HU WEIDE

and the Weak Diplomacy of the late Qing/Early Republican Period

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Chapter One—Preface

From the end of the Qing Dynasty, China's foreign relations came under great pressure, and could no longer continue the 'dynastic' system of foreign policy. Especially after the tumult of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 and the Eight-Nation Alliance (France, Russia, Great Britain, America, Italy, Japan, Germany, and Austro-Hungary) in 1900 during the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901), China's international position became even weaker. The successors to the Qing, the Republican and Beijing government were thus in an extremely difficult position to carry out diplomacy. At first glance, it appears as if China was continually victim to foreign aggression, and in a difficult position. More detailed research reveals however that this period was actually a period of transition for China from the imperial vassal system to the western family of nations. Thus, apart from the Qing Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the diplomatic service was also reinvigorated by individuals who replaced the literati officials. The Beijing government managed to lessen the damage caused by the unequal treaties by revising them where it could. The above measures are proof of the concrete means taken by the late-Qing and early Republican governments' to deal with the diplomatic situation.

Furthermore, from a nationalistic and partisan view of history, foreign relations from the late-Qing onwards can be/are often seen in terms of the relinquishing of power and the humiliation of the country. From this perspective, not only is it difficult to fairly evaluate the late-Qing and Beijing Republican governments and their policies, but neither can one get a real sense of Chinese foreign relations at the time. A more realistic approach towards Chinese foreign policy since the late-Qing would need to take into account the fact that China's ability for self-determination was severely limited to the extent that it was not free to master its own destiny: it was unable to carry out foreign relations in the great country manner of the imperial court. Thus, whilst stumbling along the way, the

Qing tried to improve their situation and protect sovereignty through such measures as working to join the family of nations, and as such China's foreign relations should be seen in this context as a 'weak nation'. Under the appellation 'weak country', China was similar to certain small countries in that, whilst superficially respected by large nations, they nonetheless occupied an inferior, repressed position in the western international system. Facing aggression from the western world, China was a weak country.

Although 'weak country' has no clear definition, at the very least it implies a lack of state power, an enduring through humiliation in order to carry out important missions, and a foreign policy seeking to minimise damage rather than maximise gain: all this stands in stark contrast to the foreign policies of powerful countries. When facing historical judgement, although 'enduring humiliation to carry out a higher purpose' may not be the best policy, it was however a common element and in some measure proved to be an effective period of Chinese foreign policy. An example being, at the time of Japan's Twenty-One Demands on China (1915), Lu Zhengxiang (1871-1949) and Cao Rulin (1877-1966) dealt courteously but without sincerity with the Japanese, thus lessening damage to Chinese interests. They also lured the Japanese into making an ultimatum, resulting in international sympathy for China, whilst adhering to their principles. During the Paris Peace Conference and the Washington Naval Conference, Gu Weijun (1888-1985), despite enjoying popularity amongst the international community, did not attend the treaty signing ceremony because the treaty did not do justice to the reality of Chinese diplomacy. Since 'weak country' diplomacy was unsatisfactory to nationalists, those diplomats involved in such were often attacked by the former for their practices. As a result of this, Lu Zhengxiang and Cao Rulin were arrested, whereas Gu Weijun has been lavishly praised, all because those involved did not fully understand 'weak country' diplomacy.

Hu Weide (1863-1933) is an important diplomat from China's period of 'weak diplomacy', but has been neglected for a long time. His background and experience are intimately linked with the early-modern history of Chinese diplomacy, and as such bear testimony to the evolution of that history. Yet, because he was out of the glare of the spotlight that shone on such diplomatic stars as Gu Weijun and others, and since research topics are always centred around this core group of individuals, the sources that mention Hu Weide have been neglected.

Additionally, the fact that Hu Weide did not leave extant manuscripts or diaries behind for researchers to consult resulted in this late-Qing old school diplomat, who was an important player in his field, not being granted the importance that was his due.

In terms of background, Hu Weide was from the relatively liberal Zhejiang area. He graduated from the Shanghai Interpreters College (Guang fangyan guan), and was a talented diplomat trained under the late-Qing self-strengthening movement. After the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-1895 and the alliance of the Eight-Nation Alliance in 1900, this group of western specialists who were originally trained as translators had the opportunity to be fast-tracked into higher positions. Although Hu Weide was not from an especially prestigious school of western studies destined to provide candidates for the diplomatic service, he worked his way up quickly. Hu Weide was the first graduate from the Interpreters College to be selected for the diplomatic service. Fellow students such as Lu Zhengxiang were appointed to positions in the diplomatic service a few years later.

In terms of promotion, Hu Weide and all those graduates from western schooling backgrounds broke the cycle of candidates selected from amongst officials from Hunan and Anhui, and were the first modern 'professional diplomats'. This dissertation will define the diplomats from this period as 'second generation' diplomats (see Chapter 2 for more detail), separating themselves from the first generation of traditional diplomats already mentioned, and from the third generation of diplomats that emerged in the early Republican period with students returning to China from overseas. Although the second generation has the shortest time span compared to the other two, the individuals who made up this generation were the most complex: there were scholarly gentlemen from traditional backgrounds, graduates from western academies within China, and those who had studied abroad, constituting fierce competition amongst each other. That Hu Weide was able to reveal his talent, and gradually rise to the rank of ambassador, showed that the Qing government must have thought him a reliable, worthy individual. Moreover, this second generation of diplomats were also important proponents of 'weak country diplomacy', and Hu Weide was one of its most significant members. Another point is that as successive generations of diplomats changed, this revealed China's changing response as it

adjusted during a period of diplomatic pressure. Hu Weide's life experience alone (he was posted in Russia during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905) constitutes an important historical record of China's diplomatic experience at that time. Besides his role as a neutral outsider in the position of representative and spokesman, Hu Weide's part in representing China as it entered into the international community at the first peace conference is a likewise important episode in his career. China's participation at the peace conference is a significant turning point in its 'weak country' diplomatic attempts to win powerful international backing. Hu Weide was situated between two negotiators in this process, the first was Yang Ru (1848-1902), and the other who completed negotiations at the peace conference, was Lu Zhengxiang. It can perhaps be argued that Hu did in fact perform great service at the peace conference, although there is no research to corroborate this. All in all, his life and experiences have been unfortunately overlooked.

Hu Weide held successive posts as a diplomat in Russia, as ambassador to Japan, and after the 1911 Revolution acted as deputy foreign affairs minister in the cabinet of Yuan Shikai (1859-1916). Apart from Hu's status as the most distinguished graduate from the Interpreters College, much more worthy of note is the relationship between Hu Weide, Yuan Shikai and the Qing government. Especially interesting is the rumour that has been passed down of Hu Weide being Yuan Shikai's 'bully of officials'; as to whether this is true or not, further research needs to be done. As Hu had a gentle character, certainly no more forceful in manner than people like Yuan Shikai, Zhao Bingjun (1865-1914), and Liang Shitai (1869-1933), it is doubtful whether he could have really been an effective 'bully'. It would also be worth researching the difference between Hu Weide's contributions to the 1911 Revolution, as someone born into diplomatic circles, compared with that of diplomats such as Lu Zhengxiang. Hu Weide's manoeuvres in officialdom during the late-Qing and early-Republican period are not limited to the history of diplomacy, but are closely related to the whole of China's early modern history.

During the Republican era, Hu Weide was stationed in France during World War I and was involved in the Paris Peace Conference of 1919; additionally, he was stationed in Japan during negotiations in Washington, known as the Washington Naval Conferencestdt (a conference essentially meant to limit Japanese naval expansion and

maintain the open door policies with China), and so during these important moments in the history of modern Chinese diplomacy, Hu was stationed where the action was taking place. Whether there was some special purpose behind this, or whether it was coincidental needs more in-depth research. Moreover, Hu Weide's presence during important international conferences, and his influence on and contributions to Chinese diplomacy naturally deserve attention. However, in the past when the Paris Peace Conference and the Washington Naval Conference were mentioned, researchers all hastily focused on Gu Weijun's negotiations, and neglected Hu Weide's presence in France and Japan, which inevitably led to an erroneous and only partial understanding of the situation. This is especially significant during the Washington Naval Conference when Hu was in Tokyo, directly facing pressure from the Japanese; indeed, such negotiations were not necessarily less arduous that those undertaken by Gu Weijun. In fact, Gu Weijun was indeed the primary agitator in relations between China and Japan, and determining whether an auxiliary role such as that of Hu Weide was instrumental in China's negotiations at the Washington Naval Conference is also a pertinent research angle.

Returning to China after his assignments abroad, Hu Weide was far from idle. Apart from holding the posts of cabinet minister for foreign affairs, cabinet minister for internal affairs, and deputy to the prime minister, he was also able to assume powers of the president himself, and held the position of greatest authority within the diplomatic service. Although Yan Huiqing (1877-1950) and Gu Weijun also had considerable powers in the cabinet, first of all Hu Weide held office during an earlier period, and secondly Hu lived during the Beijing government's most chaotic period, and so his time in office was not as smooth as that of Yan and Gu, and in fact the difficulties involved were much more considerable. Also, the tradition started by Hu Weide of a 'Hu family dynasty of diplomats' is a high point in the history of Chinese diplomacy.

Not only has there been, up to now, a dearth of research on such a revered senior official with an important position who experienced the turbulence of modern Chinese history, but his name has been obscured in favour of such diplomatic heavyweights as Lu and Gu, which is a great shame. As the Beijing government was coming to an end, Hu Weide did not assume further official appointments, and had no connection during

his life with the power of the Revolutionary party. Furthermore, after unification he held no further office under the Republican government. Because of this, Hu Weide was seen as a figure belonging to the 'Northern clique', unlike the third generation of diplomats such as Gu Weijun and Yan Huiqing. And so by comparison, Hu Weide did not receive attention from the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) or the future Communist Party, and so has gradually been forgotten.

As a result of past neglect, very little research relating to Hu Weide has been carried out, and research concentrating on Hu Weide is non-existent. Fortunately, several scholars on the mainland have gradually come to the realisation of Hu Weide's importance, and have collected his letters and telegrams whilst he was serving in Russia and Japan, which have been published in Jindaishi ziliao (Pre-modern history materials). Jindaishi ziliao no. 37 has 'Hu Weide's telegrams whilst serving in Russia (February 1904 to February 1906)', no. 92 'transcript of the texts of Hu Weide's telegrams whilst serving in Russia', no. 95 'Hu Weide's letters whilst serving in Russia', no. 99 'Hu Weide's telegrams whilst serving in Russia and Japan', texts of telegrams from 1906-1910, no. 100 'Hu Weide's memorandum to the emperor whilst in office' as well as all kinds of memoranda to the emperor from Hu Weide when he served in Russia. Apart from the latter half of no. 99 (1908-1910), which has documents relating to Hu Weide's time in Japan, these documents are principally Hu's letters and telegrams during his time in Russia.

Although there is much overlap between them, they are at least ordered and catalogued. Apart from the above materials, there is no book directly examining Hu Weide. Fortunately, Hu Weide enjoyed a long career in public office, lasting from the late-Qing Guangxu period to the latter years of the northern government. Hu Weide held many offices, and was involved in important events of the time, and thus much research that touches on the diplomacy of that period mentions Hu Weide. To summarise the four important periods in Hu Weide's life, namely, his studies, time as a Qing official, a diplomat in the Republican period, and serving in the Beijing government, all illustrate the value of Hu Weide's life and experience. For example, Su Jing's Qingji tongwenguan ji qi shisheng (The Foreign Languages School and its teachers and students during the Qing), Sun Zihe's Qingdai tongwenguan zhi yanjiu (Research on the Qing Dynasty Foreign Languages School) both contain much insight into the background surrounding the creation of the Foreign Languages School and other Chinese institutions of Western studies, and

their achievements. This is especially true of Su Jing's work that has a small section on Hu Weide, most of which is taken from primary source materials. As this book is not specifically about Hu, it is inevitable that it contains some inaccuracies, but it at least goes some way into understanding the life of this important figure.

Regarding the section on Qing Dynasty officials, there is a ground-breaking study on the history of the development of early-modern Chinese diplomacy – Wang Licheng's Zhongguo jindai waijiao zhidu shi (A history of China's early-modern system of diplomacy). The contents of this book are full and accurate, and although little use is made of archive materials, its reference value is high. Other sources include Master's theses such as Qingji zongli yamen shezhi ji qi zhengzhi diwei zhi yanjiu (Research on the establishment of the Office for Foreign Affairs in the Qing Dynasty and its political status) and Zhongguo waijiao zhidu xiandaihua (1901-1911 zhi waiwubu) (The modernisation of China's diplomatic system/service [1901-1911 foreign affairs department]), which both have distinct views on the evolution and systematic influence of the Zongli yamen and foreign affairs department: they are also useful sources for understanding the details of the system in which Hu Weide's career as an official took shape.

Zhang Jixian's Master's thesis from Taipei's National Chung Hsing University, Beijing zhengfu waijiaobu zuzhi yu renshi zhi yanjiu (1912-1928) (Research on the organisation and personnel of the foreign affairs department of the Beijing government), is an important contribution to research on the organisation of diplomatic personnel. This study takes personnel as its starting point, and uses large amounts of primary source materials such as 'Diplomatic archives', 'Government bulletins', and 'Diplomatic bulletins', compensating for the shortcomings of the works above. Although this is an investigation into the personnel of the Beijing government as a whole, and it lacks in-depth research on individual diplomats, and there are mistakes and omissions in some respects, it is still useful as a reference for background information.

Regarding diplomats and officials after the Republican period, as there are no studies centred on Hu Weide, one can only extract the traces of Hu Weide's life from research done on the important diplomatic events of the period. Examples of such works include Gu Weijun yu Bali hehui (Gu Weijun and the Paris Peace Conference), Bali hehui ye Zhongguo waijiao (The Paris Peace Conference and Chinese diplomacy) Hunchun shijian

zhi yanjiu (Research on the Hunchun Incident), Huashengdun heyi yu Zhongguo waijiao (The Washington Naval Conference and Chinese diplomacy), Zhong-Ri guanyu Shandong wenti zhi jiaoshe (1921-1922) (Sino-Japanese negotiations on the Shandong question [1921-1922]), Shandong xuanan jiejue zhi yanjiu (Research on resolving the unsettled Shandong case), Guanshui tebie huiyi zhi yanjiu (Research on special conference on customs duty), all of which provide an understanding of single topics. The work Gongzhong yulun yu Beiyang waijiao – yi Bali hehui Shandong wenti wei zhongxin de yanjiu (Public opinion and northern diplomacy – research focused on the Paris Peace Conference and the Shandong question) was revised from a Master's dissertation and published, and has in-depth descriptions of Hu Weide as a diplomat in France, and of the situation in China at that time. Although this work is about the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy decisions, it is useful as a source of background reference material.

Nonetheless, although the abovementioned works do provide some information, there is still not a complete work on Hu Weide. Apart from ordered correspondence, telegrams and specialised materials, archives, newspapers, biographic dictionaries, and memoirs are still important materials for constructing a complete picture of Hu Weide's life. The problem is that although biographical dictionaries do not lack information on Hu Weide, this information is too sparse and basic.

This dissertation is mainly based on Diplomatic Archives (waijiao dang'an), and the Shanghai newspaper Shenbao that started publication in 1872. The objectivity of archives is relatively high, and although Shenbao has changed several times over the years, it should basically adhere to a position of fair-mindedness and objectivity, and is useful for an accurate understanding of the situation at the time. Although the Jindaishi ziliao have materials focusing on Hu Weide, they still need to be combined with the more complete Foreign Ministry Archives and newspapers, biographical dictionaries, and memoirs in order to gain a complete picture of diplomacy at the time. Apart from these, the diaries, memoirs, and letters of people connected to Hu Weide also constitute important reference materials, especially works by diplomatic giants such as Gu Weijun and Yan Huiqing. Hu Weide's official life can therefore be reconstructed by a piecing-together of information from archives, newspapers, and the writings of his contemporaries.

This dissertation is divided into six chapters, with a preface, conclusion, and four main chapters divided according to the periods of Hu Weide's life. The preface has outlined the reasons for the research; surveyed work already produced on the subject, and laid out the framework for the dissertation. The main content of Chapter Two concerns the evolution of generations of Chinese diplomats and the background to Hu Weide's rising up the ranks of Chinese diplomacy, including the launch of the late-Qing self-strengthening movement, the reasons for the establishment of institutions of Western learning in China, as well as the vicissitudes of the first to third generation of Chinese diplomats. By analysing the process of evolution of generations of Chinese diplomats, Hu Weide's position in the history of Chinese diplomacy can be more accurately ascertained.

Chapter Three looks into Hu Weide's overseas postings during the late-Qing, focusing on his position as a neutral outsider in negotiations during the Russo-Japanese War and his participation in the peace conference. Hu Weide's endurance of humiliation during this period for the sake of an important mission is a classic example of the spirit of weak country diplomacy. Chapter Four describes Hu Weide serving as an official under the late-Qing, especially Hu's efforts during the period of transfer of power between the late-Qing and early Republican era. Chapter Five analyses Hu Weide's political career during the Republican period, including both missions abroad and time in the cabinet. The most important diplomatic events of Hu's time abroad are undoubtedly the First World War in Europe, the Paris Peace Conference, and the Washington Naval Conference whilst Hu was in Japan, and accordingly more weight and space will be accorded to these topics. Although Hu Weide did not assume national office for long periods of time, the fact that he represented the prime minister and acted on behalf of the president must not be overlooked. Especially, as Hu Weide personally undertook to represent the prime minister in order to support negotiations with other countries, maintaining China's legally constituted authority, and since this was in support of China's diplomatic position, this can be seen as a crucial part of Hu Weide's important career as a diplomat.

The conclusion will summarise Hu Weide's life and career, placing him in the history of Chinese diplomacy. This dissertation hopes on the one hand to accord Hu Weide with the historical position he deserves and more clearly trace the evolution of generations of Chinese diplomats, thus constituting a foundation for research into the coterie of early-

modern Chinese diplomats. More importantly, this dissertation also hopes to make a preliminary contribution in elucidating the contribution of China's 'weak country diplomacy' at that time, thus achieving a renewed understanding of China's diplomatic positioning from the Qing onwards. □

Chapter Two—Diplomatic reforms during the late-Qing and Hu Weide's background

Before 1860, China did not have any specialised institution for negotiations with foreign countries, and no permanent embassies overseas; foreign affairs were generally considered only when they arose as particular issues. People of the time were constrained by the concepts of the imperial court, and most thought diplomacy was 'the affairs of foreigners', lacking early-modern notions of international diplomacy and sovereignty. As a result not only were there no professionals suitable for the real requirements of diplomacy, but this often led to the national interest being damaged. Although occasionally there were some knowledgeable officials who created a stir, proposing that foreign affairs were important, it was rare that they were heeded.

Facing the campaigns of the British and French Allied Armies that were at war one moment and at peace the next, some officials, with Prince Gong Yixin (1833-1898) at their head, gradually started to revise traditional practices. After the British-French War, the self-strengthening movement was launched, the Zongli Yamen (Office for the General Management of Affairs with all Foreign Nations) was established, and real reforms in diplomacy were made, including sending personnel

overseas and the training in Western studies. Since at the time there were no professional diplomats, traditional scholars were gradually chosen for posts involving Western affairs, and as they were considered pioneers, they still enjoy the position in history as China's first generation of diplomats. Although in 1901, after the signing of the Boxer Protocol that forced China to reform its institutions for foreign relations, the importance of diplomats became obvious to nearly everyone. Since the knowledge of the first generation of traditional scholar diplomats did not necessarily correspond with the demands of foreign negotiations, they had to be replaced with new blood. Those who had a background in foreign language skills and Western knowledge became the new generation of diplomats.

Before the end of the Qing, the decision to establish institutions of Western learning in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou to replenish the supply of translators, as well as plans to send students abroad to study subjects such as law and politics formed the foundation for the second generation of diplomats. The students from the Foreign Languages School and the Interpreters College, who received an education in translation and training in non-professional diplomacy, and who were compensating for an interim situation of a lack of personnel, used reason as a principle of negotiation. Graduates from the Foreign Languages School and the Interpreters College soon became the successors to the traditional literati, and became an important cohort in the new generation of diplomats.

Hu Weide is a classic example of a diplomat of this background. After completing studies at the Foreign Languages School, and with the status of a successful candidate in the imperial examinations at the provincial level, he followed the first generation of diplomats on postings overseas, and accumulated experience of missions abroad. Afterwards, along with the changing times, he became the first graduate from the Foreign Languages School to be a second-generation diplomat. Hu Weide's career in public office is both long and varied, and like Lu Zhengxiang, he is an important representative of the second generation. He was also a major proponent of 'weak country diplomacy'.

Section One—Transformation of foreign relations at the end of

the Qing

After the Industrial Revolution, Western countries soon surpassed the traditional power of China, and gradually constituted a real challenge to the Chinese imperial tribute system of foreign relations. Starting from the Opium Wars (1840-1843 and 1856-1860), and the subsequent attacks by the British-French Forces, which had as one aim the complete changing of China's system of foreign relations for all Western countries, the imperial system began to transform. The signing of the Treaty of Tianjin (1858), which allowed for foreign residence in the Chinese capital and forced China to deal with a style of foreign relations completely different from the traditional imperial tribute system, is one such example. As far as the West was concerned, having legations in Beijing ought to have been extended as a courtesy, and not a right they needed to grasp. But apart from destroying the view China held towards foreign countries, the principle intention of the British and French was to exert direct pressure on the inner circle of the Qing court to ensure that they fully abide by the signed treaty. The Qing court refused because the treaty was damaging to them, but after the British-French Forces unexpectedly attacked Beijing for a second time, the Xianfeng Emperor panicked and ordered his brother, Prince Gong (Yixin), to swiftly make peace with the British and French. In 1860, Prince Gong exchanged the Tianjin Treaty with the British and French, and signed the Beijing Treaty, which validated the clauses allowing for foreign legations in the capital. Thereafter, China gradually began to undertake diplomacy in the Western style, and carry out systematic changes. This reform initiative became known as the 'self-strengthening movement'. The most extensive systematic change effected by the self-strengthening movement was the establishment of the Zongli Yamen, the aforementioned 'Office for the General Management of Affairs with all Foreign Nations', which marked the beginning of the self-strengthening movement.

Although the Tianjin Treaty did not require China to establish an institution that specialised in dealing with foreign affairs, China still prepared for the creation of a ministry focused on foreign relations in order to reduce the burden on the military department. On 11 January 1861, a group of people including Prince Gong, a graduate of the Wenhuadian college, Gui Liang (Prince Gong's father-in-law), and Wen Xiang, the War Minister, together handed in a memorandum to the emperor entitled 'Thorough directions for procedure in the aftermath of crisis', in which they made suggestions for reform, the essence of which

is summarised as follows:

i. Beijing should establish an Office for the General Management of Affairs with all Foreign Nations (Zongli Yamen), which would take full charge of such matters.
ii. Northern and Southern ports should have ministers assigned to keep check on trade.
iii. In order to increase tax revenues, new taxes should be added on imports; order every province to appoint upright (and incorruptible) officials to locally manage tax collection.
iv. For any province dealing with foreigners, they must work together with the military office and provincial office, in the hope of avoiding misunderstandings.
v. Shanghai and Guangdong should send people who can read and speak foreign languages to Beijing for service, and to prepare for enquiries.
vi. All national and international business at sea ports and newspapers from all countries must consult and report to the administration office every month, for examination.

These six clauses are all related to foreign relations, especially the clause concerning the establishment of the Zongli Yamen, as China's specialised institution for foreign relations. The Xianfeng Emperor agreed with its establishment, and appointed Prince Gong and two others as responsible for its running. Additionally, taking the six aforementioned suggestions as a base, the court began reforms in foreign relations. Although Prince Gong had identified the Zongli Yamen as a temporary institution in a memorandum to the emperor, the ministry became permanent from this point on, right up until after the Boxer Protocol when it became the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

After this, training personnel in Western affairs became one of the most important priorities. Although the Zongli Yamen was established for foreign affairs, diplomacy was not one of China's traditional practices, and so naturally it needed talented and capable people to support this practice. Chinese officials came from a background of imperial examinations however, and were not familiar with international affairs; thus, new people needed to be trained. As a result, the Zongli Yamen forthwith established the Foreign Languages School for officials (Tongwenguan), which became an institution for training translators.

The Qing court did not only establish institutions of western learning such as the Foreign Languages School in China, and train translators; more importantly, it sent students abroad to learn Western skills, for the purposes of foreign relations and industry and commerce. Since the institutions of Western learning had not been long established in China, students started work in the field early on, with those having been abroad starting the earliest. Thus, apart from a small number of students, those who had studied abroad, and translators and counsellors who had followed ambassadors abroad, most came from institutions of Western learning such as the Foreign Languages School. This happened after the Boxer Protocol. Graduates from Chinese institutions of Western learning filled the gaps left by the first generation of diplomats quicker than those students who had been overseas, becoming an important group in the formation of the second generation of diplomats. China did not originally have the tradition or desire to station ambassadors abroad, but the Tianjin Treaty with Britain and France stipulated the mutual stationing of ambassadors in the other's countries, forcing China to face the necessity of sending ambassadors abroad. After the establishment of the Zongli Yamen, the Great Powers favourably considered China's reforms, with a cooperative policy gradually replacing Britain's previous policy of gunboat diplomacy, which had 'tried to induce Beijing to take steps toward the gradual modernisation of China'. Inspector general of the Maritime Customs, Sir Robert Hart (1835-1911), submitted a memorandum called 'outsider bystanders' on 17 October 1865, saying 'It would be greatly advantageous to China to send officials to reside overseas. With officials in the capital, if reasonable requests are made, then China should comply; if the requests are unreasonable, it would be difficult for China to refuse to comply if it had no officials resident in the country concerned'. This emphasises the importance of stationing officials in foreign countries. The Qing court agreed with Hart's suggestions, stating that 'with regard to Hart's treatise on foreign relations, China should indeed station representatives in various nations overseas'. As a result, in the following year the Zongli Yamen had ordered Bin Chun, who was previously a county magistrate in Jiangxi's Xiangling County, to assume the role of vice-prefect and manage the affairs of the inspector general of the Maritime Customs Bureau. He was later awarded the third rank, and was in charge of three Foreign Languages School students that were sent abroad with Hart. After this, on two occasions the Qing court sent students from the Foreign Languages School overseas with ministers. Apart from enhancing students' learning and experience, it also acted as a trial in posting envoys abroad, thus

allowing the Qing court to kill two birds with one stone.

However these three instances of sending officials overseas as 'special envoys' were only in the capacity of non-permanent diplomatic envoys. The Qing government only began to regard seriously the question of permanent diplomats overseas when Japan invaded Taiwan in 1874; preparatory work was begun the year after this event. The Yunnan Affair* also pushed the Qing to establish a system of diplomatic representation abroad, and led to the opening of an embassy in Great Britain, marking the beginning of China's diplomatic missions overseas.

On 28 October 1876, the Qing court promulgated 'Regulations for representation abroad in twenty-four articles', the most significant of which are the seven articles listed below:

i. The Board of Rites will have bronze seals cast which will be issued to each envoy residing abroad. The text will read: 'Seal of appointed Qing envoy'. Before these have been issued, wooden seals can be used.
ii. Envoys residing abroad will maintain their posting for an approximately three-year period from the day they take up office. Before this period is up, the yamen office should select and send another envoy to replace the first. This also applies to vice-envoys.
iii. All envoys sent abroad will be split into grades two and three, taking immediate effect. Those envoys already posted will be considered as grade two.
iv. The envoy should decide how many counsellors, consuls and interpreters he is taking abroad, and should draw up a name list himself, which he should hand over to the yamen for authorisation.
v. After each envoy has arrived in the country of their posting, apart from urgent matters which they should report to the court straightaway, their normal procedure should be to write to the relevant yamen, which will pass on the information to the court.
vi. If an envoy sent abroad concurrently holds another post relating to state affairs, he should divide his time according to his duties. The envoy should decide how to arrange matters, and inform the yamen for authorisation.
vii. All matters relating to salaries, travel expenses, and living costs abroad should be presented by each envoy in a report to the yamen for authorisation.

The regulations stipulate the length of service for diplomats, their remits and details of their duties, and that officials should be divided equally into two ranks, equivalent to envoy, and 'equivalent to the grades of foreign envoys in China'. From this point onwards, China's preparatory work for sending envoys overseas was largely completed.

The first Chinese envoy to serve abroad was Guo Songdao (1818-1891) who was posted to Great Britain. Guo chose various staff to accompany him according to the yamen regulations, amongst whom were three interpreters. Apart from the third ranking candidate Dr Halliday Macartney (1833-1906) who was a Scotsman and had no connection with western education in China, the other two interpreters were Fengyi and Deming who had accompanied Robert Hart overseas in 1866 (Deming had by now already changed his name to Zhang Deyi, 1847-1918); both were graduates of the Foreign Languages School. Within two years of this, China established embassies in succession in Germany, Japan, France, the USA, and Russia, and of the interpreters sent to these countries at least one was a graduate from the Foreign Languages School. This was due in large part to the fact that the Foreign Languages School was the only college to train interpreters at the time (envoys were chosen from its graduates).

But the ability in Western languages of students from the Foreign Languages School, since they were 'forced to become Interpreters, was not necessarily outstanding; also, originally the Foreign Languages School was an institution that only trained interpreters, and did not provide specialist training for the diplomatic service. As a result its graduates were considered to be not of much use to the diplomatic service. Thus, envoys at that time usually came from traditional bureaucratic backgrounds, and were not graduates from the Foreign Languages School who had received an education in Western learning. Not until 1891 when, Wang Fengzao (1851-1918) was appointed ambassador to Japan, was an ambassador a graduate of the Foreign Languages School. After this, there were more and more diplomats who had graduated from the Foreign Languages School and so their influence extended into the period of the Beijing government. Although the Foreign Languages School initially only trained interpreters, in later years there is no doubt that it had a profound influence on China's

diplomatic circles. Graduates from institutions of Western learning in China ensured that the diplomatic service was provided with the talent it needed to keep abreast with the times.

In these pages, the term ‘diplomat’ only refers to envoys sent to live in a foreign country on government orders, excluding temporary chargé d’affaires, or those waiting to be dispatched to their posts. The Qing did not define ranks with terms like ‘envoy’, and most positions were referred to ‘minister sent abroad’, although in most cases their authority was similar to that of the rank of Envoy Extraordinaire and Minister Plenipotentiary, which encompasses the ranks of ‘diplomats’ referred to herein. Furthermore, this work divides the evolution of diplomatic personnel into three generations, the first from 1875 to 1895, the second from 1901 until just before the establishment of the Republic (1912), with the third being from the Republican period onwards. The six years between the first and second generations can be seen as a buffer period.

In comparing these three generations of diplomats, this dissertation will attempt to establish a hypothesis that from the late-Qing, Chinese diplomacy went through three generations of change, of which four characteristics can be noted: (i) The first and second generation of diplomats were selected under pressure and in haste, whereas the third generation took up office under the careful planning of Hu Weide and Lu Zhengxiang around the beginning of the Republican period; (ii) the academic background of the first and third generations was more field-specific, whereas the second generation was more varied: apart from traditional scholars, there were also a large number of people with training in Western learning. Graduates from the Chinese institutions of Western learning such as the Foreign Languages School and the Interpreters College formed the majority of the second generation of diplomats; (iii) as times changed, Chinese diplomacy gradually professionalised, and diplomats from traditional scholarly backgrounds were replaced by diplomats who had received training in Western learning; (iv) even during times of chaos and change of government, diplomats sent abroad were not influenced by the events around them, and were still subject to systems of the late-Qing. Those that participated in the revolution did not immediately become the new diplomats of the Republic.

Of those diplomats in the first generation before 1895, only Rong Hong

(1828-1912) and Wang Fengzao, who served as vice-envoys to the USA, came from environments of Western learning; all the others were traditional scholar officials, and were all of a similar kind. But from 1895, officials sent abroad came from diverse backgrounds, with many students returning to China after studying abroad, which constituted a marked difference from the first generation.

The background to the first generation being sent abroad were the Tianjin treaties signed between China and Great Britain, and China and France, and were defined by law. Also relevant was the pressing matter of the invasion of Taiwan by the Japanese military. Although China agreed with the suggestions made by Hart in his memorandum 'Outsider Bystanders', it did not originally intend to send diplomats abroad, and apart from isolated special missions overseas, such as those by Hart and Bin Chun taking students from the Interpreters College and Anson Burlingame's (1820-1870) diplomatic mission in 1868, or Chong Hou going to France in 1870 to apologise for the Tianjin missionary incident, there were not many active measures taken. It was only in 1874, after the Japanese Armed Forces invaded Taiwan and the Yunnan affair with Britain that the Qing started to make plans to send envoys overseas, and hastened the building of permanent embassies in foreign nations. However, the job of an overseas envoy was no easy task and required a long period of specialised training; thus, the pressing nature of the situation made it hard to find good people. As a result, as a matter of expediency, the Qing could only use people that had experience in foreign affairs. This explains why the first generation of diplomats all came from traditional scholar-official backgrounds.

China began sending envoys abroad during the self-strengthening movement, which meant that those driving Chinese policy at the time were the main players in the self-strengthening movement. These people had knowledge of Western affairs and competed to recruit talented people who were familiar with Western languages. Naturally some of them had received a Western education, and were being rigorously recruited. But those returning to China after studying abroad were at that time in seriously short supply, and so recruiting these people became a top priority. Rong Hong who had returned from studying at Yale University in the USA was passionate about this, and many times suggested sending students abroad to study. He eventually received official replies from statesmen such as Zeng Guofan (1811-1872) and Li Hongzhang (1823-1901). In 1872, students began to be sent to the USA

with four groups making the trip up to 1875. Although this practice was later stopped by more conservative elements, it can still be seen as a big step forward in late-Qing reforms in the recruiting of diplomats.

It must be noted, however, that measures to renew diplomatic personnel were, first of all, continually thwarted by the conservatives and thus progress was slow; secondly the diplomatic environment worsened by the day making the sending of envoys abroad a burning necessity for China. In 1895, after China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War, the Qing court gradually realised the imminent crisis they were facing and the importance of implementing sweeping reforms; public opinion was also in favour of Western learning. From 1895 to 1900, of the seven envoys sent abroad, three had a background in Western learning, namely Qing Chang, Wu Tingfang (1842-1922) and Luo Fenglu (1850-1903), this constituted more than forty percent of the total number of envoys. Furthermore, Wu and Luo had studied abroad, similar to Rong Hong in the first generation of diplomats and by this time, the status of those who had studied abroad was even higher than before. Whereas Rong Hong had been a vice-ambassador, Wu and Luo were full ambassadors, and were much more important. A comparison of the backgrounds of the first generation with these people shows a significant change had taken place.

Before Wu and Luo were sent abroad, they were important experts on foreign affairs, trusted by Li Hongzhang, whereas Qing Chang had graduated from the Foreign Languages School and originally served as an assistant to Zeng Jize (1839-1890) and Xue Fucheng (1838-1894). Thus, it was more that these three men were protégés of important officials than it was some change in the outlook of the Qing court that they were sent abroad as envoys, as was the case of Rong Hong being sent abroad on account of Zeng Guofan's status as an important official. Accordingly, this kind of change was not a real change of the times, but just a superficial facsimile of change.

The year 1901 and the time of the Boxer Protocol was the real watermark of significant change for diplomacy. Negotiating the Boxer Protocol was a period of acute humiliation for China, and a time that absolutely necessitated Chinese representation abroad. Every country involved was demanding that China reform its system of diplomacy, and at least that the inefficient Zongli Yamen be overhauled. As a result, after the Boxer Protocol was signed, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was established,

marking the beginning of China's formal western-style diplomacy. Although the establishment and structure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stemmed from the self-strengthening movement, the ideas for formalising China's diplomatic service from the advanced nations were not necessarily detrimental to China.

The speed at which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was established was like a tidal wave for China's diplomatic service. Before this, on account of the difficulties for people with Western learning to be promoted, and the Zongli Yamen compelling people to serve overseas, more than half of the officials were from traditional scholar backgrounds. But after the establishment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a system of four people in command was brought in, with one minister of foreign affairs, one secretary, and two vice-presidents, with the rule that one of the two officers should be able to speak a Western language. However, since the examination system had not been reformed in time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs chose the most able people from those available. At this time, since those with educational training from the Foreign Languages School and Interpreters College had obtained a modicum of experience serving abroad, and since there were not enough returning students with experience, this period saw the rise of graduates from institutions of Western learning within China. Thus, out of the twenty-nine diplomats of the second generation, fifteen had a background in Western learning, of which twelve had been trained in China (these included: Wu Dezhang from the School of Naval Construction in Fuzhou and Yang Sheng from the Foreign Languages School in Guangzhou). On account of this urgent need, graduates from Chinese institutions of Western learning were pressed into becoming diplomats to fill the gap in talent.

Finally, by 1910, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was taking the shortage of talent seriously. On 20 April, because of the shortage, the Ministry 'chose graduates from colleges all over Beijing with the intention of sending them to the USA and Europe to study at Chinese Embassies, for periods of three years, and that they were to set out from Beijing within a few days'. This was a way of improving the foreign language ability of graduates from Chinese institutions of learning, known as 'study in the field', which helped to ensure some way forward for the future. On 10 May, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared that 'on account of a lack of personnel, employees from this ministry will be sent to the West to learn languages, and upon their return shall sign up for selection'. This law was the conduit to advanced study for employees of the Ministry, and

the selection upon their return to China only stimulated them to study even harder. These measures were the basic foundations of the professional systemisation of Chinese diplomacy set down by Hu Weide and Lu Zhengxiang during the reforms to Chinese diplomacy after the birth of the Republic. As a result of this, during the Republican period, the numbers of people who had studied abroad and had sufficient experience increased, resulting in the majority of the third generation of diplomats having overseas study experiences. For this particular reason, the people in the first and third generation of diplomats, as mentioned above, had more field-specific backgrounds compared to the second generation. The first generation was mainly composed of traditional scholars, the third generation composed people who had studied abroad, both having upwards of eighty percent of its people of the same background. But out of the twenty-nine people in the second generation, traditional scholars composed 48.28 percent, those who had studied at Chinese institutions of Western learning were 34.48 percent, and those who had returned from studying abroad were 17.24 percent (the figures have been rounded off), showing the complexity of their background. The reason for this is closely connected to the rushed diplomatic reforms mentioned earlier. Also, that those from backgrounds of Western learning outnumbered those from backgrounds of traditional learning shows that times were finally beginning to change.

Moreover, diplomats in the early period were not only traditional scholar officials, many more were from the Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang Hunan and Anhui networks, belonging to the Enlightenment and Westernisation schools of the traditional literati. Especially in the first generation of diplomats, apart from Liu Xihong (1877-1897), Chong Hou, Xu Chengzu, Zhang Yinhuan (1837-1900) and Wang Fengzao, the rest were from the same power networks as Zeng and Li, making up over three quarters of the total (76.19 percent). Out of the thirty-six diplomats that came after the first generation (in the buffer period and second generation), there were twelve from this system, making up a third of this second period of diplomats, and although there was a decline, they were still a force to be reckoned with. Only when the third generation came into office did the influence of the Hunan and Anhui power networks completely disappear.

The reason that the Hunan and Anhui power networks influenced Chinese diplomacy was that during the early period when the Qing court was selecting people to be sent abroad, its criteria for selection were

‘princes or officials in the capital who were both familiar with foreign affairs and protectors of Qing borders’. The people from the Hunan and Anhui networks who were the force behind the self-strengthening movement had ample experience in foreign affairs and were familiar with each other. This meant that they looked out for each other, which led to their considerable influence. At this time of scarcity in talented individuals, apart from those people from the Hunan and Anhui networks who had cooperated with foreign troops to fight against the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864), it was difficult to find people more suitable to the task of permanently representing China overseas. Public opinion in China was gradually more opposed to this sort of thing however, believing that the specialist ‘diplomat colleges’ established by the British should be emulated in order to train diplomats in an systematic fashion. The idea of building specialist diplomat colleges was not implemented, and indeed the strength of the early westernisation school only decreased with the death of its leader Li Hongzhang in 1901, and only finally disappeared after a specialised institution in the form of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been established. After this, the appointment of diplomats was carried out according to professional ability and specific requirements.

From the gradual disappearance of the Hunan and Anhui networks from early Chinese diplomacy, we can see that the appointment of China’s modern diplomats was gradually becoming more professional. Although the real formalisation of permanent representation abroad did not start from the establishment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the selection of diplomats was gradually based on the ability of the individual, not their background. Although awareness of a diplomat’s ‘ability’ was not mature by this stage, that the familiarity with western languages had become a standard, could be seen as a measure of progress.

Furthermore, during the five years after the establishment of the Republic, altogether there were twelve newly appointed envoys, but it was during 1913 that saw the appointment of six of the most outstanding. Out of these twelve people, only Wei Chenzu (1885-?) was from the late-Qing Revolutionary Party, and was a vice-minister of foreign affairs in the south during the period of the split between north and south. Amongst the others, no matter whether they had a traditional background such as Gao Erqian, or Xia Xiefu (1874-?), who were previously jinshi (successful candidates in the highest imperial examination) during the Qing, or those with a background in Western learning, including Dai

Chenlin (1872-?) and Tang Zaifu (1878-?) from the Interpreters College: all were officials under the late-Qing, and if they had not accompanied ambassadors abroad, they had worked in the Qing government. Thus it can be seen that although political power changed hands, Chinese diplomats from the late-Qing onwards were still able to maintain their independent status, remaining unaffected by internal politics.

The reason they were able to maintain their independence was perhaps due to the official achievements of Lu Zhengxiang the second time he served as foreign minister. After Lu Zhengxiang replaced Liang Ruhao in the eleventh month of the Republic, he quickly set down the following criteria for selecting diplomats:

i. To have served as cabinet minister for foreign affairs,
ii. or previously (or currently) a vice-minister.
iii. To have served or currently serving as a high-ranking official
iv. in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
v. To have served as an envoy.
vi. Currently serving as a representative overseas or consul
vii. general, or those who registered for this.

These criteria stipulated that the candidate must have diplomatic experience, whether as assistants or envoys. Ministers must have had senior level experience in institutions of foreign affairs, or as envoys overseas. This meant that in the Republican period, the selection of diplomats was from the late-Qing system, and was not affected by the turbulence of the times.

Diplomats in the Republican period were not influenced by political events or parties, and were skilled in negotiation: this was confirmed in reports about Wang Guangqi in the newspaper Shenbao.stdt Wang Guangqi was a well regarded diplomat who had returned from studying in the USA, and who had accompanied Lu Zhengxiang to Russia. He accompanied Lu back to China, and in 1912 went to serve in Belgium. Whilst Wang was working at the Foreign Ministry, the former head of the translation and editing department at the Nanjing Office of Foreign Affairs, Xu Tian asked to be employed at the Foreign Ministry, and asked Lu Zhengxiang to put in a good word for him; Wang Guangqi was the person responsible for handing this matter. Xu Tian made his case for employment on the fact that he had served in the Revolutionary Party, had been recommended by President Sun Yat-Sen (1866-1925), was a

graduate of the Northern University, and had been to Japan, claiming that he ought to be made at least a minister. Wang Guangqi replied that most employees at the Foreign Ministry had graduated from universities in Europe, the USA and Japan, and had been envoys abroad, all with intimate knowledge of foreign affairs. Wang told Xu that his experience was 'insufficient' for the job. Xu angrily retorted that the Revolutionary Party had built the Republic of China, and that he thus should have some authority. Wang's colourful response reads as follows:

> The revolution was intended to bring happiness to all our compatriots, not to make your Excellency a minister. In case your Excellency did not know, the main personalities of the revolution have since withdrawn from public office, whereas your Excellency is using the revolution to seek a post as minister. Not only is this unworthy of your position, it also belittles the value of the revolution. Thus your Excellency will not be employed. □

Wang Guangqi's comments provide insight into the standards of the time for becoming a diplomat, which were in the process of becoming more specialised and professional. Also, during the early Republican period, when revolutionaries had great authority, the diplomatic system remained unaffected and independent from these trends. The generational change of diplomats ought to occur because of the needs of diplomacy itself, and should at best only have a tenuous link to national politics.

To sum up, the appointment of modern Chinese diplomats between the years 1901-1912 experienced two turning points, the first came after the Boxer Protocol, the second came about after the establishment of the Republic. The second change brought about a fundamental transformation in modern Chinese diplomacy – the early period with its lack of diplomatic talent and its diplomats from traditional backgrounds was gradually replaced by professional diplomats with experience in Western learning. At the same time, diplomacy was becoming more specialised and professional, remaining unaffected by factionalism or political trends. And on account of the sudden nature of the Boxer Protocol, the second generation of diplomats, in the tight space between the first and third generations, was pushed into the firing line with, in some cases, an unremarkable ability in Western languages and lack of diplomatic skill to represent China in extremely challenging negotiations. Precisely because of this, the second generation of diplomats was

obviously transitional. However, once the Republic was established and after the gradual rise of the third generation of diplomats, many people from the second generation continued to serve as diplomats and did not withdraw from the diplomatic scene. Although the second generation of diplomats faced a transitional period of crisis, they clearly continued to serve during the Republic using ‘weak country diplomacy’, and their seniority and prestige are not to be neglected.

Section Two—Training of diplomatic personnel

The structure of the second generation of diplomats is the most complex, the reason being that graduates from Chinese institutions of Western learning had been forced to become ambassadors representing China in a short space of time, due to the crises the country was facing. These graduates from Chinese institutions of Western learning were mostly from the School of Foreign Languages in Beijing or the Interpreters College in Shanghai. The School of Foreign Languages in Beijing opened a new page in Chinese diplomacy during the late-Qing, and the Interpreters College in Shanghai which opened the following year, likewise made an outstanding contribution, so much so that out of the twelve people who had received a Western education in China in the second generation, six graduated from the Interpreters College in Shanghai, twice as many of those from the School of Foreign Languages in Beijing. The Interpreters College established in Guangdong province, however, was in no way in the same league as the colleges in Beijing and Shanghai, with only two of its graduates entering into public office in the modern period. The School of Foreign Languages in Beijing was run by the central government, and so came under the remit of the Zongli Yamen. The Interpreters College was locally run in Shanghai, under the jurisdiction of the River and Sea Customs Bureau, later under the Manufacturing Bureau of South-China. The levels of the two colleges, the teaching methods, the curricula, and the school administration were all approached differently.

The years of 1863 and 1864 added great weight to China’s teaching of Western languages with the creation of these two schools. The School of Foreign Languages originally taught Russian, as an extension of the ‘Eight Banners’ official studies, which influenced the results of education

there. But in 1868, after receiving students from the Interpreters College who had come to Beijing, the school broke the tradition of taking Manchu students only, making the School of Foreign Languages an important centre for the training of translators in China. China twice faced pressure from outside, culminating in the emergence of the first and third

generations of diplomats, whereas Hu Weide was an outstanding individual from the second generation.

Well before the establishment of the Zongli Yamen, the Chinese court and people at large had recognised the importance of translation. Apart from the well-known Wei Yuan (1794-1856), who wrote the Illustrated Gazetteer of Maritime Nations, important officials like Guo Songdao and Feng Guifen (1809-1874) also stressed the need to train interpreters and translators. Although studying foreign languages did not violate the principles behind the vassal state system, the Qing court was oblivious to reality, and still did not take the necessary measures in this regard. Only during the peace negotiations with the French and British forces did they finally realise the importance of foreign languages. Indeed, the Treaty of Tianjin signed by Britain and China stipulated that future public documents between China and Britain or France would not use Chinese, but Western languages instead: this increased the pressure on China to train translators. Thus, as soon as the Zongli Yamen was established, Prince Gong made arrangements for the creation of translator colleges.

According to the fifth clause in the ‘Thorough directions for procedure in the aftermath of crisis’, Prince Gong suggested that Guangdong and Shanghai should each send two people to Beijing as tutors. Moreover, apart from ‘preparing for enquiries’, they can also take on the job of teaching Western languages, and then selecting talented and bright people from the Eight Banners system, under thirteen or fourteen years of age, for study, each teacher with four or five people. The people sent should follow the example of the Russian School’s teachers, their stipends should be generous, and after two years their level of industriousness should be apparent. Those who excel should be given rewards. People from the Eight Banners system who come here to study can complete their studies once they are fully conversant in the language they are studying. The so-called ‘Russian School’ was established in 1708 (forty-seventh year of the Kangxi Emperor), its regulations were

finalised in the year 1839. This school was intended for Manchus from the Eight Banners system as an institute for studying foreign languages, and as such it became Prince Gong's point of reference. Prince Gong wrote a memorandum stating, 'The Russian language is the foundation of this college, and is part of the regulations, and should be seriously studied', he included a new clause that the Eight Banner system's students should also 'specialise in the languages of Great Britain, France, and the USA. All those excelling in the languages they study should be rewarded with prizes'. Although at the time Prince Gong's knowledge of the West was clearly lacking, since he did not realise that Great Britain and the USA shared the same language, separating them into different courses, this institution specialising in the study of Western languages marked the beginning of the establishment of the Foreign Languages Schools.

An examination of the contents of the 'Thorough directions for procedure in the aftermath of crisis' clearly shows that this institution was set up in keeping with the times, maintaining the tradition of the Eight Banners system, and excluding all others from studying. After the Zongli Yamen was established, Prince Gong set down the regulations for the Foreign Languages School, stating in the final clause:

> Students fluent in Western languages should be given appropriate remuneration. Regulations stipulated that people familiar with the languages of Britain, France and the USA should come from Guangdong and Shanghai to work in Beijing. Additionally, select students from the Eight Banners system, will be given suitable stipends, and rewards. Language studies of British, French and American should be taught in the same way as Russian. New students would normally enter the Russian college, but the space is limited, this has caused difficulties in studying and has caused friction amongst the students. The boiler room could be converted into a new teaching space to save the trouble of looking for more space outside: officials need to consider this.

Although this new college would have its position fixed under the jurisdiction of the Zongli Yamen, it would be another year before it started operating. This reason was partly to do a lack of teachers, which Prince Gong freely admitted, but two other factors were of greater importance. The first is that the Zongli Yamen had just been established

and had many other matters to undertake; the second was due to the internal factional struggles in the Qing court. Thus it was only in the spring of 1862 that the school began classes at the Zongli Yamen, and by the summer of the same year, Prince Gong had given it the name of the Foreign Languages School.

