



2-2-1932

## Outline of the Far Eastern Crisis, February 2, 1932

Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/fmhw\\_commerce\\_documents](https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/fmhw_commerce_documents)



Part of the [Diplomatic History Commons](#), [Political History Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

[Click here to let us know how access to this document benefits you.](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Huntington-Wilson, Francis Mairs, "Outline of the Far Eastern Crisis, February 2, 1932" (1932). *Documents, 1919-1938*. 44.

[https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/fmhw\\_commerce\\_documents/44](https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/fmhw_commerce_documents/44)

This Memorandum is brought to you for free and open access by the Travel, Commerce and Politics (1919-1938) at Digital Commons @ Ursinus College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Documents, 1919-1938 by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Ursinus College. For more information, please contact [aprock@ursinus.edu](mailto:aprock@ursinus.edu).

Outline of the Far Eastern Crisis  
by  
F. M. Huntington-Wilson  
(formerly Undersecretary of State, etc. etc.)

To go thoroughly into the background that has led up to the present situation in the Far East would require volumes. Japan gradually gained control of Korea just across from the southernmost large Japanese island after the China-Japanese war of 1894-1895 in which China's claim over Korea was the issue. In the days of the Russian Empire Russia led the scramble for territory and special privileges in China. Fear of the Russian menace to Manchuria, which is just north of Korea, brought on the Russia-Japanese war, which gave Japan territory and privileges that Russia had had. Japan needs Manchuria to supply itself with food and raw materials. Through many treaties Japan has, besides a railway, tremendous enterprises of every sort in Southern Manchuria and these have brought there many Japanese and also vastly greater numbers of Chinese, who have immigrated there from the chaos of China proper, to live and work.

Since the fall of the Chinese Empire, about twenty years ago, and the death of Yuan-Shi-Kai, a great Chinese statesman, China has been almost continuously over-run by war-lords with private armies, looting and terrorizing, and virtually uncontrolled by any central government. There have been governments at Peking, at Canton and at Nanking, but never a government really in effective control of the whole country,-- least of all of Manchuria. A powerful war-lord, Chang-Tso-Lin, ruled there, and on his death was succeeded by his son. Under the latter things went from bad to worse in the Manchurian provinces, where there was much murder, rapine and banditry, including killing and outrages upon a great number of Japanese, and culminating in wilful damage to the Japanese railway. Japanese treaty rights were

unprotected. Part of the recent trouble seems to have been plain banditry and part officially inspired. The fighting of the Japanese in Manchuria is supposed to be to clear Manchuria of bandits and restore order as a police measure to protect Japanese citizens and their interests, including treaty rights,- a task which no Chinese government for some years has been able, even if willing, to perform. The campaign has included driving out the war-lord of Manchuria and putting in place of hostile Chinese officials other Chinese willing to cooperate with the Japanese. It amounts to pretty well taking charge of the country. In doing it the Japanese have penetrated the part of Manchuria that Russia is interested in, and they have used a railway that is jointly operated by the Russians and the Chinese. Moscow seems too busy with the five year plan to care to retaliate. In going to such lengths to strengthen its position in Manchuria Japan is probably thinking of a possible menace from Russia or from a united China in the long future.

The Chinese have been using, against Japan, the same weapon they tried against the United States when resenting the exclusion of Chinese immigrants some years ago. They are boycotting Japanese imports. This injures Japan severely because the Chinese market is second only to the American market in importance to Japan. While individuals cannot be compelled to buy goods from a particular country, if a boycott of that country's goods is inspired, abetted or even ordered by the authorities (as these Chinese boycotts are supposed to be) then the boycott becomes a fair subject for most strenuous objection, and indeed, may possibly be regarded as a hostile act. The boycott and anti-Japanese propaganda had gone very far when several Japanese were killed at Shanghai. Then a Japanese fleet was sent there to protect the Japanese and their interests and to demand that the authorities put a stop to the boycott

and the propaganda. Since two-thirds of China's trade passes through Shanghai, it probably seemed an appropriate place to demand cessation of the boycott. Very likely such central government as there <sup>now</sup> is in China was not thought strong enough to stop the boycott if it would, except in the capital itself. A naval demonstration, to landing back up demands, and a/force to protect Japanese life and property would not have been extraordinary, ~~but~~ alleged sniping by ununiformed Chinese seems to have turned the landing party into a belligerent force which, added by bombing airplanes, destroyed a large section of the Chinese city and took on the appearance of ~~belligerent~~ warfare, including clashes with regular Chinese troops. Nanking, the capitol that the principal Chinese authorities are said to be vacating, is not far from Shanghai; and if large Chinese reinforcements come from there, real war may develop, with an army coming from Japan.

