisms¹¹¹ while *The Times* discredited Labour protests against the ‘thoroughly liberal’ China policy.¹¹² The *Manchester Guardian* spoke glowingly of Chamberlain’s efforts: ‘On the diplomatic side he has little or nothing to defend; he has voiced the sentiments not of a party but of a nation.’¹¹³

Additionally, the press attacked the idea that Chinese nationalism was ephemeral or a cover-up for Communist ambitions. The *Manchester Guardian* cited the KMT’s success in courting other Chinese armies to its cause as evidence that nationalism was a popular cause. They were indeed nationalists—‘Communists they almost certainly are not.’¹¹⁴ J.L. Garvin went even further to state emphatically that nationalism, ‘the indigenous Chinese movement’, was ‘authentic and inevitable’ and that Bolshevism was only a

parasite, indifferent to its ideals.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, he wrote, ‘Nothing can stop it.’ A number of British and American journalists flocked to China in 1927. Rodney Gilbert complained that Peking ‘was overrun’ with ‘high-priced special correspondents’, working for the the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Daily News*, *Telegraph*, the *Daily Mail*, among others. Arthur Ransome, sent to China for the *Manchester Guardian*, earned the special ire of Gilbert. Ransome was, according to Gilbert, ‘looking for material to confirm that Yiddish organ in its Pink conceit’ and had already found ‘nationalism’ in the Yangtze.¹¹⁶ Ransome would publish a book that year highly critical of the inflexible ‘Shanghai mind’ and recommending coming to terms with Chinese nationalism.¹¹⁷ Furthermore Ransome passed a memorandum on his impressions of China and his recommendations for the future to the Foreign Office, which the latter duly sent up to the Cabinet.¹¹⁸

THE ‘NANKING OUTRAGES’

Faced with a visibly divided public opinion, the FO needed a renewed justification and affirmation for its current policy. Although the policy had the backing of a number of influential press organs and groups, a major charge against the government policy had still not been undermined and disproved. The charge was that it would do no good to negotiate with the Chinese Nationalists because they were only proxies in the real battle against the Soviets. Thus, the spring of 1927 was a crucial time for the Far Eastern Department as it viewed the ongoing power struggle within the KMT with much interest. The question of which faction would ultimately control the KMT was important for the FO, as a break with the Bolsheviks would justify the wisdom of its current policy. Yet while the FO hoped for the end of ‘Red’ influence, the Nanking ‘outrages’ of March revived right-wing calls for forceful measures in China.

The FO had received many reports of friction between Chiang Kai-shek and the left-wing of the KMT, which could result in a split.¹¹⁹ For example, Archibald Rose of the BAT, who strongly supported the government’s policy, informed the FO of rumours of an impending split.¹²⁰ Soviet financial support for the KMT had ceased, he said, thus strengthening the role of the moderates vis-à-vis the extremists. The FO had a high opinion of Rose’s views and Chamberlain subsequently sent a copy of the memorandum

to Churchill and Birkenhead, likely seeing it not only as a source of interest for his colleagues, but also an affirmation for his prescient policy. It also received information as to the avowed 'moderation' of Chiang Kai-shek.¹²¹ The Soviets and left-wing of the KMT had been annoyed with the signing of the Hankow agreement and the disagreements over the location of the national government had caused a rift between Nanchang (Chiang Kai-shek's group) and Wuhan (the left-wing). This rift between Nanchang and Wuhan over the location of the national government resulted in Chiang being stripped of his military authority and the role of the CCP being raised. The situation was fluid, however, and it was not clear which faction would emerge victorious. The FO thus turned to making an arrangement with the Peking government over the Tientsin concession modeled on Hankow. On the one hand, this was a step forward in treaty revision, but on the other, it also revealed the FO's continuing ambivalence regarding the permanence and lasting-power of the Nationalists. After concluding an agreement with the South, the FO moved quickly to make an agreement with the North, thus legitimising both governments. However, Eric Teichman, the Chinese Secretary, recommended delaying negotiations with Peking over Tientsin in order to give 'face' to and strengthen the moderates in the KMT.¹²² In view of the Nationalists' movement towards Shanghai, Teichman argued that it would be wiser to cultivate friendly contact with the Nationalists, rather than antagonise them by engaging in formal negotiations with Peking.

But while the FO waited for the KMT's power struggle to play out, the arrival of Nationalist troops in Nanking caused further trouble for the British. On 24 March 1927 the Nationalist troops entered Nanking. By nine in the morning, the city was in their hands, mass looting began, and foreigners were targeted in the riots and shooting that followed. Soldiers attacked and looted the British, American and Japanese consulates, killing British and American subjects. The foreigners fled to, and congregated at Standard Oil Hill, established visual communication with the two American and one British men-of-war in the river and attempted to retreat under the cover of shelling from the ships. Most escaped safely while being shot at by Chinese troops, but there were several casualties, with at least three British subjects killed and several injured, including the Nanking Consul-General, Bertram Giles.¹²³

The 'outrages', as they were called, immediately stirred up more controversy in Parliament. Conservatives felt justified in supporting the policy to send forces to China. Sir Clement Kinloch-Cooke, a staunch imperialist and founder of the right-wing journal, *The Empire Review*, declared that without the shelling, every foreigner on the hill would have been killed. Austen Chamberlain agreed.¹²⁴ The apparent fact that what happened at Nanking would have happened at Shanghai on 'a thousand times' bigger scale' if the Defence Force had not been sent bolstered Conservative confidence in the government decision.¹²⁵ But the die-hards were not in complete agreement with some of the more liberal aspects of policy. Recent disorders in Hankow had made British nationals residing there uneasy. Kinloch-Cooke asked Chamberlain if he was 'aware that the Hankow Agreement has no beneficial results whatever, but rather the contrary, and that the position of British nationals in Hankow has become intolerable'.¹²⁶ Thus, the violence and disorder in the various concession areas that accompanied the Northern Expedition seemed to prove that their previous opposition had been correct.

Labour sought to absolve the KMT from guilt in the Nanking outrages, attributing the looting and violence to Northern troops (even though there was eyewitness evidence to the contrary).¹²⁷ Ramsay MacDonald, toned down his rhetoric, but he questioned government action, saying that the dispatch of forces to Shanghai 'has considerably increased our negotiating difficulties. It has not increased the security of British life outside Shanghai. It undoubtedly spread suspicion all over China as to what really was the intention of the Government.'¹²⁸

To resolve the issue, the British government had to answer the question of who was to blame for the incident. The *Manchester Guardian* wrote an account of the troubles, blaming the looting and burning of foreign property on Chinese 'irregulars'.¹²⁹ While the Cantonese leaders were 'ready and anxious' to secure the safety of foreigners, the article said, they only had imperfect control over the auxiliary troops. Like Labour MPs, others blamed the Northern troops retreating from the KMT advance in addition to extremist-influenced troops.¹³⁰ However, the FO received sworn testimony that the perpetrators were Nationalist troops, thus inculpating the KMT.¹³¹ In the face of such evidence, even Pratt in the FO pressed for reparations from Chiang Kai-shek.¹³² The Cabinet met to discuss retaliatory action for Nanking and decided that it was necessary to act in conjunction with the Americans and the Japanese.¹³³ The Chiefs of Staff report

also urged effective coercion of the Cantonese by taking control of the Yangtse, confiscating the Cantonese fleet and, if necessary, taking action at Canton.¹³⁴ The proposed reprisals included the destruction of the Wusung forts and the destruction of the arsenals at Hankow and Canton. Amery was pleased with the report and felt that the Nanking events had ‘considerably gingered up Austen’.¹³⁵ Indeed, it seemed as if the government had every intention of taking firm action.¹³⁶ Admiral Tyrwhitt, the Commander-in-Chief of the Shanghai Defence Force was impatient to act. He was certain that Britain could never return to uninterrupted trade until they had ‘given the Cantonese a severe knock’.¹³⁷ Tyrwhitt was in consultation with the American, Japanese and French admirals, who were all in favour of ‘doing in the Woosung Forts immediately if the Chinese do not accept our ultimatum.’ They then planned to advance up the Yangtse, demolish the ports and finish with destruction of the Hankow arsenal. Tyrwhitt wrote: ‘If “they”! would only give me a free hand I believe I could [reinstate] our credit and prestige in the Yangtse and at the cost of very few lives.’