The Foreign Languages School was originally established to teach Western languages, starting out with English, French and Russian (the latter two starting a year after English), adding German in 1871, and Japanese in 1895. In August 1866, the General Tax and Customs Office moved from Shanghai to Beijing, with its chief officer, Sir Robert Hart now able to closely influence the westernisation movement of the late-Qing. The Foreign Languages School received financial support from this office, helping it to become the conduit through which modern thought was introduced to the Chinese education system. Prince Gong was influenced by the Tax Office, and introduced to more Western technology. This in turn facilitated the addition of mathematics and astronomy to the range of subjects taught at the Foreign Languages School. Additionally, Prince Gong also sought to make all ranks of scholars from the capital and provinces at the Hanlin Academy enter the school for study. Although this turned the Foreign Languages School into an academy for officials, the fierce opposition of conservative scholars caused great obstacles in its administration. Luckily in 1868 the school was re-opened, and continued to open to greater sections of society, with science taking a priority, putting the Foreign Languages School firmly on the path to becoming a modern educational institution. From then on, the fields of diplomacy and taxation became closely linked in China, partly due to Hart's heavy involvement in the westernisation movement.

Apart from the Beijing Foreign Languages School, the Shanghai Interpreters College also played an important role in the self-strengthening movement, the main difference being that it was locally rather than centrally administered. In January 1863, the provincial governor of Jiangsu province, Li Hongzhang followed the example of the Beijing Foreign Languages School, and was permitted to set up a 'Foreign Languages School' in Shanghai, which was how the Interpreters College was founded. In coming to this decision, Li Hongzhang was influenced by an official under him, the aforementioned Feng Guifen. Li stressed that the shortage of personnel who could speak foreign languages caused, locally, many misunderstandings in business. As a result they would 'choose students under the age of fourteen who were

bright and showed literary talent to study Western languages, holding local competitions to select the best, with lessons also in the classics, composition and history'. This would mean that 'three to five years later, people who were fluent in foreign languages would be able to work in the tax and business offices, keep check on transactions, and help weed out corruption'.

This memorandum illustrated Li Hongzhang's original intention in setting up education in foreign languages, all of which is closely related to the fact that Shanghai was a cosmopolitan city composed of Chinese and foreigners. Shanghai was one of the ports identified in the Treaty of Nanjing (1842) for opening, and with its long history as a harbour, Chinese and foreigners interacted with each other on a regular basis. But since these interactions required interpreters, and at the time such skills were in short supply, business was fraught with difficulties. Furthermore, Li Hongzhang was highly displeased with the corrupt and profit-seeking Chinese in Shanghai, and so established institutions of Western learning to train speakers of foreign languages who also had high moral calibre and training in the classics. The Interpreters College was founded after the promulgation of the regulation to set up a foreign language college in Shanghai, written by the chief tax officer in Jiangsu, Huang Fangni. The regulations had twelve clauses altogether, focusing mainly on where students were recruited and their future careers, the teachers and teaching arrangements, and the students' day-to-day lives. The thirteenth clause stipulated that students must assemble every morning and perform rites and thus illustrates Li Hongzhang's demands for the moral education of the students.

The following year the school opened, starting by teaching English, under the name of Interpreters College. Although the college only taught one foreign language (unlike the Beijing Foreign Languages School), it realised the importance of mathematics right from the start, and so was ahead of the latter by three years. The fourth clause in the above regulation stipulated, 'Western technology is based on mathematics, and unfamiliarity with this subject would render knowledge of Western languages useless. All students must improve their knowledge of Western languages and mathematics, deciding whether they also wish to study history and the classics. Those specialising in mathematics may decide as they wish'. This shows that students had to study Western languages and mathematics, but could choose whether they studied history and the classics. Although attaching such importance to the study of mathematics

did not have a significant effect on the development of modern Chinese science and technology, it had a certain symbolic significance.

In selecting students for the schools, the Interpreters College was markedly different from the Beijing Foreign Languages School. The former required students to be ‘under the age of fourteen, to be bright and show talent, and willing to live at the school. Officials or upright citizens should record their age and appearance, place of birth, and details of three family generations in an enrolment log book, and send them to Shanghai to be interviewed, where of those with strong literary ability forty will be chosen to enter the school. Those not chosen may be able to enter the school later to fill gaps’. This demonstrates how rigorous the school’s selection criteria were. Also, the last phrase, ‘those not chosen may be able to enter the school to fill gaps’, shows that the Interpreters College selected from a wider range of people than the Beijing Foreign Languages School.

The Interpreters College originally trained students for a period limited to three years. Students’ future careers were not only guaranteed by the regulations, but the Qing court also allowed that if ‘students had made great achievements after one or two years, they can come to Beijing to sit examinations for official posts’, with the result that students from the Interpreters College could sit imperial ‘Western’ examinations, and become scholar officials through Western studies. In the actual course of events however, the Interpreters College and the Beijing Foreign Languages School did not run so smoothly, resulting in students’ slow progress and spending longer than the allotted time at the colleges. Apart from two years, 1868 and 1871, when the colleges admitted and graduated students within the allotted time, the rest of the time students did not graduate according to the limits set out in the regulations. Especially after 1871 and for a period of seven years, the Beijing Foreign Languages School no longer actively enrolled students from the Interpreters College. It was only in 1879 that two students who had majored in French, Wu Zonglian (1857-?) and Huang Zhiyaostdt, came to Beijing; from then on the Zongli Yamen was gradually more reluctant to accept students from the Interpreters College.

In 1867, the South China Manufacturing Bureau ‘built a foreign languages institution, including a college for training interpreters, to publish Chinese versions of Western books on science and technology’. Since this institution was similar in nature to the Interpreters College, the

River and Sea Customs Officer Tu Zongying (1812-1894) argued, with the approval of the governor general Ma Xinyi that the Interpreters College should come under the jurisdiction of the South China Manufacturing Bureau; this became reality in the following year. Managed by the South China Manufacturing Bureau, the Interpreters College expanded its curriculum, adding French, German, astronomy and mathematics. In 1898, the college opened a technology department, with two subjects, chemistry and mechanics. By this time, the curriculum of the Interpreters College was quite varied.

Tu Zongying ascribed particular importance to traditional Chinese learning, and so gave prominence to this in the curriculum at the Interpreters College. Apart from classics from Chinese history like the Chronicle of Zuo (Zuozhuan) and Zizhi Tongjian (Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government), the curriculum also involved studying the classics and writing eight-legged essays (baguwen). During their first year, students had to give special priority to their Chinese studies. Although the Interpreters College emphasis on the study of mathematics was not neglected, Tu Zongying required that reference also to be made to the Chinese 'Mathematical classics' when teaching algebra, geometry and trigonometry; the result, however, was that this caused much confusion at a conceptual level. Thus, although the curriculum at the Interpreters College was expanded, there were negative influences on the learning outcomes. Consequently, whilst enriching the curriculum at the Interpreters College, Tu Zongying also contributed to its downfall.

In addition, during the handover of administrative authority, problems occurred at the college, hindering its development. In 1870, the directors of the Manufacturing Bureau, Feng Quguang and Zheng Zaoru (1824-1894) changed the curriculum, making it more complex and less practical, taking the Interpreters College away from its original design of training interpreters; thus, making the students more specialised in science negatively influenced their effectiveness in studying foreign languages. After these changes, the importance of the Interpreters College declined, until in 1905 its jurisdiction was transferred to the military.

Out of the Chinese institutions of Western learning, Foreign Languages School graduates entered the field of diplomacy first since they had graduated quite early on. However, because the Foreign Languages School did not have a mature strategy, well-rounded graduates from the

Interpreters College made up for the lack in numbers from the Foreign Languages School. Thus, diplomats in the second generation with backgrounds in Western learning made up more than forty percent of the total, and out of them, half came from the Interpreters College. Despite its eventual decline, this proves that in training diplomats, the Interpreters College made a greater contribution than the Foreign Languages School.

The establishment of Chinese institutions of Western learning such as the Foreign Languages School was originally intended to train students in Western technology, and not professional diplomacy. And since the future careers of graduates from the Foreign Languages School were not clearly stipulated, they did not necessarily enter the field of diplomacy. Generally speaking, graduates from Chinese institutions of Western learning had two career paths: the first was to work as an interpreter or teacher, the second was to accompany ambassadors overseas as student interpreters, later rising to become interpreter officials or counsellors. The latter required experience in foreign negotiations, especially after the Boxer Protocol, and so ushered in a new generation of Chinese diplomats. □

Section Three—Hu Weide's background

Although the influence of the Interpreters College was adversely affected by the changes to its curriculum, there were still many outstanding individuals who stood out: Hu Weide was one such example. Out of six envoys who had graduated from the Interpreters College, only Hu Weide was accepted into the Beijing Foreign Languages School without a usually necessary recommendation. Moreover, only Hu sat and passed the imperial examinations; as such he distinguished himself from his contemporaries by this unique background. Also, he was one of the only graduates from the Interpreters College and the Foreign Languages School to quickly enter the diplomatic service. Lastly, Hu Weide and Lu Zhengxiang were the only persons from such a background to hold the highest rank in the diplomatic service. All this makes him an exemplary person amongst diplomats with a background in Western education in China.

Hu Weide used two zi (style name), which were Xiangwu and Gongfu; his literary name was Fuchang. He was born in 1863 in Gui'an, Zhejiang province. Beginning with his great-grandfather Hu Zhiqi, his forbearers had been part of the local gentry-official class. When Hu Weide was eight years old, his father Hu Qijiang died and so he was brought up by his grandfather Hu Songqing. Hu Songqing was a severe man who worked as a teacher in a private school, and was strict with Hu Weide. Under the firm guidance of his grandfather, from a young age Hu Weide stood out amongst his contemporaries. By the time he was a young man of twenty, he became a scholar and reasonably accomplished. He had a strong interest in traditional Chinese culture, especially calligraphy, whilst also being interested in geography and mathematics. In 1876, Hu entered the Interpreters College and majored in mathematics with minors in English and French.

The Interpreters College originally recommended students for studies in Beijing, but on account of the waning enthusiasm of the Zongli Yamen, the transfer of students to Beijing was greatly hindered. Besides, Hu Weide had majored in mathematics, and not English and French, and so was even more likely to be refused by the Zongli Yamen. As a result he continued studying at the Interpreters College for ten years, until 1886 when the Interpreters College was allowed to transfer students to the Beijing Foreign Languages School once more. Initially, however, no reply from the Zongli Yamen was given concerning transferring students. Not until 1888 when there were 110 students enrolled at the Foreign Languages School, with all places being filled could students who had been recommended sit entrance exams for the school. The school, however, would not allow students from the Interpreters College to come to Beijing to study. It was luck that for the four mathematics majors from the Interpreters College, Hu Weide, Zhu Zhengyuan, Ye Yaoyuan and Li Xi'en, the Zongli Yamen provided them with an alternative option.

In 1888, the provincial examinations added mathematics to the syllabus, so the Zongli Yamen allowed Hu Weide and the other three students from the Interpreters College to come to Beijing and sit the examination. Apart from the mathematics examination, decided by the Imperial Inspector Chen Xiuying, being accepted by the Zongli Yamen, Sir Robert Hart's suggestion that civil service entrance examinations include science and mathematics was also influential. Thus the four students made their way to Beijing, and although they had not been recommended to the Foreign Languages School, they were finally admitted. But getting to Beijing was

no easy matter, because after the Zongli Yamen and Board of Rites and Classics had deliberated, they decreed that those studying science and mathematics should sit examinations in their field of study, as well as in the classics and poetry. Those who passed the mathematics examination could be admitted to the Zongli Yamen. They also had to study engineering, naval and army tactics, law, or world history. They originally intended to accept one candidate in every twenty. That year thirty-two people sat the provincial examinations, but in the end they only passed one candidate. Through such stringent competition, Hu Weide was the only person that passed the provincial examination, obtaining the title of juren (successful candidate in provincial examinations).

After passing this examination, Hu Weide obtained a position in the cabinet, and in 1890 he accompanied Xue Fucheng (1838-1894), the ambassador to Great Britain, France, Italy and Belgium, abroad, which marked the beginning of Hu Weide's diplomatic career. Xue Fucheng's zi (style name) was Shuyun, his literary name, Yongan, and he was from Wuxi in Jiangsu. He became a jinshi (successful candidate in the highest imperial examination) in 1845, following in the footsteps of Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang. He is considered an outstanding individual in the first generation of diplomats. Xue Fucheng paid particular attention to military matters and the treaties China had signed, and thus was instrumental not only in the construction of the Northern Navy, but also in getting Great Britain to sign the Yunnan-Burma Border Trade Agreement. Hu Weide gained experience under Xue Fucheng and was influenced by him, also ascribing great importance to international agreements such as treaties. From this time onwards, one can often see Hu Weide suggesting the government use international treaties as a diplomatic means for resolving conflicts. Moreover this pursuit of peaceful methods such as the signing of treaties in international relations is typical of representatives of the second generation of diplomats such as Hu Weide in their 'weak country diplomacy' approach.

Out of the people accompanying Xue Fucheng, Counsellor Xu Jue, Counsellor Qian Xun and student interpreter Hu Weide all became part of the second generation of diplomats after 1901. Although at this time Xu Jue and Qian Xun had higher positions than Hu Weide, their first time abroad was later than his. That Hu had been sent abroad so early must have been because the Qing court had evidence of his ability. Indeed, the reason for Hu Weide being so highly regarded could be that he was fluent

in English and French, had been trained in mathematics, was steeped in traditional Chinese learning, and had obtained the highest grade at the provincial civil service examinations. Compared to other people, Hu Weide's rise through the diplomatic service was quite smooth.

One of Hu Weide's important jobs as a student interpreter was to provide a diary for Xue Fucheng. This was because the Zongli Yamen had ordered that diplomats abroad should keep diaries as a source of information for people back in China. They also had to translate foreign newspapers, and write accounts of any travels. Thus Xue ordered Hu Weide to do this, and report back to the Zongli Yamen. Xue's book A Diary of Time as an Envoy in Britain, France, Italy and Belgium had, therefore, contributions from Hu Weide and others.

By March 1893, Hu Weide's period as an intern had passed, and he became first an attaché, and was later sent to the USA under ambassador Yang Ru, where he became a counsellor. Yang Ru was a diplomat of the latter period of the first generation, and was still quite traditional in style, but his social graces, polite demeanour and attractive style won great prestige for China. Under his leadership, all diplomatic staff lived at the embassy, and it was there that Hu Weide's first son, Hu Shize (Victor Hoo, 1894-1972), later to become a famous Chinese diplomat in his own right, was born.

In 1896, Hu Weide accompanied Yang Ru to Russia, and became counsellor at St Petersburg, where he assisted Yang in negotiations. When Hu first arrived, there were no serious diplomatic issues between the two countries, but after the Boxer Rebellion, relations became strained. After 1900, there were repeated political movements and upheavals in Russia, making negotiations for Yang and Hu Weide extremely difficult. Overall, as a counsellor in Russia, Hu was involved in two major events, the first was participating at The Hague Peace Conference (1899), and the second was negotiating the withdrawal of Russian troops from China's northeast (Manchuria).

The Hague Peace Conference was the result of agitations for peace in late nineteenth-century Europe. On 18 May 1899, Czar Nicholas II of Russia participated in the first peace conference at The Hague. The Czar advocated holding a peace conference mainly because Russia was feeling great pressure in the arms race, and wanted to be released from this. However, China believed this to be a great opportunity to enter international society and change the status of China, sending Yang Ru to

Holland to take part in the conference as soon as an invitation was received. Hu Weide also went with another counsellor, He Yansheng, and an interpreter official, Lu Zhengxiang. The conference opened with twenty-six countries participating and lasted several months, but with limited results. For a China wishing to join international society, however, it had symbolic significance. Yang Ru and his retinue left on 24 June to return to Russia, arriving on the twenty-seventh to begin his report on the conference to the Zongli Yamen.

It must be noted however that, despite the fact that Yang Ru went to The Hague Peace Conference, he did not hold absolute authority. This was because he was not authorised to sign documents unless they were completely finalised and agreed upon. The Qing court did not easily give diplomats full authority. In 1878, Chong Hou had full authority whilst serving in Russia wherein the Zongli Yamen decreed that 'ambassadors serving in the Western world have complete authority and thus they cannot be lightly appointed. Those envoys serving at grades one and two therefore have no need to have full authority conferred upon them, which will help to differentiate them from the ambassador'. Although Yang Ru did not have full authority, he insisted on having the power to sign treaties, saying that this peace conference marked the beginning of China's entrance into international society, and if it did not sign, the foreign powers would wonder whether China did not mind splitting its boundaries'. Moreover, and in the future, if 'there was another such conference at which China should participate, they may not allow us to come'. Through these arguments Yang had tried to stress the importance of signing. The Qing court ruminated over this for a long time, however, with the Zongli Yamen decreeing that 'envoys need to send all documents for verification'. The documents in question at this conference were finally signed on 5 November. Although Hu Weide did not play a crucial part in this negotiation, his in-depth knowledge of proceedings at the peace conference meant that from this time onwards all matters dealing with peace conferences were handled by him.

Apart from this conference, Hu Weide also assisted Yang Ru in negotiating China and Russia's border issues. The Boxer Uprising and the Eight-Nation Alliance that resulted gave Russia (one of its members) the incentive to press further east. From 1900, in three short months, it invaded the whole of Manchuria. After this, although it returned the territory to China, and signed the Fengtian regulations, it still sought to control Manchuria. The Qing court gave Yang full authority to deal with

the Manchuria question, and deemed Russia's actions invalid on 18 January 1901. However, the Russian Finance Minister Sergei Witte (1849-1915) made demands, outlined in thirteen clauses, which the Qing court could in no way accept. It thus ordered Yang Ru to cease discussions. On 16 February 1901, Russian Foreign Minister V N Lamsdorf (1845-1907) made further demands to Yang Ru, delineated in twelve clauses, in the draft of a treaty on China's three north-eastern provinces. A month later (March 1901) Lamsdorf and the Russian Ambassador to China, Nikolay Karlovich Giers (also known as M de Giers, 1820-1895), both increased pressure on Yang Ru and Beijing, setting a deadline for signing. The Qing court appealed to Russia for more time, and Yang Ru tried to see Lamsdorf and Witte several times, but was refused an audience. Luckily by this time, the London Times in Great Britain had exposed Russian intentions to invade Manchuria, which displeased many countries. Thus, the Qing court was able to rely on the displeasure of other countries to continue to resist compromise. Yang Ru received orders not to sign, or meet with the Russians. Things became complicated however as during these negotiations, Yang, returning to the embassy, slipped whilst exciting his means of transportation and seriously injured himself. Hu Weide immediately sent word to China to report the incident. After Yang Ru was injured, negotiations on the Russia-China border treaty were suspended. In his role of counsellor, Hu Weide sent a telegram to the Qing court informing them of Russia's delay in making a decision about a troop withdrawal.

After Yang's injury, he took leave to go to Germany to consult a doctor. After a few months, he had still not recovered, and a telegram was sent to the court on 8 July explaining the situation. The Qing court ordered the ambassador of Great Britain, Italy and Belgium, Luo Fenglu to stand in as ambassador to Russia, but this was refused by the Russians. Thus, the temporary head of the embassy in Russia became Hu Weide. Yang Ru finally recovered and resumed his official duties but in February 1902 a second accident exacerbated his health and he soon passed away in St Petersburg (his son later came to Russia to conclude his father's affairs). As counsellor in the embassy, Hu Weide sent a telegram to the Qing court asking them to send a replacement for the ambassador as soon as possible. To prevent Sino-Russian relations stagnating further, the Qing court ordered Hu Weide to assume the role of chargé d'affaires. On 5 March, Hu Weide wrote back to China, reporting on the situation. After the death of Yang, negotiations between China and Russia over Manchuria took place in Beijing. As chargé d'affaires, Hu Weide now

began his independent diplomatic career.

Chapter Three—Hu Weide's activities as a diplomat during the late-Qing

From 20 February 1902, Hu Weide became chargé d'affaires in Russia and thus began his career as an independent ambassador. During this period, Hu Weide engaged in many negotiations, and left considerable historical records behind. One reason for this was that Sino-Russian relations were in a continual state of flux and the particular matter of Russian troop withdrawal from Manchuria caused great difficulties that were not easy to resolve. The Russo-Japanese War that followed put even more pressure on China to participate actively in peace conferences, join

international organisations such as the International Red Cross, and strive to negotiate its neutral status. China's participation at peace conferences and joining the Red Cross is proof of China's efforts to join the international community of nations. Concomitantly, negotiations for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Manchuria, and negotiations as a neutral bystander demonstrate the difficulties of 'weak country diplomacy' as well as the diplomatic contributions made by Hu Weide and the second generation of diplomats.

Whilst Hu was serving in Russia, events inside and outside China were changing fast. The internal changes consisted mainly of diplomatic administrative reforms. The situation worsened after the Boxer Rebellion, the intervention of the Eight-Nation Alliance and its culmination in the Boxer Protocol. The twelfth clause of the treaty stipulated that the Zongli Yamen should become the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and rank higher than the Six Boards in priority; this attests to the importance the Chinese government needed to give to foreign affairs. Once this had been implemented, the administrative structure of Chinese diplomacy was made to adapt much more to modern requirements, and despite it being forced, it did have a positive effect on all future diplomatic negotiations.

The external changes were the consolidation of power centres in China by the Great Powers. China's previous engagement in foreign relations was dominated by trade with the British, and generally speaking other foreign countries in China abided by this situation. The 'cooperative policy' that began during the reforms of Tongzhi years (1861-1875) gradually achieved effectiveness and during the decade China had largely peaceful relations with foreign countries with no large-scale military conflict. However, after China's defeat in the first Sino-Japanese War, not only did a new power (Japan) begin to influence the larger picture, but on account of China's defeat in the war, other countries began to change their policies towards China. Additionally, as many countries had control over Chinese finances and sectors of the economy because of lending agreements, the likelihood of a colonially 'carved up China' increased; in essence, the balance of power was souring. This crisis was exacerbated by Russia: all while Britain and the USA tried to return to the previous balance of power, resulting in a change in the situation in the Far East at that time.

Before 1898, Russia was a leading member in relations with China and

there was a great deal of amity towards them in China, so much so that a 'Sino-Russian Friendship Treaty' was signed in 1896. But Russia had its own intentions towards Manchuria and so carried out surveys over the area several times, with the desire to build a railway in the region. After the Sino-Russian Friendship Treaty was signed, this afforded Russia the right to 'place Russian ships and soldiers in all Chinese ports, if the situation urgently required it', with Russia able to build a railway in Manchuria 'in order to reach the ports', and to use this railway to transport soldiers, food supplies, and armaments'. After this treaty was signed, Russia helped Germany to use the 'Shandong Missionary Incident' [several German missionaries were killed] as a reason to occupy the bay of Jiaozhou, in exchange for Germany's support in occupying Lüshun and Dalian, signing the 'Treaty of the bay of Lüshun and Dalian' in 1898. Russia occupied this area for twenty-five years and in addition to forbidding China from stationing troops there, they also constructed a railway line, cannon fortifications, barracks, lighthouses, and so on, just as if the area was Russian territory.

Furthermore, apart from Russia expressing a clear wish to 'enjoy a special position in Manchuria' Germany and France also wanted to expand their interests, which together accounted for 80 percent of total trade in China. Whilst in the past Britain had always insisted on keeping all countries on an equal footing in terms of trade, the reality that it was losing its grip on maintaining equal trading relations as other western powers began to seize more control, meant that Britain began to worry its interests in China would be affected in this battle of concessions in China. Thus, since Britain did not have the power to stop other western nations from altering the balance of power, it could no longer maintain its status quo policy towards China. In turn, it joined the camp of those seizing power and asking for compensation from China. Britain was unwilling to allow its privileged trade status to be damaged further and so it sought to obtain free trading policies in areas where other powers had special status, seeking the support of the USA in pursuing an 'open door policy' with China; the USA, at this time, was the only country to have a clean slate vis-à-vis the concessions issue.

The USA did not initially react, only taking notice of this matter once the war in the American West had ended. Although American exports to China did not account for a high percentage of total US exports, the levels of exports to China started to rise sharply, making it necessary for it to support the open door policy. Additionally, after the ending of the

wars in the American West (generally referred to as the Indian Wars, 1622-1890), the USA assumed control over the Philippines with the end of the Spanish-American War (1898), which in turn allowed it to take on a larger Pacific role. This emergence of the USA as a player in the politics of the Far East and China's gradual opening of its markets allowed America to share Britain's stance of supporting the idea open door policy with China. In September 1899, the American tax official John Hay (1835-1905) gave the American ambassadors in Britain, Germany and Russia suggestions under the title of 'open door policy'. When the note was presented, all countries guardedly consented to the broad issues, which could be considered as agreeing in principle. Although this note was only a declaration of principles, and not the American governments' official policy, especially since the American government had neither the intention nor the ability to pursue this in practice, it did represent a potential conflict of interest between countries in China. The result was that western powers began to worry that conflict may arise between them, which had the effect of slowing down the rate of the 'carving-up' of China, returning it to a diplomatic situation of a balancing of power.

This new balance of power was far from stable, however. After the Boxer Rebellion, Russia had invaded Manchuria and stationed troops there creating the real possibility of a deterioration of the status quo. France was allied with Russia, and was ambivalent towards Russia's behaviour. Germany also harboured intentions to establish a foothold in the Yangzi River basin in order to strengthen its power base in East Asia; this sent warning messages to Japan and the United States. Perhaps due to its upcoming internal elections, the USA reverted to its traditional 'go-it-along' stance, trying where possible to act unaided and avoid cooperation with other countries. Japan's allegiance swayed between Britain and Russia, all the while maintaining a genial façade. Britain was experiencing difficulties because of the Boer War, and was unable to give its full attention to the East Asian question. All this demonstrates that during the early twentieth century, although China was not facing the danger of being 'carved up', it was still facing a real threat from the western powers.

In short, around the turn of the twentieth century, the environment of China's foreign relations changed from power struggles to 'carving up'

and back to power struggles again, allowing the western powers to consolidate their interests, which further intensified the challenges faced by Chinese diplomats overseas to closely watch the reactions of other countries during negotiations.

Section One—Ambassador to Russia

Hu Weide had the dual distinction of being both a juren of Shuntian County as well as a student of mathematics, English and French at the Interpreters College. This situation resulted in him being steered into the field of diplomacy by first-generation diplomats Xue Fucheng and Yang Ru. Notably, whilst accompanying Yang Ru, he had to deal with Russian troops and their refusal to withdraw from Manchuria in which difficulties and delays in negotiations could not be easily foreseen. Although the formal position Hu Weide held was that of counsellor, in actual fact, Hu, along with his fellow graduate from the Interpreters College, Lu Zhengxiang, was an assistant whom Yang Ru could not do without. Indeed, when Hu accompanied Yang Ru to the aforementioned Peace Conference (see Chapter two), he worked on the issue of Russian troop withdrawal from Manchuria, with the result that Yang Ru commended Hu's performance, reporting this to the central government. When Yang Ru had his accident and became ill (see below and Chapter two), Hu Weide was already familiar with the functioning of the embassy and had moved extensively in Russian diplomatic circles, thus he naturally became one of the strongest candidates to fill the post of ambassador. The Qing court looked first to Hu Weide because they knew that he could do the job. Out of the Interpreters College graduates who became diplomats, apart from Wang Fengcao, Hu Weide was the fastest to rise amongst the major officials.

Referred to above, on 3 February 1901, the ambassador to Russia, Yang Ru, was seriously injured. Hu Weide and embassy interpreter Lu Zhengxiang quickly reported back to China, saying that Yang 'was disoriented and his words unclear'. On account this injury aggravating his previous one, Yang Ru's condition quickly deteriorated and he died. Although Hu Weide sent a telegram to China requesting the 'quick appointment of a new ambassador' or the dispatching of an interim ambassador to stand in, within three days he had been asked to take on

the responsibilities of ambassador himself. Yang Ru's son came to Russia to administer his father's affairs, and not long afterwards committed suicide. This led to the circulation of rumours in diplomatic circles that the Russians had forced Yang Ru's son to kill himself. In response, Hu Weide reported to the court that Yang Ru's son had without any doubt committed suicide. Because Yang Ru could not perform his official responsibilities, the negotiations between China and Russia about the three Eastern provinces had come to a halt. It was only later that these negotiations reassumed in Beijing with Hu Weide being responsible for them. On 7 November 1902, Hu's temporary status was changed, making him the official ambassador. Despite Hu's entreaty to the court to select someone else to be ambassador in Russia, the court would not relent and on 14 January 1903, Hu Weide presented his credentials to Russian authorities.

Hu Weide's first task was to negotiate the return of Tianjin. These negotiations were meant to settle the status of the city, which had been attacked and occupied by the Eight-Nation Alliance in 1900, after which the British, Japanese and Russians had established garrisons in it. After reaching a treaty agreement, the Allied Forces withdrew from Beijing, but not from Tianjin. In 1901, The Prince Qing Yikuang (1836-1918), an army commander and minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, actively sought to negotiate with all countries to secure the early return of Tianjin to Qing control. In February of the following year, Yuan Shikai actively petitioned for this, with only a part of the negotiations causing disagreement. By 15 May 1902, Yuan Shikai sent a telegram to Hu Weide, stressing that the return of Tianjin was extremely important and rested on the eleventh clause of the treaty, urging Hu to negotiate with the Russians on this basis. Four days later, Yuan Shikai received the following response from the Russian Foreign Ministry via Hu Weide, 'Even if Russia were to withdraw from Tianjin now, this would achieve little as other countries have been latecomers to the negotiations, thus leaving the issue unresolved'. Russia blamed other nations and refused to take the lead. But on 1 June, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent word to Hu Weide again, saying that the late return of Tianjin was because a Russian general in Tianjin was creating obstacles, and they therefore asked Hu Weide to take this up with the Russian Foreign Ministry. Five days later, Hu informed the Qing government of the Russian response, saying that Russia had ordered the general in question to leave Tianjin some time ago and that the late return of Tianjin was not due to this general; instead, they claimed that Germany was creating the obstacles.

Although Hu had good relations with Russia and Germany, and asked Russia to urge Germany to return its Tianjin concession, the Russian Foreign Ministry claimed that by ordering its general to leave Tianjin it had already significantly helped China and would not be able to assist further in its negotiations with Germany. Russia both denied causing difficulties and was unwilling to apply pressure on Germany: this caused great problems for Hu Weide. After keeping up pressure for nearly a month, eventually Tang Shaoyi (1862-1938) reached an agreement with the other countries, setting a date of 7 July 1902 for Yuan Shikai to travel to Tianjin and personally receive it.

Apart from the issue of returning Tianjin concessions, the most important diplomatic negotiations of the time were the indemnities claims and the withdrawal of troops from Manchuria. Moving from an interim position to official ambassador, Hu Weide had to work on these two matters without letup. Although Hu Weide's negotiations with Russia can hardly be called successful on the surface, his continual dealings with the Russians and his buying time for China are characteristics of 'weak country diplomacy'.

(I) Paying Boxer indemnities

The reason that arguments arose over the Boxer indemnities was that after the Boxer Rebellion silver was cheap and gold was valued, internationally, quite high. The Shanghai Bank Group thus requested that China's repayment method be tabulated according to the gold standard. Whilst this was the Shanghai Bank Group's method to protect its own interests, since there was benefit to be had, Russia and other interested parties attempted to extract further profit from China.

On issues such as the Boxer indemnities and China's ability to pay them, the countries involved with the Boxer Protocol carried out research and discussions before signing. Broadly speaking, Britain and the United States advocated first identifying what China's repayment capacity was, then setting figures to be paid. Germany and France believed that China had the ability to pay any amount, and so espoused the idea of first deciding 'how much', then asking China to pay this amount. To resolve these conflicts, officials from Britain, Germany, France and Japan set up the Commission for Payment of Indemnities on 22 February 1901 in order to come to an agreement. On 1 May, the Commission made a report to the Diplomatic Corps at Beijing, outlining nine sources from which China could make payments, including 'maritime customs, native

customs, grain conveyed by water, salt duties, income from the Banners system, provincial transit duties, Zhejiang land taxes, duties collected at Chongwen Gate in Beijing, and funds from the Navy': this would come to about nine million to thirty million taels. However, since each country operated according to its own principles, the only sources used in the end were sea customs, land customs, and salt and grain duties. Because of this, the amount that China could actually repay was even lower. Furthermore, when the Treaty was signed, countries did not abide by the 'common principles' stipulated, apart from the figures provided by Sir Robert Hart, they argued for 450,000,000 taels and in some cases demanded more. The final decision of the Imperial Commission stipulated that the total figure could not exceed 450,000,000 taels. If the amount demanded was too high, Chinese finances would be in serious trouble.

The Boxer indemnities were, in any case, a heavy burden for China, and this made the price of silver in China drop further, leading recipient countries to demand that China pay the amount in gold. In early 1902, it was common knowledge in Shanghai that all countries were demanding payment in gold, and so Jiangsu Governor-General Liu Kunyi (1830-1902) sent word to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stating:

> Banks under the jurisdiction of Shanghai are tacitly consulting with their Directors regarding the use of silver to pay the indemnities rather than pounds. They are continuously petitioning the Counsellor in charge. However, various Directors have different suggestions and have not reached an agreement. The original figure for payment was stated in terms of silver, but B J de Cologan (a Spanish official who was head of the Diplomatic Corps), representing the foreign nations involved have demanded it be paid in pounds. Currently, the banks have not agreed on a rate of exchange, and if we let de Cologan set this figure, it will be out of our control. The banks must agree, and must use pounds to pay, but to change this later will be difficult. From now on, the banks may discreetly raise the value of pounds even if this causes losses to the old and new terms of payment and further losses of revenue. This situation must be watched carefully.

He suggested that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should maintain the figure originally stated in silver, and use silver as stipulated in the treaty,

and all ambassadors resident in Beijing should discuss this with the Ministry. The Qing court continued to negotiate, but failed to grasp the main point. A month later, Liu Kunyi wired the Ministry again, saying that 'Yesterday, according to information from the Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corporation we should buy pounds at the rate agreed in the Treaty. If we go by the market price of silver, this is too low, and will not be sufficient to make up the amount required'. According to the current price of silver, its devaluation would cause great damage to China's finances. Although the Ministry of Foreign Affairs knew that the Treaty contained the unfavourable clause 'payment will be made in gold', it also indicated that the amount could be paid in instalments, and that the exchange rate for silver would remain constant. This seemed to go against Liu Kunyi's theory of the price of gold changing for each country. Liu Kunyi was thus asked to re-negotiate with the banks.

The two organs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, apart from holding talks with the diplomatic corps and banks in China, also instructed ambassadors stationed overseas to pursue direct negotiations, and to confirm the policy change. On 8 June, the Ministry informed all ambassadors abroad:

> The Boxer Protocol stipulates that 450,000,000 taels must be paid from maritime taxes; all countries agreed that this total was based on the current market price of gold in exchange for silver, with an interest paid at a rate of 4 percent per annum, and that over the period of payment the guarantee slips should be calculated in silver. This figure is based on all countries' calculations of China's income. Now, in Shanghai, people are saying that exchange should be carried out according to present rates of exchange. Recently, the price of the pound has increased daily, causing a great discrepancy in the amount: a one million annual increase. China certainly does not have the financial means to meet this. If the increase is too large, the amount to repay will become outlandish. Please convey to the foreign ministries of Britain, Italy, Belgium, the United States, Spain, France, Germany, Japan, Holland, Russia and Austria-Hungary that the payments should be made in silver, to avoid misunderstanding. Apart from writing to each ministry, please telegram back results of discussions.

The reaction of each country to this was different, but Russia and Germany were reasonably supportive. At this time, Hu Weide was

ambassador to Russia, whilst also serving as ambassador to Austria-Hungary and Italy; five days later he sent a telegram stating that he had already done his utmost to negotiate with the Russian Foreign Ministry. Officials in China were not satisfied with this however: the Governor-General of Jiangsu, Liu Kunyi, Governor Yuan Shikai, Governor-General of Hubei, Zhang Zhidong (1837-1909), Governor-General of Guangzhou, Tao Mo, Governor-General of Fujian, Xu Yingkui and Governor-General of Sichuan, Kui Junlian, together responded to Hu Weide, and ambassador to Germany and Holland, Zhang Deyi (1847-1919), saying 'Since China is using silver, it has no gold to exchange, and those seeking to have payments made in gold, whether they use previous or current exchange rates, are using silver to calculate the amount, but in the end are still using gold. Payments that exchange gold for silver should pay according to the original figure in silver stipulated by the Treaty'. Apart from stipulating payment and exchange, their telegram also noted that all signatories of the Treaty should support China's original intention (referring to clauses that advocated a spirit of openness in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and Franco-Russian Alliance). Furthermore, they exhorted the ambassadors to maintain their positions and continue to negotiate. Hu Weide negotiated with the Russian Foreign Ministry for an extended period of time and then informed senior officials in China that the Russian Foreign Ministry had indicated that it needed to consult with its Ministry of Finance and with all countries involved, and could not respond straightaway.

In reality, this response from the Russian Foreign Ministry was seen as an excuse. Just half a month later, Russia's attitude hardened. Hu Weide's letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in China read as follows: 'I have discussed payments with the Foreign Ministry [in Russia] to no avail. The Ministry of Finance is in charge of this matter, and insists on repayment in gold. Their tone was very firm, and even with repeated exhortations, they refused to budge'. Hu Weide ascertained that the reason Russia insisted China pay in gold was that 'the Ministry of Finance has calculated that there is more going out than coming in. If China pays in silver, using today's exchange rate, then Russia would lose 3,500,000 taels. The country is too poor, and cannot afford to take such a loss'. As to whether China could pay in silver as it requested, he was very uncertain. At this time, the United States was the most amicable and allowed payments to be made in silver. Britain also began this way, but later added conditions to the payments. Although Germany and France did not explicitly support China, neither did they directly go against it.

Generally speaking, Russia was the most insistent of receiving payment in gold.

Liu Kunyi and Zhang Zhidong (1837-1909) informed Hu Weide that they had received a note from the head of the Diplomatic Corps, B J de Cologan to the effect: 'the Powers state that the amount to be paid is 450,000,000 haiguan (maritime custom) taels, according to the price of gold on 1 April, with an interest rate of 4 percent per annum'. Liu and Zhang also told Hu that the USA and Britain, as previously stated, were willing to agree to terms more favourable to China. Hu replied that the Russian Ministry of Finance was sticking to its former position, demanding repayment in gold according to current rates of exchange, and the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Ministry stipulated that conforming to the Treaty, payments must be made in gold. Hu Weide knew that each country was pursuing its own interests, and suggested that the Qing court use the authority of the Peace Conference to pursue this matter at an international level, using the rule of international law to settle it. Wang Shuhuai said on 8 October 1902 that the issue of paying in gold could be arbitrated at the Peace Conference (especially as Britain and Germany were not against this). On 4 November, Ambassador to the United States, Wu Tingfang, raised this issue at the Conference. Using international means to resolve difficult issues was a practice favoured by Hu Weide. Although later the Qing court argued that only the USA would allow payment in silver, adding that arbitration was of no use, it thus refused to allow officials to arbitrate; Hu Weide had considerable foresight when it came to the issue of paying in gold.

The sixth article of the Boxer Protocol had clearly stipulated that the exchange rate between the haiguan taels and the rouble would be 1:1.412, and China planned to make payments according to this rate. However, there was an ambiguous article in the Treaty that stated 'payments will be made in gold or at the rates of exchange corresponding to the dates at which the different payments are due'. Russia continued to insist that China pay in gold due to its own financial difficulties. And so, in order to maintain the consistency of the Boxer Protocol, the other countries changed their minds and supported Russia's position. China could not avoid such pressure, and could only negotiate as much as possible, thus Hu Weide became the main person of contact between China and Russia.

Generally speaking, China's attitude to this issue can be broken down

into two levels. The first had to do with admitting the validity of the treaty; the second concerned China's financial capacity. First of all, China thought that the statement in the sixth article, 'in the manner indicated in the annexed plan of amortisation', and the amortisation table in appendix thirteen that clearly stated the figure be paid in silver, payments should be made accordingly and other countries should respect the contents of the treaty. They thought that since plenipotentiaries from the involved countries were experts in foreign relations, why did they not raise the issue of exchange rates at the time, namely how to proceed if the price of gold rose or fell, which would affect the amount paid by China, and why did they agree on the figure of 450,000,000 taels? For example, if on a certain day gold was trading at a lower rate, but silver was not then China would owe a million taels less. They added that the banks would definitely want to pay according to terms set out in the treaty, and that China could do nothing about this. The Chinese authorities argued that the other countries were forcing the issue. Furthermore, all countries had originally calculated the amount for payment according to China's financial ability, and now they were expecting payment according to the price of gold; China did not have the means to deal with this situation. If all countries wanted to be paid in gold, after dividing the amount between them each share would be quite small, since China really could not bear the costs, and bearing the damage alone was highly unfair.

Hu Weide's view of the payment issue stemmed from two angles. Hu maintained the same attitude he had always held in Russia whilst negotiating with the Russians on this: he emphasised that 'the calculation of payments in the Treaty was made according to the price of gold for silver at that time. The amount was fixed according to China's ability to make payments, and was judged fair to avoid later misunderstandings. If payments were to be made according to market price, this should have been made clear in the treaty'. The Chinese people were quite hostile to this, and large-scale public disorder would surely not be desired by foreign nations. This was the thrust of Hu Weide's negotiations. Nonetheless, the Russian Foreign Minister was either beholden to the Finance Minister, or made the excuse of having to conform to the wishes of other countries. For these reasons Hu Weide was unable to make significant progress on this issue.

Fortunately for China, the competition amongst foreign powers within its borders was intense, meaning that Russia could not clamour for exorbitant repayment but instead had to sacrifice its own interests.

Around June, the USA and Britain together agreed to allow China to pay in silver and for the time being Japan had no objections, putting Russia in an awkward position. Consequently, together with its ally France, Russia suggested that China collect tax in gold, in order to compensate for the increase in exchange rates. However, China thought that apart from Britain not permitting it to collect tax in gold, it did not have the capacity to do this, and so stuck to paying in silver. Hu Weide clearly understood Russia's intention and stated in a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 'Russia and Britain are most crafty, and will not give way to each other. Britain's temporary allowance of payment in silver is done in order to protect trade, and Russia's insistence on receiving payment in gold is to inconvenience Britain. Collecting tax in gold is contrary to the wishes of Britain and not beneficial to China and is unrelated to Russia'. Britain's main interest in China was trade, and if tax were collected in gold, its tax payments would increase dramatically, and so naturally it was unwilling to go along with this. With Britain opposed to Russia's suggestion and China unwilling, Hu Weide had to continue to negotiate terms. Although Hu painstakingly made the argument of the link between international trade, China's finances, the people's malaise, and the price of gold, the Finance Ministry of Russia continued to maintain its position. As Hu examined this attitude, he found that the Russians were maintaining their insistence for China to collect tax in gold to make up for shortfalls in payments. The Russian attitude did not soften even after a fortnight. They continued to insist on payment in gold, arguing that payment in silver went against the Treaty. Additionally, since Russia's position amongst the other countries was quite low, it stuck to its principles even more strongly, thus opposing Britain and the USA and their allowance for payment to be made in silver.

In April that year, Lü Haihuan (1843-1927) who was negotiating with all involved parties in Shanghai, Sheng Xuanhuai (1844-1916) and Liu Kunyi exhorted the Qing court to choose between collecting tax in gold or paying in silver as a solution to negotiations. The Qing court decided on paying in silver, but put the idea of collecting tax in gold on record. Then they saw that opportunities for paying in silver were gradually less and less, and so they started to consider seriously the possibility of collecting tax in gold. Meanwhile, the nations involved agreed that China should collect maritime taxes in gold, to be calculated according to its weight, which in turn should allow it to be able to make payments. When Hu Weide received communication from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to that effect, he immediately began negotiations with Russia. This

method was originally put forth by Russia, so they were naturally in favour of it, communicating government orders to all ambassadors and all countries. Hu Weide suggested to the Qing court that if the matter was to be settled in this way, they should gain some profit from it, and not just use it to make repayments. In any case, from this moment on there were problems in China regarding the collection of tax in gold, and finally the nations concerned discounted this as a solution for making payments. From that point on, the idea of collecting tax in gold was dropped, which meant that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had to think of another way to make up the shortfall in payments. After lengthy negotiations, eventually on 22 June 1905, the final Boxer Protocol was signed, stipulating that China should make payments exclusively in gold, resulting in the Qing losing nine million taels.

(II) Negotiations for the withdrawal of troops from Manchuria

Just as China was resolving the issue of payments in silver and taxation in gold, the issue of Russia withdrawing troops from Manchuria became another point of friction between the two countries. Manchuria had always been highly coveted by Russia, and after the Boxer Rebellion, Russia used even more means to actively pursue its interests in the area. However, since it had gone perhaps too far in this regard, it incurred the displeasure of Germany, Britain, France, Japan and the USA. In early 1901, Britain's Times newspaper exposed an agreement signed between Russia and the Fengtian General Zeng Qi, revealing to the world Russia's expansionist aims in Manchuria. This meant that Russia had to renegotiate its treaties with China, leading to the negotiations on the Manchuria question. Whilst negotiations were continuing, the Boxer Protocol and China's payments were finally settled. This led Russia to argue that the losses it had incurred in this agreement justified its actions in Manchuria. After Yang Ru died, negotiations ground to a halt, and as Russia was under pressure from other countries, agreement was made and signed handing back the three north-eastern provinces; this also meant the withdrawal of its troops. In 1902, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ordered Hu Weide to exchange treaties with Russia, which he did in the Russian capital on 5 March. Although the signing of this treaty temporarily restricted Russia's movements in Manchuria, it did not last as Russia continued to manoeuvre in the region.

Long before the Boxer Rebellion, Russia stationed a garrison in Manchuria to ensure the security of the railways. After the Boxer

Rebellion, Russia reinforced this protective force, and established a military garrison north of the Amur River whilst discussions were taking place with Yang Ru. From then on, this railway garrison became a pawn in Russian policy towards Manchuria. The treaty to return the three north-eastern provinces stipulated that Russia would withdraw troops from Manchuria in three stages. The reason that Russia was so frank in this regard was largely to do with the establishment of the garrison north of the Amur River. According to the plans of the Russian Finance Minister, Sergei Witte, withdrawing Russian troops from Manchuria would not constitute too serious an obstacle to Russia's expansionist aims in the region, because 'in fact, we [Russia] will replace the withdrawing troops (occupying forces) with another unit of troops (garrison for railway security north of the Amur)'. Therefore, in reality, Russia's decision to withdraw troops had a limited effect on checking its power base in Manchuria.

Russia knew that such measures would prevent a counter-attack by China, but other countries were not pleased with this, especially Japan who was in competition with Russia for profits in Manchuria. Although Russia did withdraw troops during the first phase set out by the Treaty, these troops did not in fact return to Russia; instead, they were transferred to the railway garrison north of the Amur. The transfer of troops strengthened their control of the railway from Shenyang to the town of Fenghuang, thus increasing the threat to Japan, and aggravating relations between Japan and Russia. Russia's actions in Manchuria caught the attention of the international community as well as Japan and subsequently China was given international assistance in dealing with the issue of the second withdrawal of Russian troops.

Russia realised the importance of Japan with regard to Manchuria, and gradually stepped up relations with Japan. In 1903 the Ministers of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Finance Ministry, Army and Navy, along with Russian ambassadors to China, Japan and Korea organised a joint conference to improve relations with Japan and other issues relating to the Far East. Furthermore, the Russian national railway was facing internal conflicts. The group of 'moderates', originally led by Sergei Witte, was challenged on Far Eastern policy by another group led by A M Bezobrazov. Bezobrazov's Circle, formed by noble officials, rich merchants and body-guards with close ties to the Czar, advocated an aggressive Far Eastern policy. In some respects, this group can be seen as representing the intentions of the Czar himself. Nevertheless, the Czar's

government was facing continual strikes and popular movements in Russia, and his ministers thought that by focusing on the positive aspects of their Far Eastern policy they could use it as a means of distraction. From 8 October 1902 to 8 April 1903 Russia's Far Eastern policy changed from peaceful to overtly aggressive. Because of this change in Russian behaviour, the withdrawal of troops was delayed further still. On 8 April the second deadline for withdrawing troops passed, but Russia not only failed to withdraw, it took the Manchurian cities of Harbin and Qiqiha'er, instead.

In November 1902, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed Hu Weide of Russian military officials' intervention in the withdrawal of troops, and asked Hu Weide to present three warnings to Russia. The decision to block withdrawal of troops from Manchuria was made at the aforementioned joint conference. This proves that Russia had already decided to move forward with the aggressive policy of Bezobrazov's Circle, and acted straightaway. The following year, Hu secretly sent word to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that Russia had just sent a note to all ambassadors saying, 'the trade port of Dalian is coveted by all countries, and they must present their cases to the Russian government'. This note, however, was not given to the Chinese Ambassador to Russia, Hu Weide, and thus illustrates Russian ambitions to claim sovereignty over Manchuria. Not long afterwards, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs replied to Hu Weide saying that the Russian general in Manchuria had not received government orders, and that it was hard to set a date for the withdrawal of troops. Furthermore, the Fengtian area informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the troops that had withdrawn had returned. Hu Weide consulted the Russian Foreign Ministry on this troop movement, which said that it needed certain guarantees from China before it could answer questions on the withdrawal of its forces. At the time, the content of these 'guarantees' was not made public, and as a result the Ministry of Foreign Affairs contacted Hu Weide and asked: 'the second stage of troop withdrawal is stated in the treaty, and should be carried out according to it; there should not be further amendments'. After Hu Weide had negotiated with the Russian Foreign Ministry he relayed the results to his Foreign Ministry saying that the Russians did not disagree with the treaty, it was just that 'to implement the treaty, procedures need to be in place, these are however not clearly stipulated in the treaty'. The 'guarantees' turned out to be nothing more than issues of logistics relating to the withdrawal. In reality, the content of these 'guarantees' were the 'seven clauses' demanded by Russia, which were

conditions basically allowing complete control of Manchuria to fall into Russian hands. Precisely for this reason, Russia was worried about incurring the displeasure of other countries, and even Hu Weide was not willing to pass this on, so in March the Russian envoy to China, G A Planson, handed these conditions to Prince Yikuang. The content of these 'seven clauses' were as follows:

i. The area from Yingkou to Liaoning must be returned to Russia, it cannot be ceded to another country.
ii. Mongolia must not have a new government.
iii. No ports must be opened in the eastern provinces without the approval of Russia.
iv. Northern mining companies must employ Russians.
v. Electric cable must be installed from Shengjing, through Yingkou, Lüshun, to Beijing.
vi. Customs revenue from Yingkou must be regulated.
vii. When Russian troops have withdrawn from the eastern provinces, the previous rights of Russian businessmen will be maintained.

