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Japan–US Relations and Chinese Nationalism

The Policy Factions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Western Group and the Reformist Group

The second Yamamoto Gonbē cabinet, formed at the time of the Great Kantō Earthquake, would resign en masse in December 1923. The Yamamoto cabinet had taken responsibility for the assassination attempt on Crown Prince and Regent Hirohito, referred to as the Toranomon Incident.

Kiyouura Keigo (1850–1942), successor to the post of prime minister, was originally a government official and had been closely connected to the elder statesman Yamagata Aritomo, who had died in 1922. The Kiyoura cabinet's main members treated the 'Kenkyū-kai' (Study Group) of the House of Peers as its nucleus, with the governing party consisting only of the Seiyū Hontō. For this reason, the 'Goken Sanpa'—the name of a group comprised of three separate pro-constitution political factions: the Kenseikai, the Seiyūkai and the Kakushin Club—criticised the Kiyoura cabinet for being anachronistic. With the Goken Sanpa later achieving outright victory at the general election, a new cabinet was formed in June 1924, led by the president of the Kenseikai, Katō Takaaki.

Because the governing parties represented in the Katō cabinet included the Kenseikai, the Seiyūkai and the Kakushin Club, it was also referred to as the Goken Sanpa cabinet. The Katō cabinet was further known for actions such as its enactment of universal suffrage for men. As it happens, it was as part of the Katō cabinet that Shidehara would serve as foreign minister for the first time. Shidehara was 51 years old. Party-based cabinets would continue from that point until the attempted coup d'état of 15 May 1932 (known as the May 15 Incident). During this period, Shidehara would serve as foreign minister for a total of over five years in Kenseikai-aligned cabinets, including the Katō cabinet, the first Wakatsuki cabinet, the Hamaguchi cabinet and the second Wakatsuki cabinet.

Before covering Shidehara's time as foreign minister, I would like to clarify some of the personal relations within the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹ In general, Shidehara, Debuchi Katsuji, Satō Naotake and Hirota Kōki have collectively been referred to as the 'Western group', a clique oriented towards the major Western nations, due to the emphasis they placed on Japan's relationship with Europe and the US. This group's overall views initially dominated the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

By contrast, when Arita Hachirō became director-general of the ministry's Asian Bureau in September 1927, he helped establish his own group, known as the 'Asia group' or the 'reformists'. Along with Arita, the reformists also included figures such as Shigemitsu Mamoru, Tani Masayuki and Shiratori Toshio. Of course, while we can speak of the 'Western group' or the 'reformists', neither was a monolithic entity. For example, as noted in Chapter 1 (Section 5: The Washington Naval Conference), when Shidehara served as ambassador to the US, he relied upon Saburi Sadao more than Hirota. Hirota, too, was close to the reformists.²

The reformists originated in a society within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs known as the Gaimushō Kakushin Dōshikai (Reform Association of Kindred Spirits of the Foreign Ministry). This was a society created by younger diplomats who had participated in the Paris Peace Conference—including Arita, Shigemitsu, Saitō Hiroshi and Horinouchi Kensuke—to work towards structural reform. The society had around 40 members. It should be noted that Shiratori, who played an important role in the reformists, maintained positive relations with Shidehara up until the Manchurian Incident of September 1931. After that incident, however, the reformists proceeded to take control over the direction of the ministry.

The reformists also had their own internal divisions, with a Shiratori clique facing off against Arita and his supporters. Individuals such as Arita, Shigemitsu and Tani became known as the 'traditionalists'.³ The actions of the reformists are particularly instructive for understanding Japanese diplomacy in the 1930s. For it was they who would go to make up the core of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the years following the Manchurian Incident.

What about the Western group? It was in fact Shidehara who, as a member of the Western group, acted as a pivotal figure in the ministry in the 1920s. Extensive research has been conducted on Shidehara's two terms as foreign minister. That research characterises Shidehara as seeking cooperation with the US and the UK, and as a proponent of economism. With respect to China, Shidehara is portrayed as both a non-interventionist and someone who sought to foster the establishment of order. How prior commentators have evaluated Shidehara has depended upon which of these aspects they viewed as of greater significance.⁴ How were these different aspects coordinated in Shidehara's thinking? Further, what kind of principle, if any, can we identify at the base of his policies? On these points, commentators have not yet arrived at a stable interpretation. One reason for this, I suggest, is the lack of analysis of his personal relations and of his policy process.

Among the Western group, it is particularly important to pay attention to the policy group that would best be referred to as the 'Shidehara clique'. Within this clique, we can trace a direct line of descent, as it were, from Shidehara to individuals such as Debuchi Katsuji and Saburi Sadao. It is they who would make up, for a time, the core actors in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Yet, as seen in the case of Shidehara not talking to Hirota, the Western group was not united in belonging to the Shidehara clique. These kinds of internal connections and divisions are, in my view, very important. Yet, for some reason, they have not previously been properly analysed. Thus, it would be valuable to shed some light on what kind of people Shidehara worked with and to achieve which goals.

The publication of Debuchi's diary is particularly significant in this respect, given his close relationship with Shidehara. As it happens, thus far, relatively little research has made substantial use of Debuchi's diary. In the case of Saburi, whom Shidehara relied upon so strongly, we see that

research has merely emphasised the role he had to play in such matters as the Beijing Special Conference on Tariffs.⁵ It can be said, therefore, that empirical research on the Shidehara clique has only now gotten underway.

To put it another way, investigations into the Shidehara clique are still insufficient compared with the research that has been carried out on the reformists. It seems that this has occurred because it was assumed that Shidehara simply took the initiative with respect to the actions of this clique. Yet if we are to deepen our understanding of Shidehara, we must not neglect more in-depth analysis of this personal connection and his policy process. There are five reasons for this, which I shall now outline.

First, Shidehara tended to advance his policies by coordinating with trusted subordinates. This approach was already evident during his time as ambassador to the US. Once he assumed the role of foreign minister as well, he preferred not to rely too much upon opinions from outside his own circle.

Second, Shidehara's experience of overseas postings was quite unbalanced. His longest posting abroad was in Korea. In all, Shidehara spent a little over five years at Incheon and Busan. His time in the US was also quite long, at nearly five years. In the case of the UK, Shidehara's posting lasted two years and a few months. He also spent some time in Belgium and the Netherlands. However, he never had any direct experience with China.

Third, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs underwent organisational expansion. Because the workload expanded significantly at the time of the Paris Peace Conference, the ministry first responded by establishing the Treaties and Conventions Bureau. Then, in 1920, the Political Affairs Bureau was divided up into the Asian Bureau and the American and European Bureau. The Asian Bureau was, in turn, formed of three divisions, in charge of general diplomacy, finance and economy, and Japanese expatriates, respectively. The American and European Bureau also had three divisions, in charge of Russia, Europe and the US, respectively. Given that Shidehara was a product of the diplomatic service exam and sought to act in the established framework of the ministry, understanding what kind of organisational changes occurred is important.

Fourth, the number of employees at the ministry increased sharply during this period. When Shidehara took the fourth diplomatic service exam, he was one of only four individuals who passed. Twenty years or so later, in the period following World War I, the number of successful candidates for the exam on a given occasion would grow to be more than 20. In 1920 and 1921, in particular, the number of incoming staff was closer to 40. Capable personnel were even recruited from outside the ministry. When Shidehara assumed the role of foreign minister, the total ministry staff had grown to more than 1,100. This indicates that, regardless of whether he was foreign minister, it would not be a simple task to steer the ministry as a whole in the direction he wanted it to go.⁶

Fifth, and finally, negotiations with institutions such as the army and the navy would be conducted by someone of at least the rank of director-general of bureaus. A classic example would be the Kiyoura cabinet's policy platform regarding China. This platform was deliberated over by Debuchi, who was then the director-general of the Asian Bureau. On this occasion Debuchi attempted to restrain the army's policy of advancement into northern Manchuria. This indicates the extent to which Shidehara relied upon the Asian Bureau staffs, and in particular Director-General Debuchi, on matters concerning policy on China.

Keeping these points in mind, I seek to clarify the nature of Shidehara's policy process and personal connections for his first term as foreign minister. An examination of what Shidehara left in the hands of his trusted subordinates, and of what was thereby achieved, allows us to better understand the reality of 'Shidehara diplomacy'. In some cases, actions that were thought to have arisen from Shidehara's own decision-making may turn out to have actually been cases of bottom-up policymaking. Therefore, in the discussion that follows, I will begin by tracing the formation of the Shidehara clique, before moving on to topics such as Shidehara's relationship with Prime Minister Katō, Shidehara's diplomatic ideals, the relationship between China and Japan, the US immigration problem, ministry personnel, economic diplomacy and policy on the Soviet Union.

The Formation of the Shidehara Faction

Our first step shall be to look at the formation of the Shidehara clique, by way of Shidehara's relationships with Debuchi and Saburi. For this reason, it is necessary to take a step backward and return to the era of Shidehara's service as the ambassador to the US. Shidehara arrived at his posting in Washington in November 1919. Of the various problems that exacerbated Japanese-American tensions during the Wilson administration, the primary one was opposition in the US to Japanese immigration. Naturally, Shidehara did his best to resolve this problem. Yet this was not the only issue. Japan and the US were also at odds over matters such as the Siberia expedition, the Shandong problem and the New Four-Power Consortium.⁷

When Shidehara became ambassador, the Wilson administration was already nearing its end. Moreover, the office of secretary of state was in transition from Lansing to Colby. This meant that the third undersecretary of state, Breckinridge Long, had to play a larger role, as he was frequently assigned to negotiations with Japan. Shidehara would make frequent use of Counsellor Debuchi for his negotiations with Long. Of the various issues discussed, it was that of the New Four-Power Consortium that saw the greatest progress.⁸ Originally, it was Lamont, representative of the US bankers, who received attention for his role in the development of the New Four-Power Consortium. Certainly, Lamont displayed a willingness to go along with Japan's position and contributed significantly to the establishment of the consortium.⁹

Yet in the State Department, it was none other than Long who would collaborate with Lamont. This fact has been acknowledged by MacMurray, chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs. When in negotiations with Debuchi and others, Long wrote, in correspondence to Lamont, that 'it is necessary to get Japan to become a member of the Consortium'. He added, 'we are prepared to admit that Japan has certain specified vested interests in Manchuria, and that these be excepted from the operations of the Consortium'.¹⁰ In other words, Long was more conciliatory with respect to Japan than even Lamont. Shidehara would have been made aware of this fact from Debuchi's group. This was why he was able to pressure Long further, as though he had seen through the intentions of the US side. In the words of Long, Shidehara:

Spoke of the use of the word veto, and asked whether it was proposed by the use of it that Japan should not have the right to prevent those activities which might be aimed at her national interest.¹¹

Here, too, Long replied in a way that seemed to accept Shidehara's wishes.

