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HISTORY FROM THE MIDDLE: THE STUDENT INTERPRETERS CORPS AND IMAGINED AMERICAN ECONOMIC IMPERIALISM IN CHINA, 1902-1941

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HISTORY FROM THE MIDDLE: THE STUDENT INTERPRETERS CORPS AND
IMAGINED AMERICAN ECONOMIC IMPERIALISM IN CHINA, 1902-1941

by

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B.A., Excelsior College, 2006
M.A., American Military University, 2009

A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Doctor of Philosophy in Historical Studies Degree

Department of History
in the Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
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DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
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Doctor of Philosophy
in the field of Historical Studies

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

NATHANIEL ALEXANDER DAVIS, for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in HISTORICAL STUDIES, presented on MARCH 3, 2017, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: HISTORY FROM THE MIDDLE: THE STUDENT INTERPRETERS CORPS AND IMAGINED AMERICAN ECONOMIC IMPERIALISM IN CHINA, 1902-1941

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Jonathan Bean

The project of American economic imperialism in China during the first half of the twentieth century was first and foremost an imagined enterprise. This dissertation examines the role of the Student Interpreters Corps (SIC) in this endeavor. Studying language-trained intermediaries, this treatment is a first step towards studying history with an approach that is neither top-down nor bottom-up but rather middle-outward. Examining hitherto neglected personnel records and State Department correspondence, this study reveals the SIC as part of an imagined but unsuccessful program of economic imperialism. Although effective in garnering American business interest and support for Foreign Service reform and expansion, efforts to entice American merchants and companies to enter Asian markets (particularly in China) failed to yield a coherent, successful trade empire. However, the largely unstated goal of increased American power was achieved as the result of a bureaucratic imperative for specialization, professionalization, and institutional expansion set in motion during the establishment of the SIC. Examining the evolving roles and views of SIC-trained intermediaries, this dissertation finds that while the imagined trade empire failed to materialize, the SIC contributed to a developing American perception of China that envisioned increasingly greater American intervention in East Asia. In this milieu, a “Peking” order emerged by the mid-1920s that became influential in American East Asia policy towards the eve of World War II that saw China as vital to American interests. Established as precursor of American economic empire in China,

the SIC was instrumental in shifting discourse away from economic empire towards an interventionist American Orientalism. Trade expansion rhetoric waned and Orientalist language solidified as Japanese aggression became more blatant and the ascendance of Communism in China ever more certain. Highlighting the bureaucratic intermediaries as new method of studying history, this study indicates that the project of American economic imperialism was largely imagined, but one that transformed to accommodate evolving visions of expanding American power in East Asia. These conclusions offer new challenges to and opportunities for scholars of American foreign relations.

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I am grateful to Dr. Holly Hurlburt for encouraging me to apply to the Ph.D. program, for the support of the Delyte and Dorothy Morris Doctoral Fellowship, which supported me through the first four years of study, and to the History Department faculty who taught, mentored, challenged and supported me. It was my advisor, Dr. Jonathan Bean who first encouraged me to consider “imperial translators” as a topic for the dissertation and who has given tireless—even relentless—guidance and assistance throughout the writing process. It was Dr. David Wilson who first introduced me to the Student Interpreters Corps and whose guidance through the archival sources has been of immense assistance.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Hale Yilmaz, Dr. David Wilson, and Dr. Jonathan Bean for their active support and encouragement of my continued language study during the second half of the program. Just as for the Student Interpreters examined in this dissertation, that language training has opened new doors for me. Walking through them has changed my life in countless profound ways.

PREFACE

The roots of this dissertation lie in the six years spent as Cryptologic Linguist in the United States Army between 2003 and 2009. As part of my military training, I learned Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian, achieving a high degree of fluency and gaining enormous appreciation for the labor that acquiring such fluency requires. While stationed in Wiesbaden, Germany, between 2005 and 2009, I also acquired a conversational level of German. It was between 2007 and 2008, as I both designed and participated in a year-long intensive Afghan Pashto language training course that I came across study materials and dictionaries produced by British Orientalists serving with the East India Company army and (after 1857) the British Army during the Anglo-Afghan Wars. During this time I developed a passion for history and began a Masters program in history (which I completed in May, 2009). I felt particular affinity with the history of interpreters and translators, of which I felt an active part. As a member of a unit variously deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan during the age of “Imperial Presidency,”¹ I also felt a reluctant part of American imperial history, and was fascinated by the role of language training, interpreters, and translators in that history. Learning a foreign language entails the devotion of no small part of one’s life and energy to attain functional fluency, and necessarily involves at least partial appropriation of some cultural attitudes and modes of thinking.

Accepted in the History Ph.D. program at Southern Illinois University in August 2009, I began studying American Business History, with Dr. Jonathan Bean, Middle Eastern History, with Dr. Hale Yilmaz, and the History of American Foreign Relations, with Dr. David Wilson. During the first year of my studies I became interested in the Student Interpreters Corps (SIC), the first formal language training program of the United States government for Foreign Service

¹ Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *The Imperial Presidency* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973), x.

officers in China, Japan, and the Ottoman Empire. This topic proved the ideal intersection of my three fields of study, bringing together my interests in business history, American involvement in the Middle East, and the role of interpreters in the history of imperialism. Following the presentation of my prospectus, I planned to expand my study of the SIC to a comparative study of the SIC and the Ottoman Translators Bureau (*Tercüme Odası*). From 2011 to 2012, I studied modern Turkish intensively at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, funded by the Illinois Veterans Grant and at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, funded by a Foreign Language Area Studies fellowship (FLAS).

In the summer of 2012, I was awarded a Boren Fellowship to study modern and Ottoman Turkish at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul and conduct research in the Ottoman archives, a development that was truly life-altering. On completing my studies with a Turkish Ministry of Education exam demonstrating fluency, I conducted several months of research in the Ottoman Archives, examining the lives and careers of Ottoman Occidentalists who learned French, English, and other Europeans during their service to the Ottoman state during the Tanzimat period. In August 2014, I moved to Izmir, Turkey to establish an educational advising center at the request of the US Embassy in Ankara, in partial fulfillment of the stipulations of the Boren Fellowship.

It was during this time, particularly during a conference presentation of my research at Yaşar University, that I came to the reluctant conclusion that a comparative study was proving too large and cumbersome to complete in the framework of the doctoral dissertation. I have therefore adhered to framework outlined in the prospectus, focusing primarily on the Student Interpreters Corps in China and Japan, where the vast majority of the language-trained Foreign Service officers served. The research I have conducted on the Ottoman Translation Office,

Language School, and Foreign Ministry will be included in future publications, while living in Turkey for nearly five years at the time of defense has influenced my outlook and will continue to inform and shape my approach to teaching.

Some of the ideas in this dissertation have appeared in my published work. The references in chapters seven and eight to American appropriation of British cultural perceptions of Afghanistan grew out of research during my first colloquium-seminar sequence with Dr. Hale Yilmaz on Middle East History. Portions of this research were published in 2010 and 2014 respectively.² In addition, some of my findings on American Orientalism in chapter eight were published in a greatly truncated, more theoretical form in 2014.³

Working for a State Department-funded program in public diplomacy in Turkey, I have come to feel even greater appreciation for these men and their families, who often spent the bulk of their careers and much of their lives serving in China, Japan, and the Ottoman Empire. These men were often “invisible” in that their work generally remained unnoticed by the American public unless they blundered into controversy or scandal. As will be outlined more fully in the introduction, body and conclusion, examining intermediaries such as interpreters and translators offers another method of studying history, one that is neither top-down nor bottom-up but rather from the middle. The language-trained officers examined in this dissertation played an important role in the development of the United States’ approach to China and Japan during the first half of the twentieth century. Examining their role in the imagined project of American economic

² Nathaniel A. Davis, “From Colonialism to Neo-colonialism: Nationalism, Islam, and the Cultural Framing of Conflicts in Afghanistan,” *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 33, no. 3 (Spring 2010), 1-21; ____, “Century of Ignorance: The Translation of British Attitudes into American Popular Culture and Perceptions of War in Afghanistan, 1880s—1980s,” *Muslims in American Popular Culture*, Anne Richards and Iraj Omidvar, eds. (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2014).

³ Nathaniel A. Davis, “History from the Middle: The Student-Interpreters Corps and the United States’ Understanding of Asia, 1902-1941,” *The West and Asia/Asia and the West: Essays on Transnational Interactions* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2014).

imperialism, their successes and failures in advocating policy, offers an opportunity to ask new questions of old issues and revise conclusions about the ways in which the United States has approached relations with other countries. Although these approaches have not always produced results as enlightened as some Americans—both contemporary and modern—would like to believe, this history from the middle emphasizes that the enterprise of seeking to understand and engage other cultures and societies has overall been a positive one that can and must continue.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

**INTRODUCING HISTORY FROM THE MIDDLE: THE STUDENT INTERPRETERS
CORPS AND AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO AMERICAN FOREIGN
RELATIONS**

Each generation of historians asks new sets of questions from increasingly varied sources, seeking new and ever-more specific conclusions. In the introduction to a compilation of historiographical essays on American foreign relations, Michael J. Hogan has sounded the call for diplomatic historians to expanded study of marginal groups, particularly non-state actors and interdisciplinary syntheses.⁴ Addressing the preponderance of top-down studies in this area, scholars such as Paul Cohen, Kathleen Lodwick, and Jane Hunter have examined missionary activity in nineteenth century China as a component of American foreign relations, reexamining the opium trade, anti-foreignism in China, and gender.⁵

These are welcome contributions. However, these efforts have overlooked the role of Foreign Service interpreters in American relations with Asia—particularly China—during the early twentieth century. Historians of Sino-American relations have neglected interpreters because of their fixation upon the personalities of senior diplomats and the decisions of a small coterie of American politicians and businessmen. Scholars have generally associated American

⁴ Michael J. Hogan, "Introduction," *Paths to Power: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations to 1941* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 7.

⁵ Paul A. Cohen, *The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Antiforeignism in China, 1860-1870* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), vii-xiv; Kathleen L. Lodwick, *Crusaders against Opium: Protestant Missionaries in China, 1874-1917* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1996), 1-10; Jane Hunter, *Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

policy with these elites--particularly U.S. State Department officials during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century—without careful analysis of the day-to-day American interactions with local people and municipal as well as state officials. This oversight derives from the misconceptualization of government institutions as monolithic, as well as the misguided, concomitant association of the drive for expansion of American trade with the beginnings of American hegemony and economic imperialism in East Asia at the end of the nineteenth century.⁶ The time is ripe for not only the revision of various narratives within the meta-history of American Foreign Relations, but also the methodology with which they have been approached.

This dissertation examines the development of the Student Interpreters Corps—the first U.S. government language training program—as a first step towards studying history with an approach that is neither top-down nor bottom-up but rather middle-outward, tracing the roles and perspectives of intermediary actors. The Student Interpreters Corps (SIC) and the officers who received training in it (particularly in China) offer a fruitful field for such an approach, paving the way for a reexamination of the assertions of historians such as Thomas McCormick that the US approach to East Asia in the early twentieth century was dominated by an imagined quest for economic empire.⁷

Based on State Department correspondence, hitherto un-examined personnel records and private papers, this dissertation provides a view from the middle, an examination of diplomacy in practice and the efforts to understand, interpret, and locally implement policy that was usually articulated at the top. Graduates of the SIC operated “in the middle,” as it were, in several

⁶ Thomas J. McCormick, *China Market: America's Quest for Informal Empire, 1893-1901* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1967), 7-10, 21-52.

⁷ Ibid.

respects. They represented the interests of the United States government to local officials. They mediated between local government officials and American businessmen and missionaries. They also operated in a community of intermediaries and interlocutors that included the local government counterparts, host country nationals foreign consular and diplomatic colleagues, as well as foreign nationals.

Although this period of American Foreign Relations has been studied extensively from a variety of perspectives using similarly variegated methodologies, no such study of language-trained American Foreign Service officers has yet been attempted. It has been more than four decades since Gary May wrote in 1976 that “a scholarly study of the China Service remains to be written, and now that most State Department and Pentagon documents pertaining to Chinese-American relations are now available for research ... there are enough primary source materials to begin that task.”⁸ Scholars such as Gary May, E.J. Kahn, and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker began the task of examining the American Foreign Service officers who played crucial roles in constructing the United States’ understanding of China, but studies have hitherto viewed both the officers and their contributions to the US understanding of East Asia without considering the evolving structure of the US State Department or its concomitantly developing goals and priorities.⁹ Moreover, they focused almost entirely on the “China Hands” who became embroiled in controversies concerning Chinese Communism after World War II, particularly officers such as O. Edmund Clubb, John S. Service, and John Carter Vincent. However, these officers were merely the tip of the iceberg, the flashpoints of an otherwise nearly invisible middle of

⁸ Gary May, “The New ‘China Hands’ and the Rape of the China Service” review of E. J. Kahn, *The China Hands: America’s Foreign Service Officers and What Befell Them* (NY: Viking Press, 1987), *Reviews in American History* 4, no. 1 (Mar. 1976), 120-127.

⁹ *Ibid.*; Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *China Confidential: American Diplomats and Sino-American Relations, 1945-1996* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), *passim*; E.J. Kahn Jr. *The China Hands: America’s Foreign Service Officers and What Befell Them* (New York: Viking Press, 1975), *passim*.

bureaucrats who spent their lives in government service. Without minimizing the important contributions of previous studies that highlighted prominent “China Hands,” this study looks to contextualize the institution and individuals within which and among whom they lived and worked.

Similarly, cultural historians such as James Reed and Jane Hunter have exaggerated the influence that American missionaries exerted on the formulation and implementation on American policy in China, while business historians such as Sherman Cochran have tended to examine particular business or companies.¹⁰ This dissertation is a first earnest attempt to provide a textured picture of the Student Interpreters Corp of the US Foreign Service, from its inception as the brainchild of Gaillard Hunt, Wilbur Carr, and Elihu Root. It is an effort to understand these officers alongside their colleagues who studied Japanese and (very abortively), Ottoman Turkish. It is the beginning of an effort to understand not particular American understandings of particular national contexts (although they certainly figure quite prominently here) but of the nascent system which State Department administrators began to construct at the turn of the century in order to understand and engage those national contexts, and which system continued to evolve throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

Finally, it is the first attempt to use language training as a window through which to examine the process—not merely the policies—of the United States’ relations with the rest of the world. Following a new methodology and offering unique perspective, this dissertation argues that the project in which the SIC prominently figured was not a carefully orchestrated economic imperialist project in China, but rather a complex and usually reactive process whereby the United States sought to become an influential international player but whose original aim

¹⁰ James Reed, *The Missionary Mind and American East Asia Policy, 1911-1915, Harvard East Asian Monographs; 104* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

collapsed in the face of Japanese military and economic imperialism in China. As will be examined in detail, this latter development not only curtailed tepid efforts to expand American trade but also realigned the focus of language-trained American officers from promoting American business interests to answering military and diplomatic challenges, thereby obviating discussion of American economic empire.

In the first chapter, the establishment of the SIC is examined within the context of an impetus towards trade promotion at the beginning of the twentieth century. It surveys the coalition of would-be State Department reformers and American businessmen that emerged on the heels of the Spanish-American War. Shepherded by Secretary of State Elihu Root and State Department chief Wilbur Carr, this alliance deployed the language of empire to argue for reorganization and “Americanization” of the US Consular Service and the institution of language training for officers in non-Indo-European countries, particularly China (and shortly thereafter the Japanese and Ottoman Empires). The envisioned result was the realization of the presumed commercial benefits of empire with few of its military and administrative costs. The process of establishment thus clearly articulated trade promotion as the primary mission of the Student Interpreters Corps.

Chapter two examines that mission in detail, highlighting the emphasis placed on trade promotion by the architects of the Student Interpreters Corps as well as the understanding of officers in China. Particularly in China where the largest number of language students was concentrated and the emphasis on trade promotion was strongest, Foreign Service officers struggled to huckster for American trade. Their efforts were hampered by Congressional parsimony and a lack of buy-in from American business, which failed to pursue such trade opportunities as these officers identified. Low budgets for Consular offices meant that pay was

comparatively low, particularly given the lifestyle and conduct expectations incumbent upon these officers. Financial shortfalls also ensured that Student Interpreters never replaced host country citizen employees entirely. At the same time, the apathetic response of American exporters to the comparatively meager opportunities in China (relative to domestic) meant that very few officers appeared to be accomplishing the primary goal of the reorganized US Consular Service and the very *raison d'être* of the SIC.

Chapter three surveys the colorful characters of the Student Interpreters Corps. Although established as a language training program for future Foreign Service officers in China and Japan as well as the Ottoman Empire, it was China that eventually the vast majority of students and it was Chinese officers who became the most influential. The chapter divides the Student Interpreter era into two periods. The first is from the establishment of the SIC in 1902 to the Rogers Act of 1924, which merged the Diplomatic and Consular Service to form the US Foreign Service (hence, “consular officer,” “diplomat,” and “Foreign Service officer” are used interchangeably, although some preference is given to the latter). The second period begins in 1924 and ends in 1941 as US entry into WWII became increasingly unavoidable.

During the earlier period, the perspectives of “old China hands” such as Nelson T. Johnson largely prevailed within the Far East Division of the State Department. They were characterized by a generally classical liberal view of economics and social order, a predominately non-interventionist view towards bilateral relations, and a paradoxically neutral stance on the promotion of specific American business interests while fiercely advocating the promotion of American trade in general. The latter period witnessed the continued dominance of these older officers’ perspectives, but these met with increasing challenges those of junior officers, who matured in the political climate of Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal. Their views

became progressively more politically interventionist and less economically liberal (for example, they tended to afford greater sympathy for Chinese Communists). While examining these developments, this chapter also highlights some of the many personal rivalries and entrenched prejudices that plagued this branch of US government service just as they did many others of this era.

Whereas much of the dissertation deals with SIC officers in China, the fourth chapter examines them in Japan. This chapter examines the seemingly innocuous bifurcation in the approaches to trade promotion between Japanese- and Chinese-trained officers. Partly due to their numerical superiority, China hands had a much greater influence on the Inspection Service that policed American Consulates following provision in the 1924 Rogers Act. This led to low-level but continuous friction over the relative importance of trade promotion. As the chapter reveals however, Japanese-American trade was nearly indisputably in Japanese hands, largely due to the much greater English language abilities of Japanese businessmen. Consequently, as knowledge of Japan became increasingly important for political reasons, emphasis shifted rapidly away from trade promotion towards political crisis management. Yet even as discourse shifted away from ostensible pursuit of economic empire in particular, it swung increasingly in favor of greater American interventionism.

Part of the impetus for this was personal—a point highlighted in the fifth chapter, which highlights the role of women, family, and other aspects in the personal lives of officers from the Student Interpreters Corps. Although the SIC was modeled along the same lines as its older British counterpart, it lacked the administrative structural support. The purpose of the chapter is multifarious. Firstly, examination of women and family's underscores an important part of the story that has often been missing from top-down history. It reveals actors, relationships, and

pressures on SIC-trained officers that are obscured in the pages of international political history while underscoring some of the ways personal behaviors, habits and ambitions that influenced the day to day workings of American consulates in China, Japan, and Ottoman Turkey.

Highlighting the travails of individual officers by examining their families and personal lives, the chapter indicates that the SIC and its Foreign Service graduates were insufficiently funded and protected to sufficiently undergird an economic imperialist project in China.

Chapter six approaches the imperialism question slightly differently. Whereas cultural historians such as Jane Hunter and James Reed have portrayed American missionaries as agents of cultural imperialism and American economic historians have linked missionaries, consuls, and businessmen within an overarching American economic imperialist project, this chapter examines the connections between American consular officers and missionaries, primarily in China, but to a lesser degree also in Japan and Turkey. The reasons for the comparatively greater attention to China are that during much of the period between 1902 and 1941, the United States had comparatively few consular offices in Ottoman Turkey and Imperial Japan—and many of those in Japan and Turkey were geographically distant from centers of American missionary activity.

The chapter suggests that the relationship between American missionaries and Foreign Service officers was more complicated and nuanced than allowed for by pithy epithets such as cultural and/or economic imperialism, particularly in the ways that perception of too-close an association between officers and missionaries negatively affected their standing in the Foreign Service. It highlights the privileging of trade promotion as an institutional goal for the SIC, underlines divergent missionary and SIC-officer views towards the Chinese Communists and Chinese Government, and emphasizes both the reluctance of missionaries to follow consuls'

advice and the headaches such recalcitrance caused for the latter. Finally, analyzing missionaries in the perception of SIC-trained officers in American consulates in China, Japan, Ottoman Turkey and the Far East Division, the chapter also indicates that despite a complex mix of variously clashing and overlapping interests, missionaries and SIC-trained Foreign Service officers both envisioned a more globally interventionist role for the United States government in the world.

The next two chapters underscore this development as precisely the road the creators of the SIC wished to embark upon. The foregoing chapters generally regard cultural histories such as those of Hunter and Reed, and economic treatments like those of Thomas McCormick, as under-contextualized and reductionist accounts that smear the nuances of a complex era with unreflective labels including “cultural imperialism,” “economic empire,” and “hegemony.” Taking a detour from this theme however, the seventh chapter highlights how State Department reformers deliberately aped, mimicked and translated the imperial discourse necessary to achieve their desired bureaucratic results. The most immediate of these at the turn of the twentieth century was the establishment of the Student Interpreters Corps. The chapter examines the issues attending the adoption of such language to push American trade, as well as the political obstacle course that individual officers were expected to navigate while simultaneously demonstrating their utility in promoting American trade and delivering politically-informed sound economic advice. In many cases, doing both was simply impossible. Underscoring the ideological and political components of the struggle to construct a coherent bureaucracy, this chapter argues that the language and rhetoric deployed to defend the acquisition of economic empire resulted not in the attainment of empire but rather built consensus on the necessity of attempting imperial projects in the future.

The eighth chapter expands on this theme, tracing the evolution of State Department and business attitudes towards China and the emergence of a nascent American Orientalism, while highlighting the latter's similarities with and differences from the Orientalist discourse outlined by Edward Said.¹¹ The chapter argues that American "Orientalism" underwent a gradual but fundamental shift between 1902 and 1941, evolving from the relatively passive ethno-nationalism of the Open Door to a more overt discourse of power, aimed at presaging American exercise of power in East Asia—particularly China and Japan. It further elaborates the United States' conscious emulation of imperial translator training programs as part of the appropriation of American appropriation of Orientalism: only properly trained and loyal Americans could represent the Orient for the United States. Yet as the Open Door was increasingly obviated by Japanese aggression in China transformed in anticipation of an American response: the United States simply could not sit idly by. Driven by political exigencies and belief that the United States must eventually take action, the framing of problems in China by SIC-trained officers increasingly emphasized the Japanese threat, growing American power, and of the Chinese as comparatively weak and backward, and, implicitly, in need of American assistance. Yet while a consensus for U.S. action emerged, such agreement fractured over visions of what that action should entail. While underscoring the evolution of a uniquely American Orientalism, the chapter also indicates how such attitudes could prove a barrier to understanding specific issues even while providing a useful rationalization for the eventual exercise of American power.

The final chapter also highlights this trend of ideological change but re-focuses on the dissolution of trade expansion ideology as the impetus for American economic empire in China. It examines SIC-trained officers' perceptions of Chinese Communism and Japanese militarism

¹¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2003), *passim*.

from the mid-1920s to the eve of US entry into WWII. Political crises forced a shift away from trade expansion ideology. To be sure, trade expansion was never far from the minds of SIC-trained in China and Japan as they regarded the Japan's naked imperialism in China. Lacking the muscle to hold the Open Door open, they turned their energies towards politics, but were frustrated to find that their views were often not solicited and were easily ignored. The chapter reveals the emergence of differing perceptions of Chinese Communists and Japanese militarism in China among Japanese- and Chinese-trained officers and underscores how the emphasis on trade promotion collapsed in the face of political crises.

In this way this dissertation maintains that the putatively economic imperialist project in China was an ephemeral phantom, largely confined to the realm of rhetoric, changing according to the exigencies of political crisis. By examining the careers of language-trained officers in the American Foreign service, this dissertation offers an alternative method of studying history. The approach is neither top-down nor bottom up, revising past narratives and using linguistic intermediaries as a lens through which to approach new questions. The conclusion further reflects on this methodology of "history from the middle" and presents possibilities for future study. Adopting this approach, it argues, will revitalize not only the history of American Foreign Relations but also that of international relations, opening new and re-opening old areas of discussion and incorporating elements of cultural, economic, and even business history—a history of, and about, the often invisible middle.

CHAPTER 2

**“CONSIDERED AS A BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENT”: INTRODUCING THE
STUDENT INTERPRETERS CORPS, 1890-1910¹²**

The United States Foreign Service of the early twentieth century has been wrongly portrayed as an expression of rising American economic power in global markets. Scholars such as Thomas McCormick, Richard Hume Werking and Michael Hunt have portrayed the United States government as responding to the calls of export-oriented American businesses for a more robust consular service and increased protection for their enterprises abroad. Yet while business certainly played a significant role in the reconstitution of the American Foreign Service at the beginning of the twentieth century, historical accounts of consular reform as well as American Foreign relations have largely overlooked the story of a small agency with a growth agenda: the United States State Department.

An examination of the creation and function of the Student Interpreters Corps—the first-ever foreign language program for American Foreign Service officers—will reveal this story by detailing the ways in which the State Department extracted greater authority from Congress under the guise of promoting and expanding American overseas trade. Not only did establishment of the Student Interpreters Corps (SIC) in 1902 immediately pave the way for more comprehensive reform of the Consular Service, it provided for the continual expansion and specialization of the State Department throughout the early decades of the twentieth century. The creation of the Student Interpreters Corps was part of the transformation of the State Department

¹² Elihu Root, “Reorganization of the Consular Service,” Committee on Foreign Relations, House Report 2281 (59-1), 4906.

from a minor office, without a building of its own,¹³ to a bureaucratic leviathan by the end of World War II. The theme of bureaucratic creep, has not been entirely overlooked. Thurman Arnold, for example has noted that "Institutions once formed have the persistency of all living things. They tend to grow and expand. Even when their utility both the public and their own members has disappeared, they still survive."¹⁴

However, this trend has been comparatively neglected in the history of American foreign relations—an oversight that this examination of the SIC seeks to address. In particular, this chapter, and the subsequent one that examines SIC-trained officers' efforts to expand American trade in China, underline a trend of "bureaucratic imperative" identified by scholars such as James Buchanan who have identified this impetus as "the motivational structure of the governmental bureaucracy as the primary source for that part of governmental growth that does not represent response to the demands of citizens for goods and services."¹⁵

The United States came late to language training for its representative officials abroad. This development was the response to a confluence of factors, including rising American foreign trade aspirations, emerging nationalism, and the clash of multiple imperialisms and imperial cultures. As will be discussed in this chapter, the Student Interpreters Corps, its creation, development, and role in American foreign relations and trade are intertwined with these trends. An examination of the Student Interpreters Corps thus contributes to further comprehension of all of these by demonstrating the initiative of the State Department in agitating for and realizing the establishment of the first government language training program for American representatives abroad.

¹³ Nelson T. Johnson, *Reminiscences*, 27.

¹⁴ Thurman W. *The Folklore of Capitalism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1937), 355.

¹⁵ James M. Buchanan, "Why Does Government Grow?" chap. 1, *Budgets and Bureaucrats: The Sources of Government Growth*, Ed. Thomas E. Borcherding (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1977), 14-15, 18.

This was first and foremost a political enterprise, part of the larger scheme whereby which the United States government sought to expand its markets while portraying itself as the equal of empires such as Britain, France, and Japan. From early reform proposals and the establishment of Chinese, Japanese, and Turkish language training programs to Congressional approval and Executive implementation of Consular reforms, the State Department played the leading (albeit not solitary) role.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the diplomatic and consular services of the United States lacked interpreters and translators throughout the embassies and consulates in Asia and the Middle East. It is worth noting the difference, at that time, between, diplomats and consuls. Diplomats lived in foreign capitals, were accredited to and accepted by foreign heads of state, and conducted their nation's foreign business, whereas consuls were accredited to foreign ministries and lived in other cities as wells as capitals in order to attend to the needs and/or problems of their compatriots.¹⁶ Because of this, discussion of the creation and development of the Student Interpreters Corps will frequently reference the "Consular Service," which is also the term that appears most frequently in the archival sources from the 1890s to 1924. "Foreign Service" will be used to denote the general body of individuals employed by the State Department and concerned with American foreign relations from the 1890s to 1946.

Foreign Service officers performed a broad range of functions. Some of these included supplying economic and political reports concerning the districts to which they were assigned. The purpose of this was to give the State Department as accurate a view as possible of the political and economic life of the country. Depending on the city or region to which they were posted, officers also fulfilled a number of supplementary duties, such as certifying incoming and

¹⁶ Robert D. Schulzinger, *The Making of the Diplomatic Mind: the Training, Outlook, and Style of United States Foreign Service Officers, 1908-1931* (Middletown, CT, Wesleyan University Press, 1975), 5.

outgoing cargoes, processing visa and passport applications for Americans and prospective immigrants, and maintaining professional relationships with local officials. Officers were also expected to establish and maintain contacts with prominent local and foreign businessmen, as well as with the representatives of other foreign governments in their particular districts.

Although their pay and promotions were determined by Congress, Foreign Service Officers were appointed by the President (as will be discussed in greater detail later, the American separation of powers inhibited the development of a robust Foreign Service and at times hampered its functioning). The system of appointments and promotions was in flux from the turn of the twentieth century, where this study begins, to the 1924 adoption of the Rogers Act.¹⁷ Thereafter the system remained relatively unchanged until after World War II.

The most powerful impetus for change was political. Victory in the Spanish-American War catapulted the United States to greater importance in Asia in 1898, while the wartime military experience impelled senators and members of Congress on the Senate and House committees on Foreign Relations and Foreign to seek a massive reorganization of the Diplomatic and Consular Service. The centerpiece of this reform was the adoption of merit-based system of civil examinations for recruitment, with an emphasis upon performance and efficiency as conditions for advancement. Abandonment of the so-called “spoils system” (whereby consular and diplomatic officials were appointed along party lines) aroused fierce opposition, which thwarted passage of any major attempt at restructuring for several years.¹⁸

The enlargement and reorganization of the Consular service was conceived primarily as meeting the threat (real or perceived) of European discrimination toward American merchandise

¹⁷ Richard Hume Werking, *The Master Architects: Building the United States Foreign Service, 1890-1913* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1977), 249.

¹⁸ See “Views of the Minority,” House Report 3305 (57th Congress, Session 2), vol. 4414.

marketed abroad. Congressman Robert Adams Jr. (Representative from Pennsylvania and erstwhile US Minister to Brazil) in 1898 and thereafter was at the forefront of efforts to refurbish and professionalize the Service. In Adams' portrayal of the situation, the government had been aware of rising hostility toward American products for some time.¹⁹ With the Spanish-American war in the background, he added a sense of urgency:

“no stronger argument could be offered for the necessity of a reform in the consular service than the war with Spain. Our naval authorities have a right to look to the consuls to keep them informed on all matters of interest appertaining to the movements of the enemy's vessels of war . . . how can men . . . gather information from the people or even the newspapers thereof, without the aid of interpreters who may be false in their service to them?”²⁰

The idea of recruiting young American men and training them “in the difficult oriental languages”²¹ was an early success in the efforts at consular reform. Compared with the more comprehensive overhaul of the Consular Corps, establishing an interpreter-training program was easy, probably because the notion gained popularity in many circles simultaneously. The Chinese Minister in the United States in an address at the University of Pennsylvania in 1900

¹⁹ Robert Adams Jr., House Report 1460 (55-2), 3722. May 27, 1898.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Richard Hume Werking, *The Master Architects: Building the United States Foreign Service, 1890-1913* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1977), 115.

suggested that the United States adopt a Chinese language-training program similar to those of Britain and France.²²

As suggested by Congressman Adams' references to the Spanish American War, one reason the notion of obtaining American interpreters became attractive rapidly was that the war highlighted the questionable wisdom of trusting non-Americans in situations relating to national security. The Boxer Rebellion may have added urgency to concept as well, for in 1902 Edwin H. Conger, the U.S. Minister to China (who had experienced first-hand the Boxers' siege of the foreign legations in 1900) decried the U.S. legation's dependence on a sole, ex-missionary named E. T. Williams for the official interpreting and translating.²³ The lack of an interpreter-training program forced the government to rely upon missionaries and businessmen, an arrangement that Conger similarly deplored. Writing to Secretary of State John Hay, he asserted, "no one who does not make a specialty of the Mandarin language and of official Chinese life can ever fit himself for [diplomatic] work."²⁴ For Conger, the concerns of commerce and evangelism were encumbrances to prospective diplomats—but such obstacles would disappear if an official training program were established.²⁵

In the minister's opinion, not only did the lack of American interpreters put the United States at a diplomatic and commercial disadvantage in China, it was also an embarrassment to national prestige. He stressed that

²² Francis Rufus Bellamy, *The Outlook* 64, no. 9 (March 3, 1900), 471; Robert Adams Jr., "Reorganization of the Consular Service," House Report 562 (56-1) 4023, March 8, 1900.

²³ Edwin H. Conger to John Hay, Peking [Beijing] China, March 29, 1902. United States Department of State, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, with the annual message of the president transmitted to Congress December 2, 1902*; hereafter [FRUS], (Washington D. C., GPO, 1902), 228-229.

²⁴ Edward Thomas Williams of Columbus, OH spent years as a missionary in China before serving as Interpreter to the Consulate in Shanghai and later as Second Secretary to the American Legation. See *The Register of the Department of State* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1918), 149.

²⁵ Conger to Hay, op. cit., 228.

“everyone of the other Great Powers has two or more interpreters of long experience and from three to twenty students being prepared at government expense for future work. We are thus placed at a very great disadvantage before the Chinese and among the other legations. It is largely through the interpreters that the legations are kept in touch with the Chinese or are able to secure valuable current information.”²⁶

In terms of language-trained personnel, the United States Diplomatic and Consular Service (the official name until the 1924 Rogers Act) was inferior compared to those of Britain, France, Germany, and Russia; as of 1894, even Japan had a superior training mechanism, educating many of its future officers in Chinese, Russian, Thai, Spanish, and Korean.²⁷ The assertion by reform’s opponents that “our [consular] service is, in our opinion, as good as any service in the world” flew in the face of these facts.²⁸

In fact, Secretary of State John Hay had requested that Congress provide for student interpreters in 1900.²⁹ Even those opposed to a larger overhaul of the Consular service agreed on the necessity of training interpreters (in 1902 the question of how to retain them had simply delayed the appropriation), so by the time Conger’s letter reached Secretary Hay, the Student Interpreter Corps (SIC) had been created.³⁰ However, the task of training, standardizing, and

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Barbara Brooks, *Japan’s Imperial Diplomacy: Consuls, Treaty Ports, and War in China, 1895-1938* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2000), 55.

²⁸ “Consular Reorganization,” House Report 3305 (57-2), 4414. Their main objection to reforming the system—including establishment of interpreter-training program—was that adoption of a merit-based system would curtail the power of the President to appoint consular officers.

²⁹ Werking, *Master Architects*, 115.

³⁰ “Money for foreign service. (1902, Feb 14). *New York Times (1857-1922)*, pp. 3-3. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/> (accessed 9 January 2012); Hay to Conger, Washington D.C., March 29, 1902. United States Department of State, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, with the annual message of the president transmitted to Congress December 2, 1902* [FRUS], (Washington D. C., GPO, 1902), 228.

professionalizing this cadre was caught up in and overshadowed by the larger battle over reorganization of the Consular Service.

Selling to Salesmen: the Campaign for Consular Reorganization, 1890-1906

Richard Hume Werking has told the story of consular reform in great detail.³¹ However, the primary details bear repeating, as they illustrate the political and institutional within which the Student Interpreters Corps was created. The campaign for and resistance to consular service reform highlights the leading role of the State Department in winning the support of business associations for consular service reform while simultaneously underscoring the American political exigencies and economic tensions that continually plagued the Foreign Service and its officers throughout the early twentieth century. Even the effort to establish the Student Interpreters Corps met stiff opposition from sectional (particularly Southern) interests, wedded to the “spoils system” of political appointments to the Consular Service.

Because appointments to American diplomatic and consular posts were made by the President, these offices experienced heavy turnover following American presidential elections, sometimes reaching 90 percent. The president-elect used consular positions to reward political loyalty and placate political enemies in the Senate (which, due to the “advice and consent” clause of the Constitution, had to confirm presidential appointments).³² So politicized was the U.S. Consular Service that even in 1909 Secretary of State Elihu Root described it as a place “to

³¹Werking, *Master Architects*, passim.

³² *Ibid.*, 10.

shelve broken down politicians and to take care of failures in American life whose friends were looking for some way to support them at Government expense.”³³

This was not mere political hyperbole. One of the initial inspections of American consular offices in China revealed that the Consul-General in Canton had been guilty of “gross drunkenness upon a public occasion,” the “issuance of fraudulent Chinese certificates for the admission into the United States of Chinese coolie laborers under the guise of merchants, and receiving illegal fees,” as well as “extending the protection of his consulate to Chinese subjects on the grounds that they were American citizens.”³⁴

Although shocking to the American public, such misconduct was hardly uncommon in a system within which Congress exerted more oversight and control of the consular service than the State Department. Until 1906, there was no system whereby to inspect and supervise American consular posts; because such an endeavor required a separate appropriation from Congress, more than a century elapsed between the establishment of the Consular service in 1790 (under Thomas Jefferson) and its first inspection in 1896-1897.³⁵ The reason for such a dilatory approach to reform was, as mentioned above, the constitutional problem. Even sincere advocates of reform considered it unconstitutional for Congress to dictate to the President how and whom he could appoint to foreign posts;³⁶ the opposition was likely reluctant to abandon the system of political patronage.

The ‘Spoils System’ Resists, 1898-1906

³³ Ibid., 11.

³⁴ House Report 665, *Report on Inspection of United States Consulates in the Orient* (59th Congress, Session 1), 5037; House Documents Vol. 97.

³⁵ Ibid., 3-4, 8.

³⁶ Ibid., 54, 59.

Acute as were the lack of oversight, systemic malfeasance, complete dearth of training, and the nearly random classification, ranking, and pay system, these problems took a backseat to the inherent woes of the spoils system. Even if the State Department was fortunate enough to attract a few good candidates, by the time they had acquired any experience, they faced the prospect of dismissal from service after the succeeding Presidential election. Michael Hunt has observed that turn-of-the century appointees “had no expertise; those who stayed long enough to gain it eventually fell victim to party politics or succumbed to the lure of higher pay offered by business or the customs service.”³⁷ Moreover, “inadequate staffing, especially of able interpreters, was a recurrent and serious deficiency.”³⁸

Notwithstanding these glaring issues, it is important to note that prior to the 1890s, there was scant enthusiasm existed for ameliorating the bureaucratic quagmire. During the 1880s, Secretary of State Thomas Bayard had repeatedly asked Congress to fund Consular inspectors to no avail.³⁹ Secretary of State John Hay requested student interpreters in 1900.⁴⁰ Loyalty to the spoils system and misgivings concerning the constitutionality of proposed reform persisted, preventing comprehensive reorganization until 1906; however the creation of the Student Interpreters Corps in 1902 was the first act in what would be more than two decades of State Department-Congressional tussling over presidential privilege vis-à-vis professionalization.

Personal friendships were the primary means of mobilizing business associations to pressure Congress in favor of reform. The Student Interpreters Corps was an early success of

³⁷ Michael Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship: The United States and China to 1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 169.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Werking, *Master Architects*, 8.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 116.

such collaboration. The friendship between Gaillard Hunt, a State Department clerk disgruntled with the spoils system, and Harry Garfield, the eldest son of the assassinated president, was one such avenue. Werking has noted that the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce had enthusiastically greeted early efforts to reform the Consular Service in 1895, partly as a result of their association.⁴¹ A colorless career bureaucrat, Wilbur Carr, appointed as the head of the Consular Bureau in 1902, lacked the business and congressional connections and charisma of his rival Hunt.⁴²

Although Carr was undeniably an able administrator, it appears to be no coincidence that the creation of the Student Interpreters Corps occurred in 1902, partly through his efforts, and that more complete reform of the Consular Service—Carr’s efforts notwithstanding—did not occur until 1906, under Secretary of State Elihu Root, a corporate lawyer who had reorganized the War Department following the Spanish-American War.⁴³ As seen in House and Senate committee reports and the *Congressional Record*, lobbying by business associations increased steadily.

Local chambers of commerce and other business associations supported consular reform (including the establishment of interpreter training) in order to reduce the transaction costs of import-export trade. According to political scientist Paul M. Johnson, the primary categories of transaction costs are: “search and information costs, bargaining and decision costs, policing and enforcement costs.”⁴⁴ Werking has observed that the drive for consular reform was most popular “the kinds of businessmen associated in chambers of commerce or boards of trade. These groups

⁴¹ Ibid., 46.

⁴² Ibid., 65-66; 90-93.

⁴³ Ibid., 46-59, 93-94.

⁴⁴ Paul M. Johnson, *A Glossary of Political Economy Terms* (Auburn, AL: Haley Center, 2005). http://www.auburn.edu/~johnspm/gloss/transaction_costs (accessed January 12, 2012).

attracted the smaller and medium-sized firm which . . . were more dependent than the major corporations upon government information about for information about foreign markets.”⁴⁵

In addition, the expansion and reorganization of the consular service was not expected to be a burden on Federal resources: while pushing for consular reform and expansion, Secretary of State Elihu Root stressed that financially, the service at the time was nearly self-sufficient; proposed increase in consular salaries would be offset by the new revenue in consular fees (in most instances at that time these were pocketed by the consul, in whole or in part).⁴⁶ Therefore whether or not they were not dependent upon the government for market intelligence, large and small firms alike were interested in expanding and professionalizing the Consular Service (the various spokesmen of the respective chambers of commerce did not divulge their identities however—probably given the trust-busting tendencies of the McKinley and Roosevelt administrations), as they anticipated tangible benefits. During a Senate Foreign Relations Committee on consular reform in 1900 Charles P. Moser of the Auburn, NY chamber of commerce reported,

“our manufacturers and businessmen are interested in this bill. I talked with our largest manufacturer Monday morning. He represents a concern whose pay roll last year amounted to nearly a million dollars in labor and he said he most emphatically supports this bill. This firm has its agents in foreign countries, so they do not need the work of the

⁴⁵ Werking, *Master Architects*, 32.

⁴⁶ Elihu Root, “Reorganization of the Consular Service,” Committee on Foreign Relations, House Report 2281 (59-1), 4906.

consular service so much . . . but the better reports made by the consuls, the better reports they would get in the country . . . ”⁴⁷

Thus, under guidance of reformers such as Henry Cabot Lodge, Robert Adams Jr., Elihu Root, Wilbur Carr, and many others, business pressure helped erode opposition to reorganization. By the time Robert Adams of Pennsylvania first proposed an overhaul in 1898,⁴⁸ organizations such as the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), The Cleveland Chamber of Commerce, and the National Business League of Chicago had already been calling for an overhaul, as well as “Americanization of the [foreign] service.”⁴⁹

The chief motivation behind this goal was economic. During a committee discussion on consular reform, Congressman Adams of Pennsylvania summed up the view that foreigners in the service were “as a rule, of no value to in our efforts to build up our export trade, because their sympathies and the interests of their local associates are generally opposed to the success of those efforts.”⁵⁰ There was some basis to this assertion. During this period it was not uncommon for a businessmen or consul of one nationality living in a particular area to care for the interests of another nation—similar to the way the Swiss Embassy in Tehran represents American concerns in Iran today. Such agents could not be expected to provide information that would allow American companies to compete with them or their countrymen—particularly after the 1906 reorganization limited salaries for non-U.S. citizens to \$1000 or less.⁵¹ For example, in 1914 Inspector Alfred Gottschalk heaped criticism upon Peter William, the German citizen in

⁴⁷ “Consular Reorganization. May 3, 1900. Senate Report 1202 (56-1), 3894.

⁴⁸ Werking, *Master Architects*, 49.

⁴⁹ John W. Ela, “Resolution of the National Business League of Chicago,” House Document 219 (59-2), 5071, December 24, 1906.

⁵⁰ Robert Adams Jr., “Consular Reorganization,” House Report 2281 (59-1), 4906.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

charge of the United States' Consular Agency at Samsun, Turkey—even though the officer was not even a salaried employee—for failing to report adequately on local business conditions, maintain office records, etc.⁵² The adoption of a merit-based examination system and the creation of an interpreter-training program appeared to offer the solution to this problem.

In 1900, John Ela, the League's general counsel, made it clear that interpreter training was a vital element of any consular reform program, praising the British system of language study and on-the-job training as assistants, vice-consuls, and eventually, consuls, urging that the Congress institute a similar system.⁵³ Similarly, in a letter to Congressmen Robert R. Hitt (Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs), Theodore C. Search (President, NAM) wrote, “that we have any efficient men in the service is not due to the system under which the service is organized and maintained; the efficient men are there in spite of the system rather than because of it.”⁵⁴

As will be discussed further in detail, this observation applied equally to the Foreign Service of the succeeding two decades. Nevertheless, the creation of the Student Interpreter Corps in 1902, its extensions in 1906 and 1909,⁵⁵ and the early efforts to improve and expand the consular service were watershed improvements, marking the beginning of a professional organization. The Foreign Service Act of 1924 (commonly known as “the Rogers Act”) further consolidated these reforms (especially merit-based promotions and a retirement system), most of

⁵² Alfred Gottschalk, “Third Inspection of Consular Agency at Samsoun, Turkey,” *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, National Archives and Records Administration, hereafter NARA, College Park, MD.

⁵³ “Consular Reorganization,” House Report 562 (56-1), 4023.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Providing for student interpreters to Japan and Turkey, respectively. See Werking, *Master Architects*, 115-116.

which Elihu Root had sought in 1906.⁵⁶ Conceiving such a service—even legislating it—was one thing. Implementing it however, was quite another.

Part Two: “To Bring about Harmonious Working”⁵⁷

It was one thing to call for changes to the Consular Service; putting them into practice was quite another. The Student Interpreters Corps was the first challenge. Having coaxed, cajoled, and shepherded the much-touted SIC to passage through at best an uninterested Congress, the State Department was forced to implement less than a half-measure. During the congressional debates over creating the Student Interpreters Corps, American Minister to China Edwin Conger forwarded a summary of the regulations for British student interpreters in China in the hope that Congress and the State Department would emulate them. They provided for passage to China, payment for their Chinese teachers, and government housing.⁵⁸ Congress created the corps but initially left its recruitment and administration to the President. Passed on March 22, 1902, the bill only provided salaries of \$1000 per year for “ten student interpreters in China,” stipulating that they be U.S. citizens between the ages of 18 and 30⁵⁹ and in good health,

⁵⁶ The United States Statutes at Large, vol. 43 (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1925), 140-146. It also cut the number of student interpreters in China, Japan, and Turkey to five each. This theoretically resurrected the SIC in Turkey, although diplomatic relations were not formally reestablished until 1927. After this reduction there were usually no more than two or three student in China and Japan, and one or two in Turkey.

⁵⁷ Alfred Gottschalk, “Third Inspection of Consular Agency at Samsoun, Turkey,” *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁵⁸ Edwin H. Conger to John Hay, Peking [Beijing] China, March 29, 1902. United States Department of State, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, with the annual message of the president transmitted to Congress December 2, 1902* [FRUS], (Washington D. C., GPO, 1902), 228-229.

⁵⁹ Theodore Roosevelt changed this by Executive Order on June 27th, 1906. See *The Register of the Department of State* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1918), 169-177.

and that the selection be “non-partisan.”⁶⁰ It did nothing else. Their duties were unspecified; neither was there any promise of promotion or an incentive to become proficient in the language.

The effective date of individual appointments to the SIC was also unclear, which meant that the beginning of their salary was also uncertain. As no provision was made at first to cover the costs of transportation to their posts, the State Department’s initial instructions to student interpreters required them to bear the burden, as well as their tuition, and required them to sign a ten year service agreement.⁶¹ In theory, recruits could spend a decade at the same salary. As will be dealt with later, this bureaucratic torpor produced widespread resentment among SIC graduates, often producing the very “stagnation and decay” among consular officials that the opponents of reform had feared.⁶²

The relative success (or failure) of the student interpreter corps in China, Japan, and Turkey varied respectively according to the character of the program implementers, those of the students themselves, the personnel needs of consular service, the relationship between the consulates and the American embassy or legation; even the timing—and wording—of the various appropriations bills played a role. The size of the legation was one of the most important factors, as the SIC created a more specialized body of officers—in comparison to the consular service at large as it existed after 1906—who generally spent their entire careers in the country where they began as students. As of 1911 (the first year that Student Interpreters are listed for Turkey in the *Register of the Department of State*), there were 16 posts (including consulates and consular agencies) in China, 7 in the Japanese Empire (including offices in Taiwan, Korea, and

⁶⁰ *United States Statutes At Large* “An Act Making appropriations for the diplomatic and consular service for the fiscal year ending June thirtieth, nineteen hundred and three,” 57-1, ch.. 272 (Washington D.C: GPO, 1902).

⁶¹ John Hay, “Student Interpreters in China,” United States Department of State, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, with the annual message of the president transmitted to Congress December 2, 1902* [FRUS], (Washington D. C., GPO, 1902), 231.

⁶² “Views of the Minority,” House Report 3305, part II (57-2), 4414.

Manchuria), and 25 in the Ottoman Empire. Of the latter however, only 6 were located in Turkish-speaking areas, the other 19 were in Arabic- or Greek-speaking locations, many of which were closed to SIC graduates, by local custom if not by law.⁶³

In addition, the practice of capitulations in the Ottoman Empire permitted foreigners to hire Ottoman subjects as interpreters (“dragomans”). They received special status, including tax exemption and trade privileges (the same rights granted to foreign merchants and consuls).⁶⁴ As will be discussed further during treatment of these consular middlemen, the “dragoman” tradition in the Ottoman Empire created a very different attitude toward student interpreters, interpreters, and foreign staff among American consular and diplomatic officers in the Ottoman Empire, compared to those in China and Japan.

In China (and Japan, after 1906), students were to “apply themselves exclusively to the study of the Chinese language for a period of two years.”⁶⁵ As part of the consular service overhaul, in 1906 these directions were modified slightly, allowing supervisors (the consuls-general, etc.) to assign a minimal amount of office work and even to transfer students to other posts.⁶⁶ In China and Japan, Hay’s early instructions (issued because Congress refused to provide rules in 1902, because of the ongoing dispute concerning executive power connected with

⁶³ The State Department, *The Register of the Department of State* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1911), 33-34, 48; In 1913, only Cairo, Jerusalem, Saloniki, and inexplicably, Teheran, were open to SIC graduates. See Alfred Gottschalk to Wilbur J. Carr. Constantinople, March 21, 1913, *Correspondence of Inspector Alfred M. Gottschalk*, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁶⁴ V. Necla Geyikdağı, *Foreign Investment in the Ottoman Empire, 1854-1914* (New York, NY: I. B. Taurus, 2011), 7.

⁶⁵ John Hay, “Student Interpreters in China,” United States Department of State, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, with the annual message of the president transmitted to Congress December 2, 1902* [FRUS], (Washington D. C., GPO, 1902), 231.

⁶⁶ The State Department. “Regulations for Student Interpreters in China, Japan, and Turkey,” *Register of the Department of State* (Washington D. C.: GPO, 1911), 121, 130-131; as will be discussed further in another chapter, fort his reason student interpreters were often enthusiastic when their supervisors took leave, even if this meant an interruption of their studies.

consular reform) set a precedent that supervisors generally followed; in the Ottoman Empire, this was not the case.

Despite the clear instructions that they were to concentrate solely on language study, student interpreters in the Ottoman Empire were employed almost immediately in clerical work.⁶⁷ This occurred for several reasons. First, as pointed out by Elihu Root in 1906, the consular service was systemically understaffed, comparing the contemporary workload of most consulates to dumping the legal work of big city law practice on a village lawyer's office.⁶⁸ This was hardly an exaggeration. Although some posts were no longer relevant, in the 1890s, American enterprise exploded into international competition so abruptly that this development was described as an "American invasion."⁶⁹

Yet as will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters, this "invasion" did not occur in China, Japan, or Turkey, and while language-trained consular officers functioned as important interlocutors between American business interests local government, politics. The Student Interpreters Corps in these countries was the exponent of American commercial ambitions and its development was retarded by the difficulties in actualizing these goals. This was particularly true of the SIC in the Ottoman Empire, where the growth of American trade was slightest, American interest in its expansion was weakest, and international politics (World War I and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire) intervened to render expansion of American trade and the Student Interpreters Corps there largely superfluous. Such neglect was exacerbated by mismanagement and apathy on the part of those who implemented the program, and the sluggish political response to practical problems.

⁶⁷ Alfred Gottschalk to Wilbur J. Carr. Constantinople, March 21, 1913, *Correspondence of Inspector Alfred M. Gottschalk*, RG 59.

⁶⁸ "Consular Reorganization," House Report 2281 (59-1), 4906.

⁶⁹ Mira Wilkins, *The Emergence of Multinational Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 70

Unlike students in China, who lived in a “student interpreters mess” due to their lower numbers (usually no more than three or four in any given year) they lived alone in privately rented quarters in İstanbul.⁷⁰ Poor supervision of students in İstanbul got the program off to a bad start, not least by warping the expectations of the junior officers concerning their future in the service. These were outlandishly high. As Inspector Alfred Gottschalk observed in 1913,

“their general attitude toward life and their work was (with two or three honorable exceptions) that of superior young persons in possession of weighty governmental secrets, whose future in the diplomatic corps was assured, in contrast with “political employees”—the latter being anyone who was not a student dragoman.”⁷¹

Gottschalk next recited a litany of perceived abuses, chief among these being their double-duty as clerks in the embassy, decoding telegrams, copying dispatches and being invited to official embassy functions.⁷² Strangely, his proposed remedy was to send student-interpreters to various *consular* posts throughout the Empire (where such office work as they were required to do was the same as that of the embassy).⁷³

Despite benevolent intentions, Gottschalk’s recommendation, ostensibly for the *improvement* of student-interpreter training, seriously hampered their acquisition of the language. Appointees to SIC Turkey between 1913 and 1917 (when the Ottoman Empire severed diplomatic relations with the United States) quickly found themselves in cities such as Cairo,

⁷⁰ Ibid.; Esson M. Gale, *Salt for the Dragon: A Personal History of China, 1908-1945* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State College Press, 1953), 29-31.

⁷¹ Alfred Gottschalk to Wilbur J. Carr. Constantinople, March 21, 1913. *Correspondence of Inspector Alfred M. Gottschalk*, RG 59.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

Jerusalem, Beirut, or even Tehran, where Turkish (even Ottoman Turkish) was not readily spoken and the economic and political life differed dramatically.

It might seem intuitive to assume that in creating a Turkish program in İstanbul, State Department officials would have learned from the experience of the branch in China. The first appointees there—including Julean Arnold, Frederick Cloud, Percival Heintzelman, Willard Hull and Albert Pontius—were able to devote themselves to full-time study. For example, Secretary Hay’s first regulations in 1902 required that they “apply themselves exclusively to the study of the Chinese language for a period of two years, under the direction of the minister of the United States.”⁷⁴ Trying to balance language study with on-the-job training, The State Department regulations for student interpreters fluctuated continually between the establishment of the corps in China in 1902 and its expansion to the Ottoman Empire in 1909.

During these early years, aside from the minimal oversight of the legation/embassy secretary, student interpreters had a remarkable amount of autonomy. The language teachers came to them while both the course content and hours of instruction and study were (initially) determined by the students, the amount they could afford to pay their instructors.⁷⁵ It was therefore imperative to attract men of high character and ability to the position.

“Getting the right men in”⁷⁶ was a constant challenge for all three branches of the corps, but the Turkey branch labored under unique constraints. American students Istanbul were required to learn French as well as Ottoman Turkish (without allowing them additional time for preparation), often while working “temporarily” in consulates such as Cairo, Beirut, and

⁷⁴ John Hay, “Student Interpreters in China,” United States Department of State, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, with the annual message of the president transmitted to Congress December 2, 1902* [FRUS], (Washington D. C., GPO, 1902), 231.

⁷⁵ Esson M. Gale, *Salt for the Dragon: A Personal History of China, 1908-1945* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State College Press, 1953), 34.

⁷⁶ Secretary of State Philander Knox, Hearing before Subcommittee of House Committee on Appropriations, 61st Congress, 2nd Session. (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1910), 70.

Jerusalem (likely the result of Inspector Alfred Gottschalk's suggestion), where Arabic rather than Turkish was important for the day to day interactions with local officials and businessmen. Although this was also a problem in China, as previously mentioned, there were many American consular districts in which some form of Mandarin was spoken, giving students in China comparatively greater opportunities for practice as well as future work upon being promoted into the general Consular service. By accident rather than design, the "China hands" became a comparatively favored group.

As of 1906, there were a total of 18 interpreters (including those in China, Japan, Turkey and Korea) in a consular service of 1,113 persons.⁷⁷ This number increased rapidly. By 1908, 20 of the 37 officers listed for China were interpreters or interpreters-in-training. 8 were Student Interpreters, two were native Chinese (one of these was for Canton, where Cantonese rather than Mandarin was spoken, the other for the Nanking consulate, where none of the American staff spoke Mandarin), two were missionary backgrounds (as was one of the Student Interpreters); the background of one is not listed.⁷⁸ As of 1921, 242 men had participated in the Student Interpreters training program—a number used by Wilbur Carr to encourage Harvard graduates to consider a career in government service.⁷⁹

Despite such recruiting, the Student Interpreters Corps failed to attract enough applicants to fill any of the three branches of the SIC to the legislated capacity. In 1913, Inspector Gottschalk considered the program in Turkey to be a complete failure: with only two mediocre students that year, he speculated that word of students' experiences had gotten out and was

⁷⁷ House Report 2281 (59-1) 4906. 16 February, 1906.

⁷⁸ The State Department, *The Biographic Register* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1908), 35, 53.

⁷⁹ Wilbur J. Carr, "W. J. Carr Discusses Consular Service," *The Harvard Crimson*, March 21, 1921, <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1921/3/21/w-j-carr-discusses-consular-service/> (accessed January 13, 2012).

detering further applicants.⁸⁰ More likely, the less-than-tepid interest was due to the fact that the examination system, such as it was in the early 1900s, allowed for direct appointment to Consul; the examination for Student Interpreter was identical to it in 1908, and still resembled it substantially in 1911.⁸¹ Consequently, the primary attraction of the Student Interpreters Corps was the opportunity of language training, and this opportunity came at the cost of lower pay and an uncertain professional future.

Notwithstanding the poor pay and conditions, the SIC remained attractive to some. It provided the first outlet for professionally inclined Americans interested in their country's positive relations with other states to direct their energies towards diplomacy. Low pay, poor training, and meager opportunities for advancement handicapped the nascent Foreign Service, further reinforcing the fact that despite some advancement, American attention-business and otherwise—remained fully fixed on politics and development at home.

Thus, although reform produced an American consular service in China, Japan, and Turkey that by the end of the 1910s was a dramatic improvement over that of the 1890s, it could hardly be said to function according to the “gospel of efficiency” as reformers had likely envisioned. This was due to the inherent contradictions within American political system and the fact that reformers represented diverse business interests unworthy of the reductionist label of “class.” A bargain-hunting Congress (and the State Department) expected student interpreters to emerge from their initial two-year training period fully competent in general consular work as well as fluent in the appropriate languages—with no prior knowledge or previous training—and to invest themselves fully in the promotion of American trade.

⁸⁰ Alfred Gottschalk, *The Correspondence of Inspector A. L. M. Gottschalk, Jan. 1, 1912-Mar. 25, 1914*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

⁸¹ The State Department, *The Register of the Department of State* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1908) 87; The State Department, *The Register of the Department of State* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1911), 123

Richard Hume Werking has asserted that “the pre-World War I foreign service “not only held the door open for American exports (ensuring *protection* for American trade), but it increasingly attempted to shove American businessmen through the open door (*promoting* foreign trade).”⁸² As will be seen in another chapter, this is a great exaggeration, as it mistakes bark for bite. To be sure, some middle- and senior ranking officers understood trade promotion to be one of the most important goals of the Foreign Service in the early 20th century, and as the American consular service developed as an institution, insisting that consular officials stress trade promotion became a form of institutional political correctness (most especially in China). However, in China, Japan, and Turkey, American consular officers usually lacked effective means to protect American property and investments--other than appealing to often corrupt or impotent local authorities for the enforcement of bilateral treaties—let alone any tangible ability to encourage investment and trade. As will be discussed in another chapter, their effectiveness in this regard varied according to the relative status of the American consular officers in particular districts, their individual language abilities, and their respective skills in cultivating local friendships—many of which developed during their tenures as student interpreters.

The creation of the Student Interpreters Corps can be best understood as the opening salvo of a self-interested executive branch to mobilize and exploit American business interests so as to expand and strengthen the powers of the President while avoiding the responsibility of delivering on the promised benefits of doing so. Mixing imperialistic language with appeals to patriotism and vague pronouncements of as-yet-unrealized trade opportunities, the brief confluence of business and government interests produced a talented and increasingly specialized and self-aware bureaucracy with the vague mission of fostering an American

⁸² Werking, *Master Architects*, x.

economic empire in Asia and the Middle East. Although consular reform gave the Foreign Service the language and uniforms of empire, it failed to give them weapons. As will be seen in the following chapter, this deficiency was most glaring in the area of trade promotion.

CHAPTER 3

DRAGGING BUSINESS THROUGH THE OPEN DOOR, 1902-1931*Part One: Imparting the Mission*

This chapter will examine the daily routine of the consulates in China, Japan, and Turkey, with a view toward identifying the roles of native interpreters and American language students and their steadily increasing prominence in trade and diplomacy from the turn of the century to the beginning of World War II. It will also consider their legal status, workload, and working relationships, and an examination of the relationship between business and the Foreign Service at the personal level.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Student Interpreters Corps (SIC) was created in order to provide American interpreters for United States consulates and embassies respectively in China, Japan, and the Ottoman Empire. The ostensible goal of this and other Foreign Service reforms was the extension of American trade in these states. However, this examination of the SIC indicates that, although initially successful in garnering American business interest and support for Foreign Service reform and expansion, efforts to entice American merchants and companies to enter Asian markets (particularly in China) failed to yield large scale results. In other words, the goal of trade expansion exerted a greater influence on the growth and development of the State Department and language-trained Foreign Service officers, particularly in China, than that of the refurbished Foreign Service on the volume of American trade. Despite trumpeting potential profits and building potential bureaucracy, the State Department was unable to drag American businesses through the Open Door.

Much of this examination of the SIC is concerned with officers in China, and for good reason. First established and by far the largest, the SIC branch in China was the most potentially influential, situated in Asia's largest market centers. In addition, there were far fewer American consular offices in the Japanese and Ottoman empires. The Japanese government had instituted language-training programs for its consular and diplomatic officers nearly a decade before the establishment of the SIC; English-language training at the university level was common for trade-oriented Japanese businessmen.⁸³ Japanese businessmen were far better equipped to penetrate American markets than vice versa.

Similarly, the SIC training program in the Ottoman Empire was interrupted in 1917, when the Sublime Porte severed diplomatic relations with the United States. Although groups of ones and twos had resumed training again by 1927 (in the Turkish Republic), the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire at the end of WWI drastically reduced the commercial importance the American government attached to Turkey.

The establishment of specialized language training for United States diplomatic and consular post in China, Japan, and the Ottoman Empire set apart these positions from the rest of the American Foreign Service by creating a semi-specialized corps of officers, endowed with a specifically conceived mission, whose members spent most of their careers in the aforementioned regions. Although the consular examination system established in 1906 ensured that all career consular officers had some facility in a modern European language (Spanish, French, or German),⁸⁴ the SIC endowed officers with language skills that were unparalleled in the consular service at the time. For this reason, although they were the equals of untrained

⁸³ Barbara Brooks, *Japan's Imperial Diplomacy: Consuls, Treaty Ports, and War in China, 1895-1938* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 51-55.

⁸⁴ The State Department. "Sample Examination Papers," *The Register of the Department of State* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1908), 91-96.

officers in the service at large for purposes of pay and promotion, they rarely served outside of China, Japan, or the Ottoman Empire, respectively.⁸⁵

Their long tenure of foreign residence and work in these countries influenced officers' views on politics, foreign relations, and trade in profound and unique ways, so much so that the terms "China hands" and "Japan hands" were developed to describe them.⁸⁶ Between 1902 (the establishment of the Student Interpreters Corps⁸⁷) and 1937 (the outbreak of Sino-Japanese war), the number of language-trained officers increased steadily, becoming ever more vital to the daily operations of American Foreign Service posts, the workings of American trade, the protection of United States citizens, and the perception of Chinese, Japanese, and Turkish cultures.