These seven conditions clearly reveal Russia's intention to control Manchuria. As a result, Yikuang maintained his position, insisting to G A Planson that Russia withdraw troops as stipulated in the treaty, adding that 'if Russia did not return the territory according to the treaty, and insisted on new clauses, this would infringe upon Chinese sovereignty and would leave the Prince in an impossible situation'. He informed Hu Weide of his rejection of Russia's conditions and plans of action, saying they were contrary to the treaty. He said the conditions were too demanding, that they violated Chinese sovereignty, and could not be met. Additionally, the Prince was concerned that other countries would not agree and that trade would be affected. He advised negotiating with the Russian Foreign Ministry to persuade them to act according to the treaty and return the territory on time. Nevertheless, China was still a weak nation and could not forcefully reject Russia's demands for it did not dare to be seen as aggressive. During these negotiations, Japan was becoming aware of the developing situation. After a Japanese envoy to China discovered the intricacies of negotiations, he immediately discussed forming a policy between his government and China. The Japanese government informed its ambassador to China on this, but it did not take any positive action at this stage. Since China could only use

reason to negotiate, Hu Weide had no choice but to continue negotiations with Russia.

As a result, Russia used G A Planson to keep up the pressure on Yikuang, and tried to suppress Chinese sovereignty in a short space of time, to strike whilst they could. So when the seven conditions had been presented to Prince Qing Yikuang, even though Hu Weide was still petitioning the Russian Foreign Ministry, the Ministry would not tell him the content of these conditions. After they had been presented, Hu learnt of their content through third-part sources. It seems that Russia was aware of the unreasonable nature of what it was demanding. Hu repeatedly tried to contact the Russian Foreign Ministry, but they were unwilling to enter into discussions with him on this issue, which in turn stressed him considerably. With regard to being kept out of the loop, Hu Weide assessed the situation in a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in China. He was quite worried about Russia changing its original intentions and leaving little or no room for China to manoeuvre. Moreover, he was concerned about the potential of conflict and the inevitable land grab this would entail.

Since Hu Weide was living in the Russian capital, he had a greater understanding of it than that of his colleagues based in China. His letter explains the motives behind Russia's conditions, revealing its Far Eastern strategy and showing how the Palace moved towards a more aggressive policy. Hu's letter shows that the Russian Foreign Ministry expressed several times that they would maintain their promise to withdraw troops, and could discuss their seven conditions. This shows that the Moderates still had some sway in diplomatic affairs, and that the seven conditions were not absolute; under the Moderates, there was still room to negotiate. When Yikuang received all this information, he was reluctantly prepared to meet with G A Planson. Prince Qing Yikuang, however, pinned all his hopes on Japan, and immediately contacted the Chinese envoy-minister in Japan, Cai Jun, asking the Japanese government to secretly contact Britain and the USA to come to the aid of China.

Whilst this was transpiring, other involved parties were not prepared to sit by and watch as their rights and interests in China were usurped. The American ambassador to Russia in St Petersburg had already asked the Russians for clarification on the situation, whereas for the time being the British and Japanese ambassadors remained silent. The United States had always shown great concern over the Manchuria question, since at the

start of the twentieth century, the American share of trade in Manchuria, standing at 20 percent of total trade, was the highest amongst the nations concerned. And so the USA was not at all pleased over Russia's desire to assume complete control of the area. Belatedly, Britain and Japan began to intervene in the situation as well. When Russia started to actively incite conflict in the border areas, China was quickly forced to concede. In April, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs contacted Hu Weide about the Russians sending bandits into Manchuria, worrying that this would affect the entire geopolitical situation in the region. Hu Weide thought that these bandits were troops deployed by the Russians in the Yalu River area in March. Hu had informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that these troops had occupied the forest to prevent Japanese penetration into the area. Russia had misgivings about Japan, thinking it would not allow Russia to expand in Manchuria when it had such strong interests in the region and the neighbouring Korean peninsula. Thus, in August that year, Japan entered into direct talks with Russia. From then on, the question of Manchurian sovereignty moved from Sino-Russian to Russo-Japanese negotiations.

Even after the negotiations between Japan and Russia, when Japan demanded that Russia guarantee the independence and territorial integrity of China and Korea, Russia did not cease operations in the area. From June, the Russian Czar had established the office of 'Governor-General of the Far East'. When EI Alekseev took on this role, Hu Weide immediately spoke with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in China. The establishment of this office put the Governor-General directly under the Czar with no other Ministries or departments to control him; it was as if the Czar was directing this position himself (this new development can perhaps be seen as the victory of the Palace group). Some time after this, Witte was dismissed from office, symbolising the final demise of the Moderate line. From this time onwards, the control of the Russian Foreign Ministry over affairs of the Far East became gradually weaker. Hu Weide wrote a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in China:

> After petitioning the Russian Foreign Ministry numerous times, they say that the affairs of the Far East are now under the control of Alekseev, that he is in charge of internal administration, diplomacy, land and sea forces, servants, justice, and all matters large or small. Alekseev told the Russian Foreign Ministry that all the above comes under his remit, and that they would not be informed of affairs of the Far East. The Japanese ambassador to

> Russia has returned to Tokyo to decide what action to take. The Russian ambassador to Japan has gone to Port Arthur [Lüshun] to meet Alekseev. It looks as if the Russian Foreign Ministry will no longer be involved in the affairs of the Far East.

On account of this, it was difficult for China to accept the seven conditions, and they publicly revealed its contents. At this time, Japan was preparing to negotiate with Russia on the Manchurian and Korean question; they were thus not keen for the Manchurian issue to change again and so were against China making any concessions to Russia. As Russia had already embarked on a path of aggression, it could not accept China's attitude of opposition. Using the lack of disciplinary action taken against the Chinese provincial governor Yuan Dahua as a pretext, they sent troops to Manchuria, entering and occupying Shenyang. As a result of this important development, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs relayed to Hu Weide their demand for a Russian troop withdrawal, and carry out such according to the second and third stages outlined in the treaty. However, it was now difficult for the Russian Foreign Ministry to intervene in matters concerning the Far East, meaning that Hu Weide's negotiations were to no avail. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs again contacted Hu Weide, ordering him to make a full report of this to the Czar, in person. The Russians, however, made the excuse that 'even special envoys of the highest rank are not granted an audience with the Czar', and that 'Hu could only present his case to the Foreign Ministry, and await the final Russian decision', thus prolonging the process. Nonetheless, Hu Weide tried, unsuccessfully, many times to see the Czar. Still, there was nothing Hu could do but present a document expressing China's position. This document had eight clauses:

i. The Emperor declares that the withdrawal of troops from Fengtian should proceed according to the Treaty, other matters can be discussed accordingly; we request the Russians to seriously consider this.
ii. Beginning with a small matter, the troops aggressive approach has gravely damaged our friendship.
iii. This incursion into our territory has caused great public anger.
iv. Relations between our two neighbouring countries are becoming increasingly strained to the point that there is no friendship left; this should be first dealt with, as there is no long-term plan.
v. China has esteem for Russia, and believes Russia to have been split into two competing sets of interests, and that this situation

has been caused more by the interests of the Palace group advocating an aggressive foreign policy.

vi. This action has insulted China's dignity, and has done great harm to Russia's reputation.

vii. Alekseev has made many decisions without consulting China; we do not understand why all matters cannot be discussed. Issuing threats makes discussion even more difficult.

viii. The general at Jilin has accused Russian troops of at least thirty cases of robbery, and if troops are not withdrawn, it will cause a humanitarian disaster. We believe Russia to be honest and kind-hearted, and hope it will be compassionate.

These were the main points made by Hu Weide vis-à-vis the contents of the Treaty, relations between the two countries, and international reactions. Nevertheless, Hu Weide understood Russia's intentions and could do nothing to change them, he said 'I sent this document to the Russian authorities yesterday, even with this document, however, I cannot see the Czar. The result is hard to predict'. Shortly hereafter Russia replied to Hu Weide stating that China's recent behaviour had meant that Russia was unable to withdraw its military force and that the blame for any violation of the Treaty lay with China.

As a result of this, Hu Weide contacted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, saying, 'There are people on all sides of the Russian Czar, and the Foreign Ministry has little influence, I fear it will be hard to make progress'. Hu suggested asking the United States for assistance. All the while there was no word from the Russian Foreign Ministry. Moreover, at this time disagreements between Japan and Russia were becoming more serious with the possibility of the escalation into war on the minds of the Japanese authorities; Russia was of course not willing to give way. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent word to Hu Weide saying that 'apart from a direct threat to China's sovereignty, all matters could be discussed. Please communicate this to the Russian Foreign Ministry and insist on the withdrawal of their troops'. This showed China's willingness to discuss anything, and that its only demand was the withdrawal of troops. But Russia had for some point excluded China from all such discussions, and was only interested in negotiating with Japan. Russia procrastinated in all its relations with China. Hu noticed this, saying, 'Sino-Russian negotiations need much time. If we hold secret negotiations, Russia will definitely not withdraw its troops;

besides, after any negotiations, it will be too late. Japan is preparing its troops and Russia's position is hardening; empty words are of no use and may even ignite the issue'. By this stage, Hu Weide felt that it was unlikely that Russia would withdraw its troops, as China had been hoping. And he could see the early sparks of the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War.

Section Two—After the Start of the Russo-Japanese War

The Russo-Japanese War had a profound effect on Chinese diplomacy, although up to the present day its influence has been overlooked. After the Boxer Rebellion, Russia seized the opportunity and sent troops to occupy Manchuria, inaugurating a period of continuous Sino-Russian negotiations on this issue. This in turn created a conflict of interest with Japan, eventually leading to the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. The main battlefield for this conflict was in China's northeast. Both during and after the war, China's diplomatic position was extremely awkward: China's professed neutrality was continually questioned. Against this backdrop, Hu Weide became one of the most influential personalities in negotiations between China and other countries.

During the Russo-Japanese War, Hu's main role was in establishing China's neutrality in negotiations with Russia. However, because Russia continually doubted China's neutrality, it did not participate in organisations such as the Peace Conference or the International Red Cross. As Hu understood Russia quite well, he continually urged both sides to make peace and thus contributed greatly in this regard to the Qing court. When China and Japan agreed on the 'Treaty for arrangements in the three eastern provinces', Hu Weide not only provided reports and suggestions, but as the main protagonist in ensuring the smooth running of this process, he provided great assistance.

After the Russo-Japanese War, Japan rose to become a super-power in East Asia. Although it had been humiliated in the past when it first encountered Western powers, notably Commodore Perry's (1794-1858) opening of Japan with the Convention of Kanagawa in 1854, Japan's subsequent Meiji Restoration (1868-1912) and modernisation project allowed it to minimise its overall losses. Furthermore, after it established

an alliance with Britain in 1902, its international position rose, and it became a force to be reckoned with in Chinese diplomacy. Moreover, the cause for the dispute between Russia and Japan was closely linked to the current geopolitical situation in East Asia. Japan had designs on Korea and Manchuria, which clashed with Russian interests, naturally leading to conflict. Japan's intervention on the issue of Russia returning Manchuria to China, as well as Japan's alliance with Britain meant that relations between Russia and Japan were far from harmonious. From the autumn of 1902 to the spring of 1903, both Russia and Japan had designs on China's northeast and began to undertake aggressive measures in this regard. Russia thought it could drive Japan back, and Japan thought that its alliance with Britain would force Russia to accept its conditions. It was only a matter of time before conflict would arise between the two nations.

There had been talk of a war between Russia and Japan for a long time and there was already news of a Russo-Japanese War as early as 1899. In 1901, the Chinese ambassador to Japan, Li Shengduo (1859-1934) sent a telegram saying that Japan was unhappy with Russian forces not withdrawing from Manchuria, and that after Japan had telegraphed Russia, it prepared its army and navy for war. A few days later, the outbreak of conflict between Russia and Japan was reported; the London Standard said that the Russian Foreign Ministry had admitted war had broken out with Japan. It seemed that both Russia and Japan had intended to go to war for some time. Although since 1902 Russia's principle negotiating partner was Japan, both countries saw the declaration of war as an inevitable means of resolving their differences, and never stopped their preparations towards this end.

Since Russia had no intention of negotiating with China, and since its negotiations with Japan broke down and led to conflict, relations between the three countries were very strained. China hoped to gain international support from Japan to intervene in the Manchuria issue, which was, however, hard to achieve. On 14 January 1904, Hu Weide became aware of the volatility of the Russian political situation, and telegraphed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs saying that Russia and Japan may not go to war, but that tension over Manchuria was sure to increase, thus necessitating immediate action, such as reinforcing areas around the capital and the north-western border to protect peace and prevent people from taking advantage of the tension. Sheng Xuanhuai (1844-1916), in charge of commercial treaties, asked Hu Weide for advice as to whether

or not this would be a good time to negotiate with Russia, saying that Governor-General Alekseev had indicated he wanted to make peace. Hu Weide replied that 'Negotiating peace does not just depend on Alekseev. Because of Japan, Russia is now massing troops, and has no intention of withdrawing them; it continues to make demands. As soon as I give a little, they take a bit more. Once the brush has hit the paper, it is hard to go back. The Eastern question has been continually delayed, which gives us time to think'. Hu Weide knew exactly what Russia's intentions were towards Manchuria, and the deadlock over the Russian withdrawal was actually a way of Russia gaining the upper hand; not much hope should be pinned on Russian diplomacy. Hu had dealt with the Russians over a long period of time, and understood them well, and so was quite cautious in making predictions. He was quite despondent about a positive outcome in Russo-Japanese relations. He emphasised that at this time, China should make defensive preparations, and that China should not lightly dismiss Russia, this was the only way to avoid serious damage. In February Hu Weide could feel that war between Russia and Japan was imminent and wrote to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stating that he thought Russia and Japan would not be able to avoid going to war. Indeed, just after this, Russia and Japan recalled their ambassadors and severed diplomatic relations. A few days later, the Russo-Japanese War erupted. China's army did not have the capacity to enter into the conflict, even though it had to defend China's sovereignty in this situation. In this predicament, Hu was incredibly important in maintaining China's neutrality. Furthermore, since China could do nothing about Russian and Japanese forces fighting a war on Chinese territory, and since international condemnation was at best weak, the substance of Hu Weide's negotiations is a classic example of the 'weak nation diplomacy' of the second generation of Chinese diplomats.

(I) Negotiations as a neutral third-party

On 12 February 1904, conforming with the statements of the international community, the Qing court publicly declared its neutrality in the conflict and promulgated the 'Regulations on China's firm position as a neutral outsider'. It must be noted however, that these regulations had already been prepared much in advance since before Russia and Japan had officially declared war on each other, military conflict had already arisen between the two sides. China was forced to react early and had prepared these regulations long before they were actually announced. Unaware of this fact, on 8 February, Hu Weide telegraphed Sheng

Xuanhuai, saying ‘Fighting has already broken out at Port Arthur [Lüshun]; I am awaiting orders as to what to do’. Sheng Xuanhuai replied in despair, ‘I am removed from the situation and have made no preparations’; he nonetheless told Hu Weide of China’s countermeasures. The following day the leader of the Northern government, Yuan Shikai, telegraphed Hu Weide, saying that China ‘has decided on remaining neutral’. After China formally announced its neutral stance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed Hu Weide and instructed him to relay their neutrality to Russia. The content of this was as follows:

> Japan and Russia have gone to war, and as an ally of both countries, the Qing court, in the spirit of a good neighbourly relations, has adopted a position of neutrality. Every province has been informed and must respect this in order to prevent damage and to protect trade and education. Shengjing and Xingjing are home to the emperors’ tombs and palaces and we ask that the relevant generals protect them. Both countries must not harm the cities, people or assets of the three provinces. The Chinese army will not offer opposition. To the west of the Liao River from where Russia has withdrawn its troops will come under the jurisdiction of the Northern government. All provinces, coastal areas, and inner and outer Mongolia will all adopt a position of neutrality. The armies of the two countries must not invade further. If they advance into the interior, China will naturally oppose this, which must not however be seen as a declaration of war. China will control any area in Manchuria where troops have withdrawn and cannot guarantee neutrality in these cases. The sovereignty of the three provinces, whatever the outcome between Russia and Japan, belongs to China, and must not be occupied. Apart from this note to all ambassadors in Beijing, it is hoped that this will be communicated to all Foreign Ministries.

After this principle was sent out, Hu Weide went straightaway to the Russian Foreign Ministry to communicate its content. At first, the Russian Foreign Ministry had no objections to most of its content, but it could not agree to the return of territory where there were no troops. Some days later, just as Hu Weide was sending word to the Ministry about Russia’s reaction, the Russian Foreign Ministry changed its stance. In spring 1904, Hu Weide reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the Russian Foreign Ministry had replied to China’s profession of neutrality, but that it doubted the sincerity of China’s neutral stance and

that it could not recognise China's claim on neutral areas. Russia could not accept that areas west of the Liao River from where it had withdrawn would be considered as beyond its reach, and wanted to bring those areas back under the control of Russian troops. Russia stressed that the areas outside their control and the territory of the three provinces were two separate matters and insisted that they not be discussed together; this stance thus reveals Russia's reluctance to see China pursue its own interests. In short, Russia saw Manchuria as already 'in the bag', and since it was not willing to let other countries encroach on this territory, it clashed with Japan. Nor was Russia willing to allow China to seize the opportunity and reclaim its original rights over the land, and so it hardened its stance. Russia had doubts about China's professed neutrality and this only increased when China appealed to international law to settle the dispute. At the same time the Chinese government had the responsibility of acting within international law to minimise the damage caused to local Chinese people and their property by the Russo-Japanese War. China thus seized the opportunity of the second Peace Conference organised by the United States to participate in organisations such as the International Red Cross.

In early 1904, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a dispatch to the head of the Northern Government, Yuan Shikai, concerning the fires lit in Manchuria by soldiers and about the great misery and suffering of the people. They were hoping that contributions could be solicited from voluntary organisations such as the Red Cross to help the people in the afflicted areas. Two days later, the Ministry of Trade sent a dispatch to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs saying that China had never joined the Red Cross, and did not enjoy the rights afforded by the organisation, and thus it would be difficult to achieve this. But after a period of consultation, the Shanghai government merchants agreed to set up the Shanghai multi-lateral Red Cross Society as a joint organisation between China, Britain, France, Germany and the USA. There were Chinese and Western directors and each country contributed funds and participated equally in its management. According to the Western directors, this was an expedient method and the Chinese government should telegraph the two countries [Russia and Japan], asking them to recognise this organisation and inform their troops in the battlefield. A day later the officials responsible for the agreement, such as Lü Haihuan (1840-1927), wrote to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with all the details of the clauses of the agreement, the list of directors, and the amount of contributions, saying that the Red Cross 'must first be approved by the headquarters in

Switzerland, before it can be recognised by the two countries at war'. On account of this, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs immediately telegraphed Hu Weide, asking him to negotiate the suggestions put forward by the Ministry of Trade. Regarding the necessity of the Red Cross in China being approved by the headquarters in Switzerland, the telegraph stated: 'the clause in the Peace Conference concerning the Red Cross must first be presented to the president, then to the envoys. The headquarters in Switzerland has not sent anyone to deal with this, and we hope that first we can make Russia recognise this society, and following on from that, the soldiers in battle and the ambassadors abroad. If it is necessary to first gain the approval of the headquarters in Switzerland, then please make the necessary preparations and send word of your plan of action'. Negotiations with Russia were the first priority, but after Hu Weide had negotiated, seven days later he informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia's response: 'Russia has many members of this organisation in its military, and this organisation in other countries is only allowed to use its donations for medical supplies, there must be no members from the military'.

Although Russia opposed this, China still actively pursued setting up a chapter of the Red Cross Society. Lü Haihuan telegraphed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs again, suggesting that the ambassador to France, Sun Baoqi (1867-1931), ask the French government to contact the Swiss government and request that the Swiss Red Cross headquarters reply quickly, which in turn would help the ambassadors in Russia and Japan negotiate. An American envoy in Yingkou telegraphed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs saying that the Red Cross had already set up in Niuzhuang (Yingkou), and asked China to officially organise this. Inspector General of the Maritime Customs, Sir Robert Hart also said, 'in the twelfth clause set out in the agreement reached at the Peace Conference by the ambassador to Russia, Mr Yang, it was stated that all countries would have to give their approval'; he thus suggested that the court 'contact the current ambassador to Russia, Hu Weide, and ask him to take the agreement reached by Yang and already signed by China' [to the Russia authorities and that] this would help settle the matter. According to an official at the Maritime Customs in London, J D Campbell, ambassador to Britain, Zhang Deyi, should petition the Swiss government in this regard. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs quickly telegraphed Zhang Deyi saying: 'if the Swiss headquarters send a letter, please mention the original treaty signed by China in 1864'. Russia, however, stressed that it had its own Red Cross that would help Chinese

people affected by the war. It still expressly forbade the Shanghai Red Cross to intervene in Manchuria.

In fact, both Japan and Russia were opposed to China sending its Red Cross to the area, but Japan said that 'if the Red Cross were to be stationed near the battlefield, this could be discussed', giving China a tiny shred of hope. Russia still staunchly refused. Comparing the two, Russia was much more against this than Japan. Hu wrote the following report:

> People doubt whether I have ever been neutral, because 100,000 troops have been temporarily stationed at Irkutsk, especially to watch over me. China's neutral position has for some time now been reiterated across China and abroad. Recently, representatives from numerous countries trust me less; and, if they cannot trust the government, then the public mood is even harder to ascertain, as it was after the Boxer Rebellion when there was no statement from the government. Now the Japanese navy has started manoeuvres, the outcome of which is uncertain. Various countries are concerned for my safety. Apart from officials continually asking me, it is difficult to prevent rumours from spreading.

This telegram reveals Hu's impression of Russia's lack of confidence in China, thinking that even if the government policy states neutrality, the people may not necessarily follow suit. At that time, there were anti-Russian sentiments running throughout the country. Apart from several anti-Russian movements that began in 1907 after this conflict, there were also commanders in Manchuria such as Jiang Guiti (1843-1922) and Ma Yukun who advocated the declaration of war on Russia, and there were the 'Anti-Russian Iron Blood Society'; this all confirmed Russia's suspicions.

As Russia doubted China, much of China's diplomatic efforts were therefore concentrated on Russia. Lü Haihuan and others knew that Russian troops were still in Manchuria and had the ability to intervene aggressively in the region. They thus telegraphed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asking that: 'As Mr Yang (ambassador to Japan, Yang Shu, has temporarily not sent word, and as Russian troops have occupied the three north-eastern provinces, could the Ministry please telegraph Hu Weide again to hold talks near the battlefield, and see how the Russians respond'. Thus, the Ministry immediately contacted and informed Hu Weide that: 'the Russian Foreign Ministry not allowing the Red Cross

access was the result of a misunderstanding'. Moreover, they asked Hu Weide to explain to the Russians that, 'the Red Cross set up by Chinese and Westerners has no ambulances, the only hospital near the battlefield is controlled by the warring countries and occupied by the injured of all countries, please allow people who have no connection with the war access'. In order to prevent Russia from opposing this, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said to the Russian Foreign Ministry that 'the warring countries have rights on the battlefield and neutral countries have only rights outside and near the battlefield. Affairs will be managed with this distinction in mind, with no interference'. Hu Weide negotiated the above with the Russian Foreign Ministry, reporting back to say that Russian authorities needed to ask the Czar before replying. Russia seemed to be using this as a delay tactic, but Chinese officials could not wait any longer. On 15 March the Foreign Affairs Ministry received a note from the Ministry of Trade, saying, 'Saving people is like putting out a fire, no time can be lost', asking that Russia and Japan quickly make a decision about the establishment of the Red Cross in China. The Ministry sent a note to the Russian ambassador to China saying that, 'This Ministry abides by the Red Cross Navy Treaty signed by Holland, and warring countries and neutral countries should all respect this, again this further emphasises China's neutral position'. On March 19, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a note to the Russian and Japanese ambassadors to China, Paul Lessar (1851-1905) and Count Yasuya Uchida (1865-1936), saying it was sending people to an area outside the battlefield in Manchuria to provide vehicles for transporting the injured, further emphasising that the Red Cross was the most important charitable international organisation, and that the chapter set up by Chinese and Western directors would look after the injured and the refugees outside the battle area. Furthermore, since this was in complete conformance with China's neutral position, it asked that the Russian and Japanese ambassadors in China approve this for the sake of the Chinese people in the war torn areas. Russia did not make a decision quickly and Hu Weide initially had to telegraph the Ministry of Foreign Affairs saying that the decision on the Red Cross had first to be sent to Alekseev; he would report back on his decision when he knew it. Finally, Lessar sent a note saying that Alekseev said that only Chinese people could serve in the Red Cross, and that he was willing to allow eight Chinese Red Cross directors to become involved; this finally resolved the issue.

Although Russia permitted China to send people to the war zone, it still doubted the sincerity of China's professed neutrality. The Ministry of

Foreign Affairs could do little about this, and could only ask Hu Weide to reassert China's intentions to the Russian Foreign Ministry. Hu reported back that he was repeatedly doing this and that he had eventually managed to put a stop to rumours, so that for the time being Russia seemed to trust China. Still Russia was worried that 'traitors' may infiltrate its position west of the Liao River and spy on its military positions and therefore it changed the terms of its agreement and asked China to comply. On account of Russia's mistrust of China running so deep, it made China's entry into international organisations even more pressing. Hu Weide was entrusted with negotiating with Russia and also obtaining approval from the Dutch Red Cross. He therefore telegraphed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and requested them to send the agreement to the Red Cross in Holland with an additional three points, asking for the approval of the international community. With his practical experience of dealing with Russia, Hu understood that they most likely thought that China was trying to use diplomatic language to deceive it, and thus he urged China to quickly join organisations bound by international law. To assist in this, Hu urged Holland to accept China's application. The Dutch, however, replied that this matter had to be agreed upon by all involved parties and that they could not give approval alone; more time would thus be needed. Hu Weide keenly felt the urgency of the situation and so suggested to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that if Holland could not make a decision quickly that it dispatch a representative to Holland to negotiate personally. A few days later Holland said the documents had not been handed over, making it difficult to make a decision. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs could see the difficulty of signing international treaties and considered sending someone from China. On 12 June, the original documents from the Peace Conference in French were sent to Hu Weide to examine. On 23 September, he telegraphed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, saying that the Dutch Foreign Ministry are preparing to send the Treaty, but are waiting for the Dutch ambassador in Russia to return the documents; this would delay things momentarily. The journey from Russia to Holland took seven or eight days, in that time someone could go there, and return when the matter was resolved. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs immediately wrote back instructing Hu to travel to Holland; he left straightaway. This time, the Hague Conference was more a meeting than an actual conference and so Hu Weide asked the Foreign Affairs Ministry as to how China should proceed. Not long after this, the matter of Red Cross ships was discussed, meaning that the Ministry sent Hu again to Holland to participate at the meeting. In the end, Hu Weide was able to

entrust the extension of the Red Cross and the navy treaty to the Dutch government.

After this, China gained a greater understanding of international treaties. In 1905, China heeded American suggestions and participated in the second Peace Conference at The Hague. Hu believed that participation in these kinds of international conferences should be carried out by someone permanently stationed at The Hague, as had been done in the past when Vice-Minister Wu Tingfang of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs presented reports on Chinese affairs. As a result of his belief, Hu Weide recommended that the second counsellor at the Russian embassy, Lu Zhengxiang, represent China permanently in The Hague. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs praised this as 'an excellent idea' and strongly agreed. Thus, from this time on China was represented by Lu at the Hague conferences.

China's aim for participating in international treaties was to gain the trust of other countries and to prove its neutral stance. But since China was making such great efforts in this direction, Russia was even more suspicious of its intentions. On 8 December, Russia informed other countries that China would not remain neutral and had been leaning towards Japan. When Hu Weide saw this report, he immediately telegraphed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs saying that Russia had changed its position, and that the Foreign Ministry had said nothing. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs immediately responded telling Hu Weide to set Russia straight, saying that it was referring to a time before the war started, which did not affect the present neutrality. When Hu Weide could see that Russia was not interested in accepting China's explanation, he informed the Ministry, suggesting: 'as Russia has already told other nations of China's intent, I will do my best to rebuke this and reassure other governments of China's neutrality, and keep rumours to a minimum'. He sent another telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs saying that he had secretly seen a document in which Russia accused China of violating its neutral position, advocating action against it, none of which was recorded in official reports. The Russian Foreign Ministry said that all agreements with other countries would be invalid if China did not maintain its neutrality. Russia seemed to fear an attack to the right of the Liao River by land, or a Japanese naval attack. Thus it accused China of violating its principle of neutrality. When the Ministry of Foreign Affairs heard this from Hu Weide, it instructed all ambassadors abroad to deny these accusations levied by Russia and to deny that

Russia had heretofore not accepted China's neutrality. Russia's estimates of Chinese behaviour did, however, have some foundation in reality as in China there was a marked support of Japan and opposition to Russia. The examples that Russia could see aroused its suspicions. Hu's suspicion on the other hand, was that Russia's accusations had an ulterior motive. Russia's motives were complex, apart from moving into neutral areas to attack Japan, there was always the possibility of creating disturbances in China. Hu thought there must be a concealed intention as it seemed to have nothing to do with China being neutral or not. Although it seems as if Russia was pressing China remorselessly, Russian authorities perhaps began to realise that the war was not going their way, and was already thinking of what to do in the event of defeat. Towards the end of the Russo-Japanese War, Hu Weide predicted its end, showing that his negotiations as a neutral outsider had also come to an end.

(II) Suggestions regarding peace

Very early in 1904, Hu Weide had already predicted the Russo-Japanese War, 'although no other nations have intervened, it is not far off'. On 13 November 1905, Hu Weide telegraphed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs saying that the Russian Far East Governor-General Alekseev had been recalled and that the Baltic fleet had been sent to the Far East, signalling that Russia was going through difficulties in the war. Even as early as January 1905, Hu Weide could see from Russian internal affairs that the war was going badly. Hu had already been thinking that Russia and Japan had to make peace and sent a dispatch suggesting that preparations be made for the end of the war. The content of this communiqué were as follows:

> I think that before this war is settled, officials inside and outside China and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should employ legal experts from countries like the United States, Switzerland or Sweden. They should hold discussions daily with the princes and officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and telegraph each country to ascertain public opinion. After many months of work, I have thought about this, and think that we should not rush matters, nor should we discuss secretly, as in the past. This affects the entire nation, whether positively or negatively. At the current stage, however, any such discussions must be carried out sensitively and in secret, outsiders must not know this, and the warring countries must especially not hear of this.

On account of China's rush to participate in the Peace Conference and the Red Cross causing problems in the past, Hu Weide advised the government to make preparations for the end of the war. He particularly stressed that 'legal experts' should advise China, ensuring that it could establish a stable legal position in international treaties. Hu considered law as extremely important, emphasising that utilising the assistance of legal experts would bring long-term benefits, and on 18 September 1905, together with Yang Zhaojun, Liu Shixun (1869-?) and Sun Baoqi, suggested that officials be sent to legal experts for consultations in order to resolve issues such as reparations and other agreements. All this shows the high esteem Hu Weide had for legal experts. Hu advocated such use of the law despite the fact that his reaching out for assistance from legal experts had not received any concrete response from the Qing court, and the Chinese Red Cross had still not been established.

Although in a military sense, Japan was the victor of the Russo-Japanese war, Japan's basic military and financial structure had been severely weakened, and the country could not continue, which made peace with a defeated Russia even more urgent. At the same time, other countries were not willing to see Russia lose out militarily. First of all, Germany was not willing to see Russia tumble down the international standing in the Far East, hoping 'it would still be able to oppose Britain'. Germany also hoped that Russia would quickly make peace with Japan so it could concentrate its efforts to quickly stamp out the revolution within its own borders, and stop it from spreading west and threatening Germany's ambition as an empire. Additionally, the USA, which had always looked out for its own commercial interests in Manchuria and had, originally, hoped that the Russo-Japanese War would weaken the capabilities of both countries, realised that Japan's military victory far exceeded its expectations. This led the USA to worry that if Russia's strength declined in the Far East, it would threaten its own strategy for the region. As a result, President Roosevelt wanted to prepare the best conditions for the entry of American capital into the three eastern provinces after peace between Russia and Japan. Furthermore, the Russian court had become despondent after the defeat of the Baltic Navy which in turn allowed the Moderates to grow in strength, increasing the prospect of peace.

After this, as both Japan and Russia, as well as the western powers all began to desire peace, the prospects for it gradually became brighter. On 17 March 1905, Hu Weide had reported that although Russia had sustained 130,000 casualties, they were still not interested in peace. Two

months later, the Russian nobility and officials were still not keen on peace, but there seemed to be some movement towards it. On 6 June, Hu Weide reported that the American president suggested that representatives of the two countries meet to discuss peace. The Russian nobles and officials met many times and seemed closer to reaching a peace deal. On the same day, Russia replied to the United States that the Russian and Japanese authorities were both considering peace, and that if Japan expressed its willingness to pursue this, Russia would support such a move. At this point, negotiations progressed and the two countries finally made peace on 5 September 1905.

Living in Russia, Hu Weide still feared Russia's intentions towards Manchuria, and so before Russia and Japan entered peace talks, Hu telegraphed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs saying that they must secretly work with the three generals in Manchuria to ascertain the condition of property and the loss of life, and record this to be presented at a later time. This showed China's displeasure at Russia and Japan fighting a war on its territory and laid down preparations for its demand for reparations. In June 1905, the Chinese Military department wrote to all envoys overseas stating: 'Russia and Japan have already made peace and we hear that they will meet in Washington to sign a peace deal. All officials must prepare for how China should react to this, and what measures it should take in reconstructing the three eastern provinces; this must be reported back to the Ministry but done secretively'. As a moderate, Hu Weide said China should remain friendly with both countries, but must make three conditions for dealing with Russia, namely, 'there must be no secret talks with Russia; there must be no private talks with Witte; no agreements must be lightly signed with Russia'. The following document highlights Hu's profound mistrust of Russia:

> Now, Japan seems to have the upper hand in the three eastern provinces. Our two countries have good relations, share the same script and are of a similar race, and are generally quite close. Our officials should secretly discuss this. China must strongly express its sovereign interests to all countries. Treaties must be established between both countries, although this is at present difficult to achieve.

Hu Weide was keen here to harmonise relations between the two nations, whilst he discreetly favoured Japan, showing that Hu was no longer able

to trust Russia in the future. The other important point in this telegram is that China's sovereign interests not be neglected, suggesting that the Qing court should express this actively to other countries. After this, Hu suggested that personnel be sent to broker peace, although not directly with Russia, instead asking the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to secretly telegraph ambassadors in the United States and Japan. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs could not completely agree to the secret mission to the East, saying that Russia and Japan should discuss peace on their own, and other countries should not interfere. The USA was seeking a place to hold peace discussions and China should wait for this. However, as far as communicating China's position to other nations, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs heeded Hu Weide's suggestion, writing to all ambassadors in China that 'currently Russia and Japan have been fighting on China's territory, now their peace negotiations also affect China, and any agreement reached without first discussing matters with China cannot be accepted'. Furthermore, on 3 July, Minister Natong visited the British, Japanese and Russian ambassadors in China reiterating that any clause affecting China's northeast agreed to by Russia and Japan, would not be accepted by China. After this, although Japan had to wait for peace to be decided between itself and Russia, it replied that the guarantee of peace in East Asia depends on the terms of agreement, thus evading China's request. However, Japan communicated with the Chinese ambassador to Japan, Yang Shu, that: 'Japan had no intentions towards Manchuria, and if Russia withdrew from Manchuria, thus safeguarding peace in East Asia, then Japan would likewise withdraw its troops'. China had distrusted Russia for a long time and so was more willing to make an alliance with Japan. Yuan Shikai even suggested holding direct talks with Japan on the Manchurian question without the intervention of other nations. Thus, China had high expectations of Japan, hoping that a friendship stemming from a shared script and being of a similar race would help China to wrestle its sovereignty over Manchuria back from Russia.

Although China had expressed its desire not to sacrifice its sovereignty in Manchuria, and was preparing to prevent this, on 5 September, when the two warring countries signed the 'Treaty of Portsmouth' in the USA, Russia and Japan both ignored China's request, and were in essence exchanging China's sovereignty amongst themselves. A day after this treaty was signed, Hu Weide immediately telegraphed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs summarising its contents. The most sensitive issue for China was Russian troops in Manchuria, and China was highly

displeased at the clause in the appendix to the treaty allowing for the stationing of troops to protect the railway. It expressed to Russia and Japan that it could not accept this. China was unable to change the situation however, so the Ministry of Foreign Affairs instructed Hu Weide to consult with the two countries about protecting China's sovereignty. This treaty incurred in China feelings of betrayal and attack once again. In Japan, public opinion was dissatisfied with Japan having to ask the Qing government for land that had been ceded by Russia. This forced Japan to negotiate with China and demand reparation in order to settle the disquiet in its own country. The result was that China began treaty negotiations with Japan concerning the three eastern provinces.

Although Hu had a limited role in these negotiations, all matters relating to the end of the Russo-Japanese War depended on Hu Weide to negotiate with the Russians. Concerning the communiqué from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs protesting about the Treaty clause on the stationing of troops by the railways, after Hu had negotiated with the Russians he telegraphed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs saying, 'Russia has reasoned at length that it has no intention to change the Treaty signed between itself and Japan. Japan has had no discussions with Russia, and even if Japan would discuss this, Russia is unwilling'. Regarding the possibility of Russia conceding this issue, Hu asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to also negotiate with Japan. In fact, after the Russo-Japanese War, Russia did not reduce its military garrisons in Manchuria north of the Amur River, if anything, it reinforced them, and as a result the opportunity for the withdrawal of Russian troops was further reduced. Therefore the Ministry of Foreign Affairs telegraphed Hu Weide asking him to refute the fifth clause in the Treaty concerning the railway in Manchuria (on the Baoding plain), but Hu replied that Russia was causing further delays in this regard. Subsequently, because of Russia's attitude, Tang Shaoyi, Vice-Minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, began negotiating with the new Russian ambassador to China, Dmitri Dmitrievitch Pokotilov (d. 1908), on all issues relating to Manchuria, and Hu Weide's role was less important. After this new development, Hu Weide's work in Russia consisted mainly in negotiating details and reporting on the current situation in Russia, complying with the orders he was given.

Although Hu Weide did not participate in the process of Sino-Russian and Sino-Japanese negotiations, he helped in the proceedings of negotiation and gave many reports and suggestions. On 21 February

1906, Hu wired the Ministry of Foreign Affairs saying that Russia was suspicious of China's behaviour in the Far East, and was secretly planning action. Russia had changed its intentions regarding the withdrawal of troops, leaving 200,000 in the area. If there was an incident, other countries would have a navy, whereas Russia would only have this land force. In order to protect peace in East Asia, Hu Weide suggested informing other nations about this. On 5 March, the Qing court asked the Military Department to inform the international community that China intended to maintain good international relations. The somewhat verbose communiqué highlighted the Qing court's desire to maintain an amicable standing in the international community and caustically criticised those creating false rumours of China's intentions. Although no explicit change was expressed in this telegram, it suggests that the Qing court had the intention to reform, but that it would not accept any violation of previous treaties, thus also showing its greater understanding of the international system.stdt This represented great progress in China's entry into the international community of nations. Also, the Qing court's acceptance of Hu Weide's suggestions proves the importance of Hu Weide in Chinese diplomacy, and should not be overlooked. Once Hu had negotiated with Russia, Russia withdrew its troops according to the treaty. And finally after negotiations with Japan, Japan finally withdrew most of its troops from Manchuria.

Furthermore, Hu Weide's suggestion of demanding reparations also bore fruit. In 1906, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs repeatedly petitioned the Russian ambassador in China for reparation from the Russo-Japanese War. Although the Russians refused to pay reparations to the people of Manchuria, they paid reparations of 5,000,000 taels for damage to Haicanwai [Vladivostok], which they extracted from China's payments from the Boxer Protocol. Due to Hu Weide's continual negotiations, in late December that year, Russia agreed to pay reparations to the people of Manchuria, and arranged to do this in March of the following year. In August 1907, Russia finally made payment. Hu Weide tried to negotiate an increase in the amount paid, but Russia said this would need to be arranged together with Germany and France and other countries. In late February 1909, since it was afraid of losing out on reparations entirely, China gave up trying to increase the amount. By this time, Hu Weide was no longer stationed in Russia.

Although Hu Weide's performance during the Russo-Japanese War was not stunning, his continual negotiations insisting on China's neutrality,

his secret letters reporting back to China, and his insistence on gaining the support of international law, illustrate the contribution diplomats using ‘weak country diplomacy’ made to Chinese international relations.

(III) Establishing the constitution and other important communiqués

After the war between Russia and Japan and the former’s defeat, the situation inside Russia became even tenser. There were strikes and popular movements, all of which greatly affected Russia’s international position. The result of Japan winning and Russia losing meant that people in Russia were clamouring for the establishment of a constitution. This in turn led to more and more calls for a constitution within China. As a diplomat, Hu Weide had a greater understanding of international affairs than officials in China, and thus often offered his opinion. Establishing a constitution was one of Hu Weide’s firmly held political beliefs.

Regarding political reform, as early as 1904 Hu Weide wrote a joint telegram together with the ambassadors in Britain (Zhang Deyi), in France (Sun Baoqi), and in Belgium (Yang Zhaojun), requesting the Qing court to reform. The telegram emphasised the importance of restructuring, noting that whilst Russia began reforms many years ago, it still reels from internal convulsions; Japan on the other hand has been able to modernise and become a powerful nation in a short period of time.

Hu Weide also prepared an article on the constitution, and originally wanted to hand it in at the same time as the telegram, but because the opinions expressed were considered by the others too strong, he decided against it. No one has seen this article to date and it is therefore difficult to guess its content. But, his colleague Sun Baoqi once telegraphed Hu Weide saying: ‘your article is too strong’; the result from this was that Hu soften his tone. Although Hu did not publish his article on the constitution, since the Qing was facing a national crisis and the need for reform was greater than ever, Hu Weide often suggested to the Qing court to implement political reforms post-haste. At the end of July 1905, Hu telegraphed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, saying ‘the current situation is very urgent, people in China desire reform, in the military, in the justice system, in education. Other countries also desire this. No matter what the scale, voices for reform are increasing, and should not be taken

lightly…'; 'Russia has had problems at home and abroad and now needs to reform, and is doing this with a constitution'. This illustrates how Hu Weide encouraged the Qing court. On 21 September 1907, Hu Weide together with Sun Baoqi, Lu Zhengxiang, Liu Shixun, Li Shengduo and Qian Xun suggested to the Qing court to begin drafting a legal constitution. Thus Hu Weide supported and pushed for the establishment of a constitution with the help of other diplomats. In this matter, Hu was a radical in China but he was in conformance with the international political trends of the time.

Apart from the political system, Hu Weide also made suggestions to the Qing court on education, commerce and finance. The two most important articles were about personnel in Manchuria and finance. The former was allowed by the Qing, and Hu worked with the Governor-General of Manchuria, Xu Shichang (1855-1939), on this. The situation was more complex with respect to monetary reforms. Once before, on 14 November 1903, Hu had suggested the Chinese currency be pegged to the US dollar, but was not taken seriously. The Qing currency reform had to wait until ambassador to Britain, Wang Daxie (1859-1929), advocated changing from the silver standard to the gold standard. Hu again wired the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 2 July 1907, giving a report on Wang's suggestions for reform. The report said that gold as a currency is a world trend, and that China could use gold to gain the trust of other countries; he thus echoed Wang Daxie exactly. But Hu's report was more concrete than that of Wang's, apart from suggesting the use of gold, he suggested that China should follow other countries in having an established currency with a name, standard amounts of gold in each coin, and shape. However, he also suggested not rushing to distribute such a new currency amongst the public, as this may cause upheaval. The report suggested calling the new currency yuan, with an exchange rate of 7.2; the report was finally submitted to the Ministry of Finance on 28 May 1908. Ultimately the Qing court did not sanction this monetary system until the middle of 1908 when, concurrently, the international community needed to agree on a tax treaty and when the ambassador to the USA, Tang Shaoyi, was asked to submit a report again.

The Qing court's final acceptance of monetary reform established the yuan as a unit, and began the gradual withdrawal of the old silver currency from circulation. Although Hu Weide's suggestion was finally heeded, this was perhaps due to a change in the times, rather than his personal influence.

As can be seen during this period, Hu Weide put forward many articles containing suggestions for reform, which is possibly connected to Xu Shichang entering the Military. The origin of the relationship between Hu Weide and Xu Shichang cannot be ascertained using the sources currently available. But Hu Weide's younger brother Hu Weixian had Xu Shichang as a teacher, and the relationship between Hu Weide's brother and Xu Shichang was perhaps closer than any ordinary relationship. In 1906 Hu Weide sent Xu Shichang a letter to wish him a happy new year, as well as congratulate him on entering the Military and putting forward some ideas for the new constitution. That someone of Hu's standing in the political establishment would dare to make frequent suggestions on the constitution shows that he must have known powerful persons behind the scenes.

By this time, Hu Weide had been in Russia for nearly twelve years (1896-1907), and had been an ambassador there for almost six (1902-1907). Thus he could be considered as one of the Chinese diplomats with the deepest understanding of Russia at that time. However, due to his long service abroad, where he was unable to return to China because of continual negotiations, Hu Weide's health began to deteriorate. He started to feel particularly exhausted on 23 February 1907, and took leave to see a doctor. The Qing court gave him two months leave, telling him to 'regain his health, take full leave and not to return until he felt better', which shows the esteem in which they held Hu Weide. After Hu had delegated his responsibilities as ambassador to a subordinate, he took some time off, returning to his office three months later.

Two months after his return, Hu wrote to the court saying that he had altogether spent nineteen years abroad, in Britain, the USA and now Russia, and since his mother was soon to be seventy years old, could he possibly take three months' leave to return home to see her. The Qing court granted him this request, changing his rank to Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs. This request perhaps illustrates Hu's fatigue vis-à-vis working in Russia, and the Qing court seemed to be aware of these sentiments.

Before he returned to China, the Czar presented him with a gift. Hu had wanted to go in person to convey his thanks, but had to return to China immediately. After taking his leave and asking for further time off, he returned to Beijing to report back to the court, which this time refused his request on the grounds that 'times were very difficult and negotiations

most urgent'. This can be understood as the Qing court realising that they still needed his services. After the decision to change his appointed status was made, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs telegraphed Hu Weide asking him to return to China immediately to accept further orders.

Many problems arose in the process of selecting a replacement for Hu's office. On 24 September, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs telegraphed Hu Weide saying that Sa Yintu (1870-1912?) would take over as ambassador to Russia. Before he received this telegram however, Hu had heard this news from the Russian Foreign Ministry, who wrote, 'the ambassador on his way to Russia has not been formally approved, nor discussed with Russia, which is not courteous, please inform Beijing of this'. Hu Weide replied on the spot that, 'Mr Sa was a suitable candidate who knew Russian, that he had been sent to Russia, and that this was in the spirit of friendship. The ambassador and other officials were all suggested by me to Beijing'; this response left the Russian Foreign Ministry with nothing to say. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs were pleased with Hu Weide's reply, and asked him to inform Russia that it would be difficult now to change their choice of ambassador. After Hu Weide had communicated this to the Russian Foreign Ministry, the latter said they did not object to Sa Yintu, just that the telegram had used rather strong language. Hu Weide was anxious to return to China, but had to await a Russian response. Five days later, Hu reported that the matter had been settled in a satisfactory manner and he left matters in the care of Liu Jingren (1868-1944) and returned to China.

During Hu Weide's time in Russia, he first had to deal with the issue of Russian troops not withdrawing from Manchuria after the Boxer Protocol, and then he had to face Russia's suspicions of China during the Russo-Japanese War. This all made his career in Russia far from smooth and easy. But Hu not only magnanimously dealt with his responsibility for negotiating Chinese interests, but often added his own analysis and suggestions, providing materials on each situation. His career in Russia was widely praised. Furthermore, since at the time China's international status was comparatively low, Hu Weide's negotiations in Russia was by definition extremely difficult. His humble and responsible attitude, and continued efforts in dealing with Russia, his neutrality, and activities such as enlisting the help of the Red Cross all demonstrate Hu's brilliant performance under the spectre of weak country diplomacy.

As a practical diplomat, Hu Weide was interested in the progress of his

country, and as the constitution became a matter of national importance, Hu sought opinions on a constitution to save the nation. Apart from supporting the idea of a constitution, Hu Weide telegraphed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the progress Russia had made in establishing its own as a means for China to learn from. This proves that Hu Weide was not only interested in matters relating to international negotiations, but that he took a keen interest in domestic politics as well. Such an attitude was similar to that of Confucian scholar-gentlemen such as Yang Ru. Compared to other more specialised and professional diplomats who would have stuck to their own field, taking little interest in domestic politics, Hu was of a broader mind, which again illustrates his uniqueness and brilliance. This characteristic marks a turning point in the kind of Chinese diplomats assuming office.

Section Three—Ambassador to Japan

After Hu Weide finished the difficult posting in Russia, he returned to China and became a consultant at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The next year (1908), he was sent to Japan as ambassador until 1910 and returned to China in April the same year. This would be Hu's last posting delegated by the Qing court as the revolution would soon bring about the dynasty's collapse.

Hu Weide could speak fluent English and French, but he was not as accomplished in Japanese. Compared with Sa Yintu who mastered Russian very well and had replaced Hu Weide as the next Chinese ambassador to Russia, there must have been some particular reason for the Qing government to send Hu to Japan. The period when Hu served in Japan was extremely sensitive: numerous Chinese students studying in Japan were exposed to and developed revolutionary thinking and various revolutionary organizations were established. Whether Hu Weide had anything to do with these activist students or not, is still a question. Apart from this, Japan had already become the strongest country in East Asia and as a result was one of the foreign countries that China had to be particularly careful in dealing with. So it is unlikely that the Qing government had no particular reason to send Hu as ambassador. There

was obviously something special about him that made the Qing government think they could rely on him. If this is so, Hu Weide's diplomatic mission to Japan has a deeper significance that needs to be analysed.