In this manner, Shidehara did his best to secure Japan's special interests in China. Meanwhile, Lamont, working through the commercial firm J. P. Morgan, sought to pressure Undersecretary of State Long and Polk to accept a settlement.¹² An agreement concerning the New Four-Power Consortium would finally be reached in May 1920. During this period, Debuchi was transferred to Germany to serve as an embassy counsellor. Shidehara therefore turned to his first secretary, Saburi Sadao, for help with negotiations with the US. As it happened, Saburi was originally known within the ministry as a specialist on France. His assignment to the embassy in the US, therefore, was due to the support he received from Shidehara. Back when Shidehara was serving as vice-minister for foreign affairs, Saburi had been serving as the French language instructor to Crown Prince Hirohito. He had 'no experience at all of the U.K. or the U.S.'. When Saburi heard that Shidehara 'would go to the US as the ambassador, he approached me with the request that he also go, because he wished to see the U.S.'. ¹³ Assenting to this request, Shidehara worked to ensure Saburi's assignment to the US.

In summary, Shidehara tended to advance his policy goals through coordination with his trusted subordinates. In particular, he relied heavily upon Debuchi and Saburi. At the Washington Naval Conference, Saburi would participate from the outset, while Debuchi also assisted as senior officer of the public relations section. Eventually, both Debuchi and Saburi supported Shidehara as the foreign minister, with Debuchi becoming the director-general of the Asian Bureau and Saburi the director-general of the International Trade Bureau. (See Table 2 on important ministry personnel in the 1920s.) Let us look at what roles Shidehara assigned Debuchi and Saburi to and what this says about his own diplomatic goals.

Table 2: Important personnel in Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1920s

Prime Minister	Foreign Minister	Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs	Director-General, Asian Bureau	Director-General, American and European Bureau	Director-General, International Trade Bureau	Director-General, Treaties and Conventions Bureau	Director-General, Intelligence Department
Hara Takashi (1918–21)	Uchida Yasuya	Shidehara Kijūrō	Yoshizawa Kenkichi	Matsudaira Tsuneo	Hanihara Masanao	Matsuda Michikazu	Ijūin Hikokichi
Takahashi Korekiyo (1921–22)	Uchida Yasuya	Hanihara Masanao	Debuchi Katsuji	Hirota Kōki	Tanaka Tokichi	Yamakawa Tadao	Tanaka Tokichi
Kato Tomosaburō (1922–23)	Uchida Yasuya	Tanaka Tokichi	Debuchi Katsuji	Hirota Kōki	Nagai Matsuzō	Yamakawa Tadao	Tanaka Tokichi
Yamamoto Gonbē (1923–24)	Ijūin Hikokichi	Matsudaira Tsuneo	Debuchi Katsuji	Hirota Kōki	Nagai Matsuzō	Yamakawa Tadao	Matsudaira Tsuneo
Kiyoura Keigo (1924)	Matsui Keishirō	Matsudaira Tsuneo	Debuchi Katsuji	Hirota Kōki	Nagai Matsuzō	Yamakawa Tadao	Matsudaira Tsuneo
Katō Takaaki (1924–26)	Shidehara Kijūrō	Matsudaira Tsuneo	Debuchi Katsuji	Hirota Kōki	Saburi Sadao	Yamakawa Tadao	Matsudaira Tsuneo
Wakatsuki Reijirō (1926–27)	Shidehara Kijūrō	Debuchi Katsuji	Kimura Eiichi	Hotta Masaaki	Saitō Yoshie	Nagaoka Harukazu	Debuchi Katsuji
Tanaka Giichi (1927–29)	Tanaka Giichi	Debuchi Katsuji Yoshida Shigeru	Kimura Eiichi Arita Hachirō	Hotta Masaaki	Saitō Yoshie Taketomi Toshihiko	Saburi Sadao Matsunaga Naokichi	Debuchi Katsuji Komura Kinichi Saitō Hiroshi
Hamaguchi Osachi (1929–31)	Shidehara Kijūrō	Yoshida Shigeru	Arita Hachirō	Hotta Masaaki	Taketomi Toshihiko	Matsunaga Naokichi	Saitō Hiroshi
Wakatsuki Reijirō (1931)	Shidehara Kijūrō	Nagai Matsuzō	Tani Masayuki	Matsushima Hajime	Taketomi Toshihiko	Matsuda Michikazu	Shiratori Toshio

Ambassador to the US	1919 (November): Shidehara Kijūrō
	1923 (February): Hanihara Masanao
	1925 (March): Matsudaira Tsuneo
	1928 (October): Debuchi Katsuji
Ambassador to the UK	1916 (July): Chinda Sutemi
	1920 (September): Hayashi Gonsuke
	1925 (August): Matsui Keishirō
	1929 (January): Matsudaira Tsuneo
Ambassador to France	1916 (February): Matsui Keishirō
	1920 (September): Ishii Kikujiro
	1928 (February): Adachi Mineichirō
	1930 (June): Yoshizawa Kenkichi
Ambassador to the Soviet Union	1925 (March): Satō Naotake (chargé d'affaires)
	1925 (July): Tanaka Tokichi
	1930 (December): Hirota Kōki
	1918 (December): Obata Yūkichi
Minister to China	1923 (July): Yoshizawa Kenkichi
	1929 (October): Saburi Sadao
	1931 (June): Shigemitsu Mamoru

Note: Sourced from the respective yearly editions of Minister's Secretariat Personal Division, ed., *Gaimushō Nenkan* (Ministry for Foreign Affairs yearbook).

The Spirit of the Washington Naval Conference

Shidehara and Katō

On 11 June 1924, the Goken Sanpa cabinet was formed, headed by Katō Takaaki. Informally, it was almost decided that the post of foreign minister would go not to Shidehara but to Ishii Kikujirō, who was then ambassador to France. At the very last minute, the position went to Shidehara.¹⁴ Why did Shidehara ultimately become the foreign minister instead of Ishii? One interview provides Ishii's account of the circumstances:

On one occasion, Mr. Katō (Takaaki) said that if he were to form his administration, he would very much like to give me the office of foreign minister. But I responded by refusing the offer. It could make things uncomfortable, given that Shidehara was a relative [of Katō]. But basically, I recommended him as the most suitable candidate. Later, during my second term as ambassador to France, Count Katō did actually get to form a government. I wrote a letter right away, just to state that my opinion was the same as before, and that I would prefer to not take on that position.¹⁵

In other words, Ishii declined the post of foreign minister and instead recommended Shidehara. Katō responded by appointing Shidehara, rather than Ishii or the previous foreign minister, Matsui. What was Katō's true intention here? Shidehara and Ishii did not have vastly different conceptions of foreign affairs. And, from the beginning, Shidehara had had a close relationship with Ishii. In fact, it was Ambassador to France Ishii who secured the role of vice-minister for foreign affairs in the second Ōkuma cabinet for Shidehara.¹⁶ It was at that point that Ishii was internally thought to be the best candidate to succeed Katō as foreign minister.

Naturally, Ishii was therefore regarded as belonging to Katō's political faction. It was only appropriate that Ishii would go on to assume the role of foreign minister in Katō's own cabinet. Yet if Katō had made this decision, there would have been political complications. Hence, for the above reasons, it would ultimately be Shidehara who would become foreign minister in the Katō cabinet. In fact, Shidehara would be the very first foreign minister to enter the ministry through the diplomatic service

exam. Until that point, foreign ministers were typically chosen more on the basis of their personal connections than the circumstances of their entry into the ministry.

The previous foreign minister, Matsui Keishirō, also exemplified this older way of doing things. Matsui stated:

When I was thinking of securing a job that concerned foreign nations, I spoke with Mr. Hatoyama Kazuo [director-general of the Investigation Bureau and, simultaneously, a professor of law], because he seemed to have some status within the ministry. He was warm to the idea and said he would put in a word with Katō Takaaki, so I should go and introduce myself. When I went to visit him in Surugadai, he gave me his approval, so then it was decided that I would go work at the Foreign Ministry. All I had to do was wait for the summons after I graduated.¹⁷

By contrast, Shidehara, as a member of the generation who entered via the diplomatic service exam system, was a model official. Figures such as Hara Takashi and Yamagata Aritomo were initially cautious of Shidehara, whom they saw as belonging to the Katō clique. Yet despite being something of an arch-rival of Katō, Hara at least would gradually come to trust Shidehara. He would even go so far as to have Shidehara succeed Ishii for the role of ambassador to the US. This speaks to how Shidehara was regarded as less politically partisan than Ishii.

A talk by Nagai Matsuzō is instructive on this point. Nagai had a close relationship with Shidehara and served under him as vice-minister for foreign affairs during Shidehara's second term as foreign minister. This is what Nagai had to say:

I have worked under Minister Ishii Kikujirō as well as under Minister Shidehara Kijūrō, and Viscount Ishii had the sharper mind. Mr. Shidehara was careful, but I am not sure he was particularly politically minded. Really, it was Uchida Yasuya who did not show much in the way of brilliance. However, he was good with people and quite a capable drinker. His personality like a rubber doll is well liked by everybody, I suppose.

Katō Takaaki was not familiar with the U.S. At the time, I was director of the Immigration Division, around the time when the whole immigration problem was basically getting resolved. Then, when [Katō] became minister, he came around to our area, and

delivered his judgment of the whole thing right there on the spot: 'Those Americans can't be trusted. You can negotiate with them as long as you like, and it will not get you anywhere.'¹⁸

So why did Katō choose the less politically oriented Shidehara as the foreign minister? If we interpret his action logically, it would seem that, in considering his choices, Katō had his eye fixed on Saionji Kinmochi. Saionji was the last of Japan's *genrō* (elder statesmen). Certainly, it was no longer the golden age of the *genrō*, yet it was still they who approved the succeeding prime minister for leading the nation. To be able to decide who would head the cabinet was itself a great power.

The problem Katō faced was that he had a poor reputation in the wake of the Twenty-One Demands issued to China. For Katō, therefore, it was imperative that he take an action that could help eliminate Saionji's suspicion. For this reason, it was desirable for him to assign a more neutral figure such as Shidehara, rather than Ishii, who was more firmly in Katō's camp. Thus, Katō left diplomatic affairs to Shidehara in order to preserve some continuity in Japan's foreign policy.

The Diet held on 1 July 1924 seemed to hint at Katō's decision on this matter. This was Katō's first address to the Diet as prime minister. Contrary to expectations, he hardly addressed diplomatic issues at all. He merely expressed 'regret' that the US had passed the Japanese Exclusion Act, which was scheduled for enactment that very day. According to the preface of the influential journal *Gaikō Jihō* (Diplomatic review):

It may seem that he had simply dropped the matter of the China problem as though he had forgotten it, yet this [omission] was actually reflective of Prime Minister Katō's administrative policy.¹⁹

In other words, perhaps Katō had intentionally avoided touching upon the China problem, given its controversial nature.

Shidehara was the next to take the podium after Katō. Shidehara asserted the need to 'maintain continuity in matters of diplomatic policy', claiming that this would also help 'preserve the dignity of the nation'.²⁰ Shidehara's approach towards diplomacy would eventually earn the trust of Saionji. While there may have been a mixed reception in general, Shidehara's more cordial relationship with Saionji was extremely valuable to the Kenseikai.

