Brother Nations:
Sun Yat-sen’s Plea for Japanese Support to China, 1914-1924

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Abstract

Chinese revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) actively sought Japanese support for Chinese revolutionary activity throughout much of his revolutionary career, even as Japan became increasingly aggressive toward China. This thesis is concerned with how Sun framed his argument for Japanese aid to China, and how the way that he framed this argument changed over the ten year period between 1914 and 1924, just before Sun’s death. This study presents a close analysis of three letters, two speeches and two interviews of Sun’s that advocated for Japanese support to China and were directed at a Japanese audience between 1914 and 1924. Four themes are traced across these sources: a) comparisons of Japan to Western powers, b) the portrayal of the Kuomintang, c) benefits that Japan would see by aiding China, and d) the presentation of the Sino-Japanese relationship. The sources and themes are analyzed within historical context.

This thesis finds that the way in which these themes are addressed between 1914 and 1924 changes with the times and Sun’s political situation. At the time of the 1914-1915 letters, Sun was living in exile and desperate for foreign, particularly Japanese, support. As such, he was more willing to compare positively Japan with Western powers and offer political and economic benefits to Japan. He plays up the importance of the Kuomintang as an ally to Japan, as it is the Kuomintang that so desperately needed support at this time. At the time of the 1919 letter, Sun, like many of his compatriots, was reeling from the decision after World War I to grant Japan all of Germany’s former rights in Shandong province. Sun does not compare Japan favorably to Western powers in 1919, nor does he offer political and economic benefits to Japan. He compares the Kuomintang to Japanese Meiji reformers in an attempt to play up the similarities between the two countries. At the time of the 1922 interview, Sun was more concerned with obtaining Russian support and potentially convincing Japan to ally with Russia as well than with Japanese support. His frustration with the lack of Japanese support and his hope for Russian support comes through in the way that he addresses the themes – he attacks Western powers, does not offer Japan benefits, and does not bring up the Kuomintang, instead arguing that Japan should support “Asia” in general. At the time of the 1924 speeches, Sun stopped in Japan on his way to negotiate China’s unity with a warlord in northern China. In an effort to gain public support, Sun utilizes popular Pan-Asianist themes and attacks Western powers and civilization as inferior to “Oriental” civilization. He does not offer specific political and economic benefits, and he does not bring up the Kuomintang by name, again, opting instead to make the case for Japan to take the side of “Asia” in general. Finally, with one exception, Sun emphasizes the closeness of the Sino-Japanese relationship throughout.
Introduction

“My passage through Kobe,” said Sun Yat-sen addressing a crowd at the Oriental Hotel in Kobe, Japan in November of 1924, “is like a stop-over in a Japanese family.” “China and Japan are brother nations,” he continued, whose people are of a similar race and culture; that, therefore, they should join hands in common effort.”\(^1\) Less than ten years earlier, Japan had issued the utterly humiliating Twenty-One Demands of China, and, instead of returning the formerly German-controlled Shandong province to China after World War I, had assumed control of the province. While many Chinese people at the time were thoroughly “disturbed by the Japanese threat” and had given up hope of Japanese support,\(^2\) Sun Yat-sen continued to rally for Japanese support of Nationalist activity in China until his death in 1925. A Pan-Asianist, Sun expressed in another speech in Kobe just a few days later that “in East Asia, China and Japan are the two greatest peoples” – and that together China and Japan would be a “driving force” for anti-Western anti-Imperialist nationalist movements in the region.\(^3\)

Having spent quite a bit of time visiting and living in Japan during his life, Sun became friends with a number of similarly minded Japanese. Between 1914 and 1924, Sun appealed to leaders and friends in Japan to aid the Kuomintang overthrow Yuan Shikai (before Yuan’s death in 1916), abolish the Unequal Treaties imposed on China by foreign imperialists (including Japan), and foster an independent and unified China. He sent letters to Japanese officials, delivered speeches, gave interviews and wrote articles

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1 Sun Yat-sen, *China and Japan: Natural Friends, Unnatural Enemies* (Shanghai: China United Press, 1941), 135.
3 Sun, *China and Japan*, 144.
on the matter. Many of these are collected and translated into English in a 1941
publication out of Shanghai entitled *China and Japan: Natural Friends, Unnatural
Enemies*. Focusing on the period between 1914 and 1924, this paper will explore how
Sun Yat-sen frames his argument for Japanese support to China by closely analyzing
seven pieces from the period including interviews, letters and speeches within their
historical context. Four themes are traced across the pieces and throughout this ten year
period: Sun’s views on Japan as compared to Western powers; his portrayal of the
Kuomintang; Sun’s presentation of the Sino-Japanese relationship; and the benefits Sun
promises to Japan in return for assistance.

Briefly, this thesis finds that the way in which Sun three of the four themes
between 1914 and 1924 Japan changes drastically over this period, and that the fourth
remains relatively constant. In 1914-1915, Sun was living in exile and desperate for
foreign support, so he was more willing to compare Japan to Western powers in a
positive light, to promise Japan political and economic benefits in return for assistance,
and to play up the Kuomintang as a worthy ally. By 1924, as Sun is in a more secure
situation and is hoping once again to become president of China, Sun bashes Western
powers, promises Japan moral rather than economic benefits, and fails to even mention
the Kuomintang. With one exception, Sun’s emphasizes the importance of the Sino-
Japanese relationship throughout the period.

**Methodology**

Gail Bederman’s *Manliness and Civilization* is an inspiration for this study. Gail
Bederman uses the concept of discourse to contextualize the actions of four figures in
American history between 1880 and 1917. Bederman defines “discourse” as “as set of
ideas and practices which, taken together, organize both the way a society defines
certain truths about itself and the way it deploys social power.” In other words, discourse
is a social framework that defines a society and ties together certain, perhaps otherwise
unrelated, ideas that grant particular people and groups power while posing obstacles for
other people and groups. In Manliness and Civilization, Gail Bederman argues that
around the turn of the century in America a discourse of “civilization” was present, and
interwove ideas about race and gender in such a way that it proved “a powerfully
effective way to link male dominance and white supremacy.” She presents four
examples of historical figures that effectively implemented or manipulated this discourse
to achieve their own goals. For example, Ida B. Wells, an anti-lynching activist, worked
within the discourse of civilization by trying to re-frame lynching as an “uncivilized”
practice (lynching was falsely justified within the discourse of civilization because,
within the discourse, black men were considered to be “uncivilized” and “unmanly,” and
were sometimes, often mistakenly, believed to engage in “uncivilized” behavior with
white women, while white men were considered “civilized”).