Tyrwhitt was to be sorely disappointed, however, when the British found their plans circumscribed once again by the intractability of the other Powers. Chamberlain had strongly urged co-operation, lest all the ‘odium of initiative and action’ be heaped upon Britain once again,¹³⁸ but Japan was reluctant to move against the KMT, as Chiang Kai-shek seemed to be moving against the extremists within his party. It would be contrary to their mutual interests, the Japanese argued, to ‘humiliate him unduly’ at the present moment.¹³⁹ The Americans also similarly objected.¹⁴⁰ Chamberlain was so perturbed by the situation that he began to ‘dream China’.¹⁴¹ He told his sister that the American Secretary of State Kellogg was an ‘old woman without a policy’, ‘trembling at every breeze’ from the Senate and that Japan would only ‘save her bacon at our expense’. Still, they co-operated enough to agree to a joint Note being sent to the Nationalists demanding reparations for the destruction of life and property at Nanking.

While they waited for the Chinese to reply to the Note, Chamberlain wrote to Lampson no doubt, attempting to placate the latter’s unhappiness with the slow pace of decision. He explained that isolated punitive action against the Chinese could only concentrate the entirety of their hostility on the British and, more importantly, would meet with insufficient support from the war-weary public at home. Chamberlain wrote:

The Great War still haunts every household. I am told that the first reaction of the sending of the Suffolks was that the women in the villages of that country were saying: "You are sending our men to their deaths. It is beginning over again. We shall see them no more." Far away from England and with the constant provocations and outrages of the Chinese ever before your eyes and in your ears, you can have no conception how profoundly pacific our people now are.¹⁴²

TOWARDS CONSENSUS

THE APRIL PURGES

Chiang Kai-shek provided the basis for an unexpected resolution of the Nanking issue on 12 April, when he ruthlessly purged the communists within the KMT and ended the First United Front. Although the split between the left and right wings of the KMT had been predicted, the purges were more violent and thorough than had been anticipated. Chiang had been increasingly alarmed by the growth of Communist influence after union workers led an uprising in Shanghai that defeated the Chihli clique in March. The union workers took over the government of urban Shanghai, causing alarm for Chiang, whose troops were about to arrive in the city. At the same time, Chiang was in a dispute over the control of Nanking and the left-wing of the KMT was maneuvering with the CCP to overthrow Chiang. Then in early April, Chang Tso-lin, the warlord in Manchuria, raided the Soviet embassy in Peking and found documents allegedly proving that the Soviets had plans to infringe Chinese sovereignty.¹⁴³ A week later, Chiang pre-empted his own overthrow by the Central Committee in Nanking by staging a coup and ordering all provinces under his control to purge the Communists. On 12 April union offices were attacked, thousands of Communists were arrested and hundreds killed.

Chiang's purge took place in the context of the power struggle going on in the Soviet Union between Stalin and the United Opposition composed of Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev. Trotsky, especially, had supported taking a more radical line in China through strengthening and organising the workers and peasants into an independent proletarian party. Chiang's actions seemed to prove him correct and he lambasted the

‘United Front’ policy espoused by his political enemies, Stalin and the current head of the Comintern, Bukharin. But Stalin quickly blamed the April purges on the actions of the imperialists.¹⁴⁴ The ‘powerful sweep of revolution’ had united the imperialists against the Chinese revolution. The bombardment of Nanking then, was an ultimatum engineered to court Chiang and the ‘national bourgeoisie’ into the imperialist camp. Stalin proceeded to give his support to the revolutionary wing of the KMT in Wuhan. Trotsky used the events in China as a political weapon, decrying the Comintern’s past policy of ‘opportunist’ and compromising co-operation with the KMT.¹⁴⁵ Trotsky would eventually lose the power struggle, with Stalin emerging victorious through his own series of purges. The CCP formed an alliance with the Left KMT in Wuhan, attempting to make a political comeback through mass movements.¹⁴⁶ The alliance only lasted for several months, until the summer of 1927, when the Left KMT leaders headed by Wang Ching-wei also decided to split with the CCP.¹⁴⁷ To Western observers, Borodin’s dismissal from China in June seemed to signal the death-knell of Soviet intrigue in China.¹⁴⁸

But in the spring, Chiang’s action was enough cause for relief for the FO. Past troubles could be blamed on the communists who had been in the KMT, and even right-wingers who were sceptical of the KMT had to admit their approval of Chiang’s actions. Godfrey Locker-Lampson, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, gave an account of the purges in a statement to Parliament and linked it with an account of improved conditions at Nanking, since the Communists had been the source of difficulties.¹⁴⁹ Eugene Chen had sent a reply to the Powers’ joint Note regarding Nanking on 14 April, which the FO found ‘unsatisfactory in substance and in detail’.¹⁵⁰ His reply now lacked authority, in light of the events of 12 April. Only four days after the Note was received the government he represented ceased to speak for Nationalist China or the KMT.¹⁵¹ Hankow all of a sudden was becoming less relevant, and the FO talked of withdrawing diplomatic representation from there.¹⁵² Chen’s plight became the subject of caricature, as in a poem in the *North China Daily News* entitled ‘Cautionary Tales for Poor Politicians’.¹⁵³

This turn of events subsequently influenced the British response to Nanking. Despite the purges, the FO still faced pressure from the men-on-the-spot and from Cabinet members to take firm action in response to the ‘dastardly’ ‘series of murders’ that had

taken place in March.¹⁵⁴ Admiral Tyrwhitt's impatience for action has already been recorded above. In the Cabinet, Churchill, Birkenhead, Amery, Worthington Evans were also growing restive.¹⁵⁵ Churchill wrote to Lord Beatty, the First Sea Lord, who had warned against 'frittering away forces' or getting involved in unnecessary commitments, to explain his support for a re-occupation of Hankow.¹⁵⁶ The relinquishment of the Hankow concession had been an 'affront and injury' far greater than at Nanking and served as a 'dangerous model' for the rest of the Concessions. Churchill saw no incongruity between this action and support for Chiang Kai-shek's purge of the 'Reds'. Rather, taking action at Hankow would leave Chiang alone to concentrate on destroying his enemies while taking advantage of Hankow's current military and political vulnerability. Sir Charles Addis joined the debate on the other side and spent two nights at the FO 'pleading for patience', believing that an attack on Hankow would revive Bolshevism, set all of China against Britain and alienate the United States.¹⁵⁷ The US had already rejected the idea of sanctions and Japan soon followed.

Chamberlain leaned towards re-taking the Hankow concession, which he considered a 'middle course', in between the 'any & every violent' measures sought by 'Shanghai & Hongkong' and the do-nothing attitude of the FO.¹⁵⁸ Still he confessed that the arguments made him more doubtful and hesitant rather than conclusive. In a meeting at the end of April, it was clear that Addis' opinion was influencing Chamberlain when he told the Cabinet that Addis, 'a great authority on China', disapproved of the plan of re-occupying Hankow. Still, he would reserve his final opinion until he heard from Lampson in Peking.¹⁵⁹ Lampson, however, supported the destruction of the Hanyang arsenal in order to deprive the Cantonese of munitions. In light of the multiplicity of views, as well as the lack of support by the United States, the Cabinet decided to wait and take no further action.¹⁶⁰ Although Cabinet members believed that discussions about Nanking would continue, the question was left 'woefully in the air',¹⁶¹ with ultimately no definite resolution. Lampson was 'dreadfully cut up' about the affair.¹⁶² He understood that the split between Chiang and the Hankow government may have meant that the latter would be unable to carry out the terms which the British were insisting on, but to him, it was a 'failed' policy. Nanking had ended in 'smoke'.

