Andrea Revelant. 2025. Chapter 3: The *Manshū Nippō* and the Issue of Chinese Reunification at the Turn of 1929. In Kazutaka Sogo (ed.), *The Dynamics of East Asian Politics and Diplomacy in the 1920s: The Intersection of International Cooperation and Imperial Expansion*. Osaka: Asia-Japan Research Institute, Ritsumeikan University. ISBN 978-4-910550-55-8

Chapter 3
The *Manshū Nippō* and the Issue of Chinese Reunification at the Turn of 1929

Andrea REVELANT

1. Introduction

The *Manshū Nippō*, alternatively named *Manshū Nichinichi Shinbun (ManNichi)* in 1907–27 and again in 1935–44, was for several years the largest newspaper circulated in Northeast China. It was based in Dairen (Dalian in Chinese), the economic center of the Japan-administered Kwantung Leased Territory, and belonged to the media network of the South Manchuria Railway Company, or Mantetsu for short. As a quasi-official press organ, it played a major role in the dissemination of views favorable to Japanese interests in the surrounding region. Despite being a prime source for the study of imperial Japan's relations with China from the standpoint of public communication, the *ManNichi* has so far attracted little attention in the scholarly literature (Ikeda 2000, 69–109; Ri 2000; Satō K. 2009; Matsushige 2013; Ma 2015; Cao 2016; Revelant 2021; Rong 2021). In particular, except for the second half of 1929, there is still an almost complete lack of discourse analysis on the crucial period between June 1928 and the summer of 1931. It means the interval from the conclusion of the Northern Expedition, waged by the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) against the "warlords" who controlled central and northern China, up to the months preceding the outbreak of the Manchurian incident.

The purpose of this essay is to clarify how the *ManNichi*, within that span of time, dealt with a turning point in Chinese politics: the "change

of banner" (*yìzhì*, read *ekishi* in Japanese), which on December 29, 1928, marked the formal submission of the Northeast, or Three Eastern Provinces, to the Nationalist Party and the central government it had recently established in Nanjing.[1] More precisely, the articles examined here cover a period of about one month between the announcement of the flag replacement and the aftermath of a closely related incident that upset the factional balance of power in the "Fengtian clique," that is the shooting of Yang Yuting and Chang Yinhuai by order of Zhang Xueliang on January 10, 1929. Through a comprehensive survey of editorials, opinion pieces, and factual reports, this study aims to ascertain the character of the resulting narrative in comparison with the editorial views of the two leading newspapers of Japan, as well as with opinions that appeared later in the *ManNichi*, after a change of government in Tokyo.

In the first place, did the *ManNichi* differ significantly from the mainstream press in Japan when they dealt with the same issues? A recent comparative study on the two largest independent newspapers, from June 1928 to June 1929, shows that there was a remarkable distance between their respective views on what was happening in China and how Japan should respond to those changes (Revelant 2023). The *Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun* held a conservative stance on Japan's established rights overseas, starting from those that ensured a special position in "Manchuria-Mongolia" (*ManMō*, hereafter Manchuria). Consequently, it had a cold attitude toward the Nationalists and was concerned about the prospect of their influence spreading to the

1 In addition to Fengtian, Jilin, and Heilongjiang, the Northeastern regime also controlled the special district of Rehe (Jehol). In February 1929, the latter was elevated to province, while Fengtian took the name of Liaoning. The eponymous capital city of Fengtian, called Shenyang in 1929–32 and again since 1945, was known internationally by its old Manchu name of Mukden.

Northeast. The *Ōsaka Asahi Shinbun*, instead, saw the need for a more active policy of dialogue with the Nanjing government as the only viable option left to Japanese diplomacy. This approach meant that, even in Manchuria, the promotion of Japanese interests would have to pass through the renunciation of some rights without relying anymore on the Fengtian regime as a negotiating counterpart.

Despite these differences, both newspapers harshly criticized the China policy of the current administration, led by premier-cum-foreign minister Tanaka Giichi (April 20, 1927 – July 2, 1929). The *Mainichi* deplored its inconsistent tactics and militaristic image, which was counterproductive, while the *Asahi* dissented from both the cabinet's outdated vision and its wrong choice of means. Moreover, both newspapers demanded that the cabinet inform the public about the results of its investigation on the Huanggutun incident of June 4, 1928, that is the assassination by bombing of Zhang Zuolin, leader of the defeated Northern coalition. Tanaka, however, not only had to keep it secret that radical officers in the Kwantung Army had killed Zhang to provoke a regime change, but was also unable to punish them properly. This failure ultimately led to his cabinet's resignation.

Research on the *ManNichi*, instead, has verified that the newspaper kept arguing for the preservation of regional autonomy in the Northeast throughout the latter half of 1929 (Revelant 2021). Its writers insisted that Chiang Kai-shek's efforts to bring China under a unified rule were bound to fail, pointing at the endless strife among military cliques as proof. Moreover, when conflict with the Soviet Union over control of the Chinese Eastern Railway ended in a sound defeat for China, the *ManNichi* took that outcome as a case in point to urge Nanjing not to interfere again in the Northeast. At the time, the newspaper's divergence with the strategy of the new foreign minister, Shidehara Kijūrō, was not evident to the public: as a result of the Sino-Soviet conflict, Shidehara

set aside his initial intention to address the "Manchurian question" under a unified China policy. Nevertheless, the differences are sufficient to prove that the *ManNichi* was not under tight government control. This finds partial explanation in the lingering influence of the previous administration on company appointments, but additional research is required to assess the role of other institutional actors.

By shifting the object of the enquiry to the turn of 1929, it is possible to reach a better understanding of discourse in terms of continuity and responsiveness to political change. Under Tanaka there was an alignment of key positions in Dairen, because the *ManNichi* president, the Mantetsu president, and the director-general of Kwantung all belonged to or were closely associated with the party in government, the Rikken Seiyūkai (Revelant 2021, 192). Therefore, one may expect the newspaper to have adhered closely to the cabinet's policy in that period. At the same time, further comparison with the *Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun* can lead to a more accurate assessment of the common ground between mainstream public opinion and the *ManNichi* with respect to basic policy objectives.

Before presenting the results of the survey, it is expedient to recall briefly how historians have put the main facts falling within the examined month in their broader context. From the standpoint of Japan's foreign policy, the "change of flag" of the Northeast meant the failure of previous efforts to avoid its alliance with the Nationalist government. After causing some delay, however, by the autumn of 1928, Japan had stopped interfering in the negotiations between Nanjing and Fengtian. The consolidation of Chiang's "moderate" faction in power, along with signals that the Northeastern regime would retain *de facto* autonomy, had softened Tanaka. The prime minister still thought it possible to exert tutelage over Zhang Xueliang, the son and successor of the assassinated leader. He pressed Zhang to allow an extension of the Mantetsu lines, as

reluctantly promised by his father (Iriye 1960; Tsuchida 1992, 81–84, 87–89; Satō M. 2009, 314–341).

Factional instability remained, however, a source of concern. The young Xueliang (henceforth called by name to avoid confusion with other Zhangs) had still to prove himself. Although he did have his own followers in the "new faction," such as Gao Jiyi, his position largely depended on the ability to hold the balance between other power brokers. More than by the "old faction" of Zuolin's comrades, such as Zhang Zuoxiang and Zhang Jinghui, Xueliang felt challenged by the growing influence of Yang Yuting, Zuolin's former chief of staff, and his ally Chang Yinhuai. Yang had a long experience as a negotiator with Japan and other military factions in China. Under Xueliang, he refused an appointment that would have removed him from the center of politics and kept for himself the strategic post of director of the Fengtian arsenal. He also secured for Chang the governorship of Heilongjiang and the vice presidency of the communications commission.