(I) At the Foreign Affairs Ministry in China and then as Ambassador to Japan

On 10 September 1907, Hu Weide was appointed by the Qing government as an advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was transferred from Russia back to China. After a very eventful period as a diplomat in Russia, a month after these orders, Hu Weide returned to China. After living in Russia for several years, no one could better gauge trends in Russia than him, and on his return to China he took up office at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, all of which means his contribution to diplomacy between Russia and China was considerable. The limited documentary evidence available means however that it is hard to prove this directly.

After returning to China, Hu Weide began work at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a position that would last for about half a year. Since the Qing government intended to advocate constitutionalism, they needed to send someone abroad in order to research other countries' policies and how they implemented such. Li Jiaju, who was the ambassador to Japan, was given this position. Therefore, Hu Weide, advisor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was sent to Japan to replace Li Jiaju.

The advisor's post at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was a new position under the auxiliary official system. It became a special position in modern China to principally deal with foreign affairs; it was not a traditional post. The Shanghai newspaper Shenbao explained the history of this new post saying that the advisor position had not existed before the time of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It started as a concurrent post with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and was not considered independently. This was the 'safe policy' used to deal with foreign affairs before the Boxer Protocol. But after foreign affairs became more and more complex, only professionals with a firm grasp of the issues at hand could handle sensitive international affairs. Therefore the Qing government decided to establish the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Above the minister was the Premier and ministers of different departments. Under the assistant minister was advisor to the minister. Since the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was a new ministry in the Chinese

government, the advisor to the minister became a special post in this new ministry. According to this new system, the ministerial advisor 'should deal with negotiations, complaints and onerous duties, requiring an individual of great skill and ability'. Clearly Hu Weide had the ability to take on this position, even if he would not have relished the complexity involved in the job. Still, this position was useful for Hu Weide to rise to senior levels in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and left him well-positioned for future promotion.

Yuan Shikai was Minister of Foreign Affairs when Hu Weide returned to China to take up office as advisor to the minister. They had, up until Hu's appointment, little or no connection. However, whilst Minister Yuan Shikai was in office, Hu Weide was sent to Japan as ambassador, a critical position since Japan was an extremely important neighbour. Thus, obviously, Yuan Shikai had given Hu a good reference, but there is still no concrete evidence pointing to a special relationship between Yuan and Hu.

There is little documentary evidence of Hu Weide's time as advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. This is partly because this position was not a formal post and involved a lot of work behind the scenes. At present we know that in March 1908, Hu Weide, Liang Shiyi and Gao Erqian together established the 'Shanghai-Hangzhou-Ningbo Railway Loan Contract' with the British & Chinese Corporation; the loan was for 1,500,000 pounds. As for Hu Weide, apart from onerous and complex tasks, serving as advisor to the minister was the perfect job for him to assume upon his return from Russia. Hu had always had a certain joie de vivre, but since his wife had passed away about half a year before, he was quite melancholic. After his return to China, there were less social occasions in diplomatic circles for him to attend, which allowed him time to overcome the pain of losing his wife. Still, this brief respite did not last long as he was soon appointed to a new position since he was precisely the kind of diplomat that the Qing government required.

China's situation both at home and abroad was quite different at this period from the early years of the century. In China, the Qing government felt more and more anxious as it faced growing revolutionary movements. Between 1903 and 1905, the revolutionary spirit ran high amongst Chinese student societies in Japan, with many different revolutionary organisations appearing in a short time. This required the close attention of the Qing government. A defining moment in the

revolutionary consciousness was the establishment of the Tongmenghui (Chinese Revolutionary Alliance) in Tokyo in 1905, which combined the entire impetus of revolutionary groups around China, and published an internal newspaper called the People's Newspaper (Minbao) in order to promote revolutionary ideas; together with the reformers' New Citizen Journal (Xinmin Congbao), they became 'the main bastion of controversy'. Although the Tongmenghui gradually splintered when one of the leaders of the revolution, Sun Yat-sen, left Japan in 1907, new revolutionary ideas such as socialism and anarchism continued to emerge amongst Chinese students in Japan. Therefore it became a very important issue for the authorities to monitor the situation in Japan and prevent the students' ideas ever turning into action.

In the early twentieth century, more than 100 Chinese students went to study in Japan. Most of these had unique interests and ambitions; with many of them also being supported by the revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen (his main reason for supporting them was to recruit more revolutionary followers against the Qing). In 1902, Zhang Binling, Wu Jinheng and others carried out public activities against the Qing court. This caused quite a headache to Cai Jun, the ambassador to Japan at the time. In January 1904, the then ambassador to Japan, Yang Shu, who was also general supervisor of Chinese students abroad, noticed that increasing numbers of 'self-promoting and wilful' Chinese students went to study in Japan, and certain phenomena such as using public anger for personal spite, and instigating a crowd to trouble would be unavoidable. After two years, Yang Shu reported to the Qing court saying that the 'ordinary schools' set up by Japan for Chinese students were of inferior quality. Such education was not reliable, but it still attracted a large number of Chinese students hoping to fast-track their education, but 'they would leave a poor legacy in their wake and action should be taken against this'. Also, the quality of the students deteriorated, and there were several cases of rape and theft that became the source of national humiliation. Yang Shu, therefore, suggested that Chinese students intending to study in Japan should be selected carefully, and that if there were any Chinese students in Japan involved in illegal matters or who expressed unorthodox political views they should be sent back to the local authorities in China for interrogation. Meanwhile, the Japanese government also sought to control the quality of the increasing numbers of Chinese students, since negative publicity did not help their educational reputation. Therefore they issued 'Regulations for the entrance of Chinese students to Japanese public and private schools'.

These regulations, however, caused political unrest amongst the Chinese student societies in Japan. Although this matter was later resolved by Yang Shu and some of the more disciplined students, it made the Qing government pay great attention to the power of those Chinese students in Japan. The power from organised students allied to revolutionary ideas would become a great danger to the Qing government. Therefore they carefully considered selecting an ambassador to Japan who would be able to communicate with and guide the students. This intent can be seen from the instructions that the Qing government gave to the Chinese ambassador to Japan, Li Jiaju.

Chinese foreign relations were now dominated by Japan, which had become the most important country for Chinese foreign relations. But it was also a powerful country that China carefully needed to deflect. Japan was not originally China's main diplomatic concern, but its position in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was rising daily. In 1895, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a memorandum to the emperor asking him to no longer call Japan a 'foreigner island' because of demands from the Japanese Ambassador Count Tadasu Hayashi (1850-1913). This could be seen as a warning to the Qing government to recognize that Japan was elevating its position. After the Russo-Japanese War, Japan and Russia signed the Portsmouth Treaty, and China and Japan signed a treaty regarding the Manchurian region. This brought Japanese power flooding into the area. Moreover, Japan also signed an agreement with Russia, each ensuring their special positions in southern Manchuria, Korea, north Manchuria and Mongolia, so that the Japanese increased their control even further into China. By now China had to accept that Japan had become the most important rival in its international relations.

The Manchurian issue became China's central focus once again. Japan and Russia had signed an agreement in Fengtian on 30 October 1905, to hand over the South Manchuria railway and discuss the details of both withdrawing troops. However it took a year to withdraw these military forces, and it seemed likely that both sides had ulterior motives. Although the aftermath of the war between Russia and Japan prevented the former from annexing Manchuria and Mongolia, the latter still maintained a presence in south Manchuria, and later become an imperialist aggressor who threatened the territorial integrity of China. Thus, China was hardly in a position to trust Japan.

The international situation in the Far East forced China to concentrate on dealing with Japan. In the early twentieth century, Great Britain gave up its foreign policy of 'splendid isolation' and after the much-criticised Anglo-German convention in 1900 it signed the Anglo-Japanese alliance, which in turn caused Japan's international status to rise. After its defeat of Russia, and during the war itself, Japan benefited greatly from its Anglo-Japanese alliance and its renewal in August 1905 made Japan even stronger. In general, after 1907, because Western countries were gradually moving their main power bases back to Europe, 'they were content to leave the military-naval ascendancy in the Far East to the Japanese'. This allowed the Japanese to control nearly all of the Far East on its own. As for the specifics, even though Japan was criticised on the Manchuria issue by western nations, it still tried diligently to maintain amiable relationships with other countries in order to preserve its position on the international stage. We can see this from the telegraph that Hu Weide sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 10 July 1909:

> Over the last two or three years, Western countries were not really happy with what the Japanese did in Manchuria, and have made veiled criticisms, and there have been rumours that Japan has lost its relationship with Great Britain and the USA, which has seriously concerned the Japanese government. Consequently, the Japanese Emperor has sent emissaries to deal with relations with Britain, Germany, France, Russia, Italy, and Austria. Also, not long ago, it set up an Anglo-Japanese exhibition in London, though this event was a pretext to gauge foreign relations with Britain. Japan then sent generals of the navy and army to visit the USA, and recently also agreed that American and Japanese industrialists would visit each other. It has made every possible effort to maintain contact with foreign nations.

According to this we can tell that the Manchurian question had become an issue that concerned western countries as well. Japan knew this and tried constantly to keep close to all the western countries to maintain freedom of action in Manchuria. Japanese diplomacy became very agile whilst it made itself the dominant power in the Far East. This put a lot of pressure on China.

Since Japan had become the most important diplomatic relationship for China, it was essential to appoint a suitable person as ambassador to Japan. According to the regulations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

when it was established, auxiliary officials and the advisor to the minister all would be candidates to be ambassador. Hu Weide had the experience as ambassador in Russia and also as a ministerial advisor, he was thus an ideal choice for the Qing government. Therefore, after serving as ambassador in Russia for twelve years and spending only half a year back in China, Hu Weide was sent again on a diplomatic mission, this time to Japan.

The Qing government sent Hu Weide to Japan as ambassador on 23 March 1908. On 21 April, Prime Minister Yikuang presented a memorandum to the Qing Emperor that said: 'Ambassadors sent abroad must always be approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and must present a memorandum to the Qing Emperor and receive his approval. Since Hu Weide was appointed by the Qing government and sent as ambassador to Japan, he should receive imperial instruction and approval. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has sketched out the credentials of Hu Weide: his personality is honest and tolerant; he is capable and experienced, has been sent on diplomatic missions to western countries and has received positive feedback in managing negotiations'. Although this was typical diplomatic language, it still illustrates the Qing government's impression of him. Hu Weide was considered an honest and tolerant individual who had been appointed ambassador before.

Hu Shiping has said that his father Hu Weide had a modest and peaceful personality. The epitaph for Hu Weide also states: 'skilled in the line of duty, he respected friends sincerely, was merciful and friendly, spoke without prepossession, did not chase fame and wealth, lived a simple life and was a self-controlled person'. Perhaps Hu Weide's character made the Qing government think that as ambassador to Japan he could alleviate the tension between the Qing and Chinese students in Japan.

Compared to all the provincial imperial instructions that the Qing government used to send Chinese ambassadors in Japan, it was clear that the levels of vigilance exercised by the Qing government had been reduced. The turning point was during Li Jiaju's time as ambassador to Japan. In the imperial edict sent to Cai Jun when he was sent to Japan as ambassador in August 1901, it was decreed that he should supervise the studies of Chinese students about to graduate, and train them as professionals. As can be seen, the supervision of the students' studies was emphasised. By the time Yang Shu was ambassador to Japan, the

imperial edict decreed that Chinese students in Japan should cooperate with their supervisor in checking their studies, so that can the supervisor may watch and guide the development of the student's thoughts and ensure they would become a productive individual in society. The supervisor not only looked after the student's studies, but the Qing government also started to take note of the students' thinking. Then when Li Jiaju was appointed, the imperial edict changed: for Chinese students studying in Japan, the most important thing was to supervise the students' studies, supervisors must seriously consider and observe the students' thinking, and adjust wayward ways to ensure that they will become productive persons in society. By this time the Qing government added particular words to emphasise their position: for example: 'very important', 'pay very careful attention to' and 'adjust' any wayward thinking. All this was related to events that happened in 1905, notably the establishment of the Tongmenghui and People's Newspaper, and the 'clamp down on regulations' event. But when Hu Weide and after him Wang Deyi were sent to Japan as ambassadors, imperial edicts issued to them focused on the following:

> Since you have a lot to manage, ensure you deal with negotiations, follow treaties and handle them with great care. After you receive orders from The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, consider the best timing and opportunity to execute such orders; also ask for instruction and act on them at all times. All the retinue and personnel who are engaged in educational missions must follow these rules. Chinese businessmen and people abroad should be taken care of and regulated by the Chinese embassy at all times. Ensure they are living and working peacefully. If there are any unfinished matters concerning imperial instruction, you should judge the timing, measure the situation and handle it fairly.

At this time the Qing government did not insist on using strong language like 'review' or 'adjust' regarding the students' thinking. This change in policy might have been because after 1908, the centre of activity for both revolutionary movements and constitutional movements gradually migrated from Japan to China. Following this line, we can see that the period when Li Jiaju was ambassador to Japan was the time when the Qing government seriously worried about Chinese student movements in Japan. But the Qing government was much less concerned about student movements in Japan when Hu Weide took over as ambassador from Li

Jiaju. Still, even though Japan trained Chinese students with new Western ideas and organisation skills, its continued influence on political movements in China was an issue of concern. The Qing government was very concerned about this. The incident surrounding the Japanese merchant ship 'Daini-Tatsumaru' in May 1908 illustrates this.stdt

The 'Daini-Tatsumaru' Incident happened after a Japanese merchant ship called 'Daini-Tatsumaru' was captured by the Governor-general of Guangdong and Guangxi, Zhang Renjun, in Chinese territorial waters near Macao on 5 February. It was carrying 'more than 2000 guns and 40,000 ma (stacks)', but did not have a 'China munitions license'. According to the 'the third paragraph of the trade relations treaty', a Chinese ship brought the 'Daini-Tatsumaru merchant ship and its goods back to Huangbu to deal with it according the law'. But because they captured the Japanese merchant ship in the area just outside the sea Macao, it aroused complaints from Portugal and Japan and started a succession of negotiations between China, Japan and Portugal. The Qing Government acted in this way because they believed that the munitions were being provided for revolutionary needs. This was certainly related to the expansion of revolutionary fervour in China and thus the Qing government paid great attention to shipments of munitions. Although various political movements transferred their centres to China, the Qing government continued to keep a close eye on information from Japan. Concomitantly, this incident caused unrest amongst the Chinese which led to the boycotting of Japanese goods. Later the Qing government tried hard to resolve this issue, but the 'Daini-Tatsumaru' Incident had nevertheless aggravated relations between the two countries. Consequently, the Qing government picked Hu Weide to serve as ambassador to Japan with the intention of improving the poor relations between the two by utilising Hu Weide's generous personality. Later, in 1922, Yan Huiqing (1877-1950) invited Hu Weide back to serve as ambassador to Japan once more, a further illustration of Hu's special qualities.

The connection between Japan and revolutionary movements in China was not only related to Chinese students in Japan. Furthermore, the revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen was spreading revolutionary ideas abroad and had already caused grief to the Qing court. Japan was the main stage in Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary movement. In February 1909, the governor of Hubei province, Chen Yilong, sent a telegram to the Qing court, saying: 'there are rumours that the rebel (referring to Sun Yat-sen)

is currently living in Tokyo… We have consulted with Ambassador Hu Weide in Japan… the Japanese ambassador in Beijing and the Japanese Foreign Ministry, trying to investigate and catch him to counter his machinations and stop the insurgency'. At the same time the Qing court also discovered by enquiry that Sun Yat-sen was in Japan, and sent a telegram to Hu Weide to confirm that if Sun was there then discuss his 'banishment from Japan' with the Japanese Foreign Ministry. Hu Weide replied to the Qing court and said: 'I have already sent a telegram to the Kobe consul to go to the Nagoya area and find Sun Yat-sen'. Two days later, Hu sent another telegram to say that a person called Zhongcun had been spotted, but they could not confirm whether it was Sun Yat-sen, and asked for instructions as to ' whether to continue spying on him or not; the expenses are quite high: what should the next step be?'. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in China ordered Hu to 'keep spying on him and report at all times'. In the end, there were no definite results regarding this matter, but it still showed the great caution the Qing government took with regard to revolutionary activities.

Everything happens for a reason: Hu Weide's personality and the situation at the time were the two main factors that made the Qing court send him to Japan as ambassador. Although the centre of Chinese student political movements gradually moved from Japan to China, Japan was still an important place for revolutionary materials and the dissemination of ideas that forced the Qing government to seriously approach the issue. Also, Hu Weide's honest and tolerant character and respect-commanding seniority meant that he could defuse revolutionary fervour amongst the Chinese students whilst also mitigating the alienation between Japan and China, exacerbated by the Japanese merchant ship incident. This conferred advantages on the Qing court, and validated the court's decision to send Hu Weide to Japan as ambassador.

(II) Negotiations whilst serving in Japan

After Hu Weide had accepted the position, he was summoned twice by Emperor Guangxu, although unfortunately we have no idea what was discussed at these meetings. Hu arrived in Tokyo on 31 July. He received a government seal and files the following day. On 3 August, he presented a memorandum to Emperor Guangxu about the situation in Japan after his arrival and mentioned that he was very impressed by the excellent supervision undertaken of Chinese students. On 11 August, Hu Weide handed an introductory letter to the Japanese government. After arriving

in Japan, apart from keeping an eye on revolutionary movements amongst Chinese students, he also had to begin negotiations on major issues. Some of these issues were the Dongsha Island (Pratas Island) case, the Korean issue and the Yanji case. Additionally, when Hu Weide arrived in Japan, apart from the aforementioned issues, there were also the 'Tianbao Mountain case' and 'Anfeng Railway case' which all involved Manchuria. Here we will mainly discuss the Korean issue and the Yanji Incident, with only a few words on the other issues since Hu Weide was more involved in these two. All were territorial disputes. The Korean issue and the Yanji Incident were also linked to Manchuria, demonstrating how serious the question of the northeast had become for China and Japan.

The so-called Dongsha Island issue arose from a small island or archipelago called the Pratas in Chinese territorial waters 170 miles southeast of Hong Kong. This island was uninhabited and no one had officially taken control of it. Nonetheless, Chinese fishermen had been using the island around the middle of every year for a long time. There was also a Japanese man called Nishizawa Yoshizistdt who, in 1907, had led an expedition to the island and claimed it as his own, thus complicating the issue of sovereignty over the island. The problem of sovereignty, however, did not manifest itself prior to Britain displaying interest in it. When it began constructing a lighthouse on the island, the Chinese government initiated research into archival evidence and confirmed that this island did indeed belong to China. The governor of Guangdong province, Zhang Renjun, presented a memorandum to Emperor Guangxu that said:

> Consider erecting a sign to prevent other countries from taking over this island. The governor of the Two Rivers area also suggested informing Britain and Japan that this island belonged to China. They can send an accredited person to take a map as evidence to meet British diplomats first to clarify this issue, then meet Japanese diplomats and see how they react, and then decide what to do. If they all agree, then it would be possible to negotiate with Japan about withdrawing the Japanese who are occupying the island. If there was any uncertainty, they should send people to the island to investigate, thus avoiding any unexpected turns. After the Japanese trader Nishizawa Yoshizi is removed, if this island did require a lighthouse, it should be dealt with by the Chief Customs Commissioner and passed on to the Customs

Commissioner of Guangdong province to reconnoitre and construct. If further work was needed, Governor-general Zhang Renjun would assess the situation and decide a course of action.

Zhang Renjun investigated the island and reported that: 'this island has a short railway, piping to produce fresh water. 101 Japanese men and women live there, and thirty-three workers from Taiwan have been recruited. Obviously the Japanese have operated on this island for a while. But it is run by individuals without government involvement'. Zhang Renjun suggested that China contact Japan demanding those people be relocated. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, however, considered that the Japanese had managed the island for a while, and that it was a bit late for China to now claim sovereignty. The Ministry asked Zhang Renjun to check with the local Japanese consul and 'see how they reply and then decide what to do'.

Hu Weide reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 18 March, saying: 'During this time, the newspapers have reported news that some Japanese fisherman have shown up on Dongsha Island, and have hung the Japanese national flag on it. I called on the Guangdong Governor-general to investigate this and also to consider it as important news to report'. Zhang Renjun checked with the Japanese consul and reported as following: 'This Island does not belong to Japan. Japan did not intend to occupy the island, but thought it was uninhabited. If China considers taking control of this island, it must show local historical records and maritime maps to prove that this island belongs to China, and send such evidence to the Japanese Foreign Ministry'. Hu Weide discussed with the Japanese Foreign Minister Komura Jutaro (1855-1911), who replied by telegram to Hu Weide that: 'Japanese businessman have lived on Dongsha Island for about two years, and were asked to take over the place because it seemed to be uninhabited, but the Japanese government did not agree. If China has evidence to prove that it belongs to China, then it should be thus'. These words show that Japan had no intention to take over the island. Hu Weide still suggested to the Qing government that: 'because this relates to territorial issues, we should ask the Governor-general of Guangdong to collect all the evidence and prepare to negotiate with the Japanese'. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Zhang Renjun adopted his suggestion, and worked hard to collect all the evidence and exchange information with Hu Weide. Negotiations with Japan could only be successful if all evidence was gathered.

Although China took this matter very seriously, Japan did not seem hugely concerned about it. The Japanese Foreign Ministry not only sent the message that this island should belong to China, but also asked the local governor to negotiate with Zhang Renjun, making the sole condition that the Japanese people who lived there be protected. Therefore, Zhang Renjun sent a telegram to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs asking Hu Weide to cease further negotiations with the Japanese to avoid conflicting messages. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs agreed to this. This matter was then transferred from Hu Weide to Zhang Renjun to deal with

the Japanese Foreign Minister directly. Nevertheless, the island remained ostensibly under Japanese control until the end of World War II.

At that time, Japan's major ambition was to obtain Manchuria, and not the region around Guangzhou: [the situation was thus not seen as of great importance]. Everything related to Manchuria, on the other hand, would be difficult. After the Russo-Japanese War, the attitude of hostility between Japan and Russia had, little by little, become a one of cooperation. The reason behind this was related to the fact that China had started to pay attention to the management of Manchuria. Apart from the change in the geopolitical situation in the region, China also wanted to invite other countries to explore the area, which aggravated Japan and Russia. They were deeply afraid that the region, which was under their monopoly, would become a place of multinational competition. Therefore, Japan and Russia signed a secretive treaty in July 1907 to agree on the borderline of South and North Manchuria. They also mutually recognised their status of power in South and North Manchuria and in Mongolia to prevent other powers' intervening in the area. In 1910, they signed a second secret treaty in response to the actions of the USA which wanted to neutralise the Manchuria Railway. Not only did they announce that 'there would be no competition for power over the border', they also solidified their mutual cooperation in order to 'prevent a third party (the USA) from interfering' in the region. This cooperation between Japan and Russia made China's situation more difficult. On 1 April 1909, in his report about handing the national letter to the Japanese court, Hu Weide said that, 'negotiations in Japan were already complicated, especially with respect to the recent Manchuria issue where everything was important. I have the honour of being the ambassador and will try to maintain the situation through negotiation and will diligently report everything in time to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to

maintain national dignity'. By saying 'maintain the situation through negotiation', Hu Weide revealed the precarious situation the Chinese government faced over the issue of Manchuria.

Although the issue of Korea was not a major concern for Hu Weide, it could still not be overlooked. Since Japan would always have backyard worries of westward intrusion unless Korea could be stabilised, Korea was actually at the heart of most of the problems in Manchuria. Early modern Korea was China's closest vassal state. But since it was situated in a strategic location between China and Japan, it had become an important area positioned in the way of Japan's expansion into China. Moreover, there had been talk in Japan of 'conquering Korea for quite some time. The Sino-Japanese War started because of Korea, and even the Russo-Japanese negotiations before the Russo-Japanese War also had shades of the Korean problem. In the secretive treaties between these two countries, Korea, according to Japanese declarations, belonged to its sphere of power. From this, it can be suggested that Japan was determined to assume control over Korea, [which they finally did in 1910].

This thesis, however, will not discuss the Japanese-Korean relationship before the first Russo-Japanese secretive treaty but will use it [the treaty] as a starting point. On 26 July 1907 (five days before the first secretive treaty between Japan and Russia), Japan and Korea signed a treaty in which was written: 'most administration and human resources were to be supervised by Japan'. After this treaty, Japan had officially obtained so-called special power-status in Korea which served as a base for the Russo-Japanese secretive treaty. Nonetheless, several groups of Koreans refused to submit to Japan and therefore led insurgencies against Japanese control; this in turn aggravated the Japanese authorities. Especially disturbing were the rebels that operated in the border areas between China and Korea, and whom Japan could not easily subdue. So, apart from asking for help from China, they also wanted to send their own troops into the area to investigate and quell the insurgency. The general of three provinces in the northeast, Xu Shichang, worried that Japan would not behave as it announced, and that under the pretext of ridding the area of the bandits they would 'try to encroach upon China, a point that should not be overlooked'. Furthermore he stated that: 'The Japanese wanted to send armies across the border which was denigrating towards our sovereignty and should not be permitted'. He asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to question the Japanese ambassador about

this but nothing came of these enquiries as other cases that needed negotiations between China and Japan, for example, the Yanji Incident, came to the forefront.

On 24 July 1909, Hu Weide wired the Ministry of Foreign Affairs saying that 'today it was announced that Japan and Korea exchanged a memorandum of understanding. The judicial system and the gendarmerie of Korea would heretofore belong to Japan and therefore the military department and the law department were to be abolished'. Shortly thereafter, Korea's military and legal offices were closed and replaced by Japanese institutions, thus making Korea a base for Japanese manoeuvres in East Asia; this situation was called a 'combination of Japan and Korea'. Afterwards Hu Weide wired the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reporting that Korea's 'chief of the Iljinhoe [meaning Progress Party - a pro-Japan organisation], Yi Yong-gu (1868-1912, was in favour of the merging of Japan and Korea' which highlighted fully Japanese ambitions towards Korea. But China at that time only wished to save itself and had no capacity to pay close attention. Several months later, Japan 'was formally about to execute its plan, even though European countries were opposed'. Hu Weide could not stop this plan and sighed that, 'Korea had become a continuation of the Okinawa islands.'

It was understandable that China wanted only to save itself, since apart from its movements in Korea, Japan had also carried out operations in Manchuria. On 18 July 1907, under pressure from Japan, the King of Korea abdicated and was succeeded by the prince. This caused great discontent amongst the Korean people. As a result, the general of Manchuria, Xu Shichang, and the general of Fengtian, Tao Zhaoyi, thought that, 'since the Korean king was forced to give up his throne which lead to the whole of Korean territory plunging into chaos, we should be gravely concerned about Manchuria. The Chinese-Korean border was not fixed and there would surely be more and more negotiations. Additionally, since there were no previous cases to refer to, there would be no reference when a crisis came'. They also suggested that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 'ask the Chief Consul of Korea Mr Ma Dostdt to choose someone who was familiar with the border to come and bring a map and essential documents to clarify the details'. The Ministry accepted the suggestion in order to prevent the worst from happening.

Japan was also quick to react. Two weeks later, the Japanese government

planned to send troops to protect residents who were troubled by the bandits since the sovereignty of the Kando Island near the Chinese-Korean border was not clear. After his investigation, Xu Shichang wired the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informing them that 'the island did belong to China' and the residents 'had simply come across the border to till the area' and emphasised that Japan 'could not claim that the sovereignty was in question just because of the number of Korean residents'; he thus asked the Ministry to refuse Japan's demands. Japan, however, believed that 'it was not clear whether this place belonged to China or Korea', and therefore it could not be considered Chinese. From this point on, China and Japan began to seriously argue over the issue which eventually led to the Yanji negotiations.

The Yanji Incident was called the Kando (Chinese: Jiandao) Island Case by the Japanese. These two names have always been conflated together. In either case, the Yanji Incident continued to develop whilst Hu Weide was ambassador to Japan. At the time, Japan had sent 'a thousand gendarmes' there and 'sent the chief of the gendarmerie of Kando Island and the police to every village where there were Korean settlements'. Also it 'expanded the territory of the island and made the Koreans immigrate and begin cultivating the land' as if it wanted to concretise as fact that it belonged to Japan. This aroused the attention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which wired Hu Weide and asked him to 'petition firmly in person to the Japanese Foreign Ministry'. Hu Weide 'questioned Komura Jutaro' and wired back stating that 'the latter said that he wanted to close the Kando Island affair and not let it escalate any further. But he had only recently become Foreign Minister and had to discuss how to manage the issue with the government. Since the Koreans had made trouble in the area, an army detachment was requested but refused by the authorities. Perhaps that is why it established a gendarmerie. In any case, the issue would be sorted out in three or four days.' Hu Weide had also emphasised that the Yanji territory had been documented by the Chinese government as being Chinese, and Japan's rash actions not only intruded upon China's sovereignty, but also 'damaged neighbourly relations'. Komura Jutaro 'was very sorry for the delay in resolving the disagreement'. Komura's actions seemed to indicate that Japan wanted to solve this problem peacefully.

About two weeks later, Hu Weide wired again to report Komura's response. He said that, 'altogether there were only 107 gendarmes on Kando Island, and there had been no reinforcements of 1000 more'. The

areas in which China accused Japan of sending gendarmes were not true. ‘The experimental farms of Shidaogou and the sending gendarmes to the north of Korea were both not true’. Since all accusations made by China were denied by Komura Jutaro, Hu Weide suggested ‘replying immediately. After verifying his claims, we could question him further if the reality of the situation did not correspond’. The Ministry therefore wired Xu Shichang and asked him to verify the facts and provide proof.

However, the day before the Ministry sent this telegram, conflict erupted between the Chinese and Japanese gendarmes near Yanji, which aggravated the situation. Shortly afterwards, the conflict became more and more intense. The Japanese gendarmes warned that they ‘would shoot if any Chinese tried to prevent them from building’, referring to the construction of a military garrison nearby. Soon a Chinese policeman was wounded by the Japanese, which finally made the problem very complicated. China claimed that this area belonged to it and that Japan had invaded China’s territory. Seen from the Japanese point of view, Japan had the responsibility to protect this area since there were many Korean residents there. Additionally, if its sovereignty had not been clearly ascertained, the issue should be discussed in a diplomatic way. It was argued that the Chinese officials and gendarmes made a local inspection before any diplomatic negotiations and without listening to warning; this was surely due to their lack of consideration. Both held to their own opinions and would not acquiesce. This made Hu Weide’s work very difficult.

On 12 October, the special envoy to the USA, Tang Shaoyi, went to Japan to make a study of the finances and received a very warm welcome by the Japanese Foreign Ministry on the second day of his arrival. During the dinner, the Japanese Prime Minister Katsura Taro (1848-1913) and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Komura Jutaro both expressed that regarding ‘the unresolved case of the three North-eastern provinces’ they had ordered the Japanese ambassador to China to ‘negotiate peace as quickly as possible’ so that ‘relations between the two countries would make progress’. However, whether this was said just for the sake of diplomacy, or whether the central and local governments were not at one with each other, the next day Japanese militia were firing at and wounding Chinese gendarmes. Since Tang was in Japan, China asked both Hu Weide and Tang Shaoyi to ‘firmly question Japan’, and make demands, such as punishing the criminals involved, withdrawing soldiers, and compensating the wounded. But after negotiations, Hu

Weide wired the Ministry of Foreign Affairs saying that what Japan had received as information was not what China claimed, and it needed to be clearly investigated.

Later, both sides began to acquiesce, and the negotiations seemed to be concluding well. The Japanese Foreign Minister, Komura Jutaro said that to China the most important thing was the boundary, whereas to Japan it was protecting the Korean residents. If China could acknowledge Japan's 'right to protect the Korean residents in Yanji', Japan would acknowledge China's 'sovereignty'. Hu and Tang believed that if both countries carried on insisting different principles, then 'the affair would be aggravated as time went by'. They thus suggested the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to 'select one or two places as a commercial port. China would take charge of the administration of industry, gendarmerie and health issues. Furthermore, all the Koreans in this area should be allowed to have their share of land leased for a certain period. As for local taxes, they should pay the same as the Chinese. If they asked for the right to have their own police, such could be refuted since a commercial port is not a concession and that it has never been allowed for any country to have their own police on Chinese territory'. The Ministry thought this reasonable and wired Xu Shichang for his opinion. But Xu understood the local situation better. He believed that though Japan could acknowledge the area as belonging to China, their 'Japanese-Korean agricultural community' had put this argument on their map, which showed that they wanted more than this. He worried that 'the Japanese were always very cunning and there might be other troubles afterwards'. Seen from the perspective of Japan's other actions in China, Xu's concern seemed reasonable. Therefore the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Japanese ambassador to China started to deal with the Yanji border problem in Beijing. Hu Weide's negotiation mission in Japan was to demand compensation.

Generally speaking, China's ultimate goal of negotiation was the establishment of a border with compensation being second. But to Japan, the compensation meant an acknowledgement of failure and they could not easily allow it. Nonetheless, the negotiations in Beijing worked well. Japan seemed to have the intention to recognise Kando Island as Chinese territory in order to have the administrative right over the local Koreans. But in Japan they had refused to allow Hu Weide to investigate what really had happened as 'the case had already been settled and they need not send anyone to investigate'. There would be no 'compensation' if

evidence of the conflict was not verified. This was how Japan tried to avoid the compensation issue. Hu said that the Vice-Minister of the Japanese Foreign Ministry (since Minister Komura was sick and had been substituted by the Vice-Minister) insisted that the Chinese were armed at the time and the Japanese took their guns to defend themselves, and that 'it was all clear. If they sent investigators there would be useless trouble'. Particularly, the Japanese believed that 'the Yanji problem needed to be thoroughly resolved and should not be lingered over because of unimportant details'. Japan did not want to acknowledge that they were mistaken which would lead them to a withdrawal from the Yanji area. That is why when even Hu Weide asked several times to talk, there was no agreement regarding compensation.

Not only was the problem of compensation unresolved but also when China thought Japan would finally recognise China's sovereignty over Kando Island the negotiations reached an impasse as Japan made an official 'clarification' of the proceedings. In April 1909 the Japanese ambassador wrote to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On the Yanji problem, he stated that:

> At present, the issue concerning Chinese or Korean sovereignty over Kando Island, including the area of Douman and Jiangbei (north of the river), is unsettled. In your letter you said that we had acknowledged Chinese sovereignty over the area. However, it was a pure misunderstanding. What I said to your honourable Minister was that if your honourable government would agree with our proposals and other conditions on other cases being discussed, we could also withdraw and concede sovereignty of Kando Island. Since I want to compromise and deal with it rapidly, I therefore followed the orders of my government and acknowledged that Kando Island was Chinese territory, given that the negotiation conditions were satisfactory. This is my reason for this letter and I trust you will check the details.

He meant that although Japan could acknowledge that Yanji belonged to China, this was conditional on China accepting all its proposals on other issues. This was a rather strict condition. Japan's behaviour in this matter was in fact closely linked to its intentions in Korea and Manchuria. A supporting example was one of the so-called 'other cases': the arbitrary right over the Korean residents in Yanji. According to Hu Weide who had analysed Japan's reasons for this, it was that 'firstly, the judges in Korea

were all Japanese. These two countries had exchanged their memoranda of understanding, and Korea had given its right of judgement to Japan. So Japan would not give in on anything that concerned Korean judicial issues. It was a policy to manage Korea'. 'Secondly, hatred towards Japan was very deep in Korea. People were always plotting to revolt. In the north of Korea, people were more openly rebellious, and the Japanese suspected they would hide themselves in the border area and therefore insisted arbitrary rights over the Koreans. It was a policy to control the Koreans'. To Japan, the territorial problem was but a temporary one. The judicial system and arbitrary right were the essential issues to help expand its power. But to China, Japan's demands were too great, and no agreement could be reached.

In order to achieve its goal, Japan had let its soldiers cause disturbances several times to put pressure on China. China, however, would not compromise at any price, and interrogated the Japanese Foreign Ministry through Hu Weide. This issue was finally resolved by Japan's withdrawal as a result of negotiations held by Hu, the local government of the Northeast and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They would give territorial control of Yanji back to China and sign a treaty concerning the Yanji border issues and other negotiations in Manchuria. Japan claimed that 'it was an exceptional withdrawal and it was intended for the friendship of our two countries'. The affair was closed the following year. The result was that 'China opened four commercial ports in the south-east of Jilin province and the Koreans stayed and cultivated the land as before'. To China, it was ideal to solve the problem peacefully through diplomatic means. The solution of Kando Island dispute was due to the cooperation between the officials in Beijing, Manchuria and Hu Weide who made firm declarations in Japan.

Japanese diplomacy was more active than that of China. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Russo-Japanese Treaty made it possible to expand its power and protect itself. When its expansion caused dissatisfaction amongst other countries, it managed to maintain relations and resolve the obstacles. Examples of this were the Anglo-Japanese Exhibition and the Japanese sending of prominent generals to visit the USA as noted above. Hu Weide therefore suggested that the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs not be drawn backwards. In the telegram dated 10 July 1909 cited above, we can see his suggestions for Chinese diplomacy through his references to Japan's relations with European countries and the USA:

> The reason that Japan would invest itself in this was essentially to hide its intentions from the West and to attack the East. We have to prepare for this and frequently the European countries and the USA have to compete with Japan. Recently, relations between China and Great Britain have become cooler. We might try to save it. Whenever there were issues to be negotiated between China and Europe only the USA would help us. We should pay attention to maintaining this relationship when dealing with the USA and not let anyone drive a wedge in between. Today we face a solitary situation and our international status is closely connected with the country's rise and fall. My job is in diplomacy and this is my modest observation. I would not dare to keep silent about this.

Generally speaking, Hu's comments were reasonable. But he was over-optimistic in international affairs and believed that if China 'paid attention to maintaining its relations with other countries and not let others sow discord' it could fully protect its rights. However, European countries were soon more focussed on Europe and American diplomacy returned to its earlier isolationist stance. East Asian issues soon began to depend upon Japan. Nonetheless, even if Hu Weide's suggestions seemed over optimistic, it was what China had to do at that time. Thus his proposals became the accepted diplomatic principals of the Qing court.

Hu Weide had also made contributions to the administration of human resources at the Chinese Embassy in Japan. Wang Daxie who succeeded him essentially kept the same arrangements Hu had made. However, some of these arrangements would turn out to be unfair and cause later problems. For example, the supervisor of the overseas students, Tian Wuzhao, got on poorly with the students and was soon replaced after Wang Daxie's arrival. Additionally, the chief accountant of the supervisory section, Xia Xuntan, was a corrupt bureaucrat soon to be disciplined by Wang. From this it can be seen that Hu Weide was not very efficient in the appointment of administrative staff. This stood in stark contrast to his sharp eye for recommending diplomatic talent.

The most important work after all was diplomacy as well as finance. When Hu Weide was in Russia the embassy had little money, which created obstacles for its actions. Facing this difficulty, Hu Weide still maintained normal arrangements and achieved the missions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was a proof of his ability. When he

was in Japan, the embassy finances were in better shape than in Russia. With ample resources, Hu could better arrange embassy affairs. Though China was sometimes looked down upon, seen from Katsura Taro and Komura's intentions to maintain friendship, Hu Weide had earned much for the dignity of China. When he returned to China after his appointment in Japan, 'many Japanese officials sent him off at the Shimbashi railway station'. It is clear that he had a high reputation amongst Japanese officials.

But before the end of his time in Japan, he had married a concubine and 'went on a honeymoon trip by car along the Japanese coast'. It took 'more than a month to come back to Tokyo'. At this crucial time when Japan and Russia were secretly discussing their strategies regarding China, Hu Weide's personal trip lasting over a month was criticised. The Shenbao printed a short critique: 'Alas! At a time when our country is facing humiliations and difficulties everyday, the diplomatic service has become a bed of marriage… Have the Japanese islands with their beautiful landscape and refreshing temperatures become a pleasure retreat for our consul and counsellor? I have to convey my wishes: 'Congratulations to our consul and again congratulations to our counsellor, and tears for our diplomatic future!'' This short critique was very negative about Hu Weide and his counsellor (the second counsellor Wu Zhenlin who had married the daughter of Yize Xiu'er, who had remarried and neglected their work. Luckily the press was more discontent about Wu marrying a Japanese wife, and it was near the end of Hu Weide's time as ambassador (he was to leave for China for another job in a fortnight), so this issue was not elaborated upon. Hu Weide's position was succeeded by Wang Daxie and thus ended his last posting during the Qing Dynasty.

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1. Hu Weide, servant of the Qing Government
2. The first Madame Hu, nee Cheng
3. Hu Weide and eldest son, enjoying one of their hobbies
4. Hu Weide's first daughter-in-law and her first-born son
5. Hu Weide's second son and wife

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1. Hu's second wife, nee Chu
2. Their five children
3. Nine of Hu's twelve children. The two eldest were working abroad; no.12 was too young to stand
4. Hu's consort, mother of six of his children

Chapter Four—Hu Weide at a time of transition in political power

After Hu Weide was transferred from his post as ambassador in Japan to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he became a senior figure in Chinese diplomacy and rose very fast in his official career at the Ministry. To reiterate, the creation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was one of the outcomes of the Boxer Protocol, because of the great inefficiency of the Zongli Yamen; the countries involved used the Protocol to coerce China into establishing a western system of diplomacy. Though the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had numerous problems, it nevertheless symbolised 'an approximation of the general model of diplomatic organisations of modern nations'. Additionally, the Ministry established a leadership system that, comparatively speaking, enjoyed a concentration of power. It also stipulated the terms for the basic requirements of every class of the leadership and thus added a new variable for personnel changes in Chinese political circles. The traditional scholar-officials could no longer participate in diplomatic policy decisions, which they could under the Zongli Yamen. Rather those who had been trained in western learning, particularly the new categories of intellectuals educated in Western languages, found a new road for promotion to higher office in the diplomatic world. On account of his background in western learning and the credentials of having entered the diplomatic realm relatively early, Hu Weide became an important player in the Chinese diplomatic world at the end of the Qing Dynasty. Not only did he rise rapidly, but he also began to show his uniqueness amongst the second generation of diplomats, which established him as a paragon in the midst of the diplomats of that generation.

Section One—Official posts at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the late-Qing period

Hu Weide did not complete his official appointment in Japan as he was recalled by the Qing court, upon which he returned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to assume duties. At that time the postings of the first generation of diplomats were already decreasing. Though there still remained many diplomats of a traditional scholar background in China as well as abroad, the new generation of scholars trained in western learning were nevertheless beginning to show their talent, becoming the officials

handling diplomacy. The most prominent figures in diplomatic negotiations amongst the students who had studied abroad were Liang Dunyan (1857-1924), Wu Tingfang, and Cao Rulin. The most outstanding persons with a background in western learning obtained in China were Hu Weide and Lu Zhengxiang. These individuals became the main force in diplomatic negotiations at that time. This suggests that the followers of western learning had already gradually mastered the realm of Chinese diplomatic negotiations. Besides, Chinese official circles had always attached importance to qualifications and records of service, hence Hu Weide had both a background in western learning and a superior position as an envoy abroad over many years. Additionally, at a time when individuals involved in foreign affairs during the earlier period were declining in number, he leaped into the rank of leaders in diplomatic circles and so could enter the governing class of Chinese diplomacy.

Hu had for a short while acted as a deputy official (an advisory position) in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1907, but because it was only for a short time and data is lacking, it is difficult to judge his performance. Nevertheless, at that time Hu held an important post, and encountered the unrest of the Revolution, and so must have played a significant role. Hu Weide's influence in Chinese diplomacy is a pertinent topic for discussion, especially during this time of turbulence and changes in political power in the transition from the Late-Qing to the Early Republic.

(I) Becoming Minister of Foreign Affairs

Hu Weide received an order from the Qing court on 24 May 1910, and returned to China to take up a post at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On account of the Foreign Minister Liang Dunyan being ill, rumours of personnel change had for some time been circulating around the Ministry.

The civil service system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was divided into the Guanbu and Tangguan sections. The Guanbu had Imperial Clansmen and Princes as Ministers in control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; they were at the very top. Under the General Minister were two officials, and generally it was the Minister of Foreign Affairs who held the job concurrently (it did not constitute a separate post). The Tangguan was supported by two Ministers and two Vice-Ministers; Manchus and Han were not segregated; amongst the Ministers there also had to be a

Minister of the Armed Forces. Along with the Vice-Ministers there had to be at least one person who knew a western language. Under that system, those who held posts as top officials in the Guanbu at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had to come from Imperial lineage, but those who held the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs and his attendants could be from the general public. In addition, it was the responsibility of the Tangguan system to regulate the general affairs of the Ministry. Therefore, to ascend to the positions of Minister of Foreign Affairs or attendant was equivalent to entering the echelons of the leadership of the General Affairs of Chinese diplomacy.

On 6 November 1906, the Qing court reshuffled each Civil Service Board. It abolished the original system in which each board had to have two Ministers and where Manchus and Hans had been segregated. There was now to be one Minister and Manchus and Hans were not differentiated. Afterwards, the system of five leaders at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was reduced to four people, but the policy according to which at least one Vice-Minister had to know a western language remained the same. At that time only Jin Lianfang came from a background of western learning, yet afterwards the proportion of personnel trained in western learning continued to increase.

After the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been established, Prince Qing Yikuang first served as General Minister of the Guanbu, although the Minister of Foreign Affairs changed many times. The first to be appointed as Minister of foreign Affairs was Qu Hongji (1850-1918), then Lü Haihuan and lastly Yuan Shikai, who was removed on 3 January 1909. After Yuan Shikai was removed from office, Liang Dunyan, who had studied in the United States, temporarily acted as a Vice-Minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After one year, Liang Dunyan became Minister of Foreign Affairs, with his vacated post being filled by the former Vice-Minister Assistant Zou Jialai (1852-1921). From that time onwards, Liang Dunyan became the head of the Tangguan system at the Ministry, and the two Vice-Minister posts were taken by Lian Fangyu who came from the Foreign Languages School and the aforementioned Zou Jialai, who came from a traditional scholar background. Not only did this comply with the policy that ‘amongst the Vice-Ministers one must know western languages’, but also because amongst the three leaders of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs two were from a background of western schooling, they could master matters pertaining to diplomacy more effectively.

After the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was established, originally only Jin Lianfang knew Western languages well, but after Jin and Wu Yanfang held the posts of First Vice-Minister and Vice-Minister, respectively beginning in 1905, the proportion of those with a western education gradually began to increase. Other than a few times when there was only Jin Lianfang, there were mostly at least two people possessing a western education. This situation shows that there was already a tendency for professionalism in the assignment of Chinese diplomatic personnel. But because Chinese officialdom had always attached importance to qualifications and records of service, promotion to the ranks of leadership according to such, as well as seniority, was still practised. On a certain level this hindered the rate of progress of professionalisation for diplomatic personnel, which will be discussed later in more detail.

On 3 January 1909, Vice-Minister Liang Dunyan became a Minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to the Shenbao, after Liang Dunyan assumed this position he became the principal leader of Chinese diplomatic affairs, the remaining Ministers such as Jin Lianfang and Zou Jialai, achieved almost nothing. When it became difficult for Liang Dunyan to hold office normally, the arrangement of personnel became very troublesome for the Qing court. In May 1910, news circulated that Liang Dunyan was suffering from stabbing chest pains and he was constantly coughing up blood; Chinese and Western medicines were inefficacious and he repeatedly asked for leave. Afterwards, because it was said that the condition of his sickness make it harder to see signs of recovery, Ministers considered recalling the Ambassador to the United States, Zhang Yintang, to Beijing to act as a Deputy in the Ministry's Affairs. Nevertheless, in the end because Zou Jialai opposed this appointment and it was not officially implemented. It was only at the end of the month after Liang Dunyan had 'begged to retire' that there were more positive changes at the Ministry. It was under these circumstances that Hu Weide, who possessed both a background in Western schooling as well as diplomatic qualifications and a record of service, could, after the reshuffle, enter the ranks of leadership at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Although as Ambassador to Japan Hu Weide had not made any outstanding achievements, neither had he committed any major errors. Furthermore, as his qualifications and record of service were complete he could be assigned a post; the fact that he was considered a good natured senior official and had a good grasp of specialised public law also

assisted in his appointment. Therefore, before he was about to finish his work as Ambassador to Japan, the Qing court had already ordered his appointment as a 'judge' at the Holland Conference 'Treaty of Arbitration of International Disputes'. Also referred to as 'arbiter', the criteria for appointment was still according to the forty-fourth amendment of the 'Treaty of Arbitration of International Disputes' which said: 'all national representatives that have signed the treaty must be proficient in public law, they must select four people who have a good reputation to serve as judges at the court. The office lasts six years; one person must also receive the votes of several countries'. Originally China only had Wu Yanfang, who had qualified as a lawyer in Britain, to serve in office, with three remaining vacancies. China said that 'if in China or abroad there are experts in public law, they could be consulted any time, and the Emperor would be informed'. The Qing court appointed Hu Weide and Liu Shixun, who was Ambassador to France, as arbiters, both of them being 'knowledgeable about public law, and also both with great experience', 'to fill the vacancies our country has been allotted'. It shows that in Chinese officialdom, Hu Weide was a personage who enjoyed much prestige as a result of his accomplishments.

The Chinese people had considerable expectations towards their arbiters at The Hague, and there were doubts whether Hu Weide and the others were up to the job. On 6 May 1910 the Shenbao commented:

> Recently, various countries have repeatedly asked for our country to send people to participate in meetings and in all kinds of competitions and research committees; all this should promote our country's knowledge and wisdom, but none are as important as the present Court of Arbitration at The Hague. To resolve international disputes, to preserve peace, all will depend on this association. Foreigners have started more rumours in regard to Chinese affairs and we should investigate these inside stories with special care. Can three grand imperial envoys be successful in this important task?

Public opinion had much expectation toward the efficacy of the court of arbitration; therefore it worried whether Hu Weide and the others would be fully competent. Yet, for the Chinese government the arbiters 'would simply have their names listed with the court, and when there was no business there would be no need for them to personally attend. There was also no need to provide them with salaries, only when an arbitration case

happened would they need to travel there'. Actually, the court probably only had the function of extending special treatment and supporting the Treaty, with the actual results being extremely limited. For example, over the course of his life, Hu Weide was re-appointed four times as an arbiter, but he never went to The Hague to perform the role. This shows that to hold the post of arbiter one perhaps needed a considerable background in public law, and that in such a post one would still be treated with great courtesy. Nevertheless, the fact that Hu could be appointed arbiter several times by the government shows his intrinsic value.