Shidehara and Debuchi

What kind of diplomacy did Shidehara initially pursue in the Katō cabinet? The longstanding issue at the time was how to deal with China. To better understand Shidehara's approach, it helps to look at his address to the Diet. As mentioned above, his initial address was given on 1 July 1924. The venue was the House of Peers. There Shidehara advanced the following position with respect to China:

When it comes to the domestic political circumstances of China, we need to avoid getting overly involved. Furthermore, we need to avoid taking measures that appear to ignore China's reasonable positions. When it comes to China, for some time now, we have worked towards bringing Japan and China closer together economically, under the ideal of equal opportunity ... As you are all well aware, at the time of the Washington Naval Conference, various treaties were signed that concern China ... These prescribed policies are in complete accord with those policies we have sought to take. Therefore, the government's intention is to act in a manner that is consistent to the spirit of these treaties.²¹

In summary, Shidehara declared that Japan would not interfere in China's politics but would instead seek closer economic relations between the two countries on the basis of equal opportunity. The goal was to help forge an international order in accordance with the spirit of the Washington Naval Conference. This stance was naturally understood as constituting the essence of Shidehara diplomacy.

Yet it should be pointed out that, at the time, Shidehara's address was not necessarily warmly regarded. To quote once more from *Gaikō Jihō*:

The address of Foreign Minister Shidehara was like something by a new editor of a provincial newspaper tasked with writing an editorial on diplomatic problems for the first time. It neither included any real aims nor had any clear central message.²²

In other words, the journal harshly criticised Shidehara's address as not only unoriginal but empty of meaning.

How should such strong criticism be interpreted? It may help to consider the Diet address of former foreign minister Matsui:

With regard to the peaceful unification of China, an improvement of the conditions of that country is a task that falls upon its citizens. It is they who need to awaken to the needs of the day, and apply their efforts. It is not the place of outsiders to overly interfere in their matters ... We need instead to work towards a complete understanding between the peoples of Japan and China and be resolute in promoting further cultural and economic relations ... In the case of the Washington Conference, we will honor the spirit of the various treaties and decisions made there, and on that basis, take necessary steps with respect to our policy on China.²³

Matsui's address was given on 22 January 1924—only half a year before Shidehara's address. In this address, Matsui maintained that, while Japan ought to maintain its stance of non-intervention, in the hopes of promoting peace and national unity within China, it also needed to push forward with developing closer cultural and economic ties between the two nations, while also respecting the spirit of the Washington Naval Conference. There was no essential difference between Matsui's address and Shidehara's. Thus, the ideals expressed in Shidehara's speech can hardly be regarded as his own unique stance; instead, they were already identifiable within senior diplomatic circles from an earlier stage.

As to why Shidehara's and Matsui's speeches were so similar, the key here is Debuchi. As director-general of the Asian Bureau, Debuchi supported both Matsui and Shidehara during their respective terms as foreign minister. Debuchi, who had previously supported Shidehara during his time as ambassador to the US, went to Beijing in the period after the Washington Naval Conference to negotiate some of the details regarding the Shandong Treaty that had been signed at the conference. These negotiations began in June 1922 and were concluded in December. The committee chief of the Japanese side was Obata, then minister to China. Debuchi assisted Obata as a member of the committee, alongside Secretary-General Kimura Eiichi and others. The committee chief of the Chinese side, meanwhile, was Wang Zhengting.²⁴

Debuchi would go on to become director-general of the Asian Bureau in May 1923. Debuchi was proud of the work he had done alongside Shidehara in successfully concluding the negotiations at the Washington Naval Conference. For this reason, he forcefully argued to Foreign Minister Ijūin and Vice-Minister Matsudaira of the Yamamoto cabinet that 'the Washington treaties be followed as our guiding principles'. However, Debuchi was dissatisfied with Ijūin. This was primarily due

to their differences on policy on China. Debuchi sought to promote cultural undertakings with regard to China. In fact, Wang Zhenqiang, former Chinese foreign minister, even visited Debuchi once to discuss the issue of the lynching of innocent Chinese people in the aftermath of the Great Kantō Earthquake. Ijūin, meanwhile, had no interest in such matters. Further, from Debuchi's perspective, Ijūin tended to hire people on the basis of favouritism. For example, he declined to make former minister to China Obata the ambassador to Germany, instead choosing Honda Kumatarō.²⁵

The Kiyoura cabinet was formed in January 1924. The position of foreign minister went to Matsui Keishirō. When he made the address quoted above, the section on China was actually written by Debuchi. The main points were the following:

- (1) The desirability of peace in China; (2) non-intervention in Chinese affairs; (3) cooperation between the citizens of the two nations; (4) the importance of cooperation conducted with a spirit of autonomy; (5) respect for the spirit of the Washington Naval Conference.²⁶

These were principles, therefore, that predated Shidehara's promotion to foreign minister, and they were previously prepared by Debuchi. Moreover, it was also Debuchi who was able to impose an arms embargo on the warlord Zhang Zuolin.

With the beginning of the Katō cabinet in June of the same year, Shidehara, as foreign minister, internally shared an outline of his planned Diet address with the directors-general of the different ministry bureaus. Debuchi, after seeing a draft of the address, 'made substantial revisions to the section concerning China'.²⁷ The result was the kind of address seen in the excerpt above. This is all to say that the reason Matsui's and Shidehara's addresses were similar was that, in each case, Debuchi added his own, not inconsiderable changes. Of course, it was Shidehara himself who had influenced Debuchi considerably during his time as ambassador to the US. It was in this way that Shidehara's diplomatic ideals began to take hold within Japanese diplomatic circles in general, even before he became foreign minister.

In the autumn of 1924, a conflict erupted in China between the Zhili and Fengtian military cliques. This conflict is known as the Second Zhili-Fengtian War. At cabinet meetings at this time, Shidehara had to fight

for his position without support. The Katō cabinet was leaning towards sending troops to China, urged on by the minister for agriculture and commerce, Takahashi Korekiyo. Nevertheless, Shidehara continued to argue against intervention. It should, of course, be kept in mind that Shidehara's non-interventionist stance was not at all arbitrary. Rather, he had his own underlying reasoning that supported his view of the situation.

At the cabinet meeting, Shidehara made the following statement:

Even if Wu Peifu [of the Zhili clique] wins and enters Dongsan Province (the 'Three Northeast Provinces' that would later become subsumed within the puppet state of Manchukuo), his forces will be fully engaged, with no reserves for deployment elsewhere ... Feng Yuxiang [also of the Zhili clique] is in Zhangjiakou; however, he is not well disposed towards Wu. He is not going to just sit back and watch Wu capture more territory.²⁸

In response, Prime Minister Katō went so far as to criticise Shidehara's position as 'meaningless'.²⁹ After a furious debate, Shidehara submitted his resignation to Kato, but was appeased.

As it happened, the Second Zhili–Fengtian War played out as Shidehara predicted, with Japan managing to secure its interests in China without incident. However, behind the scenes, the Japanese army was lending support to Feng Yuxiang. It was at this time that Asian Bureau Director-General Debuchi lent his support to Shidehara's policy of non-intervention. Debuchi organised a three-party meeting with the Ministry of War and the Navy Ministry, whereupon 'it was decided that a basic policy of non-intervention would be followed'. Debuchi also 'emphasized the importance of a non-intervention policy' to the Seiyūkai and Seiyūhontō parties.³⁰

It should be noted that Debuchi played a significant role in handling coordination with the army and navy during Shidehara's first term as foreign minister. Shidehara and Debuchi also shared similar ideals. Shidehara once argued, regarding international politics in the era after the Paris Peace Conference:

We must speak of a future where the abuse of military force is swept away, where the ideology of invasion is rejected, where all international problems are resolved through cooperation based upon mutual respect of the parties involved, as well as upon an understanding that is shared between all the peoples of the world.³¹

In December 1924, Debuchi was promoted from Asian Bureau director-general to vice-minister for foreign affairs. This change also had an impact on Shidehara's policy of non-intervention. With Debuchi now extremely busy working as vice-minister for foreign affairs, coordination with the military became more difficult. It should be remembered that this situation was in the context of Japan's response to the 'Guo Songling Incident' of this period. The Guo Songling Incident was a rebellion launched in November 1925 by General Guo Songling against the Fengtian clique leader Zhang Zuolin. In response, Japan issued a warning and was able to force Guo Songling's army to retreat by increasing the size of the Kwantung Army.³²

In August 1926, in the first phase of the 'Northern Expedition', Matsui Iwane, chief of the Second Bureau of the Office of Army General Staff, argued that peace should be recommended to the various armies of China. The Northern Expedition was a military campaign inside China. It was launched from Guangzhou by Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi), leader of the National Revolutionary Army, for the purpose of defeating the Beiyang government. However, Matsui's proposal for promoting peace was rejected by Asian Bureau Director-General Kimura Seiichi. Kimura, as Debuchi's successor to the post, was also concerned about Japan's relations with the UK, the US and France, and wanted to maintain the course of non-intervention.³³

Immigration and Personnel

Shidehara and Saburi

Along with Debuchi, another individual who was regarded as belonging to Shidehara's coterie was Saburi Sadao. As an embassy counsellor, Saburi had previously worked as a plenipotentiary attendant at the Washington Naval Conference, under Ambassador Shidehara to the US. In May 1924, Saburi was relieved of his position in the US. Upon returning to Japan, he became the director-general of the International Trade Bureau in September that year, following a brief period as acting director-general. The previous director-general of the bureau, Nagai Matsuzō, had required a period of convalescence.³⁴

Traditionally, the International Trade Bureau had not been viewed as of particular importance within the ministry. One entry in Debuchi's diary even stated: 'In the vice-minister's office, we debated the matter of abolishing the International Trade Bureau'.³⁵ Horiuchi Tateki, who had long served in the bureau, was dissatisfied with its low position inside the ministry. This was because, in his view, 'from the perspective of Japan, within it lay the fate of economic diplomacy occupying a central position'.³⁶ Horiuchi was also in charge of handling practical affairs for the Gaimushō Kakushin Dōshikai.

So, what did Shidehara wish to promote through Saburi and the International Trade Bureau? The bureau was responsible for economic and immigration matters. The first issue that Shidehara and Saburi needed to engage with was the immigration problem in the US. Let us go back in time a little now to revisit the roots of this issue. In 1908, an informal agreement between Japan and the US ensured that, in exchange for a voluntary restriction in the number of vessels crossing over, Japanese individuals could still immigrate to the US. It should be noted that, at this time, the immigration of Asian people from countries other than Japan was already prohibited. However, towards the end of May 1924, the US Congress enacted a Japanese Exclusion Act. A clause in the new law forbade foreigners who were not eligible for naturalisation from entering the country. This effectively outlawed the immigration of all Japanese individuals. In reaction, anti-US protest movements spread across Japan. Japan was sensitive to matters of racial discrimination and had sought for its citizens the status of 'honorary whites'.

With the Japanese Exclusion Act passing in the US, Shidehara tended to be viewed as lacking any plan for dealing with the immigration problem. In reality, however, Shidehara had been deeply involved with this issue even before becoming foreign minister. While serving as ambassador to the US, Shidehara had been concerned about the influence of the 1920 Alien Land Law that had passed in California—the law that prohibited Japanese people from leasing land. In October 1920, immediately before the passing of the bill, Shidehara had put pressure on Secretary of State Colby. He urged Colby to speak out as a representative of the federal government 'for the purpose of allaying popular excitement in Japan'.³⁷ However, Colby believed he could not agree to Shidehara's request. Taking into account matters such as the situation in California, he was very cautious about issuing any government statement.