Many authors in China, and others by reflection (Nishimura 1996, 61–63; Zhang 2016, 117–118), have held that a core aspect of rivalry between Xueliang and Yang lay in the latter's opposition to joining forces with the Nationalist Party, which implied a pro-Japanese stance. This interpretation has been discarded by other authors, owing to evidence that Yang actively pursued an accommodation with the Nationalists to increase his own authority. In so doing, however, he not only made Xueliang feel in danger, but also antagonized the "old faction," which saw in those maneuvers a threat to its territorial base (Tsuchida 1992, 75–76; Mitter 2000, 24–28; Higuchi 2004; Kwong 2017, 136–139). After investigating the double assassination, in his report to Tanaka (24/11/1929, in NGB, 152), the consul general in Fengtian, Hayashi Kyūjirō, portrayed Yang as a two-faced schemer:

> [T]hrough Chang Yinhuai, Yang Yuting secretly caused opposition to the railway issue in negotiations with the Mantetsu; on the other hand, he informed the Japanese that the procrastination […] was due to Zhang Xueliang's irresoluteness, and so he would guide Zhang Xueliang and see that a solution be reached gradually. Moreover, toward the Nationalist government […] he slandered Zhang Xueliang as a puppet of Japan and vigorously spread convenient words of self-recommendation […] Zhang Xueliang realized that […] owing to the lack of progress on the railway issue he was inviting suspicion by the relations with Japan, and he was also falling into an unfavorable position with the Nationalist government.

If Yang was not simply pro-Japanese, then, why did that label remain stuck on him? One obvious answer is that, at the time, it helped justify his execution. Furthermore, as Yang had often dealt with the Japanese under Zuolin, his public image was tainted by that record. This is key to understanding why the press reacted to his death in conflicting ways, as illustrated further here.

For the sake of clarity, the analysis of screened articles is organized into three thematic paragraphs. In order, they present the immediate reactions to the "change of flag," seen in the context of Sino-Japanese pending issues; the opinions on the "Yang-Chang shooting incident;" the outlook for Japan's Manchurian policy, and related appeals for the unity of public opinion. Finally, the concluding paragraph answers the research questions on the basis of the findings. Due to limited space, articles are cited only by date of issue (day/month, omitting the year) and page without the title. For those sent by telegram to the *ManNichi* headquarters in Dairen, the origin is shown in square brackets as follows:

s: special telegram; B: Beiping (Beijing's name under the Nationalists); C: Changchun; F: Fengtian; N: Nanjing, S: Shanghai, T: Tokyo.

When two articles have all of the above features in common, a lower-case letter is added to distinguish them. The *ManNichi* had two daily editions, consisting of eight pages in the morning and four pages in the evening. As by common practice, the first page of the morning edition was entirely filled with advertisements. Editorials ran across the top of the third page in the morning, therefore citations omit that number. Edited diplomatic correspondence from the series FRUS and NGB is cited by document number, while microfilm slide numbers identify the documents cited from *Gaimushō Kiroku* (GK).

2. The White Sun Rises over Manchuria

Despite a string of rumors, according to which the change of flag would take place on January 1, 1929, as late as December, the *ManNichi* still assumed that Fengtian authorities would defer any decision at least until mid-March (22/12 ev., 1 [N 21/12]). A reporter reminded readers that the Third National Congress of the Kuomintang was to be held in Nanjing from the 15th of that month. Consequently, Fengtian leaders would wait for its outcome before resuming discussion on a possible compromise with the South. In any case, they would delay the agreement as long as possible. If a deal turned out to be unavoidable, they would still aim at preserving the autonomy of the Three Eastern Provinces in internal affairs (23/12, 2 [sF 22/12]). While preparations for a superficial restyling of the political organs were under way, the policy was to set limits to the local application of the "principles and spirit" of the Nationalist Party (25/12, 3 [sF]). On December 29, however,

news that the change of flag had been anticipated on that very same day disproved the recent forecast (29/12, 2 [sF 28/12a]; for Hayashi's last efforts to find out what was going on, see his reports of 27–28/12, in NGB, 232–236).

The *ManNichi* tried to shed light on the circumstances behind the sudden turn of events. On the 27, it was explained, Chiang Kai-shek had solicited Xueliang to carry out on New Year's Day the long-delayed display of allegiance. The Fengtian leader had immediately convened his top officials and proposed to them to anticipate the flag replacement. "Certain heavyweights," though, had voiced their opposition on the grounds that the step was premature, thereby opening a debate that seemed still unresolved when the reporter informed the staff in Dairen. A reason for Xueliang's hurry, the writer speculated, might have been that he wanted to take advantage of Japan's distraction: because of the impending session of the Imperial Diet, in the neighboring country all attention was set on domestic issues (29/12, 2 [sF 28/12b]). A telegram update added that extended consultations with provincial representatives had led to the decision to hoist the Nationalist flag on the 29. Appointments to the new organs, however, would be postponed owing to complaints from members of the provincial assemblies, who would lose their positions as a result of the reorganization (29/12, 2 [sF 28/12c]). It was observed afterwards that Zhang Zuoxiang was most keen about preserving the assemblies, while Heilongjiang province had shown no interest in the issue (4/1 ev., 1 [sF 3/1]). This can be read as a sign of Chang Yinhuai's support for changes that would weaken the "old faction."

The first page of the evening edition had its upper half filled with titles about the big event, including an excerpt from the official announcement. Xueliang and his colleagues stated that the late Marshal, Zhang Zuolin, had always wished for peace and unity. He had fought communism, not the Three Principles of the People; as the Nationalist

Party had broken up with the communists, mutual trust now allowed for unification and obedience to Nanjing (29/12 ev., 1 [sF a]). Other articles, all written in a neutral tone, were purely descriptive. Despite fears that the communists might cause trouble, there was no report of incidents at any place. Nothing was said about the ordinary people's response, aside from a remark on some "novelty-loving merchants" who could not wait until morning to hoist the new flag in Fengtian (29/12 ev., 1 [sF b]; cf. Hayashi to Tanaka, 29/12, in NGB, 237).[2] Later on, a writer using the pen name "Jochiku" (如竹) reported some sarcastic comments by students of the Northeastern University (6/1, 2 [F]).

A correspondent from Tokyo wrote that the government had foreseen the change in light of recent developments. Although it would not interfere in China's internal affairs by issuing a protest or a warning, it was concerned that Southern organizations and radical elements in the North might foment the anti-Japanese movement, which was worsening across China with blatant Nationalist endorsement. If Nanjing did not stop it, the cabinet would have to issue a "firm admonition" and take other "effective measures" that were currently under careful study (29/12 ev., 1 [sT]). The *ManNichi* also enquired about the unofficial response of the Kwantung Territory and Army. Both had a wait-and-see attitude, as it was common belief that Nanjing would not attempt to impose some of its men to key posts in the Three Provinces. Notwithstanding superficial unification, they did not foresee any immediate change in practice. Northeastern leaders would think twice about entrusting all negotiations

2 The US consul in Harbin reported to the minister in China this impression: "No particular enthusiasm over the event was expressed by the local Chinese residents, but it is reasonable to conclude that they are relieved by this outward sign that North and South China are united." (Hanson to MacMurray, 31/12, in FRUS, 79). Japanese consular reports composed a mixed picture: a festive atmosphere in Juzijie (now Yanban) and Tonghua; indifference in Qiqihar, Chifeng, and Tieling (GK b, 528, 532, 536, 562–563).

with Japan to Nanjing, as that would mean for them to "dig their own grave" (1/1, 2).