Any discussion of the work and activities of language-trained consuls would be incomplete without mentioning the rivalry between the Department of State (particularly the Consular Bureau), and the Department of Commerce. Richard Hume Werking has written extensively on this subject, noting that the primary supporters of the creation of the Department of Commerce and Labor were the same as those interests that promoted consular reorganization, namely "medium-size manufacturing and mercantile concerns."⁸⁸ Werking underscored the ideological differences between the economic outlooks of Oscar Phelps Austin (Bureau of Statistics, under Dept. of Commerce, a protectionist and neo-mercantilist), and Frederic Emory (Bureau of Trade Relations, under the State Department), alongside the numerous turf wars that

⁸⁵ As will be discussed further in detail, the SIC in Turkey was an exception, because after dissolution of the Ottoman Empire at the end of WWI, those officers were released into the service at large.

⁸⁶ However, previous scholarship has considered only a tiny fraction of these officers, concentrating on consular officers such as John Carter Vincent, Edmund O. Clubb, and John Paton Davies, who were persecuted for their views on communism in China at the end of WWII. See John Paton Davies, "The China Hands in Practice: the Personal Experience," *The China Hands' Legacy: Ethics and Diplomacy*, ed. Paul Gordon Lauren, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), 37; Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations throughout History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 237. There was no such designation for SIC Turkey graduates, probably because the program there was comparatively short-lived and chronically short-staffed during its brief existence.

⁸⁷ Hereafter "SIC."

⁸⁸ Werking, *Master Architects*, 53, 171-172.

broke out between the rival agencies.⁸⁹ Among these developments was the creation of special commercial agents in 1905, at the behest of the cotton-producing states, whose work overlapped with that of the consuls but who had greater freedom to travel.⁹⁰ Werking has also outlined a “snowballing process that resulted in greater attention to specific commodity lines,” whereby new agents were frequently added to the department, “sometimes after the solicitation by [Commerce and Labor].”⁹¹ A parallel process developed in the Consular Service through a bureaucratic emphasis on trade reporting—even in regions where trade and investment were marginal concerns (compared to missionary-related work, for example).

Despite the institutional competition from the Department of Commerce, trade promotion remained close to the hearts of senior State Department officials, who desired to instill this priority in the minds of junior officers. Consequently, one of the functions of the consular inspection system was to interrogate consuls on their efforts to extend American trade and provide assistance to U.S. companies operating within their districts.⁹² Even non-career employees, native interpreters, and consular employees were evaluated with a view toward maximizing the trade-promotion capabilities of the Consular Service. This often led to tension between consuls and inspectors, particularly when language-trained consuls were anything less than obsequiously enthusiastic on the subject or when they betrayed even a hint of cautious criticism regarding American trade expansion in their districts.

For example, following his 1923 inspection of the US Consulate in Changsha, China, Nelson T. Johnson sternly rebuked the consul, Carl D. Meinhard (like Johnson himself an SIC-

⁸⁹ Werking, *Master Architects*, 171-217.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 183.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 183-184.

⁹² See Fleming D. Cheshire’s first inspection report on Amoy for a typical example: “1st Inspection of the American Consular Office at Amoy, China, 1907,” *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

trained Chinese specialist) for stating that, because American investments in the district were meager, trade promotion did not constitute a large portion of the consulate's work.⁹³ According to Johnson, it should be the consul's "one aim in life to be the best-informed man in his district on all questions of this [commercial] kind and to that end he will give all of his waking time to the acquiring of the information."⁹⁴

It is worth mentioning that during his inspection Johnson did make an important point to Meinhardt: "the fact that the shelves of the stores and shops display articles of foreign manufacture is convincing evidence that there is a market in the district for goods manufactured abroad."⁹⁵ As no representatives of the companies producing the goods in question were present in Changsha, finding out how these products traveled to the shelves was an important question to Johnson.⁹⁶

Although both language-trained and non-language trained consuls alike strove to provide accurate reports, those of non-language-trained officers were often more careful to stress the importance of trade promotion, and were less frequently castigated for their oversights in this area. In the 1907 inspection of Amoy consulate (the first inspection after the establishment of the inspection service in 1906), Consul Henry Paddock carefully emphasized, "the subject of trade extension will be carefully watched and any point of interest will be immediately reported to the Department."⁹⁷

⁹³ Nelson T. Johnson to Carl D. Meinhardt, "Inspection of American Consulate at Changsha, China," *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

⁹³ Fleming D. Cheshire, "1st Inspection of the American Consular Office at Amoy, China, 1907," *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

⁹⁴ Nelson T. Johnson to Carl D. Meinhardt, "Inspection of American Consulate at Changsha, China," *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Fleming D. Cheshire, "1st Inspection of the American Consular Office at Amoy, China, 1907," *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

There were not many such points in 1907, and consuls like Paddock emphasized this often. In response to the question, “state what openings there are for American trade, industries, and other enterprises in your district, Paddock stated, “there are no apparent openings for trade other than in lines of necessities, such as kerosene, flour, cotton cloth, etc., in this district.”⁹⁸ The most immediate obstacle to American trade expansion the problem was the region’s poverty; another was a dilatory Chinese government: “if the Chinese government enacts a suitable mining code, there will be good mining opportunities for the investment of American capital, and the field for sales of mining machinery will be good.”⁹⁹ American consular officers repeatedly emphasized that the expansion of American trade required the investment of American capital and the extension of more liberal credit terms, as well as catalogues in Mandarin, while noting that “our merchants must take advantage of the opportunities pointed out to them and send men out here to stay and study the wants and needs of the natives. Without an effort of this kind, trade will not develop.”¹⁰⁰ It should be noted that whereas American business was reluctant to enter Chinese markets under these conditions, Japanese merchants were successfully doing so on a large scale by 1910, particularly in Manchuria.¹⁰¹

Under the system of extraterritoriality in China, American consular officers possessed abilities to assist and protect American businessmen (and other US nationals) that they did not have in other countries. These included arranging for the physical security of Americans in their districts, assisting merchants in securing land, facilities, and building permits for their

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Fleming D. Cheshire, “Inspection of the American Consular Office at Mukden, Manchuria, September 19, 1909,” *Inspection Reports of Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

¹⁰¹ Fleming D. Cheshire, “Third Inspection of the American Consular Office at Mukden, Manchuria, August 19-22, 1910,” *Inspection Reports of Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

commercial ventures, protesting and remedying illegal taxation, and in securing payment on fulfilled contracts.¹⁰²

Conversely, one important role of consular officers in China became that of dispelling inflated conceptions of trade opportunities, a role that intensified as SIC graduates gradually filled more and more of the U.S. consular positions in that country. Their fulfillment of this function was hampered by institutional ideology, in the form of the tacitly understood mission to promote American trade. Lack of trade promotion activities (reports of trade opportunities, efforts to protect or expand American business) counted against an officer's efficiency. After all, the underlying impetus to train Americans in Chinese, Japanese, and Ottoman Turkish had been the desire to increase trade. However, an officer could only show the way—he could not drag American businessmen to the Open Door, let alone through it. At the turn of the twentieth century, most American companies operating or seeking to invest in countries such as China, Japan, and the Ottoman Empire did not possess personnel with the requisite language skills, nor did they seek to acquire them. Instead, most companies imagined that such great demand for their products existed that simply sending catalogues and brochures could substitute physical entrance into local markets.

This attitude was particularly endemic to small- to mid-sized firms, most especially members of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), The Cleveland Chamber of Commerce, and the National Business League of Chicago, whose support was vital to the passage of consular reform and expansion legislation.¹⁰³ Secretary of State Elihu Root's touting

¹⁰² Nelson T. Johnson, "Inspection of the American Consular Office at Nanking, China, April 28-30, 1924," *Inspection Reports of Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

¹⁰³ John W. Ela, "Resolution of the National Business League of Chicago," House Document 219 (59-2), 5071, December 24, 1906.

of the supposed business benefits of consular reorganization in 1906 helped achieve the desired reforms but it also led to the adoption of tacit mission to promote American trade aggressively. However, the greatest obstacle to American trade expansion in the fabled “China market” was not so much the American business community’s ignorance of non-European languages as its pervasive unwillingness to correct this deficiency.

Language trained consuls such as E. Carleton Baker recognized the need for greater personal involvement on the part of American business. In a 1914 commercial report for example, Baker noted, “it is easy for Consuls in their reports on China and in their lectures at home to deal in glittering generalities and platitudinous statements about the ‘teeming millions in China,’ the new republic and growing demand for foreign goods, but America will never enjoy a full share of this growing demand unless some definite, concrete and practical means is adopted to this end.”¹⁰⁴ Observing that American merchants were unable to “go after the business,” Baker even proposed to bring leading Chinese merchants from the Chungking district to the United States for consultations with American businessmen.¹⁰⁵

Thus, the dearth of traffic through the Open Door derived from American apathy toward the market and antipathy towards learning Chinese. Recalling the turn-of-the-century Anglo-American mentality in his memoirs, Nelson T. Johnson criticized the general disdain of British and American merchants of this toward learning Chinese, and at the same time praised Standard Oil and British Asiatic Petroleum for pioneering in this manner. He explained, “it was considered by the British and American merchants to be a little *infra dig* to learn Chinese . . . the only American company that really went out to have its young people learn the Chinese language

¹⁰⁴ E. Carleton Baker, Commercial Report, “Taking Business to America,” American Consulate, Chungkin, China, January 14, 1914, Records of the Department of State, RG 59, Decimal File, 123.B/17/20, NARA, College Park, MD.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

was the Standard Oil Company. The Standard Oil Company recruited young people from college, sent them to China and had them learn Chinese, and the advancement of these fellows in the Standard Oil Company depended upon their ability to learn Chinese and play around with the Chinese. So I and my Standard Oil colleagues would very often be together with Chinese where other Americans wouldn't be present, simply because they could talk Chinese. They could mix on terms of social equality.” “I, as a Chinese-speaking representative of the United States Government, used to see a great deal of them here and there.”¹⁰⁶

Even within companies such as Standard Oil and British-American Tobacco (BAT), the vast majority of foreign employees in China spoke no Chinese.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, the comparatively low number of Chinese-speaking BAT and Standard Oil foreign employees rivaled (if it did not exceed) that employed as Chinese language officers by the U.S. government. For example, during WWI, 80 English BAT nationals returned to Britain for military service; many of them served as bilingual interpreters for the Chinese Labor Corps in Europe for the duration of the war.¹⁰⁸ In comparison, by the same period, the American Student Interpreters Corps had trained fewer than 50 Chinese language officers.¹⁰⁹ While the total number of Chinese-trained Westerners was low and their command of the language was probably superficial, it was enough to provide competent middle managers, capable of supervising at marketing and distributing centers in China.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Nelson T. Johnson, *The Reminiscences of Nelson T. Johnson* (New York, NY: Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, 1957), 496-497.

¹⁰⁷ Sherman Cochran, *Big Business in China: Sino-Foreign Rivalry in the Cigarette, 1890-1930* (Harvard, Harvard University Press, 1980), 30.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 242.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 242.

¹¹⁰ Sherman Cochran, *Encountering Chinese Networks: Western, Japanese, and Chinese Companies* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000), 34.

In this vein Nelson T. Johnson's portrayal of these companies highlights the comparative success of the business-oriented language training strategy. Replying to the National Refining Company of Cleveland, OH, Johnson observed that Standard Oil, the Asiatic Petroleum Company, and the Vacuum Oil Company "import stocks and sell at wholesale to Chinese dealers, who act as their agents. These dealers they reach through shroffs and sales agents who visit the dealers periodically and secure such orders as they require."¹¹¹

To be sure, Johnson exerted himself considerably for companies such as Singer Sewing and Standard Oil—probably no less than their language-trained and foreign staff, as well as native employees—but this was expected of American Foreign Service officers.¹¹² In addition to lodging formal requests for payment on delinquent accounts, Johnson also strove to maintain and improve relations between these companies and the local Chinese.¹¹³ Like many of his SIC-trained colleagues in the Consular Service, Johnson also stressed the importance of sending a personal representative; if not one for each district, then at least one for the whole of China—but with sufficient funds and authority to visit the various regions as necessary.¹¹⁴

Consuls such as Johnson acted as middlemen in a variety of informal ways. The most common of these was simply by placing the appropriate people in contact with each other. Johnson's correspondence with Andersen, Meyer and Co (an American import/export company with a branch in Changsha, selling various types of electrical equipment and exporting Chinese raw materials to the United States) offers a good example of this. In this exchange, he sought to

¹¹¹ Nelson T. Johnson [from Changsha, China] to the National Refining Company of Cleveland, OH, *Correspondence, American Consulate, Changsha, 1916*, Vol. 6. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84. NARA.

¹¹² Nelson T. Johnson, *The Reminiscences of Nelson Trusler Johnson* (New York, NY: The Oral History Research Project, Columbia University, 1957), 191.

¹¹³ Nelson T. Johnson to the Standard Oil Company of New York, November 2, 1916, Changsha, China. *Correspondence, American Consulate, Changsha, 1916*, Vol. 6. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84. NARA.

¹¹⁴ Nelson T. Johnson [Changsha, China] to the Ludlow-Saylor Wire Company, November 3, 1916, St. Louis, MO. Changsha, China. *Correspondence, American Consulate, Changsha, 1916*, Vol. 6. Records of Foreign Service Posts. RG 84. NARA.

put that company into contact with a prospective Chinese mining concern attempting to find a buyer for graphite ore.¹¹⁵

Language-trained consuls were invaluable in enforcing contracts. In addition to securing payment for Singer's sewing machines, officers such as Dillard Lasseter, stationed in Antung (Manchuria, China), were often requested to follow up on delinquent payments for goods shipped on consignment. In one case, a Chinese agent in Changpaihsien failed to pay for \$9,200¹¹⁶ of Standard Oil property.¹¹⁷ After failing to collect this debt, the company asked Lasseter, the American consul in nearby Antung who then corresponded with the local Chinese magistrate until the matter was settled.¹¹⁸

The company also requested relief from repeated illegal taxation. In 1922, the Tax Office of the city of Takushan (within the Antung district, about a day's journey away) on several occasions assessed the company with a 10% re-export tax (called a "famine tax," as the proceeds were intended to mitigate the effects of a regional famine).¹¹⁹ The consul duly contacted the magistrate. During his investigation, the Takushan office claimed it could find no record of such taxes. After the company produced receipts, the office provided a series of justifications for the tax, refusing to refund the payments.¹²⁰ Eventually the consul forwarded the matter to the American Legation.¹²¹ The matter was taken up in coordination with the other Powers, and as

¹¹⁵ Nelson T. Johnson to Anderson, Meyer, and Co., November 20, 1916, Changsha, China. *Correspondence, American Consulate, Changsha, 1916*, Vol. 6. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84. NARA.

¹¹⁶ A conservative estimate of the present-day value of this amount is \$117,000. See <http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/relativevalue.php>.

¹¹⁷ Wang Shun Chun to Dillard B. Lasseter, June 14th, 1922, Antung, China, subject no. 340. Consular Posts, Antung, China. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84. NARA.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ H. Barton to William R. Langdon, Antung, July 28th, 1922. Antung, China, subject no. 340. Consular Posts, Antung, China. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84. NARA.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ William R. Langdon to Jacob Gould Shurman, Peking, China, October 7, 1922. Antung, China, subject no. 340. Consular Posts, Antung, China. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84. NARA.

Consul Langdon informed the company in October of 1922 (the original complaint was made in early May), the objectionable taxes would eventually be resolved.¹²²

Michael Hunt has written extensively on the subject of U.S. government relations with American companies operating in China, covering both the development of policy and the relation of that policy to economic competition.¹²³ He has asserted, for example, that the reason American textile exports to China gradually yielded to Japanese products was due to “the economic advantages achieved by Japanese competitors who produced cotton textiles of similar quality and exported them to the American-dominated part of the China market.”¹²⁴ He details the various ways in which the Japanese gradually achieved superiority in price while maintaining high quality by blending different varieties of cotton, making bulk purchases of raw materials, etc.¹²⁵ As will be seen shortly, lower prices were only part of the story; physical presence, cultural empathy, and language were important factors as well. As Hunt has observed, “The Japanese, unlike the Americans, carefully cultivated their market in China. They regulated supply to meet demand, aggressively marketed their products, eliminated costly middlemen, and gladly sold on credit.”¹²⁶

American consular officers recognized these factors as crucial components of success. Language inspection reports, replies to trade inquiries, and personal correspondence bear this out. In the main however, American exporters did not follow the Japanese example; preferring, presumably, to only conquer markets that yielded without a fight. For example, in 1917, SIC

¹²² William R. Langdon to Standard Oil Company, Mukden, China, October 24, 1922. Antung, China, subject no. 340. Consular Posts, Antung, China. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84. NARA.

¹²³ Michael Hunt, “Americans in the China Market: Economic Opportunities and Economic Nationalism, 1890s-1931,” *The Business History Review* 51, no. 3 (Autumn, 1977), 277-307; Michael Hunt, *Frontier Defense and the Open Door: Manchuria in Chinese-American Relations, 1895-1911* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), passim.

¹²⁴ Hunt, “Americans in the China Market,” 286.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 287.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

recruit Norwood Francis Allman stressed, “American trade has rapidly declined in this district due to the fact that the Japanese have gone after it and have got it. Kerosene oil is the only American product that has withstood the Japanese competition but this product is feeling the effect of the cheap Japanese oils on the market.”¹²⁷ Through their polite but enlightening replies to trade inquiries, language-trained consuls helped prevent overzealous and naïve investments; in such instances American businessmen generally were grateful and followed consuls’ advice.

In addition to soliciting their opinions via trade letters, American businessmen also requested consuls’ participation in and publicization of trade conferences. For example, urging the attendance of the U.S. consul and American businessmen located in Yunnan province, one representative of the National Foreign Trade Council emphasized, “we are always keen to strengthen our conventions with Americans fresh from abroad; for they come right from the trenches.”¹²⁸ Despite the general enthusiasm for the input of language-trained consuls, when these officers offered constructive advice for expanding the market share of existing American goods or introducing new products, their business contacts largely ignored their suggestions, whether offered in person, through correspondence, or trade opportunity reports.

The Standard Oil Company was a notable exception to this trend, an example of business done right through its language training program and development of local contractors. Even companies such as Singer Sewing, which were able to achieve a measure of business success in Russia and China, lacked the language training and/or personnel recruiting tools necessary for

¹²⁷ Norwood Francis Allman in Stuart J. Fuller, “Inspection of America Consulate in Amoy, November 24th, 1917,” *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, 25.

¹²⁸ O.K. Davis [National Foreign Trade Council] to Meryl S. Meyers, March 8, 1927, Yunnanfu, China, . 610.1. Correspondence, American Consulate, Yunnanfu, China. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84. NARA.

full market penetration and brand consolidation.¹²⁹ Similarly, few statistics exist regarding the details of Standard Oil's language training programs; future research should illuminate this aspect of Sino-American trade relations in greater detail.

This bifurcation indicates a far more heterogeneous American "power elite" than scholars such as Thomas McCormick have posited,¹³⁰ and complicates the notion that economic expansion in China was a primary goal of American foreign policy during this period. On the contrary, so far as the China market was concerned, trade with Europe and American domestic issues were of much greater importance. Far more than for American businessmen, trade expansion in China was of enormous significance to politicians and bureaucrats—Chinese as well as American.

For example, Hunt has stressed Chinese awareness of the American goal of protecting U.S. trade that one reviewer humorously commented that they sound as though the Chinese "had been reading William Appleman Williams!"¹³¹ For example on the issue of Manchuria, Hunt notes that commercial privileges in both Manchuria and the rest of China were often of less domestic importance than immigration.¹³² The records of consular inspections from this period bear this out.

Coinciding with the conclusion of the Gentleman's Agreement (1907),¹³³ the timing of the inspection report on the American consulate at Amoy certainly confirms this point. Yet

¹²⁹ Mira Wilkins [untitled review], *Business History Review* Vol. 59 no. 1 (Spring 1985), 127-129.

¹³⁰ Thomas J. McCormick, *China Market: America's Quest for Informal Empire, 1893-1901* (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee Publishers, 1967), 10.

¹³¹ Hunt, *Frontier Defense*, 202-203 ; Marilyn B. Young, review [untitled], *Pacific Historical Review* 43, no. 4 (November 1974), 624-625.

¹³² Hunt, *Frontier Defense*, 139,

¹³³ *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of American Regional Cultures: The Pacific Region*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2004. s.v. "ASIAN AMERICANS IN THE PACIFIC REGION,"

racist domestic policies were not the only obstacle to the expansion of American trade in the Amoy district. While highlighting the region's poverty, Consul Paddock noted,

“being the nearest port to Formosa . . . the Japanese also form an appreciable part of the foreign population, and have large concessions and holdings. Consequently their cheap but fairly good quality manufactures hold a great share of the market. The Japanese are on the ground to do their own selling, and being Orientals [they] understand Oriental needs. European wares also have a good sale as they are cheap and are made especially for the people and the climate. These last two considerations are vital and have not been considered by American manufacturers.”¹³⁴

Thus, American trade faced several disadvantages. The proximity of Japanese-governed Formosa to Amoy was an important example; the lack of American concessions in China was another. Yet another was the attitude of those foreign powers possessing territorial and/or railway concessions in China. For example, in 1936 the French refused to allow shipment of American airplanes or spare parts via the Yunnan Railway, even if sold via a French company.¹³⁵ The French gave preference instead to Japanese products on consignment to French companies, scoffing at American consul Arthur Ringwalt's suggestion that Americans might make more reliable partners than the Japanese.¹³⁶ The United States could do little about these obstacles (and had scant desire to attempt to do so), but there was another problem, entirely American-

¹³⁴ Henry L. Paddock, in Fleming Cheshire, “Inspection of the American Consular Office at Amoy, China, 1907,” *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

¹³⁵ Arthur Ringwalt to Julean Arnold, American Consulate, Yunnanfu China, January 28, 1936, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, RG 84, Records of the Department of State, NARA, College Park, MD.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

made: the production of *cheap* goods, tailored to local needs and tastes. To be successful in China, an American company had to adapt its product to local conditions, which required physical representation for both intelligence-gather and marketing. Inspector Fleming seems to have recognized this, as in his report on Paddock's commercial work he noted, "reports sent by this consulate have completely covered the trade possibilities without giving undue encouragement for large trade when such possibilities do not exist."¹³⁷

Without Americans actually present, willing, and able to do business in China, there was little that consuls could do to promote American trade—no matter how good their language skills were. For example, during George L. Murphy's inspection visit to Chungking in 1913, Consul Edward Carleton Baker asserted, "catalogues and other trade literature are handed to merchants who are likely to place orders with American firms, and the various features in these publications are carefully translated and explained to them."¹³⁸ The dubious value of such handouts is reinforced by noting that in early twentieth China (and the same goes for Turkey, and to a lesser extent, comparatively more westernized Japan) the notion of a "fixed price" for goods—let alone catalogues whereby such goods could be purchased—was novel and alien. As indicated by Inspector Fleming Cheshire, this occasionally caused confusion and resentment between language-trained American consuls and Chinese employees;¹³⁹ using catalogues in this era was thus a desperate and forlorn marketing attempt at best: Baker himself noted that local merchants

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ George L. Murphy, "2nd Inspection of Consular Office at Chungking, China, 1913," *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

¹³⁹ Fleming D. Cheshire, "First Inspection of Consular Office at Chungking, China, 1910," *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

rarely consulted them (and this apathy obtained in one of the most prosperous regions of China at the time).¹⁴⁰

According to Baker, a few local merchants did place a few limited orders for *some* American goods as the result of his huckstering, but these isolated, one-time purchases could hardly serve as motivation for long-term U.S. investments—especially after he explained local market conditions to such American merchants as were brave enough to visit.¹⁴¹ Baker also emphasized repeatedly that the local Chinese usually purchased foreign goods, American or otherwise, from trade centers such as Shanghai, rather than import them into Chungking directly.¹⁴² Finally, all things being equal (Chungking was one of the few consular districts in China where “Open Door” conditions could theoretically obtain), Baker hit upon one of the showstoppers for American trade expansion. In this comparatively prosperous region, he observed,

“there are opportunities to sell American electric and mining machinery and many other classes of American products. The field at present however, is very limited and requires assiduous cultivation. This can best be accomplished by *personal representation* and by distributing samples among responsible firms. More liberal credits should also be extended and goods should be placed on commission with reliable concerns [emphasis added].”¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

Such counsel was not confined to one region. For example, Perceival Heintzelman (among the very first Student Interpreters to be appointed) similarly stressed the importance of sending *resident* Americans to the field to cultivate the China Market:

“More young Americans should be sent here in responsible positions as representatives of some of the greater industries and allowed to develop their particular business in the community in which they reside. The casual drummer with catalogues, figures, and a few samples is not in nearly so favorable a position for securing orders as the resident agent who is known to the community and acquainted with the conditions of trade.”¹⁴⁴

This advice mirrored earlier suggestions by officers such as Willard Straight, Charles Arnell, and Frederic D. Cloud at Mukden between 1907 and 1909.¹⁴⁵ Echoing their observations, Inspector Fleming D. Cheshire emphasized, “our merchants and manufacturers must take advantage of the opportunities pointed out to them and send men out here to stay and study the wants and needs of the natives. Without an effort of this kind, trade will not develop.”¹⁴⁶ These suggestions, combined with answering trade letters and inquiries from distant American businesses and merchants, were the approximate extent of “trade promotion.” Significant as they were, unless companies were prepared to invest the time and money necessary to establish networks and deal with locals, “trade promotion” was more a bureaucratic emphasis, than an entrepreneurial support service.

¹⁴⁴ Fleming D. Cheshire, “Third Inspection of Consular Office at Shanghai,” June 26th to July 5th, General Records of the Department of State, *Inspection Reports of Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁴⁵ Fleming D. Cheshire, “Inspection of the American Consular Office at Mukden, China, May 21st 1907,” and that of September 19th, 1909. *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

In addition to Chinese poverty, there were several reasons why American-manufactured goods and equipment failed to gain traction. According to Consul Frederick Cloud while stationed in Mukden, Chinese farmers were ignorant of modern farming practices and unable to use American farming equipment—although this did not dampen the inquirer’s enthusiasm.¹⁴⁷ According to consuls such Edward Baker previously mentioned, small- to mid-size American companies had little appetite for risk, and were generally unwilling to sell on credit.¹⁴⁸ Although most consulates received and maintained “commercial libraries” containing catalogues of American products, they were invariably written in English, rather than Chinese, Japanese, Turkish, etc.

Despite the commitment of men such as William Howard Taft and Philander C. Knox to expanding American trade in Manchuria, China, and throughout Asia, the United States Government could not drag American companies through the Open Door—however hard it might try.¹⁴⁹ When companies did invest in China directly, according the numerous suggestions of American consuls, the payoff was often excruciatingly slow. For example, in 1909 Inspector Cheshire stressed the role of Consul Frederick Cloud (an SIC graduate) role in persuading the local government to hire an American engineer to oversee an electrical plant in Mukden.¹⁵⁰ Eight years later, Consul Edward Baker (not an SIC graduate) observed a small increase in importation of American electrical equipment, noting that this

¹⁴⁷ The Avery Company of Peoria, IL [signature unclear] to Frederick D. Cloud, Mukden, China, July 7, 1909. “Inspection of the American Consular Office at Mukden, China, September 19th, 1909, *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁴⁸ George L. Murphy, “2nd Inspection of Consular Office at Chungking, China, 1913,” *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁴⁹ Michael Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship: The United States and China to 1914* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1983), 209-215.

¹⁵⁰ Fleming D. Cheshire, “Inspection of the American Consular Office at Mukden, China, May 21st 1907,” and that of September 19th, 1909. *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

“has largely been sold through an American engineer who located in this district, learned the Chinese language, and gradually acquired a position of influence in the community. With the strong German and Japanese competition, these results could not have been obtained any other way. Similar methods must be adopted on many other lines if business on any large scale is to develop.”¹⁵¹

This anecdote provides an example of the accuracy of language-trained officers’ assessments of local market conditions and their suggestions to American companies, as well the way in which the officers themselves became invisible even when their economic advice bore fruit. Eight years after the fact, few cared (and no one probably remembered) that Cloud’s influence with the local government (by recommending the hire of an American engineer) translated into tangible profits for Americans.

Success stories such as this were fairly rare. Rather than understanding “trade promotion” as consular huckstering for American products, in light of the hundreds of trade inquiries by diverse American firms—dealing in everything from automobiles to pig bristles—it is equally accurate to portray these efforts as providing a caution against overzealous, flawed investments. In every case, they sought to answer inquiries frankly and thoroughly, and to offer practical suggestions. The response of Albert W. Pontius to the Kern Commercial Company of New York, while posted to Mukden, offers a typical example. While agreeing to post the company’s catalogues in the consulate’s library, Pontius informed his clients, “actual representation and

¹⁵¹ Stuart Jameson Fuller, “Inspection of the American Consular Office at Mukden,” October 26th-20th, 1917. *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

demonstration are the essentials of successful sales in this district. Foreign catalogues and descriptive literature [in English] have little effect.”¹⁵²

This picture is not entirely new. As Michael Hunt has demonstrated, the domestic market remained far more important to American businessmen than the mythical China market¹⁵³—no matter how glowingly select spokesmen described it. Hunt observed, “while the Japanese pursued customers abroad far more numerous than those at home, the American industry had immediately at hand a market that was large, still growing, and protected by a substantial tariff.”¹⁵⁴ What is striking however, is how repeatedly, pervasively, and specifically these language-trained, comparatively low-ranking officers outlined potential blueprints for success to a multitude of American entrepreneurs—and how so very few companies actually followed their instructions.

In the face of such widespread recalcitrance, the assertion of a “power elite” as fueling the drive for Asian markets verges on the ludicrous.¹⁵⁵ McCormick argued that “just as some contemporary historians, such as Gabriel Kolko, have seen the business-oriented community as the prime dynamic for progressive reform at home, so it seems to me . . . that the same elements acted as the chief shapers of expansionism in the 1890s—and many for the same ends”¹⁵⁶ Although this might be the case concerning turn-of-the-century efforts to reform the Consular Service, beyond this there was neither consensus nor concerted effort. In the domestic market, American companies did not have to face the same regime uncertainty—compounded by foreign

¹⁵² Albert W. Pontius to the Kern Commercial Company, New York, NY, May 11th, 1920, in Charles C. Eberhardt, “Sixth Inspection of Consular Office at Mukden, China,” *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁵³ Hunt, “Americans in the China Market,” 287.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ McCormick, *China Market*, 10.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

competition—that they faced in areas such as China. Nor did they confront even remotely similar linguistic and cultural barriers.

Thus, while American businessmen and entrepreneurs forwarded their English-language catalogues and brochures, hoping to pique the interest of potential Chinese customers from afar, the Japanese assiduously cultivated their would-be clients, aided by greater proximity to their manufacturing centers and privileged by their formal territorial concessions. That American concerns refrained from sending representatives after receiving explicit and often-repeated instructions on how to compete in markets throughout China—from officers steeped in the belief that trade promotion was the highest goal of the Consular Service—demolishes the notion of a unified American “power elite” aggressively pursuing economic empire in China. If such an elite existed, in the shadow of its Japanese counterpart it was indifferent, incompetent, and impotent. In any case, following the passage of Consular/Foreign Service reforms in Congress in 1906, American commercial interest in China scarcely budged upward, whereas Japanese economic venture and interest both increased steadily.

However, when American businesses were active in their districts, American consuls exerted themselves to the fullest to assist them. Recalling his early years in the Service as a consular officer, former Ambassador Nelson T. Johnson remarked, “the Singer Sewing Machine Company sold [their] machines all over China even though they were located in the treaty ports. One of my headaches in those days was tracking down those doggoned machines and see that the payments were kept up.”¹⁵⁷ Obtaining local, provincial, and occasionally national government cooperation in the enforcement of contracts was an important function of these language-trained consuls.

¹⁵⁷ Nelson T. Johnson, *The Reminiscences of Nelson Trusler Johnson* (New York, NY: The Oral History Research Project, Columbia University, 1957), 191.

In China during the early decades of the 20th century, political instability made this task particularly vital-for Chinese as well as American businessmen. For example, in 1927 the Chinese Kochiu Tin Trading Company (controlled by the provincial government) wanted to buy American mining machinery via Andersen, Meyer, and Co. Seeking to protect itself against price gouging, the Chinese company stipulated that the invoices for the equipment be sent through the American consulates in China.¹⁵⁸

At every stage in the negotiations between the Chinese and American companies, the language-trained American consuls played a crucial role in persuading local authorities to select an American company, in the face of stiff competition from British, French, and German representatives.¹⁵⁹ According to Andersen and Meyer's representative in Shanghai, H. H. Braun, Consul Meryl S. Meyers had discovered

“that a new power and mining plant was to be constructed by the Kochiu Tin Trading Company (at Kochiu, Yunnan province, China). He immediately made a careful investigation, saw their Chief Engineer, called upon the Chinese Commissioner of Foreign Affairs, and the Chinese Managing Director, and after completing his investigations and realizing the importance of the project, communicated the information to your Consulate General here [Shanghai].”¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ H.H. Braun to Joseph E. Jacobs, January 25, 1927, Yunnanfu, China. 610.1. Correspondence, American Consulate, Yunnanfu, China. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84. NARA.

¹⁵⁹ H. H. Braun to C. E. Gauss, February 17, 1927. 610.1. Correspondence, American Consulate, Yunnanfu, China. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84. NARA.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

Subsequently, Meyers was transferred Joseph E. Jacobs (another SIC-trained consul) took his place in Yunnanfu. Braun further noted that because the negotiations were extremely sensitive, “the Chinese authorities would not trust their own interpreters and throughout the negotiations in Yunnanfu, Mr. Jacobs, who is unusually proficient in the Chinese language, sat with me, served as interpreter, guide, and assistant in every way.”¹⁶¹ It was clear to Mr. Braun that the consuls had been indispensable during every stage of the transaction. He stressed that “as a result of Mr. Myers’ and Mr. Jacobs’ work we were enabled to sign a contract for a power and mining plant on very advantageous terms . . . without the assistance of Mr. Meyers and Mr. Jacobs, the sale would not have been made.”¹⁶²

After signing the original contract, Jacobs apparently maintained his efforts with the Yunnan government, as Braun further observed, “through Mr. Jacobs’ assistance in working with the provincial authorities . . . another engineering project of considerable magnitude has come to us.”¹⁶³ The total value of the contracted products was more than \$300,000, the present-day value of which is over \$3 million—by even the most conservative estimate.¹⁶⁴ Such sales thus represented significant achievements, despite falling short of the gargantuan hopes concerning the potential of “the China Market.”

As mentioned previously, it was the Chinese company that had requested the involvement of American consuls, in this instance as added protection against price gouging in a cost-plus contract.¹⁶⁵ The manner in which subsequent events played out reveals a schizophrenic United States trade policy, one which claimed to seek the extension of American trade in every

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., for the dollar’s value in 1927, see <http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/relativevalue.php>.

¹⁶⁵ H.H. Braun to Joseph E. Jacobs, January 25, 1927, Yunnanfu, China. 610.1. Correspondence, American Consulate, Yunnanfu, China. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84. NARA.

way possible, but flatly refused to provide the most rudimentary accommodation for international transactions. Combined with the explosive political instability in China during the 1920s, this capricious trade policy presented a powerful disincentive for direct American investment in China.

The Kotchiu Tin company affair outlines the justification the American business preference for domestic and European markets. The constant *ad hoc*, often un-sanctioned support that officers such as Nelson Johnson, Meryl S. Meyers, and Joseph E. Jacobs provided to U.S. companies was important, perhaps even vital, for those companies operating in China during the early 20th century. Indoctrinated with the gospel of trade extension and spurred by individual ambition, language-trained consuls were willing to do whatever was necessary to advance American trade. However, the formal reluctance of the State and Commerce departments to condone any action other than the compilation and dissemination of market information or informal negotiations with local officials cast a shadow over consuls' recommendations concerning direct investments.

For example, the crux of the arrangement between the Chinese tin company in Kokiuchang and Andersen, Meyer, and Co., Ltd, was that by sending the invoices through official channels, the departments of State and Commerce could certify that the prices listed on the invoices represented the actual costs of the machinery; Andersen and Meyer would profit by commission.¹⁶⁶ Both the American consul and the Commercial Attaché forwarded some of these invoices as requested, commenting that they showed “the actual net cost of the materials

¹⁶⁶ W. H. Rastall to Julean Arnold [SIC-trained American Commercial Attache], August 27, 1927, Shanghai China. 610.1. Correspondence, American Consulate, Yunnanfu, China. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84. NARA.

mentioned.¹⁶⁷ After the fact however, these field officers were informed that senior officials in both the State and Commerce Departments “felt that it was unwise to certify in any way the accuracy of these invoices,” and refused to forward any other invoices, much to the bewilderment of Arnold and Jacobs.¹⁶⁸ To minimize the inconsistency, J. V. A. MacMurray instructed the Yunnanfu consulate to forward any additional invoices informally.¹⁶⁹ Although bewildering to field officers, this bureaucratic hiccup proved to be one of the lesser threats to completion of the contract.

Regime change in China at the national level led to parallel turmoil in Yunnan province during 1927. As the local government administered the tin mines, which were its primary revenue source, Andersen, Meyer, & Co. was naturally concerned about what the political upheaval meant for the mining equipment contract.¹⁷⁰ Consul Jacobs kept the company abreast of political developments in Yunnan and the resulting shakeup of management of the tin company.¹⁷¹

In light of the efforts of officers such as Nelson T. Johnson, Joseph E. Jacobs, and many others, the reluctance of the State and Commerce Departments to condone the mere certification of invoices might appear anomalous. However, for all the turn-of-the-century blather about extending American foreign trade, the influence of certain classical liberal ideals persisted. Chief among these was that there was a limit to the assistance the United States government

¹⁶⁷ Joseph E. Jacobs to the Kotchiu Tin Trading Company [English translation, with attached copy of the Chinese original], August 6, 1927, Kokiuchang, China. 610.1. Correspondence, American Consulate, Yunnanfu, China. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84. NARA.

¹⁶⁸ W. H. Rastall to Julean Arnold [SIC-trained American Commercial Attache], August 27, 1927, Shanghai China. 610.1. Correspondence, American Consulate, Yunnanfu, China. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84. NARA.

¹⁶⁹ J.V.A. MacMurray to William I. Hagan [vice-consul], December 31, 1927. 610.1. Correspondence, American Consulate, Yunnanfu, China. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84. NARA.

¹⁷⁰ H. H. Braun to Joseph E. Jacobs, March 3, 1927, Yunnanfu, China. 610.1. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84. NARA.

¹⁷¹ Joseph E. Jacobs to Messrs. Andersen, Meyer, and Co., March 2, 1927, Shanghai, China. 610.1. Correspondence, American Consulate, Yunnanfu, China. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84. NARA.

should extend to American business. As Richard Werking has observed, reformer Elihu Root, despite laying a heavy emphasis upon the role of the State Department in holding “open the door for the entrance of American trade and to make its progress and extension easy, I do not believe in too much Government.”¹⁷²

The attitude of U.S. policymakers in the State Department appears to have been that if American manufacturers and producers simply had the right information, their products could, and would penetrate any market. Yet according to officers such as Ernest Price, “the market here is not for the asking, it would have to be planned, studied, and then fought for.”¹⁷³ Only a very select few companies were willing to invest such efforts. Scholarship such as that of Sherman Cochran has sketched the early efforts of companies such as Standard Oil and British-American Tobacco to provide language training to some of their employees in China.¹⁷⁴ However, his valuable study of encounters between Chinese networks and foreign businesses devotes only a few pages to interpreters and language training and its importance to transnational business.

In an article discussing American business successes in China, Michael Hunt has asserted, “the experience of [Standard Oil and the British American Tobacco Company] . . . suggest that direct government support was marginal to long term success and to the solution of daily problems.”¹⁷⁵ Hunt also argued, “as the trade expansionists alleged, the American diplomatic and consular service was indeed weak. Those few consuls with a knowledge of the Chinese language and Chinese commercial conditions could claim better pay and perquisites by

¹⁷² Werking, *Master Architects*, 93.

¹⁷³ Ernest Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

¹⁷⁴ Sherman Cochran, *Encountering Chinese Networks: Western, Japanese, and Chinese Corporations in China, 1880-1937* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), passim.

¹⁷⁵ Michael Hunt, “Americans in the China Market: Economic Opportunities and Economic Nationalism, 1890s-1931,” *The Business History Review* 51, No. 3 (Autumn, 1977), 277-307.

going into business.”¹⁷⁶

Hunt’s article spans over forty years, and it is unclear what years or decades he is describing. During the 1890s and early 1900s, the Consular Service certainly was weak, but it was improving. Reformers such as Elihu Root and Wilbur Carr ensured that. As for language-training, the breakup of the Ottoman Empire at the end of WWI effectively terminated the SIC in Turkey, but in Japan and China it remained strong and active, with over 240 graduates by the 1920s.¹⁷⁷ Regulating the supply to meet demand, during the 1930s new appointees to the SIC slowed to a trickle, but by the 1920s nearly every consulate in China or Japan that had work for a language-trained consular officer had one on its staff. The same was true of the American Legation in Peking and the Embassy in Tokyo, each with a Secretariat staffed by a SIC-trained consular officer and subordinates.¹⁷⁸

As for Hunt’s claim that language-trained consuls could obtain better pay and conditions in private business, although it might seem intuitive, this simply did not happen in more a small handful of cases, due mostly to the fact that very few American companies were willing to invest in permanent local representatives. The original ten-year service agreement (later reduced to five), required by law, further deterred defections from the Foreign Service to private enterprise.¹⁷⁹ In the rare case these officers left the service before retirement (because of the slow promotions and poor pay cited by Hunt), they most often entered academia or practiced

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Wilbur J. Carr, “Wilbur J. Carr Discusses Consular Service: Promotion Based Entirely on Merit,” Special Article, *The Harvard Crimson*, March 21, 1921.

¹⁷⁸ For example, see Robert Frazer Jr., “Inspection of Ferdinand L. Mayer [struck through in pencil] at Peking, China, 1927, officer in Charge J.V.A. MacMurray” *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁷⁹ The Statutes at Large, “An Act to Provide for the Reorganization of the Consular Service of the United States,” 59-1, Chs. 1363, 1366, page 101. *The Statutes at Large of the United States of America* (DEC 1905—MAR 1907). Part 1. Washington, G.P.O., 1907.

law.¹⁸⁰ Aside from missionaries, language-trained consuls in China, Japan, and Turkey constituted the largest group of language-competent Americans in these countries. Moreover, it was on these individuals that even the largest firms had to rely if they wanted to invoke extraterritorial privileges.

Thus, however minimal it might seem at first glance, even for companies like Standard Oil and British-American Tobacco, support from the language-trained, invisible middle of the Consular Service in China was necessary; to the daily operations of many smaller American companies operating in China, it was vital. Such firms included Andersen, Meyer, and Co., United States Steel, whose physical presence in China was generally limited to Shanghai.¹⁸¹ Although the benefits of a language-trained Consular Service accrued unevenly—primarily to those few companies like Standard Oil with a large physical presence in China, which arguably required the least service—they *were* crucial in identifying new opportunities, and resolving some (not all) trade and taxation disputes.

Language-trained consuls acted as middlemen in variety of transactions. Although their most immediate concern (as a result of the Service's stated priority) was commercial expansion, and presumably, a preference for defending American interests, they did not hesitate to transmit complaints concerning product quality, service, etc., to U.S.-based companies. For example, when foreign customers made complaints about American goods, they often sent them via the U.S. consulates. For example, when Chinese buyers of American bamboo steel complained about cracked and chipped bars of steel and refused to purchase more, the seller (a multilingual

¹⁸⁰ For example, see Norwood F. Allman, *Shanghai Lawyer* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1943), 76-79.

¹⁸¹ See W. H. Rastall to Julean Arnold [SIC-trained American Commercial Attache], August 27, 1927, Shanghai China. 610.1. Correspondence, American Consulate, Yunnanfu, China. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84. NARA; Joseph E. Jacobs [U.S. Consulate, Yunnanfu] to United States Steel [Shanghai], August 3, 1927, 610.1. Correspondence, American Consulate, Yunnanfu, China. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84.

Japanese merchant working for a French firm in Yunnanfu province) appealed to the American consul (Joseph E. Jacobs) intervene.¹⁸²

Apparently, the cracks developed as part of the quenching process in the production and transshipment of the steel and did not affect its quality.¹⁸³ Nevertheless, the Chinese buyers were unconvinced and demanded a discount, threatening the seller (who operated on a consignment and cost-plus basis) with steep losses.¹⁸⁴ Not wishing to jeopardize a long-term trade relationship, the American company requested that Jacobs tactfully represent their interests, stressing their wish to accommodate the buyers' preferences, but without consenting to drastic losses.¹⁸⁵

Business interests were not the only American concerns that consuls worked to protect, often relying on their language skills and cultural expertise. For example, Edwin Stanton recounted his experience while stationed in Kalgan, helping arrange a scientific expedition of the American Museum of Natural History in 1926. Just before the beginning of the trip, troops under the command of Marshal Feng Yu-hsiang confiscated fifty of the expedition's pack camels. Aroused in the middle of the night to handle the crisis, Stanton protested the seizure—over tea and cigarettes—to the commanding officer. In Stanton's account, the officer observed that his superior had ordered him to procure fifty camels for the imminent campaign, telling Stanton, "please think of my great difficulty." "I am thinking of your great difficulty," was Stanton's response, "and how much more serious it will be for you tomorrow when I tell your great

¹⁸² United States Steel Products Company to Joseph E. Jacobs, July 18, 1927, Yunnanfu, China, 610.1. Correspondence, American Consulate, Yunnanfu, China. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84. NARA.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

General Feng that fifty camels of the expedition for which he has issued a protecting permit have been seized by his troops.” The camels were released immediately.¹⁸⁶

Such anecdotes illustrate the dynamic that language training brought to American Foreign Service officers in China, Japan, and Turkey. Although untrained officers like Henry Paddock could adequately report on trade conditions, relying on a native interpreter for essential interactions with local Chinese, they could not possibly resolve situations such as the one Stanton described. The ability to do so increased rapidly as the Chinese political situation deteriorated.

This was particularly true in more remote districts (remote from Peking, that is), such as the Chungking consulate. As Inspector Cheshire noted in 1910, the distance from the capital¹⁸⁷ increased the need for the consul to be capable of “original action in the event of certain important cases arising without referring the matter to the Legation at Peking for instructions.”¹⁸⁸ According to the inspector, missionary and mercantile protection cases constituted a large part of the work of the consulate at the time, further highlighting the frequent necessity of independent action and stressing the ability to collaborate closely with Chinese officials.¹⁸⁹ Moreover, at this post Consul Pontius was not only vital to protection of American interests (chiefly missionaries), but also to intelligence gathering on British, French, and German rivalry.¹⁹⁰

Such inspection reports reveal the various officers, their careers, conduct, and opinions as they rotated through American consulates throughout China, Japan, and Turkey. Particularly in

¹⁸⁶ Edwin F. Stanton, *Brief Authority: Excursions of a Common Man in an Uncommon World* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1956), 34-35.

¹⁸⁷ This was an advantage during the second Sino-Japanese war and WWII, when Chungking served as the temporary capital of China.

¹⁸⁸ Fleming D. Cheshire, “1st Inspection of Consular Office at Chungking, China, 1910,” *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

China, officers' views and trade-related work indicate a thorough grasp of the economic, political, and historical challenges that American merchants would have to grapple with while attempting to pass through the Open Door. They frequently-emphasized importance of Chungking as the proper site for a U.S. consulate suggests officers' deep appreciation for Chinese history, and their understanding that cultural and political change originated not in the coastal cities and treaty ports but in the heart of China's hinterland. Consul E. Carleton Baker stridently defended the consulate's location during one inspection, noting,

“the seaport offices are on the very rim or fringe of China where movements and changes of thought or purpose do not *begin* . . . Chungking is almost 1000 miles further up the [Yangtze] river than is Hankow, and it is reached by travelling through narrow mountain gorges liberally sprinkled with dangerous rapids and rendered more dangerous by river pirates.”¹⁹¹

Baker, like Pontius before him, defended the Chungking location believing that Congressional parsimony would never permit establishment of two American consulates within the same province so deep inside China's hinterland.¹⁹² If it is permissible to speak of a (monolithic?) American “power elite,” as have scholars such as Thomas McCormick,¹⁹³ it was a doubly risk-averse elite, with little stomach for campaigns of economic conquest even when they

¹⁹¹ Edward Carleton Baker in George H. Murphy, “2nd Inspection of Consular Office at Chungking, China, 1913,” *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA. Baker was not an SIC graduate, and therefore relied on local native interpreters. See Stuart Jameson Fuller, “Inspection of the American Consular Office at Mukden,” October 26th-20th, 1917.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*; George H. Murphy, “2nd Inspection of Consular Office at Chungking, China, 1913,” *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁹³ Thomas J. McCormick, *China Market: America's Quest for Informal Empire, 1893-1901* (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee Publishers, 1967), 10.

lay open, unencumbered by the trappings of formal colonialism. The putatively political elite in Congress lacked the will to follow British, German, French, and Japanese initiative in setting up higher-ranking consulates in Chengtu, while the ostensible “business elite” could not muster entrepreneurial spirit sufficient to send permanent representatives to Chengtu or Chungking to hawk their wares.¹⁹⁴

In this way an awkward system of trade promotion developed. Trade expansion had been both the *raison d’être* of the Student Interpreters Corps and the marketing tool that reformers such as Elihu Root and Wilbur Carr had used to push consular reform through Congress in order to strengthen and enlarge the United States’ Foreign Service. Yet as the next chapter will illuminate in further detail, the largely unstated goal of increased American prestige and power was achieved (albeit incompletely and imperfectly, as will be seen) through the allocation of funds and the addition of personnel. In terms of American commercial expansion and Foreign Service professionalization, both the American business public and Student Interpreter recruits were sold a bill of goods.

¹⁹⁴ Edward Carleton Baker in George H. Murphy, “2nd Inspection of Consular Office at Chungking, China, 1913,” *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

CHAPTER 4

**ODDBALLS AND HARDBALLS: TALENT, BUREAUCRACY, AND PERSONALITY IN
THE STUDENT INTERPRETERS CORPS, 1902-1945**

The mission of the Student Interpreters Corps demanded the recruitment and retention of talented and intelligent individuals possessing unique mindsets and nearly military patriotism. In this reformers were successful. However, like those of their contemporary and modern foreign and domestic counterparts, their career paths remained wedded to the consular/diplomatic branch of their nation's government. Unlike their non-Western colleagues, American Student Interpreters could not easily transfer between departments, inside or outside of foreign relations. Unlike those of more specialized services, such as that of Britain, consular positions within Asian and Middle Eastern countries were not generally restricted to officers knowing the relevant languages.

With the emphasis on language during the first two years of appointment gradually yielding to crisis management during 1920s, the hodge-podge system quickly evolved from mere trade promotion to political reporting, although the institutional preference for the former continued to influence officers' records long after the true emphasis had shifted (in the early 1920s). Within the Far East Division and among American Foreign Service officers in China, Japan, and the Ottoman Empire, a "Peking" order emerged by the mid-1920s that continued to influence American policy in East Asia until well after WWII. It included continued ideological support for trade expansion (the push for which sharply diminished during the 1920s and '30s), cautious but firm opposition to Japanese aggression in China, and a growing awareness of and concern regarding the rising Communist challenge. This broad consensus fielded challenges

from Japanese-trained officers as well as its own junior officers and was the dominant civilian influence on American foreign policy in Asia from the 1930s until the end of WWII.

As will be outlined in this chapter however, this order was based on personalities and was inherently unstable and dependent upon personal relationships, friendships among officers. Personal rivalries—particularly junior officers’ animosity toward Stanley Hornbeck later fractured the order and complicated a unified voice on US policy in East Asia after WWII. Additionally, the transfer of Ambassador Nelson Johnson to Australia in 1941 (likely the result of FDR’s personal animosity) severed the head of the China SIC’s paving the way for uninformed characters such as Hurley to pursue a massively unpopular (with SIC graduates) course correction. The result of these developments was the marginalization of officers who could and did influence formulation of US policy in China. However, this group was inherently unstable, dependent on the acquiescence of seemingly indomitable benefactors.

Shepherded by a few influential China officers, such as Nelson T. Johnson and Stanley Hornbeck, American policy as propagated by this order envisioned challenging Japan’s dominance in China while downplaying the increasing military and political dangers of doing so. Something akin to a “good old boys’ club” combined with the sheer numbers of the China service to channel American policy against Japan, even though no such distinctly anti-Japanese policy existed. As will be outlined in a later chapter, the China Hands saw Japan as the primary threat, whereas the Japan Hands viewed war with Japan as to be avoided at all costs, including sacrificing influence and interests in China.

The early twentieth century saw the emergence of three distinct groups of language-trained Foreign Service officers, specializing in Chinese, Japanese, and Ottoman Turkish. As mentioned elsewhere, the Chinese specialists vastly outnumbered the other two groups

combined. After the Ottoman Empire severed diplomatic relations with the United States in 1917, the Turkish Student Interpreters program was suspended. The dissolution and dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire after WWI rendered moot any serious renewal of the Turkish language program and the few career officers who remained were released to the general service.

The China Hands' prominent role in American China policy was therefore inevitable. That they disagreed with Japan Hands more willing to placate Japan in order to avoid war is also hardly surprising. The historiography of Sino-American relations is riddled with controversy over the persecution of "China Hands" such as John Davies, John Service, and O. Edmund Clubb while barely acknowledging the countervailing narratives from "Japan Hands"—unless they advocate politically popular positions, such as the un-necessity for the use of atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki—while glossing over more substantive and detailed disagreements from the late 1930s.

Examination of the middle men of the American Foreign Service in China, Japan, and Turkey re-focuses debate upon the details of American policy and its implementation in the Far and Middle East and highlights the dearth of pre-formulated imperial ambitions for these regions. In fact, this investigation suggests that the curtailed career paths of the language-trained officers of the SIC were interwoven with the fractured and contentious politics of Sino-American relations from the Pacific War onwards.

Most scholars who have studied American relations with Asia and the Middle East during the first half of the twentieth century have encountered Student Interpreter Corps graduates. Students of Sino-American relations during this period will likely recognize the names of "China Hands" such as O. Edmund Clubb, John Carter Vincent, and John Paton Davies. Scholars of

Japanese-American relations cannot avoid at least passing reference to Joseph Ballantine (both erstwhile subordinates and close associates of U.S. Ambassador to Japan Joseph Grew).

However, scholars who portray “Open Door” policy as a vehicle of informal imperial economic expansion fail to identify actual imperial processes at work. As will be examined in greater detail in a subsequent chapter, imperial economic expansionist ideology existed, particularly at the administrative level in the State Department, but failed to translate into concrete steps at the district level—the level at which SIC graduates were most active.

Identifying actual American imperial policy prior to WWII requires tremendous historical telescoping: the closer one approaches purported imperial policy, the further the historian retreats from what actually happened.

As has been emphasized in the previous chapter, trade expansion ideology functioned as an early 20th century form of political correctness. SIC graduates who perceived and acted upon this were able to use this reality as a vehicle of career advancement but could not actually drag American business through the purportedly “open” door into Chinese markets. As will be seen in this chapter, “Open Door” ideology permeated the SIC at the personnel level, but the nascent professionalization, personal administration, and parsimonious precluded actual empire building.

Much of the chapter focuses on the contradictory, even capricious administration of the SIC, including career management of its graduates. Hardly unusual by 19th and early 20th century American bureaucratic standards, the SIC and its consular exponents in China, Japan, and Turkey were no match for the British, French, and Japanese models, on which the American Student Interpreters Corps was ostensibly patterned. Instead (as will be detailed further in a later chapter), the American system of interpreter training and employment more closely resembled

that of the late Ottoman Empire in its emphasis on personal connections, patronage, and informal diplomacy.

In this vein, one section of this chapter is devoted to “native” employees of the American Foreign Service in China, Japan, and Turkey. Scholars of Sino-American relations have repeatedly assumed the existence of an “imperial” relationship without reference to any actual references to imperial administration. For example, Eileen P. Scully has asserted, “imperial expansion was a process of penetration, transformation, and incorporation that turned on transactions between indigenous elites in the target area and those whom they dominated in their own society; between those indigenous elites and foreign powers; and between the foreign powers and their own domestic constituencies.”¹⁹⁵

However, examination of the middlemen—native and otherwise—of “Open Door” diplomacy suggests that such collaboration was virtually non-existent in every way that could have influenced actual American trade. Language-trained American Foreign Service Officers strove to pave the way, but American business failed to follow the urgings of their consular representatives. Many “native” employees with business connections in local markets could have enthusiastically supplied such collaboration, but were viewed with suspicion by the very State Department administrators who so ardently espoused trade expansion. In fact, the primary contribution of the Foreign Service to American informal imperial expansion during this period lay not in the actual perpetration of empire in China, Japan, and Turkey but in changing American imperial discourse to support future imperialist endeavors irrespective of political affiliation. As will be examined in subsequent chapters, the SIC language-training program

¹⁹⁵ Eileen P. Scully, “Taking the Low Road to Sino-American Relations: “Open Door” Expansionists and the Two Markets,” *The Journal of American History* 82, no. 1 (June, 1995), 62-83.

accelerated American views inclination to intervention in foreign countries—regardless of Democratic or Republican Party affiliation.

Despite the prevalence of these middlemen in archival records, they are conspicuously absent from historical studies of American Foreign Relations. These have generally focused on such senior-ranking officials, including Frank Kellogg, J. V. A. MacMurray, Joseph Grew, and the notorious “China Hands” of the late 1940s. Striving to put them in comparative perspective, scholars such as Michael Hunt and Akira Iriye have also examined their Chinese and Japanese counterparts, yet far more research remains to be done on both sides of the comparison.¹⁹⁶

Richard Hume Werking, a prominent historian of the United States Foreign Service, has likewise examined American State Department pioneers such as Elihu Root, bureaucrats such as Wilbur Carr, and business advocates such as Harry Garfield, yet without glancing at the field officers who comprised the institutional edifice they had envisioned.¹⁹⁷ Despite providing important perspectives on the overall diplomatic and professional trends, such approaches privilege top-down analysis. This study adopts a middle-out approach that considers both elite ideology and the implementation of that ideology in practical ways.

Reviewing the careers and characters of American Foreign Service officers of all ranks in China, Japan, and Turkey facilitates an assessment of the State Department’s usage of the economic and political information gathered by its officers in Asia and the Middle East. As mentioned in the previous chapter, although this study extends geographically to Japan and the Ottoman Empire as well as China, the statistics and history of the SIC nudge its focus towards

¹⁹⁶ Michael H. Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship: The United States and China to 1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), x; Akira Iriye, *After Imperialism: The Search for a New Order in the Far East 1921-1931* (Chicago: Imprint Publications, 1990), 104.

¹⁹⁷ Richard Hume Werking, *The Master Architects: Building the United States Foreign Service, 1890-1913* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1977), ix-xiii, 88-121.

China. The comparatively small size of Japan and the relatively high competency of Japanese businessmen and bureaucrats in English and other foreign languages effectively limited the growth of the SIC in Japan.

Yet although SIC Japan never grew very large in terms of numbers, a small number of its graduates remained attached to the US Embassy and key consulates from 1909 (the beginning of the SIC training program in Japan) and these officers remained influential voices on Japan policy through WWII and beyond. The SIC in Turkey never grew as large or as influential as its sister branches in Japan or China before WWI, was discontinued during the war (as the Ottoman Empire severed diplomatic relations with the United States in 1917) and was not renewed after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire (beyond the training of a few individual officers in order to staff American consulates in the Turkish Republic). In fact, given the importance of American policy in the Middle East, the comparative lack of Turkish and Arabic language training for Foreign Service officers stands as a rather conspicuous gap, highlighting the reactionary and *ad hoc* nature of long term American foreign policy.

From 1902 to 1941, the U.S. State Department's attention remained firmly fixed on East Asia, particularly China and Japan. This particular chapter highlights the interpersonal and departmental context within which bureaucratic perception developed, while illuminating the means whereby the State Department continued to emphasize trade expansion in order to bolster its power vis-a-vis other agents. Examining the lives, careers, and characters of SIC-trained consuls and diplomats offers an x-ray of the Foreign Service: an inside-out, bottom-up institutional analysis. This analysis reveals a Foreign Service in the process of organization and professionalization even while it purported itself to be the equal of its more developed European counterparts. Examination of these middlemen in the US Foreign Service highlights the manner

in which the US government acted as an agent of its own growth and increasing professionalization. Furthermore, by highlighting the generational and institutional schisms within and between the Chinese and Japanese sections of the Student Interpreters Corps, this chapter suggests that these differences both reflected conflicting changes in Americans attitudes toward government and led to the development of opposing imperial American visions at the end of World War II.

This approach offers a hybrid of micro history and diplomatic history. Examining the people who comprised the American Foreign Service (and in part, the State Department) and consular work as a lived experience, this chapter emphasizes the structural *ad hoc* nature of American diplomacy. This chapter receives inspiration from Christine Philliou's study of Stephanos Vogorides, a middle-ranking Ottoman official and her portrayal of Ottoman governance.¹⁹⁸ However, whereas Philliou seeks to shift discussion away from institutional imperial politics via the examination of a single individual,¹⁹⁹ this section aims directly at a fuller understanding of the Foreign Service as an institution and the agency of the state. In this vein, Barbara Brook's study of imperial Japan's "China service" has paved the way by examining the institutional experience of Chinese-language trained Japanese consuls and diplomats in China.²⁰⁰ This chapter highlights the development of the Foreign Service in Asia during the first half of the twentieth and emphasizes a labyrinth of personal politics, intra-departmental rivalries, overlapping—and sometimes competing—policy goals that, precluded the emergence of an American imperial project in China. If such imperialism existed between the turn of the

¹⁹⁸ Christine M. Philliou, *Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), passim.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, xx-xxiii.

²⁰⁰ Barbara J. Brooks, *Japan's Imperial Diplomacy: Consuls, Treaty Ports, and War in China, 1895-1938* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 1-14.

twentieth century and the end of World War II, it was in the realm of political vision and imagination. Indeed, as will be argued in later chapters, by the end of WWII, rival imperial visions for East Asia had been produced by opposing forces (left, right, Democrat, Republican) at opposite ends of the American political spectrum. Neither of these visions was realized but both were directly connected to prewar American relations with China and Japan, and both were inextricably linked to SIC-trained Foreign Service officers who spent the bulk of their careers in these two countries.

In this vein it is vital to understand the individuals who observed and interpreted the local economies and politics. By examining the talented but unappreciated middle of the Foreign Service in Asia and the Middle East, this chapter illuminates the political filters through which ideas and information passed before any action could be taken, suggesting that United States politics were systemically unable to respond positively to revolution in Asia and the Middle East. Manifold, simultaneous political trends complicated American foreign policy during these turbulent decades. These were personal, arbitrary, and state-controlled, linked to leadership of the State Department.

The problem was not lack of information or ideas on the part of language-trained consuls and diplomats in China, Japan, or the Ottoman Empire. Rather, the primary obstacle consisted of the United States' chronic inability to harmonize its espoused ideals with foreign policy objectives. Endemic to republican democracy, national partisan differences precluded foreign policy consensus in the early twentieth century. Personal and departmental politics, ignorance, and the ad hoc, reactionary character of American foreign relations also exacerbated such disagreements.

American domestic politics and culture played important, if somewhat hidden roles in foreign policy trends as well, although their influence on the SIC and its graduates is difficult to trace. For example, race and class prejudices pervaded the State Department and the Foreign Service. These biases influenced appointments, promotions, transfers, and many other personnel actions, in addition to coloring personal interactions between Foreign Service officers, native and/or non-American employees, and each other. Many of the language-trained Foreign Service officers developed more progressive opinions of their host nation societies, by virtue of their long overseas tenure—and yet this itself sometimes rendered their loyalty dubious: senior officials suspected, as had the architects of consular service reform, that lengthy foreign residence might make officers go native and “forget their Americanism.”²⁰¹ Finally, Foreign Service bureaucracy during this period was personal and capricious. Ratings and records were often whimsical; they were whatever the Personnel Board decided, with some basis in facts. If administrators decided an officer’s conduct or performance was unsatisfactory, they could easily push that officer out of government service; no protections against political persecution existed and despite the putatively (and ideally) apolitical nature of the SIC, none were enacted until after the second World War.

Within this milieu, a discussion of the characters of the Student Interpreters Corps during this period (1902-1941) brings several trends to the foreground. First, it was those individuals who entered while the program was young (the very first decade of the program) who influenced its course the most—until the beginning of WWII. Second, the prevailing ideology of new entrants shifted, incrementally, in favor of American intervention in the affairs of other countries. Following WWII, the primary disagreements between these opposing visions revolved less

²⁰¹ An ironic comment coming from Senator John Tyler Morgan of Alabama, who had fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War. See Senate Report 112 (59-1), “Reorganization of the Consular Service,” 24.

around *whether* to interfere in the internal affairs of foreign states than around which forms such interventions should assume.