I believe that Sun, like the figures discussed in Bederman’s book, was trying to
frame problems in a particular way in order to achieve his aims. A closer analysis of the
way that Sun Yat-sen frames his argument for Japanese aid to China in order to achieve
his goals, taking historical context into consideration, will indicate much about Sun Yat-
sen, his perceptions of the Japanese, and the time and place in which he lived. Sun was
likely working within discourses in Japan, perhaps having to do with imperialism,

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4 Gail Bederman, Manliness and Civilization (Chicago: The University of
5 Ibid., 23.
Japanese nationalism, or Japanese racial superiority. Sun would have had to take these discourses into account when he composed his letters and speeches – he would have had to find a way to debunk or re-frame these discourses such that they would be conducive to achieving his aims, as Ida B. Wells had to do when she was attempting to change perceptions of lynching. However, as this thesis focuses specifically on the works of Sun Yat-sen, I will not be able to define grand discourses that were pervasive in Japan or China during the time in which Sun was writing, but will rather focus on how Sun frames his argument for Japanese aid to China over time.

Sources

This thesis is concerned specifically with works of Sun’s that are directed at a Japanese audience. It is in these works that he attempts to make a case for Japan to aid China, and therefore only in these works that the way in which Sun frames the Sino-Japanese relationship and China’s problems in order to get that aid would be apparent. In a written piece or speech directed at a Chinese audience, while he might mention Japan favorably, his aims, and therefore the way that he frames his arguments for Japanese aid to China, would clearly be different.

*China and Japan: Natural Friends – Unnatural Enemies* is a compilation of translated works by Sun, including speeches and an interview, that have to do with Japan. It was published in 1941 – sixteen years after Sun’s death in 1925. The implications of the publication of an English-language compilation of Sun’s work relating to Japan at that time are interesting. The Second Sino-Japanese war was well under way and, although an alliance between Sun’s party, the Kuomintang, and the Communists had been formed to fight the Japanese, fighting continued and tensions remained. What is
important to remember is that the publication of a book such as this one might have been politically charged at the time, therefore the works selected for inclusion may provide a biased account. However, this book contains a number of pieces by Sun that are directed at a Japanese audience between 1914 and 1924. Two pieces directed at a Japanese audience that are not in the compilation are also studied here to offset the bias of the compilation.

Five pieces from *China and Japan: Natural Friends – Unnatural Enemies* have been selected for examination. The first is a 1914 letter from Sun Yat-sen to Okuma Shigenobu, the Japanese prime minister, in which Sun makes a case for Japanese aid to the Kuomintang in opposing Yuan Shikai. The second is a 1919 letter from Sun Yat-sen to a correspondent at a major Japanese newspaper, the *Asahi Shimbun*, in which Sun explains why Chinese people are angry with Japan after Japan had taken control of Shandong. The third is an interview given in Kobe, Japan in 1924 in which Sun discusses the merits of a Sino-Japanese friendship. The fourth, also from 1924, is a speech at a “welcome dinner” at the Oriental Hotel in Kobe, in which Sun argues that the Unequal Treaties are holding China back. The fifth piece, which is also from 1924 and was also delivered in Kobe, is Sun’s well-known “Pan-Asiанизm” speech, in which Sun puts forth that “Oriental” civilization is morally superior to European civilization. Additionally, two pieces not included in the compilation, a 1915 letter that Sun wrote to the Japanese foreign office regarding the potential terms of a Sino-Japanese alliance and a 1922 interview he gave with a Japanese reporter regarding a Japanese alliance with Soviet
Russia, will round out this study. Historical context will be taken into consideration with each piece – for example, the 1914 letter to the Japanese prime minister is written before the Twenty-One Demands were issued and before World War I, while the much angrier 1919 piece is written after these events. The three 1924 pieces will be considered together as they are all from Sun’s November 1924 trip to Kobe and have similar angles.

Numerous scholars have studied Sun Yat-sen and his relationship with Japan. One of the earlier works on the subject, Marius B. Jansen’s *The Japanese and Sun Yat-sen* pointed out that Sun Yat-sen “had frequently compromised his integrity as a nationalist by seeking foreign, especially Japanese, help for his movement.” Although perhaps a bit outdated, Jansen’s book is a cornerstone for the study of Sun’s relationship with Japan and the Japanese. Ernest P. Young notes that “American students of twentieth-century Chinese politics have still not recovered from the shock of Marius Jansen’s *The Japanese and Sun Yat-sen,*” and it is a text cited by subsequent studies. Lu Yan’s *Re-understanding Japan: Chinese Perspectives, 1895-1945* focuses on the lives and careers of four Chinese men active between 1895-1945 and their perspectives on and interactions with Japan. It provides a sense of Chinese sentiment towards Japan during this turbulent period.

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6 I have not been able to use or locate these sources because remaining records are in Japanese. I have, however, found summaries of these documents in secondary sources, and will utilize them as much as possible. The summary I am relying on for the 1915 letter to the foreign office is from Marius B. Jansen’s *The Japanese and Sun Yat-sen,* and the summary I am using for the 1922 interview is from C. Martin Wilbur’s *Sun Yat-sen: Frustrated Patriot.* Although relying primarily on works from a compilation is not ideal, I feel that the variety of the types of records presented in the volume (speeches, letters, interviews, articles) will provide enough material to draw upon.


8 Ibid., 124.
This thesis relies on a number of excellent biographies of Sun Yat-sen. *All Under Heaven: Sun Yat-sen and His Revolutionary Thought* by Sidney H. Chang and Leonard H. D. Gordon provides both an in-depth biography of Sun’s revolutionary career as well as of his revolutionary ideals. *Sun Yat-sen* by Marie-Claire Bergere is a more traditional biography that provides invaluable insight into Sun’s life. *Sun Yat-sen: Frustrated Patriot* by C. Martin Wilbur discusses Sun’s efforts and disappointments in securing foreign aid, paying special attention to Sun’s relationship with Soviet Russia later in his life. *Prescriptions for Saving China: Selected Writings of Sun Yat-sen*, edited by Julie Lee Wei, Ramon H. Myers and Donald G. Gillin, includes a more recent translation of one of the pieces included in *China and Japan: Natural Friends, Unnatural Enemies*, as well as a useful introduction that contains a fairly in-depth summary of Sun Yat-sen’s life. Jonathan D. Spence wrote a brief biography of Sun’s life for Time Magazine in 1999, which has proved helpful. I will also refer to Spence’s *The Search for Modern China*, which, as a comprehensive history of modern China, includes information about Sun Yat-sen. This thesis differs from other scholarship on the subject in that it will focus more strictly on just how Sun Yat-sen frames China’s problems in order to secure Japanese aid. It is an in-depth analysis of seven pieces by Sun over a period of ten years that all have a similar aim and audience.

**Background: Sun Yat-sen and Japan**

Sun Yat-sen is considered the founding father of Republican China. According to Julie Lee Wei et al, he traveled to Hawaii at thirteen where he learned English and was influenced by Western ideals. As a young adult he studied medicine in Hong Kong. Abandoning his medical career, in 1894 he returned to Hawaii where he founded the
Society to Revive China, which, in 1919 would become the Guomindang, or Chinese Nationalist Party. He believed in making China a strong nation by learning from the West while retaining essential Chinese ideals such as Confucianism. A Nationalist, he was intent on overthrowing what he considered to be the foreign Manchu Qing government in China, which had proved ineffective in ridding China of foreign imperialist influence.