THE BREAK WITH RUSSIA

The lack of response to the Nanking outrage was significant. Since Chiang's purges had effectively stripped the Chinese revolution of its most menacing aspect, they had undercut the basis of most backbench protests against Chamberlain's liberal policy. These events occurred in the context of an ongoing debate about relations with the Soviet Union and in May, the ARCOS affair once again brought this issue to the forefront of the government's concerns. ARCOS was the name of a British-registered Soviet trading company and on 12 May, 200 police officers raided its London offices, looking for evidence of subversion. In the debates leading to the breaking off of relations, Conservatives brought in China as evidence of the Soviet Union's harmful activities. Baldwin gave detailed evidence of Soviet activities creating mischief in Britain. For example, the Soviet chargé d'affaires in London had sent a telegram to the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, asking it to send official reports of the Nationalist government, which would refute the information on Nanking given by Chamberlain in Parliament, to the Independent Labour Party and the *Daily Herald*. He also asked for a message from the Shanghai United Trades Unions to the President of the General Council, Hicks, which would point out that large numbers of trade union members had lost their lives in the Nanking bombardment and ask British trade unions to help the Chinese labour movement. This was clear evidence that the communists were trying to manipulate information about events in China to fit their purpose of bringing down British power. However, as James Hudson (Labour – Huddersfield) declared, none of the above information with regard to China was obtained in connection with the ARCOS raid.¹⁶³ The government had brought in China only to make their case against the Soviet Union stronger. Still, this was a political opportunity to avenge themselves against Soviet mischief-making in China for the past several years,¹⁶⁴ in addition to satisfying strong domestic anti-Red sentiment. Diplomatic relations were accordingly broken off with the Soviet Union.

With the overt rejection of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the United Front in China, the protests of the Labour left-wing were neutralised. Earlier in the year, their protests, like those of the Conservative backbenchers, had revived with the sending of the Defence Force. The new League Against Imperialism, sponsored by the Comintern and formed in 1927, had focused on the China issue at its inception in February and the

League included many of the same activists who participated in the Hands Off China movement—L'Estrange Malone, Bridgeman, Fenner Brockway and others. In early April it had published a resolution demanding recognition of the independence and sovereignty of China, the withdrawal of forces and immediate negotiations with the Chinese Nationalist government.¹⁶⁵ But the purge caused the movement a severe setback. Although the League would in the summer pass a resolution condemning Chiang's actions and vowing to 'struggle against the white terror', the Chinese issue retreated to the background as the League turned its attention to events in South America and elsewhere.¹⁶⁶ Still, the group believed that their past efforts had been effective. Bridgeman boasted that the Labour Council for Chinese Freedom had produced a 'great effect' on public opinion and that it had received wide publicity in the press.¹⁶⁷

The purges and the break with Russia thus neutralised both left- and right-wing opposition to the two strands of the government's China policy. The events of April and subsequent triumph of Chiang Kai-shek was seen as a betrayal of the workers' revolution and thus lost the support of the Independent Labour Party and those who had been active in the Hands Off China movement. On the other hand, the events placated right-wing protests that the government response to Bolshevism had been weak. By the summer of 1927, the communists in China seemed to have been thoroughly routed and relations with the USSR were cut off. After the traumatic experience of the General Strike, the government could point to its success in keeping Britain secure from the destabilising and treasonous influence of communism.

THE CONSOLIDATION OF PUBLIC OPINION

With the unhappiness of both the radical right- and left-wing groups defused, the rest of the British domestic public came together in support of the government's China policy and the moderate claims of Chinese nationalism. Although mission groups had joined with the Left in the protests against sending troops earlier that year, this temporary alliance on the China issue had mostly ended by the summer. The Union of Democratic Control had worked with churches and peace organizations like the National Council for the Prevention of War during the Chinese crisis earlier that year.¹⁶⁸ But while they

had found common ground in opposition to the sending of forces, their co-operation had foundered on the issue of Bolshevism. After April, when the Left turned its attention elsewhere, missionaries and church groups continued to publicise their opinions, which were largely supportive of government policy.

Christian groups were bolder to proclaim their support of Chinese nationalism, with the Bolsheviks gone. The main aims of a tract on ‘Christianity and the Chinese Crisis’ published and distributed by mission groups were not only to counter any aggressive action against China but to affirm that the movement in China was of ‘liberation and national re-birth’ and to urge reasonable settlement by the League, which ‘accord[s] with the way of Christ.’¹⁶⁹ The conservative CIM was relieved to see the waning of communist influence in China. The conditions for mission work had been made difficult with the events of the past several years, as many of their missionaries were forced to evacuate to the coast, and the Home Director, J. Stuart Holden, blamed the ‘sinister powers’ of Bolshevism and of ‘godless international Communism’ behind the upheavals.¹⁷⁰ In contrast, he said, ‘How radiantly shines the steadfast faith of the native Christians!’, many of whom, he pointed out, were nationalist. The genuine nationalism of the Chinese was not antithetical to Christianity. ‘True patriotism’, proclaimed Reverend C.T. Song, a clergyman from West China, ‘is the product of Christian religion.’¹⁷¹ Rather, the rhetoric of national renewal, re-birth and liberation corresponded with the missionaries’ own narrative of regeneration and the goal of indigenising the church in China. Indeed, despite setbacks, the outlook for their work ‘was bright’.¹⁷² Meanwhile the Church of England had kept a low profile during the protests early in the year, not publishing any resolutions against the troop movements and in May, Chamberlain expressed his appreciation of the church’s support of his policy in a letter to the Bishop of Salisbury.¹⁷³

The British press was also increasingly aligned in support of the government’s China policy. The sending of correspondents like Arthur Ransome by the *Manchester Guardian* and other newspapers has been mentioned above, but in April, in a telling move, *The Times* sent a new liberal-minded correspondent to China. The current Peking correspondent, David Fraser, had lived and worked in the Far East since the turn of the century and was inclined to take a sceptical and pessimistic view of the Chinese. He wrote that the ‘trouble’ with all the Chinese was that they were ‘all alike—lots of talk

with selfish motives behind'.¹⁷⁴ The Cantonese may have been full of 'fancy stuff' about their new government, but Fraser doubted the genuineness of the change.¹⁷⁵ Rodney Gilbert said of Fraser that he was 'old, disillusioned, bored with everything, indifferent to all but his race ponies'.¹⁷⁶ In contrast, Basil Riley, who Dawson elected to send to China to assist Fraser, was young, ambitious and idealistic about the prospects of nationalism. He was the son of the bishop of Western Australia and educated at Columbia University before working in *The Times*' New York office. The American atmosphere of Wilsonian idealism and support of Chinese nationalism had not been lost on Riley and Dawson did not consider this background negatively. Rather, he wrote to Fraser, 'both this enthusiasm for the Chinese problem and his up-to-date knowledge of American feeling (which I still think might be stirred in the right direction) should make him very valuable.'¹⁷⁷ After arriving in China, Riley became close with Americans like Grover Clark, editor of the *Peking Leader* and a leader of the pro-nationalist missionary party, and he was soon reputed to be 'thick with the radical crowd'.¹⁷⁸ His views were supportive of Chinese nationalism, although he did not hesitate to criticise its practical out-workings, but he saved his ire for Britain-in-China, whose 'rigidity of mind' was trying and who blamed everyone but themselves.¹⁷⁹ The 'greatest obstacle to goodwill and reconciliation', Riley opined, was the *North China Daily News*, which, being (acting-)edited by Rodney Gilbert in early 1927, continued to weekly 'insult' the Chinese.¹⁸⁰ Riley also advocated active reform, urging the British in China to treat the Chinese as equals, to reform education and child labour, open the parks to the Chinese and increase Chinese representation.¹⁸¹ Jardine Matheson's B.D.F. Beith in Shanghai told his colleague that he was afraid Riley was 'going to be very troublesome'.¹⁸² Although his editors tried to rein in his more controversial comments, Riley's 'fresh line' in China was an example of how much the opinions of the domestic British public and the British residents in China had diverged. His career was cut short abruptly, however, in July 1927, when he was killed by Chinese soldiers after venturing into the Chinese countryside near Hankow. The cruel irony of the incident was expressed by Fraser, who pointed out that Riley had been killed by the very people who he would have liked to helped.¹⁸³