Another article, however, presented a partially different view from unspecified army sources in Tokyo. Although the change of flag would not bring serious consequences right away, they said, it was an issue that Japan could not overlook lightly, because it would affect future negotiations. Japan's diplomacy was going to get busy with China, as matters relating to the Manchurian railways and all other pending issues were likely to pass into the hands of the Nationalist government (1/1, 2 [T 31/12]). Later on, the newspaper reported on a recent visit to Xueliang by consul-general Hayashi. The latter had asked for a meeting since December 28, but the commander in chief had pretended to be sick. There was evidence that he had led the political shift, keeping in check those who opposed it. Hayashi had voiced discontent with Xueliang's behavior, which disregarded the friendly relationship entertained so far (3/1 ev., 1 [sF]; cf. Hayashi to Tanaka, 1/1, in NGB 1928, 246).

After the "Blue Sky with a White Sun" flag had replaced the old five-colored one of the Republic, the *ManNichi* pondered the consequences in two editorials. In the first one (30/12), the writer could find no reason to rejoice about the event, as it was a "manifestation of the will to surrender to the National Revolutionary Army." The new flag and political rearrangement that would follow suit were not "a superficial formal change," but rather a shift from "an independent position" toward "subordination to the Nationalist government." Therefore, pending diplomatic issues would logically pass under central control, as well as other political matters. Allegedly, the deal would allow the Three Eastern Provinces to retain their autonomy in internal affairs. High-ranking officials there, though, might not necessarily trust Xueliang as the only leader of the region, and there were signs of

differences between Fengtian and Jilin men. Moreover, a struggle for power was going on within the Nationalist Party (as recently described in 25/12, 2 [S 23/12]; 29/12, 3 [sF]). It seemed too early, then, to conclude that the change of flag had brought peace to the Northeast.

The second editorial, published about a week later (1/8), reconsidered those arguments in a more dubitative tone. On the one hand, the change of flag was just "a kind of camouflage" that the Northeastern factions, with that of Fengtian at their center, had adopted to preserve their power. On the other hand, formal reform of the political structure would open the way to infiltration of the "Southern faction," with still uncertain effects. From this premise, the writer reflected on the possible impact on Japanese interests in the region.

First of all, it went without saying that no political change could subvert "the special character of Manchuria" and Japan's "special position" there, which had world recognition. This notwithstanding, the "Manchurian question" (*ManMō mondai*) would likely become even more "delicate." Issues such as railways and land leasing rights, which were already difficult to solve at the local level,[3] would become harder to negotiate if Nanjing got involved. Should the anti-Japanese campaign and the movement to recover China's sovereign rights by "crushing imperialism" advance into the Three Eastern Provinces, then Japan's policy toward Manchuria would be in trouble.

"Some people" claimed that, after the flag change, it had become impossible to treat those provinces as a special region distinct from

3 Just before the announcement of the change of flag, an article with an enclosed map had charted the progress of Chinese efforts to lay out railways around the Mantetsu lines (29/12, 2). The author noted that there was an overt aim to "encircle" the Japanese network in a way that would not just hamper its expansion, but also provide alternative routes. Yet, as China lacked the capital to run efficient lines, those projects might not pose such a grave problem. If foreign capital joined in, however, they could become "a big threat" to the Mantetsu.

"mainland China" (*Shina honbu*). The editorialist disagreed. Japan had to stick to its policy owing to historical and geographic reasons, along with its "special rights and interests." Furthermore, the current situation let him think that the Three Eastern Provinces would more than ever "build up a peculiar position" for themselves. Without leaning to either optimism or pessimism, Japan should uphold its policy principles and quietly watch the developments in China. If, by misfortune, some serious situation should occur in Manchuria, it was obvious that Japan would have to turn to "exceptional means" in order to protect its rights.

From the manner in which it covered the story of the flag change, it is evident that the *ManNichi* did not look favorably at the prospect of the actual integration of the Northeast with Nationalist China. The newspaper shared with Japanese authorities the view that the survival of a *de facto* independent regime would better guarantee the empire's interests in the region and was outspoken enough to warn the Northeastern establishment about Japan's determination to defend its vested rights. In hindsight, it is tempting to read the veiled threat of the use of force, along with doubts about the solidity of Xueliang's leadership, as part of a propaganda operation of the Kwantung Army to prepare the ground for military intervention. However, it has rather to be stressed that there was no contradiction between these articles and Tanaka's use of strong language to dissuade Xueliang from cooperating with the Nationalists. In their first meeting after the pledge of loyalty to Nanjing, Hayashi told Xueliang to keep in mind that, depending on his behavior, Japan "might have no choice but to take resolute measures" (Hayashi to Tanaka, 31/1, in NGB, 246).

The idea that the penetration of Nationalist influence into Manchuria might harm Japan's interests in the region found reason in Nanjing's agenda for the steady recovery of sovereign rights from the foreign powers. The *ManNichi* was keen on the problem of trade

boycotts and other anti-Japanese initiatives backed by the Nationalist Party.[4] In the editorialist's opinion, those campaigns would go on until the achievement of a fundamental rearrangement of bilateral relations. Therefore, it was useless to make piecemeal concessions in the hope of winning China's favor. Such an approach would rather turn the anti-Japan movement into a "despise Japan" one, thereby worsening the situation. What Japan should do, instead, was to stand firm (25/12).

Concerning the question of military withdrawal from Shandong (which had remained under partial Japanese occupation since the Jinan incident of May 1928), on January 10, the editorialist observed that Nanjing's hardening in the negotiations was just a temporary move against the Leftists' attempts to infiltrate in power. Implicitly, he meant that the Nationalist government was trying not to expose itself to domestic accusations of weakness, which might play to the advantage of its political rivals. He supported this view by pointing at several recent signs of the Nationalist leaders' willingness to reach an agreement with Japan. If bilateral relations improved, the effects on the Three Eastern Provinces would be "not small." In the past, the Fengtian group had repeatedly used discord between Tokyo and Nanjing to protect its own interests. With a détente, that trick would not work anymore. Through Japan's good offices, though, the region might secure a "peculiar position to a certain extent." As a result, there would be some progress toward the solution of local issues, which had been hampered so far by the lack of a clear responsibility (10/1).

In other words, the writer did not see the establishment of friendly relations between Japan and the Nationalist government as a means to reach an agreement on regional matters at a central level. What he meant to say was rather that easing tensions with Nanjing would facilitate its

4 In the period examined here, from January 9 onward the newspaper reported on an almost daily basis on the blockade of the Japanese concession in Hankou.

acknowledgment of the Northeast as an autonomous administration, and that the latter would then be obliged to resume negotiations with Japan.

In the meantime, the Tanaka cabinet avoided drawing public attention to the North-South deal. The topic was barely mentioned in a report about a ministerial meeting on China policy held on January 6, whose main conclusion was the decision to uphold the current line: there would be no treaty revision and no withdrawal of the army from Shandong until China changed its attitude (7/1 ev., 1 [sT]). In an interview, Tanaka touched on the "replacement of flag" along with other China-related issues. He explained that the cabinet did not oppose a compromise between North and South, as long as the rights and interests of the empire were not infringed and its "special position" in the region was acknowledged (10/1, 2 [Okitsu 9/1]). On the same day, however, the *ManNichi* reported that Xueliang had sent a long telegram to Chiang Kai-shek, asking for instructions to deal with "a rather hard demand" by Hayashi. On Tanaka's order, the consul had pressed for the implementation of an agreement that would enable the Mantetsu to extend one of its lines. This news, the journalist noted, showed that the "Manchurian question" had finally come under the influence of the Nanjing government (10/1, 2 [N 9/1]).