When he led a failed coup in 1895, he left China and lived in exile for a number of years, spending considerable time living in Japan. During this time he also traveled to Europe and the United States in order to gather support for his cause. He attempted another rebellion in 1900, but this was also a failure after which he, again, lived in exile. When he heard about the Wuchang Rebellion, he quickly returned to China and was elected provisional president of the new Republic of China in 1911.9

During a short stay in Japan in 1895, just after his first failed coup, he allegedly cut his queue and started wearing Western-style suits, influenced by the styles of Japanese men. He also started a small Society to Revive China group in Yokohama among Cantonese settlers there.10 Still in exile, he returned to Japan in August 1897 and lived there for about three years.11 It was during this time that Sun developed close friendships with politically minded Japanese that shared his views on the cultural and racial similarities between China and Japan. According to Bergere, at the time of this three-year stint in Japan, Pan-Asianist ideals were popular, and Sun and his Japanese

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11 Ibid., 69.
friends felt that there was a need for Asian unity against Western imperialism. Sun’s Japanese friends and supporters at this time, such as Miyazaki Torazo and Inukai Ki, sought to make Sun into a sort of “Chinese hero” that would free China. Okuma Shigenobu, who Sun would write a letter to years later that is studied in this thesis, was another Japanese who hoped to help China become independent and modern like Japan. The influence that Sun’s time in Japan had on Sun, as well as the sympathy and support he received there early on, helped him to further his revolutionary efforts in China. Japan and Sun’s Japanese friends continued to play an important role in Sun’s revolutionary activity right up to the 1911 revolution and his incredibly short stint as provisional president of the new Republic.

1914-1915 Letters: Historical Context and Themes

The 1914 and 1915 letters were written at a time when Sun had, as Jansen points out, “[shifted] to opportunism and cynicism” as he had recently “fallen from president, to adviser of the new regime, to traveling functionary, and, finally, to harried exile.” Although the 1911 revolution had been successful in overthrowing Qing rule, Sun had had little choice but to strike a deal with Yuan Shikai, who had taken Beijing and had control of the most advanced army in the country, in the process. This deal assured Yuan the presidency. However, Yuan began to assume the role of dictator and disregarded the democratic republican vision that Sun had for China. After Yuan Shikai had Song Jiaoren, an important member of the Kuomintang, assassinated in March 1913,

12 Ibid.
13 Ibid., 73
14 Ibid.
16 Wei et al, Prescriptions for Saving China, xvii
Sun “made a public break with Yuan” in May 1913. Sun attempted to lead a second revolution, this time against Yuan, in 1913. This attempt proved embarrassingly unsuccessful, and only further secured Yuan’s position of power in China. Indeed, after the failed revolution Yuan gave up the façade of a republican government and, in December, made clear his intention to become emperor of China. Bergere goes so far as to argue, “of all the crises [Sun] had weathered, that of the years 1913-1920 was the most profound; and of all the setback he had known, that of the Second Revolution, of 1913, was the most dismaying.”

Sun was in Japan when he heard the news of Song Jiaoren’s assassination. He traveled to Japan in February 1913, and, as a member of the Chinese government, his reception from Tokyo was incredibly positive. Contrast this with the reception to his return to Japan just a few months later, in August 1913, which Bergere describes as “low-key.” After the failed revolution of 1913, Sun returned to Japan an exile. According to Bergere, “[Sun’s] contacts and supporters [in Japan] melted away in official circles and business circles alike, for everyone was now backing the chances of Yuan Shikai.”

Japan issued the Twenty-one Demands in January 1915, just a few months before Sun sent the 1915 letter to the Japanese foreign office in March. Although many involved with the Kuomintang, and indeed many Chinese people, were infuriated by this

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18 Ibid., 55.
20 Ibid., 246.
21 Ibid., 237.
22 Ibid., 247.
23 Ibid.
infringement of national sovereignty, Sun persisted in his efforts to work with Japan.\textsuperscript{24} Chang et al argues that, because of the anger in China surrounding Twenty-one Demands, Sun’s stance on Japan was unpopular, noting that even his own brother-in-law saw him as “a ‘tool’ of the Japanese expansionists.”\textsuperscript{25} The May 1914 letter to the Japanese Prime Minister, which Sun wrote while in exile in Japan,\textsuperscript{26} and the March 1915 letter to the foreign office should be viewed against the backdrop of Yuan Shikai’s dictatorship and Sun’s fall from influence in Japan. Although the 1915 letter was written after the Twenty-one Demands were issued, it is not directly addressed (at least, as far as one can tell from Jansen’s summary). This makes sense, given his stance on Japan.

On May 11, 1914, Sun Yat-sen sent a letter to the Japanese Prime Minister, Okuma Shigenobu. In the compilation, it is given the heading “Proposal for a Sino-Japanese Relationship.” In this letter, Sun appeals to the Japanese Prime Minister to aid the Kuomintang in overthrowing Yuan Shikai and in getting rid of the Unequal Treaties. In return, Sun says, China will “open her markets” to Japan, and argues that a Sino-Japanese alliance would be extremely beneficial to both countries.\textsuperscript{27}

According to Jansen, Sun sent a letter to Koike Chozo, the “head of the Political Affairs section of the Foreign Office” of Japan on March 14\textsuperscript{th}, 1915.\textsuperscript{28} In it, Sun “expresses concern” about negotiations between Japan and Yuan Shikai’s government. He claims that these negotiations “must inevitably fail because of bad faith on the part of

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 262.
\textsuperscript{25} Chang et al, All Under Heaven, 58.
\textsuperscript{27} Sun, China and Japan, 1.
\textsuperscript{28} Jansen, The Japanese and Sun Yat-sen, 192.
Yuan.” Jansen paraphrases Sun as arguing “that a Sino-Japanese alliance was the only path to freedom from European imperialism” and that “all they [Chinese revolutionaries] needed was Japanese support” in order to “overthrow Yuan,” of which he said that presently was the perfect time to do so because Europe was embroiled in World War I. He then presents a “treaty” which lays out expectations and promises for a Sino-Japanese relationship.

Sun’s desperation for Japanese support to China, and the Kuomintang in particular, during this period of particularly devastating political exile can be seen in these letters. This can be exemplified by examining the four themes at hand, that is, comparisons of Japan to Western powers, the portrayal of the Kuomintang, the benefits Japan would see were Japan to aid China, and the presentation of the Sino-Japanese relationship. He appeals to Japan’s imperialist ambitions by making positive comparisons of Japan to Western powers. He also plays up the importance of the Kuomintang, the political and economic benefits Japan would see through aiding China, and the close relationship between China and Japan, to make his case for Japanese support.

