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DETERMINANTS OF U.S. POLICY

TOWARD CHINA 1925-1937

by

Kevin Anderson

A report submitted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation in

HONORS

Approved

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah
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INTRODUCTION

The analysis of American foreign policy has long been a favorite subject for historians, and the U. S. policy toward China during the 1920s and 1930s has received its fair share of attention. Most authors dealing with this period have been content to trace carefully the course taken by U. S. policy makers during this period, pointing out where they went wrong, or defending the policy as being the best possible given the situation. Some authors have presented biographical sketches of various major policymakers, analyzing the role played by their policy maker. Nearly all include reasons a particular policy was followed or why a particular policymaker acted as he did.

What were the major determinants of U. S. policy during the late 1920s and early 1930s? This paper will present a summary of U. S. policy toward China from 1925 to 1937 to provide a background, followed by a description of the individuals in the State Department and the White House who had primary responsibility for the formulation of the China policy during this period and the role played by each. Next, the major factors that influenced the formation of policy will be discussed as well as the relative importance of each factor as measured by the actual policy followed. Finally, conclusions will be drawn as to the major determinants of U. S. policy toward China during this period.

SUMMARY OF U.S. POLICY FROM 1925 TO 1937

Throughout the 19th and early 20th century U.S. policy toward China was one of obtaining and preserving the best possible atmosphere for U.S. trade with China. This Open Door policy was articulated in 1900, in the Open Door notes written by Secretary of State John Hay.¹ The Open Door policy supported the concept of equal opportunity for trade in China by all nations. As Western nations capitalized on China's weakness the unequal-treaty system evolved, giving the U.S. most favored nation status in trade as well as many other concessions that were demeaning to any sovereign nation. Extraterritoriality, allowing foreigners in China to be subject only to the laws of their own country, and the tariff treaties were particularly offensive to the Chinese. Tariffs in China were controlled and collected by Western nations, leaving Chinese industries unprotected against less expensive foreign imports. This state of affairs continued until growing nationalism and unrest in China after World War I resulted in the Washington Conference of 1921-22.

The United States, Japan, Great Britain, France and five lesser powers participated in the Washington Conference which featured a cooperative approach toward China. They endorsed a continuing Open Door policy while agreeing to discuss the end of the unequal-treaty

system. The four major resolutions adopted were: first, to respect the sovereignty and independence of China; second, to provide opportunity for China to develop a stable government; third, to safeguard for the world, so far as it is within the U.S.'s power, the principle of equal opportunity for the commerce and industry for all nations throughout the territory of China; fourth, to refrain from taking advantage of present conditions in order to seek special rights and privileges.²

China had great hopes that the Washington Conference would lead to the abolition of the unequal treaties, but the powers were very cautious to make promises only to discuss the matter later. They adopted a resolution that called for a Commission on Extra-territoriality to convene within three months of the conference, and for a special conference on the Chinese Customs Tariff.

The Washington Conference did not fulfill China's hopes, but was judged a success by contemporary standards because many limited goals were achieved. It codified the Open Door policy by multilateral treaty, but it actually created more difficulties than it solved because the doctrine was violated more often than honored by the powers involved in the Washington Conference, including the U.S. Its main shortcoming was that it contained no enforcement provisions.

During the early twenties the U.S. followed a double standard in their commercial policy toward China. It espoused the Open Door for other nations as specified in the Washington Conference, while only

selectively following such a course itself. The goal of this dual policy remained the same: American domination of world trade.³

By 1925, developments in China led to more serious consideration of the tariffs and extraterritoriality by the powers. Based in Canton, the Kuomintang (KMT) led by Chiang Kai-shek capitalized on anti-foreign nationalist sentiment to pose a strong threat to the Peking government. This forced Peking to take a belligerent stance on the question of the unequal treaties. Unless they showed real progress in freeing China from them they were likely to lose what control they had.

On May 30, 1925, an incident in Shanghai focused the attention of the U. S. public on China and raised Chinese anti-foreign feeling to the boiling point. British troops fired on an unruly Chinese mob inside the International Settlement and killed several Chinese.⁴ Less than a month later, on June 24th, the Chinese government in Peking demanded an overhaul of the unequal treaties.⁵ U. S. Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg was sympathetic to Chinese aspirations and agreed to talk about tariffs and extraterritoriality, in that order.⁶

On October 26th a Special Tariff Conference opened with Silas H. Strawn, a prominent American businessman, as chairman for the U. S.⁷ Instead of satisfying the demands of moderate nationalism in China, the calling of the Special Tariff Conference increased the wrath of the Canton based Nationalists mainly because any agreement to abolish the tariff would fill the coffers of the Peking based government. To further muddy the waters, the Peking Provisional Government of Tuan Chi-jui toppled

in April, 1926, raising the question of recognition for its successor or for some other government in China. The Tariff Conference was suspended for lack of a government that could represent China.

One other significant event during 1926 was the formation of a Commission on Extraterritoriality headed by the same Silas Strawn, chief U.S. negotiator at the Special Tariff Conference. In September the completed report of the Commission concluded that the powers could not relinquish extraterritoriality until the judiciary in China was protected against interference by the other branches of government.⁸

A primary goal of Nationalist diplomacy during the spring and summer of 1926 was to urge Western powers to pursue a policy of non-recognition toward the Peking government. Because of the growing strength of the Nationalists and the total confusion in Peking the State Department decided not to recognize any government as being representative of China and to await further developments.⁹ It followed this policy for the next two years.

In July, 1926, Chiang Kai-shek launched a military campaign north from Canton, the Northern Expedition, with the object of uniting the country by overthrowing imperialism and the military cliques, and to seek freedom and equality for China.¹⁰ But Chiang was careful to clarify that anti-imperialism did not mean anti-foreignism. The American diplomatic community, however, was suspicious of Chiang's intentions and soon relations with the Nationalists began to deteriorate. In September the Nationalists threatened to adjust the tariffs of their own

accord in violation of the Washington Conference treaties.¹¹

Again the United States did not take a strong stand, but merely issued a formal protest in conjunction with the other powers. The Nationalists replied they were prepared to negotiate on the tariffs and other matters as soon as the U.S. and the other powers recognized their government. Meanwhile, they adjusted the tariff schedule unilaterally as they had planned.