As mentioned earlier, Saburi left his posting in the US in 1924. On his way back to Japan, he visited the West Coast of the US to investigate the immigration problem. Undersecretary of State Phillips, after being informed by Saburi of his findings, wrote in his diary that Saburi 'has done much during the last few years to help good relations between the two countries'.³⁸

Of those individuals in Japan at that time who made proposals on what to do about the Japanese Exclusion Act, one was Sakatani Yoshirō, member of the House of Peers. Sakatani discussed the issue with Foreign Minister Matsui, as well as the director of the Immigration Division of the International Trade Bureau, Akamatsu Hiroyuki. After returning to Japan, Saburi reached out to Sakatani. Meanwhile, Shidehara had returned earlier than Saburi and was waiting for his new posting. Saburi and International Trade Bureau Director-General Nagai provided detailed explanations on the developments behind the passing of the Japanese Exclusion Act to Shidehara and financier Shibusawa Eiichi.³⁹

Around March 1924, the Kiyoura cabinet examined the possibility of sending Shibusawa, along with the privy councillor and chairman of the America-Japan Society, Kaneko Kentarō, to the US to help alleviate anti-Japanese sentiment. Shidehara, still waiting for his next posting, was invited by Kiyoura to the Prime Minister's Office where he discussed the matter with individuals such as Foreign Minister Matsui, Kaneko, Shibusawa, Uchida Yasuya and Chinda Sutemi. According to Matsui, 'Viscount Kaneko got very hot under the collar while debating, while by comparison, Shidehara primarily sought to discuss the matter by putting himself into the shoes of his interlocutors'.⁴⁰ Shidehara did his best to calm down Kaneko, who was very much in favour of the expedition. However, Matsui and Ambassador to the US Hanihara believed that such an expedition might complicate matters further. In the end, therefore, the plan was scuttled.

Later, towards the end of May, the Japanese Exclusion Act was formally enacted into law in Washington. In response, several protesters in Japan committed suicide in various public areas, including in front of the US embassy. At the National Sports Hall in Ryōgoku, a Kokumin Taibei Taikai (People's Meeting against the US) was held as a protest rally. Individuals involved in the organising of such gatherings included Ioki Ryōzō, Hatoyama Ichirō, Nagaoka Gaishi, Umeya Shōkichi, Shirowa Ryūhei, Mochitsuki Kotarō, Tōyama Mitsuru, Ogawa Heikichi, Nagai

Ryūtarō, Uesugi Shinkichi, Kuzō Yoshihisa, Miki Bukichi, Tomizu Hiroto, Okazaki Kunisuke, Tachibana Koichirō, Baba Tsunego, Nishihara Kamezō, Uchida Ryōhei and Shinobu Junpei.⁴¹

It was within this broader context that, on 31 May, Ambassador Hanihara personally delivered his letter of protest to Secretary of State Hughes. While the Kiyoura cabinet decided on the delivery of the letter, it was Shidehara who actually wrote it. According to Shidehara's memoirs, at the request of Foreign Minister Matsui, he:

Drafted the letter of protest to the U.S. in English. When I read it over, I personally felt that it was an extremely polished piece of work. Matsui then read it out word for word during the cabinet meeting ... Whereupon it was passed.⁴²

Shidehara himself was quite unenthusiastic about the idea of formally issuing a protest with the US. When Matsui consulted him about the letter, Shidehara stated: 'Whatever form of protest is carried out, it will ultimately not succeed in changing the mind of the US government'.⁴³ Because International Trade Bureau Director-General Nagai was unwell, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs assigned Akamatsu, director of the Immigration Division, and Ministry Adviser Baty to handle this matter. Shidehara continued to view the formal protest as 'ill-advised'. Nevertheless, Shidehara entrusted the final decision to Foreign Minister Matsui: 'As I am not the individual responsible, the one who must decide whether to submit it [the letter] is Minister Matsui'.⁴⁴ Although Matsui did have the letter delivered to the US government, the content ended up largely reflecting Shidehara's own views. Soon afterward, when Shidehara assumed the post of foreign minister, he would discontinue Japan's protests over the immigration issue.

Publication of Diplomatic Documents and the Immigration Committee

Shidehara became foreign minister on 11 June 1924. Half a month had already passed since the Japanese Exclusion Act was enacted into law by the US Congress. Shidehara's view at that time was that actions needed to be taken to help restore relations between Japan and the US, while at the same time domestic and foreign popular opinion needed to be taken into consideration. His first step was to make public the diplomatic documents that had been used for negotiations between Japan and the

US. In response to this decision, Hanihara, Japan's ambassador to the US, sought to make sure that the classified documents handed to Hughes in December 1923 and January 1924 were not made public without the consent of the US government.⁴⁵

Despite Hanihara's submission, in July 1924, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs went ahead and published two collections of official documents. These were titled, respectively, *1924 Nen Beikoku Imin-hō Seitei oyobi Kore nikansuru Nichi-Bei Kōshō Keika* (The US Immigration Act of 1924 and the process of Japan-US negotiations) and *1924 Nen Beikoku Imin-hō Seitei oyobi Kore nikansuru Nichi-Bei Kōshō Keika Kōbunsho Eibun Fuzokusho* (The US Immigration Act of 1924 and the process of Japan-US negotiations, supplementary English-language official documents). Both monographs exceeded 200 pages. It was unprecedented for Japan to publish a collection of diplomatic documents relating to an ongoing issue in this manner. According to the foreword in these publications, they 'were swiftly compiled in the hopes that they would be released before the end of the current special session of the Diet'.⁴⁶ While Ambassador Hanihara was concerned about the publication of the classified documents that were sent to Hughes, these monographs nevertheless included sections of those documents. Apparently, the ministry itself had pushed for their inclusion.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs widely distributed this publication. Four hundred copies were sent to the House of Peers, and there were a further 500 copies for the House of Representatives, 50 copies for the Privy Council, 12 copies for the Ministry of Home Affairs, 50 copies for various Tokyo newspapers, 112 copies for the prefectural governments, 232 copies for overseas government establishments, 63 copies for the banks, 99 copies for the regional newspapers and so on. However, the major newspapers did not report on the published documents to any significant degree.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, Shidehara was being prudent concerning further protests from Japan on the Japanese Exclusion Act. Given that the US was then in the middle of a presidential election, Shidehara believed that pressing Japan's case further would only 'uselessly inflame the sentiments of the citizens of the two nations'.⁴⁸ Finally, in mid-September, he had a protest sent to Hughes. Even so, this protest was made privately and only once. Shidehara also wished to prevent any cooperation between Japanese residents in the US and anti-US movements in Japan pushed by ultranationalist groups such as the Kokuryūkai (Black Dragon Society). Saburi, director-general

of the International Trade Bureau; Akamatsu, director of the Immigration Division; and Ishii Itarō, of the section staff, debated what measures ought to be taken in response to the Japanese Exclusion Act. Yet there were no easy solutions. Saburi was hopeful, however, that 'rather than the president rejecting the act and overturning it, it would be better if he first won the general election, so that a new approach could be found'.⁴⁹

With no solution in sight to the immigration problem in the US, Shidehara formed an immigration committee at the end of August 1924. This committee was to meet every Thursday under the supervision of the foreign minister. Shidehara chose individuals such as Bureau Director-General Saburi to serve as members of the committee. The secretary was Section Chief Akamatsu. The Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, and the Ministry of Communication also appointed the bureau-director-general-level staffs to the committee. The immigration committee concluded that immigration to Brazil was to be encouraged. As Ishii wrote, 'Mr. Shidehara was particularly interested in Brazilian immigration'.⁵⁰ The committee also deliberated on the possibility of immigration to the South Sea Islands.

Edward Price Bell

How did Foreign Minister Shidehara and Prime Minister Katō view Japan-US relations at this time? At the end of May 1925, in the twilight of his life, Katō was interviewed by Edward Price Bell, a reporter for the *Chicago Daily News*. Katō spoke with great fervour. As he said: 'To the peace of the Pacific we Japanese are devoted'. Bell subsequently interviewed Shidehara. On the topic of Japanese immigration to the US, Shidehara explained the situation, beginning with his previous discussions with the former ambassador to Japan, Roland Morris. Shidehara then went on to quote the British ambassador to the US, James Bryce, stating: 'The American people may make mistakes. They may commit injustices. But in the end, they always of their own will put them right. It is their history'.⁵¹ Bell appeared receptive to Katō's and Shidehara's message. In his article, they were depicted as true statesmen.

A closer look at Bell's article, however, raises questions. Why did Bell present Katō and Shidehara in such favourable terms? After all, the echoes of the Japanese Exclusion Act were still lingering. To present Japan in such positive terms, therefore, feels somehow unconvincing, even unnatural. A key to this mystery lies in Bell's personal documents, as well as in the

records of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to these sources, in December 1924, Bell had put in a request to Yoshida Isaburō, Japan's acting ambassador to the US, to interview Prime Minister Katō. At that stage, Bell had already interviewed the heads of the UK, France, Germany, Italy and the US. His hope was to have a meeting with Katō and to bring all of these interviews together in a booklet.

Upon learning of Bell's plan, Shidehara sounded out Katō on the idea and secured his consent. The interview was to be held after April 1925, thereby avoiding the extremely busy period when the Diet would be in session. Shidehara also informed Katō that Bell had already undertaken various fact-finding activities such as 'speaking with pro-Japanese and anti-Japanese Americans' in San Francisco. Meanwhile, Bell sent some correspondence to Katō in advance, informing him that he wished to ask him about the 'Pacific problem'.⁵² From the above facts, we can surmise that, at the very least, Shidehara prepared the broad outlines that would guide Katō and Bell's interview. It is important to understand that, from Katō and Shidehara's perspective, this was no mere interview. In particular, for Shidehara, it amounted to something close to a message that Japan would be sending to the US. Thus, Bell's interview eventually took place at the end of May. Bell quickly had the minutes of the meeting sent to Katō and Shidehara, receiving their approval. For his background research Bell also went further, referring to sources such as Katō and Shidehara's Diet addresses. His pro-Japan article was published in various newspapers in the US and the Philippines. Shidehara would have received the impression on this occasion that US public opinion towards Japan was improving.

During his time in Japan, Bell also contacted US Ambassador Edgar A. Bancroft. Therefore, Bell's reporting efforts can be considered in some respects close to a joint Japan-US effort to shape US public opinion. Bancroft had also been concerned about the influence of the Japanese Exclusion Act for some time and had previously exchanged his opinions on the matter with Shidehara. Further, Bancroft had given detailed reports in private correspondence with Hughes as to the content of his meetings with Shidehara. It should be noted that Bancroft's background was as a lawyer who was familiar with issues concerning race. It was for this very reason that he was appointed US ambassador to Japan in November 1924. However, Shidehara and Bancroft were careful not to discuss the Japanese Exclusion Act in public. Unfortunately, Bancroft would pass away suddenly at Karuizawa at the end of July 1925.⁵³

As it happened, Bell would eventually be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for his reporting. He was nominated by none other than Shidehara. In his letter to the Nobel Committee, Shidehara wrote: 'I admire his knowledge of international affairs, and not least those of the Far East; and especially his untiring efforts to promote peace among the nations'.⁵⁴ This is rare praise from Shidehara, given his distaste for the mass media. It seems that Bell had gained Shidehara's trust by faithfully reproducing the contents of the meetings and by showing the draft to Shidehara beforehand. In the end, Bell did not receive the Nobel Peace Prize. Nevertheless, he would continue to communicate with Shidehara thereafter.