The International Settlement at Shanghai has grown to a great city. Originally a British concession, an American concession was added many years ago, and a French, and the Settlement is now a neutral area for all foreigners, including Japanese. The governing authority is in the consuls of the powers, under whom their functions a municipal council with a police force. There are also a few thousands troops or marines of various nationalities whose duty it is to protect the boundaries of the Settlement, if threatened. As part of this defensive force there is included a Japanese contingent. One part of the Settlement is crowded with Japanese and many of them also live outside in the Chinese city.

If Japan wanted to land an expedition it should have chosen a base outside the International Settlement. The policing and protection of the latter should have been left to the authori-

ties and the international force of the Settlement itself, augmented if necessary. The Japanese seem to have made a section of the International Settlement a base for belligerent operations; and their marines, with gangs of Japanese civilians, appear to have run riot about the Settlement in a most dangerous fashion. This violation of the neutrality of the Settlement has put other nationals and their property in grave danger. The whole performance is so extraordinary that one wonders whether it can have been authorized by the Tokio government or whether the Japanese admiral <sup>alone</sup> is responsible. It would be difficult to find anywhere in the world another place where conduct like this would be so fraught with danger of serious international complications.

One would have supposed that the British and American and other governments would, at the first rumour of an expedition to Shanghai, have obtained from Tokio solemn assurances that the neutrality of the Settlement and its safety would be scrupulously respected and safe-guarded and that the defence of the Settlement and any Japanese action outside it would have been kept quite distinct, - the one being an international and the other a Japanese affair. This seems to be the position finally taken through rather belated representations by the American and British and then by the French and Italian governments; and it would seem incredible that Tokio should fail to accede to their joint request.

As to American policy generally, in the late nineties, when John Hay was Secretary of State, the taking of territory, with attendant special privileges in China, had been going on at a great rate. The Russian Empire, backed by its French ally and <sup>by</sup> Germany, had by diplomatic pressure made Japan disgorge some of the spoils (notably

Port Arthur) of its 1895 victory over China. Germany had got <sup>a</sup>Kiao-Chow, England Wei-Hai-Wei, etc. America's old and important trade with China seemed threatened. Therefore Secretary Hay set about negotiating with the powers concerned an understanding that the "Open Door", i.e. equality of opportunity in commerce, navigation, etc. in China should be mutually pledged and that the territorial and administrative integrity of China should henceforth be respected,- thus associating two not necessarily connected theories. The pledges were duly exchanged, but the game of aggression through government supported concessions for railways, mining rights, and what not, went gaily on, with Russia particularly aggressive and Japan awaiting its chance with its ambitions on the Asiatic mainland temporarily thwarted to some extent, but very much alive. Japan's victory over Russia (1905) rather reversed the position and created a sort of equilibrium between Russia and Japan as the two powers intend upon more or less dismemberment of China. In this dangerous situation the United States was left pretty much alone as, on paper at least, committed to be the champion of the "Open Door", China's integrity, etc.

Under President Taft, Secretary Knox set out, in 1909, to get the United States out of the position of solitary champion of the policies referred to.

This he did by creating the six power consortium. This was an arrangement to create a community of interests in China through great loans and development enterprises shared in together by those powers, including Russia and Japan, whose aggressions were to be restrained, it was hoped, by a new self-interest in these joint plans and by the participation with them of the four great powers opposed to further dismemberment of China,- namely, the United States, Great Britain, Germany and France, with Austrian and Italian interests to

be drawn in. In this way the Hay policy was brought from theory to reality and the theoretical responsibility of the United States was reduced to a one-sixth share in the support of the "Open Door" and so on.

In 1913 President Wilson promptly destroyed this whole arrangement and in 1915 Secretary Bryan wrote to the Japanese government a note which went back <sup>to</sup> the Hay tradition <sup>and</sup> intended to put America again in the objectionable position of lonely guardian of the "Open Door" and of China's "territorial and administrative integrity."

When recent Japanese military operations in Manchuria brought these questions again to the fore, and China appealed to the League of Nations, it was reported that Washington <sup>had</sup> announced that it would support the action of the League. This is hardly credible as it would have amounted to giving the League a blank cheque to draw upon American influence and prestige, - a thing wholly at variance with prudence and wise practice. Then Washington had <sup>Counsel</sup> ~~Council~~ Gilbert, at Geneva, sit with the League ~~XXXX~~ Council. As this had never been done before it may well have given color to the theory that the United States was prepared to take a very conspicuous role in the Far Eastern situation. Again America seemed to be getting into the position/<sup>of</sup> outstanding champion. Perhaps it was in reliance upon this country's bearing the brunt of resultant trouble and resentment that the League issued its most extraordinary demand that Japan retire her special expeditions in Manchuria by November 16.