Hu Weide earned the deep esteem of the Qing court soon after he had entered the ranks of the leadership of Chinese diplomacy. When he was appointed as an instructor to the Vice-Minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs he was still in Japan and had not returned: the Qing court urged him to return post-haste. But perhaps because at that time Hu was on his 'honeymoon', only on 3 July did he plan 'to leave Tokyo and return home'. Afterwards, for reasons unknown, he postponed the original date by a few days and only on 8 August did he depart Tokyo, arriving in Tianjin on 15 August, where he immediately took the train to the capital. At the Beijing railway station many people from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as family and friends welcomed him, indicating the esteem in which people held Hu Weide. However, before his late return Hu had asked for a month's holiday so that after going back to China he could visit his hometown and family; he was given tacit permission from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to do this. After returning to China, however, he was pressed into taking up his new post. Perhaps this was due to the large amount of pressing diplomatic matters and Hu's assistance being urgently needed. On 29 June, Hu Weide was summoned to the Imperial Palace by the Prince Regent Zaifeng (1883-1952). Zaifeng questioned him on his duties whilst as an envoy in Japan, upon which Hu gave Zaifeng an extremely exhaustive and clear report on the relevant matters. Zaifeng then asked him about matters relating to the Secret Treaty between Japan and Russia, exhorting that in future the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should conduct matters according to principle. After this discussion, Hu left with all due respect. Perhaps because in that meeting Hu had made a very good impression on Zaifeng, afterwards the latter very much valued his abilities, even considering making him an Advisory Minister of Diplomacy.

As mentioned, there was a great reshuffling of the leadership at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs because of various factors; this in turn provided a basis for Hu Weide to rise at every step. Rumour has it that not only did Liang Dunyan, who was acting as Foreign Minister not get along with subordinates, but he also had to face Zou Jialai and Cao Rulin's attempts to push him out, and so using his illness as a reason, he asked to be dismissed and to return to his hometown. Zou Jialai curried favour with those higher up for his own personal gain, and on 24 May he was transferred to the post of First Vice-Minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (at the same time that Hu Weide became Vice-Minister). Although he aspired to ascend to the Foreign Minister rank, he faced opposition from ambassadors in numerous countries, who hoped that Wu Yanfang would replace him. After 'much consultation', foreigners did not show dissent, and personnel were assigned—Liang Dunyan was awarded a holiday for two months, Zou Jialai temporarily acted as Foreign Minister, and (Prince) Yikuang recommended the appointment of Cao Rulin to First Vice-Minister. Although public opinion objected to the formal rise of Zou Jialai, these appointments nevertheless represented the victory of Zou and Cao. Liang Dunyan suffered a crushing defeat, and Lian Fang encountered trouble through no fault of his own. In contrast, Hu Weide was unexpectedly lucky. Because the former First Vice-Minister Lian Fang was high in seniority as well as possessing a western education he was an obstacle to Zou Jialai's career advancement. Therefore Zou used his social network of people in senior positions to send Lian Fang as a General to Jingzhou, thus allowing him to assume the vacant position of First Vice-Minister himself. When Lian Fang departed to occupy this position, the Vice-Minister Zou Jialai became First Vice-Minister, finally obtaining the opportunity to be appointed Minister; the Vice-Minister vacancy was taken over by Hu Weide whose position was below that of Zou. Although it is said that apparently Hu was lucky to receive this position, Cao Rulin recalls that it was because Prince Yikuang knew how to recognise people for their merits, which could possibly be the real reason.

It must be noted that rampant greed was common in official circles at the time, indeed Prince Yikuang's infamous greed was well known to all near and far. The fact that Hu Weide did not need to be involved in struggles for power and position makes it difficult to avoid the suspicion that he engaged in bribery. According to Shi Zhaoji's (1877-1958) recollections when he received the post of Assistant and visited Yikuang, his gift of money (presented to a senior of a first visit as a mark of esteem) was

2000 taels (at that time it was already a considerable gift). If an Assistant at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could act in this manner, the 'quota' of the Vice-Minister could not be lower. When Hu Weide acted as Ambassador to Japan the Department of Supervision of (Chinese) students abroad was under his supervision (one year's income was often 20,000 or 30,000 taels), and the profit of the surplus of official expenses was not included, which shows clearly how substantial his income would have been; it was said that he also engaged in private business. The money for Hu Weide to move in social circles was perhaps related to this.

Notwithstanding, the fact that Hu Weide could enter the ranks of the leadership at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shows that he met crucial prerequisites. Firstly, that he was accepted as a Vice-Minister at the Ministry and could fulfil the standard of 'one person knowing Western languages' (Cao Rulin served temporarily), met the regulations of the system at the time. Secondly, in Chinese diplomatic circles at the time only Wu Yanfang and Tang Shaoyi had a longer record of service than Hu Weide and also knew Western languages. In 1909, although Wu finished his term as Ambassador to the United States and was due to return to China, he secretly stayed behind and did not return. At the time of the 1911 Revolution he was in Shanghai and the first to endorse the Republic, suggesting that from an early stage he seemed to show little loyalty to the Qing court. Although Tang Shaoyi had excellent western language skills and a long diplomatic record of service, at that time he was posted at the Postal Service, and was in poor health. Returning to Hu's prerequisites, at the beginning of 1910, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 'had already recommended a great number of second rank officials', to fill the Ministry with officials whose classification was equal to that of Ambassador. This made it almost impossible to block promotions, and together they drafted laws and decrees to appoint others of the same rank; as a result, a new class emerged. This measure brought a completely new record of service to the personnel at the Ministry, and allowed many like Hu Weide with long terms of service to become the most senior figures. To sum up, Hu Weide had three major strengths: he could speak western languages, competitors were few and his background and record of service were long. These are the major reasons why, besides opportunity, he was able to launch himself into becoming one of the most prominent Chinese diplomats.

Working as a Vice-Minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was quite

different from being an Ambassador. In fact, the pressure of working in a leadership capacity at the Ministry was probably greater than that of being stationed abroad, and taking into account Hu Weide's character, this was something he probably did not like. But for the Qing court, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the department that most urgently needed personnel with a western education. Additionally, because amongst the ranks of leadership at the Ministry only Lian Fang and Hu Weide had received a western education from Chinese institutions, they represented the fruits of the training in national institutions of western learning. At the same time Hu was the only official engaged in a leadership role who came from the Interpreters College: this further distinguished him from other Chinese diplomats.

(II) Achievements as Vice-Minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

When Hu Weide returned to the Ministry to take up the post of First Vice-Minister, the biggest threats faced by Chinese diplomacy were Japan and Russia's schemes in relation to Manchuria. Hu had already paid close attention to this whilst he served as Ambassador to Japan, but in the end neither the current ambassadors to Japan and Russia, nor the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could influence this situation, they could only quietly watch its development and wait for a chance to react. Particularly worrying were actions taken by Japan to acquire profit and power—the three main problems being: the Jichang railway, the Anfeng railway and the aforementioned Kando Island (Jiandao) dispute—even though they all had been supposedly resolved in 1909, those 'solutions' actually amounted to only a compromise by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In essence, Japan was able to progressively realise its aspirations. As for Russia, on the one hand it carried out negotiations with China regarding commercial treaties in Manchuria, Mongolia, and Xinjiang, whilst on the other hand, 'it actively sought to re-establish friendly relations with Japan' and to enjoy freely the use of its China-derived profits and concurrently 'concentrate its attention on the recovery of national strength'. Therefore the Ministry of Foreign Affairs needed to diligently pay attention to moves by both Japan and Russia.

On 1 May 1910, the Shenbao reported: 'In order to develop the industry and commerce of Manchuria, and to promote commercial affairs, Japan and Russia have abandoned enmity and have engaged in friendly relations. They have signed an agreement together to support each other's

policies. Hearing that this matter is extremely secret, outsiders only know that whilst it is intended to promote commercial affairs, its content is hard to estimate'. In order to resist American attempts with the Knox Plan [proposed by US Secretary of State, Philander Knox in 1909] that sought to bring about the neutralisation of the Manchurian railway, Japan and Russia now strengthened their 1907 treaty to 'send a warning to the United States'. Since Great Britain and other major powers harboured a cautious attitude towards the Knox Plan, and since Japan and Russia's treaty of cooperation was 'in nature like a military alliance', Manchuria basically became Japan and Russia's exclusive domain. Yet the response of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was extremely slow, and was considered by public opinion as 'agreeing to the moves by Japan and Russia in their quest for profits from our country', 'taking no action, as if it was someone else's affair'. Not only did the Ministry receive great criticism, it also received censure from Court officials, who accused the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of 'being defeatist in all problems, since nothing is more important than losing economic rights.'

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was indeed slow to react to the secret commercial pact between Japan and Russia. Only on 30 May did the Ministry send a telegram to the Chinese Ambassador in Japan, Hu Weide, and the Ambassador in Russia, Sa Yintu, that said: 'recently it has been reported that the pact between Japan and Russia cannot be completely confirmed, but there is no smoke without fire; their objective is still to concentrate their efforts on Manchuria. If their pact is successful, it will have a great impact on China's future', 'Closely investigate whether there has been a secret pact between the two nations and if there is such a pact, you must discover its content, report promptly and think of ways to resist it'. Public opinion had already been stirred many times, although the Ministry only realised this after more than two months; it is therefore unsurprising that it received great criticism. Moreover, the timing of the communiqué was on the eve of Hu Weide's return to China. A week later Hu returned by boat, and so the intelligence he was able to obtain on the matter was naturally very limited. Besides, the Ministry not only realised these things after they had happened, but then also hesitated on ways to respond. After Hu returned to China, Zaifeng questioned him on this and other issues.

'The Russo-Japanese Treaty' was signed on 4 July 1910, at that time Hu Weide had only been appointed as First Vice-Minister at the Ministry for about two weeks. Therefore, Zou Jialai and Cao Rulin were the two most

responsible for presiding over the work related to this post. After the Ministry received a copied manuscript of the treaty from the Japanese and Russian Ambassadors in China, they sent it to Zaifeng ‘to consider its benefits and disadvantages together with the Government Administration’, but Hu Weide did not have an opportunity to participate. Yet, in this way Hu also avoided censure, with the result that Zaifeng only imputed criticism towards Zou Jialai and not to Hu Weide. This was fortunate for Hu’s career.

Although Hu Weide had not been deeply involved in this matter, the attack unleashed by the Secret Treaty between Japan and Russia had to be, nevertheless, jointly faced. However, the secret Russo-Japanese pact of 1910 compared with their agreement three years earlier essentially constituted a much greater assault and there were not many ways for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to respond. Hu Weide’s response was no exception. The two treaties had ‘three notable differences’, the deepest impact being: first, the increase of mutual cooperation to spur the improvement of bilateral relations on the Manchurian rail system, ‘to avoid competition that is not beneficial to this’, and to resist the impediments of the American Knox Plan. Second, it ignored all the 1907 principles regarding ‘China’s independence’, ‘territorial integrity’, and ‘equal opportunity’. Third, it no longer emphasised what the previous treaty called ‘peaceful methods’, this was replaced with: ‘When the two sides receive threats to the status quo that they wish to maintain, they should engage in mutual discussions on which policies to adopt’; this is why Jiang Yanting referred to this treaty as ‘in nature like a military alliance’. For China, the situation provoked by this pact between Japan and Russia was especially serious; greatly in contrast to previous situations in Manchuria that could be solved by involving the forces of other countries. For example, the Governor-General of the three provinces of Manchuria, Xi Liang, had previously worried: ‘I am afraid the three provinces of Manchuria will no longer be ours if I do not ask the Qing court to speedily promulgate the allocation of funds from the state treasury in order to cut off all means of retreat. This must be the policy for the future otherwise the important land from where our ancestors hail will be taken by powerful, cruel and ruthless enemies’. Public opinion, however, sighed with regret: ‘This situation has no solution, even if there is someone who is knowledgeable and brave, the situation cannot be improved in the future, the memorandum presented to the Emperor by the Governor of Manchuria is too late’. This illustrates the perilous situation brought on by the ‘Russo-Japanese Treaty’.

Faced with this situation, the Ministry made Hu Weide responsible for negotiations with Russia. Cao Rulin, who had studied in Japan, was responsible for negotiations with the Japanese. The important points in the negotiations with Russia have been mentioned above: problems related to 'Manchuria and Mongolia' and 'the revised Treaty on Yili'. The two problems occurred before Hu Weide returned to China and could be tackled together with 'revisions on the agreement of the discussions regarding the Sino-Russian commercial treaty of the three North-eastern provinces'. These discussions included 'commercial treaties in the North-West, Kulun, and Yili'. This was extremely important as 'the impact on the future of commerce in Manchuria and Mongolia is great, not only is an accidental mistake enough to cause the end for our merchants, it will make other countries covet our resources and use this as an excuse to demand benefits'. The Ministry constantly worried about this; one ambassador posted abroad advocated 'the use of forceful means' in the handling of these affairs, yet the Ministry decided to adopt a posture of negotiation. Hu Weide was given the task of planning the negotiations.

In order to deal with bilateral discussions between China and Russia, Hu Weide spent much effort filtering through data. At the beginning of July, the Secretary dispatched by the Ministry examined the Sino-Russian Treaty and previous Kulun and Xinjiang cases of negotiation, and presented the main aspects to his superior, Hu Weide. After Hu had checked the original cases, he thought that 'it did not correspond to the activities taking place in that country (Russia)', thereupon he ordered his subordinate to examine 'the remaining fragmentary material', and 'only after all the cases were properly researched did he embark upon formal negotiations with the Russian Ambassador'.

There were many varied and complex documents to examine, but because Hu Weide had knowledge of public law and a background in mathematics, he easily found discrepancies amidst trivial details. Hu was made responsible for this task and proved quite suitable to undertake it.

On 16 July, he informed Zou Jialai of his views on the negotiations with Russia. He used the argument that 'all the negotiations between China and Russia have already been recognised as settled' to provide general and brief advice: 'the Imperial Envoy Sa Yintu should revise the Commercial Treaty between China and Russia directly with the Russian government; 'The Treaty of navigation on the Songhua River' should be handled between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Russian

Ambassador in Beijing'. With regard to the other Sino-Russian items of negotiations related to Mongolia, he recommended selecting a number of secretaries familiar with the Russian situation and proficient at negotiations to go first to Mongolia to research the situation, and after their report to the Ministry, negotiations would proceed. Objectively, this programme by Hu Weide did not carry much value, at most it only organised the work of each unit. The dispatching of personnel to Mongolia in order to carry out research had rather more substantial significance. Nevertheless, Hu Weide occupied a central position in Chinese diplomacy in supporting the stability of the negotiations and effectively assigning power and responsibilities, which in themselves constituted important duties.

This plan perhaps further reveals Hu Weide's unwillingness to confront difficult work. The 'revision of the Commercial Treaty between China and Russia' was indeed a serious matter, its great impact has already been mentioned before, yet Hu Weide let the Ambassador in Russia be responsible for the negotiations. It was hard to prevent Sa Yintu from encountering further difficulties: even though the negotiations on the Treaty of Navigation on the Songhua River were also highly complex, Hu Weide had not indicated who in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should handle the matter with the Russian Ambassador in Beijing. Thus it could be said that in some respects he did shy away from difficulties. As for dispatching personnel to carry out research in Mongolia, it is perhaps logical to assume that a clerk from the Ministry would be responsible for this, and not Hu. Therefore, in his outline for negotiations with Russia, there was almost no provision for him 'to personally go into battle', he only needed to 'plan strategies within a command tent', and make decisions on the plans. Although this is normal behaviour for someone holding a central position, the fact that Hu Weide devised such a strategy is perhaps due to his character and attitude.

Nevertheless, it is not the case that Hu did not get involved. When the Japanese and Russian Ambassadors in China sent the Russo-Japanese Treaty to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hu discussed the 'wording of the reply' together with Zou Jialai and Cao Rulin. In the midst of their discussions, Hu Weide said: 'this treaty concerns Manchuria, it is not similar to ordinary treaties. Since these two countries have not notified us before signing the treaty, our country will have difficulty recognising it', thus expressing a forceful position. Afterwards, on 21 July, China sent an answer that stated: 'the Russo-Japanese treaty

touches upon every treaty between China and Japan, China and Russia, and Japan and Russia that gives some advantage to the Chinese side, stressing that the aims of 'the 1905 Russo-Japanese Treaty (the Treaty of Portsmouth) and 'the Treaty on the three north-eastern provinces' can be affirmed, thereupon 'the third article of the Russo-Japanese Treaty postulates that the bilateral treaties by the Russian government and the whole administration of Manchuria is entirely dependent upon China, it cannot infringe upon China's sovereignty and betray the notion of equality amongst nations. Besides, in the 'implementation of the opening of Manchuria', 'all actions to do with internal sovereignty must also respect the principles of equality of opportunity for every country'. These declarations were contradictory with the aims of the Russo-Japanese secret treaty; there was no overlap. The connotation attached to this statement is similar to Hu's account: 'it is difficult to recognise', did not help the actual situation. With regard to upholding China's dignity however, it nevertheless had specific value.

Afterwards the Japanese and Russian Ambassadors went to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to hold face-to-face discussions. When Hu Weide, together with Cao Rulin, received the two Ambassadors, he expressed China's dissatisfaction. The report in the Shenbao on the matter reads:

> The Ambassadors of Japan and Russia visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs together; they were received by the officials Cao and Hu. Both Ambassadors said: 'We sent the official documents some time ago; your Excellencies must have seen them at an early stage'. Cao replied 'We have already received and read them', Hu went on to say: 'The nature of the Treaty that both your countries have signed this time is quite different from ordinary treaties; besides, this Treaty concerns Manchuria. Manchuria is our country's territory, why were we not informed about this before, but were only notified afterwards?' The Japanese Ambassador replied: 'the purpose of my country signing this Treaty with Russia is to preserve peace in East Asia, besides we profoundly believe this Treaty will be greatly beneficial to your country, and you must accept it. As for two countries signing a treaty, there has never been such a principle that a third country should be notified first, your country previously signed a secret agreement with Russia on the three north-eastern provinces, did you inform our country prior to signing?' The Russian Ambassador replied: 'China and Russia have had friendly relations, except that recently

> they seem not as good as before. Your country cannot blame us for not letting you know beforehand of the signing of the Treaty between my country and Japan.

This report shows Hu Weide not only expressed great dissatisfaction with the Russo-Japanese agreement and actions, which went against China's rights and interests, but he courageously and directly questioned the Japanese and Russian Ambassadors. Only the excuse presented by the two Ambassadors in regard to the past 'Sino-Russian Secret Treaty' signed by Li Hongzhang, left Hu Weide unable to respond. Besides, the power exerted by Japan and Russia overrode that of China, and after the signing of the Russo-Japanese Secret Treaty their control of the situation was complete and China's ability to resist was further diminished; it was therefore difficult to change the predicament. This shows that even if Hu Weide did not become too involved in the task, neither did he shift responsibility onto others.

However, the serious situation provoked by the Russo-Japanese Treaty was difficult to solve. Indeed, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs found great difficulty in formulating an effective policy to deal with it. Therefore, when Hu Weide's former colleague Lu Zhengxiang brought news from Holland that a third Peace Conference was about to start, Hu Weide, who had always valued public law and, furthermore, had the experience of participating in the Conference and could be called a Chinese authority on these matters, was immediately enthusiastic and naturally greatly advocated the importance of it. Following the suggestion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yikuang passed this matter to the government administration for discussion. Although the Qing court discussed this, they did not take any concrete measures.

In reality, as soon as the second Peace Treaty had been concluded, the then Ambassador in Holland, Qian Xun, who had been to the Conference with Lu Zhengxiang, had already made the request to the Emperor that the Qing court prepare for the next Peace Conference. In 1909, Qian Xun again asked for preparations for it to be made as soon as possible, in order to avoid the repetition of the hasty attendance at the two previous Peace Conferences. Unfortunately, at the time there were no strong supporters of the Conference. Lu Zhengxiang was the most familiar with the Conference, as China's special envoy and Ambassador in Holland, but he was far away from Beijing and his influence was limited. Hu Weide understood the particular importance of the Conference and

strongly supported it; he was first an Assistant Officer, and then was appointed as Ambassador to Japan. Nonetheless, he could not change the attitude of the Qing court towards it. Therefore in 1909, when the threat of the Russo-Japanese Secret Treaty arose, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could not fall back on the hopes put on and preparations made for the Conference. Prince Regent Zaifeng could only promulgate the following order: 'all officials with authority should negotiate with all sectors, their support and assistance to preserve sovereignty should be carefully checked at all times'.

When the unfortunate situation created by the Russo-Japanese Secret Treaty had not as yet been solved, a crisis in personnel hit the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This crisis arose because the Minister, Liang Dunyan, seemed to be recovering and was ready to resume office and return to Beijing. The Deputy Minister Zou Jialai was not universally liked by foreign Ambassadors, and when the secret Russo-Japanese Treaty was signed he was criticised by both the higher ranks and public opinion. When he heard news of Liang's intentions, he was seized with panic and was worried about not being able to keep his position. Zou had a good relationship with Natong, and he also approached the Military division about putting its support behind him, so that if Liang elected to retire, he would finally be able to keep his position. On 26 July, the Shenbao reported that the higher authorities permitted Liang to retire, and Zou Jialai formally took over his position. At the same time, Hu Weide became First Vice-Minister and the former Assistant Official, Cao Rulin, became Vice-Minister. As well as being made First Vice-Minister, Hu Weide was also promoted to the post of Deputy Minister of the Tax Bureau. These personnel disputes destroyed any opportunity for Liang Dunyan to return to office, and allowed the three major personalities of the time to secure their positions. Although Hu Weide's role in this episode is not clear, such changes were nevertheless beneficial for him.

Actually, Hu Weide's work as First Vice-Minister was not too different from that of his previous post as Vice-Minister. In reality the actual head of the Ministry at the time was Cao Rulin who had just been appointed as Vice-Minister. In terms of talent, Hu Weide could not actually compare with Cao, and in terms of relations with the Court, Zou Jialai had closer links than Hu. But he was the only one to possess both a western education (which Cao Rulin had) and a traditional background (which Zou Jialai had). Hu's dual background, his honest and sincere temperament and his ability in smoothing relations between opposing

parties meant that he was much needed by the Ministry.

Even though Hu received the post of First Vice-Minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Minister at the Tax Bureau, his main role was still at the Foreign Affairs Ministry; he did not contribute much in his role as Deputy Minister at the Tax Bureau. The reason Hu was appointed as Deputy Minister was because since the end of the Qing Dynasty close links had been forged between the Tax Bureau and diplomatic circles, and the posts of Minister and Deputy Minister of the Tax Bureau were filled by scholars, Ministers, and Vice-Ministers. A typical example was the profound influence of the Inspector General of the Maritime Customs, Sir Robert Hart, on Chinese diplomacy, and Cao Rulin, who had acted as Deputy Tax Minister during June 1910. Present data only reveals that when Hu Weide was at the Tax Bureau, his sole recommendation was an itemized memorandum to reorganise the Tax Bureau. The memorandum, however, only addressed the investigation of bribery amongst the personnel of the South-eastern Tax Office, and offered no systematic restructuring.

The results of the Russo-Japanese Secret Treaty provoked great anxiety amongst the Ministry's personnel. For instance when the Ministry found out that not only the three articles of the 'Russo-Japanese Treaty' had already been released, but also about the alliance between Japan and Korea and the examination of Chinese public finance, about the defence of the two countries' rights North of the Yellow River and their involvement in Mongolia and Tibet, these all harmed China's sovereignty and security. Thereupon every department of the Ministry considered how to react. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs deliberated seriously on this matter and were concerned about unclear statements in the Russo-Japanese Secret Treaty such as 'preserving the status quo in Manchuria'. The Ministry believed that these unclear sections 'must have another meaning'. But since these countries' Ambassadors in China 'all said there was no other agenda', the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could not do anything. Especially, on 10 August, the Qing court felt strongly that 'since the creation of the Russo-Japanese Treaty, our country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has increasingly run into trouble'. Natong, Yikuang and other senior officials at the Ministry 'discussed ways to negotiate', yet when no plan was forthcoming, the central government was even more worried. Even the resourceful Yikuang wore a worried expression. The situation became increasingly pressing, and yet the counter-measures that China could take were in fact extremely limited.

Because negotiations were becoming more arduous, Natong ordered that the newly appointed Minister Zou and the two Vice-Ministers Hu and Cao had, from then on, to discuss all foreign affairs with the government. If there were cases for negotiation due to a country's violation of treaties, the Ministry's Minister, Vice-Minister and Assistant Officer should discuss and join forces to resist these, and not heed the decisions of provincial governments. Natong instructed the personnel at the Ministry to carefully engage in negotiations. Though this order's significance as a public statement was greater than its actual consequence, it nevertheless represented a new procedure for the personnel at the Ministry.

After Hu took up the position of First Vice-Minister, his initial task was the construction, in the streets around the 'Lantern Market' (dengshikou) in the east of Beijing, of more than sixty Western style houses for receiving foreign guests. Hu also took care of other straightforward matters.

First Vice-Ministers and other high officials would not normally concern themselves with such matters, but Hu was still responsible for jobs like these. This demonstrates that at the time the assignment of power and responsibility was not perfect and individual talent was at times wasted. Minister Yikuang 'never went to the Ministry', but was a nominal leader. Minister Natong 'avoided going to the Ministry', often at crucial moments, and tended to evade responsibility. Within higher ranks, Zou Jialai, who also held the position of Minister, 'was no diplomatic genius', and therefore tasks had to be handed to the actual 'supervisor' at the Ministry 'no matter how big or small'. Cao Rulin essentially performed all manner of duties. Under these circumstances, Hu Weide's space for performance was constrained.

Yet, analysing Hu's character, he must actually have been quite happy about this situation. He had a reputation as a 'court hermit' and he was also clearly aware of his own limitations. Therefore, he must have greatly welcomed the fact that the exceptionally able Cao Rulin could take care of affairs at the Ministry and thus alleviate his burden. Therefore, although his work was not too onerous, this must have actually pleased Hu. Thereupon, he had two main tasks at the Ministry: one was to focus on Russian affairs, the other on personnel. Dealing with Russian affairs mainly involved continuing his work as First Vice-Minister, and there was nothing special about this, at most it consisted in merely offering suggestions to Zou Jialai about local feasible policies 'not to allow

Western merchants to establish broker's storehouses' in order to comply with treaty stipulations. Or Hu prepared drafts for negotiations of the revision of the Sino-Russian Treaty; other crucial tasks in Sino-Russian negotiations were the responsibility of Zou and Cao. Yet, in terms of planning the organisation of personnel, Hu Weide made an important contribution, which can be divided into three parts.

The first part concerns the Local Provincial Bureau for diplomatic negotiations. This bureau was created, in a piece-meal fashion, at the end of the Qing Dynasty in August 1910 from the local system of negotiation. 'The Ministry established the Local Provincial Bureau as the centralised system, and dissolved all the Bureaus of Foreign Affairs of every province'. All provinces that needed to have representatives 'established a Local Provincial Bureau for diplomatic negotiations and one chief negotiator'. The Ministry had the right of appointment, and later if the chief negotiator 'needed officials from other provinces and translators' he had to 'inform the Ministry of Foreign Affairs', and 'wait for permission'; this further strengthened the control of the Ministry over the local bureaus. Though the establishment of these local bureaus came from a suggestion made by Zou Jialai to Yikuang, it was likely to have been the result of concerted efforts within the Ministry. After all, Zou Jialai's ability was limited, and it is doubtful that he could produce such pioneering ideas. As for the selection of people for the local bureaus, after each department considered a candidate, he needed to be approved by the Court. Hu Weide participated in the 'establishment of the bureau for foreign negotiations at Taonanfu in North-eastern Jilin province that especially dealt with Sino-Russian negotiations'.

The second part involved problems related to the work and right of appointment of personnel below the Assistant Officer at the Ministry. Even though the Assistant Officer was a new post, at the time it had already become an important personnel problem. Zaifeng 'instructed Yikuang that the most crucial step in diplomacy was the recommendation of the Assistant Officer at the Ministry, who had to be selected carefully. Thereupon, Hu Weide, Zou, and Cao used the limited effectiveness of the Assistant Officer as a reason, 'The Assistant Officers are young when they arrive at the Ministry, when they encounter a case they must find the Secretary with whom they should discuss it, someone who has wide knowledge of diplomatic cases and can help them make a decision'; furthermore if an official could not come to the Ministry, and if 'all documents could not be taken care of and time wasted, this was very

improper'. Deputy officials would be added and all officials chosen would be highly qualified, both their character and schooling would be excellent and they would be familiar with cases of negotiation. Although all these plans for personnel were not necessarily realised, the policies devised by the Ministry, such as on 31 December, 'the Heads of the Four Offices were changed into the heads of departments, the Drafter became the Vice-Minister, the Vice Head and Assistant Drafter became Section Chiefs, the officials that followed the Vice Head and Assistant Drafter became section staff'. Hu Weide actively participated in these plans.

The third reform was in the appointment of ambassadors, an example being the appointment of the new ambassador in Russia. Hu Weide, as the first ambassador from the second generation of diplomats appointed in Russia, naturally had his views on this post. The post of ambassador to Russia was closely related to the Peace Conference, because all the officials who attended the Peace Conference came from the Chinese Embassy in Russia, for example Yang Ru, Hu Weide, and Lu Zhengxiang. Therefore, apart from the special envoys at the Peace Conference, the Ambassador in Russia also often had to be involved with the Peace Conference. Therefore, when Sa Yintu was about to return to China, Shi Zhaoji, also from Zhejiang, who had for a brief period attended the Peace Conference with Yang Ru in 1899, and under Hu Weide's recommendation, was made a diplomat and appointed as the Ambassador to Russia. Although it turned out that Shi would not be the ambassador, he nevertheless received the appointment of Assistant Officer, thanks to Hu Weide.

Whilst Shi Zhaoji and Hu Weide were both natives of Zhejiang, after Shi Zhaoji graduated from the Shanghai St John's Academy in 1890, he entered the school of Chinese learning run by Hu Weixian, Hu Weide's younger brother, and 'studied Chinese for two years'. In 1893 'he followed Yang Ru as an Imperial Envoy to the United States' and worked with Hu in the US. Then, when Yang Ru was transferred to Russia, Shi Zhaoji remained in the United States and entered Cornell University. When Lu Zhengxiang, Yang Ru's interpreter, fell sick, Yang invited Shi Zhaoji to temporarily serve as an interpreter in the Chinese Embassy in Russia, and they both went to the Peace Conference at The Hague. Thus another period of collaboration began for Hu and Shi. On 7 July 1910, 'Shi Zhaoji was transferred from the Harbin local government to Beijing; he often visited the Ministry to secretly talk about the negotiations between China and Russia on the three provinces of the northeast'. He

consulted Hu Weide who was then responsible for Sino-Russian affairs with meetings held ‘everyday … [being] very secret’. Perhaps it was because of this that Hu Weide recommended Shi Zhaoji as an Ambassador to Russia.

Although Lu Zhengxiang, who only a while before had returned to Beijing and discussed issues at the Peace Conference, was skilled in dealing with the Conference intricacies, China still needed to enlist the service of somebody with his skills. After consideration, the Ministry decided to keep Lu at the Ministry, and made use of him as the second line of assistance in Sino-Russian negotiations and in affairs related to the Peace Conference. Lu Zhengxiang was also kept at the Ministry by Zaifeng because there were several issues for discussion at the Peace Conference and with the Permanent Council. Lu, who had for many years lived in Holland and was familiar with issues at stake at the Conference, and who had been stationed abroad in the past, was eventually named Ambassador to Russia.

Apart from his regular work, the three personnel matters mentioned above were Hu’s important tasks as First Vice-Minister. These were not complicated issues, and if the outcome was unsuccessful, there would be no serious consequences. As such, this can be seen as a light assignment. In comparison, matters handled by Vice-Minister Cao Rulin, whether small or big, had to be carefully attended. This also shows that at the time Hu Weide had a similar role to Zou Jialai in the Ministry, and did not wield much influence. The Shanghai newspaper Shenbao commented on 16 September that Hu Weide ‘has not achieved anything, he is only a yes-man’. They also mentioned that Hu ‘had many conflicts with Zou Jialai’; therefore Hu’s subservience was perhaps his way of being worldly-wise and playing it safe in official circles.

Besides using this method within Chinese official circles, Hu’s cautious attitude also permitted him to escape attack from both public opinion and critics. Since the Chinese diplomatic situation was critical at the time, apart from the Secret Treaty between Japan and Russia, the union between Japan and Korea, cooperation between Germany and Russia, and cooperation between Japan and America gave the Ministry a difficult time in responding, and the results of such efforts often did not satisfy people. Therefore, the disappointment felt by public opinion and critics as well as criticism in relation to officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were quite serious. Since Hu Weide was not a main player at the

Ministry however, he received fewer attacks. Even when the Shenbao described the entire Ministry's performance, it referred to officials as 'using ruse to keep their positions, passing on all matters related to negotiations to each other, offering no suggestions', but when mentioning particular individuals' performances at higher levels, they always concentrated on Zou Jialai and Cao Rulin; Hu Weide remained outside of this. For example, in relation to Zou Jialai, apart from criticising him: 'he goes to the Ministry every day pretending to check on work, but does not even check the files, and has no view on important matters of negotiation', it also reported the criticisms levelled by the court historians Wen Su and Wen Bing who criticised Zou Jialai thus: 'every time he comes across a case for negotiation he hesitates, and is not responsible. He does not dare to take a position, even when the country's sovereignty is attacked and humiliated'. Wen Bing referred to Zou and Cao as 'traitors to the country whilst seeking their own gain'; adding that 'all officials that are detrimental to the country' should be punished. A government official referred to Cao Rulin's performance in the following manner: 'in regards to the Northeast he failed in all aspects of the negotiations, all China knows this, yet the Venerable Official (Cao Rulin) boasts about his successes, he does not care for the country. If such a venerable official loved his country, how could diplomacy fail?' This was also printed in the papers, and made Cao so angry that he wanted to exact revenge. Still, since comments such as Cao 'endangers the country' and 'sells the country' were circulating, he actually hoped to 'lower his position' and 'wanted to be posted abroad', or 'to be transferred to another department'. The attacks unleashed upon Hu Weide were much milder.

Overall, the performance of Hu Weide as First Vice-Minister was no more outstanding than his time as a Vice-Minister. In fact, it could be argued that he even took a less prominent position. Perhaps the reason was because at the time Hu Weide already 'had many conflicts with Zou Jialai so he kept a low profile for self-protection', but perhaps it was because he had a tendency to avoid pressure. Irrespective of the reason, even though Hu enjoyed a high position, his performance was not outstanding. Having always enjoyed great luck in his official appointments in the last days of the Qing Dynasty, Hu Weide used this attitude to avoid falling into political competitions and attacks from public opinion. At a time when Zou, Cao and others came under fierce attack, Hu Weide was unaffected, and was able to keep his position within official and diplomatic circles.

Section Two—the 1911 Revolution

When Hu Weide was a Vice-Minister at the Foreign Affairs Ministry at the end of the Qing Dynasty the 1911 Revolution erupted. Having stepped forward to fill the vacuum left by the fall of the Qing Dynasty, Yuan Shikai virtually had full control over diplomatic negotiations. Thus the relationship between Hu Weide and Yuan Shikai is an important point for consideration. Yuan is often considered to have been plotting and thus he profited from the fact that troops were threatening the Qing court by presenting himself in the role of unifier in the new government. In contrast, Hu Weide is often considered, like Lu Zhengxiang and Duan Qirui (1865-1936), to have advised the Qing court to retreat. This in the past has been considered a suggestion made by Yuan Shikai, but there has not been any direct proof; it still nevertheless needs to be considered.

(I) Minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

In 1911, after the battle of Huanghuagang, the Qing court organised an inner cabinet to implement the quick establishment of a constitutional government in order to stay the impetus of the revolution. However, because public opinion doubted the sincerity of the Qing court in establishing a constitution, calling the new cabinet an 'Imperial Cabinet', the establishment of an inner cabinet was in grave danger.

Since the inner cabinet was mostly composed of Manchus, before it was even constituted, there were rumours. At a meeting with the Emperor's representatives on 30 April, it was 'decided that Prince Qing Yikuang would be the Prime Minister of an Inner Cabinet, Lang Beile and Minister Xu [Shichang] would be Vice-Ministers, with the latter assuming control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This was the same as the Council of State in 1910: amongst the four people selected, only Xu Shichang was a Han; everyone else was of Manchu descent. This shows that the structure of the upper levels of the Inner Cabinet changed in appearance and not in substance. On 8 May, the Qing court officially promulgated an Imperial Edict and as expected Prince Qing Yikuang was announced as the Prime Minister. Natong and Xu Shichang became Vice-Ministers (Xu being the only Han). Looking at all the governmental

departments, only the heads of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Education Department and the Postal Services Department were Han; four people were from the Imperial family (five including Prince Qing Yikuang). Therefore, it was acerbically referred to as the Imperial Family Cabinet. As a result, the first cabinet established by the Qing only further angered the people.

In the new cabinet, even though the post of minister of Foreign Affairs should have belonged to Liang Dunyan, because he was overseas, Zou Jialai served temporarily as Deputy Minister. Yikuang was again at the top of the Ministry, with only Natong being no longer a part of it. This plan caused conflicts at the Ministry, weakened its functionality and prevented it from avoiding the negative aspects of the system of personal rule. This happened because the Boxer Protocol had stipulated that Prince Qing Yikuang would take control of the Ministry and that diplomatic affairs would be followed by the Emperor. Even though the Qing court followed the norms of the Treaty, it still harboured the thought of filling the Inner Cabinet with people from the Imperial lineage. As the situation was becoming increasingly critical, there was a corresponding increase on the part of Yuan Shikai to form a cabinet. Therefore, whilst on the one hand there was the Imperial edict to form a cabinet, there were also a simultaneous requests made of other countries to ratify amendments made to the Boxer Protocol.

The reasons why the Qing court wanted to replace Zou with Liang Dunyan were firstly that the former had never displayed the ability to resolve major problems and for the fact that his performance as a Minister of Foreign Affairs had received great criticism. The main reason however was ‘to resolutely pursue a policy of modelling themselves after the United States’ and so the Court was keen to use Liang Dunyan who had studied in the US. Yet, after the Inner Cabinet was established, the capacities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were limited, so both talented individuals such as Liang Dunyan and incapable ones such as Zou Jialai all had difficulties performing their duties. The Japanese Prime Minister Okuma Shigenobu (1838-1922) said: ‘With Liang Dunyan as Foreign Minister there is a great tendency to model its affairs after the United States. Yet, though Liang Dunyan is familiar with foreign diplomacy and can speak foreign languages, the actual diplomatic authority is still the Qing Prince’.

Although all the heads of each department had been decided, the

bureaucratic system had not yet been determined, which in turn postponed the effective operation of each department. Prime Minister Yikuang met repeatedly with the Ministers of each department to discuss the number of Vice-Ministers and other problems with the bureaucratic system; the main focus was on whether to have one Vice-Minister or two Vice-Ministers. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, perhaps because Zou Jialai and Natong were on good terms, they advocated that each department should have two Vice-Ministers. Afterwards, each department set 'two Vice-Ministers, the First Vice-Minister was officially responsible to the Minister of the relevant department; the [second] Vice-Minister would be temporarily appointed, but would have no responsibilities. He took care of the daily affairs of the relevant department'. Apart from the issue of the number of people, the choosing of persons was less problematic: all sides approved the selection of Hu Weide as the official Vice-Minister.

However, Hu was considering whether or not to retire early; he seemed to be no longer willing to undertake overly-difficult work at the Ministry. Xu Shichang said: 'Now the Imperial Family Cabinet has been set up, and the constitution is about to be implemented, each department will have special responsibilities, all should be entirely responsible; there is no way to avoid this. Since there is the post of Vice-Minister, from now on if the Minister is on holiday, or is engaged in other business, the Vice-Minister should replace him, whilst paying attention to government affairs and respecting the legal system'. The Vice-Minister was regarded as a government official and had to be responsible for administration. Yet, Hu Weide's attitude as an official was not only very passive, he also tried to avoid responsibility. This had already become clear when he took the earlier post of Vice-Minister, and the present situation made him even more recalcitrant. Because of this reason, the post of Vice-Minister was not one Hu had strived towards. Nevertheless, despite his reservations, Hu Weide was the only person on good terms with the Court. Not only was he on good terms with the Vice-Minister of the Cabinet, Xu Shichang, he also had a very good relationship with Yikuang's son Zaizhen. Therefore, Hu Weide was a clear choice for the post of Vice-Minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on account of his education and rich experience.

After Foreign Affairs Minister Liang Dunyan had received his appointment, he used illness to ask for leave and was granted a month off, but in the end he did not return. At that time the former Minister of

Foreign Affairs, Zou Jialai, had already entered the department in charge of constitutional affairs (Bideyuan) to serve as an official. The Prime Minister of the Imperial Family Cabinet, Yikuang, did not have time to take care of diplomatic affairs, and so intended to change Ministers. The Shenbao reported that Yikuang meant to break protocol in order to make the official responsible for negotiations regarding Manchuria, Han Guojun, Minister of Foreign Affairs, but this did not happen. Thereupon at a time when Zou had already been transferred and Liang did not return, Hu received the highest position within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; only Yikuang ranked above him at the Ministry. Nonetheless, because the bureaucratic system of the Cabinet had not yet been fully formalised, his official position was still that of Vice-Minister. It was only at the beginning of September that the bureaucratic system of the new Imperial Family Cabinet was by and large established. Apart from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Revenue where 'two Vice-Ministers were appointed', all other departments only had one Vice-Minister; this 'had to be promulgated within three months'. Because of this, before that time period, Hu Weide was not officially recognised as a Vice-Minister. During this time, it seems all matters at the Ministry were decided upon by Yikuang, with Hu Weide making only suggestions. However, when Ambassadors posted in Japan, England, and Russia had to be transferred, Hu Weide's advice must have been much valued.

The ambassador to Japan, Wang Daxie, returned to China in May, which received much attention, because he ought to have collected a lot of information during his time in Japan that might result in blocking Japan's plans regarding China. Indeed, on his trip back to his homeland, Wang said 'from now on the diplomatic situation will become trickier by the day, and if people covet position and money, muddling through the job, there will be grave misunderstandings'. Reading between the lines may suggest that he did not want to be recalled from Japan, but since 'all officials did not see it in this way, and were concerned about offending the Japanese government, they urged Wang to return. In fact, however, Wang Daxie thought that 'no one could serve an extended period of time as ambassador to Japan' and although he temporarily reassumed his position, he continually sent telegrams to Prince Qing Yikuang expressing his desire to leave the post. On account of this, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs carefully considered the issue of replacing its ambassador to Japan.

Candidates for Wang's successor were Natong, Finance Minister Zaize,

and another official, Xu Shichang, and top diplomats Hu Weide and Prince Qing Yikuang. Hu Weide recommended Qian Xun for reasons that might have been because the latter was, like Hu from Wuxing, and also because he had accompanied ambassador Xue Fucheng to Britain, France, Italy and Belgium, and had become quite familiar with diplomatic workings. At the same time, the ambassador to Britain was advocating for Zhang Zongxiang, also from Wuxing, to take on the post, and it is not clear if this was under Hu Weide's recommendation or not. Considering Hu Weide held the highest position in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the time, and since he had tried to use his own people before, this caused quite a stir within the Ministry. Although the section chief Guo Jiaji, who had served in the Ministry for many years, was an influential figure, and who had the Commander of the Navy, Imperial Clansman Zaixun, working behind the scenes, continued to oppose Hu's recommendations and instead suggest people from his own hometown area, Hu nevertheless tried to seize the opportunity to move Guo to one side and decide the matter himself. Perhaps Hu Weide did not have selfish reasons for recommending Qian Xun and Zhang Zongxiang. In any case, no one was sent as ambassador to Japan or Britain because of the revolution finally broke out. In any case, the fact that Hu Weide dared to oppose great authorities like Natong and Imperial Clansman Zaixun showed that he still wielded real power amongst officials at that time.

Furthermore, people under Hu Weide's leadership whilst he was ambassador to Russia, such as fellow Interpreters College graduates Lu Zhengxiang and Liu Jingren, most likely benefited from Hu's help behind the scenes to secure the posts of ambassador to Russia and Holland, respectively. If Lu Zhengxiang's diplomatic career had been quite spectacular up to this time, mainly because he had been promoted early on, Liu Jingren, in contrast, had not accomplished any special achievements. Nonetheless, Liu was made Counsellor, and was highly regarded by Lu Zhengxiang. If he had received no endorsement from high-ranking officials however, it is unlikely he would have been made an ambassador. Indeed, Liu Jingren being made ambassador to Holland, as a graduate from the Interpreters College, shows that people with a background of western education were becoming the norm in diplomacy. Thus, Hu Weide must have had an influence on the large number of diplomats who came from backgrounds of western education.

Apart from being involved in the appointment of ambassadors, at this time Hu Weide was also chief examiner for students returning from

abroad. At the time, subjects for the examinations had not been clearly defined. But when Lin Shaonian and Zhu Yifan, successful candidates in imperial examinations with the titles of juren and jinshi, respectively, and Zhang Deyi and Hu Weide, both graduates from the Foreign Languages School and the Interpreters College, took over, the former two were responsible for the Chinese language, whereas Zhang and Hu presided over English and French. Although historical sources do not provide a complete picture, this was the first time that Hu Weide was chief examiner for students returning from studies abroad, and it carries historical significance in differentiating talent for China.

Bureaucratically, the Imperial family member, Yikuang, was in charge of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, meaning that everything had to be approved by him, and so Hu Weide could not act completely independently. However, judging from his ability to select ambassadors, his influence had by then established him as one of the outstanding personalities of Chinese diplomacy. □

(II) Facilitating the Emperor's abdication

Hu Weide, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, held the highest rank amongst all the western educated officials of the time. Although he had not been as outstanding as Lu Zhengxiang in terms of foreign affairs, his overall qualifications were higher and he was popular amongst his colleagues, which secured him the position. The government also valued him highly. The Shanghai newspaper Shenbao once reported: 'Since Zaizhen returned from England, he has reported to the government the difficulties faced by Ambassador Liu Yulin (1863-1942) whilst working there. Now is a critical period in foreign affairs as China and Britain are dealing with important issues regarding Pianma (a small town in south-western Yunnan province) and Tibet. Thus Zaizhen suggested the government look for someone more capable to serve as ambassador to England'. The plan was to appoint Hu Weide; transfer Liu Yulin to America, and send Cao Rulin to France; Wang Dayan would assume Cao Rulin's former position and Yang Shu would assume Wang's. If all these plans were put into practice, it would have been the single largest personnel change in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the end of the Qing Dynasty. However, it did not happen because of the 1911 Revolution.

The general public was resentful of the 'fake constitutionalism' the Qing government was promoting, and events such as the poor resisting high

taxation and business people starting the 'Railway Protection Movement' pushed revolutionary fervour to its limits. Personnel change within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs used to be an internal governmental matter, whereas now it became a matter of international concern, as the new revolutionary government needed to win over acknowledgement from the international community. In late August, the revolutionary army in Wuchang declared the beginning of a 'New China' and officially presented itself to other nations. In order to be accepted by the international community, it acknowledged all the old treaties the Qing Dynasty had signed and promised it would still pay indemnities and provide protection to foreigners in China. This earned the new government the position of 'local de facto Government', constituting a direct threat to Qing rule. The Qing government worried that soon the international community would no longer recognise it, and instead accept the revolutionary government as official. Foreign Minister Liang Dunyan, whilst still abroad, proclaimed that the Qing Army would soon defeat the revolutionary forces and he therefore began to campaign for support for the Qing government. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also complained to the Japanese Embassy for publishing the news of the Chinese revolution in their official newspaper, the Daily Times, claiming it was misleading the international community.

Frightened by the intensity of the revolution, the Qing government intended to reappoint Yuan Shikai, making Deputy Minister Hu Weide his aide. After Yuan Shikai became Prime Minister, Hu mainly dealt with internal home affairs instead of foreign ones. This meant that he played a role in the Emperor's abdication and not in foreign relations.

At the end of October, the foreign communities in Beijing wrote to the Qing Dynasty's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, saying that if the revolution could not be pacified within three weeks, they would rather accept the revolutionary government as the official Chinese government and sever relations with the Qing Dynasty; this naturally deeply concerned the Qing authorities. On the one hand, important ministers like Natong, Zou Jialai and Cao Rulin requested the international community not to accept the revolutionary government, and to have Liang Dunyan return to Beijing to re-organise the cabinet. On the other hand, they asked Yuan Shikai to be prime minister and called for reforms in order to improve the government's popularity. However, all this came too late. The army base in the east of Beijing, Luanzhou, rebelled and demanded a constitutional government. A few days later, the Qing authorities agreed to form a

cabinet, led by Yuan Shikai and without imperial members. By early November, Yuan was formally appointed prime minister.

Soon after Yuan Shikai had returned to Beijing, he released the list of new cabinet members. Liang Dunyan remained as Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Hu Weide was Deputy Minister for both. As Liang Dunyan was not in Beijing at that time, Hu Weide temporarily served in his stead, with Cao Rulin assuming Hu Weide's former position in the interim. The complex cabinet re-organisation was finally complete and Hu officially became

Foreign Affairs Minister, he would be the only Chinese official in charge of international affairs.

However, the overall situation did not favour the Qing Dynasty. There were rumours that the Emperor would abdicate. Wu Tingfang in the southern government was the first official to demand the abdication of the Emperor; before Yuan Shikai became Prime Minister, he also called for the abdication of the Emperor. After Yuan set up his new cabinet, he immediately changed his loyalty to the Imperial Family. But events were changing very fast. Abdication still happened—the general public demanded that China be made a republic. Although Hu Weide was at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he was also Minister of Internal Affairs, and thus was involved in domestic conflicts.