Nelson T. Johnson and the Old China Hands, 1902-1924

This chapter begins and concludes with Nelson T. Johnson. Although he was neither the first, last, or most notorious of SIC graduates, he embodied the Americanism espoused by the architects of the United States' fledgling Foreign Service in the early 20th century and is exemplary of the Student Interpreter influence on American foreign policy during this period. Through his work as a Foreign Service Inspector, American Minister (and subsequently Ambassador) to China—to say nothing of his work as a consul—his personality and views had a powerful impact on the institutional character and of the “China Service,” Sino-American relations,²⁰² and United States foreign policy in Asia. Scrutiny of Johnson also reveals the existence of a “good old boys club” in the “China Service.” This ephemeral cadre shaped the United States' perception of China, and to a limited extent, influenced policy, although there were increasingly frequent challenges from junior officers at the end of WWII.

Examining the personnel records of American Foreign Service officers in China will complement the parallel examinations of the Japan and Turkey branches in this study, and will deepen and extend knowledge of the “China Hands” handled by previous works including E. J.

²⁰² James F. Byrnes to Nelson T. Johnson, December 16, 1946, Washington D.C. Nelson T. Johnson Official Personnel File (hereafter NTJ OPF), National Personnel Records Center (NPRC), National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), St. Louis, MO.

Kahn's *China Hands* and Paul Gordon Lauren's *The China Hands' Legacy: Ethics and Diplomacy*.²⁰³

These works are typical of published material in which the “China Hands” appear, referring almost exclusively—if perhaps unintentionally—to some of the language-trained officers present in China in the late 1930s and early 1940s. These men included John S. Service, Raymond P. Ludden, O. Edmund Clubb, John Carter Vincent, John Hall Paxton, and John Paton Davies: these names are thoroughly familiar to American students of U.S. Foreign Relations. The historiographical obsession with these later officers overlooks the three decades of service numerous but unacknowledged “China Hands” prior to WWII. Many un-purged officers—as well as numerous officers who retired before and during the war—are rarely mentioned. These officers lived and worked in China during extremely turbulent times, yet unlike the (in) famous “China Hands” mentioned above, there has been little discussion of officers such Ernest B. Price, Carl Meinhardt, Meryl S. Myers, John Ker Davis, Edwin Stanton, and Norman F. Allman. In addition, it should be noted that personnel files present only an incomplete picture of the officer in question. As will be examined in a subsequent chapter, the role of women (girlfriends, wives, mistresses, prostitutes, etc.) is scarcely mentioned in official records. Review of official records, even heretofore unexamined, is just one of several important avenues in highlighting the role of these language trained middlemen of the American Foreign Service.

By beginning with Johnson, this chapter will highlight the elasticity of the Student Interpreters Corps and the Foreign Service it enhanced, as well as the skills, composition, organization, and cohesion of a pioneering group of Foreign Service officers. For a complete

²⁰³ E.J. Kahn, *The China Hands: America's Foreign Service Officers and What Befell them* (New York: Viking Press, 1975), passim; Paul Gordon Lauren, *The China Hands' Legacy: Ethics and Diplomacy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), passim.

understanding of how the United States approached China, Japan, and the Ottoman Empire during this period, an examination of the personnel of the Student Interpreters Corps and their functions within the Foreign Service administration is indispensable.

The overall management of Foreign Service personnel during this period was crude, although the system of appointments and promotions was a dramatic improvement over that of the 19th century. Despite the adoption of a putatively merit-based structure in 1906, what constituted merit was arbitrary, highly dependent on the views of visiting Inspectors or those of men who had no direct personal dealings with overseas consulates at all. Johnson spent his junior years in this capricious system, benefited from it, and through his reliance on informal contacts and exacting attitude toward subordinates, Johnson perpetuated it. Understanding the function of the Consular Service in China, the Student Interpreters Corps that provided language skills and cultural expertise, and the day to day work and life in U.S. consulates in both China and Japan (requires a knowledge of this remarkably complex and (within the “China Service” at least) highly influential officer. According to Russell Buhite, Johnson “read, traveled, explored, mixed with the people and came to know China as few natives knew it.”²⁰⁴

This task is difficult however, for Buhite’s limited biography of Johnson is remarkably uncritical of him. This is partly because nearly all Johnson’s peers and superiors spoke highly of him, praising his keen mind, language skills, work ethic, and close relations with the Chinese.²⁰⁵ All of these traits he undoubtedly possessed—which has been and will continue to be emphasized in this study. However, Johnson’s character, his attitude toward subordinates, and his more than ample ambition have escaped the biographer’s attention. It is one of the

²⁰⁴ Russell D. Buhite, *Nelson T. Johnson and American Policy toward China, 1925-1941* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1968), 8.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

deficiencies of Buhite's treatment of Johnson that the information from his official personnel file does not appear, as it provides an unparalleled glimpse into his life and work.

Surprisingly little has been said about Johnson's shortcomings in any published work. He was a prominent architect of American policy toward China from the late 1920s until his appointment as Ambassador to Australia in 1941. He has also been important to works such as Dorothy Borg's treatment of the Kuomintang and United States policy, and Paul Varg—as well as numerous other scholars of Sino-American relations—used Johnson's papers in exploring the United States' relationship with China in the 1930s and 1940s.²⁰⁶ Understanding the character and experiences of officers like Johnson adds a crucial human dimension to study of United States policy in China.

Nelson Trusler Johnson was a multifarious individual. One of the least-educated young men to join the Student Interpreters Corps in the early twentieth century, he was the only former student interpreter to become Ambassador to China. His career was as enigmatic as his character. Inspection reports reveal a dimension of this officer clarifies many of his dealings with subordinates, peers, and superiors alike. After reviewing a host of positive references and glowing peer reviews, inspector T. M. Wilson observed,

“the contradictions existing in this one human being are disconcerting in the extreme; values of him, his ideas and opinions gained on one day are often revised on another

²⁰⁶ Dorothy Borg, *American Policy and the Chinese Revolution* (New York: MacMillan), passim; Paul A. Varg, *The Closing of the Door: Sino-American Relations, 1936-1946* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1973), passim.

occasion . . . the case is one for the psychoanalyst rather than an Inspector of the Foreign Service.”²⁰⁷

According to Wilson, Johnson was quite friendly and genial—at least outwardly, but lacked “generosity and he is really possessed of a deep underlying suspicion which definitely has to be dealt with and entirely overcome by any who work with him closely and successfully.”²⁰⁸

Surmounting such an obstacle was difficult enough for officers who worked with Johnson directly, to say nothing of the many consuls and more junior officers whose only contact with Johnson was through correspondence or during his inspection tours. As Inspector Wilson observed, “He visits consular offices throughout China on occasion and would perhaps be more surprised than anyone in the world to know that they as a rule give more in the way of cooperation to the chancery than they receive from it.”²⁰⁹ The difficulty of accommodating his personality was undoubtedly compounded by the fact that even among junior officers there was an abundance of inflated egos.

The picture that emerges from Johnson’s personnel file is thus strikingly different from that offered by Buhite. Johnson was a bureaucratic climber. Although he certainly was capable and gifted, there was an inscrutable, hard, and even unpleasant side to him. As Wilson noted, “He has thought out carefully and applies with some determination a philosophy of life that allows himself no personal worry over any topic large or small.”²¹⁰ Singleness of mind is one thing, disregard for coworkers is quite another, and that, in the polite language of Foreign

²⁰⁷ T.M. Wilson, Nelson T. Johnson, Official Personnel File. National Personnel Records Center, (NPRC), National Archives (NARA).

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

Service correspondence, is what Johnson evinced. Inspector Wilson observed, “as it is in the case of cooperation extended by and from the legation, so it is with the conventions which usually rule everyday action—he demands more from others than he himself expects to give,” citing the instance of an (at least apparently) inappropriate relationship with a female clerk (whom he later married).²¹¹ Wilson’s overall assessment of Johnson was that “he is a very difficult person to adapt oneself to, and requires constant effort.”²¹²

This was not just the opinion of a disgruntled Inspector on tour. At the end of Johnson’s career, when he was gently but firmly forced to retire and senior State Department officials were considering offering him post-retirement consultative position, Joseph Ballantine indicated to Nathaniel P. Davis (personnel assignments), “many officers in the China Service held the belief that Johnson throughout his career had not played as a member of the team but had been inclined to look out primarily for his own interests.”²¹³

Johnson might be depicted as a likeable bulldozer: affable and confident, friendly until a subordinate or peer disagreed with him or got in his way. Johnson’s administrative failings should not obscure his otherwise impressive talents. He was highly competent in spoken Chinese and in his dealings with Chinese officials and acquaintances, and these gifts served him as well as they served the United States during this period. However, it is important to acknowledge that his brittle and mercurial disposition affected the cohesion and morale of the China Service, as well as relationships with American Foreign Service officers in Japan.

Johnson did not appreciate differences of opinion, especially when the opportunity to win an argument with a peer or subordinate officer presented an opportunity to advance his

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Memorandum of Conversation, Nelson T. Johnson, OPF.

reputation or career. Intense personal rivalry between peers often emerged out of differing interpretations of legal matters questions; Johnson developed intense dislike toward those officers who disagreed with him openly, and this certainly affected consular service cohesion as well as the willingness of subordinate officers to express opinions or analyses contrary the views of senior officers such as Johnson. This was true of political issues including the rise of the KMT in the 1920s, Communism in the 1930s and 1940s, and Japanese militarism, as well as questions of consular procedure and practice.

One such matter involved consular recognition of overseas marriage of American citizens—particularly in the case of interracial unions. During an inspection tour of U.S. consulates in Japan in 1924, Johnson took exception to Erle R. Dickover's recognition of such marriages while in charge of a consulate.²¹⁴ As a result of their differing interpretations, Nelson T. Johnson (only a year older than Dickover, but with eight years' longer service) gave Dickover a bad efficiency rating ("fair" was below "average," and officer's were not usually recommended for promotion unless they had consistent ratings of "average," "very good," or "excellent"), accusing him of "shallowness of intellectual background which has narrowed his vision and rendered him incapable of making the most of his experience," and recommended that Dickover be immediately transferred "out of the Far East and assigned for a time to some European post under the supervision of a capable principle officer."²¹⁵ Given Johnson's own lack of formal education, and his service record Johnson's remarks seem mean-spirited and ironic.²¹⁶ Whatever the case, Johnson seems to have changed his tune about these inspections a decade after the fact,

²¹⁴ Nelson T. Johnson to Erle R. Dickover, Kobe, Japan, February 25, 1924.

²¹⁵ Erle R. Dickover, Question #85 on untitled rating sheet signed Nelson Trusler Johnson, 1924. Dickover OPF; Nelson T. Johnson to Secretary of State, Washington D. C., 14 March 1924. Dickover OPF.

²¹⁶ Russell D. Buhite, *Nelson T. Johnson and American Policy toward China, 1925-1941* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1968), 6-7.

when he wrote to Far East Division Chief, Dr. Stanley Kuhl Hornbeck, that “in Dickover the Embassy in Tokyo has one of the liveliest reporting officers in the Far East...I know whereof I speak . . . because of the fact that I inspected Dickover’s office . . . in 1924 and 1925. Dickover is doing for the political situation in Japan what he did for the commercial situation in Kobe. I have not got a man on my staff capable of doing what he can do, even myself.”²¹⁷

Exacerbated by the vagaries of personality and position, educational pedigree and class were also intertwined with appointments to and the organization of the Foreign Service, and despite movement toward a merit-based system of appointments and promotion, this remained the case until the 1946 Foreign Service Act. Like so many other occupations in the United States, diplomatic service was in the throes of professionalization in the early twentieth century. Despite the promise of poor pay and the certitude of long overseas assignments, becoming a Student interpreter in the early twentieth century was a more difficult task than gaining admission to a military academy today. Obtaining an invitation to take the entrance exam required careful forethought and planning. The files of officers like Erle R. Dickover, a typical example, reveal that successful SIC applicants usually obtained impeccable commercial and political references just to get the opportunity to take the entrance examination (selection of examinees was by Presidential designation, and thus remained political, despite claims that the examination system made individual merit the basis for appointments and promotion). While applying to take the exam, Dickover obtained endorsements the Santa Barbara Savings and Loan

²¹⁷ Nelson T. Johnson to Stanley K. Hornbeck, June 29, 1933, Peking [Beijing], China, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 4, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

Bank, the president of the University of California, California Representatives Joseph R. Knowland, Everis Hayes and Julius Kahn, and Senator George Perkins (CA).²¹⁸

Impressive as this was, John Van Antwerp MacMurray's dossier glittered even more. He earned his B.A. and M.A. from Princeton in 1902 and 1907, and a law degree from Columbia in 1906.²¹⁹ Applying for a position as a diplomatic secretary, in addition to numerous secondary references (letters written at the behest of an intermediary), MacMurray received the support of Woodrow Wilson in 1905 (while president of Princeton), Senator Redfield Proctor (VT), and received continued encouragement from Woodrow Wilson as President.²²⁰ By contrast, recommendations for Willys R. Peck, the son of American missionaries in Tientstin, appear quite modest. They consisted of a letter from Benjamin Wheeler (president of Berkeley in 1906), and a letter from Senator George C. Perkins—written at Wheeler's request.²²¹

Nelson Johnson's references were distinctly lackluster; the only written one was from the principal of Sidwell's Friends School (incidentally, the same school attended by the daughters of President Barack Obama); the other was a personal visit by a Col. Green Clay Goodloe to Wilbur J. Carr in August, 1907, a few weeks after his interview with the young Johnson.²²² In addition to talent and ambition however, he also had a fair amount of luck. In 1921, Johnson was appointed "Expert Assistant to the American Commissioners" at the Conference on the

²¹⁸ Everis Hays and Julius Kahn to Secretary of State, Washington D. C., December 9, 1913; John R. Knowland to Secretary of State, Washington D. C., February 11, 1913; George Perkins to Secretary of State, Washington D. C., November 3, 1913, Erle R. Dickover Official Personnel File.

²¹⁹ The State Department, *The Register of the Department of State* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1922), 151.

²²⁰ Woodrow Wilson to Elihu Root, December 27, 1905, Washington D.C.; Redfield Proctor to Elihu Root, April 6, 1906, Washington D.C., and Woodrow Wilson to J.V.A. MacMurray, August 18, 1913 Washington D.C. J.V.A. MacMurray OPF.

²²¹ George C. Perkins to the Third Assistant Secretary of State, August 28, 1906, Washington D.C., Willys R. Peck OPF.

²²² Nelson T. Johnson, Official Personnel File (NTJ OPF). National Personnel Records Center, (NPRC), National Archives (NARA); Wilbur J. Carr to Alvey Adee, Memorandum, Office of the Chief Clerk, August 26, 1907. NTJ OPF.

Limitation of Armaments in Washington D.C. (commonly known as the Washington Conference).²²³ J.V.A. MacMurray received an appointment as an assistant to the American Commissioners at the conference.²²⁴ Such opportunities gave Johnson unrivaled occasions to impress his superiors and build close relationships with them.

The “China Service” of Nelson T. Johnson was highly stratified. Officers such as Johnson, Peck, and Arnold rose through the ranks partly by virtue of their enthusiasm for and emphasis on American trade expansion in China (regardless of the volume of American business interest in such growth). Led by Nelson Johnson, this group of “old” China Hands dominated US China policy discussions until 1941, with the outbreak of WWII. The SIC in China continued to grow in size until the late 1930s (although never at the level prescribed by Congress), but the personal nature of the State Department in general and the Far East Division in particular prevented the emergence of any serious competitors to the “old” China Hands. As will be discussed in great detail later, these circumstances created a modicum policy consensus within the China Affairs section of the Far East Division, giving American policy in East Asia a Sino-centric tinge. The old guard remained in place until World War II; however, the growth and bureaucratization of the SIC meant that sooner or later, a clash was bound to occur.

The Peking Order: Bureaucratization and Administration of the SIC, 1924-1941

From 1902 (the establishment of the SIC) to 1924 (passage of the Rogers Act), the “China Service” grew increasingly large, language-competent, and capable of entirely staffing new and existing posts. As of 1911, only 3 of the 14 posts in China lacked language-trained

²²³ Charles Evans Hughes to Nelson T. Johnson, Department of State, November 3, 1921. Nelson T. Johnson, OPF.

²²⁴ J.V.A. MacMurray, [undated] Service Record, OPF.

consular officer at the rank of Interpreter or higher—one of these posts was Canton, where Mandarin language training was moot—and there were 9 more student interpreters in training.²²⁵ This was the professional zenith of the Student Interpreters Corps. As will be in greater detail later, there was a generational divide between the officers that entered during these early years, and those who entered in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Although the latter officers have most often been called “China Hands,” (there was less of distinction in the Japan service, and none whatsoever in Turkey), the older officers not only wear the label equally well, but they were more numerous, better traveled (in China), and just as well trained.

The American Foreign Service as it existed in China, Japan, and Turkey in the early twentieth century, was a three-tiered organization. At the bottom were low-paid clerks, messengers, agents, and native interpreters who staffed the offices and performed routine and menial work. In the middle were the career officers, ranking from Interpreter to Consul General, who were in charge of the consulates, and consulates-general, and oversaw the work of the hired staff and perhaps a few American subordinates. At the top was the American Minister/Ambassador, his close confidantes, and senior State Department officials (including the Chief of the Far East Division, the assistant secretaries of State, the Secretary of State, and the President).

The increasing professionalization and bureaucratization of the Foreign Service in general and the SIC (which supplied the talent) in particular, inspired ambitions that could not be fulfilled for all but a few. Nearly all SIC-trained officers expected regular promotion, especially when they received average ratings or higher. The Legation/Embassy was the beginning of student-interpreters’ careers; as the site of the American Minister or Ambassador it was also the

²²⁵ The State Department, *The Register of the Department of State* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1911), 33-34, 50.

ideal end. Nelson T. Johnson, Edwin F. Stanton, U. Alexis Johnson, and Willys R. Peck were a few of former student-interpreters who eventually progressed as far as Ambassador. Of these, Nelson T. Johnson and U. Alexis Johnson were the only two to serve as Ambassador in the same countries where they began as language students.²²⁶

Although most Foreign Service officers did not expect to be appointed as Ambassador, after reaching their thirties, few were content to remain low-paid consuls—especially since nearly all of them had children by that point. The putatively merit-based examination system created an overlapping matrix of appointments, usually favoring non-language trained officers above those who were proficient. If they were merely on the same footing as all other consular officers, the SIC graduates would have been minimally disgruntled, if not content. The obstacles encountered by officers such as Willys R. Peck however, raised serious questions concerning the function of the SIC in the evolving Foreign Service.

Most scholars who have examined American policy in China in the interwar period (such as Michael Schaller and Akira Iriye) would recognize the name Willys Ruggles Peck. His duties as Chinese Secretary at the American Legation in Peking (secretary-ships were the few positions in China specifically reserved for SIC graduates) offer a glimpse of the important, but often invisible, influence of language-trained officers at the Legation. Peck's routine tasks included maintaining contacts with "influential official and other Chinese," advising the Minister concerning Chinese matters, serving as interpreter when necessary, receiving Chinese visitors,

²²⁶ <http://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/people/chiefsomission>. See also, the State Department, *The Register of the Department of State* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1922), 139.

and serving as a member of the multinational “Diplomatic Body,” to consider issues such as the Shanghai Mixed Court and coordinate policy.²²⁷

Directly subordinate to Peck (in 1927) were Assistant Secretaries Paul R. Josselyn, who assisted Peck and supervised the language students (W.M. Newhall Jr. and A.S. Chase) and drafted most of the Secretariat’s correspondence, and Vice-Consul Flavius J. Chapman, who translated (documents) for the legation and performed additional tasks as instructed.²²⁸

Regarding their workload Frazer observed, “it seemed to me that a disproportionate share of the constructive work done in the Chancery is accomplished by the Chinese Secretariat, and that a tendency exists to refer to it nearly all matters relating even distantly to things Chinese.”²²⁹ He further emphasized that much of this work could be accomplished by “general service secretaries after some months of service in this country.”²³⁰

More galling than the waste of talent however, was that the position of Secretary was technically inferior to that of the Counselor of the Legation, then occupied by Ferdinand L. Mayer, who had spent ten years in the Service compared to Peck’s twenty—all of which had been China.²³¹ Adding insult to injury, the State Department ruled that although the Counselor and Secretary were of equal rank, the Secretary “shall not take charge of the Legation except by a special authorization by the Department,” thereby favoring the younger, less-experienced man—who spoke no Chinese—but who possessed an education at Harvard and Princeton.²³²

²²⁷ Robert Frazer Jr., “Inspection of Ferdinand L. Mayer [struck through in pencil] at Peking, China, 1927, officer in Charge J.V.A. MacMurray” *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² The State Department, *The Register of the Department of State* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1922), 154.

Despite repeated emphases on about appointments and promotions on the basis of merit and ability, social class played a major role in the pecking order of Foreign Service assignments in China, causing deep bitterness among these unappreciated China hands. Language-trained officers regarded the position of Secretary as a professional dead end, and resisted such assignments. In 1927, Inspector Robert Frazer Jr. noted they “all spoke of the Chinese Secretariat as a ‘blind alley,’ leading nowhere and bringing little of either credit or promotion,” citing the case of the above-mentioned Peck (who as of 1927 had served in that post for six years without advancement),²³³ whose industrious character, remarkable linguistic talent, and two decades of faithful service had led to no more than a secretaryship position.²³⁴ Japan service officers assigned to the Embassy (such as Eugene H. Dooman) felt equally slighted. Ambassador Charles MacVeagh in 1927 wrote to Wilbur Carr, describing “a growing feeling among the men in the Japanese service that an assignment to the Embassy, while supposedly constituting a recognition of work well done, actually results in retarding promotion of the officer”²³⁵

Despite such petty—but keenly felt—injustices, SIC-trained officers as well as their superiors regarded the “Far East” (at the time the designation for Asia and the Middle East) as the proper place for their talents. Only rarely were they assigned outside of China, Japan, and the Middle East, and they complained bitterly about their abilities going to waste when posted to locations such as Winnipeg, Canada; most officers preferred “field work (overseas work) to

²³³ He was appointed 1 July 1921. See the State Department, *The Register of the Department of State* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1922), 166.

²³⁴ Robert Frazer Jr., “Inspection of Ferdinand L. Mayer [struck through in pencil] at Peking, China, 1927, officer in Charge J.V.A. MacMurray” *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

²³⁵ Charles MacVeagh [Tokyo, Japan] to Wilbur J. Carr, Assistant Secretary of State, December 16, 1927, Washington, D.C., Eugene Dooman, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

assignments in Washington D.C.²³⁶ Even when language-trained officers such as Willys R. Peck requested a post *within* China—Tsingtau, in this instance—, if knowledge of Mandarin was not essential, supervisors like Paul Reinsch regarded such assignments of SIC-trained officers as “a sheer waste of the material that the interpreter system is designed to furnish.”²³⁷ It should also be noted that although officers such as William R. Langdon did express preference for language-appropriate assignments, class chauvinism occasionally emerged on the part of superiors like Joseph W. Ballantine, regarding Langdon as unfit for policy work in the Far East Division (Washington D.C.), implicitly due to his lack of education (Ballantine had graduated from Amherst College).²³⁸

The career of William R. Langdon shows the fairly typical trajectory of a SIC-trained officer. Beginning as non-career clerk in American Consulate General in İstanbul in 1911, he was appointed Student Interpreter to Japan in 1914, and served in the Japan Empire until 4 December, 1941—spending only a year and a half in Washington D.C and Montreal combined.²³⁹ His 37-year career ended in 1951, with mandatory retirement.²⁴⁰ Language expertise and long residence in country were the hallmarks of SIC participants. It was these aspects of their service that enhanced their utility to the Foreign Service, despite low pay and understaffing.

A glance at the Inspection Service and the rating system illustrates how easily Foreign Service administrators—and State Department policymakers—could dismiss the work of

²³⁶ Percival Heintzelman [from Hankow, China] to Wilbur J. Carr, [Washington D.C.], April 28, 1925. Percival Heintzelman’s Official Personnel File, National Archives, NPRC, St. Louis; Wesley Frost, “Annual Efficiency Report” for William R. Langdon, Montreal, Canada, April 11, 1933, and “Rating Sheet,” page 4, William R. Langdon’s Official Personnel File, National Archives, NPRC, St. Louis.

²³⁷ Paul Reinsch to the Secretary of State, Washington D.C., March 19th, 1915. 123.P33/68 (Willys R. Peck). Central Decimal Files of the Department of State, RG 59. NARA.

²³⁸ William R. Langdon, OPF, NPRC; *Register of the Department of State* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1922), 89.

²³⁹ William R. Langdon, OPF, NPRC.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

language-trained consuls from a distance—especially if the work was less visible in terms of written reports and trade letters. Although the American Consular Service had existed for many decades, from the turn of the twentieth century (the Student Interpreters Corps had been established in 1902) until 1910, no systematic method for evaluating officers inspecting consular offices existed. The 1906 Consular Reorganization Act called for such inspections but failed to fund them. After Congress finally did so in 1910, personnel evaluations combined the comments of an officer's immediate supervisor (who often lived and worked far from the officer's post) with those of an inspector, whose visits were often irregular and infrequent despite Congressional stipulations.²⁴¹ Inspection reports consisted of dozens of pages, with questions and comments ranging from the physical condition of the officer to his performance in American trade extension. This system worked fairly well for junior officers who were direct subordinates in large offices, but much less so for those who were vice- and full consuls as chief (and usually sole) officers in consulates far from Beijing.

“The Persian Consul,” “Sister Percy,” and the Russian Jew

In addition to maintaining appearances and adhering to political correctness, conforming to racial, religious, and sexual prejudices was another potential challenge for language officers. For example, Eugene Dooman was the product of a mixed (probably Armenian-American) marriage, and his “ethnic” appearance hampered his career. Like most missionary-children-turned diplomats, Dooman acquired a peerless level of fluency. According to Inspector Robert

²⁴¹ Inspection Report blank form, Correspondence of Alfred L.M. Gottschalk, Jan. 1 1912-Mar. 25, 1914, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, NARA, College Park, MD; Rating Sheet for Paul R. Josselyn, Official Personnel File, NARA, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, MO.

Frazer Jr., Dooman in 1927, “spoke and read Japanese better than any other man in our service and no doubt as well as any foreigner in the country.”²⁴² Nevertheless, according to Inspector Stuart Fuller, “being the son of a Persian who was naturalized he looks like an East Indian or Eurasian and many Americans resent his being in the Consular Service.”²⁴³ In addition to the overt racism, this statement probably displays the ignorance of the inspector, as well as the capricious nature of the nascent inspection system. For one thing, it is highly implausible that an Iranian would have been working in Osaka, Japan as an Episcopalian missionary. Other evaluators’ comments in his personnel record suggest that he looked “Armenian.”²⁴⁴ Regardless, Dooman’s General Rating was “Fair,” because of his appearance. Despite talent in diplomatic and commercial work, the rater noted, “it is believed that his non-European blood and characteristics make him unsuited for service at most posts.”²⁴⁵ In 1918, inspector Fuller asserted that Dooman was “regarded throughout the East as not quite a white man . . . he is often jokingly referred to as the Persian Consul.”²⁴⁶

Similarly, gender stereotypes also colored perceptions of officers: men were expected to be manly and virile. Although “considerably above average” in the Service in terms of “intellect, education, and culture, Percival Heintzelman was derogatively referred to as “Lady Percy,” “Sister Percy” and, according to an inspector, dressed “in excellent taste, and were it not for a certain lack of virility about him his general appearance would be good.”²⁴⁷ According to an inspector, “Mr. Heintzelman “has a thin, high pitched voice, effeminate mannerism, and a

²⁴² Robert Frazer Jr., *From the Inspection Report on Tokyo by Robert Frazer Jr.*, “Eugene H. Dooman,” Eugene Dooman, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

²⁴³ [Untitled rating sheet], April 21, 1921. Eugen Dooman, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Letter to the Personnel Board, December 1, 1932. Percival Heintzelman, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

tendency to talk too much and explain the simplest statement. One is inclined to call him ‘ladylike.’”²⁴⁸

Similarly, the career of Max Kirjassoff, the son of a naturalized Russian Jew,²⁴⁹ reveals a hidden but virulent anti-Jewish prejudice. Like Eugene Dooman, Kirjassoff was a Japanese language officer and one of the earliest appointees to the SIC in Japan.²⁵⁰ Although Kirjassoff developed a high degree of fluency in Japanese, performed consular duties admirably and had been commended by Japanese and foreign businessmen in Japan, one inspector noted of him his

“ability will never secure for him a higher position than that of a good fair average consular officer. He is well educated,²⁵¹ and his character also seems unquestionably good, but his religion works against him, particularly in combination with the fact that he was born in Russia, all of which have been cited several times by persons conversing with the Inspector as reasons for which he should not, of all consular officers, be assigned to this particular post, Dairen”²⁵²

Other inspectors snidely noted Kirjassoff’s propensity for “making and saving money,” giving advance warning to the Department that any complaints regarding his salary should not be taken seriously.²⁵³ However, another officer observed to J.V.A. MacMurray, then-chief of the

²⁴⁸ American Foreign Service Inspection Report, Section I, Personnel, December 10, 1934, Percival Heintzelman, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

²⁴⁹ Max Kirjassoff, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

²⁵⁰ Max Kirjassoff, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

²⁵¹ Kirjassoff was a graduate of Yale, see Max Kirjassoff OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

²⁵² August 26, 1920 rating comments by Inspector Eberhardt, Max Kirjassoff OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

²⁵³ Ibid.

Far East Division, that businessmen had praised Kirjassoff's knowledge and intelligence and criticized the Department for rating an officer "merely through his signature on letters."²⁵⁴

These trends further indicate that the process of bureaucratization in SIC had not unfolded as the architects of the Foreign Service desired, that is, a fully merit-based system failed to materialize. Although successful in recruiting and training the talented men of the SIC, the State Department had difficulty employing, compensating, and evaluating these individuals equitably in accordance with the ideals espoused at the SIC's inception. The resulting bureaucracy was incapable of using officers' analyses of local developments effectively. The overwrought emphasis on trade expansion mentioned in the foregoing chapter created a strain of political correctness that certain officers—particularly Nelson T. Johnson in China—were able to use in consolidating bureaucratic fiefdoms in the 1920s.

This bureaucratic consolidation and turf demarcation coincided with changing American attitudes towards the role of their government abroad. Americans in China were beginning to expect the U.S. government to take a more forceful role in the protection of their lives and property. The coincidence of this change with the aforementioned establishment of Foreign Service fiefdoms led to the emergence of a talented (and arrogant) but (initially) marginalized group of officers who envisioned an alternate route for American policy in China and East Asia.

These were the oddballs of the Far East Division and they clashed with their hardball supervisors, who were the ideological and political gatekeepers of these circles of influence. One such collision was the acrimony between Nelson Johnson and Ernest Price concerning the latter's views of American policy in China and his tendency to air his opinions among other Americans in his consular district. In a discussion with Price in 1927 concerning both his service

²⁵⁴ H.R. Wilson to J.V.A. MacMurray, Tokyo, March 7, 1923. Max Kirjassoff OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

record and his views on American policy, Nelson Johnson quoted a portion of one of Price's own dispatches back to him:

“I would be remiss in my duty if I did not also record . . . the practically unanimous belief of Americans in this district that their Government has utterly failed in its duty in not having adopted, enunciated and carried through a definite policy with respect to Americans and their rights and interests in China. There are those who feel that the Government should have protected them. There are those who feel that it should not have protected them. But there appears to be no disagreement on the principle that the Government should either have told Americans that they should get out of China, and assisted them to do so, or should have told them they might stay, and assisted them to do so.”²⁵⁵

Price felt that he had been passed over for promotion because of his alleged tendency to be “critical of the Department of this Government's policies in China. I [Johnson] said that at the time I felt that Mr. Price had not agreed with the Department in what it was trying to do in China and that . . . he had allowed his feelings to be expressed in some of his views.”²⁵⁶ Even if there was ample justification for doing so, criticism of the Department or U.S. government policy *to outsiders* was inexcusable. According to Johnson, the Department welcomed internal criticism and disagreements over policy, so long as it was meticulously reasoned, professionally argued: in 1927 Johnson urged Price to elaborate his suggestions on what American policy

²⁵⁵ Nelson T. Johnson [memorandum of conversation], Department of State, Assistant Secretary, “Mr. Ernest B. Price, His Record in the Foreign Service and Resignation,” November 1, 1927, Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

should be. According to Johnson Price declined petulantly, saying “that I would understand that had to face now question of making a living and that he expected to get out of these questions the means to make his living.”²⁵⁷

It was Price’s attitude that held him back. He was consistently given low ratings in “Service Spirit” and “Loyalty.”²⁵⁸ In 1921, Inspector Eberhardt observed presciently that Price “may always be a difficult man to handle in the Service, but on the other hand, he has made perhaps the best progress in the [Chinese] language of any of the younger men and possibly as good as any of the older.”²⁵⁹ Despite being a talented officer with an exceptional command of spoken and written Chinese,²⁶⁰ a below-satisfactory rating in personal character sank his overall scores into the mid 80s.²⁶¹ This meant that he was eligible for promotion and ensured that other officers would be promoted before him.

Following his meeting with Johnson, Price changed his mind concerning his resignation repeatedly, in March 1928 he rescinded his resignation (he had submitted his resignation in February, 1927), and then in May 1929 he offered his resignation again.²⁶² His waffling further reinforced the Personnel Board’s low regard for his manner and ensured that this time his resignation was accepted.²⁶³ In light of Price’s behavior (particularly in comparison with the other “China Service” officers), the Personnel Board’s assessment of him seems appropriate:

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ For example, see Inspector Eberhardt’s comments of April 10, 1921 on Price’s untitled service record. Eberhardt stated that Price was “objectionably and openly critical, cynical, bitter, and generally open to the charge of insubordination and disloyalty.” See also, Nelson T. Johnson, “Inspector’s Rating of Officer, “Ernest Batson Price, Foochow, China,” April 18, 1923. Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

²⁵⁹ Inspector Eberhardt, April 10, 1921, “Ernest Batson Price” [untitled service abstract, no date]; “Clarence J. Spiker,” [untitled service abstract, no date] OPFs, NPRC, NARA.

²⁶⁰ [untitled memorandum of conversation between [Nelson] Johnson, [Wilbur] Carr, and [Edward] Norton, May 22, 1929, Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

²⁶¹ Edward J. Norton (Department of State, Office of Foreign Personnel), to Wilbur Carr, November 1, 1927, Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

²⁶² Price to Secretary of State via Naval Radio, May 20, 1929. See also Stanley K. Horbeck to Ernest Price, Tsinan, China, March 14, 1928, Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

²⁶³ Ibid.

“lacks in balance and tact; is impatient and apt to arrive at incorrect conclusions through bias or temper; is self-centered.”²⁶⁴ His letters and conversations suggest a tendency for asinine quarrels and an irascible attitude towards peers and senior officials.

Price’s complaints were typical for American officers in China.²⁶⁵ He simply grumbled louder than most. The record of Clarence Jerome (“Jerry”) Spiker offers a useful basis for comparison. They entered the Foreign Service as Student Interpreters on the same day, April 4, 1914.²⁶⁶ Price was promoted to Consul Class VI in 1921 and to Class VII 1924; meanwhile, Spiker was promoted to Consul Class VI in 1923, Class VII in 1924, and then again in 1925 and 1927. Through a bureaucratic error, Spiker had also received paper promotions in May and August of 1918, with substantial pay increases.²⁶⁷ It is impossible that institutional prejudice could have caused the discrepancy: Price had earned his bachelor’s degree from Rochester University, NY, whereas Spiker had graduated from George Washington University.²⁶⁸ Any discrimination on this score seems unlikely however, as the inspector for the Far East region in 1923 (and several subsequent years) was Nelson Johnson, who possessed no college degree at all and who criticized Price at least as harshly as other inspectors.²⁶⁹ The most likely reason for Price’s comparatively sluggish promotions was criticism from Johnson and other inspectors concerning his trade promotion work, as well as the general perception of too intimate a connection with the American missionary community.

²⁶⁴ Edward J. Norton (Department of State, Office of Foreign Personnel), to Wilbur Carr, November 1, 1927, Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

²⁶⁵ J.V.A. MacMurray to Secretary of State via Naval Radio no. 404, May 20, 1929, Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

²⁶⁶ “Ernest Batson Price” [untitled service abstract, no date]; “Clarence J. Spiker,” [untitled service abstract, no date] OPFs, NPRC, NARA.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Nelson T. Johnson, “Inspector’s Rating of Officer, “Ernest Batson Price, Foochow, China,” April 18, 1923. See also Buhite, *Nelson T. Johnson*, 6.

Purging the Old: Presaging the “Persecution” of the Young China Hands, 1930-1941

Inspections and annual efficiency reports were the determining factors in assigning officers' individual efficiency ratings, whereby they were compared with other officers and promoted (or not). Officers' personnel files suggest personality, adding color and depth to the ratings and efficiency reports and highlighting officers' agency and voice. This alone is an important contribution. The Foreign Service personnel system was in the process of professionalization throughout the period under review, but old attitudes and practices persisted.

One of the most prominent of these was that officers should not criticize their superiors, the State Department, or the United States government—especially to outsiders—and that officers should refrain from making political statements. When officers violated these principles, there were easy ways of removing them from the Service. In the case of Ernest Price, this was accomplished through dilatory promotion (albeit less intentionally than in other cases, given Price's linguistic talent). When there was no evidence of insubordination (as previously noted, Price gave abundant indications of this), a drummed up charge of drunkenness (or implication of it) was enough to force an officer to resign.

This had particularly tragic consequences in the case of George C. Hanson, who committed suicide rather than be drummed out of the Service. Like Nelson T. Johnson, George C. Hanson was one of the hardballs of the young American Foreign Service. He was dynamic, gregarious and convivial, an aficionado of languages and connoisseur of cultures with a journalist's affinity for alcohol.²⁷⁰ Before committing suicide, Hanson spent twenty-five years in

²⁷⁰ Character evaluation [n.d., circa 1930], George C. Hanson, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

the Service, the bulk of which he spent in China, Manchuria, and the Soviet Union. He was a graduate of Cornell University (Mechanical Engineering)²⁷¹ appointed as Student Interpreter in 1909, and was arguably the most linguistically gifted Foreign Service officer ever to emerge from its ranks. Not only did he learn Mandarin through the ordinary Student Interpreter course, but he was one of the few students in his age group to complete all of the prescribed exams for the Student Interpreters Corps, establishing an exceptional degree of fluency.²⁷² Hanson also learned other Chinese “dialects” (actually distinct languages, for example the Foochow dialect), paying for lessons at his own expense;²⁷³ later in his career he also studied Russian and learned to speak it fluently.²⁷⁴

Hanson built up an unparalleled popularity (for a relatively minor Foreign Service officer) among American journalists.²⁷⁵ Part of the reason for this was that he was stationed as consul in Harbin, China, for over ten years—an unusually long time at one post even for a “China Service” officer.²⁷⁶ George Sokolsky observed, “in the field, E. S. Cunningham in Shanghai, Willys R. Peck in Nanking, and George C. Hanson in Harbin and other various cities represent the most efficient consular officers of any service in China.”²⁷⁷ Like many other consular officers, whenever Hanson returned to the United States (on leave or official business), he met with prominent businessmen in cities such as San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, and

²⁷¹ R.G. Carpenter to Secretary of State, February 4, 1909, in George C. Hanson, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

²⁷² George C. Hanson, OPF, NARA, St. Louis.

²⁷³ Robert Frazer Jr., “Inspection Report of Consular Office at Foochow, China,” March 2-6, 1921. General Records of the Department of State, *Inspection Reports of Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, RG 59, NARA.

²⁷⁴ James A. Mills to Stephen Early, Secretary to the President, December 20, 1933. George C. Hanson, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ American Foreign Service Inspection Report, Section I., Personnel, June 16, 1932, George C. Hanson, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis.

²⁷⁷ “George Sokolsky, in *Asia*” Enclosure, George C. Hanson [American Consulate General, Harbin, China] to Homer Byington, April 12, 1933, Washington D.C., Hanson, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

others.²⁷⁸ These meetings were usually arranged in advance, with either the businessmen themselves, or the Department of Commerce on their behalf, contacting the State Department requesting their attendance.²⁷⁹

The accusations against Hanson did not specify being intoxicated but rather cited conduct “unbecoming to a gentleman,” at a luncheon held at the American-Russian Chamber of Commerce in New York.²⁸⁰ Although this luncheon appears to have been given “in his honor,” he arrived obscenely late, as the event was concluding, and gave a candid personal appraisal of economic developments in the Soviet Union during his time there.²⁸¹

The charges against Hanson led to an internal State Department investigation which, although kept secret, revealed a very colorful underbelly of the Foreign Service. According to Samuel Harper’s account, the conduct of certain senior members of the American legation staff was notorious in Moscow, that there had been “so much drinking and carousing” that they were no longer permitted in the main dining room of the Hotel Metropole.”²⁸² Striving to remain impartial, Wilbur Carr noted at the conclusion of his memo (to which these letters were attached) that “it should be borne in mind that Harper thinks Bullitt should not have been appointed ambassador” [to the Soviet Union].²⁸³

Taking all this into consideration, it is likely Hanson consumed alcohol on the occasion in question, perhaps even liberally. However, this does not seem to have greatly affected his judgment or the impression he made upon most of the attendees. For example, Henry S. Beal of

²⁷⁸ George C. Hanson [Bridgeport CT] to Secretary of State, July 30, 1925, 123H194/176, *The Department of State Decimal File*, RG 59, NARA.

²⁷⁹ S.H. Cross [Department of Commerce] to Wilbur J. Carr, May 18, 1925, Washington D.C., 123H194/168, Was H.E. Byram [Chicago, IL] to Frank B. Kellog, Secretary of State, June 10, 1925, Washington D.C. [no cutter number listed], *The Department of State Decimal File*, RG 59, NARA.

²⁸⁰ Linton Wells to Wilbur Carr, December 7, Washington D.C., 1934, George C. Hanson, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

²⁸¹ [Untitled] memorandum, December 7, 1934, George C. Hanson OPF, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

²⁸² [Untitled] memorandum, December 28, 1924, George C. Hanson, OPF, NARA, NPRC, St. Louis. MO.

²⁸³ Ibid.

the Sullivan Machinery Company (Chicago, IL) praised Hanson's speech and requested that Hanson "come to Chicago as I believe there are many manufacturers who have in years past done business with Russia, and who hope to do so again, who would appreciate meeting him and receiving the latest news from Russia."²⁸⁴ Beal seems to have been entirely unaware that Hanson had been charged with misconduct.

Given the circumstances, it is likely that Hanson *had* been drinking, and, having rubbed shoulders with Russians for so long, it is scarcely more of a stretch to believe that he may even have done so copiously on this occasion (and others). However, overindulgence in alcohol does not seem to have been the real issue in this case. Moreover, as mentioned above, Professor Harper and others had cast similar aspersions of liberal wine bibbing, womanizing, and "anti-Soviet" sentiment upon William C. Bullitt without prompting any sort of similar furor.²⁸⁵ On the contrary, evidence suggests that some of Hanson's comments angered wealthy businessmen with ties to the Roosevelt administration—those who had a vested interest in expanding Soviet-American trade, regardless of the economic wisdom of such enterprise.

P. D. Wagoner of the Underwood-Elliott-Fisher Company (New York) observed to Wilbur Carr,

"it has come to my attention that there has been some adverse criticism of the *conduct and remarks* of Mr. George C. Hanson, First Secretary of our Embassy in Moscow at a recent small intimate luncheon of the Directors of the American-

²⁸⁴ Henry S. Beal [Chicago, IL] to Daniel C. Roper, Secretary of Commerce, December 19, 1934, Washington D.C., Hanson, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

²⁸⁵ [Untitled memorandum] December 28, 1924, George C. Hanson, OPF, NARA, NPRC, St. Louis. MO.

Russian Chamber of Commerce, at which Mr. Hanson was kind enough to give us some very interesting information as to present conditions in Russia.”²⁸⁶

Wagoner noted further, “it was definitely understood that this was to be a very small luncheon and not to be reported in any way, and being as it were, a round table discussion, it is very surprising to me that any one should have made any such reports as I understand were made.”²⁸⁷

There is no formal record of the charges against George C. Hanson in his personnel file, only of an investigation and its aftermath. In the absence of explicit documentation, the crux of these accusations appears to be that Hanson, while intoxicated, made certain, “anti-Soviet” statements that offended other attendees.²⁸⁸ According to Wagoner however, the strongest statement of Hanson “was that Russia today seemed to be moving in the direction of State capitalism . . . in other words, that the State was furnishing the capital for industry, rather than private investors.”²⁸⁹

After Reeve Schley’s complaint concerning Hanson’s conduct and speech, A. M. Hamilton of the American Locomotive Sales Corporation wrote to Hanson, observing that although his speech “did not constitute the vaguely pleasant generalities that are usual in large public gatherings, there was nothing which I, as a sincere friend and admirer of the U.S.S.R., would criticise [sic] you for.”²⁹⁰ Neither did the Russians criticize Hanson. On the contrary, after he had served in Harbin, China, for five years, the *Novosti Zhizni* (local Russian-language newspaper) declared, “there is no doubt but that Mr. Hanson is the most popular of all consuls

²⁸⁶ P. D. Wagoner to Wilbur J. Carr, December 11, 1934, Washington D.C., Hanson, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ A. M. Hamilton to George C. Hanson, Winthrop Hotel, December 11, 1934, New York, NY, Hanson OPF, NPRC, NARA.

who have ever worked in North Manchuria. While jealously guarding the interests of Americans, Mr. Hanson has at the same time shown himself to be an impartial and fair judge . . .²⁹¹

In addition, a brief exchange between William C. Bullitt and Samuel N. Harper (professor of History at the University of Chicago) suggests that Harper had strongly criticized Hanson (implicitly for being anti-Soviet), and possibly Bullitt. The first U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union noted, “I think it is only fair to you to let you know that various highly critical statements with regard to members of the Mission in Moscow are being attributed to you in Washington.”²⁹² Harper responded that “when questioned by responsible members of the State Department regarding the policies, practices, and personnel of the American Mission in Moscow, I gave freely and frankly my views, based on my observations and best judgment.”²⁹³ During the departmental investigation, while noting that Hanson’s “behavior during convivial evenings” was “apt to be indiscreet” and that Hanson was “entirely unable to get to appointments on time,” William C. Bullitt strongly opposed Hanson’s expulsion from service.²⁹⁴ Bullitt’s and dozens of other letters were placed in his personnel file, exonerating him from any wrongdoing.

Following the State Department hearings stemming from the fracas over the New York luncheon, Hanson was assigned to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, as Consul General, but for health reasons was unable to depart for his post. On August 8th, 1935, the Personnel Board decided to separate him from the Foreign Service, before he had had a chance to bring up his efficiency

²⁹¹ *Novosti Zhizni*, “Five Years American Consul at Harbin,” February 20th, 1927, trans. T.L.L., Hanson OPF, NPRC, NARA.

²⁹² William C. Bullitt to Samuel N. Harper, January 7, 1935, Chicago, IL, Hanson OPF, NPRC, NARA.

²⁹³ Samuel N. Harper to William C. Bullitt, January 10, 1935, Washington D.C., Hanson OPF, NPRC, NARA.

²⁹⁴ William C. Bullitt, memorandum, April 1, 1935, George C. Hanson

rating, before he had even arrived at his post.²⁹⁵ At that point, he committed suicide.²⁹⁶ After Hanson's suicide, the Department was on the public relations defensive for months, with Foreign Service Personnel officials and Secretary of State Cordell Hull insisting repeatedly that the critics did not possess all of the facts, alleged "persecution" of Hanson was fictitious, and reiterating that Hanson had indeed misbehaved.²⁹⁷

An administrative conspiracy to get rid of an officer who had caused embarrassment, however unintentionally, was hardly unusual for early 20th century American bureaucracy. However, Hanson's case underscores the difficulties facing a relatively small bureaucracy striving for professionalization. Administration was personal, standards of deportment were high (particularly for senior officers such as Hanson), and even the rumor of misconduct could doom an officer if he offended the wrong people—particularly businessmen.

In Hanson's case, Wilbur Carr and other Consular Bureau administrators were overzealous in their discipline. However, at times they could also be overly lax, allowing deficiencies to accumulate until circumstances compelled action. One such instance involved the forced retirement of Percival Heintzleman, which, just as in the case of Hanson, resulted in his suicide. Like Hanson, Heintzleman had been one of the earliest appointees to the Student Interpreters Corps. Unlike dynamic and gregarious hardballs such as Hanson, Johnson, and others, Heintzleman was an oddball. He was reclusive in his personal habits and, as mentioned above, had a reputation for being effeminate.²⁹⁸ He was not a good mixer: while stationed in

²⁹⁵ T.M. Wilson to the Foreign Service Personnel Board, August 8, 1935, George C. Hanson, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

²⁹⁶ Hanson, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

²⁹⁷ Cordell Hull to William Phillip Simms, December 7, 1935, Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, Hanson, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

²⁹⁸ American Foreign Service Inspection Report, Section I, Personnel, December 10, 1934, Percival Heintzleman, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

Hankow, Heintzleman avoided giving dinner parties and other social events avidly, so much so that the business community complained to the State Department about the state of affairs.²⁹⁹

Diplomatic customs required that consular officers entertain and be entertained, often at significant cost to themselves, as the Department only provided reimbursement for expenses deemed actual and necessary. This put great strain on officers like Percival Heintzleman, who, unlike his foreign counterparts, did not receive an entertainment allowance.³⁰⁰ Because of this, they were often viewed as recluses even though their anti-social tendencies were driven by financial worry.³⁰¹ Unlike Hanson, a single officer, Heintzleman had a family to think about and could not afford to entertain as much as an officer with fewer personal obligations.

In addition, Heintzleman was not well liked and tended to impugn lower ranking officers for the failings of his post, inevitably leading to ill-will between him and his subordinates. Officers such as Nelson T. Johnson had used trade expansion as political correctness to protect and advance themselves, but Heintzleman had been content to remain a mid-ranking functionary.

Unfortunately, despite this being the very stated aim of the SIC, Chinese proficiency and familiarity with Chinese politics was insufficient to sustain career officers in the Foreign Service. The Far East Division was interested not only in language-trained individuals but also in those with leadership abilities. It lacked the institutional capacity to sustain officers whose abilities could be best used in intermediary roles. In this milieu, the proliferation of *prima donnas* was not only inevitable; it also led to the ideological schisms that will be examined in later chapters.

Heintzleman was the quintessential example of the bureaucratic functionary. He was disliked but inspectors (including Nelson T. Johnson) could find nothing but general attitudes to

²⁹⁹ Untitled memorandum, September 22, 1924, Percival Heintzleman, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

³⁰⁰ Percival Heintzleman to Wilbur Carr, April 15, 1923, Heintzleman OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

³⁰¹ Op. Cit.

criticize. For example, even while noting that Heintzleman had never been insubordinate, one inspector (most likely Johnson) noted that his office had “never radiated service spirit”—and then promptly observed that “it cannot be said that he does not give all of his waking time to his office and to his conception of the demands of the Department.”³⁰²

Heintzleman was transferred out of China to Winnipeg, Canada, in 1925.³⁰³ Suspecting that his assignment to Canada implied that he had performed poorly in China, Heintzleman wrote to Wilbur Carr, asking for an explanation.³⁰⁴ Carr’s reply to Heintzleman indicated that Heintzleman had been transferred out of China for health reasons.³⁰⁵ However, four years later (after Heintzleman contacted his Congressional representative to inquire on his behalf), Carr wrote that Heintzleman had been removed from China for failing to make contacts “essential to the proper performance of highly responsible duties.”³⁰⁶

Some of Heintzleman’s deficiencies appear early in his record, concomitant with Nelson T. Johnson beginning his stint as Inspector in the early 1920s. It is obvious from his record that Johnson never liked Heintzleman, and it is possible that T.M. Wilson’s animosity towards him in the 1930s derived from Heintzleman’s contemptuous treatment of a non-language-trained officer in the China service.³⁰⁷ It is impossible to know, however, judging solely from Heintzleman’s personnel record, to what degree his eventual forced expulsion from the service derived from his occasionally documented deficiencies in the service and to what degree it derived from the fact that he was disliked. In any case, SIC administrators had many opportunities to correct

³⁰² Undated rating sheet, Percival Heintzleman, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

³⁰³ Percival Heintzleman to Wilbur Carr, April 28, 1925, Hankow, China; Percival Heintzleman, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Wilbur Carr to Percival Heintzleman, June 1, 1925, Washington D.C; Percival Heintzleman, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

³⁰⁶ Wilbur Carr to Stephen G. Porter (U.S. House of Representatives), September 17, 1929, Washington D.C.; Percival Heintzleman, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

³⁰⁷ Heintzleman, OPF.

Heintzleman's deficiencies throughout the 1920s, but did not do so. His expulsion may have been the result of his nemeses' confluence of fortunate positions, or it may have merely been a long-delayed realization of the inevitable. In either case, his forced exodus heralded the ability of the Department to expel officers whose characters and views did not mesh with those of senior administrators.

It is impossible to state whether the removal of Heintzleman from the China field was the result of his incompetence (that certainly seems to have played a role); however, his eventual expulsion from the Foreign Service seems to have been the result of an agreement between a number of influential individuals within the Far East Division. Stanley K. Hornbeck opposed both his reinstatement in the China field and his assignment to the Far East Division in Washington D.C.³⁰⁸

Finally, although Heintzleman had repeatedly been rated "average," on December 27, 1932, he was notified that he had been rated "unsatisfactory."³⁰⁹ This letter purported that Heintzleman's performance was unsatisfactory, but his personnel file indicates that not only had the Personnel Board exaggerated his negative performance at this juncture his service had been satisfactory and Heintzleman improved his performance after the "unsatisfactory" rating, as required by regulation.

Despite this, the Personnel Board maintained the rating—and this after 30 years of service.³¹⁰ Heintzleman's rating from 1931 through 1933 was "average," the minimum required for promotion to higher grades as positions became available.³¹¹ In 1932, the Personnel Division

³⁰⁸ SKH to Mr. Byington, November 3, 1932, Percival Heintzleman, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

³⁰⁹ Wilbur Carr to Percival Heintzleman, Percival Heintzleman, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

³¹⁰ Percival Heintzleman, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

³¹¹ Efficiency Rating, 1931-1933, Percival Heintzleman OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

compiled a list of negative comments about Heintzelman drawn from two decades of service.³¹² The two chief complaints about him were “lack of force” (chiefly from Nelson T. Johnson) and not sufficiently mingling with local Americans.³¹³ The letter of clarification of this rating, requested by Heintzleman, stated only that his service had been “adversely affected by defects, largely of character and personality,” that had appeared “throughout” his career. The signature line of this letter has been smudged out.³¹⁴

It is probably no coincidence that the Personnel Board considered Heintzleman’s fate at the same time it considered that of Hanson. From handwritten notes in Heintzleman’s personnel file it is apparent that Wilbur Carr, Nathaniel P. Davis, and T.M. Wilson all tried to persuade Heintzleman to retire on his own, yet his stubbornness and pride precluded such a measure. It is hardly a leap of logic to infer that the Personnel Board simply wished to get rid of Heintzleman, yet the manner in which it did so called into question its objectivity and competence, presaging the fate of younger officers who would wear the epitaph “China Hands” more ubiquitously (as well as the forced retirement of officers such as Johnson and Hornbeck, as will be noted later). Like Hanson, Heintzelman seems to have intended to commit suicide upon learning that he was being forced out after several decades in the Foreign Service, but did not actually carry out the act and died in 1942.³¹⁵

If the records of officers such as John Paton Davies, O. Edmund Clubb, John Hall Paxton, John Carter Vincent, Arthur Ringwalt, and Raymond P. Ludden (not to mention others) are to be fully understood, they must be understood in the context those of their predecessors

³¹² Letter to the Foreign Service Personnel Board, December 1, 1932, Percival Heintzelman OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

³¹³ Undated report of conversation with Nelson T. Johnson, Heintzelman, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

³¹⁴ Untitled, signature uncertain, letter to Percival Heintzleman, May 29, 1933, Percival Heintzleman, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

³¹⁵ Heintzelman, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO; October 24, 1942, Philadelphia Inquirer.

such as George Hanson and Percival Heintzleman, not to mention the role of World War II in recasting the long term foreign policy outlook of the United States. True professionalization of the Foreign Service did not begin in earnest until after World War II. The development of the SIC during the early decades of the 20th provided the bureaucratic contours; within these it was not uncommon for officers to be pushed out of the service for various reasons, deserved or undeserved.

In this vein, Stuart Fuller noted that Student interpreters often experienced delays in promotions even after fulfilling all the exam requirements, as the State Department based the promotion schedule on the date the exam results were mailed to the Department rather than on the date exams were passed.³¹⁶ Similarly, A 1923 rating sheet deprecating Remillard for gaps in his knowledge of U.S. law and Consular regulations made such assertions as that he “thought his allowance of \$5.00 while traveling was averaged;” he wrote the Consulate General to ask if drafts drawn for the relief of sailors should be on the Secretary of Treasury; and not long ago received a letter of nearly three pages long from the General Accounting Office listing items on his travel account “that he should have known better than to charge to the Government.”³¹⁷ If, as one inspector observed in 1921, “it is plainly stated that Remillard was downright lazy.”³¹⁸ Remillard’s personnel records read more unfavorably than many of his SIC-China peers. Why, then, was he able to escape the administrative chopping block when so of his peers did not?

Institutional whim was probably the answer, and it could cut both ways. In Remillard’s case, it worked in his favor. For Percival Heintzleman, the opposite was true. In the 1930s, the Personnel Board Heintzleman’s performance was unsatisfactory, but his file indicates that not

³¹⁶ Stuart Fuller to C.C. Eberhardt, Hong Kong, China, October 21 1921, *Records of the Department of State*, Decimal File, 123K582-123K63, NARA, College Park, MD.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

only did the Personnel Board exaggerate his negative traits, he improved his performance subsequent to the “unsatisfactory” rating. Despite this, the Personnel Board continued the rating—and this after 30 years of service.³¹⁹ It is hardly a leap of logic to infer that the Personnel Board simply wished to get rid of him. Samuel Sokobin observed that American merchants should make “greater efforts to reach Chinese markets directly. This is one of the principle reasons for Japan’s success in the Chinese market.”³²⁰

The institutional priority of trade expansion thus pervaded the Foreign Service, from Congressional committee postulation to consular secretary implementation. This priority influenced pay, promotions, and personnel transfers, as well as personal relationships within the Service. As will be discussed later, this overwrought emphasis often eclipsed many of the other vital (yet sometimes intangible) services that language-trained officers provided to American citizens.

Examination of these officers’ careers confirms Michael Schaller’s claim that “the American response to [Chinese revolution in the 1930s and 1940s] was disjointed, contradictory, and almost totally incapable of achieving positive results.”³²¹ However, this chaotic response was *not* due to a lack of accurate information but rather to the abject lack of an imperial plan. Whatever plan for informal economic empire that may have existed at the inception of the SIC had all but evaporated, maintaining only the most tenuous existence in the minds of senior State Department and Foreign Service administrators, who, by the end of the second World War, found themselves being pushed out of the Foreign Service in the late 1940s in same way that

³¹⁹ Percival Heintzelman, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

³²⁰ Samuel Sokobin in Stuart Fuller, “Inspection Report on Student Interpreter Samuel Sokobin,” September 30, 1916, *Despatches from Student Interpreters*, General Records of the Department of State, (RG 59), NARA, College Park, MD.

³²¹ Michael Schaller, *The United States and China in the 20th Century*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), xi.

they had expurgated officers in the 1930s. In other words, the specific imperial vision of the Foreign Service architects had dissipated by the 1930s, but the imperial diplomatic administration they had constructed was quickly adopted and turned against them by their ideological progeny on both sides of the American political divide, who had been waiting for just such an opportunity. Junior-ranking consular officers throughout China forwarded volumes of information to their superiors, thereby supplying the basis for the regular reports of American Ministers such as Gauss, MacMurray, and Johnson. Far more than the Minister, it was junior Foreign Service officers—most often as language-trained Consuls—who influenced the United States view of China during the period under scrutiny. During the 1940s (partly due to their role in WWII), junior officers had begun to eclipse their institutional forbears in China.

It is worth noting that the significance of language-trained officers in the Far East Division was not due to elite status. On the contrary, even the “good old boys” of the “China Service” were neither political nor financial elites—at least, not in the sense that “New Left” scholars such as Thomas J. McCormick described them, as either “those social elements with the most *direct power* [original emphasis] to influence national decisions and alter events, and/or those who controlled *property* and affected the social relationships that flowed from that control.”³²² Eileen P. Scully has similarly asserted, “the unwillingness of groups in the United States to divert substantial resources to the imperial project forced the government to pursue empire ‘on the cheap’ through an alliance with collaborator elites, who themselves struggled to gain or retain authority in their own societies.”³²³

³²² McCormick, *China Market*, 10.

³²³ Eileen P. Scully, “Taking the Low Road to Sino-American Relations: “Open Door” Expansionists and the Two Markets,” *The Journal of American History* 82, no. 1 (June, 1995), 62-83.

So far as concerns the “China Service,” the connections between economic power and political influence were sporadic and incidental at best. Most frequently, the closest ties between businessmen and the exponents of the United States’ China policies were the low-level consular field officers described here, those with the *very least* ability to nudge policy in any particular direction whatsoever. The low-ranking “China Hands” were often the whipping boys of the Foreign Service. Unfairly treated through crude administration, inadequate compensation, and dilatory promotions, their justified complaints earned them a reputation for being whiners. Inundated with directives to advance American trade and search out new opportunities, their efforts in this regard were often ignored (from a personnel standpoint) if not rebuked. Paul Gordon Lauren has observed that the China Hands “had to deal with the difficult problem of what public officials should do when they believe their government is wrong.”³²⁴ They also had to reconcile differences between government policies and the priorities of local resident Americans.

This was easier said than done, for officers were expected at once to mingle with and yet remain aloof from local American business and missionary circles. Those who remained at particular posts for too long or remained in country for many years without returning to the United States on leave became suspect. Inspectors believed that long foreign residence meant that consular officers gradually lost touch with American economic and political developments.³²⁵ Similarly, if an officer remained too long in one location, he was suspected of “going native.” This fear was so ingrained in the minds of senior State Department officials that officers alluded to it as a weapon in bureaucratic squabbles. Following the 1923 earthquake in

³²⁴ Lauren, “Introduction,” *The China Hands*, 7.

³²⁵ Stuart Jamieson Fuller, “Fifth Inspection of Consular Office at Dairen, September 28-29 and October 1, 1917. *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

Japan, Nelson T. Johnson described Erle R. Dickover (another officer whom he disliked) as “a part of the foreign community in which he is living, and appears to feel that is necessary for him to interpret . . . the feelings and desires of that community and to mediate in their behalf.”³²⁶

By the end of WWII, most senior officers of the China and Japan branches had been targeted for retirement, whether mandatory or voluntary. Personnel files indicate that in 1945, Foreign Service officers working in either China or the Far East Division in Washington feared for their careers. Already underway in 1941, the “purge” of the China hands was as much a voluntary evacuation as a calculated witch-hunt. By 1945, many officers such as George Atcheson Jr. had sought transfers out of the China field, posing a dilemma for Foreign Service personnel administrators. For example, Nathaniel P. Davis (Chief of the Division of Foreign Service Personnel) noted plans to transfer George Atcheson Jr. to the Far East Division, commenting, “this is alright with him although he says frankly that if there were not a war on he would ask for an assignment as far removed from Chinese affairs as possible.”³²⁷

Part of the driving impetus in this regard was the hostility of Ambassador Patrick Hurley. According to Nathaniel P. Davis of the Personnel Division, George Atcheson urged the replacement of *all* the China officers of his cohort, to protect them from Hurley’s venom, but the lack of experienced, Chinese-trained officers made doing so expeditiously impossible.³²⁸

It was about the lack of transfers such as Atcheson’s that Hurley later blasted:

“I requested the relief of the career men . . . who were opposing the American policy in the Chinese Theater of war. These professional diplomats were returned to Washington

³²⁶ Nelson T. Johnson [Consul General at Large, Yokohama, Japan] to Secretary of State, November 15, 1923, Department of State Decimal File (1910-1921), 123D/562/67, RG 59, NARA.

³²⁷ Nathaniel P. Davis, undated memorandum, George Atcheson Jr. OPF, NPRC, NARA.