As another correspondent remarked, Xueliang's behavior proved that the North-South agreement had gone further than expected by Japan's foreign ministry, which had planned to negotiate about railways and other issues with the regional government, as before. At a time when relations between Tokyo and Nanjing were bad, it was highly doubtful that the latter would act with good faith toward Japan. Although the foreign ministry had adopted a policy of non-interference in China's domestic affairs, the government could not just stand by and watch while there was a risk that Japan's special relationship with Manchuria would be ignored, and its interests would suffer damage. It

seemed, therefore, that Tokyo would soon send a warning to the rulers of the Three Eastern Provinces (10/1, 2 [sT 9/1]). On the following day, however, news of Yang's execution cast further uncertainty on the scenario.

3. The "Yang-Chang Shooting Incident"

As a result of the formal adoption of the Nationalist system of government, the federal commission established in the aftermath of Zuolin's death was immediately replaced by a Committee for Political Affairs of the Northeast, with Xueliang as chairman. When the *ManNichi* published the full list of the 13 designated members, the article signaled in its title that Yang Yuting was not among them (1/1, 2 [sF 31/1a]; rumors of a possible exclusion had surfaced in the forecast of 31/1, 2 [sF 30/1]). Regarding the appointments at the provincial level, however, the commentator noted that Yang's faction kept its grip on Heilonjiang, with Chang Yinhuai as governor and Chang's trusted men in the other executive positions. The Jilin faction held fast to power in its home province under Governor Zhang Zuoxiang, while Xueliang's inner circle was strong in Fengtian and Rehe. Therefore, it seemed that "names have changed, but there is not any change in content." On the other hand, the same writer thought that Yang and some others would not join the Nationalist Party gladly, as required to obtain Nanjing's approval for appointment, and that a struggle for power might be unavoidable between new party members and non-party members (1/1, 2 [sF 31/1b]).[5]

5 In the meantime, Yang had told the Japanese vice consul that he disagreed with the sudden change of flag, whose consequences Xueliang had not considered properly, and that he did not intend to participate in the new system. Hayashi, however, thought that Yang was trying to cast Xueliang in a bad light, while pandering to the Japanese with "sweet words" (Hayashi to Tanaka, 31/12, in NGB, 245).

Nevertheless, news that Yang and Chang had been arrested (11/1 ev., 2 [sF a-d]) and shot (overprint on 11/1 ev., 1 [sF]) broke out abruptly on January 11. At first, a reporter speculated that the reason might have been the Yang faction's anti-Nationalist stance or its involvement in that "certain grave incident" of the previous spring (meaning the assassination of Zhang Zuolin; 11/1 ev., 2 [sF a]). The latter theory, which would then surface intermittently, is discussed further below. Another article argued that there were probably several concurrent motives. It could be a move by the Jilin faction to eliminate Yang's influence; a reaction to some conspiracy that Yang had crafted to maintain control of the Fengtian military arsenal; a consequence of Nanjing's protest against Yang's opposition to the North-South agreement; or Xueliang's intention to strike a faction that included former subordinates of Guo Songling (who had led a failed rebellion against Zhang Zuolin in 1925; 1/11 ev., 2 [sF b]). Over the next days, the *ManNichi* devoted much space to exploring the incident's background and its consequences.

The Northeastern Political Affairs Committee issued an official explanation on the same day the news appeared, in the form of a circular telegram addressed to all the main Nationalist government and party organs. It was signed by Xueliang and 11 other members, with the notable absence of the only one who would join from outside the local factions. The document claimed that capital punishment had been necessary to prevent Yang and Chang from carrying out a conspiracy, which would have put the country at risk. In a long premise, the committee explained that the two men had abused their position for money and power, and lay on them the blame for all sorts of troubles that had occurred over several years, including the delay in concluding peace with the Nationalists. Confronted with those charges, the two men had plead guilty, and the death sentence was carried out (Japanese

translation in Hayashi to Tanaka, 15/1, in GK a, 36–38); the court-martial sentence, published on January 15, specified that Yang and Chang had plotted with a communist leader to strike in March, during the Nationalist Party Congress (Japanese translation in NGB, 150). Of course, high officials interviewed in Fengtian confirmed this version; among them, Wang Jiazhen added a vivid account of the meeting in which the two culprits had acknowledged guilt and of their immediate execution (13/1, 2 [special envoy Takeda, F 12/1]; see also the interviews to Zhang Zuoxiang and Yuan Jinkai, [Takeda, F 12/1]; and to police chief Gao Jiyi, in 12/1 ev., 1 [sF a]).

It seemed from the start, however, that an internecine struggle for power lay behind the official justification. According to some "important person," Xueliang had wanted to get rid of Yang since the time Zuolin was heading the Beijing government. After the latter's death, Yang had challenged Xueliang's authority by constantly getting in the way of his initiatives, such as the attempt to reduce the deficit by cutting the expenditure for arsenals and railways. Under Yang, Chang had turned Heilongjiang into a factional stronghold, and was harboring similar ambitions toward Jilin. This had finally alarmed Zhang Zuoxiang, who had then agreed with Xueliang to eliminate both men (13/1, 2 [sF 12/1]; on widespread ill feelings against Yang, because of his opposition to military spending cuts, see also 12/1 ev., 1 [sF b]). "Chinese sources" pointed out that the decision to kill had been triggered by a discussion held in the wake of Hayashi's demand on the railway extension. Allegedly, Yang and Chang had advised the commander to comply, because disregarding an already sealed agreement would entail a loss of international trust. Xueliang and Zuoxiang nevertheless had taken a position against the start of works, fearing that Yang's faction would increase its influence at their expense (14/1 ev., 1 [sF a]).

Some articles emphasized that up-and-coming members of the Jilin

faction had instigated Xueliang with the support of the "old military clique." The *ManNichi*'s envoy gave credit to an anonymous source, who claimed that the Jilin faction would then try to take down the old faction, and ultimately aim at Xueliang's head. The Yang-Chang incident could, therefore, be "a prologue to a political crisis in the Three Provinces" (14/1, 2 [Takeda, F 13/1]). Yang's downfall had been so quick that now the old faction felt threatened by the Jilin group. Moreover, those divisions might play to the advantage of other northern factions (15/1, 2 [sF 14/1]). In Beiping, "many people" thought that Zhang had wanted Yang dead not because he opposed the Nationalist Party, but owing instead to the suspicious ties he had with some of its factional leaders, namely Bai Chongxi and Yan Xishan. In the end, however, Yang's execution would be for Fengtian "a suicidal act that has hastened its own splitting" (1/12, 2 [B 11/1]).

A "representative of Xueliang" in Beiping confirmed that Yang had plotted against the commander in chief and the old military clique, making direct contacts with the "South" to bring the Northeast under his own faction. His conclusion, however, was optimistic: Thanks to Yang's demise, political stabilization in the region would lead to an improvement in its relations with Japan (14/1, 2 [B 12/1]). Other "important people" in the same city had a still different opinion. They believed that Yang had secretly obstructed Xueliang's efforts for peace and plotted to overthrow him with the backing of Japanese military men and adventurers. Therefore, the execution would halt for some time Japan's aggressive intentions (13/1, 1 [B 12/1]).