At this time, the most serious issue for China was the reunification of north and south. Under great pressure from the Southern revolutionary army, Yikuang, Natong, Xu Shichang, Zaize, and Zou Jialai all resigned; even Prince Zaifeng decided to leave the Qing government. They all blamed each other for the breakdown of the cabinet. After Yuan Shikai became Prime Minister, he took charge of the north-south negotiations and foreign debts. The foreign minister's position was weakened and in such confusion, few in government took responsibility. Yuan could only re-appoint old officials from the military, such as Xu Shichang, Tang Shaoyi, Feng Guozhang and Duan Qirui. As for Hu Weide, his high rank and talent meant that Yuan used him as a figurehead to assume all the political risk. Behind all this, Yuan remained in charge of everything; he was close to Tang Shaoyi and discussed important matters only with him. To Yuan, the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs was unimportant. The only significance of Hu Weide's position in the government was that it made the cabinet appear complete and legal. Hu's compliant nature was perfect for the composition of such a cabinet.

Other than this, Hu Weide's honest image was also important for Yuan. Since negotiations between the north and south had started, Yuan was personally in change of everything. Every time Yuan negotiated with the Qing leaders, he took Hu with him thinking that Hu's sincere image would help gain support from the Qing Imperial family.

The biggest task that Hu Weide completed for Yuan Shikai was to persuade the Imperial Family to relinquish power. They were, however, not initially ready to accept abdication and so Hu suggested they give up their effective power with a guarantee to keep their titles and privileged lifestyle. The Imperial family seemed persuaded upon hearing this. However, after learning that the Southern Revolutionary Army had set up a government and was planning to attack the Northern Qing territory, the Empress Dowager Longyu (1868-1913) was shocked and burst into tears. The public believed that the Imperial family was delaying abdication. But in fact it was delayed because of an assassination attempt on Yuan Shikai.

In any event, the Qing Imperial family finally accepted abdication, as they realised they had lost the support of the entire country. As well as the rebellion in Luanzhou on 3 January 1911, the Chinese ambassador in Russia, Lu Zhengxiang, wrote to the Imperial family demanding their abdication. The letter was very uncompromising, stating that if they did not abdicate within one week, he would resign, and the entire embassy staff would return to China. According to Shen Yunlong, this letter was supported by the Minister of Communication Liang Shiyi. Liang was very close to Yuan Shikai. Knowing Yuan's personality, people assumed the letter from Russia was orchestrated by Yuan. The Qing Imperial family did not know what to do after receiving the letter. Yuan refused to talk to them after the attempt on his life, claiming that he was very ill; this all in turn made the Empress Dowager feel quite helpless. During this period, Hu Weide acted as communicator between Yuan and the Empress Dowager.

After the letter from Russia, on 19 January Hu Weide, as Minster of Foreign Affairs, presented the official request to expedite the process of turning China into a republic. The request stated: 'The people have lost heart; the Imperial family cannot remain in power. Please agree to the formation of a Republic for the sake of the entire nation'. This letter was presented by Hu Weide and other important government ministers and representatives such as Zhao Bingjun and Liang Shiyi. Many ordinary

people believed it was this letter that forced the Imperial family to finally accept abdication. However, amongst the press at the time, neither the Shanghai newspaper Shenbao, nor the Tianjin newspaper Dagongbao reported on this letter, showing that it was not a decisive factor at a higher level. The main factors in the final decision to abdicate were twofold: the Qing military withdrew their support for the Imperial family, and the murder of Liang Bi, its most stubborn member.

On 26 January, Yuan's close aide, Duan Qirui, authorised by Liang Shiyi together with forty-two military officers of the Qing army announced that they no longer supported the Imperial family and requested abdication. This was far more serious than the letter from Russia, since the loss of their army directly threatened the safety of the Qing government and the Imperial family. So although they publicly stated the abdication was only rumour, in private they were holding negotiations day and night. These meetings were held between the Imperial family and members of the new government. Hu Weide, Zhao Bingjun and Liang Shiyi were also sometimes present on behalf of Yuan Shikai. They claimed to be present at the meetings because of their independent opinions on the Republic, but everyone knew they were there on Yuan's behalf.

The Emperor's representatives were very cautious in the first few meetings, due to the strong opposition of some Imperial members, such as Liang Bi and Tie Liang, to abdication. As soon as the military withdrew their support, however, even Liang Bi was worried and agreed to sign the abdication documents. He was soon murdered in a bomb attack, and afterwards there was little opposition amongst the Imperial family members. Liang Shiyi said, 'The day Liang Bi was murdered, it was overcast and windy in Beijing. I went into the Imperial court, and the Empress Dowager was covering her face and crying. She said to me, 'Oh Liang Shiyi, Zhao Bingjun, Hu Weide, my life and the life of the Emperor are in your hands. Please go back and beg Yuan Shikai to protect us'. Hu Weide also commented after Liang Bi's murder, 'All the Court was scared and worried about their safety'. On 12 February, the Empress Dowager held another meeting to discuss abdication. Although there was no more opposition within the Imperial family, their views were still ambiguous. The Empress Dowager shouted angrily, 'Are you all expecting me to take full responsibility?' nonetheless, soon after she announced, on behalf of herself and the Imperial family, their acceptance of the republic. This marked the end of the Qing Dynasty.

Chinese politics after the 1911 Revolution were under the control of Yuan Shikai. He had many close advisors to help him gain more and more power; amongst them Tang Shaoyi was responsible for negotiating on behalf of Yuan with the Southern army and Wu Tingfang. Liang Shiyi was responsible for political strategy. Zhao Bingjun dealt directly with the Qing Imperial family, coercing and threatening them. Duan Qirui and Feng Guozhang were the key military figures. Hu Weide was not as close to Yuan Shikai as those mentioned above and despite the fact that he held a high position, he only carried out simple tasks as authorised by Yuan. Many members of the public thought Hu was close to Yuan Shikai, as he appeared to be a key figure in the abdication process; this view is most often expressed in unofficial histories. But at a higher level, and according to newspapers, we know he was not so important. His influence has been exaggerated, and thus I would suggest that Hu Weide was not an important figure in Yuan Shikai's plans.

In fact, the high-ranking official, Cao Rulin, stated that, 'Yuan Shikai initially was not sure whether he should force the Imperial family to abdicate, but Liang Shiyi said to him, "If you do not uproot the Imperial family, their power will come back and grow". Thus, Yuan decided on a three-step plan to bring down the Imperial family. First, he asked the Qing army to cease fighting by citing a lack of food and money. Second, he suggested the establishment of a republic to the Imperial family, thus gaining time in order to earn popularity whilst the Court deliberated. Finally, he asked ministers in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to gather international support. These steps were designed to achieve a smooth transition to a republic'. In reality, the three steps did not happen in this order. But, planned or in reality, Hu Weide was never really involved in the whole process. Looking at newspaper reports at the time, and later academic research, all discussions were focussed on the actions of Yuan Shikai, Zhao Bingjun and Liang Shiyi. Hu Weide was rarely mentioned. Because of this, I would personally argue that the reason Yuan Shikai used Hu Weide was only because of his submissive character, as well as him being Minister of Foreign Affairs, and knowing the Imperial family well. Apart from these reasons, there is the possibility that he may have been recommended by Xu Shichang.

[To further illustrate that Hu was not directly connected with those supporting Yuan, the following excerpt from the meeting concerning abdication is quite useful.] The grandson of the former Prince Gong Yixin (1833-1898), named Puwei (1880-1936), inherited the title of

Prince Gong. He strongly opposed the Republic. According to the minutes of the imperial meeting, the discussions on the Republic were rather tense. Puwei even confronted Zhao Bingjun and Liang Shiyi and the following was recorded:

> 29 November 1911 Cabinet meeting. The whole Cabinet, and Royal members including Prince Chun, Prince Qing, and the Prince of Mongolia, were present. Yuan Shikai sent apologies because he was ill. Zhao and Liang came on his behalf. It made me angry that all present officials were sitting there for half an hour or forty-five minutes, chatting amongst themselves, but not at all talking about the serious issues. I lost my patience and asked Liang and Zhao, "The Prime Minister invited us all here to have this meeting. Please tell me exactly what you want to discuss". Zhao replied, "The revolution is at its peak. Many provinces support it, and they are not scared of the Imperial Army. Prime Minister Yuan Shikai would like to set up a new government in Tianjin and negotiate with the revolutionary army, either to make peace or to carry on fighting". I said, "We hope the Prime Minister would stop the rebellion. The Imperial Government is here in Beijing; what is the point of having a new government in Tianjin? If they are not scared of Beijing, why would they be scared of Tianjin? Also, the Imperial Army has just taken back Hanyang. We should carry on and attack them based on this victory. How can we stop now to negotiate?" Liang replied, "Although we have just taken back Hanyang, most of the provinces are on the side of the rebellion. We have no food, money or arms in the north. The government in Beijing is isolated and vulnerable". I retorted, "Many years ago we had the Nian Rebellion [1851-1868]. The government fought with them for nearly twenty years, and never negotiated with them. They never considered setting up a new government. Today's situation is not even close to then, so why should we be so weak? Regarding money, food and arms, it is the responsibility of all the officers here. We know we are having difficulties; we should try our best to solve the problem. If, every time we have difficulties we seek negotiations, then anyone can be Prime Minister! Why do we bother to have Yuan as Prime Minister?" Liang and Zhao were speechless. Hu Weide said, "It seems we are starting a civil war. Foreign nations are all finding this very disturbing. If the Imperial Army continues fighting, the

> international community will blame us for not keeping the peace". I responded, "It is our domestic problem, and the official government is dealing with the rebellion—how does it concern other countries? Besides, Britain, Germany, Russia and Japan all have their Royal families. How could they be on the side of the rebellion? You said they blamed us; tell me who said this and I shall be happy to talk with them face to face". Qing Zhi added, "Please do not argue. It is such an important matter that none of us here can make a quick decision. Please report to the Emperor's representatives and ask for his opinion". After that he stood up, everyone agreed with him, and the meeting was over.

From this record we can see that before the attempted murder of Yuan Shikai, quite a few members of the Imperial household were keen to continue fighting the revolution. Also, from Puwei's argument with Liang, Zhao and Hu, we can see that Hu was not regarded as a part of Yuan Shikai's close circle. For example, Puwei only said that Zhao and Liang were Yuan Shikai's representatives. When he blamed everyone for only chatting and not discussing serious issues, he was mainly referring to Zhao and Liang, not Hu Weide. Puwei was calling Yuan by his full name, but was calling Hu 'Minister'. These subtle differences show that the Imperial family trusted Hu more than the members of Yuan's group.

Apart from this record, according to the memoirs of the Eunuch Qiuhe, after the Qing Imperial family decided to abdicate, 'It was Zhao Bingjun, Yang Shiqi, Ying Cang and a Naval Officer who came to the Imperial family under the orders of Yuan, and set up a date for them to leave'. Shen Yulong's research shows that it was Liang Shiyi, rather than Yang Shiqi, in this group. Shen also discovered that the Naval Officer was actually Tan Xueheng. In any case, Hu Weide was not involved.

We cannot say that Hu Weide was not working for Yuan. But, it was not because of Hu that the Qing Imperial family accepted the abdication. His influence was largely exaggerated. We used to think of Hu as Yuan's 'rottweiler', but this is an unfair characterisation. At that time, the political column of the Shenbao made an unofficial list of officers whom the public believed would play an important role in the revolution, but Hu was not on the list. Hu was not an activist in the revolution; rather, his honest and stable image calmed the Imperial family. Only in this sense did he contribute to a peaceful transition.

I personally feel that the actual image of Hu Weide during this period

should be clarified as being honest, reliable, and friendly to the Imperial family as well as being trusted by the Qing government. However, due to his submissive personality, he was used by Yuan Shikai as a go-between with the Imperial family; Yuan hoped Hu would soften their defences. Nonetheless, Yuan did not really trust Hu and so serious responsibilities were delegated to Zhao. Hu did not trust Yuan either; he never did anything more than what he was asked to do. In his heart, Hu never agreed with Yuan, and did not want to work for him. His contribution to the process of abdication was forced, under particular circumstances and not from his own intentions. In any case, it seemed that the Imperial family had to leave at that time. Without Hu Weide, Yuan Shikai would have found a similar person. Hu's presence did not have any fundamental influence on the overall situation. He participated, but in a passive way. Hu was not a core member of the Yuan group, and possibly was not even directly communicating with them at all. The relationship between Hu Weide and Yuan Shikai was temporary, and it ended as soon at the abdication. After the Revolutionary government was established, he was sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to France, and was no longer involved in domestic politics.

To conclude, on 13 December, rumours first began circulating that the Imperial family had decided to depart. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also announced that the Imperial family would accept the peace agreement, keep the structure of the cabinet, but change the overall system in preparation for a republic. Yuan Shikai sent 5000 soldiers to Beijing to prepare for security for the day when the abdication would officially be announced. On 12 February, everything had been prepared and Yuan Shikai went to the palace to sign the agreement with the Imperial family. This took approximately three hours, and later the agreement was validated, by cable, by the Revolutionary government in Nanjing. After that, there were no more questions about abdication, but both sides continued to negotiate the new status for the Imperial family. Hu Weide stayed on as a Foreign Minister faced with a vastly different political landscape.

Section Three—the Beginnings of the Republic of China

After the Qing government agreed to abdicate, Yuan Shikai became responsible for the changeover of the regime. He thus started negotiations with the Southern Revolutionary government. Once both sides had promised him the position of President, he authorised Tang Shaoyi to set up the first cabinet for the Republic of China. As for the list of members in the cabinet, after Tang became the deputy prime minister, the two decided that for each minister there would be one secretary and one deputy secretary. They sent the proposal by cable to Sun Yat-sen for agreement. The crucial position of Foreign Minister was given to Lu Zhengxiang. On the surface, the fact that Yuan appointed Lu instead of Hu Weide as Foreign Minister appeared to demonstrate Yuan's intention to appoint new people and establish a new atmosphere. Indeed, the new Ministry of Foreign Affairs certainly appeared more modern after Lu took over. However, the truth is that Yuan had in fact considered using Hu as his Foreign Minister; especially since many of Lu's achievements were due to the foundations laid down by Hu.

In the early Republic, there was a frantic scramble for power and profit. Although Yuan had accepted the position of interim President, the Cabinet, which had been set up according to the 'Provisional Constitution', was not stable for quite some time. Tang Shaoyi and Lu

Zhengxiang resigned from their positions one after the other, leaving the political situation even more confused.

(I) Interim Foreign Minister

On 12 February 1911, the Empress Dowager Longyu signed the abdication papers and brought to a close a period of prolonged negotiations. On the declaration paper, Hu Weide's signature appeared after that of Yuan Shikai, representing the entire Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Hu was temporarily appointed Head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the period of transition to the new government. On 8 March, he drafted an official letter to be sent to all the embassies in Beijing, announcing the establishment of the new government and Yuan's appointment as the new president. As Head of the Ministry, Hu Weide would continue the previous regime's general foreign policy. Continuity in matters pertaining to foreign policy was always an important principle in Hu's opinion.

Whilst the north and the south were negotiating the establishment of the new government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not really involved.

Yuan Shikai authorised Tang Shaoyi to convene a new cabinet. Tang, in turn, appointed the Ambassador to Russia, Lu Zhengxiang, as Foreign Minister rather than Hu Weide. Lu Zhengxiang had been the main protagonist in the Russian letter event mentioned above and was still working in Russia at that time. Since Lu was abroad, and the temporary Congress had not officially agreed to let him take over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yuan asked Hu to head the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the time being. Thus it was Hu Weide and Duan Qirui, one as the representative from the cabinet and one from the Military, who welcomed Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940), who had travelled to Beijing, and the newly appointed Prime Minister Tang Shaoyi, to invite Yuan Shikai to Nanjing, which had been made the new capital of China; Yuan, as the new president, would reside there.

After Tang Shaoyi arrived in Beijing, in the afternoon of 29 March, he went to the provisional Congress to announce the name list of the Ministers and obtain approval from it. He introduced Lu Zhengxiang as a 'well experienced diplomat, calm and stable, polite and dignified, respected by both his colleagues and by foreign diplomats; he could surely contribute greatly to affairs of state'. Later, Lu was voted in as Foreign Minister; the press also regarded him highly. Yuan Shikai announced his position the following day.

Yuan's appointment of Lu Zhengxiang as Foreign Minister raises a question: why did he choose Lu Zhengxiang over Hu Weide? The reason that Hu was not appointed was partly due to the objection from Sun Yat-sen, and partly due to his own reluctance of taking the position. Yuan did intend to ask Hu to be Foreign Minister, but Hu preferred to be sent abroad. Later, when Yuan had plans for Hu Weide to become deputy Foreign Minister, Hu was still not interested. He was determined not to be too involved at the higher levels of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Hu Shiping once said that Hu Weide had been feeling left behind by events for a long time. Perhaps it was because he regarded himself as a member of 'the previous generation' that he shied away from the positions he was offered. Regarding Lu's appointment as Foreign Minister, Su Jing has suggested that 'perhaps Yuan was seeking international support for his new regime, and thus preferred Lu, as he was better known abroad'. This theory is based on the idea that Yuan Shikai was more interested in personal power than the good of his country. Not many people, however, agree with Su Jing's argument. According to the Shenbao, 'Tang's new cabinet does not include Zhao

Bingjun and Duan Qirui; this was decided by Yuan'. Wu Tingfang was also one of the candidates for the position of Foreign Minister. Thus we can assume that Yuan Shikai was not necessarily adamant about Lu Zhengxiang being Foreign Minister. When comparing Wu Tingfang and Lu Zhengxiang, Wu was superior in terms of qualifications and reputation. Nonetheless, Lu was finally appointed, which, apart from his own qualifications, may also have been because of Hu Weide's recommendation. Lu, himself, actually tried to turn down the offer with the excuse that 'he was not well informed about the new Cabinet'. It seems Lu was not that interested in the position but was pushed into it by the other persons involved. Since Hu and Lu had been colleagues for many years and Hu had recommended Lu many times in the past, it may be possible to surmise that the former had done so again.

Hu Weide was not interested in being in charge of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but was keen to work abroad. According to rumours at the time, Yuan Shikai planned to appoint Wen Zhongyao as ambassador to Britain, Hu Weide as ambassador to Russia, and Shi Zhaoji as ambassador to America. In reality, Yuan initially appointed Wu Tingfang as his representative to inform the international diplomatic community of the new government. On 1 April during congress Yuan changed his mind, and appointed Hu Weide instead. Perhaps Yuan had changed his mind but in the end, Hu was not sent abroad. Rather, he remained at the Ministry and, in reality, accomplished a great deal.

Hu Weide's work within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was mainly administrative. Yuan initially planned to have the congress meet on the first and second of April to announce all the new officials and positions. He said, 'Even if all the new officials cannot arrive in Beijing before 15 April, Prime Minister Tang Shaoyi will represent all of those who are absent and announce the completion of the new cabinet'. Hu Weide arrived before 2 April, and started planning work for the new Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Because of his efficiency, on the day the meeting finished, he already had a complete list of officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and had planned the new procedures for managing overseas diplomats. According to the Shenbao, 'Hu Weide wants to change the old system of the Qing Dynasty, which used one ambassador for several countries. He also added the position of consul for countries like Mexico, Peru, Cuba, Portugal, Switzerland, Sweden and Denmark,

and would like to open embassies in several other countries'. These new policies drafted by Hu Weide contributed greatly to the Republic of China. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lu Zhengxiang, using Hu's plans, added a few more items and finalised China's foreign diplomatic procedures at the time.

Apart from this, Hu Weide also worked hard to promote the new government, and to earn acknowledgement from the international community. Before the new cabinet was completed, many countries were cautious with respect to it, saying that they would only acknowledge it after the cabinet had been finalised, a formal congress set up, and a legal system promulgated. Once the transition of power was almost complete, Hu wrote to all diplomats that: 'A provisional government of the Republic of China has been established. Yuan Shikai was appointed President on 10 March, promising to honour all agreements the Qing Dynasty had made with foreign governments. Any ongoing international negotiations remaining from the Qing Dynasty will be taken up by the new Ministry of Foreign Affairs'. Hu Weide also wrote, 'Now the south and north have been united. If there are commercial agreements between Chinese and foreign businessmen, they should all be reported to the local or central government; otherwise they are invalid'. This demonstrated the authority of the new republican government. After the cabinet was set up, Hu Weide needed to write to all diplomats, asking for immediate acknowledgement of the new state of affairs. This letter was so important that Hu, Prime Minister Tang, and Deputy Prime Minister Yan Huiqin discussed it for a long time, but they could not decide when to send it. It was eventually sent with the persons involved requiring immediate replies to the letter, with no need to wait or send additional copies. It is hard to estimate the response of the foreign diplomats, however. Moreover, on 1 May, all foreign diplomats stationed in Beijing gathered in the British Embassy to discuss the acknowledgement of the Republic. The British Ambassador, John N. Jordan (1852-1925), suggested each embassy write to their own government to advise them to observe the new government in China for two weeks to ensure its capability and credibility. If they were satisfied, they would accept the new government together, and continue all political and commercial activities. These countries knew that in reality this government was the only government of China, but they preferred to delay until foreign debts left from the Qing Dynasty were settled. In the middle of May, all debt

discussions were finished; the foreign community thus acknowledged the new government on 25 May. During that period, because Lu Zhengxiang had just returned to China, and had not come back to Beijing, negotiations were completed mainly thanks to Hu Weide's efforts.

Since the Ministry of Foreign Affairs promised to honour all agreements from the Qing Dynasty, and these agreements were crucial to the credibility of the new country, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested the establishment of an international policy research institute to protect the rights of the new China. This institute, however, would be only temporary. Once all agreements had been studied, the institute would be disbanded. This request was presented at the end of May, and since by then Lu Zhengxiang had returned, it is hard to tell whether it had been Lu Zhengxiang's or Hu Weide's idea. In any event, Hu did contribute a great deal to personnel issues. Previously, on 4 April, Hu had discussed with Yuan and other members of the planning committee about the candidates for positions of ambassador and consul. The meeting lasted two hours, and they decided that Liang Shiyi would be Minister of Transportation. Prime Minister Tang recommended Wu Tingfang as ambassador to America, but no decision was made. When Lu took over the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs, one of his conditions was to have full authority for choosing personnel. Therefore, we can assume that Lu Zhengxiang was the person that made most of the decisions, even though they would carry Hu Weide's signature as well.

Still, Hu did present a new proposal revealing his thinking with respect to nurturing new diplomats. Hu suggested that, 'All diplomats presently in employment have been carried forward from the previous government, and they are advancing in years. We should select low ranking young talent from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and send them to study abroad to learn the international legal system and foreign languages. This will prepare us for the future'. This idea caused some panic within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Many older employees felt threatened, worrying they would lose promotion opportunities. The younger workers on the other hand felt excited and motivated, asking every day when Hu was going to begin selecting candidates. Hu knew that he was only working temporarily, so he told everyone that this was only his idea, and it needed to wait for authorisation from Lu Zhengxiang.

Soon after that, some of the elder officials were made redundant due to Lu's personnel changes. 'On 11 June, 155 former officials were made

redundant; only sixty-five remained in their old positions. Many new officials were transferred from other ministries, and a list of well-educated young graduates, particularly the ones that studied abroad, was kept for reference, waiting for appointments'. Lu replaced nearly 60 percent of the senior officials, and transferred twenty-five from other ministries. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs personnel structure was reinvigorated as a result. Although Hu Weide's idea of educating youngsters for future appointments was not put into practice, the reforms still reflected some of his principles, namely his promoting of the younger generation. For example, Xia Yiting, Diao Zhuoqian, Yue Zhaojue and Wang Tingzhang were all promoted and later became ambassadors or consuls abroad.

Besides being involved in personnel, Hu Weide also attended congress many times, discussing foreign debt issues and means to resolve the financial difficulties the new government was facing. Negotiations regarding borrowing were carried out by Tang, but he was inexperienced; for example, on 1 May, he requested a loan of thirty-five million taels of silver from the international monetary community, and a further ten million taels each month from May to October to help China's financial crisis. The international monetary community flatly refused his request, on the grounds that he had not clearly indicated the proposed usage of the money. Additionally, the terms of repayment, which was to come from taxes on salt and tea, were not clear. He did not even make a budget for the lenders to analyse. However, there was no possibility he would receive the money. This loan request was widely criticised within the cabinet and from then on, Chancellor Xiong Xilin handled all such negotiations. Hu Weide and other foreign ministers were no longer involved, despite the international nature of the issue.

In summary, in the early years of the Republic of China, Hu Weide not only acted in the highest position in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but he also improved on his performance since he was Minister of Foreign Affairs under the Qing Dynasty. At the end of the Qing, Hu mainly acted as the bridge between Yuan and the imperial family, and was not involved in international diplomatic issues. It was only after the establishment of the new government that his ideas on international policy and the modernisation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs became reality. Although he was not able to (and was not willing to) become the first Minister of Foreign Affairs of new China, his contribution was still remarkable. He was the first interim/acting Minister of Foreign Affairs,

and he was the first high-ranking official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be educated abroad. All this has made him a unique character in Chinese diplomatic history.

(II) Hu Weide's part in the power struggles of the early Republic

Lu Zhengxiang took over the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs from Hu Weide on the 10 June. Just before, however, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs invited Hu to join the 'international policy research institute' to deal with all the old agreements made by the Qing Dynasty. Soon after, when Tang Shaoyi's cabinet seemed about to collapse, Tang said to Hu Weide: 'Both Ministers of Finance and Transportation have resigned. Would you like to pick one of these positions?' Hu Weide declined. On 20 June, the Shanghai newspaper Shenbao commented that Hu Weide might be appointed as a senior representative for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; as mentioned before. There were also rumours that Hu would be appointed as Ambassador to Russia. This all pointed to the fact that whilst Hu Weide was leaving the position of interim Minister of Foreign Affairs, he had been offered many other high positions within the cabinet, and was still highly valued by the government.

After Lu Zhengxiang assumed the ministerial position, nothing had been confirmed as to where Hu Weide would be going which meant that he worked as a temporary 'diplomatic consultant'. Surprisingly, Tang Shaoyi suddenly left his position as the Prime Minister and the cabinet collapsed. Hu Weide's wish to be sent abroad to work thus also failed.

The breakdown of Tang Shaoyi's cabinet was related to international loan negotiations as well as Tang's troubled personal relationship with Yuan Shikai. Loans from the international community were needed for the development of China at that time; but because the requests seemed to be more about Yuan Shikai's personal power expansion plans, they were therefore consistently rejected. Tang Shaoyi and Xiong Xiling were both under pressure and as a result, they preferred to resign rather than deal with the issue. Although Yuan Shikai did not want to let them go, he had had many conflicts with Tang Shaoyi, particularly on the issue of who to appoint as the head of the Zhili region. All these finally led to the resignation of Tang and after he left, Lu temporarily replaced him as Prime Minister, whilst remaining as Minister of Foreign Affairs. After much negotiation and persuasion, Tang Shaoyi still decided not to return the cabinet, and Yuan Shikai thus authorised Lu Zhengxiang to establish a new one.

When Lu had just come back from abroad, he quickly became both Minister of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister. He had maintained a good reputation both at home and abroad, and most people appeared to be supportive of the new cabinet under his lead. On 30 June, Yuan Shikai officially appointed Lu Zhengxiang to be the new Prime Minister; Lu also informed the international community of his new position and inaugurated his cabinet. He promoted many people from his close group, many of whom came from backgrounds of western education, such as Wang Qingyi, the general secretary of congress and Liu Shixun, a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Lu also intended to invite Hu Weide to take charge of the Ministry of Transportation.

Previously, when Tang Shaoyi was setting up his cabinet, he suggested Liang Ruhao as Minister of Transportation but people objected to this choice. Tang, therefore, had to be in charge of the Ministry of Transportation himself. He regarded this position as more important than other Ministries such as Agriculture and Commerce, and later appointed Shi Zhaoji to assume the post. When Lu Zhengxiang formed his new cabinet, people objected to the choice of Shi. Yuan Shikai therefore asked the head of the Navy, Liu Guanxiong, to be the temporary Minister of Transportation. Lu planned to have Tang Zhuoqian as Minister of Transportation and Liu Shixun as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Later Lu decided to be Minister of Foreign Affairs himself as well as being Prime Minister. Then he appointed Hu Weide as Minister of Transportation. It seemed that Lu had asked Hu Weide because he had run out of options after Liang Ruhao had been previously rejected. Liang was being considered again but he felt embarrassed at having been rejected and would not want to return the cabinet. Hu Weide had a good reputation as being successful in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was reliable; therefore, Yuan Shikai agreed that he could become the new Minister of Transportation. Hu had only left the position as interim Minister of Foreign Affairs a month earlier, and he preferred not to take on new responsibilities, and so was very reluctant to assume this new position. However, Hu felt that he owed Lu Zhengxiang a favour (Lu was not interested in coming back to China to work, and it was Hu Weide who had persuaded him), and now he had to return the favour by taking on a position that he was not interested in. After Hu agreed to this, the problem of stability in the Ministry of Transportation seemed to be finally resolved. Hu's submissive personality was favoured by both Lu Zhengxiang and Yuan Shikai and they believed him to be hard working and cooperative.

The public discussed the reasons why all six candidates (including Hu Weide) for new positions in the cabinet were rejected, and said that Lu's speech in the election meeting was vague, and mainly focussed on irrelevant issues such as the unsuitability of using public money for private dining, and the lending of money between members. That aside, it was claimed that the main reason behind the rejection was that the other parties all had their own agendas. Hu himself had not been a popular member in the congress; even before the election, the Nationalist Party had expressed dissatisfaction with his nomination. Additionally, the Tongmenghui lost the election, and was keen to recruit new members. Hu came from the previous generation, and was not interested in any of the new parties, and was thus not accepted by the United League. The third party was the United Republicans, who believed Hu did not have a strong character. We can see that he was becoming less popular in Beijing political circles. Hu himself realised that his ideas were dated, and was happy to drift into the background. Lu, however, kept including Hu on the candidate list, showing that the two had a close personal relationship and he wanted a close friend to be in his immediate circle. This perhaps shows Lu's lack of confidence in domestic politics.

The congress cooperated when Yuan Shikai proposed his second list of candidates. Hu Weide was not included in the list, and was happy because of it. Soon, Lu Zhengxiang resigned, and Zhao Bingjun took over the position of Prime Minister. Hu Weide had moved even further away from the cabinet. Zhao Bingjun continued to use the same cabinet members left by Lu Zhengxiang. As Lu was Minister of Foreign Affairs as well as Prime Minister before he resigned, Zhao appointed Liang Ruhao as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Zhao did not consider Hu Weide for the position. Hu had temporarily been able to escape the political chaos.

When Zhao Bingjun was still a member in Tang Shaoyi's cabinet, he rarely attended cabinet meetings. Instead, he always reported to Yuan Shikai directly. He was so close to Yuan that he paid little attention to Tang Shaoyi, let along Hu Weide. Hu was nominated as the Minister of Transportation by Lu, not by Yuan. Shen Yunlong had no evidence to place Hu within Yuan Shikai's close circle. My opinion is that at that time, Hu Weide was not important to either Zhao's cabinet or to Yuan Shikai. Whilst Hu contributed marginally in persuading the Qing Imperial family to abdicate and Yuan appreciated that fact, he was never personally close to Hu Weide. Afterwards, Yuan did not see Hu Weide as

being very useful to him. For Yuan, Hu was just another clerk doing what he was asked to do; he was only obeying orders, rather than interested in Yuan's grander plans. Their relationship was no more than a chess player and his pawn.

That Yuan Shikai sought only to use Hu Weide can also be seen by comparing Yuan's treatment of Hu and Lu Zhengxiang. Yuan intended to give Lu a 'first class honour' title for his letter from Russia. Hu Weide and Liang Shiyi were only to be given a 'second class honour' title, and at a much delayed date. This title for Lu was in spite of the fact that his letter from Russia was not that significant in the abdication process. Compared to the assassination of Prince Liang Bi, the letter of resignation from Duan Qirui's military section, and even compared to Zhao Bingjun and Liang Shiyi's negotiations, the letter from Russia was not that influential. The reason that Yuan Shikai honoured Lu Zhengxiang so highly was because Yuan had no foreign connections whereas Lu was popular with the international community. Yuan was looking towards using Lu's reputation to gain international support for the new government. Once Hu Weide's mission during the abdication was complete, as an official from the Qing Dynasty, he was seen as old fashioned. Moreover, once Lu Zhengxiang left the position of Prime Minister, Zhao Bingjun was naturally not interested in Hu Weide.

After the establishment of the Republic of China, Hu Weide's political career seems to have gradually faded away. Since he was the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the end of Qing Dynasty, he was not trusted by the new government. That he was not even able to gain a seat in congress showed that he was not be accepted by the new regime. During the transition period between the Qing and a pseudo-democratic system, Hu Weide was seen as a member of the previous generation, and not as modern as Lu Zhengxiang. A reserved and traditional man, Hu also saw himself as out of date, and thus became more passive with respect to his political career. □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Chapter Five—Hu Weide and the internal and foreign affairs of the Northern government

In the cabinet of Yuan Shikai at the end of the Qing Dynasty, Hu Weide

dealt more with the internal affairs between Yuan and the Qing court, although he held the office of Minister of Foreign Affairs. During the Republic, he had performed well as the acting Foreign Affairs Minister and was valued by Tang Shaoyi and Lu Zhengxiang. Although Hu Weide wished to be sent overseas on a diplomatic mission and was not really interested in working as the Minister, he had never gained the complete trust of congress, which in turn made him harbour the desire to withdraw from active service. Fortunately, he was replaced as Minister and Lu Zhengxiang eventually assumed the portfolio, who in turn sent him abroad as an envoy again.

Having studied French at the Interpreters College, he was first sent to France during the early years of the Republic. He stayed in France for about eight years and was then sent to Japan during the ninth year. During his service in France there were no serious conflicts between the two countries. However, at the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, China faced the choice of whether to take part in it or not. Hu Weide was then living in Europe and had a close understanding of European affairs and therefore had his own opinion on this issue. At the Paris Peace Conference, though not an attending deputy, Hu did great work in keeping the Chinese delegation working. The Shandong Incident was not solved at the Paris Peace Conference and so became an important area of concern for Hu Weide whilst he served as a diplomat in Japan; the issue would finally be resolved at the Washington Naval Conference. Hu was eventually recalled to China and was almost immediately drawn into the whirlpool of internal affairs. This was during the period when China was ruled by the Northern Warlords. Not only was China divided between north and south, but the internal operations of the central government were also chaotic. With his status as senior statesman in foreign affairs, Hu Weide twice took on the job of acting Prime Minister, which contributed greatly to maintaining the legally constituted authority of the Chinese government. His official career reached its highest point at this time.

Section One—Envoy in France and the Paris Peace Conference

Since Hu Weide resigned from his post as Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1911, for nearly half a year afterwards none of the propositions for reemploying him had been accepted by congress. In November, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Liang Ruhao, of the Cabinet of Zhao Bingjun, resigned and was replaced by Lu Zhengxiang. Only one day was needed to send Hu Weide to France, which must be considered incredibly swift. The reason that Hu could be sent abroad must have been related to Lu Zhengxiang being the Foreign Affairs Minister.

Before Hu Weide was sent to France, there were rumours that he would soon be sent to Russia. We may suppose that it was possibly due to the high tension between China and Russia concerning Outer Mongolia; nevertheless, Hu felt incapable of taking on this difficult mission since he already considered himself to be out of date. At the same time, Liu Jingren had already been valued by Hu Weide and Lu Zhengxiang and had performed well during his service in Russia. Therefore, under the combined circumstances of Hu Weide showing a lack of interest, and Liu Jingren having done a great job, it was decided that Liu would stay in Russia and Hu be sent to France, the latter job seen as more relaxing.

When Hu Weide was in France there was some good news, despite the private negotiations over the diplomatic problem concerning Russia and Mongolia, in that the USA, France, and the Netherlands decided to recognise the Republic of China. The Chinese government was very grateful to France for firstly expressing its recognition of the new Republic and for acting as a negotiator between China and other countries vis-à-vis the repayment of loans. Selecting an envoy to France had therefore become more a matter of the candidate's reputation than his/her ability. That was the reason why Hu, as someone holding a high rank in the former Qing court and being adept in French, could be selected.

'Luck' was a strange word to Hu Weide. When he rose higher and higher at the end of the Qing Government, internal and foreign affairs seemed much too chaotic and troublesome to handle for such a reserved individual. Though he was refused several times by congress to be sent abroad, he finally received his chance during the Republic and escaped from the intrigues of internal strife, about which he was very happy. From 1913, the situation became more and more troubling, especially when conflicts broke out between Yuan Shikai and the Nationalists, which resulted in the Second Revolution (1913). Afterwards there were

also important events such as the Japanese invasion of Shandong, the subsequent Twenty-One Demands (sent by the Japanese government in 1915) and the reign of Hong Xian. And yet, as an envoy abroad, Hu Weide was not connected to these events; rather he socialised happily in Paris. From this point of view, his luck at that time seemed somehow better than it was at the end of the Qing.

However, shortly after his mission in France began, the situation in Europe escalated to outright hostility with the Balkan Problem finally precipitating the outbreak of the First World War. Though unable to influence the war, China had to decide how to manage its position vis-à-vis international developments. Since Japan had 'declared that it maintained the British-Japanese Alliance when necessary', which could very likely damage China's interest, the Chinese government on 3 August 'announced that fighting on Chinese territory or in Chinese territorial waters' was prohibited. Three days afterwards, China declared itself to be neutral. Discontented by China's declaration of its neutrality, which prevented Japan from invading German-controlled Shandong, Japan, on the one hand, privately negotiated with Yuan Shikai, and on the other hand, it announced its ultimatum to Germany to 'withdraw [its] battleships from Chinese territorial waters and hand Qingdao to Japan'. Finally it declared war on Germany and demanded on 23 August that 'China leave the area south of the Yellow River as a battle field for the Japanese and German armies'.

However, Japan's declaration of war against Germany can perhaps be seen as its attempt to further extend its own interests in China. The British-Japanese Alliance, and Japan's declaration of war on Germany, was but a pretext. It was not that China was unaware of this, but that it, essentially, had no solution for dealing with Japan's actions. After American participation in the war began, China had also thought about joining. Though the Southern Government as well as a certain amount of public opinion was against the war, the Beijing government, controlled by Duan Qirui, was actively in support of the war, and it even founded an 'Office for War Entry' in 1918. As an envoy of the 'official' Beijing government, it would be worth examining Hu Weide's response to the war, his concerns over Chinese participation, and whether he had anticipated the potential post-war effects. Even though he lived in the embassy in Paris and would represent China at the conference involving the establishment of the League of Nations in 1917, which introduced China to the later Paris Peace Conference, little attention was paid to Hu

Weide; the spotlight shone on Gu Weijun. It is commonly cited that the reasons for this were because of Gu's personal talent, and yet questions such as how the young Gu could stay out of the complicated internal relationships in the Chinese delegation, whether there was any other reason and what position Hu Weide held in this delegation have all been neglected by historians of foreign affairs. In fact, there is a difference between 'no appearance at the Peace Conference' and 'no appearance in diplomatic circles during the Peace Conference'. We cannot therefore conclude that Hu Weide contributed nothing to it. In the 'Diary of Yan Huiqing', Hu's performance is noted many times in connection with the internal affairs of the group. We may conclude that Hu Weide made an effort on the nomination list at least. However, this point has always been ignored. Furthermore, at the end of the Conference there emerged a conflict within the group about whether to sign the treaty or not. The relationship between Hu Weide's attitude and the final outcome would also be worth investigating.

(I) Negotiations before and after World War I

After the refusal of Lu Zhengxiang's proposal to nominate Hu Weide as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lu left his post in disappointment. His successor, the next Prime Minister, Zhao Bingjun, did not intend to reemploy Hu Weide and Hu withdrew in silence. Though he still took part in certain political and diplomatic affairs, there was little of note. In contrast to Hu, and despite not having an official administrative role, Lu organised an 'International Law Association' in Beijing and invited several 'gentlemen well versed in the law in China' to discuss diplomatic issues like 'a proposal to prepare to adjust the Unequal-Treaties and the third Peace Conference'. It was strange that Hu Weide was not in this association since he was very close to Lu Zhengxiang and had a great deal experience at the Peace Conference. We have to guess that Hu Weide believe that he was old-fashioned and therefore remained absent.

At the same time, however, Russia and Mongolia signed a 'Russian-Mongolia Treaty' which left China as 'sovereign over Mongolia in name only'. This made the Chinese government again dependant on Hu Weide. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs 'ordered the envoy in Russia to protest officially to the Russian government and declare that Mongolia was part of China, and that it was not allowed to sign a treaty with another country without China's permission. The treaty that it signed went against Chinese sovereignty and China could not accept it'. After this

declaration, Minister of Foreign Affairs Liang Ruhao took the blame and resigned but 'left Beijing without permission'. There had been rumours that Hu Weide or Lu Zhengxiang would be the next minister since there was no one else suitable. The reason that it was to be Hu or Lu was because both had worked in Russia for a long time and understood it much better than others; it was 'only that Congress preferred Lu'. Yuan Shikai nominated Lu to succeed since he viewed this as more preferential and shortly thereafter this proposal passed. Hence the mission to deal with Russia was handed to Lu. As the other candidate, Hu Weide was given the post in France and this proposal was also passed. Hu Weide's wish to be sent abroad again had finally been granted and he would therefore extricate himself and not be involved in internal political conflicts any more. As he was no longer interested in politics, it was quite a relief for Hu Weide to stay in Paris.

Congress had not created difficulties this time and Hu had obtained sixty-six votes out of the seventy-six members present, which was five more than Wei Chenzu who had been Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the southern government at the end of the Qing Dynasty (he was in turn sent to the Netherlands). Since Congress had approved the appointments, Yuan sent orders two days later and appointed Hu and Wei to be envoys.

Hu Weide had not been to Europe for six years and now he would be stationed in France, one of Europe's major powers. Though the European situation had changed and the relationships of competition and cooperation were different from when Hu worked in Russia, France was friendlier to China than at the end of the Qing Dynasty. Apart from following the USA, 'deciding to acknowledge the Republic of China in January 1913', France also helped China with loans and the Mongolia problem with Russia. It helped that the French diplomatic focus was on the Balkans and thus there were no conflicts of interest with China, except for the loan issue. Therefore, China expressed its respect and gratitude to France by sending the experienced, high-ranking official Hu Weide.

Hu arrived in France on 6 May 1913. News about him was seldom in the newspapers, except for a presidential summons on 11 January to 'discuss secretly in the Confidential Hall of the north wing with Prime Minister Zhao, Liang Shiyi, Zhang Guojin (1876-1959), two secretaries and the associate of Foreign Affairs Liang Fang' and 'newly nominated representative in Holland, Wei Chenzu'.

Even during this urgent period of conflict between China and Russia, Hu Weide's opinion appeared nowhere, though he himself had experience in Russia. Furthermore, Lu Zhengxiang, who was in the charge of these negotiations, did not seem to want to invite Hu to consult. This implies that unless initially consulted or invited by others, Hu Weide did not want to get involved in arduous negotiations. This penchant for withdrawal was the most significant element of Hu's personality and his official career. However, when the two main international issues—the First World War and 'Paris Peace Conference'—happened, Hu Weide still contributed his rich diplomatic experience to help China face these two problems.

Hu Weide's routine negotiations in France were mostly concerned with commercial affairs, especially the international loans issue. For example, the problem concerning the aftermath of benefits affair (27 April 1913) happened shortly after his arrival. Therefore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs not only sent the 'Loan Contract in Chinese and Western Languages' to the ambassadors of the five related countries: Japan, Britain, France, Germany and Russia 'to negotiate', but also to the Chinese ambassadors abroad in order to quash rumours that this loan had not been approved by Congress. As soon as he knew that it had been passed, Hu Weide consulted the French side as to whether they had paid the loan and wired China to confirm that the first payment claimed by France had already arrived. Afterwards, since the creditor nations planned to distribute the bonds, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the ambassadors to 'check the contract and contact the banking institutions involved'. Concerning the 'Large Loan', Hu Weide only acted as ordered in the routine affairs like the other four ambassadors. After the outbreak of the First World War, the French Ambassador in China, who served there between 1912-1917, Alexandre Maurice Robert de Conty (1864-?), questioned the Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the foreign loans, and 'how to protect those interests and other foreign bond holders who held Chinese loans and whose bonds were stolen and/or ruined by the war'. The Minister of Foreign Affairs wired Hu Weide to ask for his solution. Hu considered the legal system very important and replied to him by hand that 'The Ambassador had consulted the Ministry of Finance four times and had sent the examples of the lost Swiss-issued bonds. All in all, this affair concerns the economical credibility of China and the banks of the other countries. It should be studied carefully by the Ministry of Finance in order to find a solution. From my perspective, it is not appropriate to provide a

definitive last word in case it may result in confusion'. Hu Weide considered that it would be better if this issue was studied by the Ministry of Finance to find a proper solution.

Apart from the large loan issue, the modification to the 'Tax Regulations of Trade Imports' was also an important mission during his period in France. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had already determined in advance that the State Counsel, the Ministry of Finance and the Tax Bureau must consider this matter. The State Counsel agreed to modify the tax regulations and the Ministry of Finance asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to 'inform the foreign countries six months prior to the expiration of the contract so that it would not be delayed'. After receiving the reply, the Foreign Affairs Ministry wired its Chinese Embassies and received replies from most of them.

After consulting the Foreign Ministry of France, Hu Weide had been informed that Ambassador Alexandre Maurice Robert de Conty had already sent a report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in China. He wired back to confirm. The Ministry in China replied that in the report de Conty clamed that the French government had asked to be 'appropriately refunded' as a condition 'to modify' the tax regulation and that 'it would not modify until being justly refunded its damages'. Facing this 'additional requirement', the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wired Hu and ordered him to inform France that 'there were already seven countries who had agreed by letter' to the arrangements. Hu Weide then went to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to 'ask for a discussion' and questioned France as to under what pretext it was challenging to have other requirements met. The latter replied that 'it surely agreed but was worried that the Parliament would ask questions if it was not refunded'. Hu Weide replied that 'these were two completely different issues and they should not be confused'. The latter agreed to 'give a quick answer'. After this examination, France finally withdrew and ordered de Conty to 'sign the regulation with the central government' in China directly. Hu Weide wired back to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sun Baoqi, to report the negotiation details.

Hu also had his own opinion about the fraudulent Chinese bonds in Europe. He believed that there were 'too many types of bonds which over-complicated things'. Though having declared several times that 'it should only be valid with the signature of the ambassador and the creditor government', the bonds were 'too varied and could not be

deciphered but by experts and executives. Originally, their complicated nature was to avoid fraud or the selling of bonds in Europe that the Chinese government considered useless. But still, bonds flew into the Parisian markets, good ones and bad ones. We must take precautions'. Hu Weide had 'already doubted' the Chinese Nationalist Party members in Europe who fabricated false bonds to discredit the Beijing government. Hu had also 'consulted economic experts and politicians as to whether there was a solution to prohibit false bonds'. He was told that 'without the signature of the ambassador… no one would purchase such a bond'; he therefore reported that 'it was not worth worrying about'. To Hu, the ultimate solution lay in 'disbanding the Nationalists, forbidding them to assemble. This would be the most drastic measure to deal with the situation. Otherwise if they were allowed to stay in France longer they would make more trouble and, additionally, it is worrisome that they took a foreign land as their own base of operations'. Since the French government 'could not interfere' with the Nationalists movements 'unless they threatened French security', this obliged China to solve the problem internally. To be frank, Hu Weide's reply to 'not worry' regarding the false bonds was rather irresponsible; but since he emphasized the importance of an investigation, and tried to propose a solution, he can be considered competent. The only proposal which can be considered arbitrary was with respect to the disbanding of the Nationalist party, which ran against a more democratic spirit.

In March of 1914, since the 'First Real Estate Bank' was about to open, the minister of Agriculture and Commerce Zhang Qian wired the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to request a copy of the organisation principles of the bank, which 'was a French enterprise, with headquarters in Paris with one to two Chinese representatives, a sales department in China with a staff of counsellors consisting of equal parts Chinese and French personnel'. This should be sent to the concerned departments to verify with 'four Chinese and four French models'. Since Hu Weide was the envoy in France he had also received a model from the Ministry. From then on, Hu reported several times about the meetings of the bank which made a great contribution to the transparency of its establishment.

The issues afterwards such as the 'Large Loan', the modification of tax regulations and the Sino-French bank were the major ones with which Hu Weide dealt with in France. On a smaller scale, there were several minor commercial negotiations and the investigation and consultations with the Department of the Military concerning French arms and

munitions. But Hu Weide's engagement in these issues was mainly to solve small obstacles and not the global situation; therefore his service can not be considered celebratory. His missions were mostly to negotiate commercial exchanges and to improve the friendly contact between China and France. Still, the latter had had a specifically good result. For example, the Sino-French Education Committee, which had, as its founding principle the following: 'improve the Chinese-French friendship', had invited Hu Weide to give a speech. Hu said that during the First World War this committee had not been adversely affected and had been given 'several opportunities' for growth. It seemed that Hu did intend to help this committee, which had contributed to communication between China and France. In July 1921, the President of France had 'nominated the Chinese ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs, ex-envoy in France, Mr. Hu Weide, as le Grand Officier de la Légion d'honneur' to thank him for his great contribution.

In September 1914, since Paris was in the war-zone, the French government moved to Bordeaux. Hu Weide had also followed in order to work, after having made arrangements with the expatriate community. About three months later he moved back to Paris. Since Chinese politicians were busy with the negotiations concerning the Twenty-One Demands made by the Japanese and the Hong Xian Royal Regime, the Chinese Embassy in France had plenty of issues to deal with. During this period, Hu Weide had visited Yan Huiqing in Denmark with his wife. Later he also visited London. His only regret was that he had not used public expenses.stdt It was also noted that he sometimes made it difficult for his visitors as 'his two dogs would not let visitors touch anything in the house'. These notes add some interesting humanity to his character.