By summer 1927 then, it seemed that public opinion in Britain had aligned itself in support of the FO's China policy. The narrative which Chamberlain and the FO used to sell its policy—that it was peaceful, moral and also ultimately profitable—found

support and was widely publicised in the press. On the other hand, the diehard narrative—that the Chinese could only understand the language of force—had struggled to find new adherents and was largely excluded from the major press organs. J.O.P. Bland once again complained of the difficulty of getting anything related to the diehard attitude published in any of the major London papers. *The Times*, he wrote, was ‘practically American in sentiment...and its foreign Editor is a flabby invertebrate whose sympathy for Young China’s “patriotic aspirations” is the fruit of complete ignorance.’¹⁸⁴ Whereas Soviet activities in China had caused anti-Bolshevik right-wingers to pay attention to Chinese issues, their interest now seemed to wane after the apparent demise of Soviet intrigue in April. On the other hand, the major protests from the left had also diminished after the end of the first united front in China. Thus while the rest of the year saw a rapid disintegration of KMT control, the British interest in the Chinese situation steadily decreased in parallel. News from China took a ‘steadily diminishing place’ in newspapers in the summer, which some attributed to the end of Russian influence.¹⁸⁵

However, troubles continued and the KMT continued to lodge attacks at British imperialist structures in China. Specifically, in the autumn, the Nationalists took aim at the Inspector-Generalship of the Chinese Maritime Customs. Inspector-General Aglen had a rocky relationship with the Nationalists, who wanted to receive a higher percentage of customs revenues, and eventually, Aglen was dismissed from his position. Furthermore, the Chinese rejected Aglen’s hand-picked nominee, Edwardes, but instead, Nanking insisted on appointing the friendlier Frederick Maze.¹⁸⁶ The lack of sustained protest for this move within the government and among the British public and the acquiescence in the affront to traditional British influence was a strong indication that Britain, backed by strong domestic support, was going ahead steadily along the path of imperial retreat.

¹ AC 5/1/386 letter to Ida Chamberlain 19 June 1926, p. 291 in *The Austen Chamberlain Diary Letters: the correspondence of Sir Austen Chamberlain with his sisters Hilda and Ida, 1916-1937* ed. Robert Self, (Cambridge, 1995).

² AC 5/1/399 letter to Ida Chamberlain 02 November 1926, p. 295.

³ AC 5/1/402. letter to Ida Chamberlain 02 December 1926, p. 296.

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- ⁴ National Archives FO 371/12430 F67/67/10 telegram by Goffe, 04 Jan 1927; Peter Clark, 'Britain and the Chinese Revolution', pp. 455-458.
- ⁵ National Archives FO 371/12430 F124/67/10 telegram to Lampson, 05 Jan 1927.
- ⁶ National Archives FO 371/12430 F96/67/10, diary of events, 06 Jan 1927; F176/67/10 Minute by Wellesley, 08 Jan 1927.
- ⁷ *The Times*, 05 Jan 1927, p. 10, col. A and British Library Newspaper Archive *Manchester Guardian*, 'Hankow', 06 Jan 1927, p. 8; The *Telegraph* is criticised in 'Badly Rattled', 10 Jan 1927, p. 8 for alleging that the government failed to protect British interests.
- ⁸ National Archives FO 371/12430 F176/67/10 A. Chamberlain minute, 08 Jan 1927.
- ⁹ National Archives FO 371/12398 F70/2/10 'Question of recognition', 06 Jan 1927.
- ¹⁰ *The Times* 08 Jan 1927, p. 11, col. B.
- ¹¹ British Library Newspaper Archive *Daily Mail*, 'The New Ruler of Hankow', 06 Jan 1927, p. 8 and 'Admiralty Move in China Peril', p. 9.
- ¹² St Antony's College Middle East Centre, Oxford Lampson Papers Box 1/1, Killlearn 1/1 Lampson diary, 06 Jan 1927.
- ¹³ Cambridge University Manuscripts Baldwin Papers 115 Foreign Affairs F.2 Series B. 1927 Lampson to Locker-Lampson, 07 Jan 1927.
- ¹⁴ *Economist*, 'China: A British Resident's View', 08 Jan 1927, p. 11.
- ¹⁵ The Times Archive Williams Papers TT/FE/HW/1/1922-1927 Fraser to Williams, 12 Jan 1927.
- ¹⁶ J.O.P. Bland, 'Plain Truths about China' *English Review*, Feb 1927, pp. 145-154.
- ¹⁷ 'Chinese Nationalism', *English Review*, Feb 1927, p. 132.
- ¹⁸ University of Toronto, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library Bland Papers MS 81 Box 7 Folder 8 Bland to T. Ferguson, 17 Jan 1927.
- ¹⁹ National Archives FO 800/260 A. Chamberlain Papers, Joynson-Hicks to Chamberlain, 07 Jan 1927.
- ²⁰ National Archives CAB 23/54 1(27)2 Hankow. Telegram No. 14 from Hankow. 12 Jan 1927.
- ²¹ National Archives CAB 23/54 2(27)2 from Report by Chiefs of Staff. C.P. 8, 14 Jan 1927.
- ²² National Archives FO 800/260 A. Chamberlain Papers, Lampson to Chamberlain, 11 Jan 1927 and Chamberlain to Lampson, 11 Jan 1927.
- ²³ National Archives FO 371/12449 F351/156/10 Wellesley memo, 16 Jan 1927.
- ²⁴ National Archives FO 371/12449 F351/156/10 Wellesley memo, 16 Jan 1927.
- ²⁵ National Archives FO 800/260 A. Chamberlain Papers, Chamberlain to Lampson, 11 Jan 1927.
- ²⁶ Baldwin obviously did not accede to his request.
- ²⁷ Cambridge University Manuscripts Baldwin Papers 115 Foreign Affairs F.2 Series B. 1927 J. Davidson to Baldwin, 10 Jan 1927.
- ²⁸ *Churchill, vol. V, companion pt. 1 documents, 1922-1929*, ed. Martin Gilbert, Churchill to Baldwin, 10 Jan 1927.
- ²⁹ SOAS Addis Papers Box 4 MS 14/45 Diary for 1927, 14 Jan 1927.
- ³⁰ British Library Balfour Papers 49694 vol. XII Balfour to Baldwin, 10 Jan 1927.
- ³¹ British Library Balfour Papers 49699, vol. XVII Cabinet memoranda. Notes and C.P. 3(27) 'The Situation in China', 11 Jan 1927, p. 251.
- ³² SOAS Addis Papers Box 21 MS 14/187 Addis to Mills, 14 Jan 1927. In his diary, Addis wrote about the idea: 'Bosh, I say, as to blockade and compensation.' Box 4 MS 14/45 Diary for 1927, 14 Jan 1927.
- ³³ National Archives CAB 23/54 2(27)2 summary by the Chairman of the Trading and Blockade Subcommittee of the C.I.D., 17 Jan 1927.
- ³⁴ Cambridge University Manuscripts Baldwin Papers 115 Foreign Affairs F.2 Series B. 1927 Lord Salisbury to Baldwin, 13 Jan 1927.
- ³⁵ National Archives CAB 23/54 1(27)2 Telegram to Lampson (Peking) from FO, 12 Jan 1927.
- ³⁶ National Archives CAB 23/54 2(27)2 Hankow. A. Chamberlain statement, 17 Jan 1927.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*