The growing strength of the Canton government caused several nations to reevaluate their policy toward China. By December, 1926, Great Britain had shifted its attention from the Peking regime to the Nationalist government in the south. On Christmas day the British challenged the leadership of the United States in policy toward China by issuing a memorandum that most observers felt called for a new China policy. In essence, the memorandum repudiated the Washington Conference and announced that Great Britain was prepared to act unilaterally in adjusting its relations with China. In addition it indicated a willingness to recognize the Nationalist government and a readiness to negotiate on treaty revision in the near future.¹²

During the early part of 1927 the Kuomintang's Northern Expedition advanced down the Yangtze Valley, threatening Nanking and other cities with large Western populations. The Northern Expedition and the British Christmas Memorandum attracted a good deal of attention to Chinese nationalism in the U.S. press and in Congress. On January 4th Representative Stephen Porter introduced a resolution in the House of

Representatives which requested the President to negotiate revision of the tariffs and extraterritoriality treaties, unilaterally if necessary. Many of the major newspapers editorialized on the Chinese situation, comparing it to the American revolution and urging the government to aid the Chinese who were struggling for freedom from foreign oppression.

On January 27, 1927, Secretary Kellogg issued a public statement in response to all these pressures. It articulated U.S. policy towards China for the past several years; a policy of patience and watchfulness to be pursued until the time when new treaties could be negotiated between the U.S. and China to replace the old. The statement also included two new provisions that indicated a greater willingness to negotiate on the part of the U.S. The Americans were willing to deal with any representative who could represent both north and south factions, and to negotiate independently of the other Western nations. This second provision abandoned the cooperative solution adopted at the Washington Conference.¹³

This statement recovered the initiative and leadership in Far Eastern affairs that had been lost when the British had issued the Christmas Memorandum. The Chinese, however, were not particularly impressed by the statement. Their feeling was that it was nothing new; it merely reiterated previous policy statements.¹⁴

The Northern Expedition advanced much faster than anticipated, entering Nanking on March 25. That night and the next day many Westerners were harrassed and shot at, and the Western Legations were

looted by Nationalist troops apparently acting under orders.¹⁵ This became known as the Nanking Incident and was a real stumbling block in United States relations with the Nationalist government.

Officials in the American Legation and businessmen in China urged harsh measures in retaliation, including the use of force to show the Nationalists that the U. S. would not tolerate such actions. The State Department refused to impose sanctions, again taking a wait and see attitude. In accordance with the January 27 statement the U. S. acted independently of the other powers. The only evidence of cooperative action was to send identic notes condemning the incident. The U. S. refused to use any measures other than moral sanctions against the Chinese, although their legation in China, the British, and most of the other powers had indicated their willingness to use stronger sanctions, including force.¹⁶

Throughout the rest of 1927 the Nationalists strengthened their hold on China while the U. S. waited and watched. During this period the tariff negotiations were nearly at a standstill because conditions in China were so unsettled. During late 1927 Chiang Kai-shek consolidated his hold on the KMT and expelled the Communists who had been allowed to join the Kuomintang as individuals since 1923, from his ranks. Whereas in 1927 the powers were facing a patchwork of political convictions in China, by spring of 1928 they saw a revitalized Kuomintang purged of left wing elements. This gave the U. S. a government with which to deal and on March 28-29, 1928, a settlement was reached

between U.S. and China on the Nanking Incident. Called the MacMurray-Huang Fu agreement, it included an apology by the Nationalists for the incident and promised full compensation for losses incurred. This settlement opened the way for tariff negotiations. On July 20 at a meeting between John Van Antwerp MacMurray, U.S. Minister to China, and T. V. Soong, the Nationalist Minister of Finance, both sides indicated their willingness to negotiate. An American draft of a treaty was quickly accepted and the completed treaty was signed on July 25. This agreement declared that China now possessed complete tariff autonomy in return for the continuance of U. S. most-favored nation status in China. It was a bilateral action between the U.S. and China.¹⁷

The action took the rest of the powers by surprise, as the official statement announcing the beginning of talks had come only two days prior to the signing of the agreement. Again the U. S. had acted independently and taken the initiative in dealing with the Chinese problem.

Shortly after this, MacMurray sent a note to the Chinese indicating that everything the U.S. wanted to talk about had been covered in the tariff talks. For this he was reprimanded sharply by the State Department which wanted the door left open for talks about extraterritoriality.¹⁸

When the Nationalists raised the question of de jure recognition for their government several weeks later, Kellogg answered that the signing of the tariff agreement constituted de jure recognition and that nothing else needed to be done.¹⁹ Although large steps had been taken

in abolishing the unequal treaties, continued internal disorder in China and failure to insure the safety of American lives and property made the U. S. reluctant to relinquish its extraterritorial rights. As a result de jure recognition and the tariff agreement did not lead to any further significant changes in the U. S. position.

In 1929 Herbert Hoover succeeded Coolidge as President of the United States and chose Henry L. Stimson as his Secretary of State. Both favored a continuance of Kellogg's policy toward China. In November, 1929, Nelson T. Johnson replaced MacMurray as American Minister to China, silencing the only significant U. S. policy maker who favored a hard line approach toward China. For nearly two years the State Department waited for evidence of greater unity and stability in China. By the summer of 1931 the Nationalists had made strides toward greater stability and Johnson had nearly concluded an agreement with the Chinese on extraterritoriality when the situation changed drastically because of Japan's invasion on Manchuria.

Immediately after the Mukden Incident of September 8, 1931, which marked the beginning of hostilities in Manchuria, the Chinese appealed to the League of Nations to resolve the conflict. Secretary of State Stimson insisted that the League should take the initiative, and felt that good progress had been made when on December 10 the League established a commission of inquiry headed by Lord Lytton, a diplomat from Great Britain.

