

to Soviet actions in Asia.<sup>20</sup> The Western governments, for their part, felt over-committed with the burdens of post-World War I reconstruction, the need to contain German international ambitions, and, with the onset of the Great Depression, the imperative to restore domestic prosperity.

From the mid-1920s onward, pressure within the Imperial Japanese Army began to build to counter the growing Soviet influence in China. The spread of communism threatened Japan's considerable economic investments on the Asian mainland and its domestic economic recovery. Japanese economic prosperity depended on the access to foreign markets that was largely cut off by the Western protectionist response to the Great Depression. Japan tried to enlist the cooperation of the Western powers to contain the expansion of Soviet influence in China, but to no avail.<sup>21</sup> This served simultaneously to discredit the Japanese Foreign Ministry's approach of cooperating with the West within the framework of international law and to infuriate the Japanese military, which soon developed an entirely different approach.<sup>22</sup> In 1931, the Kwantung Army responded to the Soviet Union's covert aid to China by a highly overt military invasion of Manchuria, the establishment of the puppet state of Manchukuo in 1932, and Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933. The West fully appreciated the Soviet Union's imperial agenda in the Far East only after World War II, far too late to halt the cascade of events leading to world war in the Pacific.

### THE MYTH OF RUSSO-CHINESE FRIENDSHIP

The Russians – both Tsarist and Soviet – have consistently argued that China's relations with them, in contrast to China's relations with the other powers, have always been genuinely friendly and that the Chinese have long held them in warm regard. Russian diplomats in the nineteenth century consistently alluded to two hundred years of uninterrupted Russo-Chinese friendship.<sup>23</sup> Russians have also often claimed that their relations with China have had a moral character absent from Sino-Western relations, which were polluted by the Western pursuit of commercial gain and imperial influence.<sup>24</sup>

In the nineteenth century, the Russian belief in their monopoly of the moral high ground in China became a justification for a Russian civilizing mission

20 外交資料館, 外務省, A.1.1.0-21-12-2, Japanese testimony to the Lytton Commission at the League of Nations, vols. 1-6, *passim*.

21 *Ibid.*

22 Barbara J. Brooks, *Japan's Imperial Diplomacy: Consuls, Treaty Ports, and War in China 1895-1938* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), pp. 117-118.

23 For a long list of Tsarist sources alluding to two centuries of Russo-Chinese friendship, see Paine, *Imperial Rivals*, p. 19n26.

24 Milan Hauner, *What Is Asia to Us? Russia's Asian Heartland Yesterday and Today* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p. 4; Robert Wesson, *The Russian Dilemma*, revised ed. (New York: Praeger Special Studies, 1986), pp. 35, 48.

there. After the Bolshevik Revolution, the belief became a justification for exporting communism. However home-grown Mao Zedong claimed his communism to be, in fact, the Soviet Union was instrumental in founding the Chinese Communist Party in 1921 and in providing crucial aid during the forty years preceding the 1960 Sino-Soviet split. The Russians have presented this relationship as one marked by Russian benevolence and Chinese gratitude.<sup>25</sup>

The myth of Russo-Chinese friendship also gained currency in third countries,<sup>26</sup> especially during the 1950s at the height of the Cold War. The myth continues to mar current scholarship concerning Russo-Chinese relations. For example, works focused on Manchuria in the 1920s and 1930s routinely fail to mention the 1929 Sino-Soviet War at all or give it a page or two before resuming the discourse on Russo-Chinese friendship.<sup>27</sup> The war was not an insignificant event. It lasted five months (11 July 1929–22 December 1929)<sup>28</sup> and quashed the Guomindang's hopes of regaining control over the Soviet railroad concessions in Manchuria, all of which the Soviet Union had promised to return in the orig-

25 Сладковский Б. Н. Внешняя политика СССР на Дальнем Востоке 1945-1986. М., 1988.

С. 3-9; Астафьев Г. В. Интервенция США в Китае 1945-1949, 2nd ed. М., 1985. С. 3; Тихвинский С. Л. Путь Китая к объединению и независимости 1898-1949 М., 1996. С. 3-4 70; Овчинников Ю. М. Становление и развитие единого национального фронта сопротивления Японии в Китае. М., 1985. С. 3; Юрьев М. Ф. др. Китай в период войны против Японской агрессии. М., 1988. С. 185, 4, 13, 251, 272; Катакова З. Д. Китай и державы 1927-1937. М., 1995. С. 7, 235.