- ³⁸ See Chamberlain's speech at Birmingham on 29 Jan 1927, reprinted in *The Times* 31 Jan 1927, p. 12, col. C.
- ³⁹ Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, c. 9: 08 Feb 1927.
- ⁴⁰ British Cartoon Archive (BCA) LSE7470 *The Star* David Low, 20 Jan 1927
- ⁴¹ AC 5/1/406 letter to Ida Chamberlain, 22 Jan 1927. p. 309.
- ⁴² Richard Grayson, *Austen Chamberlain and the Commitment to Europe: British Foreign Policy, 1924-1929*, p. 25.
- ⁴³ Churchill College Archive, Cambridge Amery Papers AMEL 2/4/12 Clementi to Amery, 26 Oct 1926.
- ⁴⁴ Churchill College Archive, Cambridge Amery Papers AMEL 2/1/13 Lady Clementi to Amery, 11 Jan 1927.
- ⁴⁵ Churchill College Archive, Cambridge Amery Papers AMEL 2/4/12 Clementi to Amery, 26 Oct 1926.
- ⁴⁶ Churchill College Archive, Cambridge Amery Papers AMEL 2/4/12 Clementi to Amery, 18 Dec 1926.
- ⁴⁷ Churchill College Archive, Cambridge Amery Papers AMEL 2/4/12 Clementi to Amery, 27 Feb 1927.
- ⁴⁸ Churchill College Archive, Cambridge Amery Papers AMEL 6/3/89 Lady Clementi to Florence Amery, 27 April 1927.
- ⁴⁹ Churchill College Archive, Cambridge Amery Papers AMEL 2/4/12 Amery to Clementi, 21 Feb 1927.
- ⁵⁰ The Leo Amery Diaries: Vol. 1. 4 Feb 1927, p. 495.
- ⁵¹ *The Leo Amery Diaries: vol. 1*, 7 Feb 1927, pp. 495-496.
- ⁵² *The Leo Amery Diaries: vol. 1*, 28 March 1927, p. 971.
- ⁵³ Churchill papers 22/151 Baldwin to Churchill. 18 Jan 1927 from *Winston S. Churchill, vol. V, companion Part 1, Documents. The Exchequer Years, 1922-1929*, ed. Martin Gilbert, p. 914.
- ⁵⁴ Churchill papers 22/151 Churchill to Baldwin, 22 Jan 1927, pp. 917-918.
- ⁵⁵ Churchill papers 18/141 PJ Grigg to Churchill, 22 Jan 1927, pp. 918-919.
- ⁵⁶ Churchill papers 18/43 Churchill to Worthington-Evans, 25 Jan 1927, p. 921.
- ⁵⁷ Churchill papers 18/43 Churchill to PJ Grigg, 25 Jan 1927, p. 920.
- ⁵⁸ Churchill papers 22/151 Churchill to Baldwin, 02 Feb 1927, pp. 933-934.
- ⁵⁹ Spencer-Churchill Papers Churchill to Clementine Churchill, 09 Feb 1927 in *Winston S. Churchill, vol. V, companion, Part 1, Documents.*, etc., p. 938.
- ⁶⁰ Cambridge University Manuscripts Baldwin Papers 115 Foreign Affairs F.2 Series B. 1927 Churchill to Baldwin, 02 Feb 1927.
- ⁶¹ National Archives CAB 23/54 7(27)5 China, 04 Feb 1927.
- ⁶² National Archives FO 800/260 A. Chamberlain Papers, Lampson to Chamberlain, 11 Jan 1927.
- ⁶³ SOAS Presbyterian Church of England Papers PCE/FMC Series 1, Box 60b, file 2, H.T. Hodgkin to K. Maclennan, 14 Feb 1927.
- ⁶⁴ SOAS Presbyterian Church of England Papers PCE/FMC Series 1, Box 60b, file 3, extracts on China from the Religious Press, comments by Lucy Cox, 02 May 1927.
- ⁶⁵ British Library Newspaper Archive *Manchester Guardian*, 'China and the League', 20 Jan 1927, p. 8; *The Times*, 25 Jan 1927, p. 13, col. F. (letter by Lord Parmoor); SOAS Presbyterian Church of England Papers PCE/FMC Series 1, Box 60b, file 2 Statement by the League of Nations Union, 03 Feb 1927.
- ⁶⁶ British Library Newspaper Archive *Daily Herald*, 'Labour's Campaign for Peace in China', 28 Jan 1927, p. 1; 'Fight for Peace!', p. 4.
- ⁶⁷ Hull History Centre Bridgeman Papers U DBN/3/2 Press cutting from the Annual Report of the London Trades Council, 1926-1927.
- ⁶⁸ British Library Newspaper Archive *Daily Herald*, 'Marine Battalion Embarks for China', 26 Jan 1927, p. 1.
- ⁶⁹ KMT Han 14757 letter from Chen to the Workers of the United Kingdom (transl.), n.d. 1927.
- ⁷⁰ KMT Han 14810 telegram from Feng Yu-hsiang to Central Committee of the Labour Party c/o Lansbury (transl.), 25 Mar 1927.

⁷¹ For example, SOAS Ebenezer and Mabel Mann File MS 380302 2 No. 47 'Links with China and other lands', 20 Aug 1926, p. 485. Mann was a missionary who wrote: 'it is very hard to know where to put one's sympathies. Of the troops under General Feng in the North we know very little these days...General Feng's troops are all they have been reported to be, and the missionaries report the leaders to be real Christians and with no signs of Russian influence. But the Southern branch of the People's Army, which are General Feng's Allies, are completely under Russian influence.' Also, SOAS China Inland Mission Papers CIM 167 *China's Millions* Apr 1927 portrayed Feng as 'Simon the Zealot', an ardent nationalist, and the missionaries as Matthew the tax-gatherer, a servant of Rome: 'Only the spirit of Jesus Christ, and the wisdom which our Lord can give, can enable these representatives which our Lord can give, can enable these representatives of East and West to bear and forebear and have fellowship with one another.'

⁷² For example, Malone had 'eulogised' Feng and his forces in an address in Hackney in National Archives KV 2/1905 MI5 file for Malone, Report by Special Branch, Metropolitan Police, 27 Nov 1926.

⁷³ SOAS Presbyterian Church of England Papers PCE/FMC Series 1 Box 60b, file 2 letter from Chinese Students' Christian Union in Great Britain and Ireland, 24 Jan 1927.

⁷⁴ Hull History Centre Bridgeman Papers U/DBN/3/3 *The Patriot* no. 260, vol. XII, 'The New Diplomacy', 03 Feb 1927.

⁷⁵ SOAS Presbyterian Church of England Papers PCE/FMC Series 1 Box 60b, file 2, National Christian Council to Conference of Missionary Societies in Great Britain & Ireland, 19 Feb 1927.

⁷⁶ National Archives FO 371/12432 F 677/67/10 copy of cable from Professors of Peking National Univ to Brit MPs. Jan 1927.

⁷⁷ Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, col. 25: 08 Feb 1927.

⁷⁸ Richard Grayson, Austen Chamberlain and the Commitment to Europe: British Foreign Policy, 1924-1929 (London, 1997), p. 189.

⁷⁹ Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, col. 4: 08 Feb 1927.

⁸⁰ Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, col. 88: 08 Feb 1927.

⁸¹ Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, cols. 93-94: 08 Feb 1927.

⁸² See contributions by George Hardie, John Bromley, and Martin Connolly in Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, cols. 76-77, 105, 104: 08 Feb 1927.

⁸³ Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, col. 76: 08 Feb 1927.

⁸⁴ Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, col. 38: 08 Feb 1927.

⁸⁵ See F.G. Penny in Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, col. 61: 08 Feb 1927 and H. O'Neill in Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser. vol. 202, col. 191: 09 Feb 1927, for example.

⁸⁶ Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, col. 201: 09 Feb 1927.

⁸⁷ Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, col. 63: 08 Feb 1927.

⁸⁸ Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, cols. 230-231: 09 Feb 1927.

⁸⁹ Hansard *Lords Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 66, cols. 60-61: 09 Feb 1927.

⁹⁰ Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, col. 232: 09 Feb 1927.

⁹¹ See A. Mond in Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, cols. 357-358: 10 Feb 1927.

⁹² Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, col. 93: 08 Feb 1927.

⁹³ Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, col. 193: 09 Feb 1927.