³²⁸ Ibid.

and placed in the Chinese and Far Eastern Divisions of the State Department as my supervisors. Some of these same career men whom I relieved have been assigned as supervisors to the Supreme Commander in Asia. In such positions most of them have continued to side with the Communist armed party and at times with the imperialist bloc against American policy.”³²⁹

Hurley’s venom derived in part, from the telegram that Acheson sent to the State Department on February 28th, 1945, while Hurley had returned to Washington D.C. for consultation. During the firestorm that erupted after Hurley’s resignation, Secretary of State James F. Byrnes testified before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on December 7th, 1945, which was released to the press as a Department of State Radio Bulletin. A copy of this was placed in Acheson’s file, probably to prevent future charges of insubordination on the basis of this incident. Byrnes observed, “the phase of that policy [American policy toward China] upon which Ambassador Hurley has placed the greatest emphasis is our support of the National Government of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek.”³³⁰

Byrnes further noted, “the propriety of Mr. Acheson’s telegram can be determined only against the background of the events in China which preceded it.” Noting that Acheson had taken charge of the mission in Chungking, Byrnes stated,

“the officer in charge of an American mission in a foreign country bears the responsibility for full and accurate reporting of the factors and events which are

³²⁹ Patrick J. Hurley, quoted in Don Lohbeck, *Patrick J. Hurley* (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery Company, 1956), 430.

³³⁰ Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, *Department of State Radio Bulletin*, no. 280, December 7th, 1945, George Acheson Jr., OPF, NPRC, NARA.

necessary to the intelligent formulation and execution of United States foreign policy . . . if his reports and recommendations are to be useful, it is clear that they must reflect his free and honest judgment. In the case of an Ambassador, these considerations have always been taken for granted. They have been equally taken for granted in the case of the officer who assumes charge during the absence of the Ambassador.”³³¹

Referring to John S. Service’s memorandum of October 10th, 1944, Byrnes stressed, “at the time this memorandum was prepared by Mr. Service, he was not attached to the Embassy at Chungking . . . he was attached to the staff of General Stilwell as a political observer in Yenan.”³³² Furthermore, Byrnes emphasized, Hurley was not yet the United States Ambassador to China; he was a special envoy of the President, with the diplomatic rank of Ambassador. A fine point perhaps. Nevertheless, Byrnes emphasized, “under these circumstances, it cannot be said that anything Mr. Service wrote constituted insubordination to Ambassador Hurley.”³³³

The possibility of disloyalty still existed however. Byrnes observed, “the other complaint of Ambassador Hurley is that some official or employee did not merely express a different view to his superior officer, *but advised someone associated with the Communist forces that the Ambassador did not accurately represent United States policy* [emphasis added]. For such action there would be no excuse. I would be the first to condemn it and to dismiss the person guilty of it. But Ambassador Hurley has not furnished me, nor do I understand that he has

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Ibid.

furnished this Committee, any evidence to prove that any employee was guilty of such conduct.”³³⁴

The *Amerasia* case underscores that when officers were willing to defy superiors and regulations alike, and this aroused the ire of fellow officers. Initially, Joseph Ballantine (a graduate of the SIC in Japan who spent most of his career in the Japanese Empire and Manchuria), observed in his reminiscences the “fellows stationed as Stilwell’s advisors . . . were young people, very little experienced in political affairs, they couldn’t see the whole picture as we, in the Department of State, saw it.”³³⁵ As Ballantine understood it, these officers were duty-bound to report the situation in Communist-occupied territories as they saw it, but “when they found they were overruled in their ideas, instead of saying either ‘aye aye sir, at your orders, or resigning, they started to build a fire under their superior officer by going outside.”³³⁶

Meanwhile, Ballantine and his colleague Eugene Dooman opposed efforts to force the Japanese to transpose an American university system “into every prefecture,” as well as the pressure to get rid of the Emperor.³³⁷ Ballantine eventually resigned because of his differences with senior State Department officials, particularly Dean Acheson, Willard Thorpe, and Archibald McLeish, believing that his views no longer received any currency.³³⁸

The personal as well as political views of a superior had a profound influence on the careers of many officers in both the China and Japan services. Dr. Stanley K. Hornbeck, Chief of the Far Eastern Division, said of Dooman in 1934 (while assigned to the State Department in 1933), “he is of that school whose members make or endeavor to make a clear-cut distinction

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Joseph Ballantine, *The Reminiscences of Joseph Ballantine* (New York: Oral History Office, Columbia University, 1961), 218.

³³⁶ Ibid..

³³⁷ Ibid., 229, 231.

³³⁸ Ibid., 242.

between a man's rights and obligations as an officer of the Government and his rights and obligations as a private individual."³³⁹ Unless specifically requested to do so, while stationed in Washington, Dooman did not bring work home or work overtime.³⁴⁰

That had not been the case nine years earlier, while serving in Tokyo as Assistant Japanese Secretary. According to Ambassador Charles MacVeagh, for six months in 1926, "Mr. Dooman was the only officer of any kind who could read and speak Japanese, and necessarily he was constantly called upon by myself, the Counselor and the two Secretaries to translate, interpret, advise and explain about things Japanese which came before us for immediate decision."³⁴¹

It is within this context that the "China Hands" and their observations of Chinese politics must be understood. Early and late, language-trained middlemen accurately outlined political and economic conditions in China. Ernest B. Price, for example, asserted in 1929 that "it is hard to avoid the suspicion that there is no hard-and-fast line dividing the Communist Party and a very considerable though still indeterminate element in the Left Wing of the Kuomintang . . . on practically all sides and by men of judgment and ability it is expressed the fear that the Communist Party is not dead"³⁴²

Furthermore, according to Price, in 1929, "the great bulk of the Radical Opposition are not staking everything, in fact are counting little, on gaining control of the government by legal means through obtaining a majority in the Third National Congress; for it is by now reasonably

³³⁹ Dr. Stanley K. Hornbeck, "Annual Efficiency Report," June 30th, 1934. Eugene Dooman, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Charles MacVeagh, "Annual Efficiency Report," December 1st, 1925.

³⁴² Ernest B. Price to J.V.A. MacMurray, February 6, 1929, Peiping, China. Correspondence, American Consulate, Nanking, 1929. Vol. 28, Class 8, Subject File 800. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84. NARA.

clear that the Government has already arranged to ‘pack’ the Congress with Moderates and supporters of the Government.”³⁴³

Having already submitted his resignation, Price observed of the Communist-Kuomintang tensions: “that a test of serious proportions is bound to come is admitted by all sides, but the Government seems, on the whole, surprisingly sanguine of the outcome.”³⁴⁴ However accurate his prognostications, it must be remembered that Price had an unparalleled reputation as a whiner. When assessing the efficiency of Meryl S. Myers for example, an anonymous administrator asserted, “except for V.C. Price, there does not seem to be an officer in China with so badly disjointed a nose or with so persistent and loud a wail, and criticism of the Department and its methods.”³⁴⁵ Despite the justice of many of their complaints senior officials came to view them through this unfortunate lens. The predictions of Price, on the way out the door as it were, were to be taken with a grain of salt.

Thus, by the mid-1930s, a solid, functioning bureaucracy had developed, within which the Far East Division (to which the China, Japan, Ottoman Empire/Turkey/Middle East missions were subordinate) was just one cog among many. Within the Far East Division, two clusters of influence emerged, one in Beijing, the other in Tokyo. During and after WWII, some tensions developed between members of the China and Japan services, but these appear to have been personal, rather than purely policy-related, and were just as common as were personal grudges within the various divisions of the Foreign Service. In 1943, according to his personnel file Dooman was fed up with the Far East Division. According to an untitled memorandum stamped, “G. Howland Shaw,” [Dooman] said that he knew “more about Japan than any other person in

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Meryl S. Myers OPF.

this country and that he could not see where his knowledge could be utilized in the State Department. FE [Far East Division], he says, is out of the question.”³⁴⁶ The reason for this was his “strong antipathy to serving in the Far Eastern Division under the former Office Director, Mr. Hornbeck . . .”³⁴⁷

A few months later, Nathaniel P. Davis noted that Dooman was reluctant to take another assignment under Joseph Grew, mentioning that he “said he had given the best in him for Mr. Grew who got all the credit and he wasn’t keen to resume that status. I told him he had better take the present assignment and let the future take care of itself.”³⁴⁸ The position of Minister to Thailand was open in July, 1945, and several senior officers from both the China and Japan services were nominated, Willys R. Peck and Joseph W. Ballantine were among those considered. According to Nathaniel P. Davis, “Ballantine indicated pretty plainly that he had misgivings as to the soundness of Peck’s judgment, particularly under pressure. He said his own preferences, if Peck cannot go, are Stanton or Dooman . . . I then said I thought he himself would be a good candidate; to which he replied . . . he was ready to serve wherever the Department could best use him.”³⁴⁹ The appointment went to Peck.³⁵⁰

Plate Glass over the Open Door: Informal Empire on the Eve of the Pacific War

By the time the United States entered the Pacific War, trade expansion ideology had gradually withered as a form of political correctness, and several other issues were vying for

³⁴⁶ [stamped, “G. Howland Shaw”], December 31, 1943, Eugene Dooman, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

³⁴⁷ [Untitled Rating Sheet], January 1st, 1943. Eugene Dooman, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

³⁴⁸ [stamped, “Nathaniel P. Davis,”] “Eugen Dooman,” March 4th, 1944, Eugene Dooman, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

³⁴⁹ [stamped, “Nathaniel P. Davis,”], “Joseph W. Ballantine,” July 26th, 1945, in Eugene Dooman, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

³⁵⁰ Willys R. Peck, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

prominence. Language officers in the Far East division (China and Japan, primarily) clustered ideologically in several groups. Among the “China Hands,” one group included Nelson T. Johnson, Willys Peck, Julean Arnold, and other officers of the same generational cohort. As Russell Buhite has observed, by the 1930s, Johnson believed that the United States needed a stronger policy toward Japan, which put him at odds with the Roosevelt administration. Because of this, Johnson tended to express his opinions more often in private correspondence, as opposed to official dispatches.³⁵¹

China officers within or connected to Johnson’s sphere of influence advocated a stronger US position against Japan (opposing Japanese expansion in China), anticipated the Communist threat to Chiang Kai-shek’s government, and were ambivalent towards the Kuomintang. They might easily be called the “old China Hands,” as they were a generation older than officers such as Edmund Clubb and John Service, who became much more notorious “China Hands” than their predecessors.

The young “China Hands” entered the Foreign Service as language officers in the late 1920s and early 1930s, during a sea change in American attitudes toward the role of government in society. They had lower estimations of their obligations to the government than the elder China Hands and greater expectations of the government. Like their elder colleagues, they held mixed but overall ambivalent views of Chiang Kai-shek’s government. Their views toward the Communists were also mixed but in contrast to the Old China Hands, whichever side they supported, they advocated that the US government take a more active, direct role to aid that side.

Among the Japanese language officers, a similar grouping had developed as well, roughly consisting of Joseph Ballantine, Eugene Dooman, Erle R. Dickover, and several others, all linked

³⁵¹ Buhite, *Nelson T. Johnson*, 91.

Ambassador Joseph Grew. Like their “old China Hands” peers, they had entered the SIC during the first decade of its existence in Japan (SIC Japan was established in 1909), and were fiscally conservative. They were wary of a war with Japan—more so than the China Hands—and favored coming to an understanding with Japan regarding China. Smaller in number than the China Hands, the younger language officers in Japan did not clash with their elder colleagues as strongly, nor did they have the opportunities to develop and advocate their own policies as did the younger China Hands during the Pacific War. These generational and ideological differences will be examined more closely in later chapters. Emphasis on trade expansion functioned as a form of political correctness from the establishment of the SIC until the mid 1930s. This had a more pronounced effect on the SIC and language officers in China than those in Japan.

As will be discussed in a later chapter, these differences eventually coalesced into differing, overt imperial policies. However, by the beginning of the 1940s, several salient features of the SIC and its graduates in China, Japan, and Turkey had emerged. First and foremost, trade expansion ideology had faded, functioning only as a limited form of political correctness with only a shadow of its former potency. Second, the bureaucracy that had emerged was personnel, whimsical, and capricious, simultaneously capable of harsh supervision and lax oversight and incapable of implementing any coherent imperial program. Bureaucratic suspicion of native employees further precluded American government collaboration with local commercial elites. Moreover, State Department and more importantly, Congressional apathy toward providing Consular entertainment and travel budgets diplomatic niceties hamstrung language officers’ ability to compete on an equal footing with their British, French, and Japanese rivals in building relationships with local elites—relationships that both students of imperialism and Sino-American relations scholars have repeatedly asserted are so vital to “informal

imperialism.”³⁵² All of these factors together combined to plaster a thick layer of plate glass over the “Open Door,” temporarily frustrating American imperial ambitions and channeling them in other directions.

³⁵² Scully, “Low Road to Sino-American Relations,” 65.

CHAPTER 5
OF “LITTLE VALUE IN THE EXPANSION OF AMERICAN TRADE”³⁵³: SIC JAPAN,
1906-1941

The SIC in Japan was established in 1906, four years after that in China, and a year after the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5. Although not covered in this study, this language training program for American consular officers was soon followed by a parallel one for military officers, initiated in 1908 for Japanese language students and eventually expanded to China in 1919.³⁵⁴ These, as well as the SIC students and, upon graduation, consular officers became acquainted with an ascending, increasingly assertive and ambitious Japan. As will be seen in this chapter, these officers developed a unique understanding of Japan, its economy, foreign relations, and objectives in Asia. Like their counterparts in China, Japanese language officers became increasingly interventionist.

As will be discussed in greater detail in this chapter, the influence of various SIC-Japan officers varied according to the contingencies of where they were posted and the particular expertise they developed, the perceptions of inspectors who visited the posts to which they were assigned, and their relationships to the officers who had the greatest degree of control over the flow of information to Washington D.C. The result was an SIC-Japan that was institutionally and culturally almost identical to SIC-China, but within which trade expansion received less *de facto* emphasis. Further removed from the fabled China market and under less pressure to advance

³⁵³ Robert Frazier Jr., Inspection of Consulate General at Tokyo, Japan, April 19-26, 1927. *Inspection Records on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, NARA, College Park, MD.

³⁵⁴ Thomas Collier, “The Chinese Language Officer Program of the U.S. Army, 1919-1943,” Thomas Watts Collier, Duke University, 1966. MA Thesis, ii.

American trade in Japan than their colleagues were in the Chinese context, these officers tended to see an economically stable Japan as a higher priority than holding open the door for American trade in China. The differences between and among these groups of language-trained officers were primarily personal and generational. The ideological differences that became pronounced and eventually controversial involved postwar American policy for Japan and China.

However, these will not be examined in detail. Rather, highlighting the historical contingencies that produced these differences, this chapter reinforces the argument that despite Open Door ideology, the United States had no plan for economic empire (or otherwise) in China, Japan, Japan, or Turkey during this period. Underscoring the *ad hoc* manner in which particular officers built up informational fiefdoms, this chapter also builds a case against the existence of a putative “foreign policy elite” intent on constructing such an empire. Modest as these assertions are, viewed through the even more humble lens of these American middlemen who never sought public approbation, these conclusions demand detailed and empirically-conscientious revision of such expansive claims as those of historians such as Walter LaFeber, who asserts in his Bancroft-award winning monograph, “American society had become so fluid and disorderly after 1873 that it also became imperialistic abroad to restore order at home.”³⁵⁵

This dissertation suggests that in the case of China and Japan, historians such as William Appleman Williams, Thomas McCormick, and Walter LaFeber have placed too much emphasis on pronouncements by public figures and too little on the context—historical and economic—of such statements. The context provided by SIC-Japan officers reinforces the picture highlighted by their SIC-China colleagues: namely that despite US complicity in several different imperialist projects in China, American economic empire in China was a pathetic flop. As will be argued

³⁵⁵ Walter LaFeber, *Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations Throughout History* (NY: W.W. Norton, 1997), 98.

later in greater detail, the SIC project itself can be best understood as one aspect of Elihu Root and Theodore Roosevelt's efforts to institutionalize and strengthen various components of the US federal government.

However, the same contingencies that led to differing emphases in the Foreign Service also paved the way for rival imperialisms associated with what could be crudely described as the political left and right of American politics, alternate varieties of a uniquely American species of project-based imperialism offered as substitutes for the more traditional types that existed in Japan, China, the Ottoman Empire, and elsewhere. These alternate imperial blueprints were patterned according to the historically contingent understandings of China and Japan constructed over decades by SIC-trained officers.

Examination of consular post inspection reports, post correspondence, personnel records and memoirs highlights a portrayal of Japan constructed more on the basis of contacts with Japanese diplomats than that developed by officers in China. Similar to their colleagues in China however, Japanese language officers who entered early in the program were generally those who rose the furthest in terms of rank, privilege, and influence. Scholars of American-Japanese relations will likely recognize Joseph Ballantine, Eugene Dooman, and Erle Dickover; less recognizable might be Max Kirjassoff, Edwin Neville, and John Caldwell, but even a cursory scan of State Department reports on Japan between 1910 and 1940 could hardly fail to produce an account written by one of these men, and it was from these men that the State Department—and ultimately the office of the President—received a complex and nuanced picture of Japan's economy, domestic politics, and foreign policy.

Like their counterparts in China, SIC officers in Japan were generally well-educated. As will be discussed briefly in individual cases, nearly all of them possessed bachelor degrees; a few

were children of missionaries, but the number was comparatively smaller than in China. Relative to the “China Service,” the US consular footprint in Japan was fairly small between 1909 and 1941; the body of Student Interpreters there was similarly slight. For example, in 1922 there were seven student interpreters in China and three in Japan, and equal numbers were promoted (respectively) from Student Interpreter to Interpreter.³⁵⁶ In addition to these, in China, there were 42 consular officers of the rank of Interpreter or higher; in Japan there were 18.³⁵⁷ Of these, seven began their careers as student interpreters in Japan compared to seventeen in China.³⁵⁸ It should be noted that from the turn of the century through the 1920s, Japan was a preferred posting to that of China. Nelson T. Johnson had hoped for Japan but received China.³⁵⁹ Due to the presidential appointment system, student interpreter were listed as Diplomatic Officers until the 1924 Rogers Act; in addition to these formal students, the “China Service” contained three SIC-trained secretaries; the Japan service had two.³⁶⁰ In the same year there were seven American consular offices outside of Tokyo, three of which were outside of Japan proper (Dairen, Manchuria, Seoul, Korea, and Taibeku, Taiwan), compared to eighteen for China (not including Peking).³⁶¹ Of the American consular offices in Japan, only two, Kobe and Yokohama, possessed more than two American consular officers, whereas in China, the offices of Shanghai, Tientsin, Chungking, Harbin, and Changsha had three or more consular officers (Shanghai had

³⁵⁶ State Department, *Biographic Register of the Department of State* (Washington D.C: GPO, 1922), 55-57; 66-67; 73-74.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁹ Russell D. Buhite, *Nelson T. Johnson and American Policy toward China, 1925-1941* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1968), 6-7.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 36-39.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 55-56; 66-67

nine, Tientsin six; Harbin, Changsha, and Chungking each had three), and many others had at least two, usually consisting a consul and vice-consul.³⁶²

As in China, SIC students in Japan completed their prescribed two years of study in the capital (Tokyo for Japan, Beijing for China), but although the law provided for ten students in China, Japan, and Turkey, positions were filled based on vice-consul and consul vacancies. Consequently, more students were inducted into service as these vacancies became available and the graduate Interpreters were promoted to vice consul, consul, etc. In Japan there were rarely more than two students at any given time (in Turkey there even less), whereas in China there would most often be five to seven from 1902 through the end of the 1920s.

These numbers highlight important realities that confronted actual and prospective Student Interpreters in China. First of all, as the Student Interpreters Corps had been created with a view to providing consular posts with language-trained Americans, greater potential for advancement necessarily existed for Chinese-trained officers than their Japanese-trained compatriots. Secondly, a large number of consular posts in China existed far away from Peking, whereas those in Japan were comparatively close to Tokyo. This reality afforded officers in China a greater degree of *de facto* autonomy in the performance of their duties in comparison to their SIC-Japan counterparts. The comparatively low number of language-trained US consular officers in Japan and the similarly low number of potential posts at which they could serve made the task of distinguishing themselves from non-language trained (or Chinese-trained) officers simpler. The smaller number and closer geographical and personal proximity of Japanese language students to the ambassador (for much of the time considered here it was Joseph C.

³⁶² Ibid.

Grew) also meant that some individual Japanese language officers had greater potential influence in terms of policy than did their Chinese language counterparts.

This influence was concentrated at the top of the professional career path of the SIC. This will be discussed in greater detail below when examining the differences between SIC-trained officers in Japan and China. However, the majority of this section will focus on the “middle” officers of the SIC: those of vice-consul rank and higher, who served in provincial cities and constituted the backbone of the Foreign Service in China and Japan. One representative example of this type of officer in Japan is Erle R. Dickover.

Erle Dickover was born in Santa Barbara California in 1888, and is an excellent example of the talented but unappreciated middle of the language-trained Foreign Service officers in China, Japan, and Turkey. He entered service in 1914 with a Bachelor’s degree from the University of California, and served over twenty of his thirty-five years (until his mandatory retirement in 1949) in Japan.³⁶³ Dickover’s personnel file shows that in addition to academic references, he received both commercial and political recommendations just to get the opportunity to take the examination (selection of examinees was by presidential designation, and remained political, despite claims that the examination system made individual merit the basis for appointments and promotion). While seeking permission to take the exam, Dickover obtained endorsements the Santa Barbara Savings and Loan Bank, the president of the University of California, California Representatives Joseph R. Knowland, Everis Hayes and Julius Kahn, and Senator George Perkins.³⁶⁴ As with SIC-China, bureaucracy as well as politics obstructed the

³⁶³ Erle Roy Dickover Official Personnel File (OPF), National Personnel Records Center, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), St. Louis, MO.

³⁶⁴ Everis Hays and Julius Kahn to Secretary of State, Washington D. C., December 9, 1913; John R. Knowland to Secretary of State, Washington D. C., February 11, 1913; George Perkins to Secretary of State, Washington D. C., November 3, 1913, Erle R. Dickover OPF.

path to appointments and advancements. After passing the written examination, to his astonishment, Dickover failed the physical exam although, as he put it, he had “never been ill for a day in my life, with the exception of the usual diseases of childhood.” The reason he failed the physical is unclear, but he underwent it again with a different doctor and passed.³⁶⁵

As with their counterparts in China, SIC-trained officers based in Japan were often reviewed by superiors who had scant contact with, or knowledge of their skills, abilities, and attitudes. Absent adverse action or personal prejudices, this meant that superiors tended to recommend that officers continue to serve in or return to service in the country where they had received language training. This meant that by the 1930s, American consular offices in Japan were primarily staffed by SIC-Japan trained American officers and host country nationals. As in China, the American officers in Japan who gained the greatest influence were those who won the most approbation from their superiors and State Department benefactors.

In this way SIC-Japan was nearly indistinguishable from SIC-China in terms of structure and administration. However, one important difference was that due to the comparatively small number of Japanese-trained officers and the greater number of consulates in China, State Department inspectors tended to be more familiar with and sympathetic to the priorities of SIC-China. Whereas Nelson T. Johnson and Charles Eberhardt had many years of experience in China and inspectors such as Fleming Cheshire and Alfred Gottschalk traveled widely, visiting American consulates in China, Japan, and Turkey (as well as elsewhere), virtually no inspectors during the 1910s, '20s, or '30s had a service background in Japan—although officers such as Edwin Neville, Joseph Ballantine, and Eugene Dooman did eventually hold positions of

³⁶⁵ Erle R. Dickover to Secretary of State, Washington D. C., April 1, 1914. The results of the failed physical, inexplicably, are not in his personnel file, although such records appear in other SIC personnel files, and his own file contains later physicals. After a reexamination, Dickover finally signed his service agreement on June 4th, 1914. Dickover OPF.

significant responsibility, both in the US Embassy in Japan and later in the Far East Division at the State Department.

However, this trend produced tensions between SIC-China and SIC-Japan. In the 1920s, these manifested themselves primarily as personality differences and banal disputes concerning the relative importance of trade expansion, commercial reporting, and other minor issues. Such rivalry often emerged out of differing interpretations of seemingly innocuous (to present readers) regulatory and legal matters, such as the matter of certifying shipping invoices. Another such issue was the proper procedure for documenting the overseas marriages of American citizens.³⁶⁶ As banal and trivial as such issues might seem to the casual reader, in many cases they were the exponents of issues existing between the “oddballs and hardballs” among these two groups of officers. As will be discussed later, SIC officers such as Nelson Johnson and Willys R. Peck maintained close personal friendships with each other as well as Stanley Hornbeck (an influential director of the Far East Division), whereas officers such as Joseph Ballantine, Eugene Dooman, and Edwin Neville were correspondingly close relationships. In some cases, these ties were closer than the bonds of blood: Joseph Ballantine assumed custody of SIC-Japan officer Max Kirjassoff’s children when the latter and his wife were killed in the aftermath of a Tokyo earthquake despite requests for custody from relatives (both officers were Jewish but Kirjassoff’s wife and relationships were not).³⁶⁷

For this reason, even banal and trivial differences between officials during this period are significant, as they provide context for the more significant post-war policy proposals that will be mentioned again in later chapters, such as the use of the atomic bomb, retention of the Japanese

³⁶⁶ Nelson T. Johnson to Erle R. Dickover, Kobe, Japan, February 25, 1924, Dickover OPF; Nelson T. Johnson to Secretary of State, Washington D. C., 14 March 1924. Dickover OPF.

³⁶⁷ Max Kirjassoff, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO; Joseph Ballantine, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

Emperor, and the issue of Communism in China. Consequently, when Stanley Hornbeck commented about John Caldwell's assignment to the State Department in 1928 that "his principal shortcomings are that he has allowed himself to become habituated to 'statutory hours of labor' and, probably unconsciously, to a conception of automatic or mechanistic determination of events and progress in politics and in the career service," more was at stake than mere performance of duties.³⁶⁸

However, unlike the vast majority of the (in)famous "China Hands," many of the influential and senior SIC-Japan officers—such as John Caldwell and Eugene Dooman were interned by the Japanese in 1941 after Pearl Harbor.³⁶⁹ As will be discussed in a later chapter, this complicated criticism of these officers' character and loyalty, making censuring of their duty performance and reference to past criticisms the easiest way to mitigate their policy proposals. Moreover, while masked by the official language common to post inspection reports and personnel efficiency reviews, personality clashes were common between SIC-Japan and SIC-China officers—although they were less pronounced as those among SIC-China officers themselves. For example, in 1924 Inspector Nelson T. Johnson (only a year older than Dickover, but with eight years' seniority) gave Dickover a low efficiency rating ("fair" was below "average," and officers were not usually recommended for promotion unless they had consistent ratings of "average," "very good," or "excellent"), for no apparent concrete reason other than "shallowness of intellectual background which has narrowed his vision and rendered him incapable of making the most of his experience," and recommended that Dickover be immediately transferred "out of the Far East and assigned for a time to some European post

³⁶⁸ Stanley K. Hornbeck, Annual Efficiency Report, February 15, 1928, in John K. Caldwell, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

³⁶⁹ John Caldwell, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO, *passim*; Eugene Dooman, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO, *passim*.

under the supervision of a capable principle officer.”³⁷⁰ This was ironic given Johnson’s lack of formal education, but underscores the reality that for SIC-trained officers in Japan (just as in China), personal relationships and connections—both between officers and between them and members of the local bureaucracies and business communities.³⁷¹

As was typical of Johnson, his report on Dickover repeatedly highlighted ways in which the latter could (and should) improve in the area of trade expansion.³⁷² Johnson had been an SIC-China student and his rise through the ranks of the Foreign Service in China had been concomitant with his whole-hearted devotion to trade expansion as an institutional priority. While it might be going too far to characterize Johnson’s emphasis on trade expansion and related criticism on that subject to lower-ranking officers as self-serving, he never served in Japan for an extended period of time and was primarily concerned with enforcing and institutionalizing the bureaucratic priorities that he best understood—particularly that of trade expansion.

As will be further emphasized below, actual political and economic conditions in Japan habituated SIC-Japan officers away from emphasizing trade expansion. However, they remained acutely aware of Japan’s economic priorities. In fact, awareness of those priorities undergirded most of their political reporting as well. For example, even while testifying to a Japan “in a much stronger industrial condition than ever before,” in 1917 then-consul at Nagasaki Edwin Neville noted that Japan was increasingly importing its iron ore from China and Korea, warning that it

³⁷⁰ Erle R. Dickover, Question #85 on untitled rating sheet signed Nelson Trusler Johnson, 1924. Dickover OPF; Nelson T. Johnson to Secretary of State, Washington D. C., 14 March 1924. Dickover OPF.

³⁷¹ Russell D. Buhite, *Nelson T. Johnson and American Policy toward China, 1925-1941* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1968), 6-7.

³⁷² Nelson T. Johnson to Erle R. Dickover, Kobe, Japan, February 25, 1924, Dickover OPF; Nelson T. Johnson to Secretary of State, Washington D. C., 14 March 1924. Dickover OPF.

was not mined anywhere in Japan and that domestic business opinion was that “Japan ought not to be dependent on the goodwill of the iron-owning peoples.”³⁷³

This economic nationalist rhetoric had a practical side in terms of bilateral trade. Whereas American businessmen were so comparatively ignorant of Japan that they invariably sought out American consular officers in Tokyo (or the commercial attaché), their Japanese counterparts just as frequently possessed an abundance of contacts (usually through corporate extensions in the United States or business affiliates) such that in 1927, “in no case has this office been requested to assist such [Japanese] travelers in any way. It is thought that even if this office assumed the initiative in presenting Japanese businessmen with letters of introduction . . . it would be of little value in the promotion of American trade”³⁷⁴

One of the reasons for this was the difference in language barriers. In China, it was much less common for local businessmen to be conversant in English.³⁷⁵ In Japan however (particularly in Tokyo), competence in English was so widespread that by the 1930s it was not even highly imperative to have language officers stationed there, other than to monitor and translate articles in the local press.³⁷⁶ For this reason, Japanese-American trade was very much in Japanese hands. Even attempts by language-trained officers to assist in settling claims of fraud frequently yielded little success. For example, in 1930 Kobe consul Erle R. Dickover sought to mediate nearly \$10,000 of claims against a business member of the Kobe Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Yet although he received numerous assurances of action from the Chamber’s

³⁷³ Edwin Neville to George Scidmore, Nagasaki, Japan, April 6, 1917, Micropy M422, Roll. 25, Records of the Department of State Relating to Japan, Record Group 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, 1910-1929, NARA, College Park, MD.

³⁷⁴ Robert Frazier Jr., Inspection of Consulate General at Tokyo, Japan, April 19-26, 1927. *Inspection Records on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, NARA, College Park, MD.

³⁷⁵ John K. Davis to George Logan, January 5, 1922, Nanking, China., Record Group 84, Records of the Department of State, Consular Posts, vol. 3, NARA, College Park, MD.

³⁷⁶ Leo Sturgeon to Homer Byington, September 2, 1932, Tokyo, Japan. Leo Sturgeon, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

Japanese president, no settlement was forthcoming but the alleged perpetrator continued to fraudulently market to American companies.³⁷⁷ Not only did Dickover's attempt at mediation result in failure, but his efforts to do so ignited a controversy within the Embassy and at the State Department over the extent to which he had inserted himself in a trade dispute.³⁷⁸ The allegedly "dishonest" Japanese merchant publicized Dickover's letters to the Kobe Chamber of Commerce and Industry president, publishing them in a local newspaper alongside his own open letter, castigating Dickover for attempting to exercise undue influence.

Whereas Dickover was censured for refusing to certify invoices, in a similar case SIC-China-trained consul Joseph E. Jacobs had been prohibited from doing exactly that. One important difference between the two cases was that Dickover's refusal would have benefitted American companies seeking redress of fraud, whereas the action of his colleague in China sought to facilitate a potentially lucrative trade deal in keeping with promotion of the Open Door in China.³⁷⁹ On the surface a trivial issue, the placement of these letters in Dickover's permanent personnel file highlights the shift away from emphasizing trade promotion and underscores the importance the State Department had begun to place on avoiding negative publicity in Japan, focusing on attempts to reconcile Japanese-American diplomatic difficulties rather than expansion of American trade in Japan. Commitment to trade expansion was still a badge of political correctness in the early 1920s, still evident for example when SIC-trained consul Max

³⁷⁷ Erle R. Dickover to F. Kashima, April 2, 1930, Kobe, Japan, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

³⁷⁸ Edwin Neville to Erle R. Dickover, June 23, 1930, Tokyo, Japan, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

³⁷⁹ H.H. Braun to Joseph E. Jacobs, January 25, 1927, Yunnanfu, China. 610.1. Correspondence, American Consulate, Yunnanfu, China. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84. NARA.

Kirjassoff was criticized for lack of trade reporting at his post in Yokohama, but gradually beginning to weaken in favor of other priorities.³⁸⁰

The shift toward political reporting in general and American-Japanese relations in particular occurred gradually during the late 1920s and early 1930s. As previously mentioned, the existing import trade from the United States was generally handled by Japanese agents and rarely required consular intervention. Moreover, extraterritoriality in Japan did not exist as it did in China, and there was little that consular officers could do in the case of disputes (such as the case of fraud mentioned above) other than to refer American companies to Japanese law firms.

As in China (but perhaps to a greater extent), the vast majority of Americans in Japan were missionaries. For example, in Nagasaki in 1920, there were approximately 150 resident Americans, almost all of whom were missionaries. Among the seven American companies listed as present, the two most worthy of mention were Standard Oil and Singer Sewing.³⁸¹ All of the American companies registered as active in Nagasaki maintained local branch offices (as mentioned elsewhere, Standard Oil and Singer Sewing also did so in China), and agents of those branches rarely visited the American consulate or requested their services.³⁸² Consequently, very little of American missionary and commercial activity necessitated consular intervention. According to consular inspection reports of American consular offices in Japan, most such instances resulted from visits by American military vessels to Japanese ports.³⁸³ In places such as Nagoya, even though there were over 120 American companies listed as registered, all were managed by Japanese nationals; in 1924 not a single American resided there who was not a

³⁸⁰ Max D. Kirjassoff, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

³⁸¹ Charles Eberhardt, "Sixth Inspection Report of American Consular Post at Nagasaki, Japan, December 7-11, 1920," *Inspection Reports of Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Ibid.

missionary.³⁸⁴ In addition, in comparison to the contemporary, legal chaos that prevailed in China, in Japan the rule of law was fairly uniform and there was no extraterritorial legal recourse to which American expatriates could apply.

Compounding this, even more so than in China, foreign competition for Japanese customers was especially fierce. As the 1920 inspection of the American consulate in Nagasaki highlighted, competition from British and German merchants necessitated that Americans “send good representatives to enter the field and make an energetic campaign.”³⁸⁵ As in China, officers in Japan reported that Japanese merchants required lengthy terms of credit, but that American businesses required deposits in advance and cash payment in full on delivery.³⁸⁶ According to SIC-trained consul Henry Huggins, “Japanese credits are no worse than other credits; they merely have to be handled with a great deal of judgment and care. A man who knows the Japanese language, the intricacies of the law affecting families and trade, could do a good business in Japan if makes himself popular with the tradesmen.”³⁸⁷ Also like in China, there was widespread acknowledgement that pointing out trade opportunities was a vital role of the language-trained officer but that it was the responsibility of American business to take advantage of and pursue them. The recommendations that SIC-trained officers in Japan made regarding expansion of American commerce in Japan mirrored those made by their colleagues in China, but there was earlier recognition that the market was fairly saturated. In China, where language-trained American officers were eyewitnesses to successful Japanese penetration of the coveted China markets, inspector Fleming Cheshire observed that the American consul “has written very

³⁸⁴ Nelson T. Johnson, “Inspection of of American Consulate at Nagoya, Japan, October 13-16, 1924, *Inspection of Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ George H. Murphy, “Fourth Inspection of American Consular Office at Nagasaki, Japan, June 17-18, 1913,” *Inspection Reports of Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

good trade reports and pointed out the exact conditions of American trade in his district, and the possibilities for future development: it is for our manufacturers to exploit the field: something more must be done than the mere issuing of trade circulars.”³⁸⁸

One exception to this was SIC-China-trained Nelson T. Johnson, who began virtually every inspection review with the phrase, “I have read with much care and interest your report upon the trade promotion work of the office of the American Consulate at”³⁸⁹ Johnson’s predilection for trade expansion reflected the priorities impressed upon him as an SIC student in China. This exception would be relatively unimportant were it not for the fact that Johnson eventually become US Minister in and eventually Ambassador to China, remaining in that post until shortly before the outbreak of war with Japan. Johnson remained fixated on the priority of trade expansion even as SIC-Japan officers and non-SIC-China-trained inspectors began acknowledging the increasing political barriers to American trade expansion in Japan. His 1924 review of inspection of the US Consulate in Nagoya, for example, steamrolled over consul Henry Hawley’s observations that not only were all American firms in the district represented by Japanese agents, but also that rising tariffs, economic nationalism in the form of “striving for economic self-sufficiency”, and “resentment against the recent United States immigration law” were increasing barriers to expansion of American trade in Japan.³⁹⁰

Acknowledgment of these realities had to be hedged carefully, as overt criticism of superiors, the State Department, the United States government, or American society and cultural

³⁸⁸ Fleming D. Cheshire, “Inspection Report of American Consular Office at Nanking, China, December 16, 1906), *Inspection of Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

³⁸⁹ Nelson T. Johnson, “Inspection of American Consulate at Nagasaki, Japan, September 1-6, 1924, *Inspection Reports of American Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

³⁹⁰ Nelson T. Johnson, “Inspection of of American Consulate at Nagoya, Japan, October 13-16, 1924, *Inspection of Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

in general could easily expose an officer to charges of disloyalty or accusations of “going native.” In the early years of the SIC, while reporting on Japan as rising industrial and economic power in Asia, some officers sought to cushion the “bad” news (for American exporters) with expansive prognostications concerning the prospects for American commerce in China. For example, American consul in Nanking Thornwell Haynes in 1906 observed that “so long as 400,000,000 (conservative) Chinese continue to absorb Western ideas and so long as American brains retain their ingenuity to improve upon improvements, there need be no fear but that America will still hold its own commercially in the East.”³⁹¹

While such racially-tinged pronouncements are unsurprising given that trade expansion in China was the very goal undergirding the establishment of the SIC, they highlight the fact that early and late, American business as a corpus was not interested enough to do much more than to support consular reorganization as a seemingly effortless alternative to the investment of capital and personnel. This was true even though merchants of other nationalities were successfully doing exactly that. Major policy objectives such as the Open Door in China as well as comparatively minor bilateral trade disputes appear to be responses to domestic political and economic issues, granted impetus by American’s increasing desire for government intervention.

As mentioned elsewhere, in the 1930s, there was an increasing trend in American politics that the US government undertake to “do” more in many areas of social and economic life. Related to Japan, one of these was rising alarm among American fishermen toward the “Japanese menace” to the salmon fisheries of Alaska, propagated by a publicity *The Pacific Fisherman*, the

³⁹¹ Fleming D. Cheshire, “Inspection Report of American Consular Office at Nanking, China, December 16, 1906), *Inspection of Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

leading fishing trade journal.³⁹² The rather aptly-named Sturgeon was nominated to visit Alaska and the Pacific coast to investigate and report on the situation.³⁹³ According to Joseph Ballantine, American fishermen were particularly agitated because they “felt that our government was paying money to develop the salmon resources in the Bristol Bay area, and the Japanese government, without any cost to themselves, was taking advantage of it.”³⁹⁴ Through Sturgeon’s efforts in the Pacific Northwest and those of Eugene Dooman in Tokyo, the Japanese were eventually prevailed upon to voluntarily relinquish their fishing rights in the area, even though the disputed fishing had been occurring outside the three-mile-from-the-coastline limit established by treaty in 1911.³⁹⁵

Leo Sturgeon’s fishery dispute assignment—innocuous as it might seem—is also interesting because it highlights another trend in Foreign Service: through their long tenures in one area or position, individual officers often built up small fiefdoms of expertise that extended and perpetuated their maintenance in those positions. Intensified by the impetus to “do” something in response to social, political, and economic developments, the sphere of government action tended to increase. In Sturgeon’s case, a 13-month assignment to the State Department (transferred from Japan) to investigate a “threatened Japanese invasion”³⁹⁶ of the Bristol Bay fisheries lasted over eight years and eventually encompassed not only Bristol Bay but also the Northern Pacific, the Great Lakes region, Newfoundland, and even the Caribbean.³⁹⁷

³⁹² Stanley Hornbeck to T.M. Wilson, March 17, 1937, Washington D.C., Leo D. Sturgeon, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Joseph Ballantine, *The Reminiscences of Joseph Ballantine*, The Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, 1961, 27.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 27; Maxwell Hamilton, “Annual Efficiency Report, Leo D. Sturgeon, August 16, 1938,” Leo D. Sturgeon, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO; Rating Sheet, page 8, March 26, 1938, Eugene Dooman, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

³⁹⁶ Leo D. Sturgeon, Rating Sheet, August 1, 1941. Leo D. Sturgeon, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

³⁹⁷ Annual Efficiency Report, August 24, 1943, Leo D. Sturgeon, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

Lengthy tenure in certain regions and areas of responsibility contributed to a highly specialized and capable Foreign Service. However, it also meant that certain channels of information were more susceptible to influence from some officers (or groups of officers) than others. As will be examined elsewhere, information regarding Japan proper (excluding Korea, Taiwan, and Manchuria) generally passed through Eugene Dooman, Edwin Neville, John Caldwell, Joseph Ballantine, and a few others. Likewise, in China, Nelson Trusler Johnson, Julean Arnold, Willys R. Peck, John K. Davis, and to a lesser extent, the infamous (or famous) “China Hands,” such as John S. Service, John Carter Vincent, and Edmund O. Clubb were the conduits through which information passed and commentary was made on events in the country.

Not all of these informational fiefdoms were equal however. Much depended on what information the Embassy in Tokyo or Beijing deemed worthy of emphasis—even though consular dispatches were routed to the State Department as well as the Embassy in the country in question—as well as on what officers assigned to the State Department decided to summarize and refer to the Secretary of State. Concerning Japan for example, Joseph Ballantine observed in his oral memoirs that [while posted to the State Department between 1937 and 1945] “everything I thought the Secretary of State should know, I would put a memorandum, a briefing to the Secretary of State on it, so that he could either read the whole report, or he could just read that briefing and decide himself.”³⁹⁸ Monthly political reports from the respective US embassies generally comprised dozens of pages and included information drawn from consular posts around China and Japan, much of it unanalyzed, so some condensation and interpretation was undoubtedly necessary, but this further highlights the ability of some officers to selectively emphasize and interpret events developments as they thought appropriate.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 30-31.

Part of the reason for the emerging divisions was a generational divide in the Foreign Service, a contingency of history that has no explanation other than the events in question happened when they did. On December 7th, 1941, most of the professional cohort of SIC-trained officers that remained in either China or Japan had entered in the late 1910s; the budget cuts of the Great Depression had expedited the expulsion of inefficient officers (and perhaps a few efficient ones). Officers that had entered in the 1910s and early '20s were more numerous and were generally in their late 40s or early 50s at the youngest, and had occupied offices of high responsibility for years, if not decades. The much-smaller group of officers that entered in the late 1920s and very early 1930s were comparatively young professionals. For many of them (particularly the alternately reviled and praised “China Hands”) it was the exigencies of war and the pressures of time and place that thrust them into positions of great responsibility.

These developments highlight the shifting direction of American policy with regard to Japan. By the 1930s emphasis had begun to shift away from expansion of American trade in Japan towards protecting American interests from Japanese challenges. Simultaneously, expectations that the US government take more direct action—beyond merely providing information to American businessmen—was on the rise. The trend away from emphasis on trade was partially exigency-driven: in both China and Japan, the political situation prompted consular officers to devote increasing amounts of their limited time to reporting on political conditions in their districts.³⁹⁹ By necessity, officers in China were forced to concentrate on Chinese-Japan relations, the rise of Communism in China, and general political instability in China, whereas those in Japan dealt primarily with American-Japanese relations—and increasingly aggressive Japanese policies in China. Geopolitical developments in China rendered the issue of trade

³⁹⁹ T.M. Wilson, “Inspection of American Consular Office at Mukden, Manchuria, July 8, 1932,” *Inspection Reports of Foreign Service Posts*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

expansion in China essentially moot. As inspector T.M. Wilson commented in 1932 (less than a year after the “Manchurian Incident” of September 18, 1931), “commercially things are certainly quiescent—if not dead—as far as trade extension [in China] is concerned at the present time.”⁴⁰⁰

However, recognition of trade expansion in Japan as dead letter did not mean that SIC-Japan officers were anything less than detailed and accurate. Similar to the portrayals of China from SIC-trained language officers, SIC-Japan trained officers presented complex, nuanced, and thorough pictures of social, political, and economic life and developments in Japan between 1906 and 1941. Underlying these portrayals was an attitude of sympathetic and realistic appreciation for the problems confronting Japan during this period. The two largest of these were interconnected: a rapidly rising population and skyrocketing demand for raw materials (particularly coal and iron) that far outstripped Japan’s domestically available resources. For example, in 1925, Tokyo consul Joseph Ballantine surveyed the decade’s second census, noting that Japan’s population growth and resulting population density rivaled those of industrialized countries in Europe.⁴⁰¹ According to Ballantine, it was rapid population growth that spurred Japan’s industrial ambitions, noting that “birth control is repugnant to Japanese ideals as a possible solution, and consequently the alternatives open are emigration and industrialization.”⁴⁰²

Ballantine further observed (although it was common knowledge in the State Department) that the Japanese were prohibited from emigrating to the United States, Canada, Australia, “the countries which are regarded as the most promising fields for outlets.”⁴⁰³

Regarding industrialization, Ballantine stressed Japan’s relative lack of raw materials while

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Joseph Ballantine, “Census of Japan of 1925,” December 15, 1925, American Consulate General, Tokyo Japan, *Records of the Department of State*, Record Group 84, Records of US Foreign Service Posts, 894.5011/17, microcopy 422, roll 25.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

stressing its stable political situation, strong educational system, and availability of hydro-electric power.⁴⁰⁴ Other SIC-trained consular officials such as Edwin Neville (mentioned above) had reported on the dearth of raw materials such as coal and steel much earlier—noting that in 1917 most iron ore was being imported from China and Korea, with 2/3 of the tonnage reserved for the railways, Army, and Navy.⁴⁰⁵ There is some doubt as to whether the notion of “surplus” population in Japan was accurate in the 1920s. During this period, nearly all of Japan’s overseas territories were “colonies of occupation rather than settlement,” leaving doubt in Neville’s mind about Japanese claims of excess population.⁴⁰⁶

Similarly, in 1928 Charge d’Affairs ad interim (temporary serving in lieu of Ambassador) Edwin Neville reported on the results of a lengthy Japanese government study on Japan’s oil supply.⁴⁰⁷ Neville detailed such stiff competition among the seven main oil importing companies (Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Japan Petroleum, Asane, Okura, Rising Sun and Standard Oil) that Japanese companies had complained that Standard Oil and Rising Sun (a subsidiary of Royal Dutch Shell) were marketing their oil and gasoline at prices below the cost of production, and the Japanese companies were therefore asking for government protection.⁴⁰⁸ According to Neville, while considering a national oil monopoly, the Japanese government hesitated to raise import tariffs; he further observed that the staggering increase in demand for oil and gasoline was fueled by

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Edwin Neville to George Scidmore, Nagasaki, Japan, April 6, 1917, Microcopy M422, Roll. 25, Records of the Department of State Relating to Japan, Record Group 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, 1910-1929, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁴⁰⁶ Mark R. Peattie, “Japanese Attitudes toward Colonialism, 1895-1945,” *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945*, ed. Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 90

⁴⁰⁷ Edwin Neville to the Secretary of State, June 21, 1928, Tokyo, Japan, *Records of the Department of State*, Record Group 84, Records of US Foreign Service Posts, 894.5019, microcopy 422, roll 25.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

skyrocketing consumption of American automobiles.⁴⁰⁹ In this case, American trade was expanding, and there was no need for additional encouragement.

In this way, from the beginning of the language training program, SIC-trained officers in Japan kept watch over the actual as well as potential for expansion of American trade. Meanwhile, although SIC-China SIC Japan developed in tandem, the contingencies of their institutionalization produced differences in perspective and personality. The *ad hoc* manner in which particular officers became responsible for and experts in certain areas (ranging in subject matter from such banal matters as fishing rights to controversial topics including the rise of Communism in China) meant that personal differences of opinion on policy, reporting emphasis, and the relative importance of trade expansion could have long term consequences, both for the offices in question and for the State Department.

These differences were rarely, if ever, visible at the senior levels: it was the relatively young group of SIC-trained officers who began to clash more with their superiors. In fact, ideologically and institutionally, senior officers resembled one another so much that according to Joseph Ballantine, “there was the highest degree of mutual respect among the senior Japan and the senior China officers . . . there was no difference at all. It was that group from Vincent down—Vincent, Davies, Service—that crowd of people.”⁴¹⁰ Ballantine also disliked Owen Lattimore, asserting that a group of Chinese language officers had come under his influence.⁴¹¹ For his part, Owen Lattimore was similarly pointed about Japanese-language officers, arguing that, “. . . at the end of the war it will turn out that some of the most true, devoted, unquestioning,

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Joseph Ballantine, *The Reminiscences of Joseph Ballantine*, The Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, 1961, 53.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.,

esoteric initiates of the Japanese Emperor cult have been holding jobs in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and State Department.”⁴¹²

However, Ballantine’s assertion of unity overlooked the issue of trade expansion. As noted above, trade expansion diminished as institutional priority for both SIC-China and SIC Japan officers, particularly in the face of increasing Japanese militarism in China in the 1920s and ‘30s. Yet circumstances in Japan caused this contraction to happen faster, setting the stage for large-scale and more politically important divergences later on. Like many of the other large-ego “hardballs” discussed previously, Ballantine probably assumed more widespread agreement with his views than actually existed. As will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, differences of opinion concerning political developments and policy proposals for China and Japan did not cleave cleanly between SIC-China and SIC-Japan officers. As will also be developed more fully in the next chapter, among both such points of convergence and divergence, a growing belief that the US government should adopt and advance a more positive, active, and robust policy in Asia. Even as SIC-trained officers in Japan as well as China allowed their lip-service to the soft flop of ostensible American economic imperialism in China to fade, they would pave the way for far more vigorous varieties.

⁴¹² Owen Lattimore, *Solution in Asia* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, & Co., 1945), 27.

CHAPTER 6

**“A MOST WONDERFUL ACQUISITION TO THE FOREIGN SERVICE”⁴¹³: WOMEN
AND FAMILY OF THE STUDENT INTERPRETERS CORPS, 1902-1941**

From its inception through WWII, no woman ever complemented the ranks of the Student Interpreters Corps (SIC). Nevertheless, women were intimately acquainted with the Student Interpreters Corps and the Far East Division, some as clerks and stenographers, but most as wives, acquaintances, and associates of various Foreign Service officers. In the scant histories that exist of the Foreign Service, equally scarce mention is made of women. Just as was the case with other institutions of the U.S. government, the Foreign Service of the early 20th century was almost entirely a male affair. Most histories of the Foreign Service and its officers during this period do not even attempt to mention women, probably because they do not appear to have been particularly important in the events and developments described. Nevertheless, as wives, mothers, lovers, friends, and confidantes, women played a vital role in the success of the Student Interpreters Corps and the daily functioning of field officers in the Far East Division.

It is impossible to identify this role precisely. Because very few direct, official records exist however, women's roles in the SIC and the “China Service” have to be read indirectly: most of the records in this connection consist of family data and inspector comments in male officers' personnel records. These records add a new dimension to studying American foreign relations in that they provided a window into these relations as lived experiences. A colorful variety of women played a role in these experiences, although very few of their contributions appear in the footnotes of history books.

⁴¹³ Paul R. Josselyn, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

The lesson most directly pertinent to the Student Interpreters Corps and the American Foreign Service in China, Japan, and Turkey between 1902 and 1941 is that until the late 1930s if not WWII, the United States did not provide adequately for its consular officers and their families or for the functions of consulates, particularly those in China. Far from the vanguard of nascent American imperialism, SIC graduates were the whipping boys of the U.S. Foreign Service; both they and their families sacrificed significantly during their service. Despite official rhetoric emphasizing trade expansion and commercial “empire,” the United States Consular failed to provide compensation and support for its offices and officers in “Open Door” China comparable to those provided by Britain and Japan. However, this problem remained a high priority for such “master architects” as Wilbur J. Carr and other senior State Department administrators. When human concerns eventually prevailed in the form of higher salaries and post allowances, the real winner was the State Department in that its personnel and budget continued to grow even though the much-touted commercial empire failed to materialize.

As mentioned elsewhere, the creation of the Student Interpreters Corps in 1902 through a Congressional budgetary appropriation was the first step toward reform of the U.S. diplomatic and consular service. A large raft of reforms passed in 1906; another set in 1924, and finally the Foreign Service Act of 1946 gave shape to the institution more or less as it exists in the early twenty-first century. However, the Foreign Service reached a sort of institutional equilibrium in the early 1930s, as pay, allowances, and promotions stabilized (albeit at levels that were still unsatisfactory to many officers) and the departmental emphasis on trade promotion gradually yielded place to political reporting.

This chapter argues that the treatment of family relationships, salaries and compensation of consular officers in the Foreign Service between 1902 and 1947 obviated the existence of such a tripod. Just as Elihu Root and Wilbur J. Carr marketed consular reform using business and trade expansion rhetoric, so they continued to advocate pay increases and personnel improvements, all with betterment of the Foreign Service in mind. Rhetoric aside however, the Foreign Service as it existed between 1902 and the early 1930s was so unfriendly toward families that many officers delayed marriage until their early 40s. As will be seen from the example of George Hanson and Verne Staten, officers who married experienced significant hardships, while those who did not had little legitimate sexual outlet and occasionally invited scandal. The cases of Hanson and Staten also raise the question of how many American Foreign Service officers made use of the “thriving illegal Sino-American commerce” identified by Eileen P. Scully.⁴¹⁴

American consular officers were usually invited to and attended the nuptials of their fellow nationals. Although, unlike their British counterparts, American consular officers could not perform marriages,⁴¹⁵ they could (and did) attend the weddings of their fellow nationals abroad and issued certificates attesting to the validity of the marriage (rather than officiating in a separate civil ceremony).⁴¹⁶ In many cases this confused clergy more accustomed to British (and other Great Powers) expatriate marital procedures. One young SIC graduate detailed to attend

⁴¹⁴ Eileen P. Scully, “Taking the Low Road to Sino-American Relations: “Open Door” Expansionists and the Two China Markets,” *The Journal of American History* 82, no. 1 (June, 1995), 62-83.

⁴¹⁵ John K. Davis, Address to Annual International Luncheon, Rotary Club, Vancouver, B.C., January 19, 1937, 123D292, Central Decimal File, 1930-1939, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*

such a ceremony was amused to hear the clergyman declare: “I now pronounce you man and wife in the presence of Almighty God and United States Vice Consul Norwood F. Allman.”⁴¹⁷

More importantly, officers were influenced by their wives’ attitudes towards their careers as well as their daily duties. As often as not, they were jealously protective of their husbands’ positions and privileges in ways that rarely are rarely described in detail in official records. For example, Nelson T. Johnson, then the American Minister in Beijing, stated that Willys R. Peck was “not happy in his dealing with subordinates,” and felt that this was “largely due to the attitude of his wife, as well as his sensitiveness to his rights as principal officer.”⁴¹⁸ However, it was of paramount importance that he had a wife who “assists him well in his work. He is fond of his home and gives it a good deal of his time.”⁴¹⁹ Although this enhanced his standing in the community, it occasionally caused problems, as Mrs. Peck apparently was “not always considerate of the feelings of subordinates in the office, because of her own jealous regard for her position.”⁴²⁰

Although their opinions and views regarding their husbands’ duty assignments rarely appear in official records, officers’ wives had an important stake in these decisions and they made their opinions known—at least to their husbands. For example, George Atcheson Jr.’s wife so strongly objected to his being posted to a rural location (Chungking) that Atcheson resisted it strenuously, referring repeatedly to “personal problems” and his “domestic situation.”⁴²¹

⁴¹⁷ John K. Davis, Address to Annual International Luncheon, Rotary Club, Vancouver, B.C., January 19, 1937, Decimal File

⁴¹⁸ Nelson T. Johnson, [untitled memorandum] August 1, 1934, Willys R. Peck, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴¹⁹ Nelson T. Johnson, “Annual Efficiency Report, Willys R. Peck, Counselor of Legation,” August 1, 1934,” Willys R. Peck, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴²⁰ Nelson T. Johnson, “Annual Efficiency Report, Willys R. Peck, Counselor of Legation,” August 1, 1933, Willys R. Peck, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴²¹ Mr. Norton, Memorandum of conversation with George Atcheson Jr., February 19, 1926, George Atcheson Jr., OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

If an officer was married, the character of his wife was considered a reflection upon his own and was noted in his efficiency record. For example, the wife of Paul R. Josselyn, one of the “China Service” officers, was described as “a woman of culture, discretion, and a most wonderful acquisition to the Foreign Service. She is unquestionably of great assistance to Mr. Josselyn in his work.”⁴²² Very little information about officers’ wives appears in official records. Inspectors’ comments were usually restricted to brief mention of an officer’s marital status, along with the background and character of his wife. Max Kirjassoff’s wife was described as “a splendid type of the educated American woman, mother and mistress of her home.”⁴²³ In nearly identical terms, Jay Caldwell’s wife was similarly depicted as “a splendid type of the educated, Christian American wife and mother.”⁴²⁴

Some SIC-trained officers married foreign women, perhaps not surprising since most language-trained officers spent most of their careers and much of their lives overseas. Of these, the majority were British expatriates. For example, Charles Edward Allen (a Turkish & French-trained officer), married Doris Harty, a “British Levantine,” whose family had “always lived in Istanbul” and was engaged in business there.⁴²⁵ In some cases, such marriages were highly advantageous to both the officers themselves and the State Department. For example, while studying as a Student Interpreter, George Bickford was rumored to receive financial assistance from his wife’s family (her father was a British citizen and Deputy Commissioner of the

⁴²² Edwin S. Cunningham, “Annual Efficiency Report, Foreign Service Officers, August 24, 1931,” Paul R. Josselyn, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴²³ Rating comments by Inspector Eberhardt, August 26, 1920. Max Kirjassoff OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴²⁴ Jay Caldwell, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴²⁵ Charles Edward Allen, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

Maritime Customs of China in Shanghai).⁴²⁶ According to an inspector, this happy union also benefited the U.S. government during Bickford's service in China.⁴²⁷

However, such marriages were rare. Women who were not U.S. citizen did not acquire citizenship when they married Foreign Service officers. William L. Peck, when posted to Stockholm, Sweden, was unpleasantly surprised by this when he married Olga Alexandrovna Lamkert, who forfeited her Russian citizenship by marrying him.⁴²⁸ Because Peck's official duties prevented him from leaving Sweden, his wife was unable to visit Russia, travel in Europe, or go to the United States to apply for citizenship.⁴²⁹

Most officers married American women (usually children of missionaries). For example, George Atcheson Jr., a China specialist, married a "native-born American of Spanish descent" named Marguerita de Laguna."⁴³⁰ Joseph Ballantine was married to Emelia Ashburner Christy, from Berkeley, CA in 1917.⁴³¹ Ernest Price married Florence Bentley of Titusville, PA, in November 1915 while he was a student interpreter (even though this was a violation of regulations).⁴³² These officers represented the (relatively frustrated) norm of married, SIC-trained consuls from the early 1900s to the 1930s.

Pre- and Extra-marital Relations

⁴²⁶ Stuart Fuller, "Inspection Report on Student Interpreter George Fremont Bickford," September 30, 1916, *Despatches from Student Interpreters*, General Records of the Department of State, (RG 59), NARA, College Park, MD.

⁴²⁷ George Bickford, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴²⁸ William L. Peck to the Secretary of State, November 29, 1922, 123P331/18, Decimal File 1910-1929, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ George Atcheson Jr., OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴³¹ Joseph Ballantine, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴³² Ernest Price biographical sheet, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

There were important exceptions to the monogamous rule. The women in the life of George C. Hanson offer particularly salient illustrations of the incompleteness of the record. Diplomatic histories have remarkably little to say about Hanson, erstwhile US Consul General in Moscow and one of the only American Foreign Service officers of the early 1930s who could speak Russian (having a Russian mistress most likely facilitated this),⁴³³ save that he inexplicably committed suicide en route to his new post of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in February, 1935.⁴³⁴ Out of context, Hanson's suicide certainly *appears* inexplicable. Yet as discussed in the foregoing chapter, "Oddballs and Hardballs," Hanson's suicide came on the heels of an intense controversy stemming from his conduct as a guest at a private luncheon in New York, 1934, held for businessmen interested in trade with Soviet Russia.⁴³⁵

In the wake of this incident, the ensuing controversy and Hanson's suicide, it came to light that Hanson had maintained a Russian mistress for some time.⁴³⁶ This information had apparently been given to T.M. Wilson (an official in the Personnel Division of the Consular Service) by a Mrs. Thompson Montgomery (a divorcee formerly married to an Englishman), who had been engaged to Hanson at the time of his suicide.⁴³⁷ Six months after his suicide, this lady called the State Department to request a meeting with T.M. Wilson to discuss Hanson's personal situation at the time of his death. During their meeting at her home, T.M. Wilson noticed that she was wearing a ring of Hanson's, cut down to fit her finger.⁴³⁸ After a brief discussion of Hanson's record during which she emphasized Hanson's hard work and enthusiasm

⁴³³ T.M. Wilson, Memorandum of Conversation [with Mrs. Thompson Montgomery].

⁴³⁴ J. Robert Moskin, *American Statecraft: The Story of the U.S. Foreign Service* (New York, NY: St. Martins, 2013), 373.

⁴³⁵ Linton Wells to Wilbur Carr, December 7, Washington D.C., 1934, George C. Hanson, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴³⁶ T.M. Wilson, "Memorandum for the Dossier of George C. Hanson," November 6, 1935, George C. Hanson OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*

for his to-have-been latest post, she broached the subject of “Valentina,” of whom Wilson was apparently aware but had never met.⁴³⁹ According to Mrs. Montgomery, Valentina had been Hanson’s mistress in Harbin, had gone to the United States (in 1934) before him, met him at his boat, accompanied him nearly everywhere, and had stated on several occasions that she and Hanson were to be married.⁴⁴⁰ Mrs. Montgomery appears to have felt that Hanson and Valentina had been together while he was in New York (circa the time of the ill-fated luncheon) and implied that that Valentina was possibly a Soviet spy.⁴⁴¹ The “Valentina” referred to seems to have been a one “Valentine Dulckeit Melgounoff,” noted as a “friend of George C. Hanson” who possessed a penchant for traveling “on ships with American Foreign Service officers.”⁴⁴²

Precisely who Valentine (or Valentina) was remains a mystery. An undated picture attached to the report in Hanson’s personnel file shows a fair-haired and attractive young woman.⁴⁴³ According to reports in this file, the lady was married to a Serge Melgounoff, a painter by profession, living in New York as of 1935, who “would never be accepted in the social circle which Miss Dulckeit frequented.”⁴⁴⁴ After her marriage to Melgounoff, not only did Valentine *not* live with her husband (who, when interviewed, had no idea as to her whereabouts), she immediately departed the United States for Paris.⁴⁴⁵ According a State Department memorandum in Hanson’s personnel file written by R.C. Bannerman under the heading “Department of State, Chief Special Agent,” Valentine,

⁴³⁹ This fact appears nowhere else in the records pertaining to Hanson that I received from the NPRC in St. Louis, MO.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Memorandum for [T.M.] Wilson, Foreign Personnel, “Valentine Dulckeit Melgounoff,” February 22, 1935. George C. Hanson, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ R.C. Bannerman, memorandum, “Valentine Dulckeit Melgounen,” November 15, 1935, George C. Hanson, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

“during her entire stay in the United States . . . maintained luxurious apartments and became acquainted with some very prominent people. It is quite evident that she is not a ‘one man’ woman. The thought persists that she is far more than a mistress to several men and supporting herself that way. Fellow passengers describe her as very charming and cultured. There may be a Soviet or Japanese backing for these frequent trips to France, India, Japan, and the United States.”⁴⁴⁶

Hanson undoubtedly worked hard and he seems to have played even harder—his dalliances were by no means limited to Valentina. During the investigation into Hanson’s character that began with his inauspicious at the American-Russian Chamber of Commerce in New York in 1934, one Professor Samuel Harper apparently alleged that that, “after hours, Hanson seems to feel that he can act as he pleases. He sees much of the night life of Moscow, drinks to excess, is indiscreet in his conversation when under the influence of liquor, and his conduct is anything but a credit to his country.” Harper seems to have had ample opportunity to observe Hanson in his element, for his report further details several drunken incidents involving Hanson in Moscow, including one during which Hanson arrived late, made indiscreet remarks about a particular Russian man whom he had jailed while in Harbin, and finally “became very much under the influence of liquor, was hugging and kissing a woman at the table, and when he left Harper at the hotel he and the woman were engaging in very undignified behavior in the presence of the hotel porters.”⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ [Untitled memorandum] December 28, 1924, George C. Hanson, OPF, NARA, NPRC, St. Louis. MO.