Then <sup>Ambassador</sup> Dawes was sent from London to Paris. He did not sit with the League officials and he evidently <sup>was</sup> dissociated the United States from the League's demand just mentioned. The League's action then dwindled to the sending of commissions of inquiry to China. The United States seemed, thus, to have escaped being the "goat"

assuming the thankless role of China's quixotic champion, for the benefit, if any, of the world at large and with a monopoly of the Japanese resentment.

But then (January 8) a new American note was published, which, according to the news despatch, "placed the United States in the forefront of the powers apprehensive of further <sup>Japanese</sup> progress", - again the objectionable leading role. That note, indeed, rather tended to commit the American government to positions which in the future might not, perhaps, prove entirely tenable. This and the many other communications from Washington to Tokio latterly made regarding Manchuria seem a little like "shadow boxing" with a little too much devotion to texts at the expense of realities and their grave implications. A mere "reservation of all rights in the premises" (a term well understood by all governments) would have served every useful purpose without ~~causing~~ causing useless irritation or involving possibly embarrassing commitments. It would also have kept America clearly out of the objectionable position of leading western actor in the dangerous drama of the Far East.

China's latest appeal to the League of Nations is reported to be made under Articles X, XV and XVI. Under Article XV the League may pass upon the merits of a controversy between its members. Under Article XVI it may use economic pressure against a member deemed in the wrong. Article X is the one providing for defense of member nations' frontiers by other members of the League. It will be remembered <sup>as</sup> ~~that~~ the Article most particularly responsible for ~~the~~ non-adherence to the League of Nations by the United States.

China had previously invoked the Kellogg Pact by which the signatories agreed to discard war as an instrument of policy and the



Nine Power Treaty, signed at the Washington Conference, February 6, 1922. As to the case under the Kellogg-Briand Pact, it might perhaps be argued that Japan has not been using war as an instrument of policy and has not made war upon China as a government; that the operations in Manchuria have been rather police measures to restore order and protect nationals, interests and treaty rights; that there has been no Chinese government with which to deal that was de jure and de facto willing and able to meet its obligations and discharge its duties. These considerations may be born <sup>also</sup> in mind in considering the drastic action taken at Shanghai, although they do not excuse <sup>Japan's</sup> ~~its~~ ill advised and high handed /disregard of the status of the International Settlement nor condone ~~its blundering and~~ reported barbarities.

Under the Nine-Power Pact the other contracting powers agree:

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

At the Washington Conference Japan returned to China <sup>1900</sup> ~~Kiao-~~ Chow and its hinterland in Shantung and also abandoned a few of the celebrated "twenty-one demands" previously made, <sup>Japan</sup> ~~but~~ still emerged with a privileged position and many special interests in Manchuria that had been formally recognized by China, whether under duress or not.

These <sup>latter</sup> part of Japan's treaty rights which are claimed to be violated. Continuing chaos in China does not seem to speak well for the use the Chinese have made during ten years since this treaty was signed of the opportunity " to develop and maintain..... an effective and stable government". Considering the situation at the time this treaty was signed, and viewing the history of China since that date, it might perhaps be argued that there had been no technical violation, although the aggressive intention of Japan to treat it's Manchurian position as a paramount national interest is quite plain.

6TP As to the equality of commercial and industrial opportunity connoted by the phrase "Open Door", there could hardly be much of it in the Manchurian Provinces so long as they remained a maelstrom of banditry.

In <sup>p</sup>appraising Japanese action in Manchuria it is <sup>only</sup> fair to remember the provocation and to envisage the government of the United States, or any other, in a situation where it's citizens and their property were being subjected to murder and plunder and treaties were being disregarded in one of it's special spheres of influence and interest.

The Far Eastern question is very old and very complicated and it's solution will take much time. Some ultimate equilibrium between China, Japan and Russia is dependent upon the evolution of events. China has the problem of putting it's own house in order. The future of Russia cannot now be predicted. Japan is the only known factor in the equation. The interest of the West is mainly commercial and preponderantly British and American. The cooperation of Great Britain and America in the perilous situation at Shanghai is fresh evidence that the cordial entente of the English-speaking peoples is

the greatest real force for civilization and peace in the world.

TP Adverting again to American policy, the United States can continue it's traditional friendship for China without assuming the role of chief heckler of Japan, another valuable and traditional friend; and can do so without condoning any action ~~that~~ by either China or Japan that violates the standards of international conduct that prevail to-day.

February 2, 1932.