⁹⁴ See C.G. MacAndrew in Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, col. 17: 08 Feb 1927.

⁹⁵ Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, cols. 60-61: 08 Feb 1927.

⁹⁶ Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, col. 120: 08 Feb 1927.

⁹⁷ National Archives CAB 23/54 12(27)1 Policy towards Russia. 18 Feb 1927. Also see *Churchill papers* 2/155. Cabinet Memorandum. 16 Feb 1927. p. 950.

⁹⁸ See J. Sexton on living conditions and M. Connolly on factory conditions and child labour in Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, cols. 67, 103: 08 Feb 1927. See also G. Lansbury in Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, cols. 380: 10 Feb 1927.

⁹⁹ Hansard *Lords Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 66, col. 55: 09 Feb 1927.

¹⁰⁰ Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, cols. 156-157: 09 Feb 1927.

- ¹⁰¹ National Archives FO 371/12432 F939/67/10 O'Malley to Lampson, 31 Jan 1927 and St Antony's College Main Library, Oxford O'Malley Papers Hankow 1927 (7) O'Malley to Lampson, 02 Feb 1927.
- ¹⁰² Ibid.
- ¹⁰³ Wilson, 'Britain and the KMT', p. 525.
- ¹⁰⁴ National Archives CAB 23/54 9 (27) 'China' 10 Feb 1927.
- ¹⁰⁵ Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, col. 328, 10 Feb 1927.
- ¹⁰⁶ National Archives FO 371/12399 F874/2/10 Negotiations with Eugene Chen, 31 Jan 1927 in which Chen mentions agreement with the Labour Party and FO 371/12432 F877/67/10 telegram from Lampson in which Lampson complains of press 'indiscretions'. The FO telegram to Lampson said that they needed to make 'abundantly clear to the Nationalists that the general policy of His Majesty's Government enjoys the full support of public opinion at home'. FO to Lampson, 04 Feb 1927.
- ¹⁰⁷ Hansard *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 202, col. 328, 10 Feb 1927 and SOAS China Association Papers CHAS/A/8 Annual Reports, 1926-1927, 'Full Text of the Hankow Agreement: agreement relative to the British Concession at Hankow', 19 Feb 1927. Texts of the agreement are also at National Archives FO 371/F1626/67/10 Hankow concession agreement, 21 Feb 1927; F1627/167/10 Kiukiang concession agreement, 20 Feb 1927.
- ¹⁰⁸ SOAS China Association Papers CHAS/MCP/6 Minutes of General Committee, 1922-1929, 23 Mar 1927 and British Library Newspaper Archive *Manchester Guardian*, 'The Hankow Agreement', 16 Mar 1927, p. 10.
- ¹⁰⁹ *The Times*, 31 Jan 1927, p. 12, col. C.
- ¹¹⁰ National Archives FO 800/260 A. Chamberlain Papers, Chamberlain to Lampson, 16 Mar 1927.
- ¹¹¹ *Economist*, 'The Situation in China. Corresp.', 05 Feb 1927, p. 24.
- ¹¹² *The Times*, 07 Feb 1927, p. 15, col. B.
- ¹¹³ British Library Newspaper Archive, *Manchester Guardian*, 11 Feb 1927, 'The Defence of Shanghai'
- ¹¹⁴ British Library Newspaper Archive *Manchester Guardian*, 05 Mar 1927, 'The Cantonese Advance', p. 8.
- ¹¹⁵ British Library Newspaper Archive *Observer*, 27 Mar 1927, 'A Stand for Civilisation', p. 16.
- ¹¹⁶ University of Toronto, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library Bland Papers MS 81 Box 18 Folder 87 R. Gilbert to Bland, 19 Mar 1927.
- ¹¹⁷ Arthur Ransome, *The Chinese Puzzle* (London, 1927).
- ¹¹⁸ Churchill College Archive, Cambridge Churchill Papers CHAR 20/180 C.P. 142 (27) 'China' Chamberlain memorandum 6 May 1927.
- ¹¹⁹ National Archives FO 371/12402 F1998/2/10 telegram from Lampson, 03 Mar 1927; F2255/2/10 telegram from Teichman (Hankow), 11 Mar 1927.
- ¹²⁰ National Archives FO 371/13402 F2146/2/10 A. Rose Memo, 25 Feb 1927.
- ¹²¹ For example, National Archives FO 371/12403 F2713/2/10 Dr J.B. Grant of Peking Union Medical College Memo on the Kuo Min Tang, 24 Mar 1927 (dated 10 Feb 1927) and National Archives FO 371/12403 F2939/2/10 Intrigues in the Kuomintang, 30 Mar 1927.
- ¹²² National Archives FO 371/12402 F2255/2/10 Telegram from Teichman, 11 Mar 1927.
- ¹²³ Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 204, cc. 850-853: 28 Mar 1927.
- ¹²⁴ Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 204, col. 852: 28 Mar 1927.
- ¹²⁵ See A. Mond in Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 204, col. 2126: 6 Apr 1927.
- ¹²⁶ Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 204, col. 858: 28 Mar. 1927.
- ¹²⁷ See E.Thurtle in Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 204, col. 852: 28 Mar 1927 and, again, in Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., vol. 204, col. 1693: 4 Apr 1927.
- ¹²⁸ Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 5th ser., cciv, cols 2099, 2107: 6 Apr 1927.
- ¹²⁹ British Library Newspaper Archive *Manchester Guardian*, 'Nanking', 25 Mar 1927, p. 10.
- ¹³⁰ See for example, British Library Newspaper Archive *Observer*, 'A Stand for civilisation', 27 Mar 1927, p. 16.

- ¹³¹ National Archives FO 371/12475 F2864/1530/10 Sworn statements by Mrs Giles and British subject named Brown, 29 Mar 1927.
- ¹³² National Archives FO 371/12403 F2939/2/10 Minute by Pratt, 30 Mar 1927.
- ¹³³ National Archives CAB 23/54 20(27) The Situation in China, 30 Mar 1927.
- ¹³⁴ National Archives CAB 23/54 23(27) China, 04 Apr 1927, C.P. 115(27) C.I.D. Paper No. 787-B The Situation in China. Leo Amery called the report 'admirable' in *The Leo Amery Diaries: vol. 1: 1896-1929*, 30 Mar 1927.
- ¹³⁵ Ibid.
- ¹³⁶ Cambridge Jardine Matheson MS JM J1/2/21 Semi-official letters, London to Hongkong, Landale to Bernard, 31 Mar 1927.
- ¹³⁷ Churchill College Archive, Cambridge Godfrey-Faussett Papers BGGF 2/7 Admiral Tyrwhitt to Godfrey-Faussett, 02 Apr 1927.
- ¹³⁸ National Archives CAB 23/54 20(27) The Situation in China, 30 Mar 1927.
- ¹³⁹ National Archives CAB 23/54 23(27) China, 04 Apr 1927.
- ¹⁴⁰ National Archives CAB 23/54 25(27) Telegram to Lampson, 07 Apr 1927.
- ¹⁴¹ Robert Self, ed. *Austen Chamberlain's Diary Letters*, 03 Apr 1927, p. 313.
- ¹⁴² National Archives FO 800//260 A. Chamberlain Papers, Chamberlain to Lampson, 11 Apr 1927.
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- ¹⁷⁴ Times Archive Williams Papers TT/FE/HW/1 Fraser to Williams, 27(?) Nov 1926.
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Conclusion

In 1928 Chamberlain's claim that he had achieved 'an almost united British public opinion'¹ seemed justified. Left-wing support for the KMT and protests about the sending of troops in 1927 had been undercut by the purge of communists from the KMT. Similarly, right-wing protests from anti-Bolshevik Cabinet members, MPs and the press had largely ceased when the KMT appeared to have eradicated Communist influence from the party. But even more importantly, the most intractable of the domestic groups lobbying for a more active China policy—the business lobby—had gradually undergone a change in response to the events of 1925-1927. This group had arguably the most important vested interests in China and also had important contacts with the government, which it lobbied unsuccessfully to various degrees over the past three years. Finally, by 1928, in response to the unwillingness of the FO to fully accede to their past requests and also in response to the apparent successes of the KMT, the domestic lobby most vocal in its requests for stronger action had adjusted its overall stance to come out in favour of the government's policy of conciliation. Of course, the business lobby had never been opposed to conciliation—they had just supported stronger measures to bring it about while maintaining British power and prestige. However, by 1928, leading members of this group decided to accept, support and promote the FO's policy of acceding to the demands of Chinese nationalism.