Although he does not compare Japan to Western powers in the 1915 letter (at least, not from what can be told from Jansen’s summary), in the 1914 letter, Sun’s comparisons of Japan to Western powers are to be viewed as positive for Japan, in an attempt to appeal to Japan’s imperialist ambitions. The most surprising is a direct comparison of the relationship between Japan and China to that of Britain and India at the time:

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29 Ibid.  
30 Ibid.
Take Great Britain…as an example. Her area is very small, but everybody knows that the reason why her strength increases everyday is due to her acquisition of India which provides her with a great trading market; it is on this account that the other Powers cannot compete with her commercially. While the exploitation of Japan’s natural resources has almost reached its limit...China is large and rich with potential wealth yet to be developed. Japan could, therefore, without even incurring the trouble and expense of stationing her troops..., acquire big commercial markets in China.31

Here, Sun tries to tempt Okuma by comparing Japan to Great Britain, were Japan to aid China. In the concluding paragraph of this letter, Sun makes further comparisons between a Japan that aids China and Western powers, arguing that, were Japan to aid China, Japan would be like France when it aided the United States (“for the cause of humanitarianism and justice”), Great Britain when it aided Spain (“for the sake of self-preservation”), and the United States when it aided Panama (motivated “by a desire to enjoy the facilities of the Panama Canal”), all in one.32 Not only would Japan be comparable to Western powers, Japan would be better too. Sun is putting forth the idea that, if Japanese leadership wants Japan to be comparable to Western powers, then aiding China is the route to take. He is willing to essentially put China in the position of “colonized” with regard to Japan because of how desperately he needs foreign aid to overthrow Yuan Shikai.

In these pieces, the role of the Kuomintang is emphasized, again, because of his desperation to garner support for the Kuomintang. In the 1914 letter, Sun frames the Kuomintang victory against Yuan Shikai as inevitable, but something that would be expedited by Japanese aid. Sun presented confidence in the Kuomintang can be seen when he states, “that the Kuo-Min Tang will rise again and another revolution break out

31 Sun, China and Japan, 5.
32 Ibid., 6-7.
are foregone conclusions.”33 He believes, or at least would like the Japanese Prime
Minister to believe, that it is inevitable, even obvious, that the Kuomintang will
experience a resurgence in power and revolt against Yuan. He might truly believe that
this revolution in inevitable, however, it is just as likely that the confidence in the
Kuomintang displayed here is to inspire trust and support of his party on the part of the
Japanese. However, he goes on to say that it is unclear as to “whether the Republican
Army will achieve success as easily and as quickly as desired if no outside help were
forthcoming.”34 He suggests that the imminent revolution would be much shorter, less
violent, and without “foreign entanglements” if a “powerful nation” aided the
Kuomintang.35 Here, Sun fairly obviously begins to hint at how he would like the
Japanese to be involved. It also seems that he takes care not to sound desperate for
outside help – he does not say that the Kuomintang would not be able to succeed without
help from outside, in fact Sun has already stated that the Kuomintang can and will return
to power. He simply tells the Japanese Prime Minister that the revolution would go a lot
more smoothly with outside help. This take on the situation – that the Kuomintang does
not need outside help per se, but outside help would certainly move things along – allows
Sun to both maintain his pride when asking for foreign aid as well as appear to be a
capable ally and a worthy cause for Japan to support.

In the 1915 letter to the Japanese foreign office, it is not clear from Jansen’s
summary that Sun mentions the Kuomintang by name. However, Jansen does include
mention of “revolutionaries” who required Japanese support in order to overthrow

33 Ibid., 2.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
Yuan.  

He also discusses the fact that “Sun expressed concern at the news of [Japanese] negotiations with Yuan Shi-k’ai’s ‘evil government.’” This leads one to believe that, if his arguments made in this letter bear any resemblance to those made in the previous letter, the alternative to Yuan Shikai’s government that Sun would like the Japanese to support would be the Kuomintang. Assuming that Sun indeed does not mention the Kuomintang in this letter, although this cannot be known for sure based on Jansen’s summary, a possible explanation could be that Sun is attempting to further legitimize his party by simply referring to it as the Chinese government, while referring to Yuan’s government as “evil.” Either way, he is playing up his party’s importance and need for assistance with the hope of Japanese support.

In both of these letters, Sun offers Japan political and economic benefits in return for support to China. In the 1914 letter, Sun plays up the benefits that he argues both Japan and China would see from Japanese aid to China, and drives his points home by comparing Japan to prosperous Western powers as discussed above. In the opening paragraph of the letter, Sun makes the argument that, were Japan to aid China, China would “open up her markets for the benefit of Japan’s industry and commerce.” This would allow Japan to “jump to the forefront of the world’s powers and occupy a position similar to Great Britain’s” while China would be able to “preserve her integrity” and “become the richest nation on the Continent of Asia.” Sun says that Japan’s assistance to China is required across the board in matters of administration, governance, diplomacy and commerce. In return, China will “enter a sort of Customs Union with Japan, whereby

37 Ibid.
38 Sun, China and Japan, 1.
39 Ibid.
Japanese manufactures imported into China and Chinese raw materials imported into Japan, will be mutually exempt from Customs duty.\textsuperscript{40} He goes on to say that Japan’s economic prowess will expand with the unbridled access to China’s natural resources and market. Here, Sun attempts to strike a deal with the Japanese – help China (and more specifically the Kuomintang) unify, organize and achieve greater autonomy by assisting in dethroning Yuan Shikai and in undoing the Unequal Treaties, and in return China will consensually allow Japan to have access to China’s resources and market. Sun tries to show that assisting China would be worth Japan’s while, and more so than colonizing China in its current disorganized and chaotic state. His argument is counterintuitive – a strong, unified China would be just as beneficial, if not more beneficial, to Japan’s political and economic standing than a weak and divided China. He tries to re-frame imperialism for Prime Minister Okuma – Japan would get all the benefits of being an imperialist nation not through invasion and colonization but through aid and mentorship. He does this to ensure Japanese aid in his time of need, but also to dissuade Japanese military advances in China. This letter was written while Sun was exiled from China and after the decisive victory of Yuan Shikai against the Kuomintang – as Sun very much needs support, he may be more willing to promise economic and political benefits to achieve this.

Similarly, in treaty presented in the 1915 letter, Sun includes a couple of items that are beneficial to Japan, including the promise that “China to give priority to Japanese officers when employing foreign military advisors,” and that “China to give priority to

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 3.
Japanese when employing foreign specialists.”41 While he is promising preferential
treatment of Japan on the part of China, and while there are certainly benefits for Japan,
these benefits are nowhere near the scale of Sun’s promises in the last letter. Moreover,
were this treaty to actually be considered, China would be getting quite a bit of aid from
Japan. It is not clear from Jansen’s summary of the piece whether or not Sun explicitly
states that these benefits are in return for aid to China, as is explicitly stated in the 1914
letter, however, even if it is not stated in the letter, it is certainly implied by the nature of
the treaty. Sun may be inching away from his “promises” in 1914 that sounded a lot like
imperialism without the struggle. This may be because of the recent issuing of the
Twenty-one Demands, although, as discussed previously, he does not mention them
outright.