26 George Alexander Lensen, *The Russo-Chinese War* (Tallahassee: The Diplomatic Press, 1967), p. 70; George Alexander Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue: International Rivalry in Korea and Manchuria, 1884-1899*, vol. 2 (Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, 1982), p. 477; Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire 1801-1917* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 440; Nish, *Origins of the Russo-Japanese War*, p. 8; Louis E. Frechtling, "Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Eastern Turkestan, 1863-1881," *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* 26, part 3 (July 1939), p. 487; A. Lobanov-Rostovsky, *Russia and Asia* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), pp. 144, 187; Steven G. Marks, *Road to Power: The Trans-Siberian Railroad and the Colonization of Asian Russia 1850-1917* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 39; Mazour, *Russia Tsarist and Communist*, pp. 296, 335-336; R.K.I. Quested, "Matey" Imperialists? *The Tsarist Russians in Manchuria 1895-1917* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, 1982), pp. 15, 45, 115, 125-126, *passim*. Quested's thesis is manifest in her book's title: Russian imperialism in China was "matey," a Criticism meaning companionable.

27 Felix Patrikeeff, has written a book detailing the significance of the 1929 Sino-Soviet War. He notes the tendency of scholars to ignore the conflict and the consequences of this oversight. See *Russian Politics in Exile: The Northeast Asian Balance of Power, 1924-1931* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 135 n2. For recent works on Manchuria in the 1920s and 1930s that virtually or totally ignore the war, see Brooks, *Japan's Imperial Diplomacy*; James H. Carter, *Creating a Chinese Harbin: Nationalism in an International City 1916-1932* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 182-183; Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

28 媛田光義 [Himeta, Mitsuyoshi] et al., eds. 『中国20世紀史』 [History of China in the 20th Century] (Tokyo: 東京大学出版社, 1993), p. 23.

inal version of the Karakhan Manifesto. To make a rather obvious observation: Wars are not friendly acts. They are evidence of deep hostility, not of friendship.

Evidence from Chinese foreign policy documents is overwhelming on this score. After the Opium Wars, the Chinese came to consider Russia as the most dangerous European power. Unlike the Western powers that came to trade, Russia came to take territory. China's preoccupation with Russian foreign policy is indicated by the distribution of the archival materials concerning Qing or Manchu dynasty (1644-1911) foreign policy: Nearly half of all these materials relate to Russia, while less than a third deal with Great Britain, and less than a tenth concern Japan or the United States.<sup>29</sup> In these archival documents, Chinese officials, over and over again, describe Russian designs on Chinese territory, using such terms as: "gnawing away like a silkworm" (蠶食), "gobbling up" (併吞), "eyeing predatorily like a tiger" (虎視) "drooling at the mouth" (垂涎) "insatiable" (得寸進尺), having "evil intentions" (禍心), "desiring that which belongs to others" (覬覦), and "unfathomable" (叵測) behavior.<sup>30</sup> Such documents clearly show that Russo-Chinese relations were deeply troubled from the start. After the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, Sino-Japanese relations became equally troubled.<sup>31</sup>

During the Republican period (1912-49), Chinese opinion became divided. Until the very end of the Qing period, there had been no real public opinion, just a lettered elite often employed in government service. Modern newspapers did not really develop in China until after the First Sino-Japanese War.<sup>32</sup> Publications in the spoken language that the general public could easily understand – as opposed to Classical Chinese, the archaic literary language that only the most highly educated could decipher – did not become widespread until the May Fourth Movement of 1919.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, public opinion was a very new thing in China.

At the time of the May Fourth Movement, many intellectuals and students believed the myth of Soviet and Tsarist discontinuity. They perceived the blow of humiliation at the hands of Western imperialism. They believed the Soviet sheviks as bearers of a modern credo that would liberate China from its century promise made in the original version of the 1919 Karakhan Declaration to return to China without compensation all Tsarist concessions.<sup>34</sup> This put Soviet

29 Paine, *Imperial Rivals*, pp. 10, 367-368.

30 Ibid., *Imperial Rivals*, pp. 10-11, 20-22. Many of these citations referring to Chinese officials come from documents originating from the Grand Council and archived at the Ming-Qing Archives at the Forbidden City, Beijing (第一历史档案馆)

31 Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War*, pp. 4, 7, 137, 268, 299, *passim*

32 Joan Judge, *Print and Politics: 'Shibao' and the Culture of Reform in Late Qing China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 19, 21-2.

33 Chow Tse-tsung, *The May 4th Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), pp. 271-272.

34 "The Declaration of 1919," in *China Year Book 1924-5*, pp. 868-869; Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception*, pp. 17-18, 24-27, 35-37

Russia in sharp contrast to the other powers, which openly insisted on retaining their own concessions. Chinese diplomats were outraged when the Soviets secretly demanded to resurrect the full complement of Tsarist concessions and privileges in China.<sup>35</sup> This diplomacy, however, remained secret. The vast majority of Chinese never knew about it at the time and remain ignorant of it to the present day. Rather, they continue to believe that the Soviet Union, in contrast to the self-interested West, offered China genuine assistance, particularly in the early period of their relations.