To be fair, Harper did not spare the U.S. Ambassador to Russia William C. Bullitt either, describing him as a “playboy” who “out-bourbons the Bourbons.”⁴⁴⁸ In addition to Bullitt’s overindulgence in alcohol, Harper also alleged that Bullitt frequently gave lavish dinner parties that lasted all night and, perhaps most damaging, “hosted a female member of the ballet at his house constantly, so much so that Harper was asked by certain Russians whether it was a fact that Bullitt was going to marry her.”⁴⁴⁹ Harper further claimed that Bullitt “displeases American businessmen by saying that he never expected considerable trade with Russia and is not worrying over the failure to effect more satisfactory trade relations.”⁴⁵⁰

Hanson’s life and relations with women therein at times resemble the plot of a James Bond movie. The difference between the official Hanson and the details of the real Hanson’s life highlights the partial transcript of foreign relations as lived experiences. What exactly happened to Hanson is unclear, but it is certain that Valentina and Mrs. Montgomery were intimately involved in the final chapter of his life.

T. M. Wilson, a close contemporary of Wilbur J. Carr and a senior bureaucrat in the Personnel Division of the Consular Service, was apparently aware of who Valentina was, but the memorandum gives no indication of whether he was aware of her relationship with Hanson or of its extent.⁴⁵¹ The special agent who wrote the memorandum included a recommendation that when she next applied for a new passport, Valentina’s old passport be “sent in for cancellation and examination” to obtain an idea of the extent of her travels.⁴⁵²

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² R.C. Bannerman, memorandum, “Valentine Dulckeit Melgounen,” November 15, 1935, George C. Hanson, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

Little of Hanson's adventurous life appears in official reports, let alone his dispatches. The extent of his relationship with Valentine cannot be determined accurately based on the existing records, but it can be shown that they were in the same places at the same time on several instances, in Harbin, China in June, 1932, and in New York, NY, from November 1st, 1934, to October 5th, 1935.⁴⁵³ Although some officers married foreign nationals, most of them preferred to marry American citizens. Consequently, officers like George Hanson either never married or married in late middle age. For this reason, after fourteen years of service in China, Hanson had pleaded for a temporary assignment to the State Department in Washington, with a view to finding a wife as well as spending time with his 81-year old father; his request was denied.⁴⁵⁴ Hanson's subsequent lifestyle suggests that although there were sexual alternatives to marriage, such choices could be disastrous for an officer's career once exposed.

Aside from the dalliances of Hanson—which only entered his record after his suicide—evidence of romantic liaisons is understandably rare. Indiscretions were ignored or covered up to the greatest extent possible. The case of Verne G. Staten of Bloomington, Illinois offers a good example of this. Staten was “a young man of pleasing manners and appearance,” 33 years old in 1923, and a clerk in Amoy with the rank of Vice Consul. He was portrayed as anti-social—which was quite normal for clerks and student interpreters whose salaries were so low they could hardly make ends meet.⁴⁵⁵ The American community—one Mr. Morse, the General Manager for

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ George C. Hanson to Judge Purdy, December 4th, 1924, George C. Hanson OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO; T.M. Wilson to Wilbur J. Carr, November 16, 1935, George C. Hanson OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴⁵⁵ Nelson T. Johnson to the Secretary of State, Amoy, China, July 11, 1923, “Verne G. Staten, Clerk and Vice-Consul at Amoy, China,” Records of the Department of State, RG 59, decimal file, 123ST24/25, NARA, College Park, MD.

Standard Oil in Amoy—loathed Staten for his inability to entertain socially, and Morse’s attitude was apparently shared by most of the American community in Amoy.⁴⁵⁶

Staten’s chief transgression was his inability to reciprocate official hospitality extended to him by the consulates of other nations, corporations such as the Standard Oil Company, as well as the leading Americans in Amoy.⁴⁵⁷ Americans were particularly offended by Staten’s failure to give a party for the 4th of July holiday.⁴⁵⁸ This was a bit unusual: consular officers were under tremendous social pressure to entertain the foreign community from time to time, and most particularly on this sacrosanct American holiday. However, the State Department did not usually have the funds to pay for such annual events and consuls generally paid these expenses out of their own pockets and then requested reimbursement, which the State Department routinely denied. For example, the State Department refused to reimburse George C. Hanson in 1923 for hosting a diplomatically obligatory dinner for the Chinese military governor in Chungking, stating that it could not be considered a necessary and authorized expense.⁴⁵⁹

Nevertheless, Staten unusually low salary and the Amoy consulate’s complete dearth of a budget for representational expenses not only precluded his paying for such an event himself but also materially inhibited his usefulness in Amoy by earning him the scorn of American residents there. Inspector Nelson T. Johnson quickly recognized that Staten had been treated unfairly and did not possess the finances to meet social expectations in Amoy and arranged for Staten’s transfer to Tientsin.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ Wilbur J. Carr to George C. Hanson, October 17, 1917, 123H194/68, *Records of the Department of State*, Decimal File, 123K582-123K63, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

In Tientsin, Staten's social life seems to have improved while his luck went from bad to worse. According to confidential letters from C. E. Gauss, in Tientsin in 1925,

“a young American woman of very good family at home, who has been residing at Tientsin for a year or more, retired to the Salvation Army Refuge Home at Tientsin several weeks ago and has become the mother of a son; she has declared [Staten's] paternity and her desire for the legitimation of the child.”⁴⁶¹

According to Gauss, Staten did not deny fathering the child, but “had been dilatory in making amends,” namely by marrying the girl and taking responsibility for the child.⁴⁶²

Apparently, it had been the young lady's American attending physician who brought the matter to the attention of the American Consul General in Tientsin (Charles Gauss), who (probably literally) jolted Staten to recognize his obligations.⁴⁶³ It is impossible to determine what had been holding him back, as this young man from Bloomington, Illinois who had served as a lieutenant in WWI almost certainly recognized his culturally dictated duties, but his low salary and near-inability to support himself was probably part of his consideration.

Nevertheless, in order to prevent the scandal from becoming public knowledge, Gauss hastily arranged a marriage ceremony and the expeditious transfer of the young man and his new family unit to Antung, China.⁴⁶⁴ Scandal was averted none too soon: the girl's presumed father, a Boston lawyer named Raymond P. Dellinger, soon contacted the State Department via his

⁴⁶¹ C. E. Gauss to the Secretary of State, “The Case of Verne G. Staten,” Tientsin, China, August 6, 1925, Records of the Department of State, RG 59, decimal file 123ST24/42, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

Senator, demanding information regarding Mr. Staten.⁴⁶⁵ The State Department obliged by sending an abstract of Staten's service record, including only his biographical information (education, training, home in Illinois, etc.), and the note that Staten "performs his duties in a satisfactory manner."⁴⁶⁶ According to Herbert Hengstler, a nearly identical case had occurred in the Service previously, and that the young man in that case had collected himself and was doing good work at the time of writing.⁴⁶⁷

One other case further illustrates both the incompleteness of the record of familial and sexual experiences of Foreign Service officers in Near and Far East posts. SIC-China-trained consul and Harvard drop-out Horace Remillard was posted as a subordinate officer to Saigon in 1921; while there he married a French-Canadian woman, whom he had engaged in 1917 named Yvonne Gay, whose family apparently owned the premises on which the American Consulate was located and whose brothers owned and operated a garage and repair shop directly beneath the consulate.⁴⁶⁸ One inspector reported that Yvonne's family exerted a corrupting influence on Remillard, constantly urging him to use his official position to make money—which Remillard appeared all too willing to do—while observing that Remillard's marriage appeared to be more for convenience for love: according to the inspector, in 1921, it was "commonly rumored that Mrs. Remillard is Consul Briggs's mistress."⁴⁶⁹ If Remillard was in fact cuckolded, he does not

⁴⁶⁵ Senator William Butler to the Secretary of State, October 21, 1925, Records of the Department of State, RG 59, decimal file 123ST24/48, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁴⁶⁶ Frank Kellog to William Butler, Records of the Department of State, RG 59, decimal file 123ST24/48a, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁴⁶⁷ Herbert Hengstler to C. E. Gauss, September 8, 1925, Records of the Department of State, RG 59, decimal file 123ST24/42, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁴⁶⁸ Undated rating sheet, Horace Remillard OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

seem to have cared, as his personnel file indicates that he rarely attended social events with his wife, preferring to stay at home while she attended parties.⁴⁷⁰

Marriage Trends and Family Adjustments among SIC Graduates from 1902 to the 1930s

These cases underscore the gloomy romantic realities that confronted low-level clerks, consuls, and student interpreters between 1902 and 1924: pay was so low that for these talented young men of prime marriageable age, marriage was a difficult proposition. At the same time, marriage-worthy women were in short supply. Some officers, such as Hanson, resorted to (semi) discreet, illicit liaisons; others such Nelson T. Johnson and Clarence Spiker delayed marriage until middle age.⁴⁷¹ Clarence J. Spiker (SIC China) remained a bachelor until his forties.⁴⁷² He had apparently been jilted in love in 1923, when he had expected to be married during trip to the United States while on leave, but was disappointed. On returning to his duties he was immediately posted Chungking and had scarce time or opportunities for courtship.⁴⁷³ Already depressed according to Inspector Johnson, Spiker found the consulate premises even gloomier, located as they were adjacent to a public execution grounds.⁴⁷⁴ Spiker's long celibacy benefited his career. He was praised as "highly dependable" having great energy and "no objection to unusually long hours."⁴⁷⁵ He was described as immensely likable, jovial, with "a better than average knowledge of Chinese manners, customs, and history" in addition to a superb command

⁴⁷⁰ Horace Remillard, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴⁷¹ Nelson T. Johnson, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴⁷² Clarence J. Spiker, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Clarence J. Spiker, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

of spoken and written Mandarin.⁴⁷⁶ Most importantly, he served at every post assigned without complaining as vociferously as the vast majority of his married colleagues.

Despite such instances, the vast majority of officers did marry, either postponing (or foregoing) having children or becoming increasingly disgruntled and/or belligerent towards the State Department, eventually resigned. The best example of such was Ernest Batson Price. He was born to missionary parents in Henzada, Burma in 1890, graduated from the University of Rochester, and was appointed Student Interpreter in 1914.⁴⁷⁷ Exposed to foreign languages at a young age, Price mastered both spoken and written Mandarin to a higher degree than many of his peers and superiors. Although officers such as Nelson T. Johnson spoke colloquial Mandarin fluently,⁴⁷⁸ very few learned the Chinese characters as well as Price.⁴⁷⁹

However, a successful career as a language officer required more than just learning a foreign language; it demanded single-minded allegiance to the United States government and a willingness to accept unfairness and hardship without protest. Many of those the State Department recruited were able to learn the language of their assigned country and acquire administrative skills but had difficulty coping with the vicissitudes and inanities of working for Uncle Sam as a language officer in the Foreign Service.

Price was utterly unable to do so. Like many other China service officers, he developed exceptional fluency in Mandarin and possessed a keen analytical mind. According to Foreign Service inspectors such as Charles Eberhardt, he was also an able administrator, who brought the Canton Consulate into compliance with State Department regulations after a series of lazy and

⁴⁷⁶ Inspection Report by T.M. Wilson, September 28, 1932, Clarence J. Spiker, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴⁷⁷ Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

⁴⁷⁸ Esson M. Gale, *Salt for the Dragon: A Personal History of China, 1908-1945* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State College Press, 1953), 37.

⁴⁷⁹ Ernest Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

recalcitrant predecessors.⁴⁸⁰ Unfortunately, he also had a contentious, abrasive personality, which eventually resulted in his resignation and prevented him from rejoining the Foreign Service after WWII.

As noted elsewhere, promotions were slow and junior officers were poorly paid. In addition, consuls were expected to do a considerable amount of entertaining and usually paid all their own living expenses.⁴⁸¹ When Price did not receive the promotion he believed he deserved, in 1929 he resigned after a series of acid exchanges and correspondence with Nelson Johnson, J.V.A. MacMurray, and Wilbur J. Carr. Carr observed, “the ideal condition would be to promote at regular intervals all officers who, like yourself, deserve advancement”⁴⁸² This was impossible, as promotions occurred only when there were vacancies in the next higher grade.

Price had actually threatened to resign frequently, first in 1921 after failing receive a promotion to Consul, and then continuously from 1927 to 1929, when his resignation was accepted in 1929.⁴⁸³ What aggravated Price (and no doubt other SIC-trained officers as well; Price was merely the most outspoken and pugnacious), in his words, was “seeing men without any consular experience appointed to the grade of consul while the regular career men who had worked their way up were ignored.”⁴⁸⁴

Although the complaints of Price and others were probably justified, in most cases they were counterproductive. As Consul-General Eberhardt noted in his correspondence with the Personnel Division concerning Price in 1921,

⁴⁸⁰ Charles C. Eberhardt, “Sixth Inspection of Consular Office at Canton, China,” *Inspection Reports of Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁴⁸¹ See J.V.A. MacMurray to Secretary of State, Washington D.C., May 20, 1929, Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA. In this letter, MacMurray observed that the “semi-representative” nature of Price’s post at Nanking made these expenses much higher than usual.

⁴⁸² Wilbur J. Carr to Ernest B. Price, Nanking, China, April 4, 1929, Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

⁴⁸³ [Undated rating sheet] Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

⁴⁸⁴ Ernest B. Price to Charles C. Eberhardt, Canton, China, November 5, 1921, Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

“advancement in the Service depends largely on one’s own diligence and uncomplaining application to the duties to which he is assigned . . . [Price] should not in any way be permitted to get the idea that the ‘kicker’ and objector is given preference over the one who works diligently and uncomplainingly.”⁴⁸⁵

Price also had a penchant for independent actions that irritated or embarrassed the State Department, as well as a reputation of outspoken criticism of the government on numerous occasions. One of these occurred in June, 1921. Without first asking the advice of the American Minister in Peking, Price forwarded a letter from Dr. Sun Yat-sen (who was a personal friend of Price), president of a rival government in Canton addressed to the President, asking for recognition of his government, earning Price a reprimand for taking action that could have suggested U.S. recognition of Sun’s administration.⁴⁸⁶ The incident may have been a factor in his transfer to Foochow in December 1921.⁴⁸⁷

Shortly after his posting to Foochow, he and his wife lost their second child, who fell from the veranda on second story of the consulate.⁴⁸⁸ This probably intensified Price’s bitterness. Despite these circumstances, the abrasive tone of Price’s correspondence and the implication that he sharply criticized the State Department to other Americans (and possibly foreigners) was more than his superiors could tolerate. Commenting on Price’s obvious vitriolic

⁴⁸⁵ Charles C. Eberhardt, “Memorandum, Re: Vice-Consul Ernest B. Price,” Melbourne, Australia, November 12, 1921, Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

⁴⁸⁶ Dr. Sun Yat-sen to President Harding, June 16, 1921, Hoover Institution Archives, *Payson J. Treat Papers*, box 50, folder “Sun Yat-sen;” Leo Bergholz to Secretary of State, 17 August, 1921, Canton, China. File 893/3902 (v. 434). Document no. 800. NARA, DOS RG 84.

⁴⁸⁷ Ernest B. Price, [untitled and undated biographical sheet] OPF, NPRC, NARA.

⁴⁸⁸ Nelson T. Johnson [Shanghai, China, Inspection District of Eastern Asia] to Wilbur J. Carr, April 22, 1923; *American Consular Bulletin* 4, no. 9 (September 1922), 168.

criticism of a U.S. naval commander's refusal to provide what he (Price) felt was adequate protection of American missionaries in the area, Inspector Nelson Johnson noted, "as usual I am afraid he aired his feelings on the subject locally for I find that Price cannot see anything wrong or undignified in sympathizing with the local American community in any fancied complaint he or they have against the Government rather than make plain to them the necessity of the stand which the Government takes in the premises."⁴⁸⁹

Inspectors such as Nelson T. Johnson described Price as "such an extremely callow youth that he is not regarded as much more than a minor clerk in the office who may be expected to grow up one day." Nor did his choice of bride inspire confidence. The same inspectors considered her "a bright, charming, irresponsible little girl."⁴⁹⁰ The timing of his marriage also caused irritation. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, Student Interpreters required by law to be unmarried, yet Price married in 1915, midway through his language study program.⁴⁹¹

The State Department turned an unswervingly blind eye to violations of this rule—other Student Interpreters also married during their programs of study—yet it was almost certainly galling for officers such as Nelson T. Johnson, who postponed marriage until middle age, to see officers such as Price violate the rules and then complain obstreperously about a situation that was at least partially of their own making.

Price and his wife also wasted no time in having three children (a fourth died in March, 1922).⁴⁹² This exacerbated his financial situation as a junior officer. Moreover, between 1902 and 1931, post allowances for living expenses and representational allowance were *ad hoc*, dependent on the flexibility of the State Department's budget. Hazardous duty pay, cost of

⁴⁸⁹ Nelson T. Johnson [Shanghai, China, Inspection District of Eastern Asia] to Wilbur J. Carr, April 22, 1923.

⁴⁹⁰ Undated rating sheet, Ernest Price OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹² "Price, Ernest B." [untitled biographical data sheet], Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

living adjustments, and other such forms of additional compensation did not exist. The sole means of determining the value of individual officers (in addition to entire posts) consisted of physical post inspections and annual efficiency reports.

Price was privately criticized for marrying so early in his career, as the drain on his finances curtailed his abilities to socialize with businessmen and soured his view of the Foreign Service.⁴⁹³ Inspector Fuller similarly noted the inadequacy of interpreters' salaries in the case of Ernest Price, stating that "it is most unfortunate that he is married" and "I do not see how, even with favorable exchange, he will be able on an interpreter's salary to keep a wife."⁴⁹⁴ Inevitably, Price's inability to rub shoulders with businessmen, precarious finances, and an almost insubordinate stance toward superiors—all common complaints of and about SIC-trained officers—lowered Price's efficiency ratings, retarding his promotions and perpetuating the very circumstances that had curdled his attitude from the beginning.⁴⁹⁵

Price and his family were also criticized for a (comparatively) abstemious lifestyle. His wife was observed to have exercised "more than ordinary care in supervision of servants and household expenses, so much so ... that the servants dislike to remain [in service] but this seems more from the fact that they have been spoiled by serving under impractical, careless, bachelor housekeepers such as [Percival]Heintzleman, [Leo] Bergholz, etc., on whose purchases they could always make extra money"⁴⁹⁶

In this way, marital, familial, and financial circumstances materially and usually negatively affected the service and promotion schedule of even the best Foreign Service officers

⁴⁹³ Stuart J. Fuller, "Inspection Report on Student Interpreter Ernest Batson Price," July 3, 1917. *Inspection Reports on Student Interpreters*. General Records of the Department of State RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁴⁹⁴ Stuart Fuller, "Inspection Report on Student Interpreter Ernest Batson Price," July 3, 1917, *Despatches from Student Interpreters*, General Records of the Department of State, (RG 59), NARA, College Park, MD.

⁴⁹⁵ Ernest Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

from the turn of the century to the 1930s, when funding for personnel support finally reached an almost adequate level, largely due to the urging of senior Foreign Service officers who possessed greater influence in the Far East Division of the State Department.

Although most of the examples given here come from graduates of the China SIC (mostly because they existed in far greater numbers), numerous examples of Japan and Turkey officers who endured financial hardships—albeit to a slightly lesser extent. Harman Broomall, a student interpreter in Japan, failed the 6th year Japanese exam by a few points and was therefore ineligible for promotion (very few SIC graduates even took this exam however). Stating that he could not maintain his family with the dignity expected by the State Department on his current salary, Broomall resigned in 1924 to take a position with an American mercantile firm in Japan.⁴⁹⁷

Senior officers were hardly unmoved by the situations of officers such as Broomall and Price. J.V.A. MacMurray (Nelson T. Johnson's predecessor as American Minister in Beijing) observed to Price, "I can only regret that our scheme of things so often assumes that our Government is entitled to make its servants pay for the privilege of serving, or get out."⁴⁹⁸ Price's continuously strident demands for promotion and salary increases were generally absorbed with the caveat: "his ambitions for promotion are probably due to the fact that he is a junior officer with a family."⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁷ Harman L. Broomall, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴⁹⁸ J.V.A. MacMurray to Ernest Price, May 21, 1929, Ernest Price OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁴⁹⁹ Ernest Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

Naturally, not all senior officers were as sympathetic as MacMurray, particularly officers such as Nelson T. Johnson and Clarence Spiker, who delayed marriage until early middle age.⁵⁰⁰ However, in the face of Congressional parsimony, there was little that even the most sympathetic administrators could do, as even routine administrative functions were inadequately funded. For example, although a semi-regular inspection schedule existed after the major consular service reforms in 1906, efficiency ratings (on which promotions and pay raises were based) were often ignored or were skewed by the difficulties of evaluating personnel thousands of miles away from the administrative center (Washington D.C.). This problem was particularly intractable in the case of Meryl S. Myers. For twenty years, Myers was coincidentally either absent from his post (through no fault of his own) during every inspection tour; occasionally, his post was overlooked.⁵⁰¹

Consequently, his personnel file contains a bewildering jumble of contradictory statements that do not always concur with the picture that emerges from consular post records. As mentioned elsewhere, it was through Myers' efforts that the Andersen & Meyer Company obtained a \$300,000 contract with Kotchiu Tin Trading Company; without his initiative, there would have been no agreement.⁵⁰² Myer's personnel file acknowledges his importance to this and numerous other instances—citing a particular businessman's commendation of his efforts—but without noting the scale of the transactions involved.⁵⁰³ Instead, the efficiency ratings often devolved into arcane bean counting over the number and style, and tone of commercial reports

⁵⁰⁰ T.M. Wilson, "American Foreign Service Inspection Report, Section I, Foreign Service Personnel, September 28, 1932, Clarence J. Spiker, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO; newspaper clipping from Washington Star, February 9, 1934.

⁵⁰¹ Inspector T.M. Wilson, "American Foreign Service Inspection Report, Section I. Personnel, Consulate General, Mukden, July 8, 1932" in Meryl S. Myers, OPF. NPRC, St. Louis, NARA.

⁵⁰² H. H. Braun to C. E. Gauss, February 17, 1927. 610.1. Correspondence, American Consulate, Yunnanfu, China. Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84. NARA.

⁵⁰³ Inspector T.M. Wilson, "American Foreign Service Inspection Report, Section I. Personnel, Consulate General, Mukden, July 8, 1932" in Meryl S. Myers, OPF. NPRC, St. Louis, NARA.

and trade letters, without considering the location and size of the consulate, number of subordinates, and type of workload. (managing a high volume of passport and/or visa applications counted very little towards an officer's efficiency, whereas a few well-written trade opportunity reports or commendation letters from businessmen were highly regarded).⁵⁰⁴

Inspector Charles C. Eberhardt was particularly harsh toward Myers. In 1920, claiming that Myers intended to close the Swatow consulate in order to return to the United States on leave, he charged Myers with a "deplorable lack of Service Spirit," shirking his work, feigning illness, of neglecting his official duties to study law, of "living in the most niggardly fashion" in order to save money—only to take a leave of absence while demanding a promotion.⁵⁰⁵

Unbeknownst to the inspector however, Myers had been so seriously ill while stationed at Chungking that a doctor as well as the American Minister (Paul Reinsch) recommended his transfer. As for the "niggardly living," when Myers finally had the opportunity to explain his financial situation to Wilbur Carr in 1920, it was noted that Myers' wife had "departed for the U.S. some time ago. Since that time it has not been possible for Mr. Myers to support her in the U.S. and live up to the standard which maintained up to that time."⁵⁰⁶ What is more, from family and marital status listed later in the file, it is apparent that Mrs. Myers left for the United States either pregnant or with a young child—another issue of which the inspector had been unaware or apathetic.⁵⁰⁷ Given the political unrest in China at the time, an officer's sending his wife and child to the United States was logical, and was even common at other post throughout Asia and the Middle East. Chungking was considered a highly dangerous due to their climates. E. Carlton

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ Meryl S. Myers, OPF. NPRC, St. Louis, NARA.

⁵⁰⁷ Inspector T.M. Wilson, "American Foreign Service Inspection Report, Section I. Personnel, Consulate General, Mukden, July 8, 1932" in Meryl S. Myers, OPF. NPRC, St. Louis, NARA.

Baker pleaded for a post transfer from Chungking in 1914 due to his wife's health (they had lost an infant son a few months prior to his request), noting that although the previous two consuls and a clerk had stayed at the post for shorter periods than he, the health of all three had deteriorated rapidly.⁵⁰⁸

These cases illustrate the severe strain under which consular officers operated in China throughout the 1910s and '20s, while also highlighting the State Department's expectations for their conduct. Family and financial hardships were further aggravated by the physical and political dangers associated with living in China during this period. According to Price, due to civil war in October 1922, "all semblance of civil administration had vanished. Not a civil official remained, and both the city and Nantai [an island] were without police."⁵⁰⁹

Physical danger made financial security an even more pressing concern: officers had to consider what would happen to their families if their livelihood disappeared or a drastic change in their family status occurred. Officers who encountered special family problems, whose spouses died or who died themselves received little or (most commonly) no help for their families other than sympathy from the Federal government. For example, SIC Turkey graduate Ralph Bader's wife died after giving birth to twins while he was stationed in Cairo. Bader returned to the United States on extended leave and resigned shortly afterwards.⁵¹⁰ Because of Bader's knowledge of Turkish, French, and Persian, Wilbur Carr (chief of the Consular Bureau) wrote to Bader, urging him to reconsider his resignation.⁵¹¹ It is interesting to note that Bader

⁵⁰⁸ E. Carleton Baker to the Secretary of State, August 26, 1914, Chungking, China, Records of the Department of State, RG 59, decimal file, 123B17/29, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁵⁰⁹ Ernest B. Price [Foochow, China] to the Secretary of State, October 25, 1922, Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Letter from American Consular Agency in Cairo to N.B. Stewart, December 19, 1922, Records of the Department of State, RG 59, decimal file, 123B141/41, NARA, College Park, MD.

neither requested nor was he offered special treatment (such as a special post allowance). Cairo was considered a difficult and dangerous post due to the hot climate; after the death of Bader's wife, George L. Brandt, another language officer, sent his wife and child back to the United States for health reasons.⁵¹² In addition to his immediate family, Willys Peck also for a time helped to support his brother's widow, after his brother was killed in France during WWI; he requested—but was denied—a post allowance to support his family while stationed in war-torn Tsingtao.⁵¹³ When SIC China graduate George Bickford died—after a protracted illness contracted through alleged (by his supervisors) overwork, his supervisor was informed that the State Department could do nothing directly for Bickford's widow and/or children who were left destitute and dependent on family members in the United States.⁵¹⁴

The family of SIC Japan graduate Max Kirjassoff fared only a little better. Max Kirjassoff was a Russian Jew and an American citizen naturalized through his father.⁵¹⁵ When Kirjassoff and his wife were killed in a fire immediately after the Yokohama earthquake, not only were the futures of their children thrown into question, a legal and cultural scuffle occurred for custody of their children, as they did not have a will.⁵¹⁶ Kirjassoff, who was Jewish, had married the sister of his SIC Japan colleague, James Ballantine, whose family was Christian. After the death of Kirjassoff, when his sisters requested custody of the children, Ballantine wrote to the State Department, demanding that the children be remanded to him, stating, “while I have no prejudice against Jews as such, it is unthinkable that Christian children should be brought up

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ Willys R. Peck to Secretary of State, December 19, 1918, 123P33/117, Decimal File, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁵¹⁴ Secretary of State to Clarence E. Gauss, 123B47/57, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁵¹⁵ Max D. Kirjassoff, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁵¹⁶ Max Kirjassoff, OPF, NPRC, NARA

in Jewish surroundings.”⁵¹⁷ The private tribulations of Raymond C. Curtice (SIC Japan) led him to shoot and kill himself on February 15th, 1922, after incurring a debt to the U.S. government of \$11,000.⁵¹⁸ He left behind a wife and three children.⁵¹⁹ Exactly how he incurred this debt and what impelled him to commit suicide is not clear from his records. In any case, Curtice was in debt and left his family without means and dependent on his father, who was a Protestant minister.⁵²⁰

These unpleasant but real contingencies made saving for the future imperative for Foreign Service officers but the fiscal realities of government service made doing so difficult for many SIC-trained officers, particularly those with families. Consuls such as Percival Heintzelman noted that all of their salaries went to maintaining their families and that they were therefore unable to save any money for the future. This was because compensation was fixed by law, from the rank of Student Interpreter onwards, and salary increases only came with promotions, which in turn were only given as vacancies became available in the next higher grade. However, senior officers and State Department administrators were aware of and worked to rectify the problems of adequate compensation and personnel support. The issue gave Consular Bureau chief Wilbur Carr considerable distress, as he observed to Heintzelman,

“there is no single problem of personnel work so important as the question of adequate salaries in the service. These salaries must be sufficient to give officers a comfortable

⁵¹⁷ W.O. Ballantine to Charles E. Hughes, Secretary of State, (filed) September 13, 1923, 123K63/74, *Records of the Department of State*, Decimal File, 123K582-123K63, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁵¹⁸ Raymond C. Curtice, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

living and also enough to enable them to save something. This is the end toward which we have been working for a number of years.”⁵²¹

Nevertheless, as the petulant tone with which officers such as Price and Heintzelman often broached the subject of salaries and post allowances often obscured the very real unfairness of their position vis-à-vis their foreign counterparts and the U.S. State Department. As Heintzelman observed in his appeal to Carr, American consular officers were expected to maintain high social standing in their communities.⁵²² Indeed, failure to socialize with the local foreign communities and his reluctance to maintain the dignity of the American Consular service were some of the very reasons Heintzelman was given low efficiency ratings and denied promotions, pay raises and allowances.⁵²³

From the above anecdotes, it is abundantly clear that there was very little support for the families of the SIC in China, Japan, and Turkey. Officers were at the mercy of a capricious rating system when it came to promotions, pay increases, and advances, and there was no safety net whatsoever for the families of officers who died on duty. Although the transcript can never be more than partial due to the overwhelmingly male nature of the State Department of the early twentieth century, it is complete enough to suggest that the support network for the SIC—touted as a pillar of the American imperial project in Asia—was so entirely inadequate as to beg the existence of the entire enterprise.

The outlines are clear however. From 1902 to the early 1930s, the Foreign Service’s system of pay and allowances did not sufficiently meet the ordinary needs of officers’ families,

⁵²¹ Wilbur Carr to Percival Heintzelman, February 12, 1924, Percival Heintzelman, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁵²² Percival Heintzelman to Wilbur Carr, April 15, 1923, Percival Heintzelman, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁵²³ Ibid.

let alone those in extraordinary circumstances. Moreover, appropriations for the operational expenses of missions and consulates (particularly those in China) were barely adequate to their functions and provided nothing for the social expenditures of these offices. The Rogers Act of 1924 sought to address many of these deficiencies of the Foreign Service (re-named as such by the aforementioned bill), regularizing promotions, post allowances, detailing field officers to the State Department for periods of duty on a regular basis and allocating some funds for representational expenses (hosting, entertainment, etc.). However, these changes were implemented slowly: post allowances were distributed unevenly, and representational expenses were not authorized and implemented until the early 1930s.⁵²⁴

As will be discussed in greater detail later, by this time trade expansion as a departmental priority had greatly diminished, increasingly eclipsed by Japanese militarism and Chinese Communism. Beginning with the Japanese seizure of Tsingtao during WWI and Chinese political instability of the warlord period, political reporting garnered greater importance. In addition, as mentioned elsewhere, Japanese merchants had triumphed over their largely uninterested American counterparts, and Japanese consular officers and their military compatriots were busily closing the Open Door in practice (albeit not name) everywhere they could.

In this sense, this part of the Student Interpreters Corps' story remains part of a U.S. government agency aware of its own needs and sluggishly but persistently promoting its own growth independent of the desires of any foreign policy elite. This examination of the women and families of the SIC, although incomplete, highlights the *ad hoc* pattern of inadequate initial investment, gradual consolidation and bureaucratic growth. It also underscores the fact that

⁵²⁴ The Department of State Office of the Historian, "A Short History of the Department of State: The Rogers Act," <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/short-history/rogers>.

commercial imperialist ideology did not translate into an imperialist bureaucracy. If American imperialism in China existed, it was only in the form of an *ad hoc*, intermittent, mental commitment to economic expansion that never translated into mechanisms of implementation, supervision and control, let alone into an appreciable increase in the balance of American foreign trade.

CHAPTER 7

**“IF THE LORD HAD CONSIDERED IT DANGEROUS:”⁵²⁵ THE SPECIAL
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MISSIONARIES AND THE SIC, 1900-1941**

Along with trade expansion, American missionary activity in Asia and the Middle East, has been charged with complicity in an overarching American imperialist project. In an attempt to paint imperial stripes on the early twentieth century American presence in China, Thomas McCormick has depicted the consul, missionary, and naval officer as “the expansionist trinity” of the United States.⁵²⁶ Similarly, according to American missionary historian James Reed, “four decades of the Open Door policy . . . helped provoke the unjustifiable attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 and left the United States ill-equipped to deal creatively with the rising force of Chinese nationalism.”⁵²⁷ Reed has attributed the lack of vision to “in large degree to the Protestant missionary movement,” suggesting at the same time that this produced a collective mentality, “the Missionary Mind,” which he asserts “colored the attitudes of the foreign-policy public and shaped the policies pursued by government officials. Long after the missionary movement itself was on the wane, the Missionary mind continued to exercise a profound effect on policy.”⁵²⁸

Reed further argues that, “because the foreign policies pursued by a democratic republic may be said to rest upon the virtue of the people, or at least upon that section of the public which

⁵²⁵ Charles Antrobus, Commander, U.S.S. Palos, to “Commander of Yangze Patrol”, attachment to Paul R. Josselyn to Nelson T. Johnson, “Americans in West China,” American Consulate General, Hankow, China, November 6, 1935, Records of the Department of State, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, 800/Communism, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁵²⁶ Thomas McCormick, *China Market: America’s Quest for Informal Empire, 1893-1901* (Chicago, Ivan R. Dee Publishers, 1967), 65.

⁵²⁷ James Reed, *The Missionary Mind and East Asia Policy, 1911-1915* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 1

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

is interested in foreign affairs, one may also suggest some deeper flaw in society.”⁵²⁹ For Reed, the source of this flaw is abundantly clear: asserting, “those who would seek some tragedy in our foreign relations need look no farther,”⁵³⁰ he unequivocally places the burden for the United States misguided policies squarely on the thought and practice evangelical Protestant Christianity.⁵³¹ Examining the ground-level relationships between American Foreign Service officers and missionaries, this chapter will argue that the relationship between American missionaries and US government representatives was ambivalent and that arguments such as that of Reed offer a reductionist portrayal of American evangelical Protestants and exaggerates the influence of Christianity on Americans in China. Echoing (and at many points, relying on) Reed’s study, Chinese scholar Jing Wang has highlighted the impact of missionaries on American government perceptions of China, observing the growth of missionary-board spending on China, the rapidly rising number of new American missionaries in China, and underscoring that missionaries played a role in influencing the Woodrow Wilson administration to recognize the new Chinese republic following the 1911 revolution.⁵³²

Yet while missionaries made significant contributions to the American understanding of China and possibly influenced the outlooks of some individual officers, this chapter argues their impact was limited, complicated by the heavy emphasis the State Department placed on trade expansion in China until the 1920s. Furthermore, while the substance of this entire study tends to highlight the influence of language-trained Foreign Service officers on US perceptions of and

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² Jing Wang, “The Image of China Shaped by American Missionaries and Its Impact,” *Journal of Cultural Interaction in East Asia*, vol. 6 (2016), 31-45.

policy proposals for China and Japan, it must be emphasized that their influence on actual policy formulation was highly circumscribed—this will be discussed in greater detail in a later chapter.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, the influence of reports by SIC-trained officers on State Department perceptions of political, social, and economic developments depended heavily on which officer reported on them and who actually read the reports in the Far East Division of the State Department in Washington. During the 1930s, one of the most important figures in the Far East Division was Stanley Hornbeck, who served as head of the Far East Division from 1928 to 1937, and from 1937 to 1944 as a special advisor to Secretary of State Cordell Hull.⁵³³ SIC-Japan-trained Joseph Ballantine noted that reports from field officers generally passed through himself on the way to Cordell Hull, along the way reviewed and amended by Hornbeck⁵³⁴—an informational bottleneck through which information that challenged his opinions did not pass easily. In this way, any influence missionaries might have exerted through diplomatic channels would have been more indirect than that of field officers themselves. Studies by scholars such as James Reed and Jing Wang have highlighted missionaries' influence on American domestic public opinion and perceptions of China, particularly noting the explosion of missionary-published works on China near the turn of the twentieth century, and the concomitant rise in church-based giving to missionary endeavors in China.⁵³⁵

As has been outlined previously, during the first two decades of the 20th century, American trade expansion and Open Door ideology were the chief priorities for the State

⁵³³ Roberta Wohlstetter, *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision* (Stanford University Press, 1962), 264-265; Documentstalk.com, "Hornbeck, Stanley Kuhl, 1888-1966," (DocumentsTalk, 2008), <http://documentstalk.com/wp/hornbeck-stanley-k/>, accessed August 21, 2016.

⁵³⁴ Joseph Ballantine, *The Reminiscences of Joseph Ballantine* (Columbia, NY: Columbia University, Oral History Research Office, 1961), 31.

⁵³⁵ Reed, *The Missionary Mind*, 24; Wang, "The Image of China," 36; Michael V. Metallo, "Presbyterian Missionaries and the 1911 Chinese Revolution," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 62, no.2 (summer 1984): 157; Wang, "The Image of China," 43.

Department in China; missionary protection was a necessary but incidental component of officers' duties. Moreover, as Reed has asserted, "men doing business with Asia did not, as a rule, have missionary minds . . . they were in it for the money: thus the business attitudes toward China and Japan [were] markedly different from the perspectives common in the Protestant religious community."⁵³⁶ State Department officials themselves possessed greater affinities with the views of businessmen outlook than that of missionaries. In fact, consular dispatches, inspection reports, and personnel files indicate that many officers believed that they knew what would benefit American trade in China better than businessmen themselves.

As noted previously, with the beginning of a (putatively) merit-based system of appointments and promotion in 1906, senior State Department officials repeatedly the role of consuls in promoting American trade in their districts. American consular officers tried to push skeptical businessmen through the Open Door, but by and large, they did not go—and both officers and Consular Service inspectors were cognizant of this. For example, during his inspection of the US consular offices in Shanghai (at the time staffed by missionary-turned consul, Dr. Amos P. Wilder) Fleming D. Cheshire observed,

"the many answers to trade inquiries have placed before the parties making the inquiry valuable information as to what should be done if they desire to enter the China markets with their goods—something more than the mere sending of trade catalogues which do not and cannot increase trade among a people who cannot read them."⁵³⁷

⁵³⁶ Ibid., 41.

⁵³⁷ Fleming D. Cheshire, "Inspection of the American Consular office at Shanghai, China," August 1st, 1909. General Records of the Department of State, *Inspection Reports of Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, RG 59, NARA.

Despite the preponderance of missionary interests in Shanghai, US consular officers gave far greater attention to American businessmen from the turn of the century into the 1920s, that is, trade promotion was a US government priority; protection of missionaries was incidental to the consular mission of providing services to US citizens abroad. When businessmen complained to inspectors about a consul general or consul's commercial efficiency, it took little more evidence for the inspectors to recommend their transfer. During this period, not only consular officers but also native employees were evaluated on their utility to advancing American trade, in the Ottoman Empire as well as China. For example, Elias T. Gelat and Antoine Thomas Gelat of the Jerusalem office were similarly educated in missionary schools, and were Syrian Christians.⁵³⁸ According to Inspector A. Gottschalk, Antoine was "one of the most useful, loyal men we have among the corps of natives employed throughout the Ottoman Empire . . . is particularly good at commercial work."⁵³⁹

Moreover, there was a hiring preference in American consulates in China, Japan, and the Ottoman Empire for hiring Christians, although it was not an official policy and its application was far from universal. In the Ottoman Empire, the State Department generally preferred to hire Christian subjects of Greek and Armenian descent.⁵⁴⁰ In China there was a tendency to hire Christians—particularly in offices staffed by American consular offices with close ties to missionaries—but this was much less uniformly the case. Conversely, local Christians rarely appeared in American consular offices in Japan. Arguably least religiously and culturally influenced by missionaries, Japanese employees were highly educated; Shuten Inouye of the

⁵³⁸ Elias T. Gelat; Antoine Thomas Gelat, Biographical Data on Alien Consular Employees, 1900-1919 RG 59, Entry 888, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁵³⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁰ Lazaraki Jordanidis, Interpreter at Sivas, Turkey, January 24, 1907, Biographical Data on Alien Consular Employees, 1900-1919 RG 59, Entry 888, NARA, College Park, MD.

Kobe office was a teacher of Japanese, an accomplished essayist, and had been educated in Japanese government schools.⁵⁴¹

However, the overriding priorities for the State Department were that native employees and consular officials alike be loyal to the Department and free of vested interests, whether they might be financial assets or missionary agendas, and demonstrated commitment to the goal of expanding American trade. Consequently, suspected of having missionary interests at heart, missionaries-turned-consular officers were particularly vulnerable to criticism related to trade-promotion. In the case of Amos P. Wilder, American Consul-General in Shanghai in 1911, Fleming D. Cheshire concluded,

“Dr. Wilder possesses ability, is active and alert, and I believe endeavors to maintain a high standard of efficiency as Consul-General, but I am afraid he lacks one very essential qualification—as members of the mercantile community here tell me—commercial instinct. He is criticised [sic] by some of the American merchants here as an unsatisfactory officer in dealing with commercial matters, is too much a politician; whose instincts are political rather than commercial.”⁵⁴²

As Cheshire portrayed it, the problem was that Wilder did not submit enough commercial reports, relegating the task SIC-trained subordinates assigned to the Shanghai office.⁵⁴³ In 1911

⁵⁴¹ Shuten Inouye, Biographical Data on Alien Consular Employees, 1900-1919 RG 59, Entry 888, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁵⁴² Fleming D. Cheshire, “Third Inspection of the American Consular office at Shanghai, China,” June 26th-July 5th, 1911. General Records of the Department of State, *Inspection Reports of Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, RG 59, NARA.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

these included John K. Davis, Esson M. Gale, James P. Jameson and Frank W. Hadley.⁵⁴⁴ These officers also handled all of the “protection cases” involving American claims against the Chinese government. In Shanghai during 1911, these cases were fairly evenly divided between Standard Oil’s complaints of piracy, theft, and the growing pains of business expansion (the construction of new storage tanks, for example) on the one hand, and missionary disputes with local Chinese authorities over land leases and the construction of buildings (schools, hospitals, churches, etc).⁵⁴⁵ The inspection report observed the rise of nationalism, and “the dissemination of ‘rights recovering’ propaganda” made it difficult for missionaries to obtain long-term leases, and in many instances the Chinese refused to fulfill contracts for the construction of new buildings.⁵⁴⁶

In these instances, the “good offices” of the American Consulate-General usually resolved the disputes. Cheshire noted,

“this Consulate-General fully appreciates the fact that the missionary societies would do well to enter upon their fields of work bearing the olive branch rather than the sword, and every effort is made to prevent unnecessary friction with the natives in these cases.”

Although missionary-related protection cases constituted nearly 50% of the workload of the American Consulate-General in Shanghai, both inspectors and Foreign Service emphasized the *commercial* importance of the city. For example, consul Amos P. Wilder noted, “the city of Shanghai is often called the commercial capital of the Chinese Empire, nearly half of all China’s imports entering here, for either local consumption or distribution to the Yangtze and coast

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

ports.”⁵⁴⁷ However, although it was understood that missionary protection constituted the bulk of the workload at many posts in addition to Shanghai, unless missionaries wrote to the State Department to commend or complain about individual officers, their resolution of missionary problems rarely found its way into the efficiency ratings on which promotions were based. Even inspection reports only mention missionary-related work in passing, or, as in the case above, to criticize the ability of missionaries to advance American trade.

Studies such as that of James Reed begin by positing existence of a “foreign policy elite.”⁵⁴⁸ This elite is difficult to define: its composition varied according to the outcomes of each presidential election (due to the political appointments), yet somehow in Reed’s portrayals it determined the course of United States foreign policy. In the case of China, American trade did not pass through the Open Door in the hoped-for volume, either to follow the flag (ie, through the acquisition of a traditional empire), or to follow missionaries.

In the early twentieth century, studies such as that of Reed argue that “opinion leadership” was oriented toward Europe by virtue of language training, class, and worldview, but was illiterate on East Asian affairs, thus, “the Missionary Mind rushed in to fill this vacuum.”⁵⁴⁹ Although this might have been true at the end of the 19th century, even by 1911 (the beginning of Reed’s study) this was changing, particularly as Chinese-trained officers gradually filled the ranks of consular officers in China. Reed’s argument hinges on the United States’ reaction to the 1911 revolution in China and the United States’ of the Chinese Republic,⁵⁵⁰ against the advice of

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁸ Reed, *The Missionary Mind*, 81. See also Ernest May, *American Imperialism: A Speculative Essay* (NY: 1968), passim.

⁵⁴⁹ Reed, *The Missionary Mind*, 94.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., 3.

Charles D. Tenney, the Chinese Secretary (and a SIC graduate⁵⁵¹).⁵⁵² As Reed observes, by the next year (1912), Tenney had executed an abrupt about-face. In a dispatch to the American Minister, Tenney had highlighted the increasingly anti-foreign attitudes and disregard for treaty obligations. He also observed, “the Chinese literati and gentry who have espoused Republicanism are still less actuated by any wish to improve the lot of the people. They are utilizing the change in government to strengthen their hand in the exercise of the local tyranny which they have always tried to exercise”⁵⁵³ Tenney’s about-face on the 1911 revolution did in fact mirror the depictions of American missionaries. Charles Tenney is a good example of a missionary-turned consular officer (at least temporarily). A medical doctor serving as consul in Nanking, China in 1913, Tenney was strongly criticized by inspector George Murphy for owning “a considerable amount of real estate in Tientsin” and recommended his transfer to another country even while admitting that Tenney’s influence had “greatly improved this office and conditions at Nanking.”⁵⁵⁴

As Wang and other scholars have noted, American missionaries did contribute to an increasingly positive perception of the Chinese Republic, following the 1911 revolution.⁵⁵⁵ They were sympathetic optimists in their views, and envisioned the realization of a Christian China.⁵⁵⁶ They also played an active role in arguing for social reforms in China. For example, medical missionaries played a crucial role in gathering evidence on the debilitating effects of opium use,

⁵⁵¹ Charles D. Tenney, OPF, NARA.

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, 117.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*, 119; see note 26.

⁵⁵⁴ George Murphy, “Fourth Inspection of American Consular Office at Nanking, China, 28-31 May, 1913,” *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁵⁵⁵ Wang, “The Image of China,” 40-43.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

while nearly both medical and evangelistic missionaries advocated for the end of the opium trade and prohibition of its use by the Chinese, adamantly keeping the issue alive.⁵⁵⁷

However, just as Thomas McCormick's assertion of American economic empire in China founders on examination of SIC-China officers' trade expansion efforts, so too do claims such as that of Reed on the existence of a putative "foreign policy elite," guided by a "missionary mind."⁵⁵⁸ The American Foreign Service made a concerted effort to distance itself from missionaries, local employees, and businessmen. Too close an association with outside influences (usually entailing local Chinese/Japanese/Turkish residents, businessmen, and missionaries) potentially compromised an officer's usefulness and frequently affected an officer's efficiency rating, according to Foreign Service inspectors and senior State Department officials.⁵⁵⁹ Abstemious habits (for example, disdain for gambling and refusing to consume alcohol) factored into selection of post assignments. Officers who like Ernest Price closely associated with missionaries were often channeled away from important commercial offices, as the refusal to drink alcohol made odious to high society to American businessmen, and threatened to compromise their effectiveness in trade promotion.⁵⁶⁰ Inspector Robert Frazer Jr. observed that either rigid abstinence or overindulgence in any common vice (drinking, dancing, gambling) could damage an officer's reputation in the local community.⁵⁶¹

On the one hand, American missionaries, businessmen, and Foreign Service officers mingled extensively and often exchanged views via telegrams, letters, and conversations.

⁵⁵⁷ Kathleen L. Lodwick, *Crusaders against Opium: Protestant Missionaries in China, 1874-1917* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1996), passim.

⁵⁵⁸ Reed, *The Missionary Mind*, 81.

⁵⁵⁹ Edward J. Norton (Department of State, Office of Foreign Personnel), to Wilbur Carr, November 1, 1927, Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

⁵⁶⁰ See Inspector Eberhardt's comments of April 10, 1921, "Ernest Batson Price" [service record], OPF, NPRC, NARA.

⁵⁶¹ Robert Frazer Jr., "Inspection Report of Consular Office at Foochow, China," March 2-6, 1921. General Records of the Department of State, *Inspection Reports of Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, RG 59, NARA.

However, in concrete instances where there *was* a connection between consular officers and the American missionary community, both inspectors and fellow officers deliberately warned the State Department of this. For example, in November 1920, consul George C. Hanson notified the Department that during his absence on leave, vice-consul Price “showed a marked preference for the company of missionaries and was very popular with them” but “was not popular with the American and foreign business community.”⁵⁶² According to inspector, Hanson reported, “while at Foochow, [Price] was evidently outspoken in his disappointment at not being more rapidly promoted in the Service, and spoke of resigning if this condition was not bettered. The missionaries by their petition evidently hoped to assist him.”⁵⁶³

There does seem to have been some tension between Price and Hanson, likely rooted in their vastly different lifestyles and outlooks. As mentioned elsewhere, Hanson was a Chinese and Russian polyglot, an outgoing heavy drinker (by most accounts), and a womanizer. Aside from being a heavy cigarette smoker (along with his wife), Price was abstemious and socially conservative. After returning from leave while stationed together at Foochow (Hanson was senior in rank), Hanson wrote that Price “did good work but was overjealous [sic] in pressing several very doubtful claims made by missionaries against Chinese. Apparently, every request the missionaries made he strived very hard to grant.”⁵⁶⁴

Hanson also deplored Price’s criticism of the Department, noting that “new provisions for Vice Consuls” had improved their financial situations.⁵⁶⁵ He observed that “businessmen . . . have treated them lightly because they considered them the results of inexperience, lack of

⁵⁶² Ibid.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ George C. Hanson to Wilbur J. Carr, December 2, 1920, Washington D.C., Hanson, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

balance, and conceit. The missionaries have probably taken them seriously.”⁵⁶⁶ This does seem to have been the case. Price was one of the “odd-balls” of the Far East Division, clashing with hardball supervisors, who were the ideological and political gatekeepers of these circles of influence. One such collision was the acrimony between Nelson Johnson and Ernest Price concerning the latter’s views of American policy in China and his tendency to air his opinions among other Americans in his consular district. In a discussion with Price in 1927 concerning both his service record and his views on American policy, Nelson Johnson quoted a portion of one of Price’s own dispatches back to him:

“I would be remiss in my duty if I did not also record . . . the practically unanimous belief of Americans in this district that their Government has utterly failed in its duty in not having adopted, enunciated and carried through a definite policy with respect to Americans and their rights and interests in China. There are those who feel that the Government should have protected them. There are those who feel that it should not have protected them. But there appears to be no disagreement on the principle that the Government should either have told Americans that they should get out of China, and assisted them to do so, or should have told them they might stay, and assisted them to do so.”⁵⁶⁷

Moreover, Price explicitly advised increasingly greater protection for American missionaries in his consular district of Foochow, even if doing required violations of Chinese

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁷ Nelson T. Johnson [memorandum of conversation], Department of State, Assistant Secretary, “Mr. Ernest B. Price, His Record in the Foreign Service and Resignation,” November 1, 1927, Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

sovereignty. His heart was probably in the right place: spread out through the city, Americans ran two schools (a boarding school for 150 girls, and one for almost 1000 boys), a hospital, and a homeless shelter.⁵⁶⁸ In the event of an invasion of the city by Communists or bandits, this philanthropic American interests would be vulnerable targets. According to Price, the contingency plan was that thirty Marines from the *U.S.S. Rizal* would concentrate at the American Consulate and two other locations on one side of the river that divided metropolitan Foochow.⁵⁶⁹ Price deemed a force of thirty insufficient to protect American interest and urged the numbers be increased, yet despite his insistence, the U.S. commander insisted that any augmentation of the force “would mean a conspicuous violation of the sovereignty of China.”⁵⁷⁰ Price’s case illustrates how the complex and often contradictory relationship between missionaries and Foreign Service officers contributed to a growing consensus that the United States should increasingly favor direct intervention in China’s internal affairs. Although—as noted above—perceptions of an overly intimate relationship between SIC graduates and American missionaries invited the disapprobation of senior officers, areas of overlapping interest existed in daily life and professional development.

The professionalization of the Student Interpreters Corps in China was partly due to the ties between the Consular Service and American missionaries in China. There was a simple reason for this: missionaries constituted the vast majority of Americans living in China, from the turn of the twentieth century to the beginning of WWII. Even in large commercial centers such

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid.

as Shanghai, American missionaries greatly outnumbered businessmen.⁵⁷¹ Missionaries often played important roles in the language training and testing of the SIC, including in Japan and Turkey, but their role in shaping the “China Service” was particularly strong. In the first place, the State Department regulations for the biennial examinations of student interpreters required that they be “examined for promotion to the grade of interpreter by a board composed of the language officer and two Americans designated by the chief of the mission.”⁵⁷² In most instances, at least one of the two was a missionary. Similarly, after 1917, for the first year of their training, SIC recruits attended the North China Union Language School, established to teach Americans (primarily missionaries) the Mandarin language.⁵⁷³ Following the suggestion of Willys R. Peck (the Chinese Secretary of the American Legation), the U.S. Army also chose to use the school to train its Language Officers.⁵⁷⁴

An important part of the story of United States foreign policy; missionaries were intertwined with the development of the Consular Service, particularly in China. Consular Service inspectors such as Fleming Cheshire sought out and consulted senior missionaries for advice on where to open new consulates, close obsolete offices, or for personal information concerning the character and conduct of the consuls (inspectors usually stayed in the area for only a few days at a time).⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷¹ Percival Heintzelman in Fleming D. Cheshire, “Inspection of the American Consular office at Shanghai, China,” August 1st, 1909. *General Records of the Department of State, Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, RG 59. NARA.

⁵⁷² The State Department, “Regulations Governing Interpreters and Student Interpreters in China, Japan, and Turkey,” *The Register of the Department of State* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1911), 129-130.

⁵⁷³ For example, see Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 94-101, 248-251.

⁵⁷⁴ Thomas Watts Collier, “The Chinese Language Officer Program of the U.S. Army, 1919-1943,” (MA thesis, Duke University, 1966), 43-46. See also, Minister in China to Secretary of State, June 14, 1917, Student-Interpreter Corps File 122.56/96, NARA, Central Files of the Department of State, RG 59.

⁵⁷⁵ Fleming D. Cheshire, “First Inspection of Consular Office at Chungking, China, 1910,” *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

So far as concerned the protection of American interests, consuls dealt more often with missionaries than with merchants. In places like Chungking, China in the early twentieth century, “protection,” usually entailed a personal appeal or visit to a local Chinese magistrate and reporting the exchange to the American Legation in Peking and the State Department.⁵⁷⁶ Inspector Stuart Jamieson Fuller wrote, “no American should ever be sent here on less than US\$1800. At present exchange he could not live on less than US\$3000. Vice Consul Meinhardt lives on the charity of missionaries.”⁵⁷⁷

In China at least, on balance the Consular Service more than repaid any charity received from missionaries. Inspection reports, dispatches, and correspondence reveal a symbiotic relationship between American missionaries and the United States Consular Service. This rapport was stronger in China than in Japan or the Ottoman Empire, particularly in China’s interior, where the American consul’s informal relations with the local magistrates could make the difference between life and death. In some provinces, missionary-related work occupied much, if not most, of consuls’ time. In the Chungking district in 1919, for example, there were 190 American residents. All but five of these were missionaries; one was doctor and the other four were Standard Oil employees.⁵⁷⁸

Missionaries regularly corresponded with American consuls in their districts, reporting on social, economic, political, and military conditions. For example, while serving as consul in Changsha province in 1916, Nelson T. Johnson relayed to the American minister, Paul S.

⁵⁷⁶ Fleming D. Cheshire, “First Inspection of Consular Office at Chungking, China, 1910,” *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁷ This is probably a reference to rent-free lodging. See Stuart Jamieson Fuller, “Fifth Inspection of the American Consular Office at Chefoo, 1917,” *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

⁵⁷⁸ “Inspection of Consular Office at Chungking, China, 1920,” *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

Reinsch, that Chinese soldiers in Kuangsi had opened gambling houses in violation of local laws in order to supplement their income.⁵⁷⁹ More worrisome however, were reports from American missionaries at Yoochow that armed groups of bandits were roaming the countryside, claiming to have been “armed and provisioned” by the American missionaries there.⁵⁸⁰

Although the reports were untrue in this case, the incident highlights the ways in which missionaries could be a nuisance to Chinese authorities and therefore cause problems for US Foreign Service officers by exacerbating anti-foreign attitudes in Chinese public opinion and among Chinese government officials. Although they did not always couch their observations in enlightened terms, American consular officers recognized these realities and attempted to address them squarely. For example, SIC-China-trained consul Samuel Sokobin noted in 1923 that the anti-foreign agitation in his district was not a new development but rather one that derived from several centuries of antipathy towards foreigners as “barbarians, an inferior, despicable people, not to be received among the Chinese and not to be permitted to reside in the country.”⁵⁸¹ Sokobin argued that

“we [the State Department] must clearly understand this—the Chinese do not like the foreigner he is American, British, French, or Japanese. They do not want us; they do not appreciate our beneficence, our desire to help them keep up in the march of civilization.

⁵⁷⁹ Nelson Johnson to Paul S. Reinsch, Changsha, China, June 27, 1916, “Correspondence, American Consulate, Chansha, China, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, RG 84, Records of the Department of State, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁸¹ Samuel Sokobin, “The Changing Attitude of The Chinese toward Foreigners,” American Consulate, Kalgan, China, March 31, 1923, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, RG 84, Records of the Department of State, NARA, College Park, MD.

Not every child appreciates being dragged along by his father, who marches down the street in great haste, leading the child by the hand.”⁵⁸²

Sokobin concluded that these feelings were “innate and instinctive and not to be eradicated by sentimental concessions.”⁵⁸³ Missionaries sometimes aggravated such sensitivities, and remained aware of instances of friction that could irritate officers’ relations with the Chinese government. For example, Dr. H. McLean, a British missionary in Yunnanfu with China Inland Mission, reported that an American missionary named William Marcus Young had been so zealous in mission work that he had “on more than one occasion antagonized the local officials.”⁵⁸⁴

To be sure, officers from missionary backgrounds tended to be more sympathetic towards missionaries. Pronouncements such as that of Sokobin above are starkly at odds with decades-earlier assertions by officers such as Willys R. Peck (himself a child of missionary parents and born in China) described Chinese history as “largely a record of recurrent cycles of submission to foreign domination and of nationalism which expels such domination and restores Chinese intellectual and political independence.”⁵⁸⁵ He further noted that Chinese officials “refer with much gratitude to the cultural benefits derived by China from the efforts of American missionaries, educators in general, and the education of students as the result of the Boxer

⁵⁸² Ibid.

⁵⁸³ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁴ Charles J. Pizar, US Consulate, Rangoon, Burma, March 22, 1927, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, volume 027, Kunming, China, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁵⁸⁵ Willys R. Peck to Nelson T. Johnson, American Minister, Peking, China, Records of the Department of State, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, Confidential Correspondences, American Consulate General, Nanking, 1933, vol. II, NARA, College Park, MD.