Less than two days after this an event occurred which altered the State Department's outlook. The moderate members of the Japanese Cabinet on whom Stimson was depending to hold the military in check lost support and a more militant faction took over. They quickly decided to support the Japanese Kwantung army, which by January 1932 occupied all of South Manchuria. Faced with these developments Secretary Stimson took the initiative from the League and on January 7, 1932 issued a note to China and Japan that became known as the "Stimson Doctrine." Essentially the U. S. refused to recognize any changes brought about by Japanese aggression in Manchuria in violation of previous treaties.²⁰ This nonrecognition policy was a moral sanction, stopping short of the use of force to prevent Japanese aggression. The Secretary hoped that the other powers would endorse his January 7 statement, but none did.

In late January the Japanese responded to an effective anti-Japanese boycott in Shanghai by sending more troops to that city. Fighting broke out and the Japanese met surprisingly effective resistance from the Chinese. After more than a month of fighting the Japanese were forced to withdraw and hostilities ceased.

The summer of 1932 was relatively quiet while everyone waited for the Lytton Commission to finalize its report. The report was finally made on October 2. It condemned the Japanese aggression in Manchuria and recommended the establishment of a government consistent with the

sovereignty and administrative integrity of China. After several months of discussion, the League adopted a resolution based on the Lytton Commission report which strongly condemned Japan's actions in Manchuria. On February 25, 1933, the U.S. issued a statement endorsing the League's stand.²¹ The use of moral sanctions by the League and the U.S. did not succeed in deterring Japan from aggression in China. Not only did the Japanese resign from the League of Nations, they also attacked and conquered the Chinese province of Jehol in less than two weeks.²²

On March 1 President Franklin D. Roosevelt took over the reins in the White House and was absorbed by the Great Depression. Cordell Hull, his Secretary of State, appeared bewildered by his new responsibilities which left him dependant on the advice of the same professionals who had served under Stimson.²³ These professionals were becoming disillusioned with the existing peace system and pointed to the Manchurian Incident as an example of the futility of moral sanctions in preserving world peace. Joseph Grew, U.S. Ambassador to Japan, urged a policy of friendliness toward Japan as the best means of preserving peace, particularly after the Tangku Truce ended open hostilities between Japan and China for a while.

On this note, the officials in the State Department began to reassess our policies in the Far East. The idea of promoting world order and peace through sanctions against aggressors was losing ground.

Instead they were asking how the U. S. could best safeguard itself against an aggressive and antagonistic Japan.

During the summer of 1933 and again beginning in 1934 the Japanese protested vigorously against any foreign assistance to China, ostensibly because the only way to strengthen China was to let her do it herself with help from Japan, who had a special responsibility in East Asia. This policy was enunciated in the Amai Doctrine, in 1934, which warned Western nations not to give aid to China.²⁴ Shortly after this the State Department reevaluated its China policy in light of the increased possibility of conflict with Japan. As a result they did not seriously protest the Amai Doctrine, and in addition they recommended that no more financial aid be given to China.

In 1935 the U. S. was confronted with two major developments in the Far East. Domestic U. S. legislation designed to raise the price of silver and benefit the silver producing states resulted in large amounts of silver leaving China because of higher prices elsewhere in the world. This undermined China's currency which was on the silver standard and left them in serious economic difficulties, leading to bitter feelings among the Chinese, who felt that insult had been added to injury. In addition to refusing financial aid which was sorely needed, the U. S. was following a policy that seriously undermined the Chinese economic situation. By the middle of 1936, however, an arrangement had been worked out between the U. S. Treasury and the Chinese Ministry of Finance which offset the losses of silver incurred by our silver policy.

The other major development was the continued efforts by Japan to extend control over all of China through diplomatic and economic means rather than through force. Throughout 1935 and 1936 the prevailing view in the State Department was that a Japanese-dominated China would soon be an accomplished fact. But there was no move to oppose Japan. On the contrary, American policymakers concentrated on reaching an understanding with the Japanese.

In January, 1937, Johnson sent a summary of the developments in China during the last half of 1936 in which he described the growing unity and nationalism of the Chinese people and their determination to resist the Japanese.²⁵ This trend continued through the first half of 1937, but the American government and American businessmen remained reluctant to participate in China's reconstruction. The first sign of a possible change in American attitudes came in July 1937 when the Export-Import Bank indicated its willingness to extend substantial credit to China.²⁶ By this time, however, the outbreak of armed conflict between Japan and China led to a decision to postpone all action indefinitely.

During the period from 1925-37 U. S. policy was essentially one of sympathetic noninterference in Chinese affairs. By 1925 the Canton Nationalists led by Chiang Kai-shek were a real threat to the Peking based government. The Shanghai Incident focused public attention on China's attempts to free herself from the unequal treaties and led to the Special Tariff Conference in October. In July of 1926 Chiang launched the Northern Expedition, advancing much faster than anyone expected.

In December Great Britain recognized the changing situation in its Christmas Memorandum, indicating a willingness to deal with the Nationalists, thereby taking the lead in Far Eastern affairs from the U. S.

Responding to various pressures, Kellogg issued a general policy statement on January 27, 1927 that indicated a greater willingness to negotiate with the Nationalist government but continued to advocate a wait-and-see noninterference policy.

The Nanking Incident was a severe test of Kellogg's non-interference attitude, as Nationalist troops looted the Western legations in Nanking and shot and killed several Westerners. Tenaciously he refused to use sanctions against the Nationalists, showing a willingness to act independently of other nations. A bilateral settlement of the Nanking Incident was reached in March, 1928, paving the way to a July agreement that gave China complete tariff autonomy. No further significant progress was made in abolishing the unequal treaties until shortly before the Manchurian invasion by the Japanese in 1931. This invasion promptly negated the progress made toward abolishing extra-territoriality. Secretary of State Stimson continued earlier policy in response to the Manchuria crisis, adding the Stimson Doctrine of nonrecognition of any treaties between China and Japan that were in violation of earlier agreements.

In response to the Amai Doctrine of 1934 the U. S. discontinued all forms of aid to China except moral support. By early 1937 the

economic outlook for China was more optimistic. The State Department considered helping China financially but again all plans were cancelled by the outbreak of armed conflict between China and Japan.