The settlement of World War I also gave credence the stereotypes of a rapacious West and a fraternal Soviet Russia. The Chinese public became outraged when the Versailles peace settlement had Germany turn over its concessions in China to Japan before Japan then returned them to China. The Chinese rejected this "indirect restitution" and demanded, to no avail, direct restitution from Germany. The diplomacy is extremely complicated. The settlement followed the terms of China's many treaties and China eventually got back the concessions in question. No matter. The Chinese public interpreted events as a slap in the face, considered dealing with Japan to be beneath China, blamed the United States, and looked ever more favorably on the Soviet Union as a result.<sup>36</sup>

Many Chinese continue to believe that, in general, the Soviet Union treated China far more equitably than did the Western powers. They have not thought to tally the costs of Western imperialism in China, deduct any benefits such as infrastructure additions, and then compare these costs to those of the Soviet legacy that so marks Chinese institutions to this day. In particular, it is worth considering the economic costs of collectivized industry and agriculture as well as the human costs of China's police-state rule. Both followed Leninist and Stalinist models. In contrast, the imperial powers left China a legacy of infrastructure including railway lines, educational institutions, hospitals, buildings, and even dikes to prevent flooding in Manchuria.

In the 1930s the Japanese were well aware of the general misperception of the Chinese public concerning the Soviet Union, but they never developed a strategy to use Soviet imperialism in China in order to deflect Chinese hostility from Japan onto the Soviet Union. Instead, the Japanese military tried to beat the Soviets at their imperial game by countering Soviet covert influence with a very overt Japanese invasion and occupation. As the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45) became protracted, Japan's military strategy backfired since it simultaneously gave ever more credence to Soviet propaganda, while undermining the Japanese pretext that such extreme means could ever be justified, no matter what the ends. Japanese military actions fueled the very anti-Japanese hatred that would preclude a negotiated settlement to the Sino-Japanese War.

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35 "Declaration of 1920," in *China Year Book 1924-5*, pp. 871-872; Elleman, "The Soviet Union's Secret Diplomacy," pp. 459-486; Whiting, "The Soviet Offer to China of 1919," pp. 355-364; Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception*, pp. 159, 161-165, 174, 177, 231, 240-241.

36 Bruce A. Elleman, *Wilson and China: A Revised History of the Shandong Question* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), *passim*.

Likewise, in the 1930s the Japanese were unable to explain to the Chinese public that the economic development offered by continuing Japanese investments would be mutually beneficial, whereas the absence of such foreign investment would leave China bound in poverty. Two generations later during the reform period initiated by Deng Xiaoping, the Chinese came to the very belated conclusion that economic isolationism did not foster but actually precluded their country's economic development. In the meantime, they had suffered upheaval, famine, and two generations of foregone economic opportunities.

The Japanese inability to counter the twin myths of Soviet-Tsarist discontinuity and of Russo-Chinese friendship cost them dear. Instead of relying on military force to achieve their objectives in China, they needed to expose the myths that the Soviet Union had renounced its imperial concessions and that it treated the Chinese more equitably than the other powers. If the Chinese public had been disabused of these myths, this would have undercut the Soviet power base in China, which, in the early years, largely rested on a Chinese misperception of Soviet activities and intentions.<sup>37</sup> The widespread acceptance of these myths resulted in the Chinese public's focusing its nationalistic anger over China's endemic misgovernment and economic mismanagement on Japan and the West. Misidentifying the source of China's troubles did not contribute to their solution.<sup>38</sup> Rather, it allowed the Soviet Union to reap the benefits.

#### THE EXAGGERATION OF CHINESE VICTIMIZATION

The myths obscuring the Far Eastern diplomatic environment of the 1930s concerned not only perceptions about the fundamental nature of Russo-Chinese relations but also about the Chinese themselves. Many history books published by Chinese present their modern history as a succession of humiliations at the hands of foreigners broken only by the communist victory in 1949.<sup>39</sup> This understanding of Chinese history is encapsulated in a number of common Chinese expressions such as 外侮 or "humiliations caused by foreign powers," 雪恥復國 or "wipe out the national shame and recover the fatherland," 利權外溢, or "the loss of economic rights to foreigners," and 禦侮 or "to guard against the

37 Sow-then Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations, 1917-1926* (Taipei: Rainbow-Bridge Book, 1976), p. 300.

38 Elleman, *Wilson and China*, *passim*.

39 This sense of national humiliation is also expressed the works of overseas Chinese authors. William L. Tung, *China and the Foreign Powers: The Impact of and Reaction to Unequal Treaties* (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana Publications, 1970), p. vii; Luke S.K. Kwong, *The Mosaic of the Hundred Days: Personalities, Politics, and Ideas of 1898* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), p. 17; Ting Tsz Kao, *The Chinese Frontiers* (Aurora, IL: Chinese Scholarly Publishing, 1980), p. 124; Byron N. Tzou, *China and International Law: The Boundary Disputes* (New York: Praeger, 1990), p. 13; Kwei Chungshu, *Plain Speaking on Japan: A Collection of Articles on the Sino-Japanese Conflict, Originally Published in the Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury under the Column, "As a Chinese Sees It"* (Shanghai: Chinese Institute of International Relations, 1932), pp. 196, 198.