Personnel

Following the passing of the Japanese Exclusion Act in Washington, Ambassador Hanihara relinquished his position, which was temporarily filled by Acting Ambassador Yoshida Isaburō. Meanwhile, Shidehara and Katō sought to install Mutsu Hirokichi as Hanihara's successor. Hirokichi was the eldest son of Mutsu Munemitsu and had also become a diplomat. However, Hirokichi declined the posting as US ambassador due to health reasons. Shidehara responded by appointing Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Matsudaira Tsuneo to the post. Matsudaira also had a close relationship with Debuchi; the two were originally classmates. It should be noted that, following his departure from the US, Shidehara and Debuchi recommended Hanihara for the job of ambassador to Italy. However, Hanihara himself turned down the suggestion.⁵⁵

The appointment of Vice-Minister Matsudaira as US ambassador led to a further reshuffling of personnel within the ministry. In December 1924, Shidehara appointed Asian Bureau Director-General Debuchi as the new vice-minister. From this period, therefore, there are further references to personnel matters in Debuchi's diary. Debuchi held Saitō Yoshie in high esteem and considered making him the director-general of the Treaties and Conventions Bureau. In the end, Saitō was assigned the role of the International Trade Bureau instead. Concerning who would succeed him as vice-minister, Debuchi would later confide in his diary:

I cannot necessarily say that Saburi is best suited to becoming the next vice-minister. If one day I were to become minister, I would want my vice-minister to be Saitō Yoshie.⁵⁶

Debuchi was critical of the fact that Shidehara had recommended Tanaka Tokichi for the position of ambassador to the Soviet Union and believed that Obata Yūkichi would be suitable as Japan's minister to China. Thus, there were some differences of opinion between Shidehara and Debuchi when it came to staffing. Nevertheless, Debuchi's diary still offers a window on the personal networks of the Shidehara clique. For example, Shidehara removed Honda Kumatarō from the post of ambassador to Germany at Debuchi's recommendation.⁵⁷

In any case, what was particularly important at this time was the question of who would succeed Debuchi as director-general of the Asian Bureau. Debuchi's idea was for Arita Hachirō to take on the role. In general, Arita was regarded as a representative of the reformist group. However, at this point he had not come out in opposition to Shidehara and Debuchi. Shigemitsu, meanwhile, was viewed as behaving too obsequiously towards Debuchi. In the end, it was not Arita but Kimura Eiichi who became Asian Bureau director-general. Previously, Kimura had attended the Washington Naval Conference as first division director of the Asian Bureau. Moreover, although he was invited by Horinouchi Kensuke, he did not join the Gaimushō Kakushin Dōshikai.⁵⁸

Thus, the Asian Bureau would be headed by Kimura, with the role of first division director going to Tani Masayuki. At the time, the Asian Bureau was regarded as the leading bureau of the ministry. It was also said of the bureau that it had its own internal 'Monroe Doctrine'. So the critique went: 'A certain clique has consolidated its grip on the Asian Bureau, keeping non-clique members out and ensuring that its own bureau staff receive good positions when sent abroad'.⁵⁹ As director-general of the Asian Bureau, Kimura would support Shidehara's economic diplomacy and his policies on Manchuria and Mongolia. Further, proceeding from the correct assumption that warlord Zhang Zuolin would decline and that the authorities in north-eastern China would compromise with the Nationalist Party, Kimura began to plan for a future improvement in Sino-Japanese relations. In time, Shidehara, then in his second term as foreign minister, would send Kimura to direct the South Manchuria Railway.

Meanwhile, there is the question of what became of Tani, the chief of the first division in the Asian Bureau. He was generally seen as a member of the reformists. Later, upon advancing to the position of Asian Bureau director-general, he promoted a policy of Sino-Japanese cooperation.

Nevertheless, until the time of the Manchurian Incident, it seems that the personal relationship between Shidehara and Tani was not an overly poor one.⁶⁰

The real problem for Shidehara was Hirota, the director-general of the American and European Bureau. Debuchi and Shidehara felt that Hirota was too different from them, and they even wanted to have him removed from his position as bureau director-general. That was not to say Hirota was on a completely different wavelength when it came to foreign affairs.⁶¹ Yet, he was shunned by Shidehara and Debuchi. Why? The first reason concerns Hirota's relationship with the Gaimushō Kakushin Dōshikai. According to Arita Hachirō:

One of the very first to join the [reformists] association was Mr. Hirota Kōki, who was then first secretary at the embassy in Washington. At that time, he already had something of the politician about him, not to mention the air of a member of Genyōsha [the Dark Ocean Society, a nationalist group from northern Kyūshū].⁶²

It should be noted that the Gaimushō Kakushin Dōshikai received internal support from a number of other figures, including Sawada Setsuzō, director of the Telegraph Division; Kawashima Nobutarō, director of the First Division of the Treaties and Conventions Bureau; and Sugimura Yōtarō, director of the Second Division of the Treaties and Conventions Bureau. There are indications that Hanihara may also have been involved. Arita, for example, wrote that 'there was something about Vice-Minister Hanihara that just did not sit well with me'.⁶³

Hirota had returned to Japan from Washington in December 1920, earlier than Shidehara, who at that point was still serving as ambassador. The following year, Hirota became director of the Second Division of the Intelligence Department before later rising to the post of vice director-general of the Intelligence Department. It is worth pointing out that Hirota and Shidehara were not far apart when it came to policy. For example, as division director, Hirota also supported the Four-Power Treaty that was concluded at the Washington Naval Conference. While House of Peers member Egi Tasuku criticised the termination of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance as deplorable, Hirota argued that 'the empire [Japan] has taken the best and only possible approach in shifting from the Anglo-Japanese Alliance to the Four-Power Treaty'.⁶⁴ Recall that it was

Shidehara who had recommended the abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance at the Washington Naval Conference. In this regard, Hirota was close to Shidehara.

Nevertheless, once Hirota became director-general of the American and European Bureau in September 1923, he began to show his colours more—and in a manner unbecoming a bureaucrat. On this matter, there is testimony from Horinouchi Kensuke. Horinouchi was second division director in the bureau, under Bureau Director-General Hirota. According to Horinouchi, Hirota's office was 'frequented by people such as Diet members, industrialists, independent patriots, and the like, lending the bureau quite a lordly atmosphere'. He added: 'From early on he [Hirota] had the air of a politician about him'.⁶⁵ Such accounts help explain why Shidehara and Debuchi felt uncomfortable with Hirota. Their distrust resulted less from his policies than from his behaviour. Hirota would subsequently be transferred to the position of minister to the Netherlands, with Hotta Masaaki succeeding him as American and European Bureau' director-general.

The Fate of Economic Diplomacy

The Beijing Special Conference on Tariffs

Above I have provided an outline of the situation with respect to ministry personnel. With this broader human context fleshed out, we can now consider what kind of policies Shidehara pursued as foreign minister. Particularly important here is the concept of 'economic diplomacy'. In Beijing, in the autumn of 1925, an international conference was held to discuss China's tariffs. Shidehara's early policy with respect to this conference was to limit the discussion to a 2.5 per cent tax, as was previously agreed upon at the Washington Naval Conference, and then proceed to examine how the increased revenue might be used. However, nations such as the US turned out to be more sympathetic towards China than anticipated, forcing Shidehara to rethink his policy.

At around the same time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, held a joint committee for the purpose of preparing for a tariff conference. This committee included

bureau-general-ranked bureaucrats from the respective ministries of the Japanese government. From the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Shidehara sent Saburi Sadao, director-general of the International Trade Bureau. The committee secretary was Asaoka Ken, director of the First Section of the International Trade Bureau. There were other participants from the ministry as well. These included Asian Bureau Director-General Kimura, Asian Bureau First Division Director Tani, Secretary Horiuchi Tateki and Secretary Hidaka Shinrokurō. The committee met almost every day to discuss such matters as the conditions and impact of a 2.5 per cent tax. The committee also investigated the various conditions that could potentially arise if China were granted tariff autonomy.⁶⁶

As it happened, Shidehara himself had not yet decided to recognise China's tariff autonomy. An indication of his stance appears in the record of the cabinet decision made on 13 October 1925. The Katō cabinet was, above all, concerned with keeping the discussion limited to an additional tax of 2.5 per cent, with any additional tax collection to be conditional on the use of a graduated tax rate and China's use of the increased revenue to service its foreign loans. On the topic of tariff autonomy, if it were granted depending on how events unfolded at the conference, the Katō cabinet intended for that autonomy to only extend as far as the setting of the period of transition.

The Special Tariff Conference in Beijing commenced in late October. The Japanese delegation to Beijing was headed by chief plenipotentiary Hioki Eki, assisted by deputy plenipotentiary Yoshizawa Kenkichi, who at that time was envoy to China. International Trade Bureau Director-General Saburi was also dispatched to Beijing, to act as the delegation's secretary-general. Other members of the delegation included Shigemitsu Mamoru, Horiuchi Tateki and Hidaka Shinrokurō. Surprisingly, at the commencement of the conference, Hioki began with an address stating that Japan was prepared to accept, as a basic principle, China's right to tariff autonomy. This move was actually a proposal of Saburi and Shigemitsu. While it had taken Shidehara by surprise when he read the speech in advance, he trusted Saburi's judgement and approved its content. The focus of the conference was therefore shifted towards what provisional measures would need to be taken in the lead-up to China gaining tariff autonomy.

The US and the UK wanted to recognise a high tariff rate. This was a problem for the Japanese delegation. Even as late as January 1926, Shidehara was instructing the attendees to not allow the additional tax rate to exceed 2.5 per cent for 'regular goods'. In March, a graduated tax rate of 2.5–22.5 per cent was jointly agreed upon by Japan, the US and the UK. Following this agreement, the central topic of discussion shifted to whether China would be required to use its increased tax revenue to service its foreign loans. It was at this stage that British Foreign Secretary J. Austen Chamberlain proposed an unconditional recognition of a 2.5 per cent additional tax. While an agreement on the topic of loan servicing had not yet been reached, each participating nation was on the verge of going ahead with an initial agreement on the tariff. However, Shidehara thought this would lead to a delay with respect to loan servicing and rejected the plan to go ahead with an agreement on the tariffs. Thus, the conference dragged on until July, whereupon it was indefinitely postponed without any clear resolution.

By sticking to the requirement of a clear economic benefit, Shidehara missed an opportunity for a more flexible give and take policy to be implemented. What the China tariff problem indicates is that, generally speaking, Shidehara's conception of the international order remained stuck within the framework established at the Washington Naval Conference. If Shidehara had taken the plunge of joining the UK and the US in recognising China's right to collect additional taxes, it may well have helped the government in Beijing to stabilise its financial base. However, it seems that on the ground in Beijing, Saburi had interpreted Shidehara's intentions as favourable to China and relayed this information to the Chinese side. This at least led to Saburi developing more friendly ties with Chinese plenipotentiary Huang Fu.