PERSONNEL AND RELATIONSHIPS IN THE
STATE DEPARTMENT

Any discussion of the formulation of U. S. foreign policy necessarily includes a discussion of the individuals in the State Department responsible for the formation of that policy. From 1925 to 1937 there was surprisingly little turnover among the professionals assigned to the Far East. In 1925 John Van Antwerp MacMurray was the U. S. Minister to China, Nelson T. Johnson was the Chief of the Far East Division in Washington, and Frank B. Kellogg was the Secretary of State under Coolidge.

MacMurray was an old China hand who was often at odds with the conciliatory policy implemented by Johnson and Kellogg in Washington. From 1925 to 1929, when he was replaced by Johnson, he consistently advocated a strict enforcement of the unequal treaties, with force to be used if necessary. He felt that all respect for U. S. foreign policy would be lost if the United States didn't back up their words with action. MacMurray also envisioned a much greater degree of cooperation between nations in formulating policy in China than the State Department envisioned.

He constantly chafed at the tight rein kept on him by his superiors in Washington, feeling that he should be given a free hand in dealing with

events in China. In general he felt that the man on the spot was best equipped to handle the situation.¹ As violence and tension increased in China, State and MacMurray drifted farther apart. Toward the end of his tenure he became bitter that his recommendations were rarely followed. MacMurray felt also that conditions in China did not warrant abolishing the treaties and that the U. S. should therefore stay with the Washington Conference formula which demanded maintenance of the treaty system until the Chinese proved their capacity to govern.

Nelson Johnson was, if not the architect of U. S. policy in the Far East, at least the biggest influence on Kellogg as he formulated U. S. China policy. During the years 1925-1937 he served first as Chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs, then as Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs and finally as U. S. Minister to China. One underlying precept guided all his policy recommendations and decisions; the decision must be in the best interests of America. He may be called a Jeffersonian because many times his idea of the best interests of the U. S. appear to have been dictated by public opinion. Although he was certainly interested in the Chinese situation, he was remarkably consistent in not allowing his sympathies to influence his recommendations contrary to what he felt were the best interests of America.

Frank B. Kellogg was industrious and devoted, but could hardly be called innovative or dynamic. One author has described him as "a busy mediocrity operating in a period when most Americans were

preoccupied with domestic affairs."² Kellogg had a deepseated steady good will toward China which was overshadowed by an almost pathological sensitivity to domestic public opinion. This good will led him to sympathize with rather than resist China's attempts to get rid of the unequal treaties. Kellogg's attitudes were reflected in the basic principles of American policy; a conciliatory approach which consisted of sympathy for Nationalist aspirations, protection of American lives and property, and nonintervention in internal affairs.

President Coolidge had little interest and offered no leadership in Far Eastern affairs. He usually left Far East Asia policy to the State Department. From 1925 to 1928 policy was guided by Kellogg, who relied heavily on Johnson for expert advice. Coolidge acquiesced in decisions made by the State Department while MacMurray could be trusted to carry out orders faithfully even though he generally disagreed with them.

The State Department response to the Nanking Incident of March, 1927, is perhaps the best illustration of the relationships between MacMurray, Johnson, Kellogg, and Coolidge. It was a severe test to Kellogg's conciliatory approach because the attack of Nationalist troops upon Western legations and personnel raised serious questions about the responsibility and intentions of the Nationalists.

MacMurray urged prompt and severe sanctions against the Nationalists, including the use of force. He also urged cooperative action among the Western powers, in the spirit of the Washington

Conference, warning that the slightest show of weakness would endanger American lives and property in all areas controlled by the advancing Nationalist armies.

With astonishing tenacity Kellogg, supported by Johnson, refused to use any kind of sanctions against the Nationalists. By refusing to join with the other Western powers in using sanctions, he effectively abandoned the cooperative approach. Instead he continued his wait and see attitude. His only real response was the suspension of any progress on tariff and extraterritoriality talks.

Later in 1927, when the Nationalists invaded Shanghai, MacMurray urged that several thousand troops be sent to protect the integrity of the International Settlement. Instead, Kellogg sent a token force of 250 troops to be used only to protect American lives and property.³ He was careful to keep the force small enough to avoid the appearance of interfering in Chinese internal affairs. Coolidge apparently approved Kellogg's actions, but gave no personal direction in the crisis.

In August, 1927, a new personality entered as Stanley K. Hornbeck became Chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs. Nelson K. Johnson was promoted to Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs. Hornbeck was another insider who had been working in the Far Eastern Division for many years and no significant alteration of policy took place as a result of the change.

The Kellogg-Johnson-Hornbeck policy sought to come to terms with Chinese nationalism. As a result, once Chiang Kai-shek had

subdued Peking, the U. S. was in a good position to negotiate treaty revision with the new government. After the settlement of the Nanking Incident, the tariff agreement guaranteeing tariff autonomy for China followed quickly. Attention then turned to the problem of extraterritoriality. This problem appears to have consumed most of Johnson's time during his remaining one and a half years as Assistant Secretary of State, while Kellogg's attention was attracted to other parts of the world, particularly Latin America. Again the U. S. waited for the Nationalists to stabilize the situation enough to insure the protection of U. S. life and property.

In April of 1929 the Hoover administration took over and Kellogg was replaced by Henry L. Stimson, but the rest of the State Department personnel concerned with China remained essentially the same except for some changes in assignments, and so did the China policy. Frustrated by his lack of influence on China policy, John MacMurray resigned as U. S. Minister to China and was replaced by Nelson Johnson in November.

After Johnson's arrival in China he felt even more strongly that noninterference was in the best interest of the U. S. He felt that if the U. S. stepped in to help China it would have to substitute itself for the government of China; once the U. S. got in it would never be able to get out.⁴ Even without much aid by the U. S. the Nationalists had made some progress toward stability by 1931. Johnson and his Chinese counterpart had nearly concluded an agreement on extraterritoriality

during the summer of 1931, but in September all negotiations were halted because of the invasion of Manchuria by Japan.