Indemnity remission.”⁵⁸⁶ Writing to Willys R. Peck (in China), Edwin Neville (in Japan) opined that the United States would continue to have strong “cultural or religious influences” in China for some time to come but believed that once China achieved a strong central government, that those influences would “while undoubtedly for good,” would “work out in a manner much different from what the founders intended.”⁵⁸⁷

The relationship between missionaries and Foreign Service officers in China was a special one. Unlike their counterparts in Japan, consular officers in China often relied on missionaries for information regarding political, military, and economic conditions in the Chinese interior—particularly during the 1930s through WWII. These reports were sometimes dishearteningly similar. For example, during the war, reports from American missionaries in the Tibet region for example provided information on Japanese troop movements and activities, as well as local attitudes, noting that all classes of the population there “are all pro-German and pro-Japanese. They frankly praised the Germans and the Japanese . . . and said that they will gladly become the peasants of the Japanese if they come here”⁵⁸⁸ SIC-China-trained consular officers in western China mirrored these reports. Raymond P. Ludden and John Carter Vincent reported widespread ambivalence among the Chinese on the front lines in the Yunnanfu region, declaring,

“I came out of Japanese internment and volunteered to return immediately to China because I thought that with the United States in the war the Chinese would do everything

⁵⁸⁶ Willys R. Peck to the Secretary of State, American Consular Service, Peking, China, October 1, 1914, “Events Necessitating the Withdrawal of the American Consulate from Tsingtau for the time being,” Records of the Department of State, RG 59, 123P33/53, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁵⁸⁷ Edwin Neville to Willys R. Peck, Tokyo, April 18, 1933, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, 800, Confidential Correspondences, American Consulate General, Nanking, 1933, vol. II, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁵⁸⁸ Troy Perkins to Charles Gauss, American Consulate, Kunming (Yunnanfu), China, July 9, 1942, Records of the Department of State, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, NARA, College Park, MD.

possible to prosecute the war against the Japanese. I have been sadly disillusioned and the longer I remain here the more evident it becomes that the Chinese are prepared to fight the war against the Japanese to the last American, but not otherwise.⁵⁸⁹

SIC-trained officers kept a close eye on attacks against American life and property in China, whether threatened by the Japanese, Chinese nationalists, bandits, or Chinese communists, and recorded aggression against American missionaries and businesses alike.⁵⁹⁰ Consular officers in China often requested and received information from US missionaries in the Chinese interior.⁵⁹¹ They also did their best to warn missionaries—American and foreign alike, as was standard practice among consular bodies in China—of impending attacks in their areas. Nelson T. Johnson wrote to Willys Peck in 1933 that the American Legation was recommending that missionaries in Tungchow close the American mission school there in the wake of Japanese military aggression there.⁵⁹² This practice often saved lives, as in the case of one F.S. Hatton, an American missionary stationed at a small village in Yunnanfu province in 1935, whom the US consulate in that province warned by special courier messenger of an advance by Chinese Communist troops.⁵⁹³

However, Americans often remained in areas under threat of attack by communist, bandit, and Japanese forces even when an evacuation had been recommended by the American

⁵⁸⁹ Raymond P. Ludden to Charles E. Gauss, Yunnanfu, China, March 9, 1943, July 9, 1942, Records of the Department of State, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁵⁹⁰ Clarence Spiker to Secretary of State, "Bombing, Standard Vacuum Oil Property, Sukiapa, Chunking, China," American Consulate General, Hankow, China, January 16, 1941, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, NARA, College Park, MD;

⁵⁹¹ Paul R. Josselyn to Nelson T. Johnson, American Consulate General, Hankow, China, April 17, 1935, Records of the Department of State, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁵⁹² Nelson T. Johnson to Willys R. Peck, May 15, 1933, Beijing, Confidential Correspondences, American Consulate General, Nanking, 1933, vol. II, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁵⁹³ Arthur Ringwalt to Nelson T. Johnson, American Consulate, Yunnanfu, China, June 17, 1935, Records of the Department of State, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, 800/Communism, NARA, College Park, MD.

consulate or Embassy, leading to accusations by other missionaries as well as consular officers that “the Americans are running undue risk.”⁵⁹⁴ In most cases, evacuation in the face of danger fell to missionaries themselves to arrange. Moreover, as their correspondence with American consular officers indicates, they were most often aware of the danger before American officials themselves were.⁵⁹⁵ For example, in June, 1935, all 18 of the American residents of Yoochow—all missionaries of the Reformed Church Mission—in Yunnanfu province evacuated to Hankow in advance of the Chinese Communist assault there on the advice of local Chinese friends and magistrates, and in coordination with the “well-to-do” Chinese of that city.⁵⁹⁶ It is worth noting that an American gunboat, the U.S.S. *Guam*, paid a visit to the Yangtze river near Yochow and Chenglingki where the Communist forces were concentrating, staying there at the behest (“earnestly begged,” according to the commanding officer of the *Guam*) of the local Chinese Nationalist garrison in order to deter attack and allow missionaries to evacuate if necessary.⁵⁹⁷

However, in 1935, even while some missionaries were evacuating areas threatened by Communist advances, other missionaries were entering for the first time. For example, whereas the China Inland Mission ordered its personnel to evacuate Chinghai (although not all of them obeyed), at the same time a group of Seventh Day Adventist missionaries traveled to the province to open a new mission despite the apparent danger.⁵⁹⁸ In this province alone, dozens of missionaries from four different American denominations were active, many with families,

⁵⁹⁴ Joseph Beech to Paul Josselyn, West China Union University, American Consulate General, Hankow, China, Records of the Department of State, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁶ Paul R. Josselyn to Nelson T. Johnson, American Consulate, Yunnanfu, China, May 21, 1935, Records of the Department of State, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, 800/Communism, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁸ Nelson T. Johnson to Secretary of State, “Confidential: Communist in West China,” Peiping (Beijing), China, July 10, 1935, Records of the Department of State, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, 800/Communism, NARA, College Park, MD.

stationed in remote areas.⁵⁹⁹ The Seventh Day Adventists in Lanchow exemplified missionaries' reluctance to abandon their posts even in the face of danger. Consul General Paul Josselyn warned them that "it will be difficult, if not impossible, for this office to render any effective assistance if the Red forces should actually threaten the city of Kaolan [nearby Lanchow]."⁶⁰⁰ Missionaries often stayed at their posts not out of recalcitrance or blind devotion to their duties, but rather because they often possessed more detailed, accurate, and up to date information concerning the situation in their districts. This is illustrated by the correspondence between the director of the China Inland Mission in Lanchow and Consul General Paul Josselyn, in which the former stressed that the mission was keeping a close eye on political and military developments and had evacuated the mission in the past without having been warned by the US consulate.⁶⁰¹ As mentioned above, American naval forces in China occasionally visited threatened areas if they were accessible by boat. Consular officers also tried to arrange protection by Chinese government police and military for American missionary personnel whenever they were threatened. However, missionaries were often zealous in their aims to penetrate new areas but lax in applying to Chinese authorities for the necessary residence permits and transit passes. As noted above, SIC-trained Samuel Sokobin observed that Chinese officials were particularly

⁵⁹⁹ Paul R Josselyn to US Legation in Peiping [Beijing], American Consulate General, Hankow, China, October 17, 1935, Records of the Department of State, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, 800/Communism, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁶⁰⁰ Paul R. Josselyn to Nelson T. Johnson, "Americans in Northwest China," American Consulate General, Hankow, China, October 24, 1935, Records of the Department of State, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, 800/Communism, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁶⁰¹ William N. Ruhl, China Inland Mission, to Paul R. Josselyn, US Consul General, Hankow, China, (no date, received by Josselyn on October 22, 1935), Records of the Department of State, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, 800/Communism, NARA, College Park, MD.

annoyed by requests for protection when the missionaries had arrived uninvited and without proper authorization and documentation.⁶⁰²

One such instance is highlighted in correspondence between US Ambassador to China Nelson T. Johnson and Wang Chao-ming, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs.⁶⁰³ Johnson had received news from the Seventh Day Adventist Mission in Tatsienlu, Sikong province, that the area was under threat of an imminent Communist attack, and wrote to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, requesting emergency protection for Americans residing or traveling there.⁶⁰⁴ The acting minister responded by duly asking provincial officials to provide protection, but protested to Johnson that “it is not right that the three Americans . . . arbitrarily went into the interior without having obtained interior traveling *huchaos* [passes].”⁶⁰⁵ Lack of local protection could be disastrous for missionaries. For example, Willys R. Peck wrote that refusal of Chinese authorities in Hunan to protect American missionaries led to the murder of one Dr. Reinhart in Yoochow, Hunan in the early 1933, leading to increased efforts by consuls to inform both local magistrates and the Foreign Ministry of the presence and activities of American missionaries, even if such exertions aroused the ire of Chinese officials.⁶⁰⁶

Chinese officials were also often annoyed by the attitudes of both missionaries and Foreign Service officers toward the Chinese government’s efforts to combat bandits and Communists: troops were often quartered on private property—including that of missionaries—

⁶⁰² Samuel Sokobin, “The Changing Attitude of The Chinese toward Foreigners,” American Consulate, Kalgan, China, March 31, 1923, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, RG 84, Records of the Department of State, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁶⁰³ Wang Chao-ming to Nelson T. Johnson, trans. Hsi and George Atcheson Jr., Peiping [Beijing], China, November 5, 1935, Records of the Department of State, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, 800/Communism, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁶ Willys R. Peck to Nelson T. Johnson, Peiping [Beijing], Nanking, China, May 10, 1933, Confidential Correspondences, American Consulate General, Nanking, 1933, vol. II, NARA, College Park, MD.

and payment rendered in nearly worthless (by local standards if not actually so legally) Chinese National Government banknotes.⁶⁰⁷ For example, in 1935, Nationalist troops occupied the compound of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Kansu. When consular officers objected—and they usually did so strenuously, albeit in culturally appropriate terms⁶⁰⁸—Chinese government officials promised to investigate but assured US representatives that troops had been prohibited from occupying missionary chapels themselves.⁶⁰⁹

As for missionaries entering China or new areas of China during this turbulent decade, religious zeal tended to override any doubts concerning security, even when warned personally and explicitly by American consular and military officers. Independent Pentacostal missionary George L. Ward offers an excellent example of this. Despite the civil war in western China, in 1935 Ward brought his wife of five months and two step children to China, intending to go to Kanting (also known as Tatsieulu). Neither Ward nor his wife and children could speak any of the regional Chinese languages; they had very little money, “no knowledge of China” and no organizational support.⁶¹⁰ Despite all this, on being warned by the commander of the USS Palos, Ward insisted that “the Lord had directed him to go to Tatsieulu and Batang, and if the Lord had considered it dangerous he would probably have warned him or maybe was trying his (Ward’s) faith.”⁶¹¹ To the captain’s admonition that travel through the mountains with winter would be

⁶⁰⁷ F.P. Lockhart to Secretary of State, “Confidential, Communist Situation in West China,” Peiping [Beijin], China, November 7, 1935, Records of the Department of State, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, 800/Communism, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁶⁰⁸ Willys R. Peck to Paul R. Josselyn, Nanking, China, 1935, and Willys R. Peck to Dr. S.S. Liu, Director of the Department of European and American Affairs

⁶⁰⁹ Paul R. Josselyn to Nelson T. Johnson, “Occupation of Premises of Christian and Missionary Alliance in Kansu,” American Consulate General, Hankow, China, November 23, 1935, Records of the Department of State, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, 800/Communism, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁶¹⁰ Charles Antrobus, Commander, U.S.S. Palos, to “Commander of Yangze Patrol”, attachment to Paul R. Josselyn to Nelson T. Johnson, “Americans in West China,” American Consulate General, Hankow, China, November 6, 1935, Records of the Department of State, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, 800/Communism, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁶¹¹ Ibid.

especially perilous for the small children, Ward replied that “the Lord tells us where we must preach and if we do not we must return to Montana and give up our church and our souls.”⁶¹²

Such zeal might have been admirable, but it complicated Foreign Service officers in their efforts to protect American citizens.

By the 1920s, American policy in China had become increasingly reactionary, responding to crises with limited resources other than diplomacy until the outbreak of WWII. Although “anti-foreignism” will not be dealt with in detail here, American Foreign Service officers in China were alive to the fact that missionaries were often a logistical and/or financial nuisance to the Chinese government, frequently traveling to the Chinese interior provinces without permission but requesting protection when threatened by bandits or Communists and strenuously objecting to occupation of their mission properties by government forces combating the former. However, the influence of missionaries on US Foreign Service officers was muted, and it is difficult to trace anything more than a highly circumscribed line between the perceptions they helped to translate for the US government and American public and actual policy implementation. What they did do, along with SIC-trained American Foreign Service officers in China and Japan, was to begin sounding the call for more direct, interventionist policies—as the above quote from Ernest Price suggests.

Nonetheless, arguments that missionaries exerted a direct influence on foreign policy are difficult to reconcile with the structure and function of the United States Foreign Service as it existed between 1900 and 1941 in China. As has been indicated, although there was a unique relationship between American missionaries in China and Foreign Service officers, this was due to more to the comparatively large number of missionaries in China relative to other countries, as

⁶¹² Ibid.

well as the fact that a significant number of SIC-trained officers (including comparatively influential first-generation SIC graduates, such as Willys R. Peck, Joseph Ballantine, and Eugene Dooman, as well as some of the more well-known “China Hands,” such as Ernest Price, John K. Davis, Eugene Dooman and John Hall Paxton) were likewise from missionary families. They putatively personify the “Missionary Mind,” as Reed calls it, and yet nearly all of them criticized Chiang Kai-shek’s regime, and several praised the Chinese Communists and advocated U.S. recognition of the PRC—these were among the chief reasons that several of them were fired or forced to resign in the 1940s, as has been extensively examined elsewhere.⁶¹³

Most of the younger officers (those who entered service in the late 1920s and early ‘30s) who were *not* disciplined had experienced the good fortune of being transferred out of China prior to the beginning of World War II. Ambassador Nelson T. Johnson was transferred (under protest) to Australia in 1941, just months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.⁶¹⁴ Born to missionary parents in Soochow, China, John K. Davis was also transferred out of China before the war, but for him it was out of the frying pan and into the fire: after several dangerous assignments in China, Davis found himself in Warsaw in 1939, shortly before the German-Soviet assault on Poland.⁶¹⁵

The views of officers such as Davis will be more thoroughly examined in another chapter. However, the interconnections between Foreign Service officers, the SIC, and American missionaries indicate that the actual relationship, although special, was far more multifaceted than has been hitherto acknowledged. There were many voices, many minds, many influences, but despite some common denominators, their priorities were generally distinct from one

⁶¹³ Ernest R. May, “The China Hands in Perspective: Ethics, Diplomacy, and Statecraft,” *The China Hands’ Legacy: Ethics and Diplomacy*, ed. Paul Gordon Lauren, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), 100.

⁶¹⁴ NTJ, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

⁶¹⁵ Davis, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

another. As has been stressed here and in previous chapters, during the early 20th century the State Department heavily stressed trade expansion; this emphasis drove an invisible yet tangible wedge between missionaries and SIC-trained officers—at times frustrating the latter who received scant recognition for missionary-protection work. As American policy in China tended increasingly toward crisis management, American missionaries were as much a headache for American officials as they were an intelligence asset. Moreover, their stubborn insistence on penetrating new areas of China was a constant nuisance to Chinese authorities.

Yet in one area there was increasing harmony: missionaries as well as consular officers increasingly agreed on the need for the United States to take more direct, interventionist action. As will be highlighted later, there were many opinions as to what course or courses of action should or should not be taken, and in the 1930s there was a proliferation of diplomatic projects and studies (as mentioned previously), but the subtle intimations were that the responses to Japanese aggression and Chinese Communism should be military or financial support to the Chinese government.

CHAPTER 8

**IMPERIALISM TRANSLATED: STUDENT INTERPRETERS AND AMERICAN
IMPERIAL MIMICRY IN ASIA, 1902-1941**

“We must push forward, and by every worthy means at our command seize the markets of the world.”⁶¹⁶ Regardless of whether they were realizable and/or actually realized, such were American attitudes toward economic expansion at the turn of the twentieth century. The intended field of conquest was the markets of Asia, in particular, the fabled China market. Yet as American commercial and political leaders guided national ambitions in this direction, they became acutely aware of the inadequacies of the United States’ consular service. There was a widespread conviction among commercial and political leaders that “in China national prestige” was just as at stake as was financial gain and that without vital reforms “the greatest market of the future [would be] supinely delivered to our trade rivals because of this and other blunders by our government.”⁶¹⁷ Seeking to expand and professionalize the United States’ diplomatic and consular corps, imperially minded reformers sought to portray the United States as an imperial rival, adopting imperialist rhetoric and stressing language training and consular professionalization as the twin secrets of overseas economic success. These State Department reformers used the language of an imperial project and aped the economic imperialism that they knew from experience (particularly with the British and French) in order to capitalize upon the exaggerated perceptions of the China market by American businessmen and accomplish their goal of bolstering and centralizing United States government power.

⁶¹⁶ Harry Garfield in Senate Report 499, May 25, 1906, submitted by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (57th Congress, Session 1), vol. 4259.

⁶¹⁷ House Report 4432, May 25, 1906 (59th Congress, Session 1), vol. 4908.

Although the economic benefits were never realized, they prompted the creation of the Student Interpreters Corps (SIC), cementing it as a defining feature of the U.S. Consular Service in China, Japan, and the Ottoman Empire during the first decade of the twentieth century. In this framework, the presumed secret to commercial success in China was a language trained, professional consular service, capable of actively promoting national business interests within their districts. The establishment of the SIC and the concurrent reorganization of the U.S. Consular service consciously emulated existing imperial models, particularly those of Britain and France with respect to pay, promotion, and responsibilities. Through these reforms, State Department officials sought to carve out space for an American economic empire in Asia. However, despite turn of the century expansionist rhetoric, language trained officers could not do the businessman's work for him. The dream of economic empire thus materialized little further than English-language product catalogues on the coffee tables of American consulates in China.

Scholars of British imperialism such as Andrew Thompson and Bernard Porter have debated the domestic effects of imperialism's waxing and waning on British society and politics.⁶¹⁸ Diplomatic language training and cultivation of foreign language-competent officials was part of British imperial expansion—although it was often a long process. According to G. R. Berridge, for a long period after the British embassy had been established in Istanbul, few British ambassadors learned Turkish.⁶¹⁹ After the British government assumed responsibility for paying the ambassadors' salaries, the Levant Company began agitating for reform of the *dragomanate*,

⁶¹⁸ Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Longman, 2005), 156; Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2.

⁶¹⁹ G. R. Berridge, "Dragomans and Oriental Secretaries in the British Embassy in Istanbul," *Ottoman Diplomacy: Conventional or Unconventional*, ed. A. Nuri Yurdusev (New York, NY: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2004), 151.

whose ranks had thitherto been filled by “Franks” of Italian extraction.⁶²⁰ The Company (as well as many in the British diplomatic service, not to mention merchants) felt that these non-British interlocutors were entirely too ready to yield ground on issues of trade privileges and concessions.⁶²¹

As discussed here and elsewhere, nationalist encouragement of trade provided one of the impulses for the United States’ implementation of language training programs, which tended to belatedly imitate its former mother country’s diplomatic and consular strategies—particularly those related to the coveted “China Market.” Scholars such as Charles Campbell Jr., Paul Varg and Thomas McCormick have written extensively on the importance of the China market in American business perceptions and its relative importance in American foreign policy—particularly the articulation of the “Open Door” policy.⁶²² Historian Michael Hunt has raised several questions relating to the historiography of the China Market, including the importance of foreign markets to American businessmen, the role of domestic overproduction, the extent of their reliance on government support, and the function of that support in their overseas successes.⁶²³ Although analyses such as those of Hunt have done much reveal the tenuous, ephemeral character of American enterprises in countries China, they underestimate the utility of exaggerated economic expectations to imperial projects.

By underscoring only the disappointing results of early twentieth century commercial expansion, Hunt and other “realists” underestimate the importance of expansionist rhetoric to

⁶²⁰ Ibid., 154.

⁶²¹ Ibid.

⁶²² See Charles Campbell Jr., “American Business Interests and the Open Door in China,” *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 1 (November 1941), 43-58; Paul Varg, “The Myth of the China Market, 1890-1914,” *The American Historical Review* 73, no. 3 (February 1968), 742-758; Thomas McCormick, *China Market: America’s Quest for Informal Empire, 1893-1901*; Michael Hunt, “Americans in the China Market, Economic Opportunities and Economic Nationalism, 1890s-1931,” *The Business History Review* 51 no. 3 (Autumn, 1977), 277-307.

⁶²³ Hunt, “Americans in the China Market,” 277-307.

official perceptions and institutional development, particularly that of the State Department.⁶²⁴ Conversely, by stressing anticipation of economic gain as the prime mover of turn of the century policy, McCormick and other “Wisconsin school” historians overlook the translation of these expectations into institutional change and neglect the frustration of these hopes as measured by tangible economic gains. An examination of the United States’ Student Interpreters Corps brings together these contrasting perspectives by highlighting the influence of exaggerated economic expectations on the reconstitution of the American consular service while noting the failure of these efforts in the actual bid for an economic empire.

In terms of raw economic power, the United States had surpassed many of its European competitors by the turn of the twentieth century.⁶²⁵ As the aforementioned scholars have noted, this rise in economic capability was accompanied by a concomitant surge in commercial ambitions. In this vein, postulations of American economic imperialism have concerned contemporary portrayals of the China market, the top-down process of policy-making, domestic politics, and the American economy. For example, in McCormick’s depiction, efforts to carve out a commercial empire in the mythical China market offered a way to avoid a domestic redistribution of wealth.⁶²⁶ In his understanding, the putatively lucrative China market offered a convenient “exporting the social question” of turn-of-the century income distribution and the notion of capitalist overproduction.⁶²⁷

⁶²⁴ See Thomas Watts Collier, MA Thesis, “The Chinese Language Officer Program of the U.S. Army, 1919-1943,” Thomas Watts Collier, Duke University, 1966. This training program mirrored the Student Interpreters Corps in many respects, and by the end of the 1930s was much larger than its civilian counterpart.

⁶²⁵ James T. Lorence, “Organized Business and the Myth of the China Market: The American Asiatic Association, 1898-1937,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 71, no. 4 (1981), 1-112.

⁶²⁶ Thomas J. McCormick, *China Market: America’s Quest for Informal Empire, 1893-1901* (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, 1990), 51-2.

⁶²⁷ McCormick, *China Market*, 9, 21-52.

Turn of the century expansionist zeal was also an expression of American nationalism. For example, Varg has observed that it “flattered the ego of Americans to think of their country as the supplier of the world’s market and coincided with their nationalist spirit.”⁶²⁸ This hubris was not without some foundation. Although the domestic market—followed by Europe—provided the greatest outlet for American finished goods, the U.S. share of global manufacturing increased from 23.3 percent in 1870 to 35.8 in 1913, and exports had increased so much that “Europeans began talking about an ‘American invasion.’”⁶²⁹ While pressing congressmen regarding consular overhaul, businessmen such as Theodore Search (president of the National Association of Manufacturers) stressed that these gains were “only the beginning of our conquest of the world’s markets, and the consular service of the United States is a most essential and vital factor in the growth of this business.”⁶³⁰

In terms of personnel and training, American consular service was in a disreputable condition from the 1890s until the turn of the twentieth century—particularly with a view towards trade promotion.⁶³¹ However, State Department officials were acutely aware of this and it was they who took the lead in pushing for reform of the Consular Service and the creation of the Student Interpreters Corps. The greatest obstacle at this time was Congress. Opposition revolved around the concern of many members that the proposed reforms would undercut the constitutional powers of the President.⁶³² Nevertheless, long-lasting institutional change required

⁶²⁸ Paul Varg, “The Myth of the China Market, 1890-1914,” *The American Historical Review* 73, no. 3 (February 1968), 742-758.

⁶²⁹ Stuart Weems Bruchey, *Enterprise: The Dynamic Economy of a Free People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 382.

⁶³⁰ Theodore Search, President of the National Association of Manufacturers to Representative Robert Hitt (IL), House Report 562, Part 2, May 21, 1900 (56th Congress, Session 1), 4023.

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*

⁶³² Richard Hume Werking, *The Master Architects: Building the United States Foreign Service, 1890-1913* (Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky Press, 1977), 60.

positive Congressional; reformers knew that in order to effect they had to succeed in “convincing others that a reorganized foreign service had important benefits.”⁶³³

To accomplish this, Secretary of State Elihu Root dispatched Consular Bureau chief Wilbur Carr to the House Foreign Affairs Committee to drum up support for congressional action on consular reorganization in 1906.⁶³⁴ He and like-minded allies on the Committee in turn reached out to American commercial associations such as the National Board of Trade, urging that they send delegations to Congress in order to win votes for the reform bill.⁶³⁵ Root and Carr articulated a vision of American prosperity that reverberated with otherwise ambivalent businessmen, which enabled them to carry through specific reforms.⁶³⁶

Economic expansionist rhetoric was the covering rationale in the campaign of stimulating ambivalent American businessmen to support controversial reorganization of the United States consular service—as the provocative nature of proposed reforms had stymied efforts to do so for several years at the end of the nineteenth century. Although they sincerely believed that consular professionalization could improve aggregate U.S. foreign trade, such was neither the immediate nor primary goal of reformers such as Theodore Roosevelt, Elihu Root, and Wilbur Carr. Rather, they envisioned American military and diplomatic organizations that would enable the United States to stand shoulder to shoulder with the imperial powers that existed at the turn of the 20th century.

To this end they seized upon the exaggerated perceptions of the potential value of the China market. By emphasizing consular language training and professionalization as the keys to the United States’ future economic success, these reformers played to the tunes of early twentieth

⁶³³ Ibid., 233.

⁶³⁴ Werking, *Master Architects*, 97.

⁶³⁵ Ibid.

⁶³⁶ Ibid., 235.

century American nationalism and achieved most of their desired results. With regard to commercial expansion and consular reorganization, their goals were primarily an increasingly professionalized and language-trained Foreign Service, actively engaged in expanding the United States economic power. The creation of a language-training program was the *sine qua non* of efforts to facilitate economic expansion in Asia. Language training was the most obvious component of professionalization. When compared to the consular services of other countries (most often Britain and France), it was among the most glaring deficiency, aside from the abysmal consular furnishings, dilapidated offices, and low numbers of officers.⁶³⁷

The desire for a renovated, language-trained consular service percolated upward from overseas officers, including Edwin Conger, the U.S. Minister to China. One of the most important components of reform—far as increasing trade in the Far East was concerned—was the matter of language training. Like other American officers in China, Conger was impressed by the size and efficacy of the Great Powers' language training programs, and urged that Congress create a similar program.⁶³⁸ Business organizations also emphasized the model of the French and British while arguing for a restructuring of the Consular Service. For example, John Ela of the National Business League of Chicago stressed that there was no comparison between the United States' system and that of Britain, with regard to the collection of reliable commercial data as well as language training.⁶³⁹

Reform advocates also stressed national security and appealed to patriotism.

Congressmen such as Robert Adams Jr. noted that a lack of language-trained consular officers

⁶³⁷ Ibid, 749.

⁶³⁸ Edwin H. Conger to John Hay, Peking [Beijing] China, March 29, 1902. United States Department of State, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, with the annual message of the president transmitted to Congress December 2, 1902* (Washington D. C., GPO, 1902), 227-232, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS>. FRUS1902 (accessed August 10, 2012).

⁶³⁹ John W. Ela, May 3, 1900. Senate report 1202 (56th Congress, Session I), 3894; Ela, House Report 3305, January 21, 1903, (57th Congress, Session II), 4414.

seriously hampered American intelligence-gathering efforts during the Spanish-American War.⁶⁴⁰ In a similar vein, Edwin Conger, the American Minister to China, pointed to the language-training programs of all the other “Great Powers” in China in 1902, noting that this put the United States at a serious practical disadvantage in relations with the Chinese Government, particularly *vis-a-vis* Britain and France.⁶⁴¹

However, it was loyalty in the campaign for overseas markets that stirred the greatest animus against foreigners in the Consular Service. For example, during committee hearings on consular reform, Robert Adams Jr. asserted that non-Americans

“have little idea of our policies and usually no sympathy with them . . . Above all they are, as a rule, of no value to in our efforts to build up our export trade, because their sympathies and the interests of their local associates are generally opposed to the success of those efforts.”⁶⁴²

According to Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (on the influential Senate Committee on Foreign Relations),

“to compete successfully with the agents of foreign powers, and to conduct advantageously the political and commercial affairs of our own country, the appointee to this service should be familiar not only with the laws, customs,

⁶⁴⁰ Congressman Robert Adams Jr. (PA), House Report 1460, May 27, 1898 (55th Congress, Session 2), vol. 3722.

⁶⁴¹ Edwin H. Conger to John Hay, Peking [Beijing] China, March 29, 1902. United States Department of State, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, with the annual message of the president transmitted to Congress December 2, 1902* [FRUS], (Washington D. C., GPO, 1902), 228-229.

⁶⁴² Congressman Adams (PA), House Report 2281, March 14, 1906 (59th Congress, Session 1), vol. 4906.

industries, manufactures, and natural products of our own land, but they should be instructed in the laws, pursuits, language, the contributions to commerce, and the character of the people to whom they are accredited.”⁶⁴³

Even the Chinese Minister to the United States was quoted in mobilizing Congressional support for establishing a language-training program:

“most European governments send young men to the East to learn the language and study the customs of the country. After a residence of two or three years, after they have proved themselves proficient, they are then placed in responsible positions as student interpreters, consular assistants, etc. . . . it might not be unwise for your Government to adopt a similar system.”

Formal language education had become an integral component of Western imperial diplomacy in the mid-nineteenth century. Seeking to attract more capable consular officers, the British Foreign office under Sir Phillip Currie adopted a competitive examination system in 1877 and instituted a two year training program for “student interpreters” in Turkish, Arabic, Persian, and Russian, modeled on a similar program for British consular officers in China, Japan, and Siam.⁶⁴⁴

⁶⁴³ Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Senate Report 499, Senate Report 499 (57-1) 4259. February 19, 1902 (57th Congress, Session 1) 4259.

⁶⁴⁴ Peter Byrd, “Regional and Functional Specialisation in the British Consular Service,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 7, no. ½ (Jan.-Apr., 1972), 127-145; for the various branches of the British consular service in the nineteenth century, see D. C. M. Pratt, “The Role of the British Consular Service in Overseas Trade, 1825-1914,” *The Economic History Review* 15, no. 3 (1963), 494-512.

Russia likewise had at least a rudimentary system in place by the mid-nineteenth century, with foreign language-language instruction offered at the General Staff Academy, including Arabic, Persian, Tatar, and others.⁶⁴⁵ Similarly, by the turn of the century, German merchants as well as consuls had earned a reputation for making a diligent effort to learn foreign languages, which translated into much more successful and efficient trade with the Chinese until WWI.⁶⁴⁶ By 1894, even Japan had established a scholarship-based language-training program as part of its consular service, which eventually included training in Russian, German, Arabic, and Chinese for aspiring consular and diplomatic officials.⁶⁴⁷

When Congress finally acquiesced in creating a student interpreters training program in 1902, Conger forward a copy of the British regulations,⁶⁴⁸ and these were incorporated wholesale—right down to the amount of their salaries—into the State Department guidelines.⁶⁴⁹ Although created as a single entity by law, the Student Interpreters Corps was actually three distinct, semi-autonomous training programs. These were established in 1902, 1906, and 1909 in China, Japan, and the Ottoman Empire respectively.⁶⁵⁰ The size, composition, and administration of which were contingent upon the host nation societies, in addition to the particular American legations. By the beginning of World War II, over 100 officers in China, Japan, and the Ottoman

⁶⁴⁵ David Rich, “Imperialism, Reform, and Strategy: “Russian Military Statistics, 1840-1880,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 74, no. 4 (October, 1996), 621-639.

⁶⁴⁶ Editorial, “The German Consular System,” *Science* 11, no. 268 (February 16, 1900), 274; ormer Ambassador Nelson T. Johnson observed that the Germans “cultivated the Chinese as no American or Britisher ever did. They entertained them. They attended their entertainments. They went out of their way to learn Chinese, so that at a Chinese dinner party, the Germans could talk Chinese at the table.” *The Reminiscences of Nelson Trusler Johnson* (New York, NY: the Oral History Research Project, Columbia University, 1957), 495-497.

⁶⁴⁷ Barbara Brooks, *Japan's Imperial Diplomacy: Consuls, Treaty Ports, and War in China, 1895-1938* (Honolulu, HI, Hawaii University Press, 2000), 55.

⁶⁴⁸ Edwin H. Conger to John Hay, Peking [Beijing] China, March 29, 1902. United States Department of State, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, with the annual message of the president transmitted to Congress December 2, 1902* (Washington D. C., GPO, 1902), 227-232, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1902> (accessed August 10, 2012).

⁶⁴⁹ The State Department, *Register of the Department of State* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1908), 90.

⁶⁵⁰ Werking, *The Master Architects*, 1-19, 113-116.

Empire had graduated from these programs, with the vast majority serving as American consular officers in China.⁶⁵¹

State Department inspectors sought to inculcate avid concern for American commercial expansion in junior consuls stationed in Asia. These officers in turn provided frequent recommendations to American companies and business looking to do business in China. However, the overriding theme of their suggestions was that if Americans wanted to do business in China, they had to learn Chinese, work alongside the Chinese and learn Chinese business practices. Companies that followed this model (such as Standard Oil and Singer Sewing) experienced a fair amount of success; most others did not. Early consular service inspectors sought to instill a sense of ownership of and responsibility for American trade. Alfred Gottschalk emphasized to officers in his “Near East” inspection district that their job was to

“equalize the figures of the balance of trade year by year—if possible to make the imports [to the country in question] exceed the exports. Or, at least, to show American merchants how they should proceed in order to accomplish this; and if they should fail to heed your advice, to report the fact to the Department, in a Consular Report pointing out one of the weaknesses of our trade system.”⁶⁵²

Language-trained U.S. consular officers were to lead American businessmen to trade opportunities; they could not, of course, compel merchants to take advantage of them. Inspectors

⁶⁵¹ An exact number is difficult to pinpoint. This is a composite figure based on names listed in the annual volumes of the *Biographic Register* of the State Department, official personnel files at the Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, MO, and personal correspondence.

⁶⁵² Alfred Gottschalk, “Hints to Consuls on American Trade Extension” [undated], *Letters Sent by Inspector Fleming D. Cheschire, April 30, 1907-October 10, 1910* (Entry 873) and *Correspondence of Inspector Alfred L.M. Gottschalk, January 1, 1912-March 25, 1914* (Entry 874), Box 1, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park MD.

gave arcane yet specific examples to drive home what they expected of junior officers. On one inspection tour, Alfred Gottschalk interrogated officers, asking that if a non-American merchant was “getting 40% of the outside trade of your district and furnishes it with very inferior hams, is it not your duty to advise our Chicago packers through [sic] the Consular Reports that here is an opening for them?”⁶⁵³ Consular officers brought home the bacon for American companies less ways as well. For example, former Ambassador Nelson T. Johnson recalled chasing down delinquent payments for the Singer Sewing Company throughout China during his days as a junior consular officer.⁶⁵⁴

Senior State Department officials took seriously the commercial expansionist rhetoric that circulated during the early efforts at consular reform. They sought to translate the exaggerated perceptions of value in China market (and other Asian countries) into actual economic gains and saw their protégés in the consular service as the linchpins of the United States’ future success. However, the results could hardly have differed more from early expectations.

Although they were careful to couch their criticisms in terms of trade *promotion*, language-trained consuls sought to dispel the notion that American goods would conquer China’s markets without a fight—an assumption demonstrated by the cascade of English-language catalogues sent by U.S.-based companies. U.S. consuls in cities throughout China were annually inundated with catalogues and pamphlets advertising all manner of American products but while they maintained these documents in their consulates’ reading rooms, they pointed out that English-language advertising offered no benefit to the majority of Chinese merchants who could not

⁶⁵³ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁴ Nelson T. Johnson, *The Reminiscences of Nelson T. Johnson* (New York, NY: Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, 1957), 191.

speak or read English; to be effective, American companies needed to physically market their products.⁶⁵⁵

Aside from providing such gentle reminders, language-trained consular officers were also considered a vital asset because of the “personal capital” necessary to acquiring market intelligence. Even disgruntled officers such as Ernest Price (considered by superiors to be out of tune with the concerns of American businessmen) understood that personal involvement was necessary if American trade with China was to expand, and tried to give specific suggestions on how to achieve this. For example, if a single firm was too small or could not afford representation on its own, Price suggested that an association of companies appoint a marketing and distributing agent in Shanghai to reach smaller centres such as Foochow.⁶⁵⁶

While working as a consular service inspector, ambassador-to-be Nelson T. Johnson expected that China officers exhibit a dedication that bordered on fanaticism. According to Johnson,

“most of this information should be part of the personal capital that any efficient officer brings to the partnership into which he has been taken by the Government . . . it should be his one aim in life to be the best informed man in his district on questions of this kind and to that end he will give all of his waking time to the acquiring of the information.”⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵⁵ Albert W. Pontius to the Kern Commercial Company, New York, NY, May 11th, 1920, in Charles C. Eberhardt. “Sixth Inspection of Consular Office at Mukden, China,” *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

⁶⁵⁶ “Need Chinese Representative,” *New York Times*, August 29, 1920.

⁶⁵⁷ Nelson T. Johnson to Carl D. Meinhardt, June 12, 1923, Changsha, China. Enclosure to “Inspection of American Consulate at Changsha, China,” May 30-June 5, 1923. *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

The State Department expected language-trained consular officers to all pay grades to socialize with local businessmen. Although not explicitly part of their job descriptions, it was considered more important than their routine duties and language competency. At the student level, some interaction did occur. In the early twentieth century, the British-American Tobacco Company and Standard Oil established Mandarin language-training programs in China, designed to create a layer of middle management, probably to provide command and control for its native marketing staff.⁶⁵⁸ According to consular service inspector Stuart J. Fuller, these employees conversed with the U.S. student interpreters in Shanghai, China, and former Ambassador Nelson T. Johnson recalled that he saw them often and spoke highly of their abilities in Mandarin.⁶⁵⁹ Business historian Sherman Cochran has observed that this language course, sophisticated as it was for its time, “was far too superficial to produce American China specialists capable of replacing Chinese compradores and sales agents,” especially in comparison with their studious and persevering Japanese counterparts.⁶⁶⁰ These employees have likely been as overlooked as the U.S. government’s Student Interpreters themselves, at least in terms of their administrative and strategic role in Standard Oil’s operations in China.

However, from the standpoint of relationships between U.S. consular officers and the vast majority of American businessmen in China, such connections were negligible. Low- to mid-ranking American consular officers were too poorly paid to mingle with their commercially oriented compatriots—a fact which caused their superiors considerable frustration. For example, despite being “far and away the best” interpreter “in the entire China service,” inspector Stuart J.

⁶⁵⁸ Sherman Cochran, *Encountering Chinese Networks: Western, Japanese, and Chinese Corporations in China, 1880-1937* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 33-35.

⁶⁵⁹ Stuart J. Fuller, “Inspection Report of Student Interpreter Samuel Sokobin,” September 30, 1916, *Inspection Reports on Student Interpreters*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park MD; Nelson T. Johnson, *The Reminiscences of Nelson T. Johnson* (New York, NY: Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, 1957), 496-497.

⁶⁶⁰ Cochran, *Encountering Chinese Networks*, 33-35, 85.

Fuller blasted Ernest Batson Price for being married, as it was a drain on his finances, preventing him from mingling socially with American and foreign businessmen in Tientsin, China.⁶⁶¹ On the other hand, Inspector Charles C. Eberhardt praised George C. Hanson, an unmarried colleague of Price as “a genial man and a good ‘mixer’ and it is believed that he is better than the average in his qualifications for successfully intervening with local authorities when the occasion calls for such action.”⁶⁶² Consular officers had to walk a fine line when it came to personal conduct. Every area of their private lives was subject to scrutiny, and either dissolute or abstemious behavior could be seen as a detriment to their efficiency as Foreign Service Officers. Inspector Charles Eberhardt stressed this while commenting on local missionaries’ presumed disapproval of Consul George Hanson’s occasion indulgence in cards, spirits, and dancing while stationed at Foochow in 1921.⁶⁶³

Character was a prime asset in the diplomacy of American commercial expansion, for both consuls and businessmen, and with good reason. As Inspector Fleming D. Cheshire observed, merely offering lower prices was insufficient in acquiring foreign business in Manchuria. Personal relationships were paramount. He noted, “one British travelling-man has, during a short stay of a few weeks, secured contracts amounting to £8,000, while American bidders, although lower, secured nothing.”⁶⁶⁴ In this instance, “there was hardly the pretense that superior goods or lowest bidders carried the day;” the contracts for South Manchurian Railway

⁶⁶¹ Stuart J. Fuller, “Inspection Report on Student Interpreter Ernest Batson Price,” July 3, 1917. *Inspection Reports on Student Interpreters*. General Records of the Department of State RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁶⁶² Charles C. Eberhardt, “Sixth Inspection of Consular Office at Foochow, China, March 2-6, 1921,” *Inspection Reports of Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁶⁶³ Charles C. Eberhardt, “Sixth Inspection of Consular Office at Foochow, China, March 2-6, 1921,” *Inspection Reports of Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁶⁶⁴ Fleming D. Cheshire, “Third Inspection of Consular Post at Dalny [Dairen], Manchuria,” July 27, 1911, *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

rolling stock went to a Manchester-based British company that had gone to considerable effort and expense to entertain the Japanese chief engineer.⁶⁶⁵ “Would it not be interesting to find out what reception Mr. Yoshino was given by, say, the American Locomotive Company?” Inspector Cheshire pointedly asked, “such an investigation might show a curious state of affairs—an interesting lesson in the diplomacy of international trade.”⁶⁶⁶

Attempting to ensure that its overseas representation met the demands of American economic ambitions, inspection reports routinely compared American consulates, their staffs, salaries, and funding with those of other foreign consulates in the same location. Although the salaries of American officers in China were markedly lower than those of their foreign colleagues, and their living allowances, consular premises and working budgets were as well. In 1913 for example, Inspector George L. Murphy criticized the shabby appearance of the U.S. Consulate in Dairen, Manchuria, noting that the British were going to considerable expense to erect a new building for themselves and pointedly noting that the both the British and Russian Consulates received annual expenditure allowances beyond those of rent, native interpreter salaries, telegrams, and courier expenses.⁶⁶⁷ The subsequent inspector went to additional effort to compare local consular salaries, noting that the United States paid its officer about four-fifths the salary of their British and Russian colleagues, required them to pay a significant portion of the rent, and required accounting for contingent expenses, whereas the British and Russians did not.⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁷ George L. Murphy, “Fourth Inspection of Consular Post at Dalny [Dairen], Manchuria,” August 2-4 1913, *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid.

In the same report, Inspector Stuart J. Fuller included a chart of estimated living expenses based on figures given by local businessmen, including room and board, utilities, clothing, and other routine expenses for “a gentleman of standing in the community who lives well but not extravagantly.”⁶⁶⁹ The estimate for a single man significantly exceeded the salary of the consul (Adolph Williams), whereas most officers (including Williams) at the rank of consul or higher were married with children.⁶⁷⁰ In a similar vein, State Departmental politics complicated challenges to the orthodoxy of a lucrative—yet unrealized—China market. Wilbur Carr stymied the transmission of less than flattering reports on the Chinese practice of “squeeze,”—despite conscientious efforts by commercial attaché Julean Arnold to highlights it’s pervasive, semi-institutionalized role in Chinese economic life.⁶⁷¹

“Themselves entirely ignorant of conditions, they come to some arrangement with a firm established in Far Eastern Asia, who may or may not know anything of the product, commence before they are ready, and find out only too late that they have commenced a comedy of errors.”⁶⁷²

The editorial made it plain that the China market was little more than a Shanghai cowboy’s version of El Dorado:

⁶⁶⁹ Stuart Jamieson Fuller, “Fifth Inspection of Consular Office at Dairen, Manchuria,” September 28-October 1, 1917, *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁷¹ Julean H. Arnold to Secretary of State, “A Report Entitled, ‘Chinese Customs; Squeeze,’ for Transmission to Addressee,” Chefoo, China, June 28, 1913, 893.50, RG 84, microfilm, M329 reel 133, NARA; Wilbur J. Carr (State Department, Washington D.C.) to Samuel S. Knabensue (Consul-General, Tientsin), October 2, 1913, 893.50/2, RG 84, microfilm, M329 reel 133.

⁶⁷² “United States Regard for China,” *Finance and Commerce*, Shanghai, China, July 19, 1922, enclosure to Edwin F. Cunningham (U.S. Consul-General, Shanghai, China) to Secretary of State, no. 975, 711.93/66, Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84, NARA, College Park MD.

“Today we see individuals and firms coming out here in considerable number, devoid in the majority of cases of the most rudimentary knowledge of trading demands, conditions and practices of Far Eastern Asia, merely ‘looking over the ground’ to see whether it would pay them to start.”⁶⁷³

Instead of hasty ventures, *Commerce and Finance* called for American businessmen and companies interested in China to invest in personnel to study Chinese culture and society as well as economic conditions. It closed with the admonition, “let wealth beget knowledge, so that in the later years, when it may be necessary, you will be in the position of using knowledge to beget wealth.”⁶⁷⁴ While stressing the accuracy of these observations, Consul-General Edwin Cunningham warned against any official endorsement of them by the State Department, arguing that to do so would irreparably harm future American commercial ventures, both in Shanghai and throughout China.⁶⁷⁵

Although a vital consideration from a business standpoint, even the slightest reference to China’s political instability could arouse controversy. According to Clarence H. Matson of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce,

“after talking to various businessmen in China, my personal reaction was that the less we had to do with Chinese trade the better, and if I had been compelled to write a strictly honest report at the time, that is what I would have said. However, this did not coincide

⁶⁷³ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid.

with my preconceived ideas and I held off from writing any report until I could get what I hoped was a better perspective.”⁶⁷⁶

Noting the recent kidnapping of Chiang Kai-shek, Matson noted, “you can’t tell the average American businessman that China has a stable, unified government when such a thing can happen, nor does the American understand why Chiang was pardoned—instead of being shot.”⁶⁷⁷ In view of the political instability, Matson thanked Arnold for criticizing his previous optimism, observing, “I have some backing in case any of our Los Angeles businessmen lose money in China and blame me for not telling them to keep out.”⁶⁷⁸ Not surprisingly (given his frank admission that the purpose of his office was to “encourage larger business between Southern California and this country [China]”), Arnold took issue with Matson’s assertions, complaining to Matson’s colleague, Arthur G. Arnoll, that Matson had fundamentally mischaracterized his depiction of Sino-American trade opportunities.⁶⁷⁹ In his response, Arnoll dismissed Matson’s pessimism, calling him “a newspaperman” and assuring Arnold that “fundamentally he feels as you do, that there are immense possibilities ahead of us in China and that everything should be done and nothing left undone . . . to the increase and betterment of our trade.”⁶⁸⁰

Arnold’s enthusiasm for American trade expansion in China is fairly representative of the view of most consular officers during this period. Yet he and his colleagues strove to provide an accurate picture of what American businessmen needed to accomplish in order to succeed. In instances when officers such as Arnold appeared overly optimistic about American trade

⁶⁷⁶ Clarence H. Matson to Julean Arnold, March 31, 1937, Shanghai, China, Julean Arnold Papers, box 1, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁹ Julean Arnold to Arthur G. Arnoll, Secretary-General and General Manger, Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, April 23, 1937, Shanghai, China, Julean Arnold Papers, box 1, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

⁶⁸⁰ Arthur G. Arnoll to Julean Arnold, May 19, 1937, Los Angeles, CA, Arnold Papers, box 1, Hoover Institution.

prospects in China, their sanguine observations were often mischaracterized. A 1920 article in the Wall Street Times exemplifies this. The article cited his predictions that in coming years China would demand more heavy machinery, vehicles, and a wide range of hardware—all of which, in his vision, the United States would supply.⁶⁸¹ Although the sensational headline (for the business audience) drew attention to Arnold’s predictions for future Chinese consumption, and the article made only a passing reference to a recurring admonition of SIC-trained consular officers, namely that Americans needed to study Chinese language and history.⁶⁸² In the American business imagination, the hoped-for ‘China Market’ was little more than a mirage; companies looking for quick and easy profits without investing time, energy, and intellectual rigor, quickly began to look elsewhere.

The need for personal involvement and direct investment were primary reasons for this, as was the high cost of American products. For example, in 1921, Consul George Hanson urged that American companies establish branch offices in Foochow and market their products directly.⁶⁸³ He stressed,

“the high cost of American goods is what obstructs the trade in American goods. If American business houses sincerely desire to enter permanently in the local trade, they must be satisfied with little or no profit during the period they are introducing their goods to the Chinese. Prices ordinarily quoted for American goods appear to the Chinese dealer so prohibitive that he is loath to place an initial order with the result that he has no chance

⁶⁸¹ *Wall Street Journal*, “China Will Want Tons of Machinery,” pg.5, May 15, 1920.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*

⁶⁸³ George C. Hanson in Charles C. Eberhardt, “Sixth Inspection of Consular Office at Foochow, China, March 2-6, 1921,” *Inspection Reports of Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park, MD.

to try out the goods. Competition with other foreign firms should be met and the confidence of the Chinese secured first; profits would then follow as a matter of course. It is believed that lower prices and longer credits would help the sale of American goods.”⁶⁸⁴

In the absence of accommodation on the part of American business, the ability of language-trained consuls to facilitate trade expansion was miniscule. This Mandarin expert went out of his way to offer to translate American price lists for companies seeking to answer an inquiry for a few dozen bicycles and spare parts by a Chinese company.⁶⁸⁵

American consular officials were usually unsuccessful in seeking compensation for allegedly illegal taxes in China as well. A dispute involving the Standard Oil Company is a representative example. In July, 1922, a sub-agent of Standard Oil in Takushan, China was compelled to pay a 10% “Famine Tax” on several hundred cases of oil, in addition to the regular customs duties.⁶⁸⁶ The legal status of the tax was unclear; according to American Minister Jacob Gould Shuurman, the famine surtaxes involving the use of stamps were in contravention of the commercial treaties with China, but refused to protest other taxes, such as *likin* or trans-shipment taxes, provided they did not discriminate against American companies.⁶⁸⁷

With this guidance, Standard Oil maintained that the tax was illegal, and paid under protest. The official Chinese response was initially seemed to confirm this. Chinese officials first

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid., under “trade extension.”

⁶⁸⁵ William R. Langdon, “Trade Opportunity, No. 1” Antung, China, July 15, 1922, *Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, Antung, China, 1922*. 610, RG 84, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁶⁸⁶ H. Barton (Standard Oil Company) to William R. Langdon (U.S. Consul), Antung, China, July 28, 1922, *Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, Antung, China, 1922*. 370, RG 84, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁶⁸⁷ Jacob Gould Schurman, circular to U.S. Consular officers in China, Peking, China, July 25, 1922, *Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, Antung, China, 1922*. 370, RG 84, NARA, College Park, MD.

claimed that there were no records of the tax having been collected,⁶⁸⁸ but when Standard Oil produced tax receipts, the customs official claimed that Standard Oil's agent did not possess the required transit pass.⁶⁸⁹ Eventually the matter of the famine tax was referred to for negotiations between the Chinese Government and the Diplomatic Body at Peking (a collective reference to the foreign treaty powers).⁶⁹⁰

Combined with China's underdeveloped transportation infrastructure, political instability, and the general poverty of the population, the prospect of irregular taxation raising prices unpredictably made direct investment a dubious prospect for businessmen. Yet these realities failed to dampen the enthusiasm (real or contrived) of SIC-trained consular officers for whom demonstrated trade promotion constituted a vital consideration in their opportunities for promotion and pay increases. The allure of the China market, however illusory, percolated all the way to lowest ranks of the U.S. consular service. For example, SIC novice Samuel Sokobin was convinced that low-priced American goods such as cigarettes, soap, matches, etc., would bring enormous profits if only companies would invest personnel in marketing them, noting the Japanese success in doing so.⁶⁹¹ Their recalcitrance in doing so highlights the illusory, ephemeral influence of the China market on American efforts to carve out an economic empire in Asia. Anticipation of commercial expansion in China was enough to bring about sweeping changes in

⁶⁸⁸ Wang Shun Tsun (Taoyin) to William R. Langdon (in translation), August 12, 1922, Antung, China, *Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, Antung, China, 1922*, 370, RG 84, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁶⁸⁹ William R. Langdon to Standard Oil Company (Mukden), September 18, 1922, Antung, China, *Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, Antung, China, 1922*, 370, RG 84, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁶⁹⁰ William R. Langdon to Standard Oil Company (Mukden), October 24, 1922, Antung, China, *Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, Antung, China, 1922*, 370, RG 84, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁶⁹¹ Samuel Sokobin, answer to question 79, "what openings do you consider that there are in China, particularly in the consular district where you are now stationed, for American trade?" in Stuart J. Fuller, "Inspection Report of Student Interpreter Samuel Sokobin," September 30, 1916, *Inspection Reports on Student Interpreters*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA, College Park MD.

the U.S. consular service—even to the point of creating a new cadre of area specialists—but official euphoria failed to stimulate private investment.

The gulf between espoused economic expansionism and the actual market activity resulted from a mix of apathy and cultural prejudice. James Linn Rodgers, consul at Shanghai in 1907, placed the burden of responsibility for sluggish trade extension on the apathy of American businessmen, while calling for a more robust government role in promoting business expansion in China.⁶⁹² Similarly, in a 1916 *New York Times* article, SIC-trained Commercial Attaché Julean Arnold bemoaned that in China, “the door is open but we don’t go in, although China is begging for our activities.”⁶⁹³ Recalling his experiences as a junior consular officer, former Ambassador Nelson Johnson noted, “it was considered by the British and American merchants to be a little *infra dig* to learn Chinese . . . the only American company that really went out to have its young people learn the Chinese language was the Standard Oil Company.”⁶⁹⁴ Willys R. Peck, Johnson’s longtime friend and close advisor of many years also recalled that American and Britain merchants in China viewed the Chinese with general disdain.⁶⁹⁵

Such preconceptions prevented American businesses from tapping into Chinese commercial networks, a vital element of success to any marketing endeavor. SIC-trained consuls were alive to this reality but labored, largely in vain, to make their commercially-oriented compatriots aware of this. For example, while recommending that American companies employ Chinese compradores, managers and assistants, Consul George Hanson stressed, “Chinese

⁶⁹² James Linn Rodges in Fleming D. Cheshire, “Inspection of the American Consular Office at Shanghai,” January 20, 1907, *Inspection Reports of Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the State Department, RG 59, NARA.

⁶⁹³ *New York Times*, “Predicts Big Future for Chinese Empire: Julean Arnold, U.S. Commercial Attache, November 16, 1916, page 19.

⁶⁹⁴ Nelson T. Johnson, *The Reminiscences of Nelson T. Johnson* (New York, NY: Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, 1957), 496-497.

⁶⁹⁵ Willys R. Peck, *Memoirs*, p. 20, Willys R. Peck Papers, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

business is conducted along different lines than American business and the time when the American business man in China can dispense with the services of able Chinese assistants has not yet come.”⁶⁹⁶ He further emphasized, “it has been the experience of some companies [primarily Standard Oil] that Chinese labor under foreign supervision is as good as American labor under certain lines.”⁶⁹⁷

Differing attitudes toward risk compounded the detrimental effects of prejudice and complicated marketing, buying and selling. Believing the virtue of their products, American manufactures expected Chinese merchants to assume all the risk (by not extending credit or credit with onerous terms), which fostered resentment among Chinese buyers. Consul General Carleton Baker observed, “many importers in China complain that American manufacturers expect them to assume the entire risk and to bear the full expense in connection with the sale of new products and they feel the burden should be more equally divided between those who hope to reap the ultimate profits.”⁶⁹⁸

Other tangible obstacles also rendered meaningful penetration of the China market far more difficult than blithe and pithy statements suggested. Paul Varg’s work has underscored such challenges as the restriction of trade to the treaty ports, the lack of a reliable transportation system, the price and variety of finished manufactures, and the habits of Chinese consumers.⁶⁹⁹ Similarly, Michael Hunt has examined the meager gains of American exporters in China in detail, in particular considering how important U.S. government support was to the efforts of Standard Oil and the British-American Tobacco company to expand their business while

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁸ Consul General E. Carleton Baker, “General Economic Survey and 1918 Report of the Mukden Consular District,” (sent to Department of State) October 17, 1919, 893.50/17, microfilm, M329 reel 133, RG 84, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁶⁹⁹ Varg, “The Myth of the China Market,” 743-744.

stressing the overall lackluster character of U.S. trade expansion in China from the turn of the century to the outbreak of WWII.⁷⁰⁰

For mid-sized enterprises, China's unstable political situation and uneven pattern of taxation was a serious obstacle. Citing the prevalence of "illegal" taxation (particularly *likin*, the provincial custom of assessing fees on previously taxed goods in transit), John K. Davis commented, "when China's diplomats enter the conference room and say to the diplomats of other countries, 'if you do this, China will promise to do that,' how can the diplomats of other such countries avoid the conclusion that no dependence can be placed on such promises?"⁷⁰¹ The problems of political instability, irregular taxation, and cultural prejudice were all chronic hindrances to American commercial expansion in China. However, Japanese encroachment in China gradually eclipsed all of these, beginning immediately after Japan's seizure of the German concession in the Tsingtao region.

Exhorted to be mindful of business conditions during their training as student interpreters, United States consular officers were sensitive to both the actual and potential effects of Japanese expansion on American commercial opportunities in China. For example, after the Japanese assumption of German privileges in Tsingtao, Willys R. Peck noted that the proposed Japanese concession would include the extensive facilities of the Standard Oil Company.⁷⁰² He also stressed that "jealous Japanese espionage" in the area made it impossible for Chinese merchants "to engage freely in those business relations with American merchants, which it has

⁷⁰⁰ Hunt, "Americans in the China Market, 300-301,

⁷⁰¹ Walter A. Adams and R. L. Smyth (Chungking Consulate) to Department of State, "Wholesale Flagrant Violation of Treaties in Szechuan, 793.00/119, Microfilm, M341 reel 3, RG 84, NARA, College Park, MD,

⁷⁰² Willys R. Peck to the Secretary of State, Tsingtau, China, July 6, 1919, Willys R. Peck Papers, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

been the desire of our Government to foster.”⁷⁰³ Peck further observed that the Japanese proposal for an International Settlement in Tsingtao offered an undeveloped, rocky, and remote location, asserting that this was an attempt to curtail discussion of the Settlement, so as to avoid actually sharing the port with foreign merchants and foster *de facto* Japanese dominance in province.⁷⁰⁴ Willys Peck’s concerns were well founded. His influence can be seen in his 1940 assessment that,

“It has become evident, however, from Japanese acts that the Japanese program envisages the establishment by armed force of Japanese hegemony over “East Asia” and the exaction of tribute from foreign nationals for that share of economic enterprise in China which the Japanese shall decide to allow to them.”⁷⁰⁵

While the Secretary did not give the talk, the fact that the comments were prepared by officers in the Far East Division indicates the structure within and the extent to which language-trained officers shaped the State Department’s perception of events.⁷⁰⁶

Although the anticipated profits never materialized, the institutional reforms brought about by this venture remained in place. In the rhetoric of reformers, imperial ambitions translated into imperial practices. Language trained officers in China and Japan differed over how to deal with issues such as extraterritoriality, Chinese Communism and Japanese militarism, yet they became increasingly interventionist in that they believed the U.S. government should

⁷⁰³ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁵ “Notes on the Situation in the Far East: Informal Comments by the Secretary of State at the Business Advisory Council Dinner In Washington, on February 29, 1940,” Willys R. Peck Papers, Box 3, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

⁷⁰⁶ Department of State memorandum from M.M.H. Hamiton to [Nelson] Johnson, March 1, 1940, Willys R. Peck Papers, Box 3, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

not simply stand on the sidelines leaving the risk to businessmen but ought to take a more proactive role. While ostensibly pursuing economic empire in Asia, the United States became increasingly entangled with East Asian affairs, leading inexorably to its WWII clash with Japan and postwar confrontation with Chinese Communism. The result was entanglement in progressively more intricate Asian controversies without experiencing the anticipated economic gains.

Exaggerated perceptions of the China market undergirded the creation of the Student Interpreters Corps (SIC) and stimulated a reorganization of the U.S. Consular Service in China, Japan, and the Ottoman Empire according to established imperial paradigms. In this framework, the secret to commercial success in China was a language trained, professionalized consular service, actively promoting national business interests. The establishment of the SIC and the concurrent reorganization of the U.S. Consular service consciously emulated existing imperial models, particularly those of Britain and France. State Department reformers went beyond business interests and Congressional constituencies in highlighting the perceived benefits that institutional reorganization would bring. However, the economic benefits that accrued to American businessmen were so far removed from the touted possibilities, this chapter argues, that the rhetoric of trade expansion was far more to the State Department important than the actual realization of increased trade.

CHAPTER 9

**FOR “THE AMERICAN BIG BROTHER” “TO SELL AMERICA TO CHINA”: FROM
OPEN DOOR “IMPERIALISM” TO INTERVENTIONIST “ORIENTALISM,” 1902-
1941⁷⁰⁷**

This chapter places the American Student Interpreters Corps in China, Japan in the context of other imperial language training programs. These language-training programs were indispensable to East-West interactions in Asia and the Middle East during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Intended as the equal of such programs, the Student-Interpreters Corps developed into an important means for constructing U.S. government perceptions of “the Far East” as well as an important (albeit complex) component of policy formation. By the beginning of World War II, over 100 American Foreign Service officers in China, Japan, and the Ottoman Empire began their careers as student interpreters and spent most of their professional lives in those countries.⁷⁰⁸

To be sure, these officers were influenced by a variety of generational, ideological, and social differences, and their actual policy goals both shifted internally and differed from one another. Nevertheless, their long-term service in Asia produced a consensus that if the United States simply pursued the correct concoction of policies, it could not only realize its foreign policy objectives in the region but transform Asian societies as well. As will be emphasized in this chapter, the mentality undergirding the American approach to China gradually shifted, from a vague chauvinism to an increasingly strident awareness of “Oriental” and “Asiatic” crises from

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁸ This is an approximate, composite number based on official personnel records and perusing the annual *Federal Register* of government employees over a period of about 50 years.

which the United States could not afford to remain apart. This led to the reluctant adoption of interventionist attitudes but at the same time to disagreement over the long-term policy goals of such intervention and even the forms that such intervention should assume.

Using an interdisciplinary interpretive framework, this chapter draws on the theoretical work of literary critics such as Lina Unali and Edward Said, political scientists like Ruth Roland and Theda Skocpol, and linguists and historians including Frances E. Karttunen and Michael Hunt. Building upon their conclusions regarding modes of representation, social marginalization, and cultural intermediaries, this chapter presents foreign language education as a cultural interstice within which attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of “other” cultures can be, and often are exchanged, transmitted, transformed, and even internalized by “outsiders.”

Outlining American interpreters’ representations of the cultures and attitudes they perceived and sought to represent, to translate, this examination considers consular dispatches, oral histories, memoirs, and even business correspondence to highlight the ways in which foreign language study transformed cultural attitudes—reflected by written representations and analyses of these cultures—while providing practical, accommodative policy alternatives. Within this dynamic cultural space however, the proliferation of normative constructs based upon class, gender, and perceived racial differences precluded the translation of appreciative cultural understandings into accommodative foreign policies.

This chapter surveys the dispatches, personal correspondence, personnel files, and memoirs of three generations of American student interpreters. The particular focus here is the role of SIC-trained officers in shaping the U.S. State Department’s understanding of American involvement with problems in China and the ways in which their framing of these problems shifted in response to perceived political goals. The underlying assumptions associated with the

Open Door transformed as it closed, giving way to new postulations as the notion spread that the United States should intervene more and more directly in Chinese affairs. These latter assumptions, this chapter argues, are more recognizably Orientalist than those associated with the Open Door, leading to disagreements among SIC-trained officers over how the United States should respond to specific problems such as Japanese militarism and Chinese communism. These culminated with its internal atomic bomb controversy and the post-WWII struggles over the occupation of Japan and whether or not to recognize the People's Republic of China (the antecedents of these controversies are covered in more detail in chapter nine). Although these controversies lie largely outside the scope of this dissertation, their salient feature is the role that the language-trained officers played in facilitating change in the discourse of American Orientalism in China. Functioning as both linguistic and cultural intermediaries, United States government interpreters and translators were vital to the construction of an American "Orient."

As will be argued presently however, the American "Orient" of the Student Interpreters Corps was a different species than that of Said's *Orientalism*. While highlighting the contours of the contribution of the Student Interpreters Corps to the evolving US perceptions of China and Japan, from the turn of the twentieth century to the onset of US entry into WWII, this chapter also seeks to underscore both their differences from and similarities with the Orientalism of Edward Said. As examined in previous chapters, the ideology undergirding the American project in China gradually shifted from that of trade expansion to interventionism, hastened by political and military crises instigated by Japanese aggression, Chinese resistance to that aggression and the intensification of Communist opposition to the Nationalist Chinese government. This chapter will emphasize the changing language and perceptions of SIC-trained officers as they reluctantly but increasingly came to support American intervention in China. Whereas Said highlights

Orientalism as a discursive system that preceded imperialism, rather than emerging as rationalization of it,⁷⁰⁹ the American counterpart evolved in rather the opposite fashion, tending towards ideological completeness in tandem with the increasing inevitability of large-scale American intervention in China. The first section will examine “Orientalism” of the Open Door, arguing that while SIC-trained officers were actually attempting to implement the Open Door, such attitudes were characterized chiefly by chauvinism and nativism. The chief Orientalist assumption in this vein, visible in the very establishment of the SIC, was that only Americans could represent China to the United States.

Moreover, simply being American was insufficient: language training and loyalty to the United States government (as opposed to religious or entrepreneurial causes) was also necessary. The second portion of the chapter identifies a different variety, increasingly interested in directly intervening in China’s affairs, that developed alongside the trade expansion rhetoric of the Open Door. However, as detailed in the third section, although a reluctant, tenuous consensus emerged in the 1930s, which saw American intervention as increasingly inevitable, and the chameleon of American Orientalist discourse evolved to accommodate it, such accord shattered when it encountered the questions of the specific goals and forms such intervention ought to assume.

The SIC and the “Orientalism” of the Open Door, 1902-1931

In this milieu, it is important to reiterate that the American “policy elite” remained largely Orientalist in outlook as well as policy formation.⁷¹⁰ However, this outlook changed

⁷⁰⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2003) 39,

⁷¹⁰ James Reed, *The Missionary Mind and East Asia Policy, 1911-1915* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 1, passim.

markedly between 1902 and 1941, from the perception of a need to “Americanize” the Foreign Service in order to facilitate American trade expansion, to a growing sense that an Oriental challenge to it (the Japanese) had to be answered, an awareness that ultimately overrode Open Door imperatives.⁷¹¹ Senior officials at the turn of the twentieth century such as Paul Reinsch (erstwhile United States Minister to China) spoke and wrote effusively about influencing “impressionable Orientals” even though his primary concern was trade expansion.⁷¹² Through his protégé, Stanley Kuhl Hornbeck, his outlook and ideas remained influential in the Far East Division of the State Department on the eve of American entry into WWII in 1941.⁷¹³ Nevertheless, the creation of the American Student Interpreters Corps (SIC) in 1902 inspired progressively more frequent challenges to the Orientalist chauvinism by cultivating regional specialists. They in turn formulated policy alternatives that increasingly differed from one another, as well as those of policymakers in Washington D.C.

As with numerous Orientalist assumptions, so it went with institutions: the establishment of the American Student Interpreters Corps (SIC) was a deliberate, nearly wholesale imitation of the contemporary British system.⁷¹⁴ As mentioned elsewhere, the United States often mimicked or appropriated wholesale the views of its parent country, Great Britain;⁷¹⁵ the establishment and structure of the SIC offers another example of this. As highlighted in previous chapters, the United States was a latecomer to language training for government service, and the British

⁷¹¹ Little, *American Orientalism*, 14-15.

⁷¹² Paul S. Reinsch, *World politics at the End of Nineteenth Century: as Influenced by the Oriental Situation* (New York, Macmillan & Co., 1902), 276; Schulzinger, *The Making of the Diplomatic Mind*, 24.

⁷¹³ Ibid.

⁷¹⁴ Edwin H. Conger to John Hay, Peking [Beijing] China, March 29, 1902. United States Department of State, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, with the annual message of the president transmitted to Congress December 2, 1902* (Washington D. C., GPO, 1902), 227-232, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1902> (accessed August 10, 2012).

⁷¹⁵ Nathaniel A. Davis, “From Colonialism to Neo-colonialism: Nationalism, Islam, and the Cultural Framing of Conflicts in Afghanistan,” *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 33, no. 3 (Spring 2010), 1-21.

system offered a culturally familiar and accessible model to American reformers and businessmen who envied equally the consular services of commercial rivals Britain, France, and Germany.⁷¹⁶ As discussed in chapter seven, the appropriation of imperial training methods facilitated the evolution of a progressively interventionist mentality toward Asia within the U.S. State Department.

At the turn of the twentieth century, State Department reformers, their allies in Congress, and American businessmen were acutely aware of the inferiority of the United States Consular Service, particularly in the area of foreign language competency.⁷¹⁷ The key issue was demonstrable commitment to trade expansion. In this vein, not only were the loyalties of native/local interpreters in the Consular Service suspect; those of American missionaries were distrusted as well.⁷¹⁸

As they contemplated changes to the lackadaisical U.S. Consular Service in the Far East and the Ottoman Empire, inspectors and senior officials idealized the social status and diplomatic position of traditional dragomen [*tercümanlar*] as they established a professional corps of interpreters loyal to the United States government. American administrators and inspectors stressed that even the most linguistically competent student interpreter graduates were incomparable to that Ottoman “dragoman,” who possessed tremendous informal influence in local business life and politics. The primary reason for this was that they enjoyed “a sort of

⁷¹⁶ Senate Report 499, 19 February 1902 (57th Congress, 1st Session), vol. 4259; see also an editorial praising the commercial abilities of the German consular system in *Science* 11, no. 268 (February 16, 1900), 274.

⁷¹⁷ Robert Adams Jr., House Report 1460 (55-2), 3722. May 27, 1898.