Finally, in making a case for Japanese aid in these early letters, Sun emphasizes
the closeness between China and Japan and the importance of the Sino-Japanese
relationship. In the 1914 letter, Sun frames China and Japan as countries whose fates are
linked, and, moreover, countries that would each see extraordinary benefits from an
alliance. “As Japan is close to China, and the prosperity or ruin of one affects the other, it
is but natural that the revolutionaries should first seek Japan’s aid,” Sun points out.42 As
previously stated, Sun argues in this letter that the Kuomintang will succeed with or
without foreign aid, however, foreign aid would make the revolution go more smoothly.
Here, Sun takes this argument one step further, arguing that, given these truths, it makes
sense for the Kuomintang to turn to Japan for foreign aid because “the prosperity or ruin

42 Sun, China and Japan, 2.
of one affects the other.”43 Sun may or may not actually believe this is true. Japan, by this point, was in fact very prosperous while China was struggling. Whether he actually believed this statement or not, it is clear that Sun would like the Japanese Prime Minister to consider the fates of China and Japan to be intertwined. This view on the part of the Japanese would be enormously beneficial to Sun, because Japan would have a stake in the revolution he speaks of. Because chaos in China would impact the Japan, it would matter to the Japanese if the revolution in China was long and bloody, and it would be in their best interest to help this revolution to go smoothly. In making this argument, Sun also points out that, not only is it “natural” for China to seek aid from Japan because of their geographical closeness, but also because “Japan and China are nations of the same race and culture.”44

In the 1915 letter, Sun continues to emphasize the importance of forming a Sino-Japanese alliance, and appears to have an optimistic view as to the nature of this alliance. Sun argues that “the settlement of outstanding issues [between China and Japan is] essential to the peace of Asia,” and “a Sino-Japanese alliance [is] the only path to freedom from European Imperialism.”45 Sun presents an in-depth example of a treaty for a Sino-Japanese alliance that includes Japanese assistance to China with such matters as “removing the evil government” and “adjust[ing] her military system,” as well as “support” for China in abolishing the Unequal Treaties.46 In addition to the call for Japanese assistance, the example treaty also includes items that would be beneficial to Japan (as mentioned above), and items that put Japan and China on more equal terms.

43 Ibid.
44 Ibid., 2-3
46 Ibid., 193.
such as the need for “China and Japan to consult each other before either [conclude] important agreements with a third power on matters relating to Asia” and the formation of a “Sino-Japanese Bank, with branches, to be established in all important cities of both China and Japan.” Jansen’s summary of this piece would indicate that, as in the 1914 letter, Sun is attempting to demonstrate to Japanese leadership that a Sino-Japanese alliance would be mutually beneficial to China and to Japan, however, he takes his argument a step further in emphasizing the importance of an alliance not only to China and Japan but to “Asia” and for the opposition to Western imperialism, and in hinting that the Sino-Japanese relationship should eventually be one of two sovereign states on equal terms – that is, after Japan assists China in achieving that sovereignty. This increased advocacy for an independent China may also be as a result of the Twenty-one demands.

Sun’s unfortunate political situation after the failure of the 1913 revolution, and potentially the issuing of the Twenty-one Demands, influenced the way that Sun framed his argument for Japanese assistance to China in 1914 and 1915. He compares Japan to Western powers in a way that would be positive for Japan, he plays up the Kuomintang, offers political and economic benefits in return for aid, and emphasizes the Sino-Japanese relationship. Living in exile, he very much needed foreign aid, so his zealous arguments for Japanese support make sense. He does tone it down a bit in the 1915 letter, but he does not mention any resentment or anger regarding the Twenty-one Demands – in 1919, when he was slightly more politically secure, he gets angry.

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1919 Letter: Historical Context and Themes

Yuan Shikai’s death in June of 1916 ushered in a period of chaotic warlordism in China. Sun was able to re-enter Chinese politics in early 1917. At this time, the politically minded in China were considering whether or not to enter World War I, and on which side. Sun argued that China ought to continue to be neutral in order to preserve sovereignty. A pamphlet was written in the spring of 1917 called The Question of China’s Survival is attributed to Sun and is thought to reflect his ideas on the matter, but was probably written by somebody else. This pamphlet expresses the desire for China to remain neutral, and the opinion that an Allied victory would be more dangerous to China than a victory on the part of the Central Powers.

China ended up entering World War I on the Allied side despite internal disagreements due to external pressure – Chang et al argue that the pressure came from the United States, but Sun, as discussed below, implies that the pressure came from Japan. This meant that China came out on the side of the victors at war’s end, however, the Treaty of Versailles granted Japan Germany’s former rights in Shandong province. This sparked the May Fourth Movement in 1919. Sun did not particularly agree with everything the student protesters had to say – according to Chang et al, “Sun was

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48 Bergere, Sun Yat-sen, 271.
49 Ibid., 272.
50 Ibid., 271.
51 Translations of this pamphlet are included in China and Japan: Natural Friends, Unnatural Enemies and Prescriptions for Saving China, however, it is not analyzed here because it is not thought to be written by Sun.
52 Chang et al, All Under Heaven, 59.
53 Jonathan D. Spence, The Search for Modern China (New York: Norton, 1990), 239.
dismayed with the students independence and seemingly unharnessed sense of nationalism.”54

In a 1919 “letter to a correspondent of the Asahi” entitled “How To Remove China’s Antagonism,” Sun expresses his displeasure with a number of recent actions taken by the Japanese.55 After reiterating his commitment to a Sino-Japanese friendship, he expresses his disappointment and frustration that the Japanese Government continues to “help Chinese officialdom in its efforts to frustrate the Kuo-Min Tang” and, although (he claims) Japan encouraged China to join the Allies during World War I, Japan then assumed control of the formerly German concessions in Shandong province after the war. He explains that Chinese people are especially angry at the Japanese because aggression on Japan’s part is like a “younger brother” stealing from an “older brother.”56

The 1919 letter is a direct response to the Treaty of Versailles and the negative Chinese reaction, and this colors the way that each of the four themes is addressed. Here, Sun compares Japan negatively to Western powers, almost scolding Japan for taking control of Shandong. He compares the Kuomintang to Japanese Meiji reformers in an effort to point out Japanese hypocrisy in failing to support the Kuomintang. He offers no equivalent to the political and economic benefits that he offered previously because Japan has taken those benefits without any promise of aid to China. Finally, he emphasizes the familial relationship shared by China and Japan in an attempt to demonstrate the error in Japan’s ways.