According to another "reliable" source, Xueliang had not been hostile to Yang until very recently. Relentless slandering had persuaded first Zhang Zuoxiang and other members of the old faction, such as Sun Chuanfang (Nanjing's former warlord), to press the case against Yang with the young commander in chief. Just after the shooting, they said,

a regretful Xueliang had "thrown himself on his bed and kept sobbing" (15/1, 2 [sF 14/1]; on vague rumors about Zhang Zuoxiang and Zhang Jinghui, see also 15/1, 3 [sH]). Both Zhang Zuoxiang (13/1, 2 [special envoy Takeda, F 12/1]) and Sun denied any personal involvement in the decision to eliminate Yang. It has to be observed that Sun did not belong to the Fengtian faction in a strict sense, although he had fought on the same side against the Nationalists. After losing his territories and the war, he had taken refuge in Dairen. Sun had been on a short trip to Fengtian on January 6–12, apparently to join the celebrations for the birthday of Yang's father. Xueliang, he said, had called him on the phone only after the shooting (13/1, 2).

Annoyed by the rumors about his role, Sun asked the *ManNichi* reporter to visit him at home. He repeated his version of the facts, saying that Yang had been a close friend of his and that the execution had been Xueliang's decision alone, against Zuoxiang's previous advice to endure discontent. The young leader had summoned the high officials and Sun himself only on the morning of the 11th to discuss how to deal with the aftermath (16/1, 2).[6]

A few reports called directly into question the Nationalist government. An "important person" within it said that it had been chairman Chiang Kai-shek who ordered Yang's death, owing to his opposition to the change of flag (13/1, 2 [urgent, N 12/1]; 14/1, 2 [N 12/1]). Based on various unspecified sources, a telegram from Fengtian tied up internal and external causes as follows. Charges of conspiracy were hard to believe, as Yang's faction did not have a foothold in the military but rather in public enterprises, such as railways, arsenals,

6 Sun also said that he had explained the situation to Machino Takema, a former advisor to Zhang Zuolin, who had paid a call to the Marshal's headquarters on that day. However, earlier on, Machino had told the *ManNichi* that the decision to put Yang to death had resulted from a series of meetings among officials and did not depend on Xueliang's feelings of hatred or envy (12/1 ev., 1 [sF 11/1]).

and telegraphs. In any case, it was a conflict between Xueliang and Yang that had inevitably led to trouble. Besides the machinations of Sun Chuanfang and Zhang Zuoxiang, who were also on bad terms with Yang, behind the incident, there was Nanjing's concern for Yang's ability to control Xueliang. Therefore, the Nationalist government had been waiting for an opportunity to get rid of Yang. Now that he was dead, it was foreseen that the "infiltration of Southern influence will eventually become extreme, and internally, confusion shall also increase." This might also make Japan's diplomacy toward Manchuria "more difficult" (13/1, 3 [sF]).

The Nationalist government, however, gave no public sign of support for the double execution (14/1 ev., 1 [N 12/1]). On the contrary, the lack of a proper trial, and especially the absence of prior consent from Nanjing to proceed against the officially appointed Chang, aroused harsh criticism by the party press, which also advanced doubts about Xueliang's real motives (*Míngúo rìbào* in Shanghai, quoted in 13/1, 2 [sS 12/1], and 14/1, 2 [S 13/1]; *Jīng bào* in Beiping, quoted in 17/1, 3). In particular, the *Míngúo rìbào* observed that Yang and Chang had been opposing Japan's encroachment into China; if that were the reason for their death, it meant the young Zhang had taken the path of his father. To dispel suspicions, Xueliang should take a clear anti-imperialist stance. According to the *ManNichi*, "an influential party member in Fengtian" stated that such a "barbaric punishment" had damaged China's international reputation and had disqualified Zhang as a political leader, exposing his true nature as a child of a military clique (15/1 ev., 1 [sF]).

Chinese newspapers responded in various ways to Yang's death. In Beiping, the *Jīng bào* acknowledged the man's qualities, but saw his demise as progress for the Revolution; the *Shìjiè rìbào*, instead, wrote that Zhang and Yang should have cooperated at a time when Japan was trying to cause confusion in their region (both cited in 14/1 ev., 1, [sB

12/1]). In Shanghai, the *Shíshì xīnbào* lamented that factional intrigue had caused the loss of still another talented man (14/1, 2 [S 13/1]).

As for the reactions of the common people, the *ManNichi* had little to say. Its envoy in Fengtian, however, mentioned briefly that the incident had met with "great applause and delight," especially among university students, bringing Xueliang's popularity "to the highest point" (14/1, 2 [Takeda, F 13/1]). Concerning the students, another report explained that Yang had prevented Xueliang from donating part of his father's inheritance as funds in support of education (12/1 ev., 1 [sF c]). The only other article that tackled the issue of popular opinion in the aftermath of the incident was an interview with Masutomo Kurakichi, a company official in charge of labor affairs at the Fushun coal mines. The mines, located not far from Fengtian, were a strategic asset of the Mantetsu and employed "nearly 50,000" Chinese workers. According to Masutomo, the execution of Yang and Chang had made a profound impression on them, as well as on the many other Chinese living in the area. Whereas the change of flag had been for them just a formal agreement between North and South, the unexpected incident had given them an "unprecedented impulse." They thought that the real cause of the affair lay in the struggle between old and new forces, and the sudden fall of the big shots made them feel that the force of the young people was emerging throughout China. From "the bottom of their hearts," they now believed that the Three Eastern Provinces "would be tied certainly and completely" to the Southern government, which was "backed by the latent power of the young people." Labor issues would get more complicated, and care would be required not to go against the trend of times (19/1, 3 [s Fushun]).

To summarize, the *ManNichi* gathered a range of explanations, some of which were mutually exclusive, for the assassination of Yang and his right-hand man. While those put forward by identified personalities were

self-serving, it is noteworthy that the Nationalist camp seemed divided between opposed appraisals of the main victim's political stance. In the international press, a correspondent from Shanghai observed a similar contrast between the views of the diplomatic body in Beiping, which took Yang's death as "a serious blow to Chinese Nationalists," and those in Nanjing, where the event appeared "favorable to the Nationalist movement" (clipped article by Thomas F. Millard from the *Herald Tribune*, 20/1, in GK a, 128). Because of Yang's ambiguous behavior, it was possible to portray him as having been either pro or against the Nationalist cause. In the *ManNichi*, the arrangement of these articles in the page layout did not suggest a preferred interpretation. In any case, the overall impression emerging from the narrative was that factional conflict ran deep in the Northeast (as reminded in the editorial of 19/1).

Already on January 13, however, an editorial made sense of the information in a rather clear-cut way. The writer gave little credit to the official justification for the shooting and found its "real cause" in the machinations of the "Southern political group" (*nanpō seidan*), which had taken advantage of rivalries in Fengtian to eliminate Yang and so realize North-South unification. After Zuolin's death, the two factors that had prevented the Fengtian group from falling apart had been "indirectly Japan's force, and directly figures like Mr. Yang." The execution of such a "man of merit" under all sorts of charges showed the future direction of the Fengtian group. Although Yang and Chang had obstructed Japan's policy, it would be shallow to think that things were going to improve without them. The situation did not require a revision of Japan's stance, but it should be realized that North-South unification and the consequent transfer of authority over foreign affairs to the Nanjing government were "an already accomplished fact" (13/1). Thus, the author took up again the pessimistic view presented in the editorial of December 30.