This crisis brought China policy under the personal direction of Secretary Stimson, but once again the U. S. policy of noninterference, sympathy for the Chinese aspirations, and a wait and see attitude remained the same. At first Stimson thought that the moderate elements of the government in Tokyo would prevail and aggression in Manchuria would cease. But even after the government in Tokyo fell and the militants took over, he used only moral sanctions against the Japanese, and provided no positive support to the Chinese. This may have been a result of President Hoover's philosophy of foreign policy. Hoover considered moral force as the ultimate sanction, while Stimson believed that moral force should be backed by a willingness to use military force as a last resort.⁶

After two years of aggression were halted by the Tangku truce of 1933, Johnson's analysis of the situation remained unchanged. Even the very real threat of a Japanese controlled China did not move him to recommend any change in policy. He felt that there was little chance for the Nationalists to unify the country. Although allegedly representative of all China, the Nationalist government actually controlled only the provinces in the lower Yangtze River area. Economically he felt that the situation there "probably does not mean the loss of a dollar from an American purse."⁷

In 1933 another change in the White House brought little or no change in State Department policy. The new President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, was much more concerned with the domestic economic crisis than he was about China. Besides concentrating on the London Economic Conference the new Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, knew little about the Far East, and left most formulation of policy to Hornbeck and Johnson. During 1933 Hornbeck seems to have been much less critical of the KMT than Johnson, but less optimistic about the chances of success than the Lytton Commission was.⁸

Shortly after the Amai doctrine of 1934 in which Japan warned the U.S. not to give aid to China, Hull asked the Far Eastern Division to review the conciliatory policy of the U.S. toward China to determine if it should be altered to avoid friction with Japan. The Far Eastern Division recommended two things; first, that the U.S. should proceed on its customary course as if nothing had happened, emphasizing that the U.S. should not lead in opposing Japan. Second, it recommended that no further financial aid be given to China.⁹

The Roosevelt administration's China policy from 1934 to 1937 was simply to avoid antagonizing Japan, but it stopped short of giving Japan its moral support. It reserved its moral support for China in lieu of military and economic aid. Although early 1937 saw Johnson becoming cautiously optimistic about China's progress¹⁰ and even encouraging private economic investment in China, the outbreak of armed conflict later in the year began another era in U.S. -China relations.

In sum, it appears that during relatively peaceful times China policy was left in the hands of middle echelon State Department officials such as Hornbeck and Johnson, who remained on the scene from 1925 to 1937. MacMurray was the lone opponent of a conciliatory policy, and resigned as Minister to China in 1929.

The three Secretaries of State, Kellogg, Stimson, and Hull, appear to have personally directed China policy only during times of crisis, although Kellogg took a larger interest than the other two and set the tone of the policy that the U. S. followed until 1937. Presidential involvement was minimal and limited to approval of the State Department actions, although Hoover's personal philosophy of the importance of moral force and all three President's sensitivity to political pressure and public opinion did influence policy to some degree.

The extremely low turnover in key State Department personnel appears to be a major factor in the remarkable consistency of U. S. policy toward China during the years from 1925 to 1937. But although the personalities of these men played a significant part in the formation of policy, they were also subject to various external pressures that were the key factors in the determination of policy. The identification of these pressures and the role played by each in the formulation of U. S. policy will be examined in the following pages.

PUBLIC OPINION

The greatest single influence on the State Department in the formation of policy was domestic public opinion as expressed through the newspapers, and by Congress. The reason for this can be found partly in the personalities of the men in the State Department responsible for the China policy, and partly in the political realities that confront every administration.

Both Secretary of State Kellogg and Nelson Johnson recognized the value of a policy supported by domestic opinion, while Stanley K. Hornbeck stated in one of his talks on foreign policy, "Policy makers are not merely influenced by what we call public opinion: they are sensitively receptive and responsive to it."¹

Kellogg's foreign policy was consistent with domestic public opinion and his personal views. Throughout his entire incumbency he was extremely conscious of public opinion. It may be argued that his personal attitudes were formed by public opinion.² At any rate, not one major policy decision concerning China during his tenure in office was in opposition to public opinion; and many of his policy statements appear to have been made as a result of pressure from the public.

Johnson's chief determinant in forming policy was that the decision must be in the best interest of the United States. However, in

almost every case he defined the best interests of the U. S. in terms of the prevailing public opinion.

Although Stimson was not swayed personally by public opinion, Hoover was extremely conscious of his failing popularity due to the domestic economic crisis, and Stimson was not allowed to act contrary to public opinion in any way. Secretary of State Hull and President Roosevelt continued in much the same vein.

An examination of U. S. policy during the period from 1925 to 1937 shows how closely the policy mirrored public opinion. After the Shanghai Incident of 1925 brought the Chinese situation into the public eye, Kellogg agreed to discuss a broad range of issues at a Special Tariff Conference. In doing so he felt that he reflected public and congressional attitudes.³

During the early part of 1927, missionary influences and newspaper reports of incidents in China coincided with public hearings on the Porter resolution which brought Sino-American relations much publicity. Most newspapers and members of Congress likened the events in China to the American Revolution, highlighting the attempts of an oppressed people to get out from under the heavy hand of foreign powers. Most major newspapers editorialized on the situation in China, thus forming strong opinions that prepared them for the Nanking Incident a few months later.

The Porter resolution and the sentiments expressed by Congress had a very direct effect on Kellogg's policy statement of January 27, 1927.

The statement actually was amended to use part of the language of the Porter resolution: "to enter into negotiations with any government of China or delegates who can represent or speak for China."⁴ This agreement to deal with any person who could represent both Peking and Canton factions was a major policy shift that was undertaken primarily to placate the public. Also, Congress and the papers were pushing for unilateral action if necessary and Kellogg included this idea in his final draft.