54 Chang et al, All Under Heaven, 62.
55 Sun, China and Japan, 125.
56 Ibid.
Sun argues that Japan compares negatively to Western powers in 1919. He begins by suggesting that Japanese people compare Japan to Western powers in a sense – Sun claims they feel that “Japan is no more aggressive to China than other Powers are” and wonders “why should China hate Japan alone?”\textsuperscript{57} Here, in Sun’s frame, Japanese people in general (he is not specific) feel that Japan should be viewed by China in the same way as other powers present in China that were otherwise Western, ergo, Japanese people feel that Japan is comparable to Western powers and that Japan’s actions in China are comparable to those of Western powers. However, later on in this piece Sun argues that Japan’s behavior with regard to China in fact compares negatively to Western powers “against aggression” (the victorious Allies; Britain, France, the United States and Russia), and lumps Japan in with less successful countries “in favor of aggression” (the former Central Powers; Germany, Austria, Turkey and Bulgaria).\textsuperscript{58} He points out that “the number of cities captured by Anglo-American troops in Europe is perhaps a hundred times greater than Tsingtao (Qingdao)” however, all captured cities were “returned to their rightful owners” after the war.\textsuperscript{59} Unlike Britain and the U.S.’s military activity in Europe, Japan took control of Shandong instead of returning it to its “rightful owner,” and Sun thus accuses Japan of entering on the wrong side of the war, since, according to Sun, Japan’s actions seem more in line with those of the “aggressive” Central Powers than those of the Allies. In the 1914 letter to Count Okuma, Sun frames comparability to Western powers as something Japan wants and is capable of achieving (by aiding China). In this 1919 letter to a correspondent of the Asahi, comparability with Western powers is

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Ibid.
\item Ibid., 127.
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still something Sun conjectures that Japan wants, however, Japan’s aggressive behavior in China does not measure up to that of victorious and economically successful Western powers that were victorious in World War I, such as Britain and the US, and are instead comparable to the defeated “aggressive” nations of the former Central Powers. He is appealing to a perceived (on his part) desire of Japan’s – to be a power comparable to Western powers.

In the 1919 letter, Sun compares the Kuomintang to “Japanese Reformists of 50 years ago,” and indicates that the Kuomintang “wish to follow the example of these Japanese and reform China.” By comparing the Kuomintang to Meiji reformers, Sun tries to incite empathy on the part of the Japanese for China – he is trying to show that Japan and China are on the same path, China is just behind. If Japan holds Meiji reformers in high regard, he asserts here, then Japan also ought to think highly of and be supportive of the Kuomintang. He also flatters Japan by stating that, because of the Meiji reformers, Japan became a “Great Power,” and by suggesting that Japan’s path is something to be emulated by China, namely the Kuomintang. Sun frames the Kuomintang as the Chinese equivalent to Meiji reformers in Japan, thus illuminating hypocrisy on the part of Japan for “forgetting the deeds and aspirations of these [Meiji] Reformists,” not supporting the Kuomintang, and behaving aggressively towards China.

Sun does not offer the same political and economic benefits to Japan in 1919 that he offered in the earlier letters. As Sun is directly responding to the Shandong incident in this letter, it makes sense that he would not offer the Japanese the benefits of an imperialist nation, as that has become a painful reality. All he really offers the Japanese

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60 Ibid., 125
61 Ibid.
in the 1919 letter is the opportunity to diffuse the “antagonism” that Sun claims Chinese people now hold for Japan and to foster an East Asia that “enjoy[s] the blessing of permanent peace,” simply by “[changing] its [the Japanese government’s] fundamental policy and [stopping] its aggression in China.” Sun takes on a more moralistic tone here, offering Japan goodwill instead of the political or economic perks in return for changing its foreign policy.

Finally, with regard to the portrayal of the Sino-Japanese relationship, Sun argues in the 1919 letter that Chinese people hate Japan more than other imperialist powers in China because Japan and China have a familial, specifically brotherly, relationship. He says that Japan’s aggressive policy in China is like a younger brother stealing from an older brother. Western power’s imperialist policies in China, however, are like being stolen from by robbers that are strangers. In this scenario, according to Sun, the elder brother would “hate [the younger brother] more bitterly than the robbers because they are of the same blood.” Sun frames the Sino-Japanese relationship as a familial one to try to get his Japanese audience to see China as a brother-nation with common heritage with the hope that Japan will help rather than hurt China, as Japan did recently with the acquisition of Shandong.

1922 Interview: Historical Context, and Themes

According to Bergere, “From 1920 to 1925, Sun Yat-sen was driven by one overriding ambition: to reconquer political power…and, as president, to unify and pacify

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62 Ibid.
63 Ibid., 128.
64 Ibid., 125.
China.\textsuperscript{65} In the final years before his death in March 1925, Sun kept very busy, as he was running the Kuomintang from Guangdong with the overall goal of leading and unifying China.\textsuperscript{66} Sun was not pleased that Japan was not supporting his government in the south, and looked to other countries, such as Soviet Russia and Germany, for assistance.\textsuperscript{67} The 1922 interview came at a time when Sun was seeking aid from the Soviet government in particular.

According to C. Martin Wilbur, a translated version of an interview of Sun Yat-sen was printed in the \textit{Japan Advertiser} in November 1922. In this interview, Sun argues that Japan should have taken the side of the Central Powers during World War I instead of the Allies, as this would have caused other Asian countries to revolt against France and England. That Japan joined the Allies had been a setback in the “Pan-Asiatic plan.”\textsuperscript{68} Wilbur quotes a portion of this interview in which Sun encourages Japan to align with Russia, as Russians are also “Asian,” to “[oppose] the aggression of the Anglo-Saxons.”\textsuperscript{69} As Wilbur argues, “the pro-Russian sentiment in this statement [from the 1922 interview] may have reflected Dr. Sun’s rising hopes for Soviet assistance.”\textsuperscript{70}

That Sun has, for the moment, given up on Japanese support to the extent that he would have liked, and that Sun is seeking aid from Russia, come through in the 1922 interview. Western powers are portrayed negatively in an effort to incite Pan-Asianist sentiment in his audience, he does not offer Japan much of anything in terms of benefits, and he does not seem to hold the Sino-Japanese relationship in high regard, opting

\textsuperscript{65} Bergere, \textit{Sun Yat-sen}, 293.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 289
\textsuperscript{67} Chang et al., \textit{All Under Heaven}, 72.
\textsuperscript{68} Wilbur, \textit{Frustrated Patriot}, 134.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 134-135.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 135.
instead to discuss the betterment of “Asia” in general. He does not mention the
Kuomintang at all, from what can be told from Wilbur’s summary. His disappointment
with Japan, and his shift in priorities, are evident.

Western powers are portrayed very negatively in the 1922 interview. Sun bashes
what he calls “the aggression of the Anglo-Saxons.” Sun states that Japan should
have taken sides with Germany and the Allied powers, not because Japan’s aggressive
policies in East Asia were more in line with the aggressive policies of the Central Powers
as Sun argues in the 1919 letter, but because “had Japan declared war on the
Allies…Annam [Vietnam] and Singapore would have risen in arms against France and
England; the Indians would have revolted against Great Britain; and the Turks and
Chinese would have supported Japan in its efforts to unite East Asia.” Japan could have
made “Asia a place for Asiatics” by declaring war on the Allies, but had not done so.
Although Sun is not directly comparing Japan to Western powers here, it is interesting
that he seems to portray the Western Allies of World War I positively in the 1919 letter
and negatively just three years later in the 1922 interview – in the 1919 letter Sun implies
that the countries that made up the Allies are to be emulated by Japan (which simply does
not measure up to them); in the 1922 interview, Sun says they should have been opposed
by Japan.

As in 1919, Sun does not, in 1922, assure political or economic benefits to Japan
for compliance. Sun asserts that “if Japan really wishes to see Asia controlled by Asiatics,

71 Ibid.
72 Ibid., 134.
73 Ibid.
she must promote relations with the Russians.”74 Here, Sun takes on a more moralistic tone – if the Japanese want Asia to be controlled by Asians (as opposed to “Anglo-Saxons”), Japan must do as Sun says. The almost threatening tone indicated how little faith Sun had in Japanese support at that time.