Beijing also hosted an international conference on extraterritorial rights that foreign nations had within China. While Shidehara favoured a resolution to conflicts over extraterritorial rights, arguing that it was 'conducive to the furtherance of our economic benefit', he also felt that the time was not yet ripe for their full termination.⁶⁷ At the same time, he also expressed his opposition to the international management of China and to foreign interference in China's domestic politics. All in all, the discussions conducted during this conference did not engender much progress on the problem of extraterritorial rights. It should also be noted that Shidehara accepted the October 1926 proposal of the Beijing government to revise the Sino-Japanese Trade Agreement.

Fragmentation of Conceptions of the Washington System

During this period, Prime Minister Katō entrusted diplomatic matters to Shidehara. That said, as someone who himself had served as foreign minister four times, Katō was by no means uninterested in diplomatic affairs. At the Beijing Special Conference on Tariffs, he spoke with 'surprising frankness' to the UK's ambassador to Japan, Charles Eliot. Eliot said it was Katō's view that the:

Conference would last [a] long time and [the] result would be small. This, he said, would be to the advantage of Japan, for she would be [the] chief loser if China received tariff autonomy.⁶⁸

Katō's stance, as revealed in this statement, presumably had a strong influence on Shidehara's policy.

It is worth briefly dwelling on Eliot. He was the UK's ambassador to Japan from 1920 and had regretted the termination of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. An individual who was deeply familiar with the history of Buddhism, Eliot had attempted to secure the continued cooperative relationship of Japan and the UK. However, Katō and Eliot's relationship was not sufficient to cement the Anglo-Japanese bond. On the contrary, at this time the two nations were becoming increasingly estranged from each other over policy on China. Foreign Secretary Chamberlain acknowledged this fact in private correspondence to Eliot, writing: 'there is a less intimate friendship between our two nations since the termination of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty'.⁶⁹ Chamberlain had lamented the departure of Hayashi Gonsuke from his post as ambassador to the UK.

At the end of January 1926, Prime Minister Katō died due to illness. As expected, his successor was Wakatsuki Reijirō, new president of the Kenseikai party. Wakatsuki had never shown a particular interest in foreign affairs. With his advancement to the position of prime minister, therefore, responsibility for directing Japan's diplomatic efforts would fall even more upon Shidehara.

Another significant development would occur in February, when Eliot was replaced by John A. C. Tilley as the UK's ambassador to Japan. Ambassador Tilley was not as passionate as his predecessor; Eliot's research on Japan was instead taken up and carried on by the commercial counsellor, Sir George Bailey Sansom. Nevertheless, there were periods in

which Tilley expended considerable efforts in his new role. In January and February 1927, for example, he visited the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs almost every day. The reason was the commencement in China, in July of the previous year, of the aforementioned Northern Expedition. In response, Tilley sought to sound out Japan on a joint Anglo-Japanese deployment of troops to Shanghai. However, Shidehara did not acquiesce to the UK's request for a military deployment.⁷⁰

One document that gives us a direct indication of the gap that had opened up between the UK and Japan is known as the 'December Memorandum'. The Stanley Baldwin cabinet unexpectedly sent this memorandum to China on 18 December 1926. Its contents included the immediate recognition of the additional taxation that had been agreed upon at the Washington Naval Conference. According to Matsui, Japan's ambassador to the UK at that time: 'Mr. Wellesley [assistant to the foreign vice-secretary] offered the excuse that because Foreign Secretary Chamberlain had suddenly made this decision afterwards, there was no time to let me know in advance'.⁷¹

After receiving the December Memorandum from Ambassador Tilley, Vice-Minister Debuchi went so far as to state: 'I have no choice but to admit that Britain ignores the spirit of the Washington Treaty and does not want to cooperate with Japan'.⁷² Shidehara also criticised the December Memorandum on the basis of discussions such as the one that had been held between Saburi and Eugene Chen, foreign minister of the Nationalist government. He took the additional step of proposing to Tilley that an unofficial tariff conference be held, with representatives attending from northern and southern China. Perhaps he was out of patience, but Shidehara apparently warned Tilley while holding a copy of a book by former foreign secretary Grey.

So much for the situation with the UK. What about Japan's diplomatic relations with the US at that time? On this topic, the reminiscences of Eugene H. Dooman, first secretary to the US embassy in Japan, are instructive. According to Dooman, because of the US's misplaced benevolence, the Chinese had begun to trample upon the interests of various foreign nations. In Japan this weakened the political fortunes of Shidehara and Wakatsuki, who had sought to uphold the spirit of the Nine-Power Treaty and helped promote militarists. In summary, once Secretary of State Hughes was no longer leading the process, the US failed to explore systematically the premises of its own East Asia policy.

In this manner, the three nations of Japan, the US and the UK, while remaining within the Washington System, were each developing their own alternative conceptions of the international order in East Asia. Ultimately, they were not to converge. In other words, the diplomatic efforts of the powers in this period can be interpreted as representing a fragmentation of the Washington System.⁷³

The Diversification of Trade

A well-known example of Shidehara's economism in action would be the aforementioned Beijing Special Conference on Tariffs. However, this was not the full extent of the economic diplomacy he pursued through the mediation of assistants such as Saburi. In fact, it would be in the domain of Franco-Japanese relations where Saburi would prove to be more adept.

An unsolved problem between Japan and France was the development of trade connections, specifically with French Indochina. Because of high tariffs, exports from Japan had stagnated. The governor-general of Indochina, Martial H. Merlin, had previously visited Japan in May 1924. At that time Saburi had observed the meeting that took place between Merlin and Foreign Minister Matsui.⁷⁴ After taking over as foreign minister, Shidehara organised the dispatch of a delegation to Indochina to discuss the tariff issue. He also sounded out the central French government on the matter, via Ishii, Japan's ambassador to France. The special envoy to Indochina was headed by privy councillor Yamagata Isaburō. Other accompanying personnel from the ministry included Saburi and Secretary Matsushima Shikao. Thus, in February 1925, Yamagata and Saburi were both in Indochina, negotiating tariffs. Of course, to begin with, there was no reason to believe that these negotiations would bear fruit. Nevertheless, Ishii would continue to negotiate with France on the matter in the period after the delegation's visit. It was around this time, in July 1925, that Japan and the UK concluded a supplementary treaty to the original Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation.⁷⁵

In April–May 1926, the Near East Trade Conference was held in Constantinople (today Istanbul), Turkey. The chairman was Obata Yūkichi. Shidehara had appointed Obata as Japan's very first ambassador to Turkey. The conference was also attended by individuals such as Okuyama Seiji, Japan's minister to Greece, and Mushanokōji Kintomo, minister to Romania. The goal of the conference was to promote trade

between Japan and the Near East, with resolutions made on topics such as the opening of direct sea routes, the establishment of suitably sized diplomatic establishments, the dispatching of commercial secretaries and the holding of trade fairs.⁷⁶

It would be Nippon Yusen that would open up the Near East sea route. While Nippon Yusen is a member of the Mitsubishi group (recall that Shidehara had married a daughter of the head of the Mitsubishi group), there are no historical records showing a close relationship between the company and Shidehara. In fact, the proposal for the Near East Trade Conference originated not from Shidehara but from the International Trade Bureau. The bureau director-general at that time was Saitō Yoshie. It should be noted that the conference was not an international conference; the ministry only sent secretary Yamamoto Kumaichi from Japan (the other Japanese attendees were already in the region).⁷⁷

Meanwhile, the First Trade Conference was also held in the House of Representatives in September 1926. This conference was organised to foster trade and investment opportunities in the regions south of Japan and was generally referred to as the South Sea Trade Conference. Representatives from numerous branches of government and sections of industry were in attendance, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Ministry of Communication, the governor-general of Taiwan, the Government Office of the South Sea Islands, various Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the cotton spinning industry, and the banking and shipping industries.⁷⁸

In the opening address of the conference, Shidehara asserted that it was principally oriented towards not only the 'promotion of foreign trade, but also the encouragement of overseas business investment by Japanese people'. Shidehara continued:

We begin this conference with the view that commercial intercourse will absolutely change for the better and that, from the beginning, it must be free of any form of political motivation ... The essence of the matter, and also our goal, must be that other nations will equally benefit at the same time as our own.⁷⁹

Shidehara stated that 'the development of international commerce must be the principal focus'. He added:

The strenuous efforts and cooperation of assembled businesspeople are to be anticipated, and the government must conduct itself in such a manner so as to fundamentally avoid interfering in this domain.⁸⁰

Here we have a conception of free trade, to be opened up in the region of the South Sea. Shidehara's comments can also be read as an expression of Japan's orientation towards trade diversification and towards becoming a maritime nation. According to Ishii Itarō, who was then Third Division director under International Trade Bureau Director-General Saitō:

My understanding of Shidehara's fundamental idea, upon which he based his international trade policy, was that Japan should, beginning with its closest neighbor, China, gradually expand [its trade connections] into Southeast Asia, thereby laying the foundations for building an economic powerhouse.⁸¹

On the topic of the South Sea Trade Conference, he added: 'I believe it was Saitō Yoshie's suggestion, which Shidehara then gave the OK to'.⁸²

It should be noted that the aforementioned trade conferences were one-time events. It was not the case, therefore, that Shidehara and Saitō's plans quickly led to fruition. It was not until 1928 that the South Seas Unit was finally established within the International Trade Bureau, to investigate the economic conditions of the region, including the availability of resources. The South Seas Unit was quickly abolished, before being restored in 1929. The establishment of the South Seas Bureau to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would have to wait until November 1940.⁸³

Japan–Soviet Relations

Shidehara's diplomatic efforts had a weak spot. On Manchuria, he was unable to develop a policy that rose to the challenges presented by the region. At that time, the foreign affairs mechanisms in the region were diverse and were quite vulnerable to the intervention of other organisations, such as the army and the South Manchuria Railway Company. There were also further complications arising from the rise of the Soviet Union. The army and the South Manchuria Railway Company's policies with respect to Manchuria and Mongolia were partially directed at addressing this shift in regional power. Later, with the first Tanaka Giichi cabinet,

the Ministry of Overseas Affairs would be established. This ministry was placed in charge of colonial administration and the supervision of the South Manchurian Railway Company. The relationship with the railway company would become more regulated under Foreign Minister Tanaka than it was under Shidehara.

At the same time, the policies Shidehara pursued in this region, with respect to Manchuria, Mongolia and the Soviet Union, serve to throw his ideals into sharp relief. Here I am referring not only to Shidehara's desire, as discussed earlier, to centralise Japan's diplomacy, placing it firmly under the control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As seen earlier, Shidehara was also a firm believer in non-intervention and economism and was not particularly suspicious of communism. Hence, he helped to establish diplomatic relations between Japan and the Soviet Union in January 1925.

The agreement reached between the two parties (referred to in English by the lengthy title 'The Convention Embodying Basic Rules of the Relations between Japan and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics') was signed in Beijing. It was generally seen as beneficial to Japan, and not only within Japanese circles. For example, this view was also expressed in the correspondence of Bancroft, the US ambassador to Japan. In a private letter to the US's minister to China, Jacob Gould Schurman, Bancroft wrote: 'The Treaty strikes me as distinctly advantageous to Japan'.⁸⁴ The reason for this perception was that the Japan-Soviet convention contained provisions such as the continuation of the Treaty of Portsmouth, the revision of the fishery treaty, an agreement of reciprocal non-intervention and the granting to Japan of rights over certain resources in the Soviet Union. Two protocols produced as a result of the convention set a May 1925 deadline for Japanese military withdrawal from northern Sakhalin Island, while promising Japan rights over the development of oil fields in that area. The final details of the revision of the fishery treaty and Japan's oil field rights would be left to be worked out in subsequent negotiations.