The most vivid example of this was the sending of Sir Frederick Whyte by a group of prominent London companies to China. Whyte was a prominent sympathiser of the KMT and he was sent to advise the Nationalist government of China. The alliance formed indicated a definite turn away from the business lobby's past attempts to influence policy. Since they could not fight the trend, they opted instead to use the trend to salvage some influence not only with the British but also the Chinese government's current situation.

Whyte had been the first President of the Indian Legislative Assembly and also led the British delegation to the second conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations in July 1927 in Honolulu. Whyte had prepared for the IPR a historical review of relations between China and the foreign Powers², which he concluded by emphasising Britain's

desire to lead a new departure in the policy of the foreign Powers in China. His statements had helped mollify the Chinese delegates who at the beginning of the conference were outspoken in their hostility to Britain. Relations were patched up to the extent that instead of going back to London, Whyte sailed to China with the Chinese delegation.³ Whyte also praised the suggestion of the American delegate James Shotwell (a Columbia history professor active in international organisations and contributor to the Kellogg-Briand Pact) to carry out a ‘Pacific Locarno’.⁴ Whyte contributed a number of articles on China at the beginning of 1928 that were aligned with the editorial stance of *The Times*. In his series of articles,⁵ he went on the offensive against the narratives that insisted on China’s innate conservatism. He began his series with the image of a new birth—China was an embryo. The Nanking Government’s political organisation was incoherent and unformed, but it was alive. Despite its corruption and despite its similarities to past groups, Whyte insisted that this was something new, that it was truly a ‘Renaissance’, an ‘awakening’ and a ‘far-reaching revolution’ not just in politics, but in customs, in ethics and in thought. Observations by those who ‘knew China’ that affirmed that the Nationalist leaders were reproductions of their warlord counterparts were wrong. Unlike the Tuchuns who only served themselves, the Nationalists represented ‘a cause greater than themselves,’ the ‘only hope now visible, for the future of China’. The editors of *The Times* agreed with Whyte that although the KMT was weak and riddled with corruption, it was the only force that represented politically those ‘trying to be modern and progressive’ in China.⁶ Whyte also insisted that the nationalist movement’s origins were Western and not inspired by the Bolsheviks. Thus, with Soviet influence diminished, it was now the West’s chance to make up for the lost opportunity of the past, when Sun Yat-sen, after being rebuffed by Britain and the U.S., turned to Russia. Whyte’s articles expressed strong support for current British policy and urged more action along the same lines— to continue negotiations over Tientsin, pass the Boxer indemnity bill and to establish relations with the Nanking Government. Whyte concluded with an article, portending the future, about the existing and potential problem spots in Manchuria.

Whyte’s observations received the approval of the FO. After reading the recommendations of Professor Charles Webster, a former delegate to the Paris Peace Conference who had also been at Honolulu, Austen Chamberlain commented that he attached ‘more weight to Sir F. Whyte’s opinion than to his’.⁷ Whyte was also active at

Chatham House and succeeded in getting the ‘ear and measure of Addis, Curtis and Co’.⁸ Sir Charles Addis chaired Whyte’s speech and his comments revealed that they were in plain agreement: ‘The main point is that in China changes are inevitable, changes which it would be the part of folly to resist, and the part of wisdom to guide into the proper channels.’ Addis wrote: ‘China is in transition from mediaevalism to modernism ... Their arguments in favour of treaty revision are unanswerable.’⁹

Significantly, Whyte also succeeded in receiving the support of an important sector of the China business community, who at last concluded that their past strategy of lobbying the government had not availed much.¹⁰ G. W. Swire’s change-of-heart has already been recorded above.¹¹ But by 1928, the President of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce was speaking with ‘warm approval’ to Chamberlain of his China policy and testifying that orders had been coming in ‘amazingly well’.¹² Whyte was also invited to speak at the China Association, after which the chairman said that he agreed with ‘every word’ of Whyte’s, that they needed to be not only sympathetic, but also assist the Chinese to establish a solid government.¹³ Whyte himself advocated the sending of a British adviser to the Nanking government and implied that he wanted the job for himself.¹⁴ In March, a group of leaders from the China companies—notably, David Landale of Jardines, Archibald Rose from B.A.T., Warren Swire and Stabb of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank¹⁵—decided to secretly send Whyte to China to ‘explore the possibilities and to seize or create opportunities’.¹⁶ Each of the ten companies decided to pay Whyte £500 annually for his mission. Whyte himself was only in contact with Landale at first and did not know exactly who was sending him.¹⁷ He left for China in April and eventually became an adviser to the Nanking government, still secretly supported in his efforts by the group of London companies.

By 1928 then, Chinese nationalism had been recognized as a force to be reckoned with by the majority of the British public. The treaty-port residents would take longer to convince,¹⁸ but the changes in assumptions and understandings had already begun within Britain.

This thesis began with a sketch of past British discourses on China, in which China was rendered in a multiplicity of ways. It was at times inferior, at times superior, simultaneously arrogant and ignorant, intelligent yet immature, weak yet threatening, at the same time, a victim and an enemy and usually, China's ancientness would evoke awe or disdain. These 'residual' representations were formed in response to past encounters with China and remained in the literary consciousness of interwar Britons, influencing their interpretations of current events in China. Britons affirmed or questioned these assumptions, with some commentators perpetuating common tropes about China. But many, in the years after the First World War, chose to understand China within an increasingly popular narrative. This narrative of a young China in the midst of a national renewal and revival had its roots in the past, especially from the missionaries whose entire purpose was predicated on the assumption that the Chinese could change. For them, China was not only an old, ancient civilisation, but also a country of young, unlearned youth which could learn from the West. The end of the First World War came at the same time as the start of a new phase of Chinese nationalism and some British policymakers, politicians, writers and other opinion-makers were accordingly ready to view China with new lenses. The changes in perspective only translated slightly into policy from 1919-1924, since China struggled with domestic civil war while Britain, with the other Powers, looked on, reluctant to be involved.

But in 1925, in the face of strong challenges from the Chinese, policymakers needed to answer the important question of the authenticity and validity of Chinese nationalism. The answer to this question would impinge on the future of Sino-British relations. Was nationalism only a tool of the Soviets to manipulate the Chinese people? Or could one really 'drown every Bolshevik' in the Yellow Sea and still the Chinese would be nationalist? The very vocal and public debates within Britain saw the gradual consolidation of opinion into a position that leaned towards peaceful conciliation. This position seemed reasonable in light of the practical inability of Britain to use force to maintain its power and prestige in China, the increased influence of the United States (along with the gradual estrangement from Japan) and the domestic economic and political context. The move towards designating the movement as authentic was even more pronounced in 1926, as the KMT made military and strategic gains in the Northern Expedition. The publishing of the December Memorandum was a marked shift

towards recognising the claims of Chinese nationalism and signaled a willingness to negotiate with the Chinese. The outbreak of violence in China in early 1927 seemed to be a setback for the policy of retreat, but the difficulties were only temporary, as the White Terror in the spring eased the way for the policymakers to defend and continue their policy. Despite the resurgence of opposing views manifested even from the top level of government, the Foreign Office's policy of retreat from China continued steadily into the 1930s.