Apart from the issues noted above, Hu Weide also contributed to the Chinese participation in the First World War. In order to cope with the Japanese conspiracy to acquire Qingdao, on 6 August 1914 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wired to all envoys abroad that China had declared its neutrality. Hu Weide immediately informed the Foreign Ministry of France and wired back to report that 'France has been informed of our neutrality. The present Minister of Foreign Affairs is Gaston Doumerque (1863-1937). The German army has not succeeded in invading France via Belgium. The British army has sent 100,000 soldiers to help France and they have already disembarked in France and in Belgium. Now the land forces and the navies of countries such as Great Britain, France and Russia will go to war as soon as they meet the German and Austrian

armies in any part of the world. Though there are not many German battleships in the Far East, I have heard that Russia will grab any opportunity in Jiaozhou to invade, which is an important port. And I worry not only about Russia. China has no other solution than staying neutral and the longer the war lasts that greater the effect will be. We can only pay great attention and tell people to be careful when dealing with foreigners in order not to let them have excuses to make trouble. The United States of America is rich in capital and fond of public relationships. They might be of help.' At that time, the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cao Rulin, was a well-known pro-Japan politician. Duan Qirui and others were also on good terms with the Japanese. Hu Weide did not say clearly to be careful about Japan but he did state that he worried 'not only about Russia' and mentioned the mutual understanding with the USA, which was a major axe of Chinese diplomacy. It can be concluded that though Hu Weide had not performed as brilliantly as Gu Weijun, his diplomatic point of view was very sharp. Though the letters and wires that Hu Weide sent back from France were far fewer than those that he sent from Japan and Russia, not all of them have been studied. On 31 July 1915, Hu Weide wired the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In his telegraph he warned the government not to ignore the fact that France 'strongly approved' of the clandestine meeting between Japan and Russia to join forces in the Far East. Hu said 'it is becoming fact that Japan will cooperate with Russia to help Europe. In order to prevent from being attacked one day, China needed to prepare means to deal with this'. Hu had been envoy to both Russia and Japan and his understanding of these two countries' ambitions must have been one of the best at the time. Worried by this situation, he suggested, strongly, that China ought to 'strengthen relations with Japan, Russia, Great Britain, France and Germany; to pay off all debts with all countries, so that there would be no excuse to find trouble with us. To improve education, enlarge financial resources, demolish the old outmoded customs and encourage patriotism and the value of work and martial arts. This is the time to enforce these principles that will benefit diplomacy'. Though this had been said before, it was still very true. However, these were long-term problems and this telegraph had little effect.

Nonetheless, Hu Weide's wire at the beginning of 1918 finally received a response. In Hu's report about the food stockpiles in Europe during the war, he said that 'this war would be a great model for future world wars. According to my observation, apart from the weapons and economics which were important, food was essential. If the lack of food lasted a

long time, even though the weapons and finances were strong enough to endure, the whole nation would submit at length and would not obtain a final triumph. Therefore, from the beginning of the war, Germany paid much attention to this issue and distributed food stocks to maintain its power. The Allied Countries thought that they could probably defeat Germany by disrupting food supplies if they could not do so by force, but we have not yet heard of any extreme difficulty in food supply in Germany…'. Therefore, Hu Weide sent a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a chart that he compiled that listed 'The food amount limits of the Allied Countries, the Axis Countries, and the Neutral Countries in Europe' and the French agricultural output for the last four years. Apart from introducing the French 'price-control' which was 'quite similar to the Chinese balance-price', he also drew the conclusion that the income had experienced a substantial drop over the last four years, after having compared the general quantity of food production. He said:

> When comparing the French agricultural output for the last four years, excluding potatoes which have been more productive than before, all other products have seen reductions this year. Notably, wheat, which has constituted a significant part of exports every year, has seen its production diminish rapidly…. This year's harvest was just fifty percent of the year of 1914. Next year they will need to import. According to French newspapers, they will need at least fifty million or forty million quintal to cope with demand.

This letter was meant to be viewed by the Ministry of Agriculture. However, it helped in the participation plan in the war. Actually, two days before the arrival of the letter, the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce had sent a wire to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs saying that 'it would temporarily establish a committee focusing on food exportation' and asked to be sent 'officials to discuss its organisation'. Before sending personnel, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent Hu's letter to the concerned ministries and said that his report was 'quite related' to the government's war policy concerning 'assisting the Allied countries with food supply' and asked the other ministries to consult. Though this result was not of Hu's intention, we can see the influence of his mathematics background and its help in his original concern which was quite different to other diplomats with backgrounds in literature, law or politics. His

background allowed him to contribute to other domains whilst acting as envoy in France. Seen from this point of view, his time as envoy has a special meaning in the history of Chinese diplomacy.

It seems obvious, in retrospect, that China had to join the Allies, but at that time it hesitated as to whether to join one side or the other. The letter that Hu Weide sent to President Xu Shichang on 15 November 1918 symbolised, for example, his notable contribution during the war. He reasoned that 'China was alone without help which was against the mainstream' and he therefore 'suggested joining the alliance at the beginning of the war'. He 'also wired many times to ask for the participation after the break-up between the USA and Germany'. At last his proposal was 'approved by the government and he managed to proceed with it'. Compared to the well-applauded Gu Weijun who had realised the importance of acting with the USA only when the latter took part in the war which was a 'realisation after the event', Hu's prophetic opinions should be praised. After the war, he also analysed the reasons for Germany's defeat, saying that the defeat was 'a failure of diplomacy'. He listed four major diplomatic errors that Germany had committed to prove that 'there were many political points to pay attention to in order to make a country stable, of which the most important one is, diplomacy'. Though not an enlightened idea, it is worthy of reflection.

At the end of the war, the political situation in China was still very unstable though maintained by Duan Qirui's forceful rule, especially negotiations with Japan about the Loan—the Xi Yuan Loan—which resulted in much trouble. Concerning Duan's loan in the name of funding the war effort, the Chinese Ambassadors, though having seldom interfered in internal affairs, were discontent with it, probably predicting its causing of troubles in any possible future Peace Conference. On 23 July 1918, Yan Huiqing first wired colleagues to ask them to 'protest against Beijing's irresponsible loan'. Wang Guangqi, the ambassador in Italy and Shi Zhaoji, the ambassador in Britain had both expressed their desire to participate. Shi Zhaoji even said 'he wanted to write a letter'. Hu Weide had taken part in protesting at the end of the Qing Dynasty and was also in agreement. Hu replied to Yan Huiqing that he 'approved of sending a wire to Beijing together' but suggested it be written by Yan. What they worried about concerning the loans would, unfortunately, come true, but through this incident we can clearly see the sharp foresight of Hu and Yan about the essential role of diplomacy to the entire country.

Apart from the issues noted above, another important mission for Hu Weide was the related negotiations regarding Chinese workers going to France. After China's war declaration on Germany and Austria, 'because of the internal conflicts and the financial and transportation difficulties, China was not able to fully dispatch its army to fight with the allied countries'. But 'in order to perform its duty, China had taken part in the united army in Siberia with Japan, the USA, Britain, France and Italy. It also sent much food to the Allied countries. But its most notable contribution to the war was the extraordinary action of sending 200,000 Chinese workers to Europe'. Since the Chinese workers were to aid the Allies, Hu Weide, as envoy, had to be involved.

The preparatory work was directed by Liang Shiyi in Beijing. As China was then neutral, the Bank of Transportation organised a company called Hui Min and signed a contract with France to 'try its utmost not to take part in the war'. Once the contract was signed, the Hui Min Company began to recruit and send workers overseas.

Since China was neutral, the contract emphasised that it 'would never interfere in hostilities with countries involved in the war'. That was why when in August 1916, Germany and Austria had strongly protested and reproached China's betraying its neutrality since it had been heard that France was about to send the Chinese workers to the Ordnance Department'. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs immediately wired to Hu Weide to ask 'if this was true as The Times reported; that the French government ordered the newly-arrived Chinese workers to work in the ordnance department' and received the reply 'according to Li Jianshan, the manager of Hui Min Company and Mr. Truptil of the office for the Chinese workers in France, the latter were placed in all kinds of crafts as demanded in the contract. The workers from neutral countries, such as Spain and Switzerland, were also amongst them and had the same status as the Chinese workers'. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs therefore replied to Germany that it was 'almost certainly an error caused by rumour' and asked Hu Weide to pay attention to this.

As a result, Hu became engaged in the issue of Chinese workers in France. Not only did he send several telegraphs to report on the situation, but it was also said that Hu Weide complained in the name of the Chinese workers that 'the salary was insufficient'. Hu seemed to be quite involved with regards to voicing Chinese workers' complaints, which in turn was noticed by the French Embassy that subsequently contacted the

Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The latter replied that 'Ambassador Hu Weide only wired concerning the situation of the workers' upon arrival. He had not mentioned the salary at all and it was but a rumour from the newspaper'. This had cleared up the issue of salaries. However, as for the place of employment for the Chinese workers, the French did indeed have them working in military installations, thus jeopardising China's neutrality. In fact, the situation was verified by one of Hu's telegrams which stated that the workers were employed in military facilities since, as he put it, 'all the French factories were now making weapons and the newly-arrived Chinese, as well as the workers from other neutral countries, were working there'. No wonder there were 'dozens of protests from Germany and Austria' which greatly vexed the Chinese government. The problem of being neutral was not solved until China's war-declaration against Germany and Austria on 14 August the following year.

Apart from the 'Principles of the Protection for the Overseas Workers' sent by Hu Weide to be passed by the Ministry, his greatest contribution concerning the Chinese workers in France was to create for the time an executive post to manage the affairs of the workers. Since the workers' arrival in France, there were often fights and deaths. 'Hu Weide suggested to have a certain person to arrange it since there were too few staff in the embassy and too many issues to deal with that it could not regularly take care of the workers'. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not reply with enthusiasm. Therefore, Hu Weide wired the Ministry on 25 November appointing by himself Li Jun, a graduate from a French secondary commercial school, to be deputy of workers-protection. He would deal with enrolment, the archives, negotiations and protection. The salary was 600 francs per month, as well as a transportation fee'. Hu Weide let Li arrange many Chinese workers' issues afterwards. In June of the following year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs approved his suggestion and formally appointed Li as 'Agent for Chinese workers' Affairs in France'; his French title was 'Agent Pour les Affaires des Ouvriers Chinois, Attaché à La Légation. He would be sent to France the next day.' Li Jun performed well and was much appreciated. Later, the ambassador to Britain, Shi Zhaoji, and ambassador to Russia, Liu Jingren, were inspired by Hu Weide's effective appointment of Li Jun, and also wanted to hire an executive to deal with Chinese workers.

Afterwards, Hu still wired many times about the issues concerning the Chinese workers, which were mainly about day-to-day affairs and were

not as innovative as ‘The Principles of Overseas Workers Protection’ and the appointment of the ‘Agent for Chinese Workers’. Internationally, Hu’s opinions concerning Chinese overseas workers, working conditions and representation did have a significant contribution in France and other countries.

During the war, though working in war-torn Paris, Hu remained as eloquent and calm as before. He maintained appropriate diplomatic behaviour which not only had maintained the Sino-French relationship but had also achieved the mission to protect Chinese workers’ safety. Even though his initial reason to be ambassador was to obtain a relaxing position removed from troublesome internal affairs, he acted properly when essential issues occurred and made China endure both internal and external troubles during the war. He was not as ‘out of fashion’ or ‘backward’ as he had said.

(II) The Paris Peace Conference

In the autumn of 1918, the war entered its penultimate phase. The Allied and Axis countries began to negotiate peace. However, the Peace Conference was still in the hands of more traditional diplomatic operatives, meaning that negotiations were rather secretive. Still, the President of the USA, Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924), did propose his now well-known fourteen pointsstdt. The Shandong question, which most concerned the Chinese, was a good example of these secret negotiations.

Nevertheless, at the beginning of the Conference, China had great expectations for justice.

As early as 1915 when China was still neutral, Hu Weide had already raised the possibility of China’s joining the negotiations as a neutral country. But the reply was not very positive. Nonetheless, China had eventually participated in the war and as the outlook became increasingly better for the Allies, China’s chance to enter the Conference increased. In November 1918 (11 November was Armistice Day) Hu Weide had ‘unexpectedly received a letter. It said that the final conference of the Allied countries would be held to discuss conditions of peace between Germany and its Allies’. So ‘Ambassador Hu Weide wired the government to ask for representatives’. China decided to send Lu Zhengxiang to France as the ‘special conference envoy to Europe’. But since the number of members was not yet fixed, the real list could not be

confirmed. Yan Huiqing had wired Hu to ‘ask for information about the peace conference’, with both Hu and Gu Weijun (who was in the US) replying optimistically that ‘China should send who it likes’.

Although the list had not been determined, Hu Weide was most likely going to be one of the expected candidates. In the ‘Diary of Yan Huiqing’, he noted that on 8 November, Hu Weide had been nominated ‘the representative of China in Versailles’. On 22 November, it was heard that he may possibly be listed with Lu Zhengxiang and Shi Zhaoji. But on 6 December when Yan Huiqing, who did not know the exact list, wired to congratulate Hu Weide, Gu Weijun, and Shi Zhaoji, Hu replied that ‘he was not a plenipotentiary representative!’ On 9 January of the second year, Wang Rongbao (1878-1933) wrote to Yan Huiqing saying that, ‘Hu and Shi were plenipotentiary representatives. Gu was the section chief, whatever that meant’. In short, though there were discrepancies, Hu Weide was always on the list.

Hu was not particularly keen on taking part in the conference, however. He had already emphasised that ‘victory belonged to the Allied armies. This would be a wise move for us. The difficulty lies not in taking part in the conference, but discussing the conditions for peace. I paid a visit to the French president, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and the American Ambassador to France and will submit a report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’. This was sent to Xu Shichang for consultation. But Hu Weide was not willing to take part in the conference and take responsibility, so he claimed that, ‘our future depends on it. But it is terribly urgent and complicated, and I was looking forward to the special envoys discussing this so that we would not fall behind. However, I have been an ambassador in Europe for more than six years. I have long wanted to cede my place to more talented people as I have little talent and the post is very important. That is why I wired several times to ask for a successor’. He wanted to resign from his post as ambassador and instead assume counselling duties in France. He had also made excuses for his resignation by stating that ‘his mother was old and it gave him insomnia when he thought of this. He planned to ask to resign when things were finished. It had been a long time that he had not taken care of her, and he wanted badly to see how she was’. Xu Shichang refused his request, which was perhaps the reason why later Hu Weide asked for holidays but would not return to China. Hu’s wish to avoid the Paris Peace Conference evaporated however as he was destined to be listed as a member of the Chinese delegation.

Not only did Hu Weide's wish to resign vanish, so did China's wish to take part in this conference as a 'major' country. It was decided that, 'there were three categories of Allied countries at the conference. The first was the five major Allied countries, with each having five seats. The second was the countries that had helped the Allies in some way. These countries had three seats. The third group was the remaining countries in the Alliance. These were allotted two seats'. China was put into the third category. 'It not only hurt their reputation internally and on the international stage, but it also made it difficult to appoint plenipotentiary representatives'. Moreover, since Lu Zhengxiang was over confident and had already told Hu Weide, Gu Weijun, Shi Zhaoji, Yan Huiqing and Wang Rongbao, there were six people to be squeezed into the two-member group, including Lu himself. Though Hu Weide, Gu Weijun and Shi Zhaoji had tried to negotiate in Paris in order to enlarge the list to five members, 'since Hu Weide and the other two were on the government's candidate list, people would have suspected they were appointed for personal reasons if they could discuss with each side. They could not insist any further'. The problem of who would be selected for a two-member-group was not solved and caused conflict over places in the group.

The problem was exacerbated when, in order to put forth an image of a unified China, Beijing invited the southern government to send someone to the conference. Wang Zhengting (1889-1961) was therefore added to the group. 'In the afternoon of 18 January, thirty-six hours before the official opening of the Peace Conference, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lu Zhengxiang, assembled a meeting. It was to determine the official representatives', but neither candidate replied, which forced Lu to decide by himself. At last, Lu decided upon five people to represent China, they were, in order: Lu Zhengxiang, Wang Zhengting, Gu Weijun, Shi Zhaoji, and Wei Chenzu. Lu felt sorry for Hu Weide and expressed that 'he would be really willing to let the envoy in Paris, Mr. Hu Weide be a representative. It is a pity that the places were limited and the wish could not be achieved. However, though not an official one, Hu would have the same position as the official ones and he would depend on Hu's cooperation. And Hu's title as the envoy in Paris would help the delegation. Lu hoped that Hu would understand'.

Praised by Gu Weijun as a 'traditional diplomat and scholar and an eloquent gentleman', Hu Weide did not care about the title at all, which solved Lu Zhengxiang's initial anxiety. Gu Weijun modestly put himself

after Shi Zhaoji, which left no more argument and thus the final list became: Lu, Wang, Shi, Gu, and Wei. However, Beijing changed the list to Lu, Gu, Wang, Shi, Wei, worrying that if Lu, who was not in good health, became too ill to assist the Conference, Wang from the south might represent China. This made Shi Zhaoji very discontent. Later he and Wang Zhengting together made things difficult for Gu Weijun. As for Hu Weide, Lu Zhengxiang asked for the title of assistant, which the government had first 'refused since there was no need to add such a title as Hu Weide was already in France and could help anyway', but later the government agreed and gave Hu the tile of 'assistant counsellor'.

Hu was highly displeased with Shi Zhaoji's jealousy. Since Shi was listed behind Gu Weijun in the order, he and Wang Zhengting attacked Lu Zhengxiang and Gu Weijun, and became at times very 'fussy'. They even proposed to replace Yue Zhaoju, the general secretary of the group and counsellor at the embassy. Hu Weide had no desire to enter into the conflict of titles and could not stand the fighting in the group. He had quarrelled with Shi who had once helped him become Minister of Foreign Affairs at the end of the Qing Dynasty. After the arrival of Yan Huiqing in France, Hu intended to cooperate with him, hoping that Yan could 'stay a bit longer to reign in Shi's ambitions'. These actions explain sufficiently that though not willing to play a principal role in the group, Hu Weide could not stand idly by the chaos or conflict within it. When remembering his dinner with Hu Weide, Yan Huiqing noted in his diary that 'Hu was furious about Shi's actions and Lu's compromises'.

That was why Hu Weide and Wang Rongbao, who held the same opinion, had 'organised a committee of all the envoys to discuss all problems related to the Conference together in order to contain Shi's secretive actions'. They also urged Yan Huiqing to stay in Paris and to take part in it. Yan agreed to help and he wired Beijing to ask for authorisation to support Hu Weide's ideas as 'all the envoys were members of the committee and had the same right to vote' in order to contain the influence of Wang and Shi. However, Lu Zhengxiang did not agree with this. He intended to add two more representatives but was opposed by Shi in the end. Becoming exhausted, Hu decided to 'resign' and then made the excuse of being 'sick' and left Paris. His destination was unknown. Later it was discovered that he had left for Switzerland and, in fact, had not stopped secretly 'negotiating with Beijing about augmenting the leader's power and the arrangements of the group's internal problems'. Lu Zhengxiang returned later with the title of the executive of

the delegation and held the power of deciding any problem himself without necessarily the agreement of the other four representatives when needed'. Lu Zhengxiang's actions made Hu Weide's plan a lot less necessary, and he finally abandoned it.

In keeping with his personality, Hu had already expressed his lack of interest in taking part in the group and should have kept a low profile. However, very soon after the opening of the meeting, Hu Weide had actively taken part in the decisive issues, which could be considered unusual. As Yan Huiqing put it, 'Hu's intention was to be put on the list of representatives. It was subterfuge to mention Wang Guangqi and the others'. Perhaps Hu Weide had expressed his wish when discussing in privacy with Yan since they were very close. But in this author's opinion, it could have been Yan's misunderstanding. Seen from how Hu Weide had behaved since his time in Russia at the end of the Qing Dynasty, he had always been indifferent to titles and would not have wished to take on too many responsibilities. If he had really wanted to be a representative, he would have taken on additional missions and burdens. This was, however, contrary to his desire. On the other hand, as he considered himself old-fashioned and tried to resign several times, he would have been very fortunate not to be a representative, so why would he bother to try to become one? The real reason might have been Hu's discontentment with Shi Zhaoji's arbitrariness and his desire to assist Lu Zhengxiang. Though his plan of collaborating with other ambassadors to contain Shi and Wang did not happen, his leadership and reputation in diplomacy made the two cautious at least. Shi's 'background' in Beijing and his experience were not equal to that of Hu, which made him concede, if only modestly. Though the southern representative, Wang Zhengting, did not need to compromise, the withdrawal of Shi isolated him in any event. This containment had some effect after all. When Hu Weide was present in the group, the other ambassadors could more or less cooperate whilst still having disagreements. Once 'Hu asked for a

vacation', 'the lack of team-spirit' soon emerged, however. We can thus appreciate Hu's importance to the group.

Hu also had an opinion concerning the signing of treaties apart from the personality conflicts. The Sino-German signing was planned for 28 June. Many staff, including Hu Weide, rarely took part in group activities, but there were still several persons who proposed their own opinions before the signing. Generally speaking, opinions ranged from 'sign' and 'not

sign'. Hu Weide belonged to the former group. At the beginning, it was mainly 'sign'. Apart from Hu, Lu and Shi were also in favour of signing. The only one who was against it was Gu Weijun.

What Gu noted was that, 'the group had not received orders vis-à-vis treaty signing from the government before the afternoon of 28 June. [As a result], they refused to attend the Conference's plenary session'. Gu's take on the event however, may be in error. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs did wire Paris on 14 May, saying that 'today the government had a meeting. Duan Qirui, the two heads of parliament and all the cabinet members were present and decided to sign. The solution would be sent later'. This suggests that the government meant to sign the agreement. Wang Guangqi also wired back to China concerning to issue of signing, as well as Hu Weide, who wired on 16 May to propose signing for six reasons:

i. If we do not sign, we will not be able to banish the 'Twenty-One Demands' and 'Treaty of Shandong' of the seventh year.
ii. It is clearly noted in the Conference that once approved by the three major countries the treaty will be executed. It makes no difference to Japan whether we sign or not.
iii. The League of Nations is very important to China's international status. The League was listed in the first chapter of the treaty, which has three types of countries: the first is the Allied countries. Those who sign will be in this category; the second category will be neutral countries that will be invited after signing; the third will be the adversary countries like Germany and Austria who need to discuss joining the League at a later date. If we do not sign, we will be out of the first category and drop to the second and will need to discuss terms of membership later.
iv. The League is a basis for peace and a guarantee of the independence of small countries. That is why Japan does not insist on racial problems and Italy came back after leaving. Both hope that other countries will join the League. If we withdraw we will surely be isolated and there will be no helping hand when needed.
v. As for the Shandong question, the ambassadors to Britain, France, and the USA do want to help us, but the first two countries are constrained by the signed treaties, and the third refuses to accept racial equality and cannot but oppose Japan.

They did not mean to betray us but they fear a rising Japan. Now if we oppose the proposals as a member of the League, we can raise this problem later when chance permits. But if we do not sign we will hurt the three countries' feelings in vain. The three powers together must be able to control the situation with a strong Japan. We need to maintain amity in case of future need.

vi. This peace treaty would allow China to regain its lost rights from its enemies and to share the international public right as a negotiating country. If we are still at war when the world peace treaty is finalised and we negotiate with enemies alone later, the latter might together hold us to ransom. It will not be easy either to accept or to refuse (their proposals).

These six reasons were considered by Yan Huiqing as 'unconvincing'. But the third of them was actually very important. Fortunately 'China signed with Austria and became a member of the League' which prevented what Hu worried about from happening. But the fact that Hu dared to raise a contrary opinion when everyone in China was furiously against the treaty was still admirable and highlighted his perseverance and courage.

Yan Huiqing suspected that the 'old-fashioned bureaucratic' Hu Weide and Wang Guangting, who were in favour of signing, had been given orders from Beijing. However, though Beijing did wish to sign, firstly whether Hu and the others were really given orders cannot be substantiated by documental verification; secondly, even if they were, they were not plenipotentiaries and had no right to sign.

The suspicion concerning this signing is unreasonable. Hu Weide preferred to sign because of his faith in international organisations and treaties. He believed that only through international power could China change its weak situation. Compared to Gu Weijun's 'gambling' idea of 'strongly believing that if China refused to sign after insisting and failed completely, it would gain the support of the press throughout the world', Hu Weide's opinion seems more realistic. And his six reasons for signing were representative of all the reasons in favour of China's signature.

It seemed clear that the major actor of the Chinese delegation in the Paris Peace Conference was undoubtedly Gu Weijun. His distinguished performance has not only garnered him a high reputation internationally, but it also minimised China's losses. Hu Weide could not compare.

However, Hu instead acted as a stabilising element; his contribution was not inferior compared to other members, aside from Gu Weijun.

Most research on the Peace Conference has argued that the conference was Gu Weijun's personal performance stage, which is quite a restricted viewpoint. Though Hu Weide's insistence on signing had been opposed, it showed at least the liveliness of the delegation. It also proved that the Chinese diplomats at that time could surmount internal obstacles and manage to be professional diplomats. From the point of view of the development of Chinese diplomacy, it has had a substantial impact.

Moreover, Hu Weide's title as envoy was quite valuable during the Conference. It was later discovered that there was an urgent telegraph signed by Hu Weide which had been sent to China before the final fixed list; it said that 'if the north and south do not start negotiating soon, the rights of our representatives to speak at the Conference may be rescinded'. The authorities 'denied the existence of such a wire'. The gendarmerie 'asked the rumour-maker to correct his statement'. Though it seemed that there was no such wire, it may illustrates the use Hu's name to push the country to unify.

Before the Conference opened, Hu had already expressed to Xu Shichang 'his wish to cede the place to the talented'. But he had to work hard after its opening. Since Hu Weide did not want to take on any burden or pressure, this was against his wishes. Thus when the Conference issues were more or less settled and younger diplomats like Gu Weijun had mastered the situation, Hu seemed rather withdrawn. In August 1919, Hu Weide 'asked for vacation to go back to China' and 'wired to the government on the day of his departure and declared that he would not return to his old post'. Therefore the embassy was taken over by Counsellor Yue Zhaoju from 31 July. It was said on 10 August that 'Yan Huiqing would replace Hu Weide as envoy in France. The envoy in Germany would be someone else'. Hu Weide officially left his post on 21 September and departed Europe for China on 23 September.

Though not as brilliant as Gu Weijun at the Peace Conference, Hu Weide had enjoyed a very important status in the Chinese delegation. Additionally, he contributed much to related matters in China. Hu Weide's performance needs to be re-examined as it has been neglected by research that has focused primarily on Gu Weijun. Hu Weide's proposal was full of the spirit of 'weak country diplomacy'.

Section two—Chinese Ambassador to Japan

The celebrated diplomat Yan Huiqing was nominated as Minister of Foreign Affairs on 17 August 1920 and one of his first acts was to reassign ambassadors. Three days later, it was decided that Hu Weide would again be the envoy to Japan.

After the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, diplomatic relations with Japan had become a most important regional relationship. After the foundation of the Republic, there were more large movements in the Chinese diplomatic world. For instance, Japan's 'Twenty-One Demands' brought Yuan Shikai and Lu Zhengxiang much criticism. The 'May Fourth Movement' (1919) had made Cao Rulin, Zhang Zongxiang, Lu Zongyu (1876-1941) lose much fame and standing. On 19 August 1920, newspapers noted that 'representatives posted in the UK, the USA, Japan, France and Italy would be officially named as ambassadors instead of the previously used title of envoy'. This illustrated Japan's high status in Chinese diplomatic matters.

To such an important diplomatic partner, China had long appointed just a 'first secretary' [although they functioned as ambassadors and have been called such in this work], which can be seen as being rather dubious. In April 1919, the current envoy, Zhang Zongxiang, resigned and the post was left to the first secretary, Zhuang Jingke, for more than six months with no new envoy to succeed Zhang. Therefore, at that time, being sent to Japan as an envoy seemed to certain diplomats as rather ominous. For example, the Shenbao noted that

> Since the resignation of Zhang Zongxiang the post of envoy in Japan had not been filled. Since the Chinese government refused to sign the Peace Conference treaty, the relationship with Japan had become troublesome and Zhuang Jingke could not be guaranteed the post, which was known in the government. It was heard that the government wished to appoint Yao Zhen but that he had refused. It was also possible that Hu Weide would be the next envoy but he had not returned from France yet. At this crucial time, the return of the most solicited Jiang Rong was undoubtedly ominous. From the point of view of the diplomats who were

> coveting this post, Jiang Rong was said to have come back to report difficulties, indicating that he would never go back to Japan; indeed, his return was accompanied by his resignation from his post as supervisor of Chinese students in Japan. It was heard that Jiang had detailed the difficulties that he had encountered in Japan when he paid a visit to the president. He was determined not to continue despite being asked to do so.

Besides, Hu Weide had also refused by making excuses, and the acting envoy, Liu Jingren, had not yet arrived and had already claimed he was sick. This might have been for the same reason.

It had been almost fifteen years that Hu Weide had served as an envoy in Japan. Only three other people had the same experience as Hu: Wu Tingfang, Sun Baoqi, and Liang Cheng (1864-1917). Even Wang Dayou did not have such a distinguished background. Though a 'major player' in Chinese diplomacy, Hu's energy and professional qualities could not compare with the third generation diplomats who where educated abroad. However, there must have been some reason why the newly-appointed minister, Yan Huiqing, who was educated abroad himself, did not choose someone similar to his standing, but rather chose Hu Weide to be sent to Japan. It seems that the efficient Yan Huiqing must have desired certain support from his choice of Hu Weide.

Hu's activities were rarely noted in documents after his departure from France. He perhaps stayed in China, or at least in Beijing, in July and August of the next year. It is notable that one week after his appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yan Huiqing travelled to Hu Weide's home to 'ask for Hu's acceptance of the posting' to Japan. Though he had lived abroad for an extended period of time, Hu must have been more used to the Chinese way of life, unlike the westernised diplomats Lu Zhengxiang and Gu Weijun who preferred staying abroad for years even without official duties. This difference might have been proof of Hu Weide's character, which was closer to that of a traditional Chinese scholar than a westernised intellectual. Moreover, the fact that Yan Huiqing paid him a visit for the particular reason of asking him to serve as envoy was perhaps on one hand to show his respect to an old colleague and on the other hand, it showed the extreme difficulty in choosing a proper candidate.

As mentioned, after the resignation of Zhang Zongxiang, the candidate to Japan was not immediately chosen. Many people were rumoured to have been chosen. Apart from the candidates cited above, there was the acting envoy in Japan, Zhuang Jingke, who 'put his ambitions on the post', and 'Zeng Zongjian, the chief of the transportation department of Jilin-Heilongjiang'. This made the issue of a replacement quite uncertain. On 28 July 1919, unsubstantiated news had been sent out that Zeng Zongjian would be the envoy to Japan, which would have solved the problem at last. But perhaps fearing political instability, the government did not officially declare its decision. Related rumours were often seen in the newspapers, and it was even reported that Gao Erqian was about to be sent. In short, the post of envoy to Japan had been well discussed but without an official solution.

On 14 August, a newspaper noted that 'Liu Jingren would be the formal envoy to Japan' and it was confirmed on 17 August. On 19 August during the cabinet meeting, the 'case of proposing Liu Jingren to be the envoy to Japan' was to pass through the same day. On 27 August, 'the case of Liu Jingren as envoy to Japan' was passed. On 3 September, the order had been sent and the issue finally settled.

But Liu Jingren had refused and this meant that Zhuang Jingke who had 'resigned the post of counsellor in the Chinese embassy to Japan' continued to act as interim ambassador. The government, however, never intended to make him the official envoy and later new rumours surfaced that Wang Daxie was to be the candidate. The reason for this rumour was because Hu Weide had recommended Wang after his return. Nevertheless, Wang 'refused, giving the excuse that he was too busy socialising'. At the end of the year it was heard that Hu Weide would be sent, but this news was also not confirmed. Afterwards, since Liu Jingren refused to take up the post, there was still no official ambassador. The most experienced diplomats, such as Liu Jingren, Liu Shixun and even Hu Weide and Wang Daxie did not want to be ambassador, showing how difficult the job was. Minor officials like Zhuang Jingke and Zeng Zongjian were keen to obtain the post, but this was most likely due to their beliefs that it was an easy route to promotion; it did not mean that they were competent.

The absence of an ambassador aggravated the Shandong issue. On 26 September 1920, it was heard that the Japanese Embassy sent 'a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to urge a reply on the Shandong issue'. A

letter was sent the following day which ‘vaguely indicated the presence of Japan’s power in Shandong. They had to push for a meeting because of the Chinese and Japanese. The original text was very long. Between the lines they hinted that they would act as they wanted without negotiations’. In view of the behaviour of the Japanese, the Chinese parliament immediately held a meeting and decided to ‘let the Ministry of Foreign Affairs discuss and solve the problem’. Nonetheless, ‘before the final decision, there was a delay in replying to this urgent letter’. Despite having a common understanding of the delay, everyone knew that there ‘would be no way to delay further’. But how could they have an efficient exchange if there was not even an ambassador in Japan? At the same time, the Ministry was already discontent with Zhuang Jingke. Sino-Japanese relations subsequently deteriorated. From May of the following year, the question of an ambassador to Japan arose again and this time the primary candidate was Hu Weide.

However, Hu did try to avoid it. He once humorously remarked to a friend, ‘How can I leave Paris to move to Tokyo?’; a remarked very suggestive of refusal. The newspaper Shenbao wrote that ‘it seemed that his political interest was rather mundane’ and it said that the government would send Li Jia’ao instead. In this author’s opinion, Hu Weide might have thought that since the situation between China and Japan was quite difficult, someone competent was required to be ambassador. He considered himself old fashioned and incapable.

At the same time, Chinese internal politics were especially chaotic. It had often been rumoured that the cabinet would be reformed. After Hu Weide’s refusal to go to Japan, there were rumours that this question ‘would not be mentioned for the moment’ and instead matters turned to the nomination of ‘Gu Weijun, Wang Zhengting, and Shi Zhaoji to act as representatives to the League of Nations’; the ex-Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chen Lu, was to be sent to France and Hu Weide was to be made Minister of Foreign Affairs’. However, Hu Weide had lost interest in politics some time ago and wanted to enjoy more leisure time. He must have shown little desire to be Minister or ambassador to Japan, both of which were difficult missions.

This period was also the time when Zhang Zuolin (1875-1928) had come to Beijing to ‘negotiate’. There were rumours that Zhou Shumo would succeed Qi Yunpeng (1877-1951) in forming the cabinet. Hu Weide’s taking charge of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the wish of the Zhou

cabinet. But it seemed that Zhou and Hu had no special relationship so Zhou's actions might have been at the behest of President Xu Shichang. The friendship between Xu and Hu has been mentioned above, and this list of cabinet members was made 'directly by Xu Shichang and Duan Qirui'. The standard was 'not to use people from the Anhui or Fujian factions, but rather people who had a good reputation and were accepted by both the south and the north'. Originally, Yan Huiqing was to be Minister of Foreign Affairs, but later it was decided that Hu Weide would assume this position. Still, Zhang Zuolin insisted on Qi Yunpeng, who had resigned, and dashed Zhou's wish of forming a cabinet. Temporarily, Sa Zhenbing, Minister of the Navy, succeeded in the cabinet and the members stayed the same as in Qi's cabinet until 9 August when Qi Yunpeng reshuffled it. It was said that his new cabinet still preferred Hu Weide to take charge of the Foreign Affairs Ministry. Xu Shichang, however, wished for Qi Yunpeng, who had be absent for a period of time, to come back to Beijing as soon as possible in order to please Cao and Zhang. As a result, he accepted Qi's list and Hu Weide was abandoned. This time it is not known whether they had asked for Hu's approval to be nominated as minister. Even if Hu had agreed, it would have perhaps been difficult to please Xu and in any event, Hu Weide may have wished not to be included in the cabinet.

As a result of all of these inner political workings, Hu Weide had a brief moment to enjoy his leisure time but it did not last. On 23 August, it was learnt that Hu Weide would be ambassador to Japan, that 'Hu would go to Japan; Lu Zhengxiang would go to France and become also the representative in the League of Nations'. The next day the new minister, Yan Huiqing, called upon Hu Weide to ask a favour. Apart from Yan Huiqing, Xu Shichang had also discussed with Hu Weide several times since 'cases such as the extradition of the chief culprit in the Shandong, Fujian and Miaojie cases' needed to be resolved. Xu asked Hu to do his utmost to be ambassador so that the cases just cited would have someone to take charge of them.' Hu Weide personally agreed, but asked the government to take charge of the negotiations as he, himself, could not do this alone. Additionally, he asked for the monthly remuneration for the embassy to be paid on time so that there would not be any difficulties arising due to a lack of funds. Xu Shichang agreed, and Hu agreed to be ambassador. On 31 August, the Japanese side accepted Hu Weide's appointment as ambassador. Hu decided to 'return to Shanghai and then travel to Japan'. On 10 September, Xu ordered the title of ambassador be removed from Liu Jingren, who had only served in an interim fashion,

and appointed Hu Weide. Thus, finally, the post of ambassador to Japan had been settled.

Judging from the complex internal politics before Hu Weide assumed this post and his acceptance conditions; we can see that apart from facing the pressure from the Japanese, the ambassador had to deal with a lack of funds. Because invitations from his old acquaintances Xu Shichang and Yan Huiqing, Hu Weide had presented his conditions of acceptance. This showed that it was very difficult to be the ambassador in Japan. Hu asked to be on the second ring of the negotiation and preferred to let the central government deal with the minutiae. This showed also why he only dealt with ordinary issues. But since the relations were tense between China and Japan, Hu Weide could not completely avoid all pressure. He still had several cases to resolve, and it is important to note them, especially the Shandong problem.

(I) Performance in Japan as Ambassador

Before Hu Weide decided to leave for Japan, the most important issues between China and Japan were the Shandong question and the nine 'chief culprits' of the Anhui-Fujian faction posing as refugees in the Japanese Embassy and asking for protection. After the war between the Zhili and Anhui cliques, Duan Qirui's Anhui-Fujian circle collapsed. Cao Kun (1862-1938) and Zhang Zuolin both asked that the adherents be punished, but the Japanese protection made it impossible. Therefore, the first important mission for Hu Weide was then to 'extradite the culprits'. To deal with it first, was the 'intention of the government'. The latter even 'asked him to get on with this work quickly so that he could deal with the extradition case'. Because of this pressure, Hu Weide hastily planned to make 'Wang Hongnian the first secretary and Zhang Yuanjie the second', he delegated the staff and finished all preparations before leaving (he eventually decided 'to leave in two weeks time').

Still, the refusal to 'extradite political criminals' is a component of international relations. Hu Weide's negotiations would not be easy. At that time there were many negotiations between the two countries and the relations were not the most secure; succeeding in this mission would be difficult. Whilst Hu Weide prepared for the mission, Japan invaded Huichun, which further aggravated Sino-Japanese relations. Hu planned to leave post-haste but suddenly became ill, 'and could not go to Tokyo because of it'. Zhuang Jingke, exacerbated things when, unable to be the ambassador as he wished, sent word to Hu Weide stating that, 'he was

also very sick and not doing well, and could not manage the post alone. He urged Hu to come as quickly as possible to assume responsibility for his own job'. Claiming illness in order to avoid work had long been an excuse in the Chinese bureaucracy. We cannot tell if their sicknesses were legitimate or not; perhaps each one had their own plans. For instance, Zhuang Jingke might have been disappointed at not being named ambassador and did not want to remain in the embassy. And in view of Hu Weide's personality, we have to deduce that he meant to claim sickness in order to delay his departure since affairs such as the extradition and the Huichun Incident were too cumbersome to deal with. The press guessed this was the reason:

> The Shandong and Fujian problem had not been resolved and the Huichun Incident emerged right after. The new ambassador, Hu Weide, delayed [leaving]* to take up his position, and the incompetence of the substitute, Zhuang Jingke, left an empty seat where someone should have taken charge of negotiations. There is no denying the danger of such a situation in diplomacy. Now the government has urged Hu Weide several times to leave, and it has been heard that Hu will leave from Shanghai on the third day of next month for Japan. But from other sources, Hu Weide's chronic illness has returned and he will not be able to leave before next year. It needs to be confirmed whether this is fear of difficulties and use of illness as an excuse. But since the government is afraid of delaying further, they have sent the first secretary, Wang Hongnian, to Japan as interim ambassador to talk to Zhuang and severely condemn the military action taken by Japan in the Huichun Incident.

In short, though he accepted the mission, Hu Weide did not go as planned 'in two weeks'. After a certain period of waiting, Hu finally made sure that he would 'leave Beijing on the fifth of next month (October) for Japan via Shanghai'. But on 1 October it was changed to 'leaving 1 November by boat'. Hu tried his utmost to delay. His personal excuse was that his most important mission was the case of 'extraditing the chief culprits' and since this was refused by Japan he could not deal with it in a routine way. Hu believed that 'such demands for extradition required proof of the crime, which the government had not provided, and so Hu asked Yan Huiqing to request that proof be obtained as soon as possible in order to request extradition whilst he was working in Japan'. But asking for proof from the government could have been done at the same

time as leaving for Japan. This was merely an excuse. On 4 October, Hu Weide paid a visit to Xu Shichang. Xu told him, 'again about the Shandong and Fujian cases in detail in order that he may deal with them upon arrival in Japan'. This showed that Hu's principal mission was the Shandong case. The next day, Hu left Beijing as planned by 'express train' at 8.35am, 'the government and the parliament both sent representatives to see him off at the station. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yan Huiqing, and the Japanese Ambassador in China Kobata Seikichi were also on the platform'. When he arrived in Shanghai the following day, 'Shanghai's transportation section chief, Chen Shiguang, the representative of the Song Hu gendarmerie, and chief Zhao from the Shanghai-Ningbo, Shanghai-Hangzhou railway lines and other officials' welcomed Hu Weide on the platform. 'Local policemen and beat cops were also there to look after Hu'. Hu Weide 'disembarked the train and shook hands with everyone. He was escorted out by police officer Chen and left by car'. This was quite spectacular. Judging from this kind of reception, and although he was not the only one to receive such treatment, Hu Weide's importance was demonstrated to all.

On 6 November Hu Weide arrived in Kobe by boat with Matsui, the former ambassador to France. Two days later, Hu Weide came to the embassy to assume the post. However, since he had arrived quite late, certain issues had been 'proposed to the Japanese government by the interim ambassador'. On 1 December, Hu Weide paid a visit to the Imperial Palace to meet the prince who represented the emperor. Apart from handing over documents from the Chinese government, Hu Weide also 'came in to visit the Empress' and therefore became the official bridge between China and Japan. It probably was the main purpose of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China to send Hu to Japan. At that time, not only the unresolved Shandong question and the unfinished extradition affair, but also the Japanese aggression in Huichun and Xiamen (Amoy) made Sino-Japanese relations extremely tense. The Foreign Affairs Minister Yan Huiqing was an excellent diplomat but he dealt with many of the Sino-Japanese negotiations with a resolve that may have upset Japan. In contrast, Hu Weide's long experience and high rank would command respect amongst the Japanese and his sincere character would make them trust him. Thus, his dealings in Japan might smooth over the tense situation. Yan Huiqing's invitation to Hu might have been the result of such a subtle role in his bi-polar strategy.

Since Yan's purpose was to create harmony and to strengthen friendly

relations, Hu's negotiations in Japan were not that important. Even his most essential mission of 'extraditing the chief culprits' had been solved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. But it might also have been a result of Japanese manipulation.stdt

On 20 October, before Hu Weide's departure to Japan, the Japanese troops suddenly attacked China's north-eastern territory, resulting in the so-called 'Huichun Incident'. The Japanese Foreign Ministry claimed that the Koreans in Huichun had attacked the Japanese Embassy and had been assisted by Chinese bandits. They claimed that the Chinese government was not competent in crushing the bandits and that they would send 'the necessary troops' to protect the embassy and its expatriates. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs hence outlined two principles to manage affairs: 'to the already arrived Japanese army, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would negotiate with the Japanese ambassador to ask them to retreat. To those who have not arrived but were in transit, the chief of the Fengji region would prevent their arrival by protesting to the ambassador; demanding them to retreat to avoid [trouble]'.* Under the leadership of Yan Huiqing, 'China remained calm to avoid further conflict' but the Japanese demands were 'too much, and the government decided to refuse'. As a result, this issue would not be easy to deal with. Yan Huiqing even exacerbated things when he declared he would, 'not to talk to the Japanese ambassador before their withdrawal'. On 16 November the Japanese proposal had been refuted by China and Japan refused to retreat. Since this incident was dealt with mainly in Beijing and the Fengji region (north-east China), Hu Weide played only a minor role. However, on the same day of the negotiations, the refugee Xu Shuzheng (1880-1925), who had been hiding out in the Japanese Embassy, fled without notice. This made Hu's work more difficult to deal with.

It seemed that Japan meant to set Xu Shuzheng free to exact revenge upon China's hard-line attitude vis-à-vis the Huichun Incident. Several hours after Xu's disappearance, Kobata Seikichi wrote a letter to the Chinese government saying that 'Xu Shuzheng, refugee, had asked me several times to cancel his previous request to be protected in the embassy and be allowed to leave. I asked him to reconsider. Up till the night of 14 November he was still in the troop barracks. The next day at dawn, he disappeared. The captain of the troop reported the disappearance and it can perhaps be surmised that he escaped between the night of the fourteenth and the dawn of the fifteenth. I protected him

only according to international norms. We had no other intentions. We informed your government about this refuge and we have therefore informed you of his escape. We hope it will be followed up'. The Chinese, however, did not believe this. They believed, rather, that 'the Japanese let Xu escape' and were ready to protest and to 'demand the extradition of Xu'. Afterwards this extradition case seemed to be intertwined with the Huichun Incident and could not be solved until the resolution of the latter. The most important mission for Hu Weide in Japan became one of direct negotiations between the two countries. Hu's responsibility was to collect information on each criminal. On 1 January 1922, Beijing made a decision to pardon Duan Zhigui (1869-1925) and other military personnel. Hu Weide had thus been spared the need to deal with this issue.

Still, the fact that Hu Weide dialogued with the Japanese Foreign Ministry in Tokyo had still contributed to the whole procedure. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in China had made three resolutions to facilitate a resolution to the Huichun Incident. The third resolution was 'wire ambassador Hu Weide to allow him explain clearly the situation of our country and our people to the Japanese government'. Hu had worked much on this resolution. He clearly categorised all the accusations of Japan when discussing the withdrawal of the Japanese army and denied each one with reason and determination. The Japanese cabinet had to 'have a secret meeting right after' to reply. Moreover, Hu Weide had also strongly refused the demand that 'every Japanese Embassy maintain fifty soldiers as the condition for withdrawing its total contingent of troops' by claiming that 'it was unreasonable and China could never allow lest other countries followed suit', which led the Japanese government to declare that all the above discussions would be terminated and that both should produce arguments to discuss next time'. These examples were all related to national dignity, and were the responsibility of Hu Weide.

In short, Hu Weide's role in the Huichun Incident and the extradition affair was simply one of communication as before, being either one of the channels of communication or making suggestions to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He did not really solve the case by himself. This reduced role was the first of Hu's conditions before he agreed to work in Japan. Additionally, at that time the focus of Japanese diplomacy was in Beijing, not in Tokyo, so Hu Weide's work was restricted. To Hu, successfully completing required missions and maintaining amity between the countries was his ultimate mission. Considering that Hu, who already

wished to retire but decided to help in such a difficult time since no one else would, it was a rather brave action.

However, seen from the diplomatic atmosphere in China, the most important issue between China and Japan was the Shandong problem. After China's refusal to sign at the Peace Conference, the Shandong problem remained in a suspended state, with China never ceasing in it preparations to resolve the issue. At the end of Hu Weide's term of office, it was the time to raise this topic at the Washington Naval Conference and thus his negotiations were focussed on this issue at the end of his period as ambassador.

(II) Related negotiations at the Washington Naval Conference

Whilst the Washington Naval Conference was a great chance for China to solve the Shandong problem, it had not been organised for that reason. In fact, its objective was to deal with a 'Japan that had continued to engage in arms expansion and had monopolised interests in China thus problematising American-Japanese relations'. 'The United States wanted to hold this conference in order to relax the tension in the Pacific and the Far East and finally solve the problem of limiting arms expansion'. The Washington Naval Conference opened on 12 November 1921. The participating countries were China, the USA, Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan, Belgium, the Netherlands and Portugal. 'Apart from limiting arms expansion, the conference would also establish committees to deal with the Pacific and Far East questions, the main subject of which was China'.

However, the conference encountered some difficulties. First of all, Japan did not agree with the USA concerning inviting China to participate. On 14 July 1921, Hu Weide wired the Ministry of Foreign Affairs saying that, 'the politicians here said that according to China's present situation and its status, it is not proper for China to attend the conference, stressing that it would have a serious impact on Sino-Japanese relations'. However, it must be noted that Japan was not against 'dissolving the meeting'. But it 'would not reply unless it had the schedule of the conference' beforehand, since it worried about having to face the unresolved Sino-Japanese problems in front of the international community. On 19 July, Hu Weide wired that 'Japan, on one hand, is worried that the major powers will attempt to contain Japan and leave it isolated in the international community', and on the other hand, suspected that the Washington Naval Conference 'was influenced by

China' and was quite hostile to it. Afterwards, there was negotiation between Japan and the USA which seemed unfavourable to China. Hu said 'the Shandong problem and Yap Island need not be listed as a topic of discussion at the conference'. Japan also said that it 'would not participate in the Washington Naval Conference unless the treaties agreed at the Paris Peace Conference were adhered to; additionally, the Japanese-American Lansing-Ishii Agreement must not be jeopardised'. 'The vested interests of Japan in China should not be over turned'. Fortunately for China, the USA replied to Japan's threat to not attend the conference saying, 'Japan has occupied Shandong for a long time, which goes against the principles of the Open Door Policies and the territorial integrity of China. If Japan will not return Shandong before the beginning of the Washington Naval Conference, the topic would have to be discussed at the meeting'. Furthermore, 'the Japanese Foreign Ministry said that, before long, Japan would withdraw from Bili in west Shandong, and hoped that the Shandong problem would not be discussed at the conference. The USA replied that if Japan could find a solution which satisfied the concerned countries and the US, the issue would definitely not be discussed'. This motivated Japan more to solve the Shandong issue. As a result of these negotiations, control of Shandong was ostensibly returned to China.