In February 1925, in private correspondence to Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg, Bancroft further expressed the opinion that 'the Japan-Russian Treaty was wisely and advantageously made by Japan'. He added:

The first crisis in the Far East, I suspect, will arise in China as a result of the activities of [the] Russian Ambassador in the dissemination, through purchased agents, of the destructive side of Sovietism.⁸⁵

It should be noted that, at this point, the US had not yet officially recognised the Soviet Union. As though substantiating Bancroft's judgement, a large-scale strike soon took place at Zaikabō in Shanghai; Zaikabō were cotton spinning mills established in China with Japanese capital. Following this development, Bancroft wrote: 'Baron Shidehara told me that the Soviet[s] [were] the sole cause of that strike; that the workers had no grievances [sic] against their Japanese employers'.⁸⁶

Prime Minister Katō and Foreign Minister Shidehara would have multiple meetings with Bancroft on this topic. Concerning the situation in China, Katō believed that 'the Powers must act together'.⁸⁷ Shidehara had the same opinion. Katō also indicated that he understood why the US continued to avoid recognising the Soviet Union, while at the same time implying that Japan's policy on the matter was different. Shidehara would provide further details on this topic at a later date, writing that 'the Japan-Russia Treaty was necessary in order to carry out the public declaration of Prime Minister Katō before he took office that Japanese troops should be promptly withdrawn from Saghalien [sic]'.⁸⁸ That said, the Soviet policy of the Katō cabinet did not amount to a Japan–Soviet partnership. Shidehara himself wrote to Bancroft that public rumours of Japan teaming up with the Soviet Union or with Germany 'lack common sense'.⁸⁹

Even after the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Soviet Union, tensions between the two powers would continue with respect to problems such as the railways in northern Manchuria and political propaganda directed at Japan. It was in this context that the Soviet Union proposed the signing of a Japan–Soviet nonaggression pact. For Shidehara, however, the maintenance of good relations with the UK and the US ruled out such possibilities. Instead, he placed more emphasis upon economic relations between the two powers, prioritising the signing of the fisheries agreement and commercial treaties. To put it differently, Shidehara's policy regarding the Soviet Union was to separate political and economic concerns. Further, it is clear that Shidehara was not yet particularly concerned about the spread of communism in China. By contrast, Tanaka, who would later serve as both prime minister and foreign minister, was concerned about political propaganda aimed at Japan and alarmed about the influence of the Soviet Union on China.⁹⁰

The Northern Expeditions and the Nanjing Incident of 1927

In southern China at this time, the National Revolutionary Army, led by Chiang Kai-shek, was continuing its advance in the name of reunifying China. As mentioned above, in Chinese history, this event is referred to as the Northern Expedition. On 24 March 1927, as the National Revolutionary Army of China advanced northwards, it attacked foreigners and Japanese and British consulates in Nanjing. It also damaged the US-affiliated Jinling University (also known as the University of Nanjing). During the 'Nanjing Incident' of 1927, UK and US warships fired upon the city. Partly at the request of Japanese residents in the city, Japan did not retaliate. Shidehara also had a favourable impression of Chiang Kai-shek and was opposed to punishing China. As a result, however, Shidehara was criticised domestically for his 'weak diplomacy'.⁹¹

Shidehara's policy during the Nanjing Incident of 1927 was to 'cooperate with the U.K. and the U.S. in negotiating' with Chiang Kai-shek. However, in the past, such cooperative diplomacy with the UK and the US was not particularly effective. For example, in such matters as the problem of treaty revision, the UK and the US would head in a different direction and attempt to earn the favour of China, throwing the joint efforts into disarray. This issue was on display with the aforementioned December Memorandum by the UK, as well as Secretary of State Kellogg's January 1927 declaration. Kellogg declared that the US would be adopting a new policy whereby it would be willing to act alone, if necessary, to help revise China's unequal treaties.

In the case of the Nanjing Incident of 1927 as well, while Japan initially issued a joint note with the US, the UK and France, cooperation with the other powers soon ran into trouble. The central point of contention was with respect to issuing a fresh warning. While the UK favoured such a move, the US staunchly opposed it. This disagreement caused negotiations with China to fragment, with each nation undertaking its own approach.⁹²

A direct impression of Shidehara's understanding of the situation at that time can be gained from the discussion he held with Tilley, the UK's ambassador to Japan. On 2 April 1927, Shidehara warned Tilley that a hardline policy, such as issuing an ultimatum, needed to be avoided and that Chiang Kai-shek's 'position' was not to be undermined.

Even if a hardline approach was resorted to, Shidehara believed that 'the communist-aligned mobs, disorderly soldiers, and so forth who constituted the core of the anti-foreign rioting would hardly be affected'.⁹³ That is to say, Shidehara's understanding was that the cause of the Nanjing Incident of 1927 was not Chiang Kai-shek and his immediate clique, but the 'communists'. From the perspective of assisting the development of order in China, Shidehara believed that a 'peaceful diplomatic method' needed to be deployed, one that would enable 'a central figure such as Chiang Kai-shek' to deal with the situation.

At the basis of such a judgement lay Shidehara's perspective on the national interest, which prioritised economic benefits. Shidehara told Tilley that, while he did not think China would become communist, he did think that:

Even if the communists were to take control, within the span of two or three years foreigners would be able to trade in China once again, so I do not think it is an overly dangerous situation.⁹⁴

In other words, even in the unlikely event of a communist takeover of China, Japan could live with and trade with China, just as it could with the Soviet Union. In summary, Shidehara believed that, provided economic benefit could be gained, the national interest could be protected.

Shidehara's perspective on foreign affairs contrasts sharply with Hara Takashi's or Tanaka Giichi's. This is because Hara and, from some time earlier, Tanaka too saw the relationship Japan had with the government of the Manchurian warlord, Zhang Zuolin, as of particular importance. Conversely, Shidehara foresaw the eventual unification of China and therefore preached a policy of non-intervention and the prioritisation of markets and commerce. In this regard, Shidehara was exceptional for the era. Shidehara's view on the Northern Expedition was not unfounded. One justification for his stance was the field survey conducted by Saburi. When the Beijing Special Conference on Tariffs ended, Saburi headed to southern China under Shidehara's orders on a special mission to conduct a survey of the region. With the Northern Expedition underway, Saburi was able to contact leading figures of the Nationalist Party and hear their opinions on trade and the removal of China's unequal treaties. It seems that through Saburi's efforts, Shidehara was able to gain a window on the direction the leaders of the Northern Expedition would seek to take China.⁹⁵

Was Shidehara correct, however, to interpret the Nanjing Incident of 1927 as the result of Chinese Communist Party intrigue? Current scholarly research on the topic has not returned any conclusive judgement. That said, the theory of a Communist Party conspiracy is not unfounded. There are comments, for example, by Yang Jie, commander of the 17th Division of the Sixth Army. On 25 March, Yang visited Morioka Shōhei at Japan's Nanjing consulate. There Yang expressed his regret for the events of the Nanjing Incident of 1927. According to Morioka, Yang stated that:

The pillaging was the result of agitation directed by Communist Party members in Nanjing or by bad soldiers and that he would directly take strict control of the situation and respond to negotiations for reparation alongside China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁹⁶

Yang's claim—that responsibility for the Nanjing Incident of 1927 lay with the Communist Party—was relayed to Shidehara via a telegram from Morioka and would have influenced Shidehara's perspective on the situation in China. Further, Chiang Kai-shek, through his representative, Huang Fu, had also begun to indicate to the Japanese that the Nanjing Incident of 1927 was the result of the machinations of the Communist Party. Shidehara's response was to instruct Yada Shichitarō of the Shanghai consulate general to impress upon Chiang Kai-shek and his associates the importance of 'deep reflection and determination'.⁹⁷ In other words, Shidehara wanted Chiang Kai-shek to covertly take firm measures against the Communist Party. In fact, on 12 April, Chiang Kai-shek carried out an anti-communist coup d'état in Shanghai. On 3 April, an incident also occurred in Hankou: a Chinese mob attacked Japanese marines in the Japanese concession. Japan responded by deploying the land forces of the navy. This was known as the Hankou Incident, and Shidehara's response led to increased domestic criticism of his 'weak diplomacy'.

Another aspect of Shidehara's policies on Soviet Russia and Manchuria–Mongolia deserves attention. This is his approval of the construction of the Taoang (Japanese: Tōkō) Railway. The Taoang Railway was part of a strategy by the Japanese army and the South Manchuria Railway Company to advance into northern Manchuria and thereby counter the influence of the Soviets. This plan ran counter to the earlier agreement reached with the New Four-Power Consortium. In this case, it seems that Shidehara gave higher priority to the expansion of Japanese national

interest in China along existing lines than to his principle of pursuing an open door policy. Victor L. Kopp, the Soviet ambassador to Japan, would issue a protest in response to this decision.

The original promoter of the Taoang Railway was Matsuoka Yōsuke, then director of the South Manchuria Railway. In a December 1925 correspondence to Prime Minister Katō, Matsuoka wrote that:

Needless to say, the construction of the Taoang Railway would serve to push back against the sphere of influence that Russia established following the conclusion of the First Russo-Japanese Agreement; it would constitute a challenge to Russia[’s regional dominance].⁹⁸

Even during negotiations with the Dongsan Province Regime, Matsuoka stated that, ‘with planning going ahead for the construction of the Taoang Railway, we are determined to do our very best to assist Zhang Zuolin and eliminate Russian resistance’.⁹⁹ It is clear that during Shidehara’s term as foreign minister, the South Manchuria Railway was planning great advances, even when compared with the relationship it enjoyed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the era of the Hara cabinet.

Diplomacy and Party Politics

Shidehara’s Miscalculation

We now have some understanding of Shidehara’s policies and personal connections during his first term as foreign minister. I would like to elaborate upon this topic further, while considering the connection that existed between Shidehara’s diplomacy and Japanese party politics. At this time, and against the backdrop of the establishment of a ‘four-bureau system’, the rise of the generation of diplomats who had entered the ministry through the examination system can be seen in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For that reason alone, Shidehara was able to pursue his policies through close coordination with his trusted subordinates. In particular, he placed considerable trust in Debuchi and Saburi. However, he also had positive relations with other individuals in the ministry, such as Matsudaira, Kimura, Obata, Nagai and Ishii. Conversely, Shidehara

tended to ignore opinions from overseas agencies of the ministry. In this respect he contrasted sharply with the subsequent foreign minister, Tanaka Giichi.¹⁰⁰

If we are to refer to this group of individuals with Shidehara at its centre as the 'Shidehara clique', then this clique was already germinating during his time as ambassador to the US. Meanwhile, Shidehara's first term as foreign minister was characterised not so much by this clique's opposition to the reformists as it was by aversion to Hirota, who was at least superficially closer with respect to his conception of foreign affairs. To put it another way, the Shidehara clique was extremely critical of Hirota's politician-like behaviour. Presumably, it was for the same reason that Shidehara did not like Yoshida Shigeru, who would become vice-minister under Foreign Minister Tanaka. Yoshida also differed from Shidehara in that he would not renounce state intervention in his policies on Manchuria and Mongolia.