Wilbur’s summary of the 1922 interview would indicate that this is the least enlightening of the pieces at hand with regard to Sun’s portrayal of the Sino-Japanese relationship. In his strange insistence that Japan should have joined the Central Powers during World War I because it would help unite Asia, and that because Japan joined the Allies, the “Pan-Asiatic plan had been delayed indefinitely,” Sun states that “because Japan had failed, China would be called upon to make Asia a place for Asiatics.”75 Here, Sun seems to place the “Pan-Asiatic plan” and Asian unity over the Sino-Japanese relationship. Unlike the majority of the other pieces, he does not ask for Japanese assistance to China and/or Asia, nor does he emphasize the close relationship between China and Japan – he only criticizes what was probably a practical political decision for Japan.

November 1924 Addresses in Kobe: Historical Context and Themes

“The last four months of Dr. Sun’s life were a deep disappointment,” Wilbur claims.76 Sun embarked on a journey to Beijing from Guangdong in the fall of 1924 on an invitation from a powerful warlord in that region.77 Sun probably wanted to discuss unification and was possibly thinking of the presidency.78 It was on his way north that he

74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Wilbur, Frustrated Patriot, 270.
77 Spence, Modern China, 339.
78 Wilbur, Frustrated Patriot, 264.
stopped off in Kobe, Japan between November 24 and November 30, 1924, and gave the interview and two addresses discussed in this thesis. The Japanese government did not support Sun after Yuan Shikai’s death, opting instead to support the unstable governments in Beijing, as it was seen as more beneficial to Japan to support the governments in the North. This last visit to Japan was an effort to get back Japanese support and assistance. Despite a somewhat chilly reception from the government in Tokyo, Sun was well received by the Japanese public and his visit received much press coverage. Both Wilbur and Bergere note that, for Sun, these speeches mark a return to Pan-Asianist themes. In fact, according to Bergere, Sun sent someone to Japan ahead of him to get a sense of Japanese reception of these themes. Despite his efforts, both scholars argue that he was not successful in achieving his aims – Bergere contends that he was successful with the Japanese public but not with the government, and Wilbur points out that he did not indicate enough support for Japan’s imperialist interests. This stopover in Japan was cut short when Sun fell ill, and he quickly made his way to Beijing, where he died months later.

In the November 1924 pieces Sun’s primary concerns seem to be the continuing presence of foreign imperialist powers in China, the Unequal Treaties, and China’s unification. In the first, entitled in the collaboration, “On Sino-Japanese Collaboration (A

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79 Ibid., 272.
80 Bergere, Sun Yat-sen, 402-3.
81 Wilbur, Frustrated Patriot, 272.
82 Ibid.
83 Bergere, Sun Yat-sen, 403.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid, 404.
86 Wilbur, Frustrated Patriot, 273.
87 Spence, Modern China, 339.
Press Interview aboard the ‘Shanghai Maru’ at Kobe November 24, 1924),” 88 Sun reaffirms his commitment to a Sino-Japanese friendship. He states that the unification of China is extremely important for both countries because a chaotic, disjointed China will not be conducive to trade with Japan. He argues that China is unable to achieve unity because of foreign imperialism and the Unequal Treaties, and that it would be much easier for China to free itself from the Unequal Treaties with Japanese support.

In the second, entitled “Japan and China’s Unequal Treaties (An address delivered at a Welcome Dinner given on November 28, 1924, at the Oriental Hotel in Kobe),” 89 Sun restates the idea that China and Japan have a familial relationship. He argues that the current situation in China is similar to that of Japan during the Meiji Restoration, but that the Unequal Treaties are holding China back from achieving what Japan has, and again asks for Japanese aid in getting rid of these treaties.

In the third, entitled “Pan-Asianism (An address delivered at Kobe on November 28, 1924, at the Reception given by the Chamber of Commerce and five other Public Organizations at the Girl’s Normal College),” 90 Sun argues that “Asian civilization” is the world’s oldest, and that only recently have European nations become strong and overpowered Asian nations (he is not just referring to East Asia but in fact the whole of the Asian continent). Japan’s development and strength in the face of Western power, he argues, has given other Asian nations hope. He states that China and Japan are the “greatest peoples” in East Asia. He asserts that “Oriental” civilization, which implements what he calls the “rule of Right” is better than European civilization which implements

88 Sun, China and Japan, 129.
89 Ibid., 135.
90 Ibid., 141.
what he calls the “rule of Might.” He challenges the Japanese to be a champion of the Asian nations instead of being the “hawk” of Western civilization.91

On his way to negotiate the fate of China’s unification and government, in 1924, Sun is back to seeking support from Japan. He makes negative, but popular statements regarding Western powers in order to gain popular support in Japan. He does not offer Japan economic and political benefits as his does in the early letter, instead attempting to show that a strong China would have long-term benefits for Japan. He emphasizes Sino-Japanese closeness, unlike in 1922. He does not mention the Kuomintang, seemingly opting instead to discuss the greater good of “Asia” in general, again, in an effort to gain popular support in Japan.

Sun portrays Western powers in a negative light in 1924, in an effort to encourage Japan to ally itself with “Asia” instead of Western powers. In “Pan-Asianism,” Sun presents an argument that deviates sharply from arguments he made in the 1914 and 1919 letters. In those letters, Sun framed Western wealth and power as enviable; something he assumed Japan would want to emulate, whether Japan compared well or not. While he may still believe that Japan wants to be comparable to the West (which would explain why he spends so much time trying to show why the West is bad), he now paints Western civilization in a negative light. “European” civilization, he claims, follows the aggressive “rule of Might,” characterized by “scientific materialism,” militarism and “force,” while “Oriental” civilization (as he calls it) follows the “rule of Right,” characterized by “reason,” “benevolence, justice and morality.”92 By this account, he argues, “while materially the Orient is far behind the Occident, morally the Orient is superior to the

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91 Ibid., 148-151
92 Ibid., 145-148.
Occident.” He singles out Japan as “the first nation in Asia to completely master the military civilization of Europe,” and is, therefore, one of the few independent nations in Asia, and the only one in East Asia. As such, “Japan…has become acquainted with the Western civilization of the rule of Might, but retains characteristics of the rule of the Oriental civilization of the rule of Right.” He challenges the Japanese to be a champion of Asian nations instead of being the “hawk” of Western civilization. His argument about the “rule of Might” characteristic of the West is reminiscent of his arguments about the “aggression of the Anglo-Saxons” in the 1922 letter. Of the Japanese reception to the 1924 pieces, Bergere states, “Sun’s anti-imperialist and anti-Western imprecations…elicited an enthusiastic welcome for him from the crowds and acclamation from his audiences, [but] failed to rally the Japanese leaders.” This may have been intentional, especially given that he sent someone ahead of him to test the Japanese response to his arguments. In other words, Sun’s presented anti-Western sentiment in 1924 may have been an effort to cater to Japanese public opinion in his quest for support.