With respect to the advance of Nationalist influence and the negative

outlook for Japan, this analysis matched with the overall view emerging from a survey of both the Japanese and international press, which the Information Department of the foreign ministry in Tokyo would compile in February. The survey, however, did not indicate that public opinion saw the Nanjing government as an instigator of the murders (GK a, 138–153; see also Neville to Secretary of State, 17/1, in FRUS, 57). In Japan, the double execution aroused much more interest than the previous announcement on the "change of flag." According to another confidential report prepared in January by the Information Department, only the *Chūgai Shōgyō Shinpō* (ancestor to the present *Nihon Keizai Shinbun*) had taken up that topic for an editorial, criticizing the failure of the cabinet's Manchurian policy (GK b, 581–583).

4. The Consequences for Japan and the Unity of Public Opinion

As a major shock within the Northeastern regime might affect its relations with Japan, the *ManNichi* enquired about the views of Japanese officials on that issue. Army sources could not predict whether the disappearance of Yang, who had performed the role of international mediator, would turn into an advantage for Japan or not; overall, they did not see any big consequences coming in the short term (12/1, 2 [T 11/1]). In the Mantetsu, Vice President Matsuoka Yōsuke (now best known for his role as foreign minister in 1940–41) neatly denied that Yang's death might influence negotiations with his company (12/1, 2). President Yamamoto Jōtarō was of the same opinion: the incident was the result of infighting, unrelated to Yang's stance either in favor or against Japan. However, he then raised some questions. If Xueliang grew stronger, would this facilitate bilateral negotiations on Manchuria? Or would they get more complicated, should the Three Provinces

rather get weaker owing to Yang's death, and responsibility for foreign relations be handed over to the Nationalist government? (12/1 ev., 1 [T 11/1]). The political police section chief of the Kwantung Territory, Ōba Kanjirō, simply stated that the incident would have no effect on the Japanese administration (13/1 ev., 1).

Kwantung director-general Kinoshita Kenjirō was less restrained in his statements. Although he too said that the affair would cause at most some delay in the negotiations, he also insinuated that Nanjing seemed to have instigated Zhang in some way; if it were so, then the Nationalist government "should bear half of the responsibility" for what had happened. Furthermore, he observed that the executions had caused a loss of international trust toward Fengtian and China as a whole. This was regrettable, since the Chinese people wished to recover their national rights through the abolition of extraterritoriality and so on, but criticism could not be helped, also in light of the bombing that had claimed Zhang Zuolin's life in the previous year (14/1, 1). In other words, Kinoshita not only took rough justice as proof that China was not ready yet for treaty revision, but also used the occasion to reiterate the Japanese version of the Huanggutun incident: the culprits were Southern agents.

A few days after the shooting, news came out that the Chinese press had announced as imminent a decision of the Nationalist government for the reversion of the Mantetsu (14/1, 2 [S 13/1a]). The text, which was an extremely short cable, got the prime space on the right side above the fold, together with two articles on reactions from Japan. In the remaining part of the upper half of the page, there were comments on the Yang affair and more news from China: it seemed that Nanjing had ordered Xueliang to immediately interrupt railway talks with Japan and that it would take over the task (14/1, 2 [S 13/1b]). The page layout thus established a visual connection between Yang's execution and hostile

moves from the South.

Concerning the Mantetsu, Japan's foreign ministry informally dismissed that news as mere propaganda, aimed at the Chinese people in view of the coming Nationalist Party Congress (14/1, 2 [sT 13/1]). Railway minister Ogawa Heikichi, too, did not believe the announcement had any substance. However, he added that if necessary the imperial government would take "self-defense measures" for the protection of its vested rights (14/1, 2 [s Koshigoe 13/1]). Vice president Matsuoka shared the opinion that the Nationalists were just obliged to say "dreamlike things" owing to their domestic situation. Although the central government had moved from Beijing to Nanjing, in the past, actual negotiations on Manchuria had always been managed locally with the authorities of the Three Eastern Provinces, and that would not change (15/1 ev., 1).

Still, the *ManNichi* took a vigilant approach to the matter. As Nanjing's order to hand over competence on relations with Japan was a precondition for reclaiming the Mantetsu, a writer noticed, such a plan could not be seen anymore as a simple fantasy. Some action might follow soon. It was reported that Japan's government had decided to watch quietly the behavior of the Three Provinces. Should the latter show the intention to transfer competence on foreign affairs to Nanjing, the cabinet would issue a warning and refuse to acknowledge the shift (15/1 ev., 1 [T 14/1]).

Indeed, as a result of a regular meeting held on January 14, the cabinet confirmed that Nanjing should not intervene in negotiations on Manchuria. Before resuming the talks, however, it would be necessary to wait until the political situation in the region had stabilized and North-South relations had cooled off as well. For the time being, the cabinet felt no need for a military expedition to Manchuria or other measures (15/1, 2 [T 14/1]). On January 15, high officials of the foreign ministry,

the military, and the Mantetsu met to discuss the issue of the transfer of responsibility from Fengtian to Nanjing. Considering that Japan had not yet recognized the latter as the new central government of China, and that the general policy was to deal with the authorities that ruled the area concerning specific issues, they agreed that there was no choice but to keep the Three Eastern Provinces as Japan's diplomatic counterpart for that region. It would be useless to negotiate with Nanjing in any case, because the Three Provinces lay outside its "range of influence." Should the Nationalist government interfere, or the Northeastern regime refer to it as an excuse to stall the talks, then Japan would react "with a resolute attitude" (16/1 ev., 1 [T 15/1]).

In practice, however, by the end of January, the Tanaka cabinet gave up the active pursuit of distinct policies for Manchuria and the rest of China and started looking for a comprehensive accommodation with Nanjing. This policy shift happened in response to Xueliang's dilatory tactics, but had its deeper causes in a combination of domestic and international circumstances that impaired the government's ability to take strong initiatives (Satō M. 2009, 344–348, 362–364). Among these factors, there was the resurgence of the issue of responsibilities in the Huanggutun incident. The main opposition party, the Rikken Minseitō, brought it up in the imperial Diet to harass the cabinet and force its resignation. At first, the Japanese press criticized the Minseitō for raising an issue that might harm the national interest. As the evasive attitude of the cabinet became clear, however, the newspapers started calling for an explanation that should dispel suspicions of Japan (Tamai Kenkyūkai 2009, 52–57).

From previous research, it is clear that the *ManNichi* defended to the last the cabinet's decision not to publish the results of its investigation (Revelant 2021, 153–154). In January, it severely condemned the attempt to use foreign affairs as a weapon for domestic power struggles.

Editorials made implicit or open criticism of the Minseitō (15/1, 17/1, 19/1), which a writer even called a "traitor to the country" (Sakaguchi, 17/1 ev., 1). At the same time, the *ManNichi* argued in broader terms for the need for unity in public opinion toward China. The editorialist guarded the Japanese against holding an optimistic view of that country (9/1). He mentioned the *Ōsaka Asahi Shinbun* as an example of "extremely optimistic discourse" and compared it to the *Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun*, which was neither optimistic nor pessimistic to an extreme degree. If public opinion lacked unity, he continued, a stable China policy could not be achieved. It was lamentable that such disunion even led at times to divergences of views on Manchuria (15/1). The editorialist also reminded readers that one should distinguish the issues relating to "mainland China" from those that concerned Manchuria, which involved the "right of survival" of the Japanese nation (18/1).