What about Japan's relationship with the League of Nations? Shidehara and the other leaders of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were not particularly interested in engaging with this organisation. Individuals who were more enthusiastic about the league included Ishii Kikujirō, ambassador to France; Sugimura Yōtarō, under-secretary-general of the League of Nations Permanent Secretariat; and individuals who worked in branches of the ministry, such as Satō Naotake, director-general of the League of Nations' Imperial (Japanese) Secretariat. Though Shidehara and Satō were together regarded as leaders of the 'Western group' in the ministry, their attitudes differed when it came to the league. Indeed, Satō was quite annoyed with the ministry's passive attitude towards the league.¹⁰¹ If we then also consider the relationship between Hirota and Shidehara's circle, it becomes clear that the 'Western group' was far from monolithic in its composition.

Therefore, even if Shidehara, Hirota, Satō, Yoshida and others are collectively referred to as the 'Western group', this grouping only goes so far towards explaining the dynamics of the ministry. This is why I have instead used the concept of the Shidehara clique. Shidehara, Debuchi and other members of this clique sought to follow the spirit of the Washington Naval Conference, promoting non-interventionist and economic-centric policies. Further, even though they attempted to separate diplomacy from Japan's domestic politics, they were cool towards the activities of the

League of Nations. As is the case with all kinds of policy-oriented groups, the key to understanding the Shidehara clique is the human relations that comprised it.

The core of the Shidehara clique was made up of Shidehara himself, Debuchi and Saburi. However, figures such as Matsudaira, Kimura, Nagai and Ishii were in the periphery. Many of these individuals shared the same formative experience in the Washington Naval Conference, while much of the reformist group, by contrast, had experienced the Paris Peace Conference. That said, as the Shidehara clique occupied the dominant position within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they did not pursue the same centripetal force as the reformists. It was this closed-off elitism that led over time to an increasingly strong backlash.

Given the dominance of his clique within the ministry, what did Shidehara manage to achieve with the help of Debuchi, Saburi and the other members? First, he carried out a policy of non-intervention with regard to China, which he hoped would become unified and increasingly stable. In this regard, he respected the spirit of the Washington Naval Conference. The cliques' debt to Debuchi here was significant, with respect to both their guiding ideal and the practical implementation of that ideal. However, it should be remembered that this was an ideal that was originally developed by Shidehara himself during earlier occasions such as the Washington Naval Conference. Debuchi also took on the burden of coordinating ministry efforts with the army and navy. Meanwhile, Kimura too followed the non-interventionist path, planning the future of Sino-Japanese relations after the defeat of Zhang Zuolin.

Second, there was the problem of Japanese immigration to the US. Shidehara tends to be viewed as lacking a policy for dealing with this issue. In reality, however, Shidehara deftly navigated the complexities of this area, beginning with his time as ambassador to the US. When, for example, Foreign Minister Matsui requested that Shidehara write a letter of protest, he followed through with the request, while at the same time softening the contents. He also succeeded in calming down Kaneko, who strongly supported sending a special delegation to the US. Later, when Shidehara became foreign minister himself, he was cautious about launching further protests, while at the same time publishing two collections of public documents for a domestic audience. Further, Shidehara took the step of sending a group led by Saburi to an immigration committee and promoted Japanese immigration to Brazil. It should also

be remembered that Shidehara utilised the reporting of Edward Bell as a way to convey Japan's position to the US, thereby working to improve US public opinion. Finally, because Shidehara was so familiar with the details surrounding the problem of Japanese immigration to the US, he was able to avoid overly relying on the International Trade Bureau. His policy process was close to a top-down model.

Third, there was Shidehara's economic diplomacy. A prime example of Shidehara responding with an economy-centred approach would be the Beijing Special Conference on Tariffs. For the most part, Shidehara's conception of regional order remained within the framework established at the Washington Naval Conference. He also displayed enthusiasm for the diversification of trade. On matters of economic diplomacy, Shidehara would take into account the opinions of his advisers such as Saburi, as well as Obata and Saitō. While the final decision on such matters may have rested with Shidehara, in this area his policy process was closer to a bottom-up model. We may say that through economic diplomacy, Shidehara raised the relative position within the ministry of the International Trade Bureau, which during this period would be alternately headed by Saburi and Saitō.

Shidehara's response to the Northern Expedition can be treated as an encapsulation of his diplomatic style. As pointed out above, following the spirit of the Washington Conference, Shidehara asserted to the UK's ambassador that, even if the Chinese mainland were to go communist, Japan's focus would remain on economic benefits such as rights of residency and access to trade. Shidehara therefore avoided the kind of ideological response later demonstrated by Tanaka Giichi.

Supporting Shidehara's interpretation of the Northern Expedition was Saburi's survey of southern China. Here again, Shidehara relied heavily upon Saburi. However, this reliance was also at the root of his miscalculation. When Saburi attended the Beijing Special Conference on Tariffs, he was influenced by the discourse on the 'Sino-Japanese partnership' promoted by figures such as Shigemitsu. Saburi would also take a more favourable attitude towards the Nationalist Party following his observations of the situation in southern China. The rationally minded Saburi would have found himself wavering between the positions of Shidehara and Shigemitsu. As it happens, this foreshadowed Saburi's mysterious death some years later.

Finally, there was also a side to Shidehara that sought to expand Japan's interests in China. We see this aspect of him on display when he gave approval to the construction of the Taoang Railway, despite the fact that it ran counter to the stance of the New Four-Power Consortium. Here we have a glimpse of how even Shidehara was not entirely free of the tradition of Japanese diplomacy.

Diplomacy and Party Politics

This chapter has shown how Shidehara utilised his connections with others to further his diplomatic goals. Yet it is worth re-emphasising that he did not have complete control over Japanese foreign policy. As indicated by the existence of the army and the South Manchuria Railway, Japan's diplomatic apparatus remained as pluralistic as ever. Shidehara worked within the framework of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and did not pay much attention to the political background of Japan.

Nevertheless, Shidehara was fully entrusted with diplomatic matters by the Kenseikai-led cabinet, and his policies succeeded in earning the trust of the elder statesman Saionji. At the time of the Beijing Special Conference on Tariffs, Saionji even went so far as to state: 'Foreign Minister Shidehara's approach today really hit the mark. First off, I want to praise him for developing into a capable minister of foreign affairs'.¹⁰² Shidehara also expressed his respect for Saionji as a politician. One incident is particularly symbolic of the relationship of trust that developed between Shidehara and Saionji. In December 1926, when the Taishō emperor was critically ill, Saionji was searching for accommodations closer to the Hayama Imperial Villa. Meanwhile, Shidehara had a holiday residence in the village of Kotsubo, in present-day Zushi city. As this residence was far closer to the Imperial Villa in Hayama, Shidehara lent it to Saionji. Thus, Shidehara and Saionji were able to 'become better acquainted and gained the opportunity to frequently meet'.¹⁰³

There are two possible ways of evaluating the decision by the political-party-run cabinet to leave diplomatic decision-making to Shidehara. First, there is the interpretation that, by leaving diplomacy to Shidehara, the Kenseikai cabinet was able to gain the trust of Saionji. This decision also coincided with Shidehara's ideal of centralising Japan's diplomatic efforts. However, while Shidehara sought to separate Japan's domestic politics from its foreign policy, this does not mean that his diplomatic efforts were devoid of political implications. On the contrary, the consolidation of

party-based cabinet rule could be said to constitute the domestic political significance of Shidehara diplomacy. Katō's Kenseikai party had already begun to absorb the spirit of the Washington Naval Conference from its time in opposition. With the coming of the Katō and Wakatsuki cabinets and Saionji's positive evaluation of Shidehara's diplomacy, the Kenseikai began to be viewed as the establishment party. Thus the Kenseikai developed into a proper governing party, and, together with the other major party, which was Seiyukai, helped to thereby establish party-based politics in Japan.¹⁰⁴

Second, we have a somewhat different interpretation, whereby overreliance on Shidehara by the Kenseikai led to the general neglect of party-based guidance of Japanese diplomacy. Even if leaving foreign affairs to Shidehara had the positive effect of gaining Saionji's trust, should not the next stage have been the pursuit of a system where the governing political party had a hand in guiding diplomatic decision-making? In fact, this approach towards diplomacy would be undertaken by a later prime minister, Hamaguchi Osachi, when he guided Japan's participation in the London Naval Treaty Conference on Disarmament in 1930. However, the second Wakatsuki cabinet was unable to adequately respond to the international situation in the aftermath of the Manchurian Incident, and prewar party-based politics ultimately collapsed. The greatest tragedy of Taishō democracy was that the Manchurian Incident occurred before the institutionalisation of party-based guidance of Japan's diplomacy.¹⁰⁵

How did Shidehara himself view diplomacy and party politics in Japan? On 10 June 1925, in a letter to Izawa Takio, the governor-general of Taiwan, Shidehara wrote:

At least with respect to simple ideals, it seems that there are areas where the position of foreign minister is similar to that of the governor of a colony. In order to achieve continuity in diplomatic matters, it may be appropriate to create a custom whereby the foreign minister does not act in line with the cabinet. Nevertheless, such things are extremely difficult under the present political conditions.¹⁰⁶

In other words, from the perspective of diplomatic continuity, the foreign minister should not share the same career path as the cabinet. Yet Shidehara understood that the party politics of Japan at that time meant that it was impossible for the foreign minister's position to not be tied to the cabinet in some manner. In fact, it could even be said that Shidehara's life

work was this very problem of how to maintain diplomatic continuity, given that a party-based political system entails periodic changes in the governing party.

It would not be long before Shidehara himself would cede the position of foreign minister to the president of the Seiyukai party, Tanaka Giichi, in the wake of the collapse of the first Wakatsuki cabinet in 1927. The militaristic diplomacy of the Tanaka cabinet would be dubbed ‘Tanaka diplomacy’. With the irregular course of Tanaka diplomacy, Shidehara’s sense of impending crisis grew stronger. It was at that very time that, in June 1927, the Constitutional Democratic Party (the Rikken Minseitō) was formed, with Shidehara’s old friend Hamaguchi Osachi as its president. This development would lead Shidehara to deepen his involvement in party-based politics. This is a topic that I wish to explore in more detail in Part II.

Endnotes

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82 *Ibid.*

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84 Perhaps for this reason, Bancroft's evaluation of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Soviet Union was that: 'Of course this is not the end of their controversies, but rather an adjustment of some'. See Bancroft to Schurman, 25 January 1925, Bancroft Papers, Box 4.

85 Bancroft to Kellogg, 25 February 1925, Bancroft Papers, Box 4.

86 Bancroft to Kellogg, 5 March 1925, Bancroft Papers, Box 4.

87 Bancroft to Kellogg, 19 March 1925, Bancroft Papers, Box 4.

88 Ibid.

89 Ibid.

90 Hattori, *Higashi Asia Kokusai Kankyō no Hendō to Nihon Gaikō, 1918–1931*, 150–56, 229–34.

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