The reason for this conclusion was that 'Japan held a cabinet meeting wishing to solve the Shandong problem before the Conference, declaring the conditions for the exchange of notes during 1915 and 1918'. Since Japan wanted to solve the problem as quickly as possible, it had to sacrifice some of its demands. And if Japan was as hardnosed as before, China could always wait to see the outcome and resort to the Washington Naval Conference, with nothing to lose. These interactions caused Japan to feel great pressure when China wired Washington on 17 August saying that 'it officially accepted the invitation for the Far East meeting of President W. G. Harding (1865-1923)'. On one hand, Japan sacrificed some of its interests, such as 'cables from the Yap Islands to Fiume on the Adriatic would now be managed by the USA; cables from the Yap Islands to Shanghai would be managed by Japan, [and] management of cables from the Yap Islands to Menado [in Indonesia] would be transferred to the USA according to the Japanese-Dutch treaty'. Japan thus 'achieved some compromise' with the USA. On the other hand, Japan 'incited and tempted the South-west of China to demand to be allowed to participate at the Washington Naval Conference so that China's credibility in the international community would be damaged,

thus proving that it was unable to unify'. Thirdly, Japan wanted to reform its alliance with Britain. The Shenbao reported that 'Japan's response to China's participation at the Washington Naval Conference had four components: (i) to drive a wedge between China and the USA, and propagate US imperialist intentions in China so that China would suspect the USA; (ii) to sponsor either the south or the north to continue the civil war; (iii) to publicise China's internal chaos in European and American newspapers to cause anxiety; (iv) to contact European countries in order to maintain their vested interests in China and to make sure that the special powers of all involved nations in China still existed'. Shi Zhaoji clarified the rumour of US intentions and said that, 'it was absolutely not the opinion of the US government' and 'if anybody spoke of intervening in China's internal affairs, the USA would oppose them. The Washington Naval Conference was to rescue China from the spectre of being torn apart. China should also try its best to fight for its interests at the conference'. Hu Weide had protested officially against the Anglo-Japanese Alliance to the Japanese government and also made urgent wires to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs that China would be 'isolated in the world and its future would be in danger' and suggested to invite Gu Weijun, ambassador to Britain, and Shi Zhaoji, ambassador to the USA to 'arrange and detect in secret and contact the south-western warlords to dissolve the separatist regime and unite the country against the common external threat'. This was not only echoed by Gu but Chen Lu also responded and urged eight other ambassadors to wire the government demanding that 'all the provinces engaged in conflict must stop immediately and discuss unification and the fight against the aggressor together'. Nonetheless, the interior chaos could not be solved by the diplomats alone and in some ways their appeals were in vain.

However, Japan reacted in its own way to China's actions. It proposed an initial solution to the Shandong problem. On 6 September, Hu Weide 'met important people from the Japanese government'; the latter 'proposed to solve the problem before the opening of the Conference. If China did not want to negotiate but to discuss this at the Washington Naval Conference, Japan had to declare its reasons, and no other country could force this'. The next day however, Japan sent Kobata Seikichi to visit Yan Huiqing and proposed 'a memorandum for the return of Shandong to China which acknowledged Qingdao as a Chinese-owned port but demanded that it be allowed to cooperate on the Jiaozhou-Jinan Railway project'. This suggested some kindness, but China held the opinion that 'though this memorandum was a withdrawal for Japan, yet

seeing the atmosphere in China we would not want to negotiate with them'. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also had wired Hu Weide and other envoys to seek their opinions. But long before receiving any reply, the Ministry decided not to deal with Japan since 'they really could not talk about negotiations'. In the midst of all of this, there was additional unfavourable news: 'The President of the USA decided that the important issues to be discussed amongst Britain, the USA, France, Italy and Japan with China having the place as an observer. China would only be asked to state its opinion when the issues discussed were related to Chinese interests'. This resulted in 'the Japanese Ambassador in the USA and the American Foreign Ministry discussing the range of topics for the Washington Naval Conference for several days with the agreement that the Shandong problem would not be included'. Britain also expected to solve the Shandong problem before the opening of the Washington Naval Conference and declared that 'this was an issue between China and Japan which had nothing to do with us', China was quite shaken and understood this to mean 'a conditional direct negotiation'. Hu Weide wired the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the list of the Japanese delegation and said that Uchida Yasuya (aka: Uchida Kosai, 1865-1936), Japanese Foreign Minister at the time, would not go and encouraged Yan Huiqing to go to the US since it was 'an opportunity for China'. China still hesitated

between entering into direct negotiations and harbouring the hope that the matter would be dealt with at the Washington Naval Conference.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not reply to Japan about the Shandong problem until 5 October. In the reply, it 'considered that Japan was still lacking in sincerity regarding a solution and that they had different ideas'. Hu Weide reported, however, that the Japanese politicians also believed that China was lacking in sincerity. On 19 October, Japan produced the second memorandum and refuted the reply of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Around November, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs published the second reply, which still emphasised the recovery of Jiaozhou, the operation of the Jiaozhou-Jinan railway alone, and Japan's total military withdrawal. None of these demands was in tune with those of Japan. At that time, since China and Japan were maintaining negotiations, it seemed quite certain that the Shandong problem would not be discussed at the Washington Naval Conference.

The Washington Naval Conference began at 3pm Beijing time on 12 November. The Chinese delegation made ten statements presenting China's interests. Afterwards, though Shi Zhaoji struggled for Chinese interests in the US, Hu Weide, in Japan, was essentially silent. There were few telegrams from him and only limited information. Even when the case became almost impossible to continue, there was no news about Hu Weide's coming to negotiate. He had merely sent a special telegram from Japan conveying the opinion of the Japanese Foreign Ministry about the Washington Naval Conference. In any event, when signatures needed to be added to the agreement to resolve the Shandong problem, Hu Weide was ordered to comply. As soon as he received the telegram, Hu went to exchange paperwork with the Japanese and wired back the full-text to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 2 February, so that the deputies in Washington could sign it. On 4 February, 'solution of the unsettled Sino-Japanese Shandong case, with eleven notes to the main text, eight to the appended text, and four to the notes of the meeting were signed in Washington'. Finally the Shandong problem was solved according to legal principle.

At the conclusion to the Washington Naval Conference, Gu Weijun was satisfied with the result and believed that 'Japan was willing to cooperate with the International Underwriting System on the priorities of Manchuria, the East, and Inner Mongolia. Japan did not insist on China's hiring a Japanese consultant on politics, economics, military and policing issues in the south of Manchuria. The problem of returning the former German-controlled area in Shandong was also resolved'. Whilst this was positive, overall, the Washington Naval Conference had not produced any fundamental changes to China's standing. From the beginning of the conference there was a tendency for the meetings involving China to be guided by Gu Weijun and other diplomats who were adept at English. Therefore, even if Hu Weide wanted to participate fully he would not have been given full play (which perhaps would not have bothered him much due to his continuing desire to withdraw from active service). However, the material presented above was gathered from the archives and newspapers whilst Hu was in Japan. Superficially speaking, Hu Weide had not done anything of note in Japan since the major negotiations were handled in Beijing and Washington. Hu did not have much space in which to act. Still, an article on 9 January 1922 in the Shenbao has revealed an interesting note:

> The ambassador to Japan, Mr Hu Weide, had several times wired

> the government asking to resign because of the tense negotiations with Japan. The government had managed to keep him as it did not want to appoint someone entirely new. Recently, Hu Weide demanded again to resign due to poor health. The government did not approve his request since there were many Sino-Japanese negotiations during the Washington Naval Conference. When Hu asked again to retire, in order to rest, the government intended to accept it since he had asked many times and the Conference was about to close. At present, the authorities are searching for a successor. It has been heard that the president of the Committee of Foreign Affairs, Wang Daxie, will be the successor and he is being asked to agree.

Hu's negotiation in Japan was noted in the 'Diplomatic Archives' and even in the 'Diary of Yan Huiqing'. If there had not been anything important, why did Hu give his reason for resigning as 'the difficulties in negotiating with the Japanese'? Why did the government repeatedly refuse his request? Why did they not accept his resignation during the Conference? Why did it wait until the Conference 'was about to close'? All these facts seem somewhat suspect. In the opinion of this author, Hu Weide's acceptance of Yan Huiqing's invitation to negotiate with Japan may have meant Hu agreed to contend with Japan. Nonetheless, whilst Yan was in China, he was unyielding and refused to communicate directly with Hu in Japan. Yan courteously negotiated but with little sincerity, which delayed progress over the Shandong question. Since Japan desperately wanted to solve the Shandong question, the pressure Hu Weide had to stand in Japan must have been quite enormous, which is most likely the reason why he felt stressed. During the Washington Naval Conference, apart from refusing to budge with Gu Weijun and the others, Japan must have pressed Hu, which in turn put him in a harder position still. Several times he tried to resign, and was refused by the central government. After coming to a deadlock concerning the Shandong question, Japan, however, had initiated renewed communication in January 1922, wherein it 'succeeded in all the important points that concerned it'. We can conclude that, apart from the Washington Naval Conference, there must have been other channels of communication between China and Japan, wherein Hu Weide had probably actively arranged new negotiations. The pressure on Hu Weide might have been no less than that on deputies like Gu and Yan.

Around 9 June 1921, Hu had already expressed to Yan Huiqing his desire

to resign. And Yan had sent him a letter, asking him to 'stay until the visit of Zhu Qiqian'. But on 17 August, Yan noted that Hu 'wanted to return again'. On 22 August, Hu finally announced his resignation; the reason was because 'the students overseas ran out of food. If they receive no financial help, it is feared that things like beatings and fighting in the embassy might happen again. I (Hu) still ask to borrow 200,000 yuan from a Japanese bank'. It is clear that Hu Weide not only had to deal with negotiation pressures with Japan but also the overseas students. Furthermore, the finances of the embassy seemed rather strained.

Hu Weide's hope for a loan through the salt-tax guarantee so that the financial embarrassment of the embassy could be overcome became hopeless by the end of October. His loan proposal had been refused by 'the salt-inspector Shi Guolun', which made him despondent. In November, he wired that 'since the loan could not be extended, all the fees of the seventeen army and navy students are impossible to pay, and they will end up homeless. Please send enough money quickly so that they can return to China'. Asking for money several times without result and the chaos caused by the students made Hu Weide quite bewildered. In December, 'Yan Huiqing's Diary' noted that 'Liao Hedao came by: Hu Weide was hospitalized, and had become a eunuch', possibly implying an operation on his genitals. It is very possible that such an operation exhausted him badly since he was near fifty-eight years of age. Hu had already desired relaxation. He only accepted to go to Japan for Yan Huiqing's sake. But at that time he must have been under a lot of pressure, plus his health was not as good as before. He was not exaggerating his physical condition. Thus, after the Washington Naval Conference and until his departure, his telegrams did not contain important issues but were mainly about the student fees. On 30 March 1922, Hu finished his mission in Japan. The post was assumed by Ma Yanliang, the first secretary at the rank of counsellor.

stdtSeen from the history of international relations, the United States had a position much higher than European countries at the Washington Naval Conference. Britain had, by this time, seen its international position reduced to a secondary role. Seen from the history of Chinese diplomacy, the Washington Naval Conference had reinforced the importance of the third generation of the diplomats like Gu Weijun, which had first been illustrated at the Paris Peace Conference. Hu Weide and other diplomats of the second generation seemed less competent. Shi Zhaoji, Gu Weijun and other diplomats of the third generation who had studied in the USA,

worked very actively, spoke English well and had become representative Chinese diplomats. Whereas Hu Weide and others from the second generation were more and more outmoded (and many also wished to retire), they found themselves unable (and perhaps unwilling) to compete with them. Therefore, even though Hu Weide had made certain contributions during the period of the Washington Naval Conference, he still had 'self-knowledge' of his increasing ineffectiveness. Apart from several resignation attempts, he finally resigned and left important responsibilities to the new generation. He did not go abroad as ambassador after this. However, though Hu's negotiations in Japan have not been documented, and the Shandong question was dealt with by Gu Weijun, Hu might have made a great contribution to solving this problem, which should not be neglected. He had at least withstood the pressure of direct dealings with Japan, which delayed the Shandong question until the opening of the Washington Naval Conference. Japan's plan to solve it before the Conference had been defeated, which was a contribution in itself.

Section Three—the political situation during the late period of the Northern Warlord government and Hu Weide's return to China

On 5 April 1922, along with Yan Huiqing who had temporarily been in Tianjin, Hu Weide returned to Beijing. From this point on, he stayed in the city without being sent abroad again.

Whilst living in Beijing for four years, Hu Weide had not taken on any important job and there is little information about him in the archives. At that time, though it was a period when the warlords fought against each other, the central Beijing Government could more or less maintain the situation with the assistance of 'powerful people' like Wu Peifu and Feng Yuxiang. It is possible that Hu Weide was not needed, which perhaps suggests why in the investigation 'Who are the twelve greatest living Chinese?', carried out by The Weekly Review of the Far East of Shanghai, from October of the eleventh of the Republic until January the next year, Hu received only four votes. In the diplomatic category, not only did he receive less votes than more well-known diplomats like Gu Weijun (1211 votes), Wang Zhengting (925 votes), Yan Huiqing (513 votes), Shi Zhaoji (278 votes), Lu Zhengxiang (13 votes), but also less

than those from the later generation like Wu Chaoshu (23 votes), Zhu Zhaoshen (14 votes), Guo Taiqi (1888-1952, 8votes) and Diao Zuoqian (8 votes). He must have only been recognised in a general social way. In Chinese politics, Hu Weide's fame had really plummeted. However, after 1926, the political situation in Beijing had become more and more chaotic as various warlords struggled to maintain control. This necessitated Hu Weide to come forward and assist in managing the chaos. After four years of semi-retirement, Hu Weide re-entered the core of government from March 1926, by first being a member of the cabinet and later acting on behalf of the Prime Minister. Though not the first diplomat to act as Prime Minister, Hu Weide had certain unique points worth studying compared with other diplomats-come-prime ministers.

(I) Early Experience Back in China

Because of incessant civil strife, Hu Weide's official career was incredibly unstable before forming a cabinet for the first time in 1926. At that time, though the Washington Naval Conference had superficially solved the Shandong problem, there were many unsettled conflicts between China and Japan. The ransom of the Jiaozhou-Jinan Railway was one such example. At the end of October 1921, Liang Shiyi, who had become Prime Minister wanted a loan from the Japanese as a ransom for the railway. This had not only caused uproar in the press, but Shi Zhaoji also told the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Britain's opposition to it. Wu Peifu and other warlords also wired together voicing their opposition to Liang who had formed the cabinet with the support of Zhang Zuolin. Seen from the surface, it seemed that China was arguing over the Shandong railway, but actually it was nothing but a conflict between warlords.

From 28 January 1922, the armies of Zhili and Fengtian began to fight. Wu Peifu, the leader of Zhili contingent won the first battles. During this period, President Xu Shichang negotiated with the warlords several times and wired to ask for a ceasefire, but without any result. After his victory in battle, Wu Peifu proposed forming a parliament as in 1917 and invited the retired president Li Yuanhong to take office, which was echoed by many sides. Xu Shichang, who had been ridiculed by the press as 'the old man who will never leave the government unless he is ill, in bed, or in a coffin', was forced to resign since there was essentially no one to resist Wu. On 2 June, he 'left the capital and the presidency to the cabinet to act as its regent'. Zhou Ziqi, who acted on behalf of the Prime Minister,

declared he had restored the parliamentary system. Xu Shichang had lost his power and influence. Zhou Ziqi, however, behaved like an old bureaucrat although he was a younger Foreign Languages School graduate. To Hu Weide, the political stage in Beijing had become increasingly different since the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the Republic, which made him yearn to retire even more. That was why after returning to China Hu Weide had only taken on three easy jobs that had little responsibility in order to snatch a moment of leisure.

The first job was as a member of a committee dealing with the aftermath of the Washington Naval Conference. The setting-up of this committee resulted from a meeting of the cabinet on 1 April 1922. It was then planned to make Wang Chonghui the president of the committee. On 4 April, it was handed to the President of the Republic to approve as follows: 'an organisation of studies and preparations. Its decisions were to be executed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or an administrative bureau it deferred to. The more important decisions would be discussed in the parliament and transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to execute'. Yan Huiqing, Minister of Foreign Affairs was to be president of the committee, and Wang Chonghui and Wang Daxie the vice-presidents, 'several members, one first-secretary, who had been asked by the Minister of Foreign Affairs to be nominated by the President of the Republic'. Everyone had his assigned duty. The member's duty was to 'come to meetings, study and prepare the questions and report regularly the problems that he dealt with'. The next year on 9 May, Gu Weijun who had been Minister of Foreign Affairs for about one month nominated Hu Weide to be the vice-president. But there is little documented about this committee. Though the date of every meeting is noted, it is hard to find any records of the meetings. Therefore, we cannot be certain about Hu Weide's role. But deducing from his habits, he might not have been involved in too many discussions, and instead simply had his name on the list.

The second 'relaxing' job was as arbiter of the Committee for Maintaining Peace. Since the term of office had passed, the post needed to be refilled. On 10 June, Yan Huiqing proposed three senior arbiters as they 'were familiar with the issues' and this was approved by the president. Hu Weide became, for the third time, an arbiter at The Hague. Nonetheless, the position was perhaps more about its excellent pay with Hu not really having particular duties. In fact, from the time when he was

appointed arbiter until his departure, the court of arbitration at The Hague had settled eighteen cases, amongst which Hu Weide had participated in none. This work was essentially an occupation that did not require assuming much responsibility. On the other hand, since the Nanjing Government had officially been recognised by the international community at the end of August 1928, it did not recognise the arbiters that the Beijing Government had sent, and they were therefore replaced with Wang Chonghui, Wu Chaoshu (1887-1934), Wang Shijie (1891-1981), and Li Jinlun (1886-1956). As a result, Hu Weide's career as arbiter came to a premature end for the fourth time.

The third 'leisure job' was as president of the Committee of [Clothing] Reform. There is little documentation about this, however. It may have just been a public association. Given that these three jobs were not work intensive, we can see that after returning to China, Hu Weide would not be influenced however the political situation changed, and it is clear that he wanted to retire from politics. Though the Prime Minister changed frequently, the Minister and Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs remained Yan Huiqing and Shen Zhilin. Given Hu Weide's experience and his relationship with Yan, if Hu had wanted to return to politics, he could have been an ambassador abroad or had the possibility to compete with Shen Zhilin to be Vice-Minister. This however, did not happen. Apart from Hu Weide's wish to remain in retirement, it might have been that he was not familiar with President Li Yuanhong and Wu Peifu who ruled Beijing at the time. But seen from Hu's habitual attitude, the first reason must have been his lack of will to take on further jobs.

In 1924, Wu Peifu lost his power after the second Zhili-Fengtian conflict. The Beijing government entered a period of cooperative control between Feng Yuxiang and Zhang Zuolin. They invited the experienced Northern leader Duan Qirui to be the 'Provisional Chief Executive of the Republic of China'. On 24 November, Duan took charge and declared the system of provisional government.

Duan had chaired two important meetings during his time in office. One was the 'Aftermath Meeting' in order to 'solve conflicts and prepare for reconstruction'. The other was the 'Special Tax Meeting' to solve financial difficulties. The Aftermath Meeting was a concept that Duan Qirui had proposed before officially becoming President. It was made to boycott the 'Citizen Meeting', proposed by Sun Yat-sen. Those invited were mostly people who were concerned with internal affairs. Some of

these were: Sun Yat-sen and Li Yuanhong, who 'had made great contributions to the country', the generals who had contributed to fighting anarchy in the interior, representatives of provincial officials, and 'people who had a special reputation, scholarship and experience'. Although Hu Weide could have been listed in the last category, he was not selected. In fact, of all the people who were invited, only Tang Shaoyi and Liang Shiyi were involved in diplomacy. We can therefore conclude that this meeting did not actually concern diplomats like Hu Weide, but was rather a meeting about internal concerns.

However, this meeting had a certain effect upon Hu Weide since it led to the establishment of organisations such as the 'Citizen Deputy Meeting' which meant the establishment of a 'temporary consultation' group. Besides, during this meeting, the 'Golden Franc Case' had been recognised which made it necessary to set up a special tax meeting intended to deal with the difficult financial situation. The temporary consultation group published regulations on 13 April 1925. On 30 July, this meeting began with Hu Weide as one of the 'consultants'. The members of the consultation were the deputies of the military and citizens from all the provinces, parliamentary speakers and administrative personnel. Hu belonged to the third category. His contributions during the consultation could not be found in the archives. Perhaps it was because he had a bureaucratic background and was not very familiar with the proceedings of such a meeting. But it might have been that this consultancy work was but a good remuneration that Duan gave to Hu, and he did not have to take it too seriously. In fact, though the consultation group was a legislative body in the time of the provisional government of the Republic of China and acted as a replacement for the parliament during that period, it existed really only in name, and undertook no real action. This job was similar to the position he held with the 'aftermath meeting'; a job of little or no importance.

The special tax meeting was established by Duan Qirui in order to 'achieve an agreement on the 'Two-Five' extra tax in order to increase governmental income'. It was originally scheduled to begin on 26 October 1925 in Beijing. The 'Special Committee of the Customs Income' would prepare the content of the meeting. Hu Weide's name was not on the list of representatives. The representatives were not necessarily the delegates of the meeting, but the six plenipotentiary delegates had to be chosen amongst the members by the provisional authorities. The following year in March, Hu Weide, as Minister of

Foreign Affairs, became a plenipotentiary delegate of the customs tax bureau. However, soon after these events Duan Qirui left the presidency. This important meeting was to finish without any consequences. Hu Weide's role as a member of the customs tax bureau's special meeting and as a plenipotentiary delegate finished on 14 July.

On the whole, from March to April 1922, Hu Weide did not undertake important missions though he had not completely resigned. He was semi-retired. That is why he could stay amidst the chaos of the political situation until the second fall of Duan Qirui, without being involved. But Duan's fall created a huge gap in the Beijing Government, essentially plunging the situation into anarchy. This change resulted in Hu Weide being called to perform important duties once more.

(II) The establishment of the Provisional Cabinet and life in retirement

The first time Hu Weide formed a cabinet was soon after the fall of the provisional government of Duan Qirui. The second time was at the beginning of the military government of Zhang Zuolin. This reveals fully the instability within China. The reason why a diplomat was nominated to be acting Prime Minister when internal affairs were in a state of chaos was chiefly to achieve a certain superficial peace in the country because of Hu's neutral appearance and his international reputation. This can be substantiated by Wang Daxie's nomination as Prime Minister at the end of 1922.

But speaking of international reputation, there would be no one from the second generation of diplomats who could be compared to the third generations' Yan Huiqing, Gu Weijun or Shi Zhaoji, except perhaps for Lu Zhengxiang. Generally speaking, the second generation was considered old fashioned and in fact, speaking of their outlook, it was indeed quite out-dated. That is why from 1921 the ratio of people from the third generation forming cabinets was much higher than that of the second generation.

In the history of the Beijing Government, Hu Weide was not the first to form a cabinet with a diplomatic background. In 1912, Lu Zhengxiang became the first to do this, and there were also Sun Baoqi, and the abovementioned, Wang Daxie, from the second generation. The diplomats who formed a cabinet with a third generation background were, as mentioned, Yan Huiqing and Gu Weijun. The special point of

Hu's forming of a cabinet was that after the fall of Sun Baoqi's cabinet in July 1924, there had been no more cabinets formed by diplomatic personnel from the second generation. Neither Cao Kun, Duan Qirui nor the Beijing authority-figures Wu Peifu and Zhang Zuolin had chosen second generation diplomats with a bureaucratic image to lead the cabinet, but rather had chosen young-looking, internationally well-known ones like Yan or Gu in order to obtain international support. The fact that Hu Weide, as someone who was considered old fashioned, was chosen must have been for a particular reason.

The performance of the provisional government of Duan Qirui was quite poor, especially vis-à-vis the case of the golden franc on 30 May, which severely damaged the reputation of his government. On 20 April 1926, the government officially collapsed and Duan Qirui left Beijing for Tianjin. Before he left, the cabinet was in the midst of change. Jia Deyao, Head of the Military, who had been Prime Minister for just over a month, began the cabinet reforms. The Minister of Foreign Affairs position was transferred from Wang Zhengting to Yan Huiqing. Yan, however, had no wish to assume this post. Duan, therefore, accepted Yan's resignation on 25 March and nominated Hu Weide as Minister of Foreign Affairs. He also nominated Hu Weide to be the plenipotentiary representative of the special tax meeting. Duan worried that Hu would also resign and sent the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Zeng Zongjian, to 'persuade Hu to start the same day'. Zeng did not know Hu Weide very well and his persuasion might not have had much effect. Perhaps surprisingly, however, Hu Weide accepted the position even after spending the last four years in more leisurely pursuits, which suggested that he might have had closer relations with Duan Qirui and other people from Anhui than the other factions.

The National Troop of Feng Yuxiang and the United Troop of Wu Peifu and Zhang Zongchang had been fighting incessantly for several months since the early part of 1926. Their battles had caused the intervention of foreign countries since they had disrupted the latter's interests which was prohibited as previously stipulated in the Boxer Protocol. This in turn led to the 'Dagu Forts Incident'. Under such stress from both the interior and exterior, and apart from trying his best to harmonise these conflicts, Duan also needed someone who was familiar with diplomacy in order to deal with the foreign nations. After refusing the appointment as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yan Huiqing had heartily recommended to Jia Deyao to appoint Hu Weide to the position. But Duan Qirui preferred Cai

Tinggan, whereas Feng Yuxiang and others from the Northwest Army preferred Wang Daxie. It was hard to decide. At the cabinet meeting on 24 March, Jia Deyao said that Cai and Wang had both refused each other's appointment. It would be better to let Hu Weide succeed straightaway rather than permit delay. This proposal had been approved and both the government and the presidency sent people to persuade Hu Weide, who finally agreed.

Hu Weide's agreeing to take charge of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could have been for three reasons. Firstly, though not belonging to Yuan Shikai's inner-circle, he felt closer to Duan Qirui who was the only active person in politics and the military and who came from the old Northern Army led by Yuan Shikai. This conclusion can be substantiated by the following: when Jia Deyao tried to persuade Hu to succeed, he had 'indirectly asked Wang Shizhen to speak favourably of Hu'. Secondly, unlike the firmness of Yan Huiqing, Hu Weide's character was gentle and even-tempered. It would have been hard for him to refuse if he had been sincerely asked to help. Thirdly, Hu, more or less, held the opinions of a Chinese traditional gentleman, insisting that when in chaos a man should accept the responsibility and deal with it. That is why after Duan's fall, Hu still remained in the cabinet. He did not formally belong to any party. Being an elder statesman with a respected reputation, his skills could be useful in stabilising the situation. This is probably why Duan accepted him as Minister of Foreign Affairs and urged him to start the same day.

But the unstable situation and the violence of the civil conflicts could not be easily remedied. On 15 April, it was falsely announced that Duan Qirui had disappeared. 'Political affairs had completely ceased, as well as international negotiations'. Jia Deyao's cabinet had resigned short thereafter. Beijing had become a lawless place causing everyone to worry. 'Wang Shizhen, Zhao Erxun, Sun Baoqi, Wang Daxie, Jiang Han, Xiong Xiling, Wang Zhixiang, Jiang Chaozong, Wang Chonghui, and Yan Huiqing were asked to organise a temporary peace-keeping committee in Beijing. This resolution was unanimously approved. Lu Zhonglin had agreed to allow this committee to be responsible for keeping the peace in Beijing and its surrounds. He also wired Wu Peifu, Zhang Zuolin, Zhang Zongchang, and Li Jinglin asking them to call a ceasefire and discuss a detailed solution in the committee'. Though this peacekeeping committee claimed only to 'focus on peacekeeping and not politics or the military', it actually functioned as a real government. On 20 April, Duan Qirui decided to resign and leave for Tianjin. Before

leaving he had approved the resignation of Jia Deyao, the Prime Minister, He Delin, the Minister of Finance, Gong Xinzhan, the Minister of Transport, and Zeng Zongjian, the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs. He also appointed Hu Weide as Prime Minister. On the same day, Hu 'appointed Chen Enhou Head of Public Order, to replace the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs'. He also announced that he had no intention of being Prime Minister and informed the military leaders to this effect, in order to seek the opinions of others. He was supported by the peacekeeping committee since he had many acquaintances. Wang Shizhen supported him as well. Hu Weide's idea of being nominated as Prime Minister in the name of the committee had worked. The leaders and others therefore would not consider him as one of Duan's people, and were not against him forming a cabinet. Hu then modified his previous telegram and wired to all the military leaders, saying that 'since Duan and Jia's cabinet had resigned, the central government would therefore cease functioning. Considering the international situation, I hope you will soon make a decision'. He also 'started to search for a Minister of Finance to begin the first step of forming a provisional cabinet.

A provisional government is an emergency or interim government usually set up when a political vacuum has been created by the collapse of a previous administration. Such a government will hold power until elections can be held or a permanent government can otherwise be established. Before that there had already been two provisional cabinets formed by Gao Lingwei (14 June till 10 October) in 1923, and Huang Fu (2 November till 23 November) in 1924. Both were necessary because after the fall of Li Yuanhong and Cao Kun there was no one to take charge of the government. Gao's provisional cabinet was dissolved when Cao Kun was voted in as president. Huang dismissed his when Duan Qirui formed his interim government. In the history of the Beijing Government, there were five persons who led as acting prime ministers, amongst which there were the diplomats Yan Huiqing and Gu Weijun. Hu's forming a cabinet on this occasion, however, was before Yan's, making him the first diplomat to do so.

Hu Weide, as Foreign Minister, had asked the Ambassador of Belgium to 'alter the Sino-Belgian commercial treaty made on 2 November 1865 which was due to expire on 27 October 1926'. He therefore nominated

himself as Minister of Foreign Affairs since 'the treaty would be due on the sixteenth. If we did not declare it out of date this treaty would still be valid. Things will be delayed if we do not have a Minister of Foreign Affairs. I cannot take charge of this as there is no one to succeed me'. The other cabinet members were from Jia's former cabinet. Though he was Prime Minister, he did not really have the powers of that name. Apart from depending on Zhang Zongchang and others for military and political affairs, he was but a 'side-guest'. Most of the socialising and negotiations with the warlords were done by Wang Shizhen. Plus, though supported by the peacekeeping committee, Hu was not approved by the Zhili and Fengtian leaders. Additionally this provisional cabinet had not been formally established. As a result, essentially, his cabinet had little real power since the military forces had not yet resolved their conflict. Legally speaking, his cabinet had been named by Duan's government, which had already lost its validity and peacekeeping committee support. Whether it was legal still remains a question. However, seen from the whole system of the 'Republic of China', Duan's temporary government was still a legal one. Though it had dissolved, it still could appoint a cabinet. So, Hu's cabinet was legitimate according to the legal system of the Republic after the fall of Duan's government. It was just that the cabinet was limited by a lack of power, and Hu did not venture further to insist on more, which meant his interim cabinet had a name only. Nevertheless, since Hu had begun the management of the administration, Beijing had moved further and further away from 'anarchy' and towards stability. Foreign nations could therefore continue their normal relations with China. The Sino-Belgian treaty that was near expiry was successfully renegotiated. These things were actually Hu's greatest contribution at the time, which has always been overshadowed by the struggles of the warlords.

Although Hu's cabinet had a relatively secure legal standing, it was destined to be short as Zhili and Fengtian factions, the most powerful warlords at the time, had essential control over Beijing. Initially, they wanted Wang Shizhen to be the interim leader to reinforce stability. Wang, however, refused. Then there was talk of forming a provisional cabinet led by Yan Huiqing. Still, it was stated that 'if Yan could not deal with the situation or was unwilling to, Qi Yunpeng could succeed'. Wu Peifu was the most in favour of this proposal, but the Fengtian clique did not agree. Yan Huiqing was generally considered a 'coward who could not deal with the chaos in Beijing'. Somehow, Hu had wired Zhang Zuolin and Wu Peifu, saying that 'my cabinet has not been appointed. I

was not able to assume total responsibility as the diplomatic situation was quite important. I could only try my best to handle things during such a short period. Please decide soon and inform me of the solution'. This implied clearly that his cabinet was temporary. After several telegrams and discussions, the intention of letting Yan Huiqing form a cabinet had appeared. Yan had refused several times, but since he knew that the Fengtian faction had accepted him, and that both Cao Kun and Li Yuanhong had announced their intention to leave politics, the conflict between supporting the law and the parliament seemed resolved. Thirdly, allowing Yan to form, or, in reality, re-form, his own cabinet, was not only 'according to legal proceedings but also the electoral law promulgated in 1913'. In short, the essential thing was that 'of the form suggested by Wu and Zhang' which signified the promise of the real powers, 'Yan's cabinet formation became certain' and Yan started to actively search for personnel to fill relevant posts. Though forced to form a 'united cabinet by Wu and Zhang', he planned to follow Hu's cabinet and form his own on 13 May 1926. At three in the afternoon of that day, Yan's cabinet officially 'returned'. He also ordered that, 'As President Cao resigned on 1 May, the cabinet should succeed the president's work' and 'ordered all the administration to work as normal'. By then, the Beijing government had been ostensibly stabilised. Hu Weide had withdrawn afterwards. On 15 May, Hu Weide announced that he was leaving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The new cabinet's status remained debatable due to the legal system, however. It could achieve little because the obstacles created by the Zhili and Fengtian warlord forces. Nonetheless, seen from the political context of that time, all China needed was a provisional government in order to maintain stability and facilitate subsequent administrations. It was the most chaotic moment of the Beijing Government after entering the warlord period. Hu's strategy of declaring that he would not form an interim cabinet, leaving that to the warlords to arrange, and maintaining diplomatic normalcy in order not to be taken advantage of by foreign forces is praiseworthy. Even though it was only a short-term cabinet (it lasted only twenty-three days, from 20 April till 12 May 1926), it had its own value, especially with respect to its contribution to preserving the legal system.

After 13 May when Yan Huiqing had formed his cabinet, Hu Weide left the government and it seemed as if he had relinquished all his work and removed himself from the political centre. But a month later, Chiang Kai-

shek went northward and made the political situation in the north more troublesome. Though Yan Huiqing's cabinet and its successor, led by Du Xigui, had taken over the relatively stable situation after Hu Weide, the warlords' forces in the north had changed since Wu Peifu and Sun Chuanfang had been attacked by Chiang Kai-shek. Financial problems also discredited the government's reputation. On 5 October, Gu Weijun succeeded Du Xigui and formed a new cabinet. Though still a united cabinet formed from both Zhili and Fengtian forces, the financial sector had been administered by Zhang Zuolin's 'close friend' Pan Fu. Fengtian's forces had increased. And 'since General Zhang Zuolin's troops had been entering the North China Plain from Manchuria, the cabinet needed to be reformed in order to represent the altered military situation, especially since the North China Plain was more and more under his control'. Gu Weijun shuffled personnel and on 12 January 1927, 'several of Wu Peifu's people were replaced by those of general Zhang' in Gu's cabinet. Hu Weide had come back again and become the general administrator of internal affairs.

The general administrator of internal affairs was similar to today's Minister of Interior Affairs. The reason why Gu Weijun invited Hu Weide, who was a diplomat, to take charge of interior affairs was because the latter 'had taken charge of the police. In order to establish peace and order and to obtain necessary information on happenings in the nation, it is important to have the police on one's side'. Seen from what Gu Weijun had noted, we can see that although Hu might not have been his intimate friend, he was well trusted. That is why Hu was appointed to deal with interior affairs so that 'the police could be on our side'. On the fourteenth, Hu Weide was officially appointed and went to the cabinet meeting the following day.

It must be noted however, that Hu was not Gu's first choice; rather he had first chosen Tian Guanghuang but the latter had firmly refused. Gu had to 'discuss with other members of the cabinet in his home' and found 'that there was no one else. He then invited Hu Weide to step in and Hu accepted the same night'. We can see from this piece of information that whenever the situation became increasingly chaotic and there was no one who wished to assume responsibility, Hu would become the 'fire-fighter' of the government and a stand-by for solving sometimes transitory problems. Though not possessing a singular intelligence, Hu Weide cared little for party struggles and his personality was humble and tolerant. He could serve to maintain stability and bring order to chaos since he was

also a respected diplomat. He could also not refuse ‘an emotional plea’, as he was often persuaded by emotional appeals. Compared to other hard-nosed persons, he was an easier choice to avoid problems. This characteristic of Hu Weide must have been one of the main reasons why he was always chosen to assume major responsibilities when things became the most disordered.

Taking charge of the Ministry of Interior Affairs was Hu Weide’s chevalier action. But it was not easy to deal with. Finance especially troubled him and the department. On 21 March, the Shenbao reported that ‘short of money to deliver salaries, the Ministry of Interior Affairs decided to cut the pine trees of Ritan (Temple of the Sun) and Yuetan (Temple of the Moon) parks. The cutting would earn the Ministry 12,000 yuan. The finance section of this Ministry had all the signatures of approval except from the Minister and Section Chief’. If a success, this ‘could pay twenty percent of salaries owed’. Facing such embarrassing difficulties, Hu Weide wanted to deliver a ‘replacement coupon’ but was refused by the cabinet. Not only did he have to cut the trees for money, but this financial difficulty also made him wish to resign his post. On the twenty-eighth, he expressed his wish to Gu and on the next day he publicly announced his resignation.

In fact, on 23 March, Gu Weijun had ‘asked all members of the cabinet to continue working until Saturday, and planned to dismiss them on the twenty-eighth, which gave Hu Weide an opportunity to rescue himself from trouble’. But Gu hesitated and Zhang Zuolin half-persuaded and half-threatened Gu to stay and asked that ‘the resigned members of cabinet to return immediately to their posts’, which made Hu’s resignation impossible. As a result, Hu’s resignation was delayed.

In the month of June, ‘the Fengtian Forces felt it necessary to reform the cabinet for diplomatic reasons, and planned to ask Pan Fu to be Prime Minister’. This made it possible for Gu’s cabinet to resign. Gu, however, resigned before the forming of the new cabinet and ‘wrote to ask colleagues to carry on the previous cabinet until there was someone to succeed’. In the same letter, Gu said that his chronic stomach-ache was causing him pain again and was told by both Chinese and Western doctors to rest. This was his reason for resigning. But since the new cabinet had not yet been formed, the important business would be left to Hu Weide to deal with. Hu became an acting Prime Minister until Pan Fu formed his cabinet. Fortunately, the wait was not long and Pan Fu’s

cabinet was formed on 20 June 1927.

Although Pan Fu returned to work on the twentieth, it is often documented as being on the eighteenth since that is the day that Zhang Zuolin promulgated the 'Regulations of the Military Government of the Republic of China' which officially transformed the Republican system into a military one. Therefore, Hu Weide's cabinet after Gu Weijun's did not have legal authenticity. And, since Gu Weijun had not officially announced Hu Weide's replacement, Hu's cabinet, which lasted less than a day, cannot be considered legitimate.

As previously mentioned, Hu Weide had long since wished to retire. Additionally, during this short interlude, he was simply an acting Prime Minister at the behest of Gu Weijun's invitation and before Pan Fu's new cabinet. The time was essentially too short to permit him to achieve much. Compared to April 1926 when he had actually wanted to form a provisional government, his reasoning this time was completely different. Still, these two occasions marked the highest positions he had in his career. The second time was to succeed Gu Weijun and it has been quite debatable, legally, since he was not officially appointed. In contrast, the first time he formed a cabinet he was officially appointed by Duan Qirui's interim government. It was legal according to the legal system of the Republic. As a result, Hu Weide should also be considered as one of the Ministers that had assumed provisional powers of the president. If we consider it this way, Hu Weide was actually the only one from the second generation of diplomats to hold such power and therefore he had obtained the highest position of this generation. His contribution and his 'maintaining the legal system' in turbulent political times are also evident.

After resigning as Minister of Interior Affairs and interim Prime Minister, Hu Weide could finally retire from politics and cease to be a member of the cabinet. On 12 November 1927, Zhang Zuolin appointed Hu Weide as Director of the Pingzhengyuan Administrative Court and the president of the Superior Committee of Punishment and Discipline for Officials. Though very useful in times of peace, these jobs were inefficacious at that time.

Nor did they carry much significance for Hu Weide. Since the Beijing Government was near collapse, he had retired from all occupations and had started to enjoy nature with other people of standing, as well as participating in cultural and artistic activities which were his true love

until his death in Beijing on 24 November 1933. He named his study ‘Dang liang zhai’ (a study that works for two goals) and left several manuscripts and diaries to his family; these, unfortunately, no longer exist.

If Hu Weide experienced enormous challenges and difficulties in his long career, his private life proved to be much more rewarding. All of his twelve children (eight sons and four daughters) gave him joy and satisfaction. He as a warm and encouraging father who sacrificed to see them all educated, half of them abroad.

He would have been more than gratified to know of their successes and achievements in their various fields. Three of his sons joined the diplomatic service (the aforementioned Hu diplomatic dynasty), achieving the rank of ambassador. Others attained the highest level in engineering and mathematics, as well as in the literary and artistic fields.

Chapter Six—Conclusion

Hu Weide's name has always been nearly invisible next to the reputations of Lu Zhengxiang and Gu Weijun. Even scholars specialising in the history of diplomacy often ignore him. Nevertheless, by studying a single person, one can, on the one hand, start from the point of view of 'biography' as a means to read his extraordinary life and on the other hand, such a study can reveal its historical meaning by contextualising that life and that person's reactions to the historical events around him. His performances abroad were indeed less brilliant than Gu Weijun's and Lu Zhengxiang's, but he was not just an insignificant person when it came to diplomatic matters. Indeed, seen from the point of view of more in-depth research, especially vis-à-vis 'weak country diplomacy', Hu Weide was a person of some importance and value in the modern history of diplomacy in China.

We can understand the importance of Hu Weide's 'weak country diplomacy' from two angles: one angle concerns negotiations with foreign countries; the other with maintaining the legal system. From the first angle, a weak country must realise its lack of real power and negotiate through compromises. It has to insist upon the bottom line and try its best to make up for losses. Hu Weide's performance during negotiations as a neutral third-party outsider during the Russo-Japanese War and his participation in the peacekeeping committee that bore direct pressure on Japan during the Washington Naval Conference are two such examples. In actual fact, the more well-known performances of Lu Zhengxiang and Gu Weijun did not really accord with the actual strength of China at that time. On the contrary, rather, Hu Weide's more humble actions were closer to the real geo-political standing of China. Therefore, through the study of Hu Weide we can see the illustration of modern China's 'weak country diplomacy'.

Hu's adherence to the legal system can be seen from his actions whilst he held the post of interim Prime Minister and when he formed a governmental cabinet. When he began to take charge of the chaotic situation after the fall of the provisional Duan Qirui administration, it was clearly intended that 'diplomacy should not cease', with the purpose to 'maintain the legal system' being very evident. A weak China, though troubled by internal affairs, should not let other countries take advantage of it in foreign relations. It was self-evident that the international legal system had to be maintained. Hu Weide's work to preserve China's relations with foreign countries again demonstrates his value in the history of 'weak country diplomacy'.

Hu Weide was an outstanding individual amongst the second-generation diplomats. The two turning points in the history of diplomacy were between 1894 and 1901 and around the foundation of the Republic. The second-generation diplomats appeared around 1901. Although the traditional scholars had not totally disappeared, the leading roles were essentially filled by those who had a western educational background. Amongst these, the most important were the ones who had received a western education at Chinese institutions, especially the students from the Interpreters College in Shanghai. It should be noted as well that the original intention of the school was to train translators, not multifunctional diplomats fully versed in foreign languages, diplomatic protocol and modern legal knowledge. However, under the pressure of the times, it was quite phenomenal for this group of people to stand up and defend China's rights. The rise of the second-generation of diplomats was intimately connected with China's weak situation at that time and Hu Weide is a good example of a diplomat following the principle of 'weak country diplomacy'.

Furthermore, Hu Weide can perhaps be more representative than is generally acknowledged. First of all, in the evolution of the diplomatic corp, he was the first second-generation diplomat from the Interpreters College and one of the first to be sent abroad as ambassador after the foundation of the Republic. Before him, there had been only four people from the second generation to achieve such distinction: Zhang Deyi, Yin Chang, Cai Jun, and Xu Taishen. Except for Yin Chang, who fell from power after the fall of the Qing Dynasty, the others retired from diplomatic circles before the dynasty's collapse. After Hu, there were diplomats who worked for the Republic such as Sun Baoqi, Lu Zhengxiang, Liu Shixun, Wang Daxie, Liu Yulin, Liu Jingren and Shi

Zhaoji. Hu Weide had a transitional role in China's diplomatic history. On the one hand, he was considered a new scholar with a western educational background amongst the second-generation of diplomats, but on the other, after the founding of the Republic he was viewed as a traditional bureaucrat of the Qing Dynasty. This illustrates well the second generations' transitory character.

Secondly, amongst the diplomats with a western background, Hu was also a very special case. He was one of the few diplomats who had a background in the hard sciences since he had studied mathematics. Apart from the students who had completed their studies on the construction of naval armaments at the Naval College, he was quite different from those who had only studied foreign languages and law. His numerical abilities were quite outstanding compared to other Chinese diplomats. He was the only one who had not been automatically transferred to the Foreign Languages School. But this permitted him to pass the regional exam of Shuntian and become a juren, which was also the only mathematical examination of the Qing Dynasty. His juren status combined with his traditional and western background might have been the reason why his career in the Qing court was so smooth. At the end of the Qing Dynasty he held the Minister of Foreign Affairs position, which was the highest position that someone with a western-educational background had obtained up to that point. Together with Lu Zhengxiang he possessed a further distinction: he held one of the highest positions in the Imperial court whilst Lu Zhengxiang had perhaps the premier reputation in the diplomacy. In essence, since taking part in politics involved matters of the court, it could be argued that Hu Weide's position was in no way inferior to that of Lu Zhengxiang's.

Thirdly, one can understand the relationship between these diplomats seen from Hu Weide's exchanges with other colleagues. For example, Hu Weide and Lu Zhengxiang had already cooperated together when they worked under Yang Ru. Moreover, this relationship continued with the two working together whilst Hu was posted in Russia. This can be seen especially in the suggestions Hu sent back to China concerning relations with Russia, which were mainly the work of Lu Zhengxiang. Since they were very close, when Hu Weide held a high position, he would help Lu Zhengxiang, and vice versa. Their relationship provides a somewhat anecdotal perspective of the workings of early modern Chinese diplomats.

Fourthly, Hu Weide was a diplomat that was at least marginally involved in the abdication of the Qing Emperor. Though Lu Zhengxiang united other envoys together in pressing for the abdication, compared to Hu Weide's intervention between Yuan Shikai and the Court, their role was less prominent. Hu's role was in spite of the fact that he did not belong to Yuan Shikai's clique; he was not Yuan's 'bully in the dismissal of the Court', and yet, his role contributed nonetheless to the Emperor's abdication.

Fifthly, despite his presence overseas during the Paris Peace Conference and the Washington Naval Conference, Hu did not contribute much to the actual workings of the conferences because he thought himself incompetent. Moreover, he had already informed Xu Shichang of his wish to delegate his duties to a successor before the opening of the Paris Peace Conference. During the time of the Washington Naval Conference he had agreed to work in Japan and had beforehand settled with Xu Shichang that the negotiations would mainly be dealt with in China. Though this may be seen as Hu not contributing a great deal, he still assisted in preventing internal strife amongst the delegation and helped to withstand the pressure from Japan during the conference. These contributions have always been neglected by historians and as a result, Hu Weide's historical weight has never been fully ascertained.

Finally, Hu Weide was the initiator of a 'Hu diplomatic dynasty'. Though not all of his descendents were diplomats, the majority were. There were three who achieved the rank of ambassador. In the history of Chinese diplomacy, such a distinguished family of diplomats has rarely been seen. Some of them were diplomats during the Qing Dynasty, some worked for the Beijing government, and some worked in the Nationalist government. The generations of the Hu family reflect the modern history of diplomacy in China and highlight the change from Manchu Imperial rule to the Beijing government and finally the present-day government(s). It can perhaps be argued that the traditional hostility to the period of the Beijing government needs to be modified.

Through the study of Hu Weide, this author shares the same opinion of Hu's life with the well-known diplomat Wang Yunsheng. Wang once wrote in an article to commemorate Hu Weide that 'diplomacy in China had started to grow after the Opium War. But the true professional diplomats appeared only thirty or forty years ago. In the early period, Hu Xinwu (Hu Weide's second name) was an important diplomat. Apart

from him, only Lu Zixin (Lu Zhengxiang's second name) was active at the same time. Furthermore, one of the first persons to work in diplomacy was Hu Xinwu. Hu was a substitute negotiator in Russia whereas Lu Zhengxiang was only a translator in the consulate'. Mr Wang's account illustrates clearly his belief in Hu's significance in Chinese diplomacy.

Hu Weide faced many serious issues in modern history both at the end of the Qing Dynasty in Russia and in Japan and during the Republic and as ambassador in France. To be frank however, I do not feel that he performed crucial negotiations. Wang Yunsheng believed that it was because 'at that time what was expected was a diplomat with reserve who did not take charge and who did not behave badly', so Hu Weide 'had to be only a responsible diplomat without assuming too many responsibilities'. This was true at the end of the Qing Dynasty, but I believe that after the foundation of the Republic, Hu Weide felt himself as out-of-date, as his son Hu Shize put it, and meant to withdraw. Being an ambassador abroad was his way to extricate himself from internal domestic conflicts, and was not a way to realise his ambitions. That is the real reason why he was not involved in important negotiations in his career during the early period of the Republic.

Hu Weide, however, did not want to struggle his way through all the political vicissitudes of the early Republic. Nevertheless, posts both in China and abroad were continually offered and in 1926 and 1927, when the internal affairs were the most chaotic, Hu Weide was pushed into the highest position. On one hand it was because Hu was even-tempered, on the other hand the situation needed someone with a great reputation for bringing stability. It was always at the most desperate times that Hu Weide was called upon to assume the highest positions, such as the acting Prime Minister. Once the situation became stable, however, Hu would retire. It was exactly the same as during his missions in France and Japan. Both times he wanted to resign but was always refused for reasons of instability both at home and abroad. He was only given permission when both conferences were finished—the refusal to sign in Paris and the achievement of a 'solution' to the Shandong problem in Washington—and the pressure from China and Japan became less. We can see that even though Hu believed he was out-of-date, Chinese diplomacy needed him.

After this study, we can see that Hu Weide has indeed been an important person in the modern history of Chinese diplomacy. Though not as

brilliant as some other diplomats, he has had his ineffaceable value and it is not justified that previous studies have neglected him. From a student with a mathematics background to one of the most important persons in Chinese diplomacy, Hu Weide represented not only the fruits of a westernised education in China but also, by the fact that he could still remain as ambassador during the Republic, the value of self development is seen since he had no professional education in diplomacy, but became a famous diplomat through his own effort and the times he lived in. Hu Weide's performances as ambassador are also a good example of how a diplomat can operate within the scope of 'weak country diplomacy'. □

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