It is not easy to explain, then, why the assassination of Zhang Zuolin did resurface in the *MaiNichi* in a way that could cause embarrassment to Japan. As mentioned above, right after Yang's execution, a reporter suggested that the reason might have been his involvement in the bombing incident. The hypothesis later reappeared as the opinion of Chinese sources in Jilin (12/1 ev., 1 [sC]) or as a generic assumption heard by "an important Chinese person" in the same area (17/1, 3 [sC]). The US consul in Fengtian dismissed this kind of reports as groundless and thought them "likely to have had a Japanese origin" (Myers to MacMurray, 14/1, in FRUS, 56). Indeed, putting the guilt on Yang might have had the purpose of deflecting suspicion from the Kwantung Army (the US chargé in Tokyo, though, wrote soon that the theory seemed "to have been generally rejected" in Japan: Neville to Secretary of State, 17/1, in FRUS, 57). However, because Yang's image was associated with Japan, it was easy to turn the argument around. Later on, it was Xueliang himself who publicly confirmed the rumors, adding

this charge to the already long list. Allegedly, Yang and Chang had killed Zuolin because he had resisted their pressures to seal the railway agreement with Japan (19/1, 2 [sF]). Thus, the story took a twist, as the assassination was put in connection to Japan's objectives.

A few days later, the *ManNichi* published an account of the discovery of the plot, as leaked by "a certain important person of Fengtian." The news, deemed "worthy of the greatest attention," went as follows. On January 10, the military police arrested five Russians, claiming that they had come to the Marshal's headquarters to call on Yang. They were carrying a note in his handwriting, which promised a large amount of money in the case that the bombing succeeded. Moreover, the police had found a pass for the transportation of the explosive, issued by Chang as head of the Beijing-Fengtian railway bureau. With such overwhelming evidence, Xueliang had lured the two men to a private meeting, had made them confess, and had even shot them himself. This time, the writer made no reference to Japanese interests and added instead that Yang had admitted he had long been waiting for a chance to take power (21/1, 2 [sF 20/1]). According to a Japanese police report, the story had been fed to the newspaper by Kobayashi Saiji, a notable of Dashiqiao, who said he had heard it from the governor of Fengtian (Yingkou consul Arakawa to Tanaka, 25/1, in GK a, 101–103).[7]

At that point, though, it took little to turn Yang's guilt into an argument against Japan. On January 28, news came out in China that the Beiping garrison command had sent its report on the conspiracy to

7 Kobayashi also said he had first shared the information with Itō Kenjirō (another local businessman), who seemed to be involved in the bombing incident with someone from the army. From his reaction, however, Kobayashi had inferred that Itō had only told the army that killing Zhang Zuolin would be good for the achievement of national policy. Itō's alleged role in the assassination plot is outlined in Satō M. 2009 (278–279).

the government. The investigation confirmed that Yang and Chang had plotted with Japanese officials, first to halt the Northern Expedition, then to eliminate Zhang Zuolin and finally to take control of the Northeast as a separate country (acting minister Hori to Tanaka, 31/1, in GK a, 117–119). The Rengō press agency relayed the news to Japan (clipped article from the *Tōkyō Nichinichi Shinbun*, 29/1, in GK a, 114), just when the cabinet was facing interpellations on the Huanggutun incident in parliament. In this manner, over a few weeks, a theory that might have originated as a distraction away from Japanese responsibilities developed into a weapon for Nationalist propaganda.

5. Conclusion

The findings presented here prove that the *ManNichi* fully supported the dualistic policy of the Tanaka cabinet toward "Manchuria" and "mainland China," which it considered necessary for the protection of Japan's vital interests in the Northeast. This stance was distant from that assumed by the *Ōsaka Asahi Shinbun* in response to the progress of Chinese reunification under the Nationalist Party. Although the *Asahi* did not go as far as to argue that a special position in Manchuria could not be maintained for long, it did speak in favor of its partial renegotiation with the new central government of China. On the other hand, the *Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun* substantially agreed with the *ManNichi* about the separate character of the Northeast, which had been a customary assumption in Japanese diplomacy. In this respect, the *ManNichi* shared with one of the largest newspapers in Japan a policy approach that may be defined as conservative imperialism.

However, there was also a sharp divide between the *ManNichi* and both of the big newspapers when it came to evaluating "Tanaka diplomacy." While agreeing on the objectives, the *Ōsaka Mainichi*

had a poor opinion of Tanaka's method and attitude, which had rather worsened problems. Such criticism was absent in the Mantetsu newspaper, as it may be expected from a semi-official press organ. Nevertheless, the fact that the *ManNichi* continued to advocate a dualistic policy after the Minseitō rose to government and Shidehara came back to office, indicates that the press agenda in Dairen did not necessarily originate from the foreign ministry. Although some articles gave voice directly to the Mantetsu, the Kwantung administration, and the army, the relative influence of each agency in the process of discourse formation below the surface remains unclear.

It deserves attention that in the first weeks of 1929, a recurrent theme was the instability of the Fengtian regime, seen as a weakening factor in the face of Nationalist penetration. Instead, through the latter half of that year the Northeast was portrayed as a relatively stable region in comparison with the rest of China, even at the peak of the Sino-Soviet conflict. Consequently, the argument that Japan might have to intervene with "resolute measures" to protect its interests almost completely disappeared from sight. An aim for further research is to investigate whether the *ManNichi* shifted to a more aggressive posture during the following year, when the chances for a satisfying outcome to Sino-Japanese negotiations grew thinner.

Acknowledgement

This chapter was produced with the contribution of Next Generation EU – M4.C2.1.1 – project "Imperial Entanglements: Latecomer Colonial Empires and the 'Politics of Comparison' (1880s – 1940s)" - CUP H53D23000120006

References

Primary sources

FRUS: Fuller, V. Joseph (ed.). 1943. *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1929, Vol. 2*. Washington: United States Government Printing Office. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1929v02>

GK: *Gaimusho Kiroku [Records of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs]*. Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tokyo.

a. A.6.1.2.1-5. ManMō Seikyō Kankei Zassan: Yō Utei, Jō Inkai Shasatsu Mondai [Miscellaneous Documents Relating to the Political Situation in Manchuria and Mongolia: Problem of the Shooting of Yang Yuting and Chang Yinghuai]. <https://www.jacar.go.jp/> (Ref. code B02031765600). (In Japanese)

b. A.6.1.5.2-8-2. Shina Nairan Kankei Ikken: Kokumin-gun no Hokubatsu Kankei: Chō Gakuryō no Tai-Nanpō Dakyō Mondai: Tōsanshō Ekishi Mondai [Documents Relating to the Chinese Civil War: Related to the Northern Expedition of the Nationalist Army: Problem of Zhang Xueliang's Compromise with the South: Problem of Flag Replacement in the Three Eastern Provinces] <https://www.jacar.go.jp/> (Ref. code B02031864100). (In Japanese)

NGB: Gaimushō (ed.). 1990. *Nihon Gaikō Bunsho: Shōwa-ki I, Dai Ichibu [Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy: Showa Era I, Part 1]*, Vols. 2 [1928], 3 [1929]. Tōkyō: Gaimushō. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/annai/honsho/shiryo/archives/s21-3.html> (In Japanese)

Manshū Nippō. Accessed in microfilm.