When the Nanking Incident occurred the press was well prepared to assume an aggressive role and cry against intervention. Other public sentiment strongly opposed any military action except for protection of American life and property. As a result Kellogg abandoned the cooperative approach. He also refused pressure from MacMurray to use economic and military sanctions against the Nationalists. In opposing the use of sanctions State was again in line with the American press and public opinion.⁵

When Shanghai was invaded and MacMurray urged that troops be sent to maintain the integrity of the International settlement, Kellogg replied:

It is necessary for you to understand that American sentiment is very strongly opposed to military action in China by this government except for protecting American life and property. NO sentiment exists here that would support any military action on the part of this government for the object of maintaining present status and integrity of the International Settlement and Shanghai.⁶

Kellogg finally sent 250 troops--a token force that would not bring accusations of interfering with Chinese affairs.

When Stimson took over in 1929, MacMurray still favored forming a cooperative policy toward China in cooperation with the other powers. Stimson, like Kellogg, deferred to public opinion which he believed favored an independent rather than cooperative approach.

In response to the Manchurian crisis the U. S. maintained its wait-and-see policy and gave moral support to League of Nations initiatives to settle the problem. This policy reflected the realities of America's meager economic interest in Manchuria, and domestic public opinion. Although Stimson presented arguments in favor of sanctions against Japan to Hoover, Hoover stood adamantly against them, again in line with public opinion.

From 1933 to 1937, United States, China policy was evaluated in light of the possibility of conflict with Japan. Again public opinion forced this change for two reasons. Above all the U.S. public wanted to avoid war and Japan posed a much greater threat militarily than China. Also American businessmen had stronger ties with Japan than with China and wanted the State Department to do nothing to endanger their relationship with Tokyo. Consequently, the State Department decision to avoid friction with Japan even at the expense of China's reconstruction was supported by public opinion as expressed through the leading newspapers.⁷

In 1935 when our silver policy seriously damaged the Chinese economy, Hull was unwilling, because of domestic pressures from

Congress, to try to change the U.S. silver policy or give financial aid to China to offset the damage done.

As illustrated above, public opinion was the dominant factor in the State Department's formulation of U.S. policy toward China. In almost every case U.S. policy was in complete accord with public opinion, and in many cases was a direct response to public pressure.

INSTABILITY IN CHINA

The disunity and instability of the government in China was another contributing factor as the State Department formulated policy. Although most Americans believed that strong, unified and independent China was the best means of maintaining the security of American interests in China, actual U. S. policy was based on China's lack of power and her disunity.

The Washington Conference, called partly in response to growing nationalism in China, ended with agreements to abolish tariffs and extra-territoriality contingent on the establishment of stability in China. It is interesting to note, however, that there was no American plan that actively provided for development of a strong, unified China. The U. S. policy was a negative hands off policy with the State Department wishfully thinking that somehow China would strengthen herself. The result was a vicious circle. Chinese disunity prevented implementation of treaty agreements which would in turn have contributed towards a strong unified government.

Many other repercussions came as a result of Chinese disunity. A strong united China would have encouraged U. S. investment and trade, which would have made U. S. economic ties with China stronger than the

ties with Japan, lessening Japan's influence on U.S. foreign policy toward China.

In the final analysis, Chinese disunity and weakness was the reason behind most of the crisis situations during the years 1925-1937. Most policy decisions from the Washington Conference, to the January 27th statement, to the Nanking Incident were American responses to disunity. From 1933 to 1937 Japanese aggression and American deference to Japanese wishes and American public opinion were all based on Chinese weakness.

MISSIONARIES IN CHINA

In 1925, 4,000 to 5,000 of the 9,800 Americans in China were American Protestant missionaries. In general, most of the missionaries felt that blaming China for disorder was ridiculous, and felt that the U. S. government should act quickly and decisively to treat China as an equal nation.¹ As far as being sympathetic to Chinese aspirations, missionary opinion coincided with State Department policy. But their desire that the U. S. act quickly and decisively to abolish the tariffs and extraterritoriality did not materialize.

The direct influence of missionaries in China upon the State Department was negligible.² But indirectly through their respective mission boards in the U. S. and through letters and other correspondence written to friends and influential people at home, they did have some impact on domestic public opinion.

The missionaries were most vocal during the period from 1925 until the Nanking Incident after which they failed to take much interest in political affairs. This can perhaps be attributed to the fact that due to persecution by the Nationalists fewer missionaries were enthusiastic about abolishing extraterritoriality and other protections afforded by the unequal treaties, particularly since they owned at least \$40,000,000 worth of property and investments in China.³

Much of the public concern in this country can be traced to missionary influences. Liberal missionary organizations such as the National Christian Council of China and the International Missionary Council supported the Nationalists and revision of the unequal treaties. At least one author attributed introduction of the Porter Resolution in January 1927 to missionary interests. The initiative certainly did not come from the State Department, who agreed in principle but felt that the timing was bad.⁴ During the hearings on the Porter resolution, strong support came from missionary and academic interests but no organized opposition appeared.

In general, most missionaries in China sympathized with the Nationalist aspirations of the Chinese, but became considerably less sympathetic and less vocal when their lives and considerable property were threatened by the advance of Chiang Kai-shek's armies in 1927. Their correspondance to friends and relatives, and public support of their missionary boards at home had considerable impact on domestic public opinion.

TRADE AND INVESTMENT: BUSINESSMEN
AND OUR BUSINESS INTERESTS

When one considers that the entire thrust of American foreign policy toward China from 1850 until 1925 had been to establish and maintain the principle of the Open Door for American trade and investment an explanation is required to understand why businessmen and our trade and investment in China had so little influence on the State Department.

The most vocal group representing American business interests in China was the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai. They mounted a widespread campaign designed to influence U. S. policy toward China. They wrote their Congressmen and entertained visiting dignitaries. Lobbyists were dispatched to Washington, such as George Bronson Rea, who urged the State Department to enforce our treaties rigidly.¹ The Chamber of Commerce and other businessmen wanted two things from the State Department; strict enforcement and continuance of the unequal treaties, and protection of American lives and property in China by force if necessary. They reflected MacMurray's hardline stance, feeling that any sign of weakness would result in the loss of their business interests.