⁷¹⁸ Edwin H. Conger to John Hay, Peking [Beijing] China, March 29, 1902. United States Department of State, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, with the annual message of the president transmitted to Congress December 2, 1902* [FRUS], (Washington D. C., GPO, 1902), 228-229.

backstairs entrance to every official's home, and an immense acquaintance among high and low in native circles, which brings him every new bazaar rumor."⁷¹⁹

A desire to enjoy the influence of (idealized) Ottoman interpreters and translators existed parallel to but in tension with two other demands: financial efficiency, and above all, loyalty.⁷²⁰ With "native" interpreters seen as unreliable in the eyes of early reformers, the addition of American interpreter training program to the American consular service was a vast improvement over reliance on locals as interpreters—although the practice of hiring them never ended entirely. Even after SIC-trained officers were available for every consulate that could make use of their services, U.S. consulates in China, Japan, and the Ottoman Empire continued to employ local interpreters and various other workers.⁷²¹ Partly because the SIC was only a few years old and still untested when it was extended to the Ottoman Empire in 1909 (and only lasted eight years before it was discontinued), the United States relied primarily on local employees as translators.

Yet although Christian and Jewish subjects continued to provide most of the formal translation and interpreting services of the American Embassy in Istanbul and U.S. consulates throughout the Ottoman Empire,⁷²² this situation was untenable for several reasons. Primary reliance on local interpreters could not continue for long in a professionalizing Foreign Service—particularly considering that nativism provided some of the impetus for the creation of the Student Interpreters Corps: only Americans could interpret China for Americans. Congress

⁷¹⁹ Alfred Gottschalk to Wilbur J. Carr. Constantinople, March 21, 1913. *Correspondence of Inspector Alfred M. Gottschalk*, Records of the Department of State, National Archives, College Park Md. RG 59.

⁷²⁰ Reformers such as Secretary of State Elihu Root stressed that the consular service would be financially self-sufficient, paying for itself in terms of fees for services and various commercial taxes. See House Report 2281, "Reorganization of the Consular Service" (59th Congress, 1st Session), vol. 4906.

⁷²¹ Fleming D. Cheshire, "First Inspection of the American Consular Office at Foochow China, February 9, 1907. *Inspection Reports of Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁷²² When the Ottoman Empire broke off diplomatic relations with the United States in 1917, the Student Interpreter Corps in Turkey was only eight years old, with fewer than a dozen junior-ranking graduates.

therefore took steps to limit native interpreters. For example, consular reforms passed in 1906 limited the annual salaries of non-citizen employees to \$1000; employees at this rate or more were prohibited from engaging in outside business.⁷²³ In the Ottoman Empire, local interpreters could obtain extensive trade privileges and/or tax exemptions through system of capitulations,⁷²⁴ which made the position attractive despite the low pay.

Not only was this system subject to frequent abuse,⁷²⁵ but local or foreign nationals were often so intimately involved in local politics and ethnic strife that the work of the consulate suffered.⁷²⁶ Moreover, local hires were increasingly criticized for failing to prioritize American commercial interests.⁷²⁷ The result was that unless directly supervised by an American, local hires were increasingly considered unreliable. Foreign consular agents, missionaries, and locally hired interpreters were regarded as particularly untrustworthy with a view to promoting American trade. It was this latter trend that enabled reformers like Elihu Root and Wilbur J. Carr to enlist business support (in the form of lobbying a recalcitrant Congress) to renovate the decrepit U.S. consular service—at the time dependent upon political patronage and riven by partisan rivalries.⁷²⁸

⁷²³ The goal was to “Americanize” the Foreign Service through this measure but in practice this merely complicated hiring local clerks. See House Report 2281 (59th Congress, 1st Session), vol. 4906.

⁷²⁴ V. Necla Geyikdağı, *Foreign Investment in the Ottoman Empire: International Trade and Relations 1854-1914* (New York, NY: I. B. Taurus, 2011), 7.

⁷²⁵ Roland, *Interpreters as Diplomats*, 44-51.

⁷²⁶ Alfred L.M. Gottschalk, “First Inspection of Consular Office at Saloniki, Turkey, October 8-15th” *Inspection Reports of American Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA; for an example of an Ottoman subject abusing capitulatory privileges while a U.S. consular employee, see “Barsamian,” *Biographical Data on Alien Consular Employees, 1900-1919*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59. NARA.

⁷²⁷ Alfred Gottschalk, “Third Inspection of Consular Agency at Samsoun, Turkey,” *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59.

⁷²⁸ Werking, *The Master Architects*, 53, 114-116; Senate Report 112 (59th Congress, 1st Session), vol. 1, reprint, Google Books, <http://preview.tinyurl.com/8tj4u78> (accessed August 28, 2012).

Congress established the SIC with the primary goal of expanding American trade, an enterprise that some historians have considered a project of “informal empire.”⁷²⁹ An early lobbyist for consular reform John Ela of the National Business League of Chicago had declared magnanimously that the “business world has awakened to its opportunities. Extension of trade is an undoubted fact. We must push forward, and by every worthy means at our command seize the markets of the world.”⁷³⁰ Ambassador Nelson T. Johnson summed up the contemporary American self-perception with the assertion that “we [Americans] asked for no colonies. We didn’t want any colonies. We had no need of them for we had our great West to develop. We did need however, and did want, the right of our merchants to trade without discrimination.”⁷³¹

It should be noted that this “Open Door” endeavor was neither an attempt to forcibly open new markets *per se* nor a campaign against protectionist tariffs. It was rather an attempt to secure for American merchants the same right to do business in China as that enjoyed by their British, French, and Japanese counterparts. During the push for reform in the American consular service, businessmen as well as State Department officials widely believed that American products would conquer the market wherever they could compete freely.⁷³²

Central to this effort was the notion that training a handful of United States consular officers in Chinese, Japanese, and Turkish would relieve American businessmen of the necessity to personally familiarize themselves with the local language and culture in their attempts to penetrate Asian markets. These language-trained specialists worked tirelessly, but in the end

⁷²⁹ Thomas J. McCormick, *China Market: America’s Quest for Informal Empire, 1893-1901* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1967), 7-10, 21-52.

⁷³⁰ Senate Report 499, 19 February 1902 (57th Congress, 1st Session), vol. 4259.

⁷³¹ Nelson T. Johnson, *The Reminiscences of Nelson Trusler Johnson* (New York, NY: the Oral History Research Project, Columbia University, 1957), 96.

⁷³² Elihu Root in House Report 2281 (59th Congress 1st Session), vol. 4906.

unsuccessfully, to dispel this impression.⁷³³ Only a handful companies (including Standard Oil, Singer Sewing, and British-American Tobacco) sent their own sales representatives to Asia, and fewer still required even a modicum of language training for such field agents.⁷³⁴

Efforts to professionalize the Foreign Service encountered resistance from men such as Senator John Tyler Morgan (a former Confederate Army officer), who asserted that officers who enjoyed life tenure “forget their Americanism, mixed up with all kinds of governments. They forget the requirements and the obligations of being an American citizen representing their country in a foreign country.”⁷³⁵ From the beginning, the notion of sending officers overseas and training him a foreign county caused some to question the loyalty of such men, amid worries that they might go “native.”

Yet at the same time, there was a growing awareness that only specifically trained individuals could represent China for American business interests. Until the establishment of the SIC, there was no system for training American diplomatic and consular officers at all, let alone a language education program.⁷³⁶ White American speakers of Mandarin were almost exclusively missionaries. Partly for this reason, historians such as James Reed and Christopher Jespersen have stressed the prominent role of missionaries in shaping American attitudes toward China.⁷³⁷ Their importance in shaping popular perceptions toward China—as well as Japan and the Ottoman Empire—should not be underestimated. Until the early twentieth century, in many

⁷³³ Fleming D. Cheshire, “Inspection of the American Consular Office at Mukden, China, May 21st 1907,” and that of September 19th, 1909. *Inspection Reports on Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

⁷³⁴ Sherman Cochran, *Encountering Chinese Networks: Western, Japanese, and Chinese Corporations in China, 1880-1937* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 33-36.

⁷³⁵ Senate Report 112 (59th Congress, 1st Session), vol. 1, reprint, Google Books, <http://preview.tinyurl.com/8tj4u78> (accessed August 28, 2012).

⁷³⁶ Ibid.

⁷³⁷ Reed, *The Missionary Mind*, 1-3, passim; Christopher Jespersen, *American Images of China, 1931-1949* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), xiii-10.

instances the U.S. government depended on missionaries as interpreters and translators (particularly in China and Japan) in American consulates and embassies, simply because they were the only Americans available who could speak the language. For example, the American Legation in Peking at the turn of the twentieth century relied solely on E. T. Williams as interpreter, causing Edwin Conger (the American Minister) to protest, “no private concern of one-fiftieth the importance would take any such chances for even a moment.”⁷³⁸

However, by the turn of the twentieth century such exclusive reliance was increasingly considered to be unwise by officials like Conger who believed that both the missionary and the businessman were ill suited for diplomatic work.⁷³⁹ This generalized unease gradually transformed into distrust. As mentioned in a previous chapter, by the 1920s, too close an association between an American officer and local missionaries in China could cast doubt on his loyalty and negatively affect his efficiency ratings and promotion opportunities.⁷⁴⁰ One reason for this was that American missionaries in China at this time were beginning to expect their government to take a more active role in protecting their lives and property overseas, and when this was not forthcoming from local American commanders, they often fiercely criticized the U.S. government.⁷⁴¹ From the standpoint of senior officers such as Nelson T. Johnson, the reason was simple: the United States government was an interest group in its own right and it was the

⁷³⁸ Edwin H. Conger to John Hay, Peking [Beijing] China, March 29, 1902. United States Department of State, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, with the annual message of the president transmitted to Congress December 2, 1902* (Washington D. C., GPO, 1902), 227-232,

⁷³⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁰ Edward J. Norton (Department of State, Office of Foreign Personnel), to Wilbur Carr, November 1, 1927, Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁷⁴¹ Nelson T. Johnson [memorandum of conversation], Department of State, Assistant Secretary, “Mr. Ernest B. Price, His Record in the Foreign Service and Resignation,” November 1, 1927, Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

duty of Foreign Service officers to publicly articulate and defend policy decisions even when they privately disagreed with them.⁷⁴²

Such trust was perceived as vital, not least because of the vast responsibility placed on officers stationed in countries throughout the world. Until the twentieth century, American diplomacy was in many ways a personal affair, the style of each office depending on the officer in charge.⁷⁴³ In many of the smaller offices in China and Japan for example, the consul was the only American employee, if not the sole worker.⁷⁴⁴ However, when officers lived and worked in cities with significant numbers of American missionaries, hundreds of miles from their immediate superiors, it was not uncommon for some officers to sympathize with the views of local Americans (and in some cases, local nationals) more than the official position of the United States government.⁷⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the underlying assumption of Open Door Orientalism was that only specifically trained Americans, free of the vested interests of religion and business, could successfully represent the Chinese Orient.

Representing the Open Door: American Orientalism, and the U.S. Foreign Service, 1902-1931

At the same time, emerging gradually from 1902 to 1931, a parallel American “Orientalism” towards China appeared in the early twentieth century. This parallel development makes American “Orientalism” in China difficult to define, riddled with paradoxes and

⁷⁴² Nelson T. Johnson [Shanghai, China, Inspection District of Eastern Asia] to Wilbur J. Carr, April 22, 1923. Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

⁷⁴³ David Anderson, *Imperialism and Idealism: American Diplomats in China, 1861-1898* (Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1986), *passim*.

⁷⁴⁴ Fleming D. Cheshire, “Inspection of the American Consular Office at Dalny [Dairen], Manchuria, August 26, 1909,” *Inspection Reports of Foreign Service Posts, 1906-1939*, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁷⁴⁵ Edward J. Norton (Department of State, Office of Foreign Personnel), to Wilbur Carr, November 1, 1927, Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA, St. Louis, MO.

contradictions, and complicated by both contemporary and modern historiographical controversies over American exceptionalism.⁷⁴⁶ On the one hand, this outlook inherited most of the qualities that Edward Said attributed to the “worldwide hegemony of Orientalism,”⁷⁴⁷ in that it presumed Western superiority over China. On the other, its unique genealogy makes it a chameleon, frequently changing its colors to suit various political environments, and it proved an amazingly resilient and effect cultural construct as specific questions of possible (and actual) American intervention in Chinese and Japanese societies became ever more salient in the 1930s and 1940s, and will be mentioned later.

Most examinations of Orientalism, whether American or otherwise, focus upon various categories of cultural products (literature, film, etc.), the attitudes which these artifacts express, and the policies and politics attributed or associated with them. For example, in *American Orientalism*, Douglass Little has stressed that a peculiar blend of popular misconceptions as well as cultural and political paternalism have compelled Americans to “underestimate the people of the region and overestimate America’s ability to make a bad situation better.”⁷⁴⁸

Meanwhile, Melanie McAlister has acknowledged the expansion of American power in the Middle East while highlighting an assemblage of interest groups that have variously facilitated, accommodated and challenged that expansion. These factions have articulated contending visions “even as they worked to construct a self-image for Americans of themselves as citizens of benevolent world power.”⁷⁴⁹ Canvassing the enterprise of cultural production in areas such as news media, literature, and film has done much to illuminate the murky—and

⁷⁴⁶ Akira Iriye, “Exceptionalism Revisited,” *Reviews in American History* 16 no. 2 (June 1988), 291-297.

⁷⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 328.

⁷⁴⁸ Douglass little, *American Orientalism: the United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 11, 314.

⁷⁴⁹ Melanie McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and US Interests in the Middle East since 1945* (Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 2002), xi-xii.

mercurial—realm of attitudes, perceptions, and assumptions that have constituted the discursive field of Orientalism.

Literary critics such as Edward Said, Homi Bhaba, and Lina Unali have referred primarily to the literary descriptions of places, events, and societies within a host of cultural artifacts in crafting their arguments regarding the meanings and interpretations attached to them.⁷⁵⁰ However, the act of interpreting and translating Asian and Middle Eastern societies with a view to producing and disseminating coherent and intelligible cultural representations for popular consumption is only one aspect of this process. The mechanism by which the state produces and consumes these same perceptions is an important component as well. Examining this process is vital to comprehending the way these observations translate into policies, thereby highlighting the channel between abstract perception and concrete action within the sphere of state autonomy.⁷⁵¹

During the first half of the twentieth century, language-trained Foreign Service officers were a vital component of the United States' image of the Far East (particularly China and Japan) as well as important agents in policy formation. These officers' training put them in a unique position within the United States government. Their language education was intended to train them as interpreters who would provide information on the host nation and whose loyalty was above question. Frances Karttunen has described interpreters in history as “conduits through which information flowed between worlds in collision translating more than just words and

⁷⁵⁰ See Lina Unali, *Star of India: Imperial Themes, The Other Face of English Literature, Modes of Representing the Subcontinent* (Rome: Lake Sun Moon, 2011), Kindle book.

⁷⁵¹ Theda Skocpol, “Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research,” *Bringing The State Back In*, eds. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 4, 12.

bringing comprehensibility to otherwise meaningless static.”⁷⁵² In this vein, they acquaint both sides with the cultural meaning and context that adds value to simple exchange of verbal information.⁷⁵³

As Homi Bhabha has argued, this dynamic process involves a certain amount of mimicry, of appropriating and internalizing elements of an Other, while simultaneously remaining distinct and aloof from it.⁷⁵⁴ Benedict Anderson has noted that for the colonial interpreter, this places him a step above his native-born compatriots while permanently relegating him to a subordinate position within the colonial hierarchy.⁷⁵⁵ This process has been often studied in the case of colonial-subject intermediaries,⁷⁵⁶ less so in the instance of colonizer-citizen intermediaries, and still more infrequently in the case of American interpreters and translators in the Asia and Middle East of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Drawing upon Michel Foucault and Edward Said, Robert Young has argued, “academic knowledge is part of the apparatus of western power . . . ‘and it is in discourse that power and knowledge are drawn together.’”⁷⁵⁷ With the goal of producing specialized knowledge for the exercise of power and the creation of wealth, the establishment of the American Student Interpreters Corps was an important if unacknowledged step in that process.⁷⁵⁸ However, examination of the perceptions and portrayals of China and Japan that U.S. government

⁷⁵² Frances Karttunen, *Between Worlds: Interpreters, Guides, and Survivors* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), xi.

⁷⁵³ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁷⁵⁴ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1994), 87.

⁷⁵⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York, NY: Verso Press, 2006), 95-96.

⁷⁵⁶ See for example, Benjamin N. Lawrance et. al, *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), passim.

⁷⁵⁷ Robert C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 387.

⁷⁵⁸ Joseph W. Ballantine, Diary, page 252, Joseph W. Ballantine Papers, box 1, Hoover Institution. This “diary” is in the form of Ballantine’s unpublished, undated memoirs, never intended for publication, deposited at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. They are separate from his “Reminiscences

interpreters produced highlights tension within the conceptual framework of American Orientalism. Their constant reiteration of the ongoing changes in Chinese and Japanese societies during the first half of the twentieth century. As Edward Said has observed, the narrative of change presents a challenge to the “synchronic essentialism” inherent in Orientalist discourse because “if any Oriental detail can be shown to move, or to develop, diachrony is introduced into the system. What seemed stable—and the Orient is synonymous with stability and unchanging eternity—now appears unstable.”⁷⁵⁹ Said makes several claims of “orientalism” in *Orientalism*; some of these are true of the SIC-generated American vision of the Far East and some are not.

Generically, SIC-trained Foreign Service officers tended to exude the “high-handed executive attitude of nineteenth and early twentieth century European colonialism” that Said outlines.⁷⁶⁰ At the same time, the officers of the SIC could be said to have enjoyed the same positional relationship with China as that of Flaubert with “Kuchuk Hanem” (speaking for her, representing her as “oriental”)⁷⁶¹ in that they enjoyed positional privilege and higher economic status than many of the people with whom their training had prepared them to relate and engage. As noted in chapter three, it should be reiterated that maintenance of perceived high status (vis-à-vis host country populations) for American Foreign Service officers was expected, by their superiors as well as by ordinary American businessmen, who thought little about, and likely understood even less of the operations of America’s embassies and consulates in China and Japan. For example, writing to Commercial Attaché Julean Arnold, James A. Thomas opined that the “United States Minister to China is the head of the American colony in China,” and

⁷⁵⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, NY: Verso Press, 1994), 240.

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

called for all Americans to work with him, and that “whether they be republican or democrat,” they should “assist him in every way to get results.” The desired “results” were, of course, expanded American trade in China (apparently a renewed priority in November, 1929).⁷⁶²

Americans preferred to perceive their Foreign Service as being the equal of those of other governments. However, Americans and American Foreign Service officers tended to adopt an attitude of triumphal progressive optimism vis-à-vis the Chinese Orient, where, in the American imagination, the feverish energy and vitality could be put to efficient and benevolent use—and SIC-trained officers were the heralds of such gospel. Headlines such as “Julean Arnold, American Commercial Attaché at Peking, China, will tell his great story of ‘The Sleeping Giant of the Orient,’” often peppered newspapers’ front pages when SIC-trained officers returned to the United States on leave.⁷⁶³ And although presumed backward, the Chinese Orient portrayed by such officers was one where Americans could both better humanity and make a profit.

The historiography of Sino-American relations has repeatedly underscored the tendency of Americans to view their actions in China in the most positive possible light—an exceptionalist vision.⁷⁶⁴ While admitting criticism (often authoring it themselves), SIC-trained officers were among the most ardent adherents of American exceptionalism—a mindset that facilitated a uniquely American species of Orientalism and accommodated “multilateral imperialism” in China.⁷⁶⁵ For example, after more than thirty years of service, erstwhile SIC trainee and longtime Commercial Attaché Julean Arnold stressed that Americans sent more money to China to support missionary activities than American business extracted in trade and asserted that “the

⁷⁶² James A. Thomas to Julean Arnold, November 18, 1929, Washington D.C., Julean Arnold Papers, box 5, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

⁷⁶³ December 11, 1929, Department of Commerce leaflet, Julean Arnold Papers, box 5, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

⁷⁶⁴ Akira Iriye, “Exceptionalism Revisited,” *Reviews in American History* 16 no. 2 (June 1988), 291-297.

⁷⁶⁵ Warren I. Cohen, [review of David Anderson, *Imperialism and Idealism: American Diplomats in China, 1861-1898*] *Pacific Affairs* 60 no. 1 (Spring 1987), 106-107.

modern American trader followed rather than preceded the (American) missionary.⁷⁶⁶ Arnold suggested pairing incoming students from China with American businessmen, asserting that “the American big brother would gain an intimate contact” that American trade with China would benefit, while China’s economy and society prospered.⁷⁶⁷ Arnold further stressed that

“our American manufacturers are distressingly slow to appreciate the value of educational and industrial films, when interestingly and intelligently made, in their potentialities to sell America to China. To a people like the Chinese, who are emerging from domestic handicraft into a modern industrial society and who are now delightfully receptive, they are particularly valuable as suggestive of ideas and methods helpful to the raising of the economic levels of their masses—hence their purchasing power.”⁷⁶⁸

Of all the SIC-trained officers mentioned in this dissertation, Julean Arnold exemplifies the shifting emphasis from trade expansion to reluctant interventionism. In both enterprises, language-trained Foreign Service officers had vital roles to play: he concluded the above-mentioned speech by emphasizing that

“we [Americans] have been contributing hundreds of millions of dollars and sending thousands of our citizens to China and Japan to help in the education of those people better to understand the institutions, ideals and methods of the West. Unfortunately, in so doing we have neglected to provide the facilities whereby our own people might be

⁷⁶⁶ Julean Arnold, “American Trade Prospects with China,” talk given before the National Foreign Trade Council, New York, NY, November 1st, 1934, Julean Arnold Papers, box 6, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid.

educated to understand and appreciate the very rich cultures and civilizations of Asiatic peoples...if we, as a Pacific power, would do our part in a manner creditable to the intellect of our nation, we must set to work immediately to make our physical gateways to the Far East intellectual gateways as well.”⁷⁶⁹

One of the oldest of the China hands, Arnold had been one of the very first American Student Interpreters in China in 1902.⁷⁷⁰ Throughout his life and his over thirty-year career in China, Arnold remained a close friend and confidant of Nelson Johnson, Willys Peck, and, perhaps slightly more distantly, of Stanley Kuhl Hornbeck. Officers such as Arnold were instrumental in constructing the American understanding of China—beginning with such basics as that China was a polyglot society, wherein the languages spoken in Beijing, Canton, and Shanghai were as different from one another “as is French from Italian.”⁷⁷¹ While Arnold’s vision still emphasized trade (hardly surprising given his role as Commercial Attaché), it was laced with an understanding of growing American power that had to be acknowledged and exercised, but also appropriately informed and guided.

It was SIC-trained officers who could provide such guidance, and it was SIC-trained officers such as Julean Arnold, Willys Peck, and William Langdon who convinced their superiors that the United States really was making progress in understanding societies such as those of China and Japan. For example, in a letter to Nelson Johnson introducing SIC-Japan-trained William Langdon’s translation of Viscount Ishii’s memoirs, Stanley Hornbeck

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁰ Julean Arnold, Official Personnel File (OPF), National Personnel Records Center (NPRC), National Archives (NARA), St. Louis, MO.

⁷⁷¹ Julean Arnold, “Foreign Languages,” April 26, 1934, Shanghai, China, Julean Arnold Papers, box 6, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

commented, “I had long thought that certain other nations more intently and understood us better than we them. In the light of events of the past ten years and what I have seen and heard and read during that period, I have gradually come around to a conjecture that, taken by and large, we understand certain other nations better than they do us. I still think they study us more intently; but the simple fact is that we are much more difficult to understand than are they.”⁷⁷²

Responding to these comments, Johnson regretted that the United States expressed its comparative lack of interest in China (vis-a-vis that of Japan) in writing and expressed dismay at Ishii’s observations on the perceived malleability of American public opinion—particularly in New York.⁷⁷³ In his reply, Hornbeck agreed with Johnson but asserted that “we have, in the positions where matters of policy are decided, men who know a great deal, seek to know more, are willing to be informed, and use pretty good glasses. With regard to the public, it is very difficult to make estimates.”⁷⁷⁴

With the exception of occasional articles and translations such as those mention above, very little of the material that SIC-trained officers produced was prepared for public consumption. Moreover, the framework of perception they helped to prepare, assemble and extend differed substantively from the universally and perpetually self-reinforcing Orientalism that Said identifies with regard to literary portrayals of the Middle East. During the first half of the twentieth century, American interpreters and translators in the United States’ fledgling Foreign Service portrayed Asian and Middle Eastern societies as anything but “lifeless, timeless,

⁷⁷² Stanley Hornbeck to Nelson Johnson, August 1, 1933 [Washington D.C.], Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 260, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

⁷⁷³ Nelson Johnson to Stanley Hornbeck, September 6, 1933, Peking [Beijing], China, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 4, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

⁷⁷⁴ Stanley Hornbeck to Nelson Johnson, October 3, 1933, Peking [Beijing], China, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 4, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

forceless” and in desperate need of Western stimulation.⁷⁷⁵ The China of the American Student Interpreters Corps was not the Orient of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, neither were SIC graduate canonical Orientalists, representing the Orient, precluding any possibility of self-representation. Although they were undoubtedly American creatures and subject to the extant cultural prejudices of their time, their education, experience as interpreters and translators, and role as political, social, cultural and economic observers shaped their understanding of these societies and acknowledged the capacity for self-directed change.

From the Open Door to Interventionism: 1931-1941 and Beyond

Language-trained officers developed their own views concerning the internal politics and foreign relations of the country in which they lived and served. Although explicit documentation is scant, they do appear to have attempted to influence policy in accordance with their views, in some cases via seemingly innocuous action. For example, Ernest B. Price became close friends with Dr. Sun Yat-sen in China during the mid-1920s, and when the latter became head of a rival government in Canton and sought U.S. aid, Price eagerly forwarded Sun’s letter to President Warren G. Harding and received a sharp censure for doing so—along with a stern reminder the United States did not recognize Sun’s government.⁷⁷⁶ Ernest Price is an interesting example because although he was their senior by over decade in age and time in service,⁷⁷⁷ in many his sympathies lay with the “China Hands” of the 1940s.

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid., 241.

⁷⁷⁶ Dr. Sun Yat-sen to President Harding, June 16, 1921, Hoover Institution Archives, *Payson J. Treat Papers*, box 50, folder “Sun Yat-sen;” Leo Bergholz to Secretary of State, 17 August, 1921, Canton, China. File 893/3902 (v. 434). Document no. 800. NARA, DOS RG 84.

⁷⁷⁷ Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

Unlike the ostracized China Hands however, Ernest Price was never accused of being a communist or even a Marxist.⁷⁷⁸ This was most likely because, by his own admission, during the war he had been fooled by wartime Nationalist censorship and propaganda depicting the Communists as “. . . ‘roving bands of Communist bandits’ in no way interfering with the Japanese.”⁷⁷⁹ His susceptibility to Nationalist rhetoric concerning the Chinese Communists (CCP and PLA) was probably due, at least partially, to his earlier association with Dr. Sun Yat-sen. Although he resigned in 1929, after repeatedly claiming ill treatment by the Department,⁷⁸⁰ he subsequently built strong ties with the Institute of Pacific Relations⁷⁸¹ and corresponded with Owen Lattimore concerning Sino-Japanese and Asian-American relations.⁷⁸²

Other examples of (failed) attempts to influence policy include numerous warnings about impending war with Japan from Japan Hands such as Joseph Grew, John K. Emmerson, Eugene Dooman, and others. These officers strove against mischaracterizations of the Japanese as cruel fanatics,⁷⁸³ portraying them instead as willing to compromise with American demands. For example, Japanese-trained John Emmerson, stressed that both Japan and the United States had mistaken images of each other before the war; he emphasized the American misconceptions were based on racism and distrust, while asserting that the Japanese underestimated American willingness to fight.⁷⁸⁴ Language-trained officers such as Emmerson, Dooman, Ballantine, and

⁷⁷⁸ Given Sun’s cooperation with both Soviet and Chinese Communists during this period, the latent ammunition for such accusations existed, but State Department officials and U.S. statesmen were unaware of it.

⁷⁷⁹ Ernest Price, “The Chinese Communists,” [n.d., circa 1950], 9, box 3 Price Papers, Hoover Institution.

⁷⁸⁰ Price to Secretary of State via Naval Radio, May 20, 1929. See also Stanley K. Horbeck to Ernest Price, Tsinan, China, March 14, 1928, Ernest B. Price, OPF, NPRC, NARA.

⁷⁸¹ Anthony Kubek later asserted that the IPR was entirely under Communist control and that it “function as an instrument of Soviet policy.” See Anthony Kubek, *How the Far East Was Lost: American Policy and the Creation of Communist China, 1941-1949* (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery, 1963), 346.

⁷⁸² Owen Lattimore to Ernest B. Price, February 15, 1935, Baltimore, MD. Box 1, Ernest Price Papers, Hoover Institution.

⁷⁸³ Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 140-150.

⁷⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

others who rubbed shoulders with Japanese officials repeatedly warned that war with Japan was coming, while highlighting the fact that through back-door channels, the Japanese had offered to come to an arrangement satisfactory to the United States—provided it was done secretly.⁷⁸⁵

Such guidance often failed to influence policy, particularly if they had to pass through officers with differing understandings of the issues. For instance, if the aforementioned warnings ever reached the President, it was only with caveats and disavowals, attached by the chief of the Far East Division, Stanley Kuhl Hornbeck, who stubbornly denied that Japan would ever attack the United States.⁷⁸⁶ Not only did he belittle those Japanese-trained officers who repeatedly warned in 1940-41 that war was coming but ten days before the Pearl Harbor attack he asserted writing that Japan would avoid conflict with the United States, and continued to encourage further U.S. sanctions against Japan.⁷⁸⁷ Right down to the day before the attack he dismissed the Japan hands' warnings and tried to diminish the force of their arguments.⁷⁸⁸ Moreover, Hornbeck did this in confidently Orientalist language, which not only disparaged the Japanese as being “overly sensitive” due to Japan’s history of natural disasters but also inferred that American officers there had “caught this nervousness” as if it were an infection disease.⁷⁸⁹ American Orientalism could be an obstacle to accurate understanding just as easily as it could bolster American confidence that the United States knew best.

⁷⁸⁵ Eugene H. Dooman, *The Occupation of Japan Project* (New York: Columbia University Oral History Research Office, 1970), 95, *Eugene H. Dooman Papers* box 1, Hoover Institution.

⁷⁸⁶ Eugene H. Dooman, *The Occupation of Japan Project* (New York: Columbia University Oral History Research Office, 1970), 66-67, *Eugene H. Dooman Papers* box 1, Hoover Institution.

⁷⁸⁷ John K. Emmerson, *The Japanese Thread* (New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1978), 117-118; Anthony Kubek, *How the Far East Was Lost: American Policy and the Creation of Communist China, 1941-1949* (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery & Co., 1963), 5.

⁷⁸⁸ Emmerson, *The Japanese Thread*, 117-118.

⁷⁸⁹ Eugene H. Dooman, *The Occupation of Japan Project* (New York: Columbia University Oral History Research Office, 1970), 66-67, *Eugene H. Dooman Papers* box 1, Hoover Institution.

The day after the attack however, Hornbeck displayed a far more petty and self-serving side of his personality. According to Eugene H. Dooman, who received his information “from a friend in the Far East Division,” Hornbeck went to Secretary Hull’s office and absconded with the memoranda he had written that minimized the chance of war with Japan. After having encouraged sanctions and other actions that likely hastened the onset of war, Hornbeck probably could not bear to leave evidence that the Japan Hands had been correct about Japan’s intentions.

By the eve of WWII, there had emerged two rival, if somewhat overlapping, perspectives on the future of U.S. relations with China and Japan. Saturated with prima donnas, adherents encompassed a variety of strong views, but the contours of two distinct schools of thought had emerged in the 1930s. A man of the left and influential among the China Hands, Owen Lattimore displayed the same variety of vague chauvinism toward Asians (particularly the Japanese) as did Stanley Hornbeck. Not only did he lambast Japan’s Emperor cult, asserting that it had no place “in an age of chemistry, plastics, electronics, and stratosphere navigation,” but called for the Emperor and eligible for succession to be forcibly interned—if the Japanese were unwilling to eliminate the institution on their own.⁷⁹⁰ He also advocated a punitive economic and political reorganization of the country that would have stripped Japan of most of its industrial capacity.⁷⁹¹ Japan Hands were adamantly opposed to this—just as they opposed the doctrine of unconditional surrender, arguing that use of the atomic bomb was unnecessary—and advocated a compassionate peace with Japan.⁷⁹²

⁷⁹⁰ Owen Lattimore, *Solution in Asia* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, & Co., 1945), 188-189.

⁷⁹¹ Edwin W. Pauley, Report on Japanese reparations to the President of the United States, November 1945 to April 1946 (Department of State, Washington D.C., GPO, 1946), passim; Joseph W. Ballantine, Diary [memoirs], p. 304, Box 1, Joseph W. Ballantine Papers, Hoover Institution.

⁷⁹² Joseph W. Ballantine, Diary, Joseph W. Ballantine Papers, box 1, Hoover Institution, i. Hereafter, Ballantine, diary, vii, 262.

Similarly, some of the China Hands also became embroiled in the heated political debates over whether to cooperate with the Chinese Communists during the war, and afterwards, whether or not to recognize the People's Republic of China. Admiration for the Communists' leadership and integrity was typical for American Foreign Service officers in China at the time. As of the late 1930s, the SIC-trained U.S. Ambassador Nelson T. Johnson believed that many of the Communists were agrarian reformers, led by men of "considerable character."⁷⁹³

Like other senior officers in the Foreign Service at the time, Johnson was (ideologically) opposed to American meddling in the internal affairs of other countries,⁷⁹⁴ although conservatives like Ballantine would have been comfortable with giving more aid to Chiang Kai-shek and thereby meddling in China's internal affairs. In his reminiscences, Joseph Ballantine also asserted "there was the highest degree of mutual respect between the senior Japan and the senior China officers. There was no difference at all. It was that group from Vincent on down—Vincent, Davies, Service—that crowd of people" who articulated a different vision postwar American relations with China and Japan.⁷⁹⁵ It was the perception that some of the junior China Hands went outside the chain of command in attempting to influence postwar policy that made them so controversial, first within the State Department,⁷⁹⁶ and later among American academics.⁷⁹⁷

However, notwithstanding the Communists' anti-American campaign and various other provocations, a majority of American "foreign policy elites"⁷⁹⁸ favored U.S. recognition of the

⁷⁹³ Russell T. Buhite, *Nelson T. Johnson and American Policy Toward China, 1925-1941* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1968), 142-144.

⁷⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁵ Ballantine, *Reminiscences*, 53.

⁷⁹⁶ Joseph Ballantine, *The Reminiscences of Joseph Ballantine* (New York: Oral History Office, Columbia University, 1961), 218.

⁷⁹⁷ Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 38.

⁷⁹⁸ Reed, *The Missionary Mind*, 70.

Communist regime. As Joseph W. Ballantine has noted in his memoirs, in 1949, he was among a “small minority which voiced opposition to the [U.S.] recognition of Red China” at a State Department roundtable held from 6-8 October, stressing that was the Communists imprisonment of the American Consul General and his staff at Mukden that ultimately prevented this.⁷⁹⁹ Anticipated by erstwhile Student Interpreter Edward Rice, Chen Jian has argued that the harsh Chinese action in the handling of the Angus Ward case was probably Mao’s personal decision.⁸⁰⁰ Within the State Department’s contending views at the time, both the conservative impulse to directly support the use of force against the Chinese Communists and the liberal desire to remake Asia according to an American conception of democracy proceeded naturally from the developing consensus (outlined in previous chapters) that the United States ought to assume more direct, interventionist policies in East Asia—particularly in China.

Bolstered by a chameleon American Orientalism, a consensus had emerged that the United States had to “do” more, but foundered on the questions of what to do in specific instances. With even the structure of the SIC modeled after its British counterpart it is not surprising that American Orientalism echoed its elder coefficient, but the American species proved far more ephemeral and exigency-driven than outlined by Edward Said. Still, it remained resilient. As Said observed, “each age and society re-creates its ‘Others.’”⁸⁰¹ Transitioning from the vague, chauvinist Orientalism of the Open Door, from the 1930s into the 1940s and beyond, American Orientalism was becoming a discourse of American power, with competing interpretations across the American political spectrum.

⁷⁹⁹ Joseph W. Ballantine, *Diary*, page 374, Joseph W. Ballantine Papers, box 1, Hoover Institution.

⁸⁰⁰ Edward Rice, *Mao’s Way* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1972), 122; Chen Jian, *Mao’s China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 39.

⁸⁰¹ Said, *Orientalism*, 332.

These trends emerge equally in the writings of Stanley Hornbeck and Owen Lattimore or Theodore White and Annalee Jacoby—on opposite sides of the American political spectrum with regard to China and Japan. Asserting that the peace of Asia depended on freeing the people “from feudal restraints,” White and Jacoby blithely attributed the Japanese defeat in WWII to the inherent wickedness of Japan’s war plans.⁸⁰² In their portrayal, Americans “had been threatened out of the darkness of the Orient; we had recognized the threat as something indescribably malevolent and had fashioned a steamroller that crushed it to extinction.”⁸⁰³

Hinting that a catastrophe similar to the recently-concluded war with Japanese might occur if the United States did not intervene, White and Jacoby likewise disparaged China, declaring that the “Chinese who fought this war [WWII] were peasants born in the Middle Ages to die in the twentieth century.”⁸⁰⁴ Imperialist rhetoric on the right (with regard to China and Japan) was muted at the end of WWII (although it flared after the fall of the Nationalist government) because senior State Department officials had held tenure under both Republican and Democratic presidents. Nevertheless, Japan officers’ policy recommendations met fierce criticism from China specialists, who were hostile towards Japan. For example, Stanley K. Hornbeck portrayed the Japanese as insatiable expansionists opposed to the United States modest and (putatively) ambivalent acquisition of the Philippines.⁸⁰⁵ He also propagated contemporary wisdom that American missionaries were the heralds of civilization in throughout the Far East.⁸⁰⁶

⁸⁰² Theodore H. White and Annalee Jacoby, *Thunder out of China* (New York, NY: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1946), xii.

⁸⁰³ *Ibid.*, xiii.

⁸⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁸⁰⁵ Stanley K. Hornbeck, *The United States and the Far East: Certain Fundamentals of Policy* (Boston, MA: World Peace Foundation, 1942), 15.

⁸⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

The intellectual exponents of the political right and left in the United States' "foreign policy elites" displayed a similar nonchalant arrogance towards Asian societies.⁸⁰⁷ Not only did both sides "underestimate the people of the region and overestimate America's ability to make a bad situation better,"⁸⁰⁸ there was an assumption that the United States could and did influence the internal affairs of countries like China simply by adhering to passive and non-interventionist policies. In other words, without committing significant military or financial resources. This is particularly visible in the dual "lost China" and "lost chance" myths that emerged after the victory of the Chinese Communists over the Nationalists in 1949.

The "lost China" myth tended to be a conservative mantra, whereas the "lost chance" myth was predominantly a left-liberal doctrine. For example, Dr. Anthony Kubek attributed the "loss" of China to Communism to a handful of language-trained American Foreign Service officers, while darkly suggesting that China's conversion to Communism would make Communists everywhere more willing to attack the United States.⁸⁰⁹ Both the "lost China" and the "lost chance" myths derive from the American-centered notion that with the right blend of policies, the United States could have prevented the Communist takeover, or alternately, could have made China an important regional ally against the Soviets.⁸¹⁰

It is admittedly difficult to gauge the weighted significance of the individual views of various officers. Regarding their immediate relevance to policy however, personal relationships and officers' proximity to the ambassador and senior State Department officials was the most

⁸⁰⁷ Reed, *The Missionary Mind*, 70.

⁸⁰⁸ Douglass Little, *American Orientalism: the United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 11, 314.

⁸⁰⁹ Anthony Kubek, *How the Far East Was Lost: American Policy and the Creation of Communist China, 1941-1949* (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery & Co., 1963), 241.

⁸¹⁰ Donald A. Jordan, review [untitled], *Mission to Yenan: American Liaison with the Chinese Communists, 1944-1947* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1997), by Carrolle J. Carter, *The American Historical Review* 103, no. 2 (April, 1998), 620—621.

important factor in determining what views reached the Secretary of State and/or the President. As previously noted, there was a long-standing friendship between Julean Arnold, the United States' commercial attaché in China, and Willys R. Peck, a close friend of Nelson T. Johnson and the Counselor of the Legation during much of Johnson's tenure as Minister and Ambassador.⁸¹¹ However, after Ambassador Johnson's transfer out of China in 1941, the "China hands" were institutionally marginalized within the State Department and their ability to inform policy was increasingly limited. Similarly, with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, many of the Japan specialists were sidelined by fate (many of them interned by the Japanese), their voices drowned out by advocates of a vindictive peace with Japan.⁸¹²

However, neither the Japan Hands nor the senior China Hands such as Nelson believed that a harsh settlement with Japan was in the interests of the United States. Rather presciently, in 1932 (in the aftermath of the 1931 Manchurian Incident), Johnson stressed that economic and/or political ruin in Japan would not be in the interests of the United States: "a broken Japan is of no service to us."⁸¹³ In like manner Johnson also opined that "there can be no settlement of these difficulties in Asia without participation and approval by Soviet Russia . . . I believe that Soviet Russia by her recent conduct has sufficiently demonstrated that she is not prepared to consider any of the recent settlements final."⁸¹⁴

As awareness of the likelihood of American involvement in East Asian conflicts became increasingly acute, the language used to frame the issues increasingly came

⁸¹¹ Willys R. Peck, untitled memoirs, Willys R. Peck Papers, introduction, nd, Box 1, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Stanford CA.

⁸¹² Joseph W. Ballantine, [untitled diary], page 267, Joseph W. Ballantine Papers, box 1, Hoover Institution.

⁸¹³ Nelson Johnson to Stanley Hornbeck, September 13, 1932, Peking [Beijing], China, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 4, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

⁸¹⁴ Ibid.

Later that year Johnson also confided to Hornbeck that “it is an odd turn of fate that the machinery for the composition of controversies between nations should rest upon the ability of that machinery to settle a dispute of no immediate concern whatever to those nations, a questions of concern only to the Orient, where Nationalism, the twin brother of Protestantism and both the product of the European Reformation has but just begun to weld together peoples hitherto bound only by ties of clan and family.”⁸¹⁵ The “machinery” to which Johnson was referring consisted of the Kellogg—Briand Pact, League of Nations, and naval armament treaties. Commenting on the US stake in Sino-Japanese conflict, Johnson observed that

“none of this concerns the United States directly; it probably does not mean the loss of one dollar from an American purse. On the contrary, the development of this area under Japanese enterprise may mean an increased opportunity for American industrial plants to sell the kind of machinery and other manufactured goods that will be needed where so much energy is being displayed.”⁸¹⁶

As the likelihood of American involvement became more apparent, racially tinged, Orientalist-style language appeared more frequently. For example, writing candidly to Far East Division Chief and friend Stanley Hornbeck about Japanese machinations in Manchuria (following the “Manchurian Incident of September 18, 1931), American Minister to China Nelson Johnson ranted,

⁸¹⁵ Nelson Johnson to Stanley Hornbeck, December 4, 1932 Nanking, China, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 4, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

⁸¹⁶ Nelson Johnson to Stanley Hornbeck, June 1, 1933, Peking [Beijing], China, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 4, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

“the present leaders in Japan have lost no opportunity to take action in Asia calculated to impress upon the Asiatic mind the utter failure of the international machinery set up by western nations . . . whatever the reaction there may be to these activities among western nations, the reaction here in Asia must, I submit, be inevitably against the prestige of Europe and the United States. The West must either choose to follow the leadership of Japan down this path . . . or eventually we will have to stand at Armageddon and do battle with Asia under Japanese leadership for the ideals which we have heretofore advocated for ourselves and Asia.”⁸¹⁷

Johnson also underscored the problem of what the United States should do about granting the Philippines independence, implying that the Japanese threat made him wary of prematurely taking such a step.⁸¹⁸ At the same time, cognizance that American involvement in the crisis was looming facilitated the expression of attitudes that comported with a nascent American Orientalism.

Awareness of growing American power in the Pacific played to notions of benevolent American exceptionalism. According to Commercial Attaché Julean Arnold, as he urged to the National Foreign Trade Council in New York to assume a greater role in analyzing and promoting Sino-American trade, “we are facing ever increasingly larger opportunities and growingly graver responsibilities as a Pacific power.”⁸¹⁹ Implied however, was the notion that this increasing responsibility involved standing up to Japanese who

⁸¹⁷ Nelson Johnson to Stanley Hornbeck, September 13, 1932, Peking [Beijing], China, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 4, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

⁸¹⁸ Ibid.

⁸¹⁹ Julean Arnold, “American Trade Prospects with China,” talk given before the National Foreign Trade Council, New York, NY, November 1st, 1934, Julean Arnold Papers, box 6, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

“insist upon playing the role of big brother to the Chinese, but in doing so demand the cream for themselves while they expect to be credited with having enforced a special protective service upon the Chinese when they forbid the latter sharing the skim milk with any others than their would-be protectors.”⁸²⁰

As Japanese aggression in China became progressively ever-more blatant, the language that SIC-trained American officers used to condemn it increasingly sought to create a moral foundation for American intervention that comported with notions of American exceptionalism, vis-à-vis the turpitude of Japanese behavior in China. As Julean Arnold stridently highlighted to Nelson Johnson in 1938,

“for a country that claims the honor of being a first class power, its methods of administering its rebuke to China for past grievances flavor distinctly of those of the Middle Ages rather than of a modern world striving to give evidence of humane consideration towards weaker and more backward peoples.”⁸²¹

Chinese officials were well aware of American attitudes and played to them in the hopes that the United States would both pursue pro-China policies itself and encourage them among other friendly countries, such as Great Britain. For example, in the view of Chinese Foreign Minister Lo Wen-kan, the United States had only “two fundamental policies, i.e., the Monroe

⁸²⁰ Ibid.

⁸²¹ Julean Arnold to Nelson T. Johnson, “Confidential: the Sino-Japanese Situation,” February 17, 1938, Shanghai, China, Julean Arnold Papers, box 6, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

Doctrine and the ‘Open Door.’ It is vital to the United States that Japan shall not succeed in abolishing the ‘Open Door’ policy, for this would mean the loss of American ascendancy in the Pacific.” In a conversation with Willys R. Peck, Minister Lo also played up the perception that the United States had used the issue of war debt repayment by Britain to pressure the British government away from a “pro-Japanese” stance.⁸²²

Yet even officers such as Peck who were highly sympathetic to the Chinese predicament were reluctant to offer unqualified support, due to concerns about the ability of the Nationalist Chinese government to effectively govern the country. They also worried that certain segments of Chinese society were in fact more friendly to the Japanese than to countries such as the United States and Great Britain. For instance, during a conversation among Willys R. Peck, Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs Lo Wen-kan, and the Chinese Minister for Industries Chen Kung-po, the latter downplayed foreign aspersions cast against Chinese nationalism. He noted that “foreigners spoke of the “North” and the “South,” but that all he could say was that foreigners and white skins and fair hair and that the Chinese in the North and the South had similar yellow skins and black hair.”

The racially-tinged comments lead the reader to wonder Cheng thought of the Japanese, particularly given the Minister for Foreign Affairs’ more circumspect observation to Peck that “the strife in China was merely a series of family quarrels.”⁸²³ Peck noted in his summary to Johnson that “both Lo and Chen Kung-po seemed to take pleasure in pointing out that the British attitude toward China had almost always been wrong,” and that the latter took pains to highlight

⁸²² Willys R. Peck, Confidential, “Memorandum of Conversation: Sino-Japanese Controversy,” January 28, 1933, [Nanking, China], Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 4, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

⁸²³ Willys R. Peck, “Memorandum of Conversation: Attitude of Foreign Nations toward China,” January 30, 1933, [Nanking, China], Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 4, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

the instances in which the British Consul General had humiliated him.⁸²⁴ When Peck asked whether China could “really handle Manchuria satisfactorily,” in the unlikely event “the Japanese were to withdraw suddenly their forces from Manchuria.” Lo apparently replied that “it would be easy for China to control Manchuria, if there no outside interference,” because “the Chinese people were the easiest people in the world to govern.”⁸²⁵ This did little to mitigate Peck’s skepticism.⁸²⁶

Officers such as Peck highlighted perceptions by both the Japanese and Chinese that foreign meddling in China had thwarted easy realization of their respective goals. According to Willys Peck’s depiction, “the Japanese think that China is per se incapable of uniting to resist any foreign power and that Japan should have been able to amputate Manchuria with almost no pain, if China had not been bolstered up by America and the League and by the world-wide publicity of which she had been the center.”⁸²⁷ Peck added that, “feeling as many of the Japanese leaders seem to feel regarding assumed venality of Chinese politicians, etc., it is not at all unlikely that they are sincere in asserting that Japan knows China better better than other nations do and that the League and the occidental nations in general are basing their criticisms on a hideously mistaken set of ideas.”⁸²⁸

However, even while they acknowledged that the ruling circles in Japan sincerely subscribed to such views, these were becoming increasingly unpalatable for SIC-trained officers, who were beginning to regard them as a threat not only to the United States but also the entire world. For example, in Willys Peck’s depiction,

⁸²⁴ Ibid.

⁸²⁵ Ibid.

⁸²⁶ Ibid.

⁸²⁷ Willys R. Peck to Nelson Johnson, February 16, 1933, [Nanking, China], Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 4, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

⁸²⁸ Ibid.

“in the face of China’s weakness and Japan’s efficiency with machine guns and airplanes, common sense would seem to be on the side of those Chinese leaders who advocate capitulation to Japan, but the question remains whether it would be common sense on the part of the world to acquiesce in a state of affairs which, in the opinion of many, hopelessly discredits the League of Nations, the Kellogg Pact, and the efforts of the world to struggle out of international anarchy.”⁸²⁹

The portrayals of SIC-trained officers of Sino-Japanese conflict and Nationalist-Communist military ferment in China left these officers between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, the Nationalist government appeared weak and corrupt; on the other the Japanese were increasingly flouting agreements that the United States regarded as providing the basis of international peace and stability. In the 1930s, this was becoming apparent locally to officers such as Willys Peck, who observed that their Japanese counterparts could not be relied upon to accurately and consistently define Japanese policy in China but that it was rather the Japanese War Ministry that did so. Peck evinced considerable glee in relaying to Johnson Chinese Foreign Affairs Minister Lo Wen-kan’s portrayal of officers in the Japanese Foreign Office as practical “puppets,” and even more so on the latter’s observation that “the difference between the Japanese and the Chinese warlords was that the Chinese warlords were ‘rascals’ and ‘damn fools,’ while the Japanese warlord were by no means ‘damn fools.’”⁸³⁰ Sooner or later, it was apparent to them, the United States would have to take action, but the time was not quite ripe for

⁸²⁹ Willys R. Peck to Nelson [Johnson], “Unofficial and Confidential,” May 12, 1933, Nanking, China, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 4, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

⁸³⁰ Willys R. Peck to Nelson [Johnson], June 22, 1933, Nanking, China, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 260, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

it, and beyond such apocalyptic but vague visions of having “to stand Armageddon,”⁸³¹ there was little consensus among SIC-trained officers in the 1930s of what exactly America should do.

As will be further outlined in the succeeding chapter, perceptions of both China’s international problems and domestic difficulties (namely, Communism) tempered American desires to unilaterally encourage Chinese nationalism. On the question of extraterritoriality for example, Johnson opined that the United States could choose to “go it alone” by relinquishing the hodge-podge of legal and economic privileges “and clear out of the International Settlement, and still I doubt whether we would accomplish much by the deed.”⁸³² In formulating this opinion, Johnson relied on his correspondence with Peck, who had stressed that premature American acquiescence on the issue of extraterritoriality would force the United States to formally rely on Japan for protection of American rights in the International Settlement and elsewhere and in so doing would not only make the United States look weak but also to appear to be in collusion with Japanese interests in China.⁸³³ Perceptions of autocratic tendencies in Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist government further complicated matters. For example, in a letter to Hornbeck, Johnson mused over how to respond to the Chinese government’s censorship of the 1932 hit film, *Shanghai Express*, noting that Peck regarded the matter in a manner sympathetic to the Chinese government but that American newspaper headlines surrounding such actions created unfavorable public opinion in the United States that was difficult to ignore.⁸³⁴

⁸³¹ Nelson Johnson to Stanley Hornbeck, September 13, 1932, Peking [Beijing], China, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 4, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

⁸³² Nelson Johnson to Stanley Hornbeck, “Strictly Confidential,” August 7, 1934, Peking [Beijing], China, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 260, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

⁸³³ Willys Peck to Nelson Johnson, June 18, 1934, Nanking, China, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 260, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

⁸³⁴ Nelson Johnson to Stanley Hornbeck, December 28, 1928, Peking [Beijing], China, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 4, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

World politics were likewise difficult to dismiss. In a conversation between Willys Peck and Chinese Minister of Finance T.V. Soong touching on world politics as well as the Chinese situation, Peck observed “there seemed to be a general tendency toward dictatorships, such as those exercised by Mussolini, Hitler, and Stalin,” noting that “even in the United States the President had been given by Congress unusually wide powers for the reorganization of the Government.” Soong, for his part, concurred in general and opined that he thought China immune to a dictatorship, as it lacked a figure of the caliber of Stalin.⁸³⁵ As will be dealt with more explicitly in the next chapter, such a figure was already at work shaping China’s future, and many SIC-trained officers were cognizant of his handiwork.

Despite all this, SIC-trained officers remained remarkably sanguine about China’s future. For example, Julean Arnold observed that although “it is true that China has not developed a republic in the commonly accepted definition of this word, but I am of the opinion that popular democratic government will eventually be developed in this country in a manner that will conform with the commonly accepted conception of popular democratic government.”⁸³⁶

Seeking to provide accurate portrayals of Chinese and Japanese society and politics while reconciling them with American foreign policy goals, language-trained officers challenged presumptions of empire while paving the way for more explicit implementations of them. As the eyes and ears of the United States government, they interpreted these societies for their country and were vital to the American understanding of Asia from the turn of the century until World War II. Although they failed to actualize their respective visions, they were instrumental in cultivating the perception of Asia as a region that American policy could and should transform.

⁸³⁵ Willys R. Peck, Confidential, “Memorandum of Conversation: Chinese Political Situation, External and Internal,” March 20, 1933, [Nanking, China], Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 4, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

⁸³⁶ Julean Arnold, “Seventeenth Anniversary of the Revolution,” October 13, 1928, Peking, China, Julean Arnold Papers, box 5, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA.

CHAPTER 10

**FROM IMPERIAL EPITAPH TO COLD WAR PRELUDE: CHINESE COMMUNISM
AND JAPANESE MILITARISM FROM LANGUAGE OFFICERS' PERSPECTIVES,
1925-1941**

Previous chapters have largely detailed the preoccupation of Foreign Service offices on the prospects for expansion of American trade in China. The failure of this expansion to materialize, and the gradual shift of emphasis away from trade towards largely reactionary policies, derived primarily from political developments, particularly Chinese Communism and Japanese aggression in China. As noted in previous chapters, from the 1920s onwards, there was increasing pressure for American policy to become more proactive; despite this, Americans became increasingly reactive, without ever having approached realization of an economic empire in China.

This chapter argues that American commitment to the aforementioned ideal remained as abstract in this crisis-ridden period as during the inception of the SIC birthed by it. With the putative ideal of economic imperialism having faded to the background, American Foreign Service officers constructed an accurate picture of the growth of Communism as a political, ideological, and military force in China, as well as the challenges inherent in combating it. In this area, SIC-trained offices played a hybrid role, acting as sources of intelligence as well as diplomatic interlocutors.

This chapter will simultaneously argue that in the portrayals of language-trained Foreign Service officers in China, the single greatest challenge in combating the Communists for the Nationalist (KMT) government was the Japanese, whereas the Communists forced the hand of

Chiang Kai-shek to begin posturing (at least superficially) against the Japanese, and at the same time took advantage of the weakness and corruption of Chiang's regime to entrench their support base in outlying provinces. Both the factual accuracy and political loyalty of these officers has been variously called into question—particularly during and immediately after WWII—but in the midst of accusations and recriminations, this chapter argues that subsequent historians as well as the principal actors themselves failed to realize that the latter's recommendations were crafted to support the rhetoric of an Open Door imperialism that had long since failed to launch, let alone obtain.

Contrary to various treatments of American diplomacy in China asserting a pervasive lack of analysis of national events,⁸³⁷ American Foreign Service officers carefully analyzed both local and national developments from their vantage points in various provinces. So comprehensive was their coverage in fact that during this period a small but discernible gap emerged between two generations of China Hands, namely, those who entered service in 1900s and 1910s, and those who entered in the 1920s and afterwards, during the shift away from promoting trade to reacting to political and military crises. A similar divide emerged between Japan and China officers as well.

Although such a variety of opinions existed that generalizations are difficult, younger and more junior officers tended to view the Communists more favorably, and were more likely to be stationed in outlying provinces where the Communists were active. From their frequent postings in Manchuria (where their Japanese language skills were useful), both junior and senior Japanese-trained officers tended to view both Japanese aggression and Communist activity there with greater alarm (likely due to the alarm with which their Japanese counterparts viewed it).

⁸³⁷ Barbara Brooks, *Japan's Imperial Diplomacy: Consuls, Treaty Ports, and War in China, 1895-1938* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 83-85.

“Old” or “senior” China Hands encompassed officers such as Nelson Johnson, Willys Peck, and Julean Arnold and Paul R. Josselyn, whereas the younger group comprised officers such as John Service, Edmund Club, John Hall Paxton, and Arthur Ringwalt. Among the Japan Hands, the dominant figures were Joseph Grew (longtime US Ambassador to Japan but not a language officer), Joseph Ballantine, John Caldwell and Eugene Dooman (Dooman was close to both Ballantine and Grew but some of his views might well place him among the moderates). There were also two groups of moderates (if such a term can be considered appropriate): among the SIC-China officers these included officers such as Ernest Price and Edwin Stanton; among the SIC-Japan officers they embraced officers such as Erle Dickover and Max Kirjassoff.

With the exception of these moderates (most of whom left service before the war or luckily escaped scrutiny for various reasons), few of these officers escaped searing criticism for propounding the views dictated by their long tenures in the Foreign Service—in some cases from each other. Over the course of several decades, these officers carefully constructed portrayals of and postulated responses to Chinese Communism and Japanese militarism. Prior to WWII, despite increasing pressure on the US government to adopt more proactive policies, the United States was unwilling and/or unable to directly combat either Communism or Japanese militarism in China. From the above-mentioned groups of SIC-trained officers, the older China officers tended to see Chinese Communism as more influenced by the Soviet Union than did their junior colleagues (who generally observed the Communists more directly).

Perhaps best represented by Jay C. Huston (whose quest to understand Communism in China bordered on the obsessive), this group tended to see force, coupled with economic reform, as the only effective way to combat the challenge that Communism posed to the Chinese government. They likewise took saw Communism as a greater irritation (albeit not a serious

immediate threat) to the United States. The younger group of officers tended to see the Communists as not only more of a challenge to the Nationalist government, but one that also offered a potentially viable alternative. Both groups of China officers viewed both Communism and Japanese aggression as preventing Chiang Kai-shek's consolidation of power and implementation of economic reform in China.

Simultaneously, Japan officers (such as Joseph Ballantine and Eugene Dooman) were generally in agreement with the younger group of China officers on the strength and viability of Chinese Communism but were inclined to agree with their older China colleagues on the threat that Communism posed (at least potentially) to American interests in Asia. However, Japan-trained officers maintained a more realistic and accurate view of both Japanese attitudes towards the United States and the likelihood of war between the two countries.

The views of these officers provided the lenses through which both the United States at the time and subsequent scholars have viewed US policy towards pre- and post-war Japan and China, leading to various assertions of lost chances and missed opportunities.⁸³⁸ However, while these officers did indeed provide careful coverage and thorough analyses of developments in China and Japan and even formulated policy proposals, these were constrained by the channels through which their reports flowed to decision-makers in Washington, as well as by anti-interventionist sentiment in the United States (which lies largely outside the scope of this study).

To briefly highlight this attitude, even when the December 12, 1937 Japanese sinking of the USS Panay made war seem increasingly likely, anti-interventionists responded by proposing a constitutional amendment that would have severely curtailed the ability of the United States to

⁸³⁸ Jingbin Wang, "No Lost Chance in China: the False Realism of American Foreign Service Officers in China, 1943-1945," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 17 (2010), 118-145.

go to war.⁸³⁹ Even as Americans were increasingly expecting their government to “do” more (a trend detailed elsewhere in this dissertation), their caution with regard to use of military force curtailed the ability of the United States to respond to threats to the “Open Door” in China—the policy which putatively undergirded the United States’ pursuit of economic imperialism⁸⁴⁰ and had led to the creation of the SIC and the preservation of which, in portrayals of scholars such as Walter LaFeber and Thomas McCormick, formed the basis of the US approach to China and Japan.⁸⁴¹ The contradiction between the desire for government to “do” more clashed with American non-interventionism. Against this background, examining American Foreign Service officers’ assessments of Japanese militarism and Chinese Communism during this period highlights that however prescient their appraisals may have been, Open Door imperialism was a dead letter, more a badge of political correctness than a proactive policy.

Although the United States was not prepared to “do” much about either Chinese Communism or Japanese aggression in the 1930s, the aforementioned groups of language-trained officers clearly understood the problems they posed for both present and future American policy. Foreign Service officers recognized the inefficacy of Chiang’s policies towards both the Communists and the Japanese and put forward differing visions of American post-war policy for Japan and China. From the 1920s onward, the China Hands recognized the staying power of Chinese Communism, whereas the Japan Hands recognized the impasse in Japanese-American relations and the likelihood of war. Towards the end of WWII, the China Hands recognized that the Chinese Communists would likely prevail in the looming civil war.

⁸³⁹ Walter LaFeber, *Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations throughout History* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997), 186-187.

⁸⁴⁰ Thomas J. McCormick, *China Market: America’s Quest for Informal Empire, 1893-1901* (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1967), *passim*.

⁸⁴¹ *Op. Cit.*, *passim*; *ibid.*, *passim*.

The China Hands' understanding of Chinese Communism was born out of decades of first-hand experience with its complex genealogy in Chinese society and politics. Officers strove to furnish vivid and detailed and portrayals of all the social, political, and economic developments transpiring within their districts. Consequently, during the 1930s, the Chinese Communists figured prominently in many of them. SIC-trained Arthur Ringwalt stressed that the Communists held much stronger appeal for Chinese peasants in Yunnan province, and that as an ideology was much more effective than efforts to counter it.⁸⁴² Ringwalt spoke admiringly of their effectiveness, noting that in 1935, the populace of Kunming was "so unnerved by tales of the invincibility of the Communists" advancing on Yunnanfu province that "they were in no condition to offer any resistance," even to three young boys of the advance troops. One was killed, one wounded; when the third opened fire with a pair of pistols, the petrified local militia apparently dropped their weapons and fled, leaving the city to the Communists.⁸⁴³ Writing of the Communists' ideological and organization discipline, Ringwalt related a locally-propagated anecdote, telling of a woman Communist with local forces who gave birth to child. Leaving the child with a peasant family in Yunnanfu, the woman pinned a note to the infant's clothing stating, "you are not my son, although you were born from my womb. You belong to the country. When you grow up you must work for the country and society and not think of me." When she departed she left the family with a sum of money and a warning that if ill were to befall the child the family would be killed.⁸⁴⁴

⁸⁴² Arthur Ringwalt to Nelson T. Johnson, "The Communist Campaign in Northern Kweichow," American Consulate, February 27, 1936, Yunnanfu, China, no. 149, 800/Communism, 1936, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁸⁴³ Arthur Ringwalt to Nelson T. Johnson, "Communist Military Organization," American Consulate, Yunnanfu, China, June 19, 1935, Records of the Department of State, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, 800/Communism, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁸⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

According to Ringwalt, “the Communist army under Chu Te and Mao Tse-Tung owes its strength to its compactness and its almost fanatical unity of purpose. Its organization is such as to make for the extreme of flexibility. Its leaders have displayed an ingenuity which only years of hardship in the face of overwhelming odds can produce. Perhaps for the first time since the early years of the T’aping Rebellion has a large body of troops been imbued with the same resolution and disinterestedness. The stress placed on political education would seem to be justified.”⁸⁴⁵ Ringwalt further highlighted the rigor of the Chinese Communists’ ideology by noting that, when Chiang Kai-Shek offered a reward of one hundred thousand dollars for the capture, “dead or alive,” of either Chu Te or Mao Tse-Tung, Chu Te reportedly “offered one dollar for the capture of General Chiang.”⁸⁴⁶

As noted in previous chapters, missionaries, along with businessmen and local informants provided consular officers with a detailed picture of the spread of Communist influence in China. One Reverend G.R. Wood from Sining, Chinghai province, China, for example, reported that some of the Nationalist troops in Kansu had defected to the Communists, that the loyalty of the remainder in his province of Chinghai was uncertain, and that Tibetan Buddhist troops had joined the Communists with the understanding that the practice of Buddhism would be unmolested.⁸⁴⁷ SIC-trained consul Arthur Ringwalt noted that not only did this tolerance become standard practice, but that prominent Tibetan figures were incorporated in the Chinese Communist forces and given positions of high responsibility.⁸⁴⁸ While striving to remain

⁸⁴⁵Ibid.