Secondary sources

Cao, Jianping. 2016. Manshūkoku-ki no Nikkei Shinbun ni okeru Tabako

Kōkoku to sono Naiyō Bunseki: *ManNichi* wo Taishō ni [Tobacco Advertisements in the *ManNichi*, a Japanese Newspaper in the "Manchukuo" era]. *(Hokkaidō Daigaku Bungaku Kenkyūka) Kenkyū Ronshū [Research Journal of Graduate Students of Letters, Graduate School of Humanities and Human Sciences, Hokkaido University]*, 15, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.14943/rjgsl.15.l1> (In Japanese)

Higuchi, Hidemi. 2004. Tōsanshō Seiken wo meguru Higashi Ajia Kokusai Seiji to Yō Utei [The Sandongsheng Regime, Yang Yuting and Far Eastern International Relations in Pre-World War II Nationalist China]. *Shigaku Zasshi [Journal of Historical Science]*, 113(7), 1223–1258. <https://doi.org/10.24471/shigaku.113.7_1223> (In Japanese)

Ikeda, Kazuyuki. 2000. *Kishatachi no Manshū Jihen: Nihon Jānarizumu no Tenkaiten [Journalists' Views on the Manchurian Incident: A Turning Point in Japanese Journalism]*. Tokyo: Ningen no Kagaku Shinsha. (In Japanese)

Iriye, Akira. 1960. Chang Hsueh-Liang and the Japanese. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 20(1), 33–43. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2050070>

Kwong, Chi Man. 2017. *War and Geopolitics in Interwar Manchuria: Zhang Zuolin and the Fengtian Clique during the Northern Expedition*. Leiden, Boston: Brill.

Ma, Jia. 2015. Mínguó shíqī dōngběi rìwén bàozhǐ yúlùn dǎoxiàng yánjiū: yǐ "Mǎnzhōu rìbào" Huánggūtún shìjiàn bàodào wéilì [A Study on Public Opinion Guidance by Japanese-language Newspapers in the Northeast in the Republican Period: The Case of Coverage of the Huanggutun Incident in the Manshū Nippō]. In Ni Yannan (ed.), *Mínguó xīnwénshǐ yánjiū [Studies on the History of Journalism in the Republic of China]*, Nanjing, Nánjīng shīfàn dàxué chūbǎnshè, pp. 253–268. (In Chinese)

Matsushige, Mitsuhiro. 2013. "Hokubatsu"-ki ni okeru "Manshū Nichinichi Shinbun" Shijō no Shō Kaiseki Ninshiki ni kansuru Oboegaki: "Gaichi" Nihonjin Shakai no Shō Kaiseki Ninshiki ni kansuru Ichi Jirei to shite [Notes on the Perception of Chiang Kai-shek in the *Manshū Nichinichi Shinbun* (Manchuria Daily Newspaper) during the "Northern Expedition": A Case Study on the Perception of Chiang Kai-shek in the Japanese Communities of the "Overseas Territories"]. In Yamada Tatsuo, and Matsushige Mitsuhiro (eds.), *Shō Kaiseki Kenkyū: Seiji, Sensō, Nihon [Studies on Chiang Kai-shek: Politics, War, and Japan]*. Tokyo: Tōhō Shoten, 35–56. (In Japanese)

Mitter, Rana. 2000. *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Modern China*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

Nishimura, Shigeo. 1996. *Chō Gakuryō: Nicchū no Haken to "Manshū" [Zhang Xueliang: Sino-Japanese Hegemony and "Manchuria"]*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten. (In Japanese)

Revelant, Andrea. 2021. Framing the Manchurian Question: The Manshū Nippō and Regional Autonomy After the Return of Shidehara Diplomacy in 1929. *Aoyama Keizai Ronshū [The Aoyama Journal of Economics]*, 72, 133–192. <https://opac.agulin.aoyama.ac.jp/iwjs0011opc/TF01309814>

———. 2023. Gauging the Tide: The Rise of Nationalist China in Japan's Leading Newspapers, 1928–29. In Laura De Giorgi, and Sofia Graziani (eds.), *The Historian's Gaze: Essays on Modern and Contemporary China in Honour of Guido Samarani*. Venezia: Edizioni Ca' Foscari – Venice University Press, 96–124. <http://doi.org/10.30687/978-88-6969-723-4/006>

Ri, Sōtetsu [Li, Xiangzhe]. 2000. *Manshū ni okeru Nihonjin Keiei Shinbun no Rekishi [History of Japanese Journalism in Manchuria]*. Tokyo: Gaifūsha. (In Japanese)

Rong, Yuan. 2021. *Soshakuchi Dairen ni okeru Nihongo Shinbun no Jigyō Katsudō: Manshū Nichinichi Shinbun wo Chūshin ni [Organized Activities of Japanese Language Newspapers in Leased Land Dalian: With a Focus on the Manchurian Daily News]*. Kyōto: Kōyō Shobō. (In Japanese)

Satō, Katsuya. 2009. Manshū Jihen Boppatsu Zengo no "Manshū Nippō" ni kansuru Ichi Kōsatsu: Kokusaku Kaisha-Mantetsu no Kikanshi no Ronchō no Henka to sono Haikei [An Analysis of News Reports from "The Manchuria Daily Newspaper" (Manshu Nippo) before and after the Outbreak of the Manchurian Incident: Changes in the Tone of a Press Organ of the National Policy Company Mantetsu, and their Background], *Nihon Daigaku Daigakuin Sōgō Shakai Jōhō Kenkyūka Kiyō [The Bulletin of the Graduate School of Social and Cultural Studies Nihon University: Nihon University GSSC Journal]*, 10, 11–22. (In Japanese)

Satō, Motoei. 2009. *Shōwa Shoki Tai-Chūgoku Seisaku no Kenkyū: Tanaka Naikaku no Tai-ManMō Seisaku [A Study on Japan's China Policy in the Early Shōwa Period: The Tanaka Cabinet's Policy toward Manchuria and Mongolia]*. Tokyo: Hara Shobō. (In Japanese)

Tamai Kenkyūkai (Keiō Gijuku Daigaku Hōgakubu Seiji Gakka Tamai Kiyoshi Kenkyūkai). 2009. *Chō Sakurin Bakusatsu Jiken to Nihon no Masu-Media, Kindai Nihon Seiji Shiryō No. 15 [The Assassination by Bombing of Zhang Zuolin and the Japanese Mass Media, Documents on Modern Japan's Politics No. 15]*, Tokyo: Tamai Kenkyūkai. (In Japanese)

Tsuchida, Akio. 1992. Tōsanshō Ekishi no Seiji Katei (1928 nen) [The Political Process of the Flag Replacement in the Three Eastern Provinces (1928)]. *Tōkyō Geijutsu Daigaku Kiyō 3 Bumon Shakai Kagaku [Bulletin of Tokyo Gakugei University, 3rd Division: Social Sciences]*, 44, 71–108.

Zhang, Liang. 2016. Kaku Shōrei no Hanran to Chō Gakuryō no Gunji Shisō: "Tōhoku Ekishi" eno Michi [Guo Songling's Rebellion and Zhang Xueliang's Military Thought: The Road to the Northeast Flag Replacement]. PhD thesis, Kitakyūshū Shiritsu Daigaku. <https://kitakyu.repo.nii.ac.jp/records/497> (In Japanese)

3. Dr. Andrea REVELANT

Chapter 3. The *Manshū Nippō* and the Issue of Chinese Reunification at the Turn of 1929

Dr. Revelant is an Associate Professor, Department of Asian and North African Studies, Ca' Foscari University of Venice.

His research interests focus on policy-making, popular representation, and mass communication in imperial Japan. He is currently working on the political discourse on China in the Japanese press of the interwar years. He is the author of *Sviluppo economico e disuguaglianza* (*Economic Development and Inequality*, 2016), *Il Giappone moderno* (*Modern Japan*, 2018) and *Il Giappone contemporaneo* (*Contemporary Japan*, 2024). He has published in several journals, including *Modern Asian Studies*, *European Journal of East Asian Studies* and *Asiatische Studien*. His work has also appeared in edited volumes, such as *Japan and the Great War* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), *Chiang Kai-Shek and His Time*, and *The Historian's Gaze* (both Ca' Foscari University Press, 2017, 2023)