For example, the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai was particularly vocal in castigating Kellogg's handling of the Nanking

incident. They favored the use of harsh sanctions against the Nationalists.² When the Nationalist troops approached Shanghai they passed a unanimous resolution calling for the U. S. government to cooperate fully in protecting the international settlement.³ As mentioned before, the U. S. responded with a token force of 250 troops to be used only for the protection of American lives and property.

This points out the major difference in thinking between the State Department and the businessmen in China. State felt an obligation to defend American lives and property, but was not willing to risk a major military confrontation to do it. Also, the diplomats paid lip service to the unequal treaties, but in practice they felt that strict enforcement of the treaties was not in the best interests of America. In fact the State Department warned businessmen that they were largely at the mercy of their Chinese hosts and would have better success if they came to their own agreements with the Chinese rather than depend on the U. S. to protect their interests.⁴

Instead of following a positive policy to strengthen and stabilize China, producing a favorable climate for trade and investment, the U. S. followed a strict hands off policy, even discouraging private investors and money leaders by telling them the government could not guarantee their investment. This policy was reinforced in 1934 when in response to the Amai doctrine the U. S. cut off the small amount of government aid it was providing to the Chinese. These all indicate that the business community was not very influential in China policy. This lack of

influence can be attributed to two major reasons first, our investments in China compared to our investments elsewhere in the world were quite insignificant, and therefore considered as not being vital to America's well-being. Second, even in the East Asian area our commercial ties and investments with Japan were viewed as having more potential and as being more important than our ties with China.

During the period under discussion both the Commerce and State Departments were aware that the fabled China market was a myth, and that vast populations do not mean vast markets. Commerce felt that by 1931 China had very nearly approached the limits of her potential buying capacity, not only at that time but for some years to come. Listed were several factors limiting trade potential: illiteracy and extreme poverty, difficulty of language, lack of rapid and cheap transportation, and especially political and administrative uncertainty.⁵

On a par capita basis, U. S. investment in China was very small compared to other underdeveloped countries. There were several reasons for this. Most capital went to underdeveloped countries, such as Australia, that had many immigrants from western countries. Very few Americans ever immigrated to China. Also, most foreign investment in other underdeveloped countries was for production destined for export to industrialized countries, a colonial type investment. Finally, despite setbacks, China successfully prevented economic penetration in the interior. Even in China, American investments amounted to only 6.1% of the total foreign investments in China in 1931.⁶ As viewed by the State

Department, then, trade and investment in China was not a vital part of our world commercial interests.

Although total foreign investment in Japan was only 42% of the investment in China, on a per capita basis investment in Japan was nearly three times as high as that in China.⁷ In addition, internal conditions in Japan were relatively stable and represented less risk than an investment in China. When weighed in the balance, most U. S. businessmen agreed with the State Department that our commercial relations with Japan were more important than those with China.

JAPAN'S INFLUENCE ON CHINA POLICY

Beginning with the Manchurian crisis in 1931, U.S. concern for good relations with Japan outweighed its desire to maintain the Open Door in China. The primary goal of the U.S. during the 30's was to prevent the threat of war with Japan from increasing rather than to champion China as has sometimes been contended.

The State Department could have adopted any of three methods to reduce the threat of war with Japan. It could have approved of the Japanese actions, it might have opposed them, or it could have done nothing. Between the Manchuria crisis in 1931 and the announcement of the Amai doctrine in April 1934, the State Department attempted to get the League of Nations to take the lead in condemning Japanese actions in China, then used unilateral moral sanctions to prevent Japanese aggression. It only succeeded in raising anti-U.S. sentiment in Japan to alarming levels. After the Amai doctrine was announced the State Department followed a hands off policy, giving China no financial or military support for fear of arousing the wrath of Japan.

In 1933, T. V. Soong, China's Minister of Finance, traveled abroad to organize a committee designed to arrange for reconstruction loans for China. One of the American businessmen he approached was Thomas Lamont, who had headed an earlier Chinese Consortium

designed to increase investment in China. This time Lamont refused to serve because Japanese representatives were not included on the committee. J. P. Morgan, Lamont's company, did a lot of business with Japan and he didn't want to endanger the company's relationship with Tokyo.¹

Soong also sought support from the State Department which was worried about deteriorating relations with Japan. State reminded Soong that China had not paid off previous debts, therefore how could the U. S. think of encouraging their people to loan them any more?²

State Department reluctance to antagonize Japan is also reflected in the U. S. response to the Amai Doctrine, and in the willingness of the State Department to give financial aid to China to offset damage done by U. S. silver policy in 1935. Although in early 1937 the State Department was cautiously optimistic about China's chances for survival and its economic outlook, the U. S. still offered no positive support because of fear of Japan.

Underlying the entire policy however, was the fact that above all the U. S. public did not want war. This is why the State Department was so conscious and responsive to Japan. They posed the greatest threat to peace. In addition, the business community supported a friendly attitude towards Japan because of extensive commercial interests that outweighed interests in China.

Each of the determinants of policy that have been discussed in this paper had a role in the formulation of U. S. policy toward China. The key individuals in the State Department, Johnson, Hornbeck, Kellogg, Stimson, and Hull, were all very responsive to public opinion. Johnson was responsive because he felt his decisions must be in the best interest of America. He defined the best interest of America as being what the public wanted. Kellogg's personality made him extremely conscious and sensitive to public opinion, while Stimson and Hull adhered to public opinion because of political necessity. Public opinion, then, was the most important direct influence on the U. S. policy toward China.

Japan's influence on United States' China policy and the internal disorder and instability in China were two other important factors that tempered, and yet were related to public opinion. From 1925 to 1933 the U. S. public reacted sympathetically to Chinese nationalist aspirations, comparing the situation in China to the American Revolution. Yet this same struggle of the Chinese people to free themselves from the unequal treaties led to chaos and disorder that prevented the State Department from abolishing extraterritoriality and otherwise fulfilling Chinese nationalist aspirations. In addition, public opinion advocated noninterference in Chinese affairs, thus preventing the State Department from pursuing any active, positive policy designed to strengthen and stabilize China. From 1933 to 1937 the threat of war with Japan became the predominant factor influencing the State Department to continue their non-interference policy, and to discontinue all economic assistance and

investment. This was due to the fact that above all else the U. S. public wanted peace.