In the 1924 pieces, Sun again makes promises of eventual economic and political benefits for Japan, though not nearly to the extent that he does in the 1914 letter, in addition to, or going hand in hand with, a more autonomous Asia and the goodwill of the Chinese people. This is particularly true in the interview “On Sino-Japanese Collaboration,” in which he points out the seemingly counterintuitive benefits Japan would see from assisting China to eliminate the Unequal Treaties:

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93 Ibid., 146. (Italics inserted)
94 Ibid., 148.
95 Ibid., 151.
96 Ibid.
97 Bergere, *Sun Yat-sen*, 404.
In the minds of short-sighted Japanese, the abrogation of Unequal Treaties by China would be a loss to Japan of her rights and privileges. Chinese tariff autonomy would, for instance, cause an immediate damage to Japanese trade. But such damage is negligible if the long view is taken. Japan would secure the friendship of the Chinese people, if she helped China to abolish to the Unequal Treaties. The benefit thus resulting to Japan would be immense and unlimited. It is true that after China has abrogated the Treaties she would raise the tariffs, to the immediate disadvantage of Japan. But Japanese assistance to China in the abolition of the Unequal Treaties would secure the genuine gratitude of the Chinese, which would result in co-operation between China and Japan. They could conclude mutual-assistance treaties, such as an economic bloc and joint-defense pacts. If China and Japan were really to become allies, Japan would receive benefits a hundred-fold, even a thousand-fold, her present privileges.  

Here, Sun attempts to show that, while yes, there would be initial disadvantages to Japan if Japan were to aid China in getting rid of the Unequal Treaties, earning “the gratitude of the Chinese” would be an invaluable asset to Japan, as this would allow for a true alliance between the two countries that would have economic and political benefits for Japan. Chinese autonomy and goodwill toward Japan, however, are prerequisites.

Sun returns to emphasizing closeness and dependency between China and Japan in 1924, seeming to have a renewed faith in the relationship. In “On Sino-Japanese Collaboration,” Sun hints that Japanese people ought to be sympathetic to the Chinese problem with Unequal Treaties, stating that “Japan suffered the same thing thirty years ago.” He takes this further in “Japan and China’s Unequal Treaties” when he compares Japan’s success in achieving independence and modernity through the Meiji Restoration with China’s relative failure to do so, as he does in the 1919). Achieving what Japan has achieved is harder for China, he contends, because when Japan underwent the Meiji Restoration “Western influence had not yet consolidated itself in the East,” while when the 1911 revolution occurred in China “European and American influence had long ago

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98 Sun, *China and Japan*, 133-134.
99 Ibid., 133.
secured a stronghold and consolidated itself in East Asia” (Sun 136). He seems to be indicating that China and Japan are on similar trajectories to independence and success in the current world order. However, China has fallen behind Japan on this trajectory, and in the meantime it has become more difficult for China to achieve what Japan had achieved. By suggesting that China is to follow a similar path to Japan, he links the past, present and future of both countries. Japan’s past is China’s present, and Japan’s present should be China’s future – but China may need more outside help in attaining this than Japan did. This is where Sun feels Japanese assistance comes in. In case attempts to incite sympathy on the part of the Japanese for China’s plight is not enough to encourage Japan to assist China, Sun also argues that Japan should assist China for their own self-preservation, as he did in 1914 – in “On Sino-Japanese Collaboration,” Sun contends that, if China does not achieve unification, “the Japanese will...suffer indirectly, because they will not be able to trade in China.” This also indicates that China and Japan have linked fates and a similar historical trajectory.

The ten-year period between 1914 and 1924 was a frustrating one for Sun. One relatively successful revolution in 1911 and a failed one in 1913 could not stop China from falling into the control of a dictator. In the aftermath of the 1913 revolution, Sun found himself in exile in Japan. Even after Yuan’s death, it seems that Japan continued to back the warlord governments in the north instead of Sun’s party in the south. Despite Sun’s commitment to an alliance between Japan and China, the Japanese government never supported Sun to the extent that he might have hoped. Additionally, Japan’s policy toward China became increasingly aggressive during this period, which caused Sun to

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100 Ibid., 136.
101 Ibid., 131.
lose some credibility and popularity among revolutionaries in China because of his continuous push for a Sino-Japanese friendship.

**Conclusions**

The way in which Sun Yat-sen frames his argument to a Japanese audience for Japanese support to China between 1914 and 1924, as seen through the four major themes studied here, changes with the times, Sun’s aims, and to some extent public opinion in Japan. In the 1914 and 1915 pieces, Sun was living in exile and likely desperate to solidify foreign support for the Kuomintang against Yuan Shikai’s dictatorship. As such, he may have been more willing to make grand promises to Japan of the global status of a Western power and the benefits of an imperialist nation in China in return for support. Additionally, in the 1914 letter at least, Sun makes a point of discussing the competence of the Kuomintang as an ally to Japan. In the 1919 letter, Sun is reacting to the Japanese taking control of Germany’s rights former rights in Shandong after World War I, instead of returning those rights to China. As such, Sun changes gears. He does not compare Japan favorably to Western powers, and he does not offer the political and economic benefits that he had offered in the 1914 and 1915 letters. He compares the Kuomintang to Japanese Meiji reformers in an effort to demonstrate commonalities between the two countries and to point out hypocrisy on the part of the Japanese for not supporting the Kuomintang’s efforts to unify China (instead, Japan frustrated those efforts). Sun’s frustration with the Japanese lack of support becomes apparent in the 1922 interview, which comes at a time when he was seeking foreign support from other nations, in particular, Soviet Russia. As in the 1919 letter, Sun does not lay out specific economic and political benefits for Japan in the 1922 interview. This
is due to the fact that his focus in this interview is more on getting Japan to ally with Soviet Russia. To do this, he bashes the countries comprising the Allied powers, particularly Britain, which Sun had spoken well of in 1914. This focus on Soviet support also explains why the Kuomintang no longer appears to be a large concern in the 1922 letter. In 1924, Sun’s emphasis is again on a Sino-Japanese alliance, as he was en route to Beijing for negotiations. It is evident that, for these pieces, he may have been catering to Japanese public opinion, as Bergere points out that he sent someone ahead of him to test the waters on his points. He also was well-received by the Japanese public, particularly due to the anti-Western sentiments he presented himself to hold – this may have been his aim. He does discuss political and economic benefits to Japan for aiding China and “Asia” in general, but they are neither as specific as nor to the extent of what he discussed in the 1914 letter. This may have been an attempt, albeit an unsuccessful one, to please Japanese leadership at the time. He does not discuss the Kuomintang specifically, opting instead to attempt to convince Japan to take the side of “Asia” in general, as opposed to the West. Throughout the pieces, Sun emphasizes the closeness and interconnectedness of China and Japan, and thus the importance of a Sino-Japanese relationship – the 1922 interview is an understandable exception, as his focus there was more on encouraging a relationship between Japan and Soviet Russia.
Bibliography