⁸⁴⁶Ibid.

⁸⁴⁷ Nelson T. Johnson to Secretary of State, “Confidential: Communist in West China,” Peiping (Beijing), China, July 10, 1935, Records of the Department of State, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, 800/Communism, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁸⁴⁸ Arthur R. Ringwalt to Nelson T. Johnson, “Political Report for May, 1936,” American Consulate, Yunnanfu, China, June 6, 1936, China, 800/Communism, 1935, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

objective in tone (and asserting that the Tibetan and Chinese “races do not mix well”), Ringwalt observed that Nationalist-Tibetan relations fared much worse, even devolving into armed clashes.⁸⁴⁹ Arthur Ringwalt similarly reported that Japanese political agents in Yunnanfu sought to agitate the Annamite community against the Chinese central government, promising Japanese aid should the provincial government in Yunnanfu form a coalition with other provinces.⁸⁵⁰

Consul General Paul R. Josselyn similarly highlighted the Communist strategy of treating defeated or captured Nationalists troops in order to build good will, noting that in December 1935 when the Communists captured a Nationalist unit in Hunan province, they fed the Nationalist troops, compensated them for their weapons and ammunition, and sent them home.⁸⁵¹ While striving to report dispassionately, Josselyn further noted that the pay of the Nationalist troops in Hunan “many months in arrears. Man for man they are hardly a match for the fighting men of the Red horde, they have not been impatient to come to grips with them in the past, and they have little stomach for fighting now.”⁸⁵²

In the portrayals of SIC-China-trained officers such developments occurred against the backdrop of severe economic privation in rural China. They repeatedly underscored the need to alleviate the dire economic conditions of the peasant population in China, while noting that the land-owning classes opposed land-redistribution proposals and that all previous attempts to re-allocate wealth and land resources so as to alleviate the extreme rural property.⁸⁵³ According to

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁰ Arthur Ringwalt to Nelson T. Johnson, “Strictly Confidential: Subversive Political Activities in Yunnan on the Part of Japanese Political Agents,” American Consulate, Yunnanfu, China, August 31, 1935, RG 84, 800, Records of Foreign Service Posts, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁸⁵¹ Paul R. Josselyn to Nelson T. Johnson, “Communist Movements in Hunan,” December 14, 1935, Hankow, China, 800/Communism, 1935, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁸⁵² Ibid.

⁸⁵³ F.P. Lockhart to Secretary of State, “Confidential, Communist Situation in West China,” Peiping [Beijin], China, November 7, 1935, Records of the Department of State, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, 800/Communism, NARA, College Park, MD.

Nelson Johnson, the deteriorating economic conditions in Chinghai and Shenxi provinces provided the primary impetus for the spread of Communist influence in area.⁸⁵⁴

Within this milieu, officers kept abreast of the political propaganda and psychological warfare of the Communists, who sought to further rally the Chinese populace to their cause. According to F.P. Lockhart (Counselor of the US Embassy in Beijing), this was calculated with a view towards “provoking action by the Japanese Army against China.”⁸⁵⁵ Such a development would further weaken the Nationalist government (the Kuomintang), paving the way for leadership competition at the national level.⁸⁵⁶ Foreign Service officers in China highlighted the corrupt and utilitarian methods of Chiang Kai-shek’s government. Although officers such as Vincent, Davies, Davis, Club, Paxton, Ludden, and Ringwalt strove to report objectively, their reports highlight a weak, corrupt Nationalist government, rooted in the sandy foundation of personal politics. For example, in 1935, Arthur Ringwalt, the American consul at Yunnanfu, stressed that Chinese media reports concerning the Communists were unreliable at best. He estimated that Chiang Kai-shek had “approximately 200,000 troops engaged in fruitless attempt to deal with 20 to 30,000 Communists . . . apparently his policy has been to weaken the various provincial forces who owe only an indirect loyalty to him and at the same time to consolidate his own position . . . one cannot escape the impression that Chiang is as interested in playing politics as in bandit suppression.”⁸⁵⁷

⁸⁵⁴ Nelson T. Johnson to Secretary of State, “Confidential: Communist in West China,” Peiping (Beijing), China, July 10, 1935, Records of the Department of State, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, 800/Communism, NARA, College Park, MD. .

⁸⁵⁵ F.P. Lockhart to Secretary of State, “Confidential, Communist Situation in West China,” Peiping [Beijin], China, November 7, 1935, Records of the Department of State, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, 800/Communism, NARA, College Park, MD. .

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁷ Arthur Ringwalt to Nelson T. Johnson, April 9, 1935, Yunnanfu, China, 800/Communism, 1935, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park MD.

In this vein Arthur Ringwalt also detailed power struggles between Chiang Kai-shek and provincial generals such as Lung Yun, the Chairman of Yunnan province as well as the local military commander.⁸⁵⁸ The key disagreement was troop deployment in the face of the Communist threat—whether Lung’s troops or those Chiang Kai-shek would be employed.⁸⁵⁹ Commenting on the political composition and orientation of the Communist forces, Ringwalt observed that although the Communists in Kiangsi “had at least the moral support and direction of the Third International . . . the Chinese Soviet was not necessarily subservient to the Third International, as the latter organization was said to have been in favor of the development of a strong soviet unit in China, while certain Chinese Communists advocated the encouraging of more or less spontaneous movements throughout the country.”⁸⁶⁰

SIC-China officers could not always discern between “communist” and “bandit” forces in the 1920s and ‘30s. For example in 1935 John Hall Paxton commented that a group of bandits claiming to be communists perpetrated the usual acts of looting and burning, but that in addition they destroyed land title deeds, contracts, and invoices wherever they could, and “raised the Red flag of the Soviets with the crossed sickle and hammer.”⁸⁶¹ In 1925, consul Edwin Stanton reported a \$5million “gift” of 5,000 machine guns from Soviet Russia to Kuomintang (Nationalist) general Feng Yu Hsiang, in the hope that Feng would assume leadership of the party “in support of its efforts to establish Communism in China.”⁸⁶² Foreign Service officers

⁸⁵⁸ Ringwalt to Nelson T. Johnson, April 29, 1935, Yunnanfu, China, 800/Communism, 1935, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁸⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁰ Ringwalt to Nelson T. Johnson, June 19, 1935, Yunnanfu China, no. 66, 800/Communism, 1935, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁸⁶¹ John Hall Paxton to Nelson T. Johnson, “Reported Red Uprising in the Mup’ing District,” December 3, 1935, Chefoo, China, 800/Communism, 1935, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁸⁶² Edwin F. Stanton to Ferdinand L. Mayer, “Soviet Government’s Gift of Arms and Munitions to General Feng,” American Consulate, Kalgan, China, May 13, 1925, Confidential File, Kalgan, 1925-1926, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, 800, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

did their best to report on the sources and movement of arms, munitions, and personnel, but against the mosaic of shifting political ideologies, rivalries and alliances among Chinese partisans and between respective Chinese factions and the Japanese and the Soviet Union in the 1920s and '30s it was often difficult to ascertain whether arms supplied to Chinese generals occurred out of ideological or financial motivations.

Moreover, the structure of the “Communist” party was fluid during much of this period. During the 1920s, officers such Ernest Price detailed the growth of the Communist party “outside” the Kuomintang alongside the development of “cliques within the Kuomintang...composed of members of the Party which are, nevertheless, hostile to the present Government, and make up what is known as the Left Wing of the Kuomintang.”⁸⁶³ Somewhat closer in outlook to older officers, Price portrayed the CCP as supporting world revolution, linked to the Third Internationale.⁸⁶⁴

However close the relationship between the CCP and the Third Internationale may have been during the former’s infancy, SIC-trained officers followed their divorce closely. In 1928, J. V. A. MacMurray’s report to the State Department (Huston was the US consul in Canton at this time) incorporated Jay C. Huston’s views on strength of Communism in the district, discounting the Communists as a political force and emphasizing the personal as opposed to ideological differences among the various factions among and between the Kuomintang and local warlords.⁸⁶⁵ He also reiterated Huston’s belief that the Russians were responsible for the

⁸⁶³ Ernest B. Price to J.V.A. MacMurray, “Growth of a Radical Opposition to the Present National Government,” Correspondence, American Consulate, Nanking, Vol. XXVIII, Class VIII, 800, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁸⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁵ J. V. A. MacMurray to the Secretary of State, January 26, 1928, Peking, China, 893.00/P. R., NARA.

uprising and that its failure entrenched local resentment against the Communist—which in turn led to the summary execution of the local Soviet Vice-Consul.⁸⁶⁶

Based on the reports of Consul Jay C. Huston, American Minister J.V.A. MacMurray highlighted the Communist role in an uprising in Canton in December 1928, noting that it marked the end of relations between the U.S.S.R. and the Nationalists.⁸⁶⁷ According to MacMurray, “personal motives rather than abstract political principles are the cause of present dissensions among those who seek to govern China.”⁸⁶⁸ According to MacMurray, the uprising consisted of “the riff-raff workers of Canton, linked up with certain robber bands from the country districts . . . ,” noting that “things began to look ominous for foreigners because of the expressed intention of the communists to deal with them after gaining control of the situation.”⁸⁶⁹ Huston had emphasized to MacMurray that this uprising “differed from previous attempts in that the movement of December 11th was purely communistic and based upon the belief that the workers would rise and take control of the city.”⁸⁷⁰

According to MacMurray, “it seemed that in their initial speeches and proclamations the agitators promised every member of the proletariat who joined them \$20 and rifle, freedom to loot, freedom from debt, food, wealth, and a house to live in.”⁸⁷¹ MacMurray further noted, “Mr. Huston reported that, in spite of these extravagant offers in a city that boasted union membership of some 300,000, the Russians were understood to have marshaled only 3,000 of the riff-raff workers who, combined with a thousand or more persons belonging to peasant robber bands and about an equal number of so-called red troops which were brought over, constituted the ‘red

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁷ J.V.A MacMurray (Peking) to the Secretary of State, January 26, 1928, 893.00P.R. No. 1366, RG 84.

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁷¹ Ibid.

guards.”⁸⁷² In MacMurray’s portrayal—based on Huston’s reports, “the manner in which the communists allowed the reds to burn the city and in many instances to shoot the owners of the houses which the latter tried to save, aroused the fierce hatred of the Cantonese against the against both the Russians and Communists.”⁸⁷³ Huston’s report expressed the opinion that the episode might be termed one of Moscow’s most ghastly failures in attempting to bring about world revolution, the Soviets having failed completely in gauging Chinese psychology and the reaction of the so-called oppressed classes to their grandiose attempt.”⁸⁷⁴

Although the political composition and orientation as well as sources of support for Chinese Communism shifted considerably during the 1920s and ‘30s, American officials were alive to these changes and by the 1930s were fully aware that Chinese Communism was a distinct entity from its elder Soviet sibling. For example, reports by then-Military Attache Col. Joseph Stillwell highlighted its Chinese particularities. General Joseph Stilwell was a graduate of the Army Language Officer Program, and shared many affinities with SIC-China-trained Foreign Service officers, although his military role conferred slightly different priorities.⁸⁷⁵ He observed that although its agriculture-based economy made industrial communism “as a theory of government” ill-suited for China, in fact, “the so-called Reds now operating in China, in open rebellion against the Government, can hardly be said to represent pure communism.”⁸⁷⁶ Characterizing Communists as outcast, erstwhile allies of the Kuomintang, Stillwell echoed the observations of Arthur Ringwalt, asserting, “it seems certain that these communist-bandits are

⁸⁷² Ibid.

⁸⁷³ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁵ Thomas Watts Collier “The Chinese Language Officer Program of the U.S. Army, 1919-1943,” Duke University, 1966. MA Thesis, 41-42.

⁸⁷⁶ Joseph Stillwell, G-2 Report, “Political Parties and Groups; Present Trend of the Chinese Communist Party,” 3700, copy to State Department, February 7, 1936, 800/Communism, 1936, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

not receiving direction or support from the Third International [sic] and that their methods are probably not approved by that body.”⁸⁷⁷

Stilwell further noted that although the Communists had been driven underground in 1928, they were “busy in those areas neglected by the government where the peasant population suffering from local misrule welcomed any form of government which promised some amelioration of their lot.”⁸⁷⁸ Similar to SIC-China officers, Stilwell highlighted the Communists’ guerilla tactics, the reluctance of Nationalist armies to engage the Communists directly, and tenuous loyalty of Nationalist troops that often led to mass defections to the Communists in the 1930s.⁸⁷⁹ He also observed that the Nationalist armies’ tactics usually consisted of tailing Communist forces, often eventually encircling them but leaving open an avenue for retreat, or arriving at a threatened city too late to engage the Communists but just in time to loot whatever the latter had left behind.⁸⁸⁰ According to Stilwell, these strategies resulted in the consolidation of Chiang Kai-shek’s power, but “the gains were made at great expense to the country and certainly cannot justify his failure to score a decisive victory over the Red armies. In fact, these gains can only be temporary unless such a victory is soon forthcoming.”⁸⁸¹

Although the Communists often destroyed the assets of propertied classes, Stilwell noted that the “conduct of the Reds toward the common people was better than that of the government troops...no Red soldier was permitted to use opium under penalty of death. While in possession of a town they were careful to pay for what they took although when forced to evacuate they

⁸⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁸¹ Ibid.

took what they wanted and burnt the town.”⁸⁸² Stilwell concluded that “communism has had little or no chance to succeed in China, which is still in a stage of agricultural life and family industry,” noting that that the farmers in the countryside “have simple and clear notions about individual property, a love for the bit of land upon which they live and a strong conviction that they should not be deprived of it. A Chinese could only believe in one form of communism, i.e., a redistribution of wealth by which he could benefit.”⁸⁸³ He further opined that the communists “can hardly be said to represent pure communism” and stressed that “it seems certain that they are not receiving any direction or support from the Third Internationale, and that their actions are probably not approved by that body.”⁸⁸⁴ Most importantly, Stilwell asserted, “unless the present[Chinese] Government can show some sign of strength by a united front against Japan, it will soon fall apart due to its own weakness. Furthermore, Japan is using the Red menace as an excuse for her present China program, which includes the prevention of Sovietism in the Far East.”⁸⁸⁵

Stilwell’s views need not be recounted in detail overmuch, thank to Barbara Tuchman’s thick description of his career in China.⁸⁸⁶ What is worthy of mention is that in the 1930s, reports by SIC-China-trained and/or experienced officers tended to mirror and corroborate his accounts. Arthur Ringwalt’s reports from Yunnanfu in particular seem to bear out both Stilwell’s reports of Communist offensive and Nationalist defensive tactics, as well as Ballantine’s intimation of large numbers of troops behind Japanese lines in Manchuria.

⁸⁸² Ibid.

⁸⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁶ Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911–45* (New York, New York: Macmillan Co., 1971), *passim*.

While scholars should be cautious in reading too much into slight differences of emphasis, it is likewise worthy to note that that older-generation officers such as Charles Gauss and Nelson T. Johnson tended to be more skeptical of Communist successes, and sparser in their praise. Viewed alongside portrayals of the Nationalist regime it does seem that those of younger Foreign Service officers in China depicted the Communists favorably. While Foreign Service officers in general took a dim view of Communism *per se*, and held even lower opinions of Americans who worked to promote Communism in China, older officers tended to be slightly more strident. For example, in May 1936, Chinese municipal authorities in Shanghai accused an American citizen, Mr. Max Granich, of being a representative of the Third Internationale.⁸⁸⁷ When Granich complained to the US Consul General, he “was informed orally that the Consulate General declined to intervene in the matter.”⁸⁸⁸ Consul General Charles E. Gauss stated,

“I felt that the Consulate General should give no official support or countenance in the activities in which he is engaged. He is publishing and disseminating a political magazine of a highly radical propaganda character, likely to incite the student and radical element to agitation, and perhaps disorders, inimical to peace and good order and to the good relations between the United States and China, and other countries.”⁸⁸⁹

⁸⁸⁷ C. E. Gauss to Nelson T. Johnson, “Registration of Eastern Publishing Company, Complaint of Chinese Authorities against Max Granich Publisher of THE VOICE OF CHINA,” American Consulate General, Shanghai, China, May 9, 1936, China, 800/Communism, 1936, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁸⁸⁸ C. E. Gauss to Nelson T. Johnson, “Max Granich, Propriet of Easter Publishing Company, Publishing THE VOICE OF CHINA,” American Consulate General, Shanghai, China, May 22, 1936, China, 800/Communism, 1936, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁸⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Gauss further relayed that he would reject Granich's application to register his company as an American entity in Shanghai (and thereby eligible for extraterritorial protection) on the grounds that in his application Granich had failed to honestly detail the intended activities of his publishing company.⁸⁹⁰

Foreign Service officers were occasionally asked to monitor and report on the movements and activities of American scholars in China. For example, Charles Gauss responded to a State Department request to report on the activities of a Yale scholar, George Alexander Kennedy and his wife during their visit to China in June 1936.⁸⁹¹ According to Gauss, Kennedy had been awarded a three-year research grant by the Rockefeller Foundation via the Institute of Pacific Relations to "experiment with intensive methods of giving a reading knowledge of the Chinese language to American scholars."⁸⁹² Gauss's report cited Shanghai police authorities as observing, "though Mr. Kennedy is suspected of radical tendencies, inquiries show that during his present sojourn in China he has not been concerned in any sort of subversive activities."⁸⁹³

Although by the 1930s the reporting focus of American officers had shifted towards political and military crises, interest in trade was by no means entirely a dead letter. Foreign Service officers in China kept a watchful eye on the economic situation as well. American Minister Nelson T. Johnson in 1935 wrote to Consul Arthur Ringwalt to request that the latter investigate in his district "whether monopolistic rights have been or are being granted to Japanese which constitute a violation of the Open Door policy," while bearing in mind that Americans might not be "likely or willing to incur the same degree of expenditure of effort and money or to assume

⁸⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁹¹ C.E. Gauss to the Secretary of State, "Confidential: the Activities of George Alexander Kennedy, American Consulate General, Shanghai, China, August 22, 1936, China, 800/Communism, 1936, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁸⁹² Ibid.

⁸⁹³ Ibid.

responsibilities to the same degree as the Japanese.”⁸⁹⁴ Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, American officers continued to observe and report on economic conditions in their districts, underscoring both opportunities for investment of American capital and threats to Open Door principles. However, in the majority of investment opportunities (when investment was requested by Chinese provincial officials in particular), they often recommended against such ventures, referring to the lack of security of the investments and insufficient Chinese collateral.⁸⁹⁵ Economic opportunities increasingly concentrated in Japanese hands by default. For example, Arthur Ringwalt noted that, despite a resurgence in “anti-Japanese feeling” in Yunnanfu, China in 1935, Japanese imports into the province more than quintupled in value from 1934 to 1935, to more than 67,000 yen.⁸⁹⁶ Ringwalt observed that operations by Chinese Communist and Japanese severely restricted Chiang Kai-shek’s ability to extend Nationalist government control throughout the country,⁸⁹⁷ while redounding to greater power for the Japanese and increased influence for the Communists.

American officers understood that the structure of the Nationalist government posed an even more serious obstacle to addressing such challenges. Commenting on the nature of Chiang Kai-shek’s government, Ringwalt observed that the character of Chiang’s government was highly personal, reliant on subordinates’ loyalty to him, rather than on competence and ability. According to Ringwalt, while visiting Yunnanfu in 1936, Chiang bestowed titular favors on the military governor a General Lung—who local officials and students charged with

⁸⁹⁴ Nelson T. Johnson to Arthur Ringwalt, “Strictly Confidential” Legation of the United States of America, Peiping [Beijing], July 8, 1935, RG 84, 800, Records of Foreign Service Posts, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁸⁹⁵ J. V. A. MacMurray to Edwin F. Stanton, Legation of the United States of America, Peiping [Beijing], August 21, 1925, Confidential File, Kalgan, 1925-1926, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, 800, Records of Foreign Service Posts, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁸⁹⁶ Arthur R. Ringwalt to Nelson T. Johnson, “Political Report for December, 1935,” American Consulate, Yunnanfu, China, 800/Communism, 1935, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁸⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

maladministration—even to the point of nominally adopting the general’s son as his own. On receiving a petition charging the general with favoritism and corruption, Chiang turned over the petition to Lung, who arrested the petition’s organizers and executed several of them.⁸⁹⁸

According to American officers, not only were nominally Nationalist officials such as Lung unpopular due to corruption, they were difficult to deal with practically because of their anti-foreign sentiments. In Yunnanfu for example, Arthur Ringwalt noted that the aforementioned Chairman and General, Lung Yun, detested foreigners, bitterly resenting “any suggestion of a limitation on his sovereignty.”⁸⁹⁹ So dogged was his antipathy toward foreigners that he refused to meet with any of the foreign officials in the province (including the Japanese) for any reason.⁹⁰⁰

Although SIC-China-trained officers contributed a large quantity of information to the US understanding of Communism in China, SIC-Japan graduates—most often stationed in Japanese-dominated or controlled areas such as Mukden, Amoy, and Tsingtao—were sources as well. While stationed as Consul General in Mukden, Manchuria, Joseph Ballantine’s relationships with local Japanese officials provided him access to secret Japanese assessments of Communist and other guerrilla activity in the province, as well as maps indicating their approximate dispersal along the Yalu river.⁹⁰¹ He noted that contrary to Japanese propaganda asserting that the Soviet Union was providing the Communists with weapons, his Japanese

⁸⁹⁸ Arthur R. Ringwalt to Nelson T. Johnson, “Confidential, Visit of General Chiang Kai-Shek,” American Consulate, Yunnanfu, China, April 28, 1936, China, 800/Communism, 1935, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁸⁹⁹ Arthur R. Ringwalt to Nelson T. Johnson, “Confidential, Chairman Lung Yun,” American Consulate, Yunnanfu, China, July 2, 1936, China, 800/Communism, 1935, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁹⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁰¹ Joseph Ballantine to Nelson T. Johnson, May 12, 1936, Mukden, Manchuria, no. 261, 800/Communism, 1936, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

contact privately admitted that no evidence of this existed.⁹⁰² Obtained through cryptically-related conversation and/or furtively permitted glimpses of Japanese intelligence, such information was tinged with the opinions of Japanese officials. For instance, in this 1936 report Ballantine noted that “a very reliable American source” had obtained “secret” Japanese maps of the disposition of Communist armies in Japanese-controlled Manchuria from “the Japanese director of a certain government bureau concerned with bandit suppression.”⁹⁰³

According to this account, “the Communist groups are reported to carry on propaganda which combines anti-Japanese and anti-Manchukuo teachings with Marxian doctrines.”⁹⁰⁴ Ballantine particularly highlighted his observation that despite repeated charges made for public consumption by Japanese officials that the Soviet Union is supplying Manchurian insurgents with arms, it is significant that in the interview the Director is understood to have categorically stated that there is no proof of weapons coming from the U.S.S.R.⁹⁰⁵ Whereas Ballantine further emphasized that the number of Communist troops in Manchuria was likely in excess of the Japanese official’s estimate of 30,000,⁹⁰⁶ Nelson T. Johnson expressed skepticism that the armies even existed, opining, “it is assumed that if such armies actually exist, they have been skillful in avoiding clashes with Japanese military patrols.”⁹⁰⁷

Yet while Johnson and other officers stationed in political centers such as Beijing and Shanghai remained skeptical of Communist gains, officers in outlying province were conversely wary of inflated, exaggerated, or outright false accounts of Nationalist engagement with

⁹⁰² Ibid.

⁹⁰³ Joseph W. Ballantine to Nelson T. Johnson, “Confidential: Native Communist Armies in Manchuria,” American Consulate General, Mukden, Manchuria, 800/Communism, 1936, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁹⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁷ Nelson T. Johnson to Secretary of State, “Native Communist Armies in Manchuria,” US Embassy, Peiping, May 22, 1936, 800/Communism, 1936, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

Communist forces. For example, in February 1936, Arthur Ringwalt observed that local newspaper reports recommended the evacuation of foreign persons in advance of a putative Communist thrust into the province, amid “lurid accounts” of Communist captures of various minor localities and a heavy Nationalist aerial bombing campaign, while the consul himself noted that these accounts were without any factual basis.⁹⁰⁸

Even more galling in the portrayals of SIC-trained officers was the apparently increasing determination of Chiang’s government to defend Communist-threatened cities to the last man—of someone else’s army: according to Arthur Ringwalt noted that in 1935, local magistrates were “enjoined to defend their district cities to the last man” on pain of execution.⁹⁰⁹ These were hardly idle threats: Ringwalt reported that the magistrate of Suanwei in northeastern Yunnanfu was executed by firing squad after hiding with his militia instead of engaging the Communists.⁹¹⁰ Informants were also treated severely. In the city of Suntien (also in northeastern Yunnanfu), the attacking Communists bribed a 7-year-old girl with a silver coin to reveal the location of the local magistrate, shooting him when he was found. When the new magistrate reported the incident to the Provincial government, both the girl and her father were “executed before the coffin of the deceased magistrate as a sacrificial offering to his soul.”⁹¹¹

In addition to witnessing such distressing events, officers had front row seats to observe the political corruption that plagued the Nationalist government from top to bottom. When General Yen Hsi-shan was about to implement village ownership of land in the district of North

⁹⁰⁸ Arthur R. Ringwalt to Nelson T. Johnson, “The Communist Campaign in Northern Kweichow,” American Consulate, Yunnanfu, February 27, 1936, China, 800/Communism, 1935, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁹⁰⁹ Arthur Ringwalt to Nelson T. Johnson, “The Communist Campaign in Northern Kweichow,” American Consulate, February 27, 1936, Yunnanfu, China, 800/Communism, 1936, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁹¹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹¹ Ibid.

Shensi (Shansi Province), Nelson T. Johnson reported to the State Department that Nationalist party officials had bribed Yen with \$5,000 to postpone the measure.⁹¹² According to Johnson however, his reports were based on newspaper accounts and conversations with Nationalist party and Chinese government officials, whereas those of Ringwalt were based on personal experience and conversations with eyewitnesses.⁹¹³ Consequently, even though officers were far from being Communist sympathizers in terms of personal ideological affinities, and although they strove to keep their reports free of political and/or ideological commentary, it would hardly come as a surprise if such first-hand observers in outlying areas such as Yunnanfu were more inclined to view Chinese Communists in a comparatively favorable light vis-à-vis their counterparts in chief urban centers such as Beijing, Nanking, and Shanghai.

For example, in 1936, while noting that the Nationalist government was beginning to view anti-Japanese propaganda with increasing concern, Willys R. Peck noted that Chinese Finance Minister H. H. Kung forcefully downplayed the ostensible influence of communist ideology on the farming and working classes, but stressed that the anti-Japanese rhetoric had become significantly persuasive to large numbers of Nationalist troops stationed in the provinces.⁹¹⁴ It is interesting to note that Peck noted Kung's assertion that the Chinese traditional expectation of filial piety played a role in checking the spread of Communism among the peasants in Shansi province by noting that the lot of land proprietors was thankless and expensive (in terms of taxes from the government and social obligations to tenants) and that he

⁹¹² Nelson T. Johnson to Secretary of State, "Communist Situation in Northwest China," American Consulate, March 3, 1936, Nanking, China, 800/Communism, 1936, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁹¹³ *Ibid.*, op. cit.

⁹¹⁴ Willys R. Peck, "Memorandum of Conversation: Dr. H. H. Kung, American Ambassador [Nelson T. Johnson], Willys R. Peck; the Communist Invasion of Shansi Province," US Embassy, Nanking, China, March 5, 1936, 800/Communism, 1936, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

personally would gladly be unburdened of his land under a communal ownership scheme.⁹¹⁵

Ringwalt's accounts from the ground do not mention such resistance among the working classes but rather from the gentry who typically "lost everything at the hands of the reds."⁹¹⁶

The Nationalist military forces appear weak in almost every account from American officers, whether they were facing Communists or the Japanese. According to Joseph Stilwell in March 1936, "if China's [Nationalist] armed forces are to be judged on the basis of performance, it is idle to even speak of resisting Japan. Instead of detailing at most one division of troops to go and root out this band of 10,000 poorly armed men, we have the usual grand scheme of rounding them up from three sides by a combined movement of six or eight or more divisions, which will simply sit down around the occupied area till the Reds decide to go somewhere else...there are no leaders in the Chinese army."⁹¹⁷ According to Ambassador Nelson T. Johnson, the Chinese government in 1936 itself asserted that it had "no fixed policy" regarding the Communists and downplayed the number of actually armed rebel troops.⁹¹⁸

The ostensibly inimically hostile relationship between the Nationalist government and the Communists was not always clear to American officers. For example, Nelson T. Johnson noted in 1936 that the Japanese began to suspect Communist-Nationalist coordination against the Japanese in Northwest Shensi.⁹¹⁹ Paul R. Josselyn, the Consul-General in Hankow, highlighted

⁹¹⁵ Ibid.

⁹¹⁶ Arthur Ringwalt to Nelson T. Johnson, "The Communist Campaign in Northern Kweichow," American Consulate, February 27, 1936, Yunnanfu, China, 800/Communism, 1936, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁹¹⁷ Joseph Stilwell, enclosure, Nelson T. Johnson to Secretary of State, "Military Attache's Report on Communists in Shansi Province," Peiping [Beijing], March 13, 1936, 800/Communism, 1936, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁹¹⁸ Nelson T. Johnson, memorandum of conversation with F.P. Lockhart and General Sung Che-yuan, Hopei-Chahar Pacification Commission, "Communist Situation in Shansi," Peiping [Beijing], March 16, 1936, 800/Communism, 1936, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁹¹⁹ Nelson T. Johnson to Secretary of State, "Confidential: Communist Situation in Northwest China," Peiping [Beijing], March 27, 1936, 800/Communism, 1936, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

reports from the representative of an American company traveling in Shansi that the locals believed that the Communists had entered Shansi “by arrangement with Chiang Kai-shek in order to give an excuse for Central Government forces to move into that province,” and that although it “took fourteen days for Red forces to cross the Yellow River . . . there was no move to hinder them in doing so.”⁹²⁰ American officers such as Willys R. Peck noted that Japan viewed such possibilities with great alarm and hostility. Peck highlighted the 1933 forthcoming visit of a Soviet Ambassador to China as making “this Communist menace much more serious than it is now. The Third International was giving constant advice and assistance to Communist forces in China.”⁹²¹ Other officers similarly underscored Chiang Kai-shek’s willingness to capitalize on conflicts between rival forces in China in order to bolster his own power. For example, Paul R. Josselyn noted that in September, 1936, Chiang Kai-shek’s forces made no attempt to assist “Mohammedan” troops in Kansu province—nominally connected to the Nationalist government—because “the Central Government is not averse to seeing the Mohammedan divisions broken by the Communists, and the military strength and the influence of the Mohammedans in the province diminished.”⁹²²

It should be borne in mind that throughout the course of such reporting, the safety of American citizens in China (most of whom were missionaries) was the most immediately pressing—albeit not sole—concern. Arthur Ringwalt’s report of April 9 noted Communist troop movements in detail, highlighting the missionary communities potentially threatened.

Referencing the 1934 murder of American missionaries John and Betty Stam by Chinese

⁹²⁰ Paul R. Josselyn to Nelson T. Johnson, “Confidential: Political Situation in Shensi,” March 28, 1936, Hankow, China, 800/Communism, 1936, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁹²¹ Willys R. Peck to Nelson T. Johnson, “Memorandum of Conversation,” Willys R. Peck and Mr. Suma, First Secretary of the Japanese Legation, Nanking, China, March 11, 1933, 330, vol. 45, Nanking, China, 1933, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁹²² Paul R. Josselyn to Nelson T. Johnson, “Movements of Communist Forces,” September 2, 1936, 800/Communism, 1936, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

Communists, Willys R. Peck noted that Communist policy towards foreigners appeared to have shifted away from kidnapping and killing or holding them for ransom in order to build a more favorable image and more effectively confront the Japanese, although this dramatic change did not, in Peck's opinion, seem to have fully gone into effect. Peck also speculated on possible Soviet influence on the putative change in policy, musing as to whether the Russians were attempting to mobilize Chinese nationalism against Japan.⁹²³

American Foreign Service officers in China were quite cognizant of the alarm with which the Japanese viewed Communism in China. However, officers such as Ambassador Nelson T. Johnson were remarkably sanguine about the challenge the Communists posed to the prevailing order. In a conversation with the Japanese counterpart of Col. Joseph Stilwell (with the latter present throughout), Johnson opined that Communism in China was an idea,

“and that ideas were like water: for just as water seeks its level, filling all holes and valleys in its rush to find its level, so ideas like communism fill all valleys of discontent and holes of defeat in their rush to find their level. This was in obedience to a natural law, and if the farmers and students could be given a happier outlook on life I felt that communism as such would lose its interest for them.”⁹²⁴

Johnson traced the organization development of the CCP to Dr. Sun Yat-sen, asserting that the Soviets

⁹²³ Arthur Ringwalt to Nelson T. Johnson, “Communist Threat to Yunnanfu,” Yunnanfu, China, April 9, 1936, 800/Communism, 1936, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD; Mary Geraldine Taylor, *The Triumph of John and Betty Stam* (The China Inland Mission, 1935: Philadelphia & London), *passim*; Willys R. Peck to Secretary of State, Naval Radio, Peiping [Beijing], April 11, 1936, 800/Communism, 1936, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁹²⁴ Nelson T. Johnson, “Conversation, Confidential: Communism in China and Chinese Currency Reform

“had brought to China the idea inherent in the modern totalitarian state as exemplified by the one-party Communist Government in Russia, the one-party Nazi Government in Germany, and the one-party Fascist Government in Italy. I remarked that these three governments all had one thing in common, namely, that they were governed by one party or group which effectively excluded, from participation in the Government or as an opposition, all other parties.”⁹²⁵

Johnson emphasized the discrepancy between rural and urban standards of living as having stimulated the rise of Communism in China, and that the idea of an industrial proletarian movement was out of the question, but that nevertheless the level of agrarian discontent had risen to a point at which the CCP could (and did) survive as an indigenous movement.⁹²⁶ Johnson further indicated that Chiang Kai-shek disliked the idea of working with the Communists to resist the Japanese, preferring to engage in the latter “upon unification of the country,” but was increasingly being pressured to do so by the prospect of “a new, and perhaps stronger, opposition to his power,” including a challenge from within his own party and government.⁹²⁷ While highlighting Col. Stilwell’s report that noted Chiang had “animadverted strongly against the Chinese Communists, contending that they were the greatest obstacle to national reconstruction and should be ‘eliminated at all costs.’”⁹²⁸ Johnson observed however, that the Chinese

⁹²⁵ Ibid.

⁹²⁶ Ibid.

⁹²⁷ Nelson T. Johnson to Secretary of State, “Political Situation in Northwest China,” November 18, 1936, Peiping [Beijing], 800/Communism, 1936, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁹²⁸ Ibid.

Communists were concentrating against the Japanese in such a way as to force Chiang's hand in the matter.⁹²⁹

Officers were alive to changes in Chinese public opinion in the 1930s, particularly those shifting in favor towards resistance to Japan. of Willys R. Peck (Consul General in Nanking in 1933) highlighted that Nationalist leaders were far from unified as to the tone to be adopted vis-à-vis Japan and that despite bold pronouncements by Chiang Kai-shek, the actual willingness of Chinese generals to adopt an aggressively anti-Japanese position was uncertain. Peck underscored that Japanese actions in China were forcing Chiang's hand "as the only alternative to becoming a vassal of Japan, and despite awareness that China "could not defeat Japan in actual military operations"⁹³⁰ In a confidential dispatch to Nelson Johnson (then American Minister in Beijing—the U.S. did not yet have an Ambassador), Peck underscored Chinese suspicions that "no matter what Japan obtains from China in the way of territory, Japan will always want more, and the only thing which will put a brake on Japan's ambitions is forcible resistance by the Chinese themselves."⁹³¹

In a conversation with a Mr. Suma, the First Secretary of the Japanese Legation, Peck starkly related his understanding of the Chinese view, admitting that his first concern was the safety of U.S. citizens.⁹³² Peck also highlighted the Secretary's concerns that under the incoming Roosevelt administration the United States might recognize the Soviet Union, but related his opinion "that the political systems of the United States and the Soviet Union were so different

⁹²⁹ Ibid.

⁹³⁰ Willys R. Peck to Secretary of State, "Sino-Japanese Controversy: Determination of China to Resist Japanese Military Invasion," 330, vol. 45, Nanking, China, 1933, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁹³¹ Willys R. Peck to Nelson T. Johnson, "Confidential," Nanking, China, March 9, 1933, 330, vol. 45, Nanking, China, 1933, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁹³² Willys R. Peck to Nelson T. Johnson, "Memorandum of Conversation," Nanking, China, March 11, 1933, 330, vol. 45, Nanking, China, 1933, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

that it would be rather dangerous to permit the opening of Soviet consulates in America, with their numerous attaches who might stir up trouble,” observing that “Mr. Suma seemed to find this theory reasonable.”⁹³³ Based on the testimony of Chinese Christians detained by the Communists, Willys Peck observed that the latter seemed to have “definite objectives” in China as of the end of 1936, including the overthrow of Chiang Kai-shek and resistance to Japan. He also attributed significant influence on the Communists to Soviet Russia, and opined that Communist pursuit of these stated goals could potentially bring Japan and Russia into conflict in China—harking back to his 1916 service as Consul in Tsingtao.⁹³⁴

Thus, as the 1930s drew to a close, three overlapping constellations of views concerning Chinese Communism: those of the “old” and “young” China officers respectively, and those of Japan officers. The views of the latter two groups tended to coincide most often, seeing closer links between the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communists than did their junior China colleagues. It was likely this perception that prompted erstwhile American Minister in China Nelson T. Johnson write to Stanley K. Hornbeck (Chief of the Far East Division and a person friend of Johnson) that “there can be no settlement of these difficulties in Asia without participation and approval of Soviet Russia.”⁹³⁵

Johnson’s personal correspondence also fleshed out his view of the Japanese as bullies in Asia, as well as the likelihood of a Japanese-American war if Japanese aggression in China continued unchecked.⁹³⁶ However, throughout the 1930s, Johnson also repeatedly underlined his belief that Japan could not indefinitely continue its advance ever deeper into China, “in utter

⁹³³ Ibid.

⁹³⁴ Willys R. Peck, “Memorandum of Conversation: Chinese Communist Activities in the Northwest,” Willys R. Peck and W.W. Stimson, 800/Communism, 1936, RG 84, *Records of Foreign Service Posts*, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁹³⁵ Nelson T. Johnson to Stanley K. Hornbeck, September 13, 1932, Peking [Beijing], China, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 4, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, CA.

⁹³⁶ Ibid.

disregard of the interests of all the other [Pacific] nations.”⁹³⁷ Yet even while officers such as Johnson criticized Japan, they found themselves paralyzed, unable to do anything locally substantial to bolster China’s position, even in matters as mundane as policing the International Settlement in Shanghai, where the United States maintained military forces alongside those of Britain and Japan. According to Willys R. Peck, the American reluctance to cede control of the Settlement to China worked to Japan’s benefit, giving *de facto* control to the Japanese.⁹³⁸ During the 1930s, Johnson grew increasingly frustrated with the quickening pace of Japanese aggression in China and urged that the United States adopt a clear and unequivocal stance against it.⁹³⁹ In keeping with his decades-long commitment to Open Door ideals, Johnson explicitly linked this recommendation to Japan’s deepening disregard for international agreements, which, in his view, threatened Americans’ ability to freely engage in commerce throughout East Asia. According to Johnson, “we should be as brutally about our intentions as the other fellow is; it is suicide for us to leave him in any doubt.”⁹⁴⁰ Hornbeck proved unreceptive to such admonitions, noting that “no administration in this country” could be sure that such a declaration would be backed by the American people, whereas the Japanese government harbored no such concerns.⁹⁴¹

Hornbeck was more sanguine than Johnson about the prospects of avoid a Sino-Japanese war in 1936, asserting that the Chinese were “past masters of the art of compromise and it may

⁹³⁷ Nelson T. Johnson to Stanley K. Hornbeck, May 17, 1933, Peking [Beijing], China, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 260, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, CA.

⁹³⁸ Willys R. Peck to Nelson Johnson, July 6, 1934, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 260, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, CA.

⁹³⁹ Nelson T. Johnson to Stanley K. Hornbeck, August 16, 1933, Peking [Beijing], China, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 260, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, CA.

⁹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴¹ Stanley K. Hornbeck to Nelson T. Johnson, July 9, 1934, [Washington D.C.], Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 260, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, CA.

happen that, although between the Devil and the Deep Sea, they may be able to escape both.”⁹⁴²

On one crucial point Johnson and Hornbeck were in total agreement: there was little that the United States could do to compete with Japan in China, either economically or militarily, without a much greater commitment of American resources. Johnson confided to Hornbeck,

“I am more and more convinced that there is little or nothing that we can give to the East in the way of services in the future. We charge too much...I have a sneaking idea that it costs more to maintain 500 American marines in Peking as a guard to this Embassy than it does to maintain the whole Japanese expeditionary force in this same area. On the basis of financial comparison, we cannot beat that kind of combination. Something is going to have to snap some place. And for us to think for a minute that we can exploit the resources of China, either on behalf of ourselves or the Chinese, in competition with the Japanese is sheer foolishness.”⁹⁴³

Hornbeck fully concurred with Johnson’s assessment, but underscored the need for the United States to “protect by diplomatic means what there remains in China of commercial opportunity for the United States and to wait patiently for a day when there may be new opportunities presented to the United States for the rendering of services and the supplying of goods to China.”⁹⁴⁴ It is difficult to ascertain from their personal correspondence as to whether Johnson entirely shared Hornbeck’s wait-and-see mentality. However, with regard to the

⁹⁴² Stanley K. Hornbeck to Nelson T. Johnson, March 12, 1936, [Washington D.C.], Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 260, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, CA.

⁹⁴³ Nelson T. Johnson to Stanley K. Hornbeck, June 19, 1936, [Washington D.C.], Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 260, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, CA.

⁹⁴⁴ Stanley K. Hornbeck to Nelson T. Johnson, July 17, 1936, [Washington D.C.], Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, box 260, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, CA.

likelihood of war between Japan and the United States, American Foreign Service officers in Japan were probably less sanguine than either those of Johnson or Hornbeck and were certainly more pessimistic than those of the latter.

Although they largely concurred with Hornbeck and Johnson on the character of Communism in China (and on that subject differed with the junior China officers who observed the Communists more directly), from the late 1930s until the actual outbreak of war, Japan-trained American officers emphasized the imminence of conflict but were deliberately ignored. To be sure, this did not necessarily mean that Japan-trained officers advocated more potentially controversial compromises than did than China-trained compatriots. According to Joseph Ballantine underscored a belief that, even though reaching a “modus vivendi” with the Japanese had become a high priority at the State Department, doing so required coaxing unpalatable compromises from the Chinese (acquiescing to Japanese supremacy in Manchuria, for example) and was practically impossible.⁹⁴⁵ He also indicated that the Japan-trained officers had warned repeatedly that unless such an agreement was reached the Japanese would attack.⁹⁴⁶ According to Ballantine,

“what we should like to have had from the Japanese was a comprehensive agreement that would speak for itself as an instrument of peace. Instead the Japanese government was disposed to stress its relationship with the Axis, to avoid giving a clear indication of its intention to Japan’s relations with China on a basis that would contribute to peace, and to

⁹⁴⁵ Ibid, 39-47.

⁹⁴⁶ Ibid., 47.

veer away from clear-cut commitments to policies of non-discrimination in international commercial intercourse.”⁹⁴⁷

Rather than their policy-specific warnings, it was the Japan Hands’ admonition that war would follow if compromise were not forthcoming that failed to gain traction at the senior levels of State Department leadership. In this vein, while Ballantine’s memoirs and oral history do not overtly criticize Hornbeck, Dooman’s have been far less charitable. He observed that Hornbeck’s memos to the Secretary of State minimized the possibility of war with Japan and that they were very influential with Cordell Hull.⁹⁴⁸ According to Dooman, “[Joseph Grew] and I felt and realized, of course, that we were dealing in Washington with a person—I am here referring to Stanley Hornbeck—who was on the opposite side of the fence, who was being extremely busy negating, as it were, the purpose of our reports from Tokyo.”⁹⁴⁹ Dooman further emphasized that Ambassador Joseph Grew tried to arrange for Dooman to meet with the President in August, 1940, for Dooman to relate the ambassador’s views, but their State Department superiors (Dooman probably meant Hornbeck, but this is unclear) prevented this from happening.⁹⁵⁰ For the Japan-trained officers, the writing was on the wall: according to Dooman, “On December 2, 1941, we sent a telegram to Washington to the effect that no sources of information with regard to military or naval movements were any longer available to us, and that Washington was not to

⁹⁴⁷ Ibid., 206.

⁹⁴⁸ Eugene Dooman, *Occupation of Japan Project* (New York: Columbia University, Office of Oral History Research, 1976, microfiche), 66-67.

⁹⁴⁹ Eugene Dooman, *Occupation of Japan Project* (New York: Columbia University, Office of Oral History Research, 1976), 61.

⁹⁵⁰ Ibid, 64-65.

count on us for prior information as to any attack that might be made against us or against any of our allies.”⁹⁵¹

At this point, any ostensible Open Door imperialism in China was truly dead, from its incipient rhetoric to its unimplemented ideals. American Foreign Service officers in both Japan and China had already been behaving as though this were the case for the better part of a decade, due to American disinterest in the Open Door, followed by a progression of events that undermined perceptions of its stability as well as its actual political viability. Both Japan- and China-trained officers were oblivious to the fact that their wartime-necessitated fall from grace in behind-the-scenes policy formulation had been pre-determined by the un-heralded death of Open Door imperialism. To be sure, these unappreciated middlemen were unaware of their demotion and expressed horror at their exclusion from planning for the WWII endgame. For example, Joseph Ballantine observed that when President Roosevelt went to Cairo, Willys Peck was sent to provide expertise, but was never sent for. According to Ballantine, Peck

“might just as well not have gone. There was no State Department person that had anything to do with the Cairo Conference. There was no Far Easter expert at the Teheran Conference, and no Far Eastern expert at the Yalta conference. We could have avoided many things, put a flea in the President’s ear about certain things that he was completely unaware of, if we’d had somebody.”⁹⁵²

⁹⁵¹ Eugene Dooman, *Occupation of Japan Project* (New York: Columbia University, Office of Oral History Research, 1976, microfiche), 68.

⁹⁵² Ibid.

It was not only Ballantine who was appalled by this. He noted: “like myself, all of my closest colleagues, especially Hornbeck and Nelson, were shocked.”⁹⁵³ Stanley Hornbeck was made Special Assistant to the Secretary of State in 1944, yet somehow did not see fit to recommend reference to the experience of an officer from *either* the Japan or China legation.⁹⁵⁴ Ballantine’s vote of confidence in the State Department-cultivated Far East experts such as the “senior China men” (and by implication, himself as one of the “senior Japan men”) is unsurprising. Recruited to be footholds for the Open Door, he and his colleagues eventually constituted an unintended wellspring of expertise that functioned equally well as the whipping post for failed policy. The Japan officers were correct about the impending war with Japan, and may well have been correct about use of the atomic bombs being unnecessary (more will be outlined about this in the conclusion), whereas the China officers were correct on the independent staying power of the Chinese Communists—on which topic Japan officers such as Eugene Dooman eventually conceded (Ballantine did not).

By the time the Pearl Harbor attack had initiated the dreaded Japanese-American war, the Open Door in China had long since been slammed shut by Japanese military and economic penetration into China with nary a moan emitted from the putatively imperial Open Door empire. To be sure, the utility of Open Door politics as both an economic American rallying cry and badge of political correctness would prove resilient in the Cold War conflict that would supersede the nuclear heat of Japan’s defeat in WWII. And to be sure, the diplomacy of the Open Door—not least the creation of the SIC—had endowed the US with tools with which it could further its objectives in Asia. Yet the actual objective of the Open Door—expansion of American trade—had been such a miserable failure that its translation from China policy goal to abstract

⁹⁵³ Ibid., 261.

⁹⁵⁴ Ibid., 242.

American policy ideal had become a foregone conclusion nearly a decade prior to the onset of WWII.

The entire intellectual edifice behind the creation of the SIC thus collapsed. But it cannot be said to have been a failure in the same way that Open Door imperialism was a failure, because its architects had sought from the inception of their efforts to effect lasting change in the institutional structure of American foreign relations, not merely within a few failed policies. Against that background, the prototype American Foreign Service that first blinked its eyes in 1902 became a worthy *ad hoc* antecedent for its modern day progeny.

CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSION

**FROM CASE STUDIES TO COMPARISONS: LIMITATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES
FOR MULTIFARIOUS HISTORIES FROM THE MIDDLE**

This dissertation brings the state back into the discussion of economic empire in China while avoiding a top-down approach.⁹⁵⁵ As highlighted in the first and second chapters, the establishment of Student Interpreters Corps was facilitated by the imperialist rhetoric that scholars such as Williams and McCormick aptly emphasize. Moreover, both the “master architects”⁹⁵⁶ who designed the SIC and its graduates were willing, able, and active promoters of trade promotion—the crux of arguments for American economic empire—they were unable to overcome the reluctance of American business to pass through the Open Door in China. Highlighted elsewhere, the complicated relationship between the SIC and American missionaries suggests that “the missionary mind” was an unreliable ally in pursuit of economic empire, even as the existing relationship shifted views increasingly in favor of interventionist policies.⁹⁵⁷ As highlighted in the final chapter, political crises gradually shifted from trade promotion to political damage control, thereby curtailing a stillborn economically imperialist project. This dissertation suggests that examination of language-trained middlemen in the American Foreign Service reveals not a project of economic imperialism—although it was couched in such rhetoric—but rather an enterprise of bureaucratic centralization, envisioned by men “who

⁹⁵⁵ Theda Skocpol, “Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research,” Peter B. Evans et. al., *Bringing the State Back In* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

⁹⁵⁶ Richard Hume Werking, *The Master Architects: Building the United States Foreign Service, 1890-1913* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1977), *passim*.

⁹⁵⁷ James Reed, *The Missionary Mind and East Asia Policy, 1911-1915* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983, *passim*).

idealized their country as a centralizing nation-state that would have to plan an active role in the world's affairs."⁹⁵⁸ Chapters 1 and 2 buttress the work of scholars such as James Q. Wilson, who have argued that a key strategy of executive power (within which the SIC emerged, evolved and expanded) is to "curry favor and placate critics."⁹⁵⁹

Internationalists such as Theodore Roosevelt, Elihu Root, and Wilbur Carr were compelled to build a constituency with the America business public, to whom they advocated the establishment of the SIC. Yet while they were successful in that regard, "trade promotion" was an insufficiently quantifiable, rather vague tasking that could never become the overarching mission of the State Department, let alone the crisis-ridden Far East Division. Most SIC-trained officers, never fully comfortable with the front-loaded emphasis on trade expansion, were therefore ready to shift from economics to politics at a moments' notice, the latter being their preferred realm anyhow: many of them preferred the role of political pundit to economic enabler, whatever the personal cost.

This dissertation has comprised a first attempt at conducting history from the middle—history that is neither top-down nor bottom-up—examining the lives and careers of American Foreign Service officers trained in the Student Interpreters Corps (SIC). While this examination does not claim to provide historiographically earth-shattering revelations, it nevertheless presents significant revision to critiques of American Foreign relations by Wisconsin School historians such as William Appleman Williams and Thomas J. McCormick by demonstrating that the links

⁹⁵⁸ Werking, *Master Architects*, 92.

⁹⁵⁹ James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), 204.

between economic imperialist rhetoric failed to translate into actual empire in China.⁹⁶⁰ These issues have already received substantial treatment by historians of Sino-American relations such as Michael Hunt, in his examinations of Open Door policies in China.⁹⁶¹

However, treatments such as those of Hunt highlight the amateur character of American diplomacy at the turn of the twentieth century and almost entirely overlook the massive first step towards professionalization of the American Foreign Service provided by the SIC. This examination of language-trained Foreign Service officers—bureaucrats in the middle—adds to critiques such as those of Hunt (mentioned above) and Paul Varg, who debunked the myth of the China market by examining economic data.⁹⁶² Yet while economically-focused studies by historians such as Varg highlight the disappointing trade figures and those such as Sherman Cochran’s examinations of local business enterprises reveal that such endeavors transcended center-periphery and imperial-colonial relationships, they do not deal squarely with the issue of business-government relations postulated by Williams and McCormick.⁹⁶³ James Lorence, a student of Williams, has attempted to highlight precisely this link in his treatment of the American Asiatic Association.⁹⁶⁴

Nevertheless, Lorence’s limited examination focuses primarily on the advocacy and ambitions of domestic trade organizations and overlooks the state as a crucial but largely assumed agent in an equally-presumed nexus of business-government-missionary interests in

⁹⁶⁰ William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (Cleveland, OH: The World Publishing Company, 1959), 12-14, 200-211; Thomas J. McCormick, *China Market: America’s Quest for Informal Empire, 1893-1901* (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, 1990), 227.

⁹⁶¹ Michael H. Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship: The United States and China to 1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), x; ____, *Frontier Defense and the Open Door: Manchuria in Chinese-American Relations, 1895-1911* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 128.

⁹⁶² Paul A. Varg, “The Myth of the China Market, 1890-1914,” *The American Historical Review*, 73, no. 3 (February, 1968), 742-758.

⁹⁶³ McCormick, *China Market*, *passim*; Williams, *Tragedy*, *passim*.

⁹⁶⁴ James J. Lorence, *Organized Business and the Myth of the China Market: The American Asiatic Association, 1898-1937* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1981), *passim*.

pursuit of economic empire. Highlighting the connections between the SIC and American missionaries, this dissertation indicates that the associations presumed by Appleman, McCormick, and Lorence were weaker, more complicated, and far less direct than has often been assumed.

In this way, this dissertation revises existing narratives that examine this period of American Foreign Relations. Examining these hitherto unappreciated middlemen of the Student Interpreters Corps also paves the way for future studies of the middle. Some of these multifarious opportunities have been highlighted obliquely in the foregoing chapters. For example, chapter seven has observed that the proponents and creators of the SIC took Great Power diplomatic language training programs such as those of Britain and France as examples and sought to emulate them—however imperfect and incomplete the imitation may have been. Future work should highlight not only the roles that language-trained intermediaries—state and otherwise—played in international relations but also the ways in which they interacted with one another.

As observed frequently in this study, the United States was a latecomer to diplomatic language training: even Japan had a system of education for future diplomats that included language training as early as 1894.⁹⁶⁵ Chinese language, culture, and politics provided a common framework within which foreign consuls and diplomats interacted, and yet while numerous volumes have been written that study the international crises with which they dealt, virtually none have examined the processes of debate, negotiation, and policy implementation from the perspective of these interlocutors between their respective governments, foreign national communities, and the Chinese people.

⁹⁶⁵ Barbara J. Brooks, *Japan's Imperial Diplomacy: Consuls, Treaty Ports, and War in China, 1895-1938* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 55.

Such studies could and should be replicated in a variety of international contexts, paving the way for reexamination of old debates by asking new questions and engaging new sources. One such avenue involves more comprehensive study of U.S. government language-training programs alongside the SIC of the Foreign Service. Although scholars such as Thomas Watts Collier and Roger V. Dingham have examined U.S. Army language officers in China and Japan respectively, and numerous scholars have studied the China Hands,⁹⁶⁶ no published work has attempted to comprehensively examine the East Asian language training programs of the United States government. This dissertation is the first attempt at examining such intermediaries in a way that transcends debate over the historiographical controversies surrounding American involvement in World War II. In what ways did military and civilian language training overlap and differ? How did differing bureaucratic priorities influence the exercise of these officers' duties? Can, and indeed should they be considered alongside one another?

In addition, while this dissertation aimed to study the lives and careers of the SIC-trained officers comprehensively, another name, pair, or set of names emerged. The research strategy evolved to treat these officers as a body, while acknowledging generational and ideological differences as much as possible. However, some of these officers deserve greater treatment. Whereas Nelson Johnson and Julean Arnold have been the subjects of biographical studies,⁹⁶⁷ officers such as Willys Peck and Jay C. Huston have been neglected. Meanwhile, no SIC-Japan officers (such as Joseph Ballantine, Eugene Dooman or Erle Dickover) have received such

⁹⁶⁶ Roger V. Dingham, "Language at War: U.S. Marine Corps Japanese Language Officers in the Pacific War," *The Journal of Military History* 68 no. 3 (July, 2004), 853-883; Thomas Watts Collier "The Chinese Language Officer Program of the U.S. Army, 1919-1943," Duke University, 1966. MA Thesis, 41-42; for the "China hands," see for example, E.J. Kahn, *The China Hands: America's Foreign Service Officers and What Befell them* (New York: Viking Press, 1975), passim; Paul Gordon Lauren, *The China Hands' Legacy: Ethics and Diplomacy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), passim.

⁹⁶⁷ Russell D. Buhite, *Nelson T. Johnson and American Policy toward China, 1925-1941* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1968), passim; Robert N. Yang, "Julean Arnold and American economic perspectives of China : 1902-1946" (1994), Master's Theses; Paper 885, http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/885.

consideration, let alone any of the SIC-Turkey officers (who largely remain outside even this dissertation). Future biographical work need not remain constrained by the top-down tendencies of the genre: as observed of Christine Philliou's work below, it is quite feasible to integrate top-down, bottom-up, and middle-outward perspectives on governance, engagement, language, and economy with an individual as an analytical lens. This has already been done for some of the SIC language officers, even if the painting has been with alternately too broad or too narrow a lens—particularly with regards to American perceptions of Chinese Communism.

While much of the historiography of the “China Hands” is linked to the “Red Scare” controversies surrounding the service of officers such as John Davies, John Service, Edmund Clubb, Arthur Ringwalt, and others of their generation, American awareness of Chinese Communism did not originate with them. They did suffer for their outspoken views, but for nearly a decade before their views became (in)famous, the aforementioned SIC-trained Jay C. Huston had studied Communism in China with a passion that verged on obsession.⁹⁶⁸ While this dissertation has striven to add to this labor, more should be done to put the American perception of Chinese Communism into its proper social, political, and military contexts.

Similarly, even while emphasizing American policy towards China, this dissertation has endeavored to show that the SIC-Japan officers were instrumental in several regards. For example, it was they who first recognized the changes in the wind that shifted emphasis from trade expansion to political crisis management. Small in numbers however, in the wake of American victory in WWII, they are a group that is relatively easy to overlook. What is more, Joseph Ballantine's excoriation of such China Hands as Service, Davies, and Clubb made it easy for historians sympathetic to the latter officers to dismiss the views of the former. In this vein,

⁹⁶⁸ J.V.A MacMurray (Peking) to the Secretary of State, January 26, 1928, 893.00P.R. No. 1366, RG 84, NARA.

while historians such as Walter LaFeber⁹⁶⁹ have made tremendous contributions to the study of comparatively recent Japanese-American relations, “history from the middle” offers the prospect of revised, more specifically-focused studies of this relationship during the first half of the twentieth century.

Another fruitful field for future study is that of language training and interpreters and translators in the Ottoman Empire. Due to the exigencies of WWI and the interruption of relations between the Empire and the United States, the language training program of the Student Interpreters Corps was curtailed in 1917. SIC Turkey is therefore a relative outlier in this dissertation. However, as noted in the preface, interest in the Translation Bureau and Language School of the 19th century Ottoman Empire was one of the research interests of this dissertation and played no small role in both the author’s life and in the extended timeline for completion of the project. Although the results of the research conducted between 2012 and 2014 have been relegated beyond the purview of this dissertation, they remain an active focus and will be returned to in future presentations and published work.

One avenue for such labors traverses the path taken by officials in the Ottoman Foreign Ministry from appointments as language students to positions of responsibility in Ottoman bureaucracy. As Sezai Balcı (who provided one of the first overviews of the Translation Bureau of the Ottoman Empire) notes, there has yet to be a single published monograph dealing with translation/interpretation within the Ottoman State,⁹⁷⁰ which Carter Vaughn Findley has

⁹⁶⁹ Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations throughout History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), *passim*.

⁹⁷⁰ Sezai Balcı, “Osmanlı Devlet’inde Tercümanlık ve Bab-1 Ali Tercüme Odası,” Doctoral Thesis, Ankara Üniversitesi, 2006, viiii.

described as “the seedbed of the Tanzimat elite.”⁹⁷¹ Balcı’s treatment of translation at the Sublime Porte does a great service in describing the evolution of the composition of the Translation Bureau, but does not analyze the role of language training in the 19th century bureaucracy. Scholars studying Ottoman modernization such as Walter F. Weiker have frequently observed that nearly all reform-minded bureaucrats and “Young Ottomans” launched their careers in the Translation Office (*Tercüme Odası*).⁹⁷² Carter V. Findley has described the Translation Office as “not only the prototype for similar offices in other departments but also one of the most basic components of the Foreign Ministry and the starting-point of many a famous statesman.”⁹⁷³ However this seemingly vital component of Ottoman bureaucracy has been largely overlooked by Western historiography. Future endeavors should provide more in-depth analyses of 19th century Ottoman language training that undergirded the Ottoman state’s approach to Europe during this crisis-filled period.

One pioneering example of such a study is Christine Philliou’s study of nineteenth century of Stephanos Vogorides, an Ottoman Greek of Phanariot heritage.⁹⁷⁴ Philliou builds on the work of Carter Vaughn Findley⁹⁷⁵ in her study of nineteenth century Ottoman bureaucracy, examining through the lens of an Ottoman Greek loyalist. Yet while her treatment does a great deal to illuminate a hitherto unexamined aspect of Ottoman bureaucracy during this turbulent period, treatment of the Language School and Translation Office—increasingly staffed by

⁹⁷¹ Carter Vaughn Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom: A Social History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 263.

⁹⁷² Walter F. Weiker, “The Ottoman Bureaucracy: Modernization and Reform,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 13 no. 3, Special Issue on Organizations and Social Development (December, 1968), 451-470.

⁹⁷³ Carter Vaughn Findley, “The Foundation of the Ottoman Foreign Ministry: The Beginnings of Bureaucratic Reform under Selim III and Mahmud II,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3, no. 4 (October, 1972), 388-416.

⁹⁷⁴ Christine Philliou, *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), *passim*.

⁹⁷⁵ Findley, Carter Vaughn. *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789-1922* (Princeton, 1980), *passim*.

Turkish Muslims after the Greek Rebellion of 1821—falls largely outside the scope of her work. Greater scrutiny of the means whereby 19th century Ottoman officials were trained to engage Europe will shed further light on the dynamic and much-discussed Tanzimat period, as well as on the Ottomanist officials who made a final, failed bid for a multi-confessional, multinational Empire that was superseded competing nationalist ideologies.

Similarly in the arena of international relations comparative studies such as those of and Karen Barkey and Michael Reynolds have provided overviews of how the Ottoman Empire and its neighbors governed, interacted, clashed and ultimately collapsed.⁹⁷⁶ Scholars such as Barkey and Reynolds renew focus on the state as agent, variously emphasizing historical continuity and change. However, the roles of diplomatic language training, of the construction of mutual perceptions and interactions again escape analytical treatment.

In a vastly different context yet methodologically similar sphere of inquiry, yet another unexploited approach includes examination of interpreters—both Chinese and Western—in the business sector. Whereas business histories such as those of Sherman Cochran have mentioned the role of linguistic intermediaries in foreign, bi- and multinational enterprises in China in passing,⁹⁷⁷ much more needs to be done in order to highlight the mediums through which these enterprises engaged local Chinese markets. As with the examples above, these inquiries can be replicated in other contexts not limited to that of China in the early twentieth century.

These are some of the possibilities for history from the middle. This dissertation has sought to lead by example in its examination of the Student Interpreters Corps and the role of its

⁹⁷⁶ Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), *passim*; Michael A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908-1918* (Cambridge, 2011), *passim*.

⁹⁷⁷ Sherman Cochran, *Big Business in China: Sino-Foreign Rivalry in the Cigarette Industry, 1890-1930*, *Harvard Studies in Business History*; 33. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980, 28-30, 146, 242.

language-trained graduates in the stillborn project of American economic imperialism. The opportunities appear inviting, yet challenges remain. Chief among these remains the question, to what extent were such “intermediaries” truly, as it were, in the middle? Could it not be argued that positionally—particularly among the host country populations among whom they served—they were actually elites? It is hoped that this dissertation’s emphasis upon the mundane aspects of the lives of SIC graduates, the travails of their families, and their complex relationships with American businesses and missionaries—all of these details indicate that these officers were not policymakers, were not in control of their careers, their lives. They were not at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder to be sure. They were (usually) university graduates, they were professionals, they were in the middle. It remains for future studies to highlight such middles in order to add nuance and depth to the narratives of history from the top-down, and history from the bottom up. This dissertation offers revision of revisionist history and seeks to bring a few bricks to the edifice of historical knowledge by presenting an example of history from the middle.

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