Missionary interests influenced U. S. policy indirectly by influencing public opinion. Missionaries in China corresponded with influential people in the United States, telling them of the plight of the Chinese people. Missionary boards in the United States issued public statements supporting Chinese pleas for freedom from the Unequal Treaties. These actions caught the attention of both the press and Congress, the most visible elements of public opinion. Active support from missionaries for Chinese aspirations lessened considerably after the Nanking Incident in 1927.

Businessmen in China strongly supported the unequal treaties, fearful of the consequences of being left without the protection afforded by the treaties. Businessmen in the U. S., particularly after 1933, felt that U. S. economic ties with Japan were more important than U. S. ties with China. They agreed with the State Department decision to maintain good relations with Japan at the expense of China because investment in Japan promised a bigger and safer return than investment in China. They represented an influential segment of public opinion that the State Department did not ignore.

In sum, public opinion was the most important determinant of State Department policy toward China from 1925 to 1937. Instability in China, and Japan's attitude toward China influenced the State Department directly. Both of these factors also affected public opinion, which in turn

affected State Department policy. Businessmen in China had little influence on either public opinion or the individuals in the State Department. Businessmen in the U. S. were an important segment of public opinion. They felt that in the overall picture U. S. investments in China were not very significant, and less important than U. S. investments in Japan. Missionaries in China and their missionary boards at home had little direct influence on the State Department, but influenced public opinion significantly.

FOOTNOTES FOR "SUMMARY OF U. S. POLICY
FROM 1925 to 1937"

¹ George L. Adelman, "U. S. Policy toward China from Earliest Relations to Open Door Notes: A Continuity Approach" (Masters Thesis, Utah State University, 1973), p. 1.

² Dorothy Borg, American Policy and the Chinese Revolution (New York: Macmillan Company, 1947), p. 9.

³ Joan Hoff Wilson, American Business and Foreign Policy (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1971), p. 100.

⁴ United States Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1927, (GPO, Washington, D. C., 1941) I, p. 647, [Cited as Frus, 1927, or appropriate year].

⁵ Ibid., p. 763.

⁶ Ibid., p. 842.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ FRUS, 1926, (1940) I, p. 979.

⁹ Ibid., p. 688.

¹⁰ Warren Wilson Tozer, "Response to Nationalism and Disunity: United States Relations with the Chinese Nationalists, 1925-1938," (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 1972), p. 54.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 863.

¹² Tozer, "Response to Nationalism," p. 84.

¹³ FRUS, 1927, II, p. 350.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 360.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 150.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 202.

¹⁷ FRUS, 1928, (1943) II, p. 475.

¹⁸ Borg, American Policy and the Chinese Revolution, p. 404.

¹⁹ FRUS, 1928, II, p. 192.

²⁰ FRUS, 1932, (1948) III, p. 7.

²¹ FRUS, 1933, (1949) III, p. 204.

²² Ibid., p. 223

²³ Daniel P. Starr, "Nelson Trussler Johnson: The U. S. and The Rise of Nationalist China, 1925-1937," (Ph. D. dissertation, Rutgers University, 1967), p. 253.

²⁴ FRUS, 1934, (1950) III, p. 140.

²⁵ FRUS, 1936, (1953) I, p. 453.

²⁶ FRUS, 1937, (1954) IV, p. 580.

FOOTNOTES FOR "PERSONNEL AND RELATIONSHIPS
IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT"

¹ Tozer, "Response to Nationalism," p. 12.

² Ethan L. Ellis, Frank B. Kellogg and American Foreign Relations, 1925-1929. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1961), preface.

³ Tozer, "Response to Nationalism," p. 272.

⁴ Starr, "Nelson Trussler Johnson," p. 149.

⁵ Frederick Bernard Hoyt, "Americans in China and the Formation of American Policy, 1925-1937," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1971), p. 67.

⁶ Tozer, "Response to Nationalism," p. 198.

⁷ Starr, "Nelson Trussler Johnson," p. 261.

⁸ Dorothy Borg, The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 53.

⁹ Ibid., p. 81-87

¹⁰ Starr, "Nelson Trussler Johnson," p. 308.

FOOTNOTES FOR "PUBLIC OPINION"

¹ Stanley K. Hornbeck, The United States and The Far East: Certain Fundamentals of Policy (New York: World Peace Foundation, 1942), p. 9.

² Ethan L. Ellis, Republican Foreign Policy, 1921-1933 (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1968), p. 312.

³ Ibid., p. 300.

⁴ Tozer, "Response to Nationalism," p. 94.

⁵ FRUS, 1927, II, p. 209.

⁶ Borg, American Policy and The Chinese Revolution, p. 277.

⁷ For a good discussion of editorials in leading newspapers concerning Japan and China during this period see: Borg, The United States and The Far Eastern Crisis, pp. 92-96.

FOOTNOTES FOR "MISSIONARIES IN CHINA"

¹ Borg, American Policy and the Chinese Revolution, p. 73.

² Hoyt, "Americans in China," p. 67.

³ Ibid., p. 47.

⁴ Tozer, "Response to Nationalism," p. 86.

FOOTNOTES FOR "TRADE AND INVESTMENT"

- ¹ Hoyt, "Americans in China," p. 149.
- ² Tozer, "Response to Nationalism," p. 144.
- ³ Ibid., p. 74.
- ⁴ Hoyt, "Americans in China," p. 160
- ⁵ U. S. , Department of Commerce, Commerce Reports, 1934, "Where China Buys and Sells," p. 3.
- ⁶ Chi-Ming Hou, Economic Investment and Economic Development in China, 1840-1937 (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1965), p. 214.
- ⁷ Ibid., p. 102.

FOOTNOTES FOR "JAPAN'S INFLUENCE
ON CHINA POLICY"

- ¹ Borg, The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis, p. 65.
- ² Ibid., p. 69.

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