Policymakers chose to believe the narrative of a new, youthful, awakened China that boded fresh hope of teeming markets rather than the traditional narrative of an old, conservative, sleeping giant that was incurably corrupt and incapable of reform. Why then did policymakers choose a certain narrative over the others? Firstly, adopting the narrative of 'new China' and promoting a policy of conciliation with it was a pragmatic decision. The effects of the First World War had made clear the limits of British military power and policymakers knew that it was unreasonable to plan for extensive military action in China. Secondly, it was popular. The rise of peace movements and of Labour in the interwar period indicated that Britons preferred to find peaceful, diplomatic solution to international issues. Being sympathetic and friendly to Chinese claims was not only the only option available to the FO, but it was the most popular one. Also, one cannot underestimate the role of the media and prominent advisors in influencing public opinion and in relaying opinion to the government. Domestic considerations were ultimately more important than the requests for assistance and intervention from the treaty-ports. Thirdly, it was potentially profitable. The Chinese began their attack on British interests by aiming at Hong Kong's trade; therefore a viable policy for China could only be one that resulted in peaceful relations that would be conducive for further trade. The business lobby at home at first believed in the traditional policy of cowing the Chinese by demonstrations of British strength, but gradually agreed with the government that friendly relations posed the best opportunity for profitable trade. Finally, those who protested against the government's China policy on both the right and the left were eventually marginalised. Ironically, both their marginalisations were aided by Chiang Kai-shek's purges of the Communists in April 1927. The fervent zeal that the KMT had inspired among radical Britons dissipated once the right-wing of the KMT came into the ascendant. At the same time, the KMT became

less threatening and more palatable to the anti-Bolsheviks. Thus, as right- and left-wing protests dampened, Chamberlain and the FO continued with their policy of conciliation.

The British retreat from China was inspired by strategic, economic and political reasons, but it was justified and influenced by the increasing popularity of new discourses about China. Underpinning the FO's choice to formulate its conciliatory policy was the choice that the British public had already made to depict the Chinese positively. From the very beginning of British contact with China, commentators had been ambivalent, embracing and exporting contradictory representations of the Chinese. Their portrayals followed and built upon one another, but they were also adjusted according to the contemporary context. As the Chinese empire disintegrated in the latter part of the nineteenth century, British portrayals turned increasingly negative. Yet China always had its champions. Free traders, missionaries and left-wing intellectuals consistently condemned what they saw as the excesses of imperialism and sought to convince their government to take a kinder and friendlier approach to the Chinese. And in the years after the First World War, large elements of British public had also changed their mind about the Chinese. The Chinese were no longer hopelessly 'immobile' and unchangeable.¹⁹ Rather, the actions of the Chinese themselves from 1925-1927 became convincing evidence that the West needed to acknowledge the transforming power of nationalism. The residual representations from the past were never completely discarded, but they worked together with the new reactive representations to provide a favourable context for the dismantling of British power in China.²⁰ Just as the rise of empire was intertwined with culture and power, the end of empire cannot be viewed apart from the social, cultural and ideological contexts within which it occurred.

Today, the 'rise of China' poses the same questions with which policymakers in the past grappled. Two recently published works, Henry Kissinger's *On China* and Martin Jacques' *When China Rules the World*, are very different books coming from opposite sides of the political spectrum, but both return to the idea of China as a traditional, civilisation-state wary of foreign intervention²¹ and both search history to find Chinese national characteristics in attempts to predict and recommend a course for the future of Sino-Western relations. Recent books have also focused on China's future place in the world, reviving the idea of China as the yellow peril, threatening the end of Western civilisation. Others are secularised missionaries, still hoping to export Western political

ideas about human rights and democracy to China. But how then will the world choose to understand China and its future? Will China only repeat the past, or will it create its own modernity? Will world leaders decide that China needs to conform and be contained, or will some, like the British policymakers of the 1920s, retreat to give China space to determine the trajectory of its own modern future?

¹ National Archives FO 800/260 A. Chamberlain Papers, Chamberlain to Lampson, 16 Mar 1927.

² Royal Institute of International Affairs Archive REF RIIA WHY R2/F8 Sir Frederick Whyte, *China and the Foreign Powers* (London, 1928).

³ James Shotwell, 'The Strategy of Peace: What an Unofficial Conference did in the Pacific' in *The Origin and Present Activity of the Institute of Pacific Relations* (New York, 1928) from Electronic Library, ebooksread.com California Digital Library, 1928 University of California Libraries accessed 22 Sept 2011.

⁴ *The Times*, 01 Aug 1927, pg. 9, col. D.

⁵ The following summary is taken from this series of articles written by Sir Frederick Whyte: *The Times*, 05 Jan 1928, pg. 13, col. G; 06 Jan 1928, pg. 13, col. G; 07 Jan 1928, pg. 11, col. G; 14 Jan 1928, pg. 11, col. A; 28 Jan 1928, pg. 11, col. A; 22 Feb 1928, pg. 13, col. A.

⁶ *The Times*, 23 Jan 1928, pg. 13, col. B.

⁷ National Archives FO 371/13164 F404/7/10 A. Chamberlain minute, 26 Jan 1928.

⁸ Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto Bland Papers MS 81 Box 11 Folder 46 Bland to Skinner, 26 Jan 1928. Bland wrote: 'I have been having one or two bouts with the egregious Sir Fredk Whyte, but cannot flatter myself that I have made any impression upon the impenetrable hide of that self-satisfied perambulator. And he has the ear and measure of Addis, Curtis and Co to such a degree that I should not be a bit surprised to see him pull off what he is obviously after, and that is a special job to open up relations with the Cantonese burglars. If he goes back to Shanghai, I should say that tar and feathers would be in order.'

⁹ SOAS Addis Papers Box 45 PP MS 14/564 Notes for Chairman of Sir Frederick Whyte's speech at RIIA, 18 Jan 1928.

¹⁰ For example, see Cambridge University Manuscripts Jardine Matheson Papers MS JM J1/2/21 Semi-official letters London to Hongkong 1927, Landale to Bernard, 21 Jul 1927, in which Landale recorded an interview between Stabb, Barlow and FO officials, 'from which we gathered that very little assistance may be expected from the Foreign Office in our difficulties in China.' Also, see J1/24/40 Semi-official letters Shanghai to Hongkong Jan-Jun 1928, Paterson to Bernard, 16 Feb 1928, in which Paterson commented: 'I do not agree with the Foreign Office's attitude in the past or even in the present but as they intend to stick to their policy through thick and thin we must dance to the tune they call for I have yet to learn that we can change it. Modify it perhaps.'

¹¹ Bland complained of the existence of the 'Swires and Consular Radicals' who depreciated the opinions of the men-on-the-spot in Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto Bland Papers MS 81 Box 11 Folder 45 Bland to Dr Skinner, 22 Jun 1927.

¹² National Archives FO 371/13166 F1436/7/10 Minute by A. Chamberlain, 26 Mar 1928.

¹³ SOAS China Association Papers CHAS/MCP/34 General Committee Papers, Sir Frederick Whyte speech, 06 Mar 1928.

¹⁴ Cambridge University Manuscripts Jardine Matheson Papers MS JM J1/2/22 Semi-official letters London to Hongkong, Landale to Bernard, 26 Jan 1928; J1/24/40 Semi-official letters Shanghai to Hongkong Paterson to Bernard, 02 Mar 1928.

¹⁵ HSBC Archives LOH II 247/2 W.E. Leveson diary, 13, 16 Mar 1928.

¹⁶ S.L. Endicott, *Diplomacy and Enterprise: British China policy, 1933-1937* (Manchester, 1975) fnt.28, p. 10.

¹⁷ HSBC Archives LOH II 247/2 W.E. Leveson diary, 16 Mar 1928.

¹⁸ See Bickers, 'Changing British Attitudes to China and the Chinese, 1928-1931' for an overview of this change among British residents in China.

¹⁹ Alain Peyrefitte, *The Immobile Empire*, transl. Jon Rothschild (New York, 1992).

²⁰ Again, I am indebted to Hucker, *Public Opinion and the End of Appeasement in Britain and France* for the use of these terms.

²¹ No doubt, they are influenced in part by the traditional views of J.K. Fairbank and others, who championed the idea of a Sinocentric world order uncomfortable with the Western system of international relations. For example, see John K. Fairbank, ed. *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968).

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