

Frida Brende Jenssen

Norwegian foreign policy and the Sino-Japanese conflict 1931-1938

Master's thesis in History
Supervisor: Espen Storli
Trondheim, November 2016

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Preface

I clearly remember one of the first lecture of the master program, where a Professor told us that they were simply expecting us to “write a book”. A mixture of panic and anticipation soon kicked in - I had never thought about it that way before. What had I gotten myself into? In the end, the book that was requested of me is finished. The long and slow learning process, which started in that class room, has come to an end, and I am pleased with the result. At the same time, I feel the need to express my profound gratitude to the people, who have supported me in different ways throughout the process of writing this thesis.

First, I would like to thank my supervisor, Espen Storli. You have exceeded everything I could have hoped for in a supervisor. Thank you for your professional advice and guidance, but most of all for your ability to make time for me in a busy schedule. You made yourself the natural person to contact whenever I had doubts, always greeting my questions with patience and sympathy. Thank you.

I also want to express my gratitude to Camilla Brautaset, who have practically served as my informal supervisor since I finished my bachelor thesis in Bergen. I have greatly appreciated your professional opinions and guidance, but most importantly - you have always expressed your belief in me. I admire you a great deal, so knowing that I had your support has made it possible for me to believe in my ambitions too.

Finally, I cannot write my acknowledgements without mentioning the role played by my family and friends. I want to express my gratitude to all my fellow students at reading room 6381 for all the fun times and discussions we enjoyed together. Ole-Jacob deserves a special mentioning – thank you so much for your help and advice throughout this process and towards the very end. Additionally, I want to express my gratitude to Joachim - this thesis would not have been possible if it was not for you. Thank you for your fundamental support, and for believing in me when I did not. I have greatly appreciated yours and Peder’s solidarity visits to the reading room in times when I felt like a was living there. Mum, Dad, Peder and Joachim - you have endured countless conversations (and monologues of mine) about Norwegian foreign policy. This thesis is yours as well. It required endurance to write, but that was acquired because of you.

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Chapter 1: Thesis introduction

1.1. Introducing the topic

“In this regard, it should not be forgotten that Norway, a small and military weak country, is greatly interested in maintaining the power and authority of the League, in order to prevent abuse from the stronger states against the weak and relatively unprotected”.¹

“Japan is the country most capable of stopping China, when it goes too far in lawlessness and violation of other’s rights. Should we conclude with surrendering the best support we have in the East in this regard?”²

In mid-March 1932, Foreign Minister Birger Braadland solemnly addressed the Norwegian parliament at a meeting behind closed doors. As part of Braadland’s general account of Norway’s foreign policy, the first statement was made in relation to the League of Nations’ treatment of a territorial dispute between Japan and China, that had begun a few months earlier. Braadland’s assessment of the situation implies that he found the international organisation’s promise of collective security to be of critical importance to Norway. Furthermore, it signifies that he saw the conflict between China and Japan as a test, where Norway would benefit if the League proved itself capable of preventing the Japanese “abuse” of the weaker member, China. Just a few months earlier, the second statement was written by the head of the Norwegian diplomatic service station to China and Japan, Ludvig C. M. Aubert. He portrays Norwegian interests regarding the conflict in a completely different manner. Aubert’s account describes China as the lawless violator while the Japanese are allies helping to protect the “civility” of the East. The two statements illustrate the focus of this thesis, because they signify the tension within Norwegian foreign policy between the pursuit of political and economic interests, and idealist status seeking motivated by the need for national security.

¹ My translation, the original quote reads: “Det bør i denne forbindelse ikke glemmes, at Norge, som et lite og militært svakt land, har den største interesse i at Folkeforbundets kraft og myndighet opprettholdes, således at det kan forhindre overgrep fra de sterkere staters side mot de svake og relativt ubeskyttede”. Birger Braadland (17.03.1932). Stortingsarkivene. Møte for lukkede dører, Stortinget 1925-1939. 81. ordentlige Storting 1932. *Redegjørelse av utenriksminister Braadland om den utenrikspolitiske situasjon*. (“Folkeforbundet”): 18-20

² My translation, the original quote reads: "Japan er det land som er best istand til å stanse Kina, når dette går for vidt i lovløshet og i krenkelse av andres rettigheter. Skal vi ende med å opgi den beste støtte vi har i Østen i denne henseende?". Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (02.11.1931). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078

According to the official Chinese historical narrative, the fourteen years between 1931 and 1945 under Japanese occupation were the darkest years in the history of China.³ In his book *Never Forget National Humiliation*, Zheng Wang claims that the 18th of September 1931 is still an important date in the Chinese collective memory.⁴ That day, the bombing of a railroad crossing in Northern China was used as a pretext for the Japanese army to invade. Within weeks, three entire Chinese provinces came under Japanese control.⁵ In retrospect, it might seem like an unavoidable development from then on and towards the second Sino-Japanese war 1937-1945. In 1931, however, the world community had no reason to doubt the prospect of settling the Manchurian Crisis through the League of Nations. As the world's first truly global international organisation, the League was supposed to solve conflicts in accordance with international law before they escalated beyond control.⁶ Until the Manchurian Crisis, it had been able to bring several conflicts towards a peaceful end, even though the proceedings had illuminated the League's limitations to a certain degree.⁷ At the end of the 1920s, however, the historian Ruth Henig claims there was an extremely wide gap between what ordinary people expected of the League, and what it could actually deliver in practice.⁸ Coinciding with the failures of the World Economic Conference and the Disarmament Conference, the Manchurian Crisis dealt a serious blow to the League system's prestige as an instrument for the deterrence or punishment of aggression.⁹

The conflict between China and Japan was a situation where Norway was drawn between two different key notions in its foreign policy. On one hand, the political scientist Halvard Leira claims that Norway aimed to become internationally recognised as a peace-nation, because it was a way of gaining status and was seen as the morally right thing to do.¹⁰ On the other hand, the beginning of the 1930s was a time where Norway considered itself threat-free, which the historian Karl Erik Haug has argued made the country appear as an

³ Wang, Z. (2012). *Never Forget National Humiliation. Historical memory in Chinese politics and foreign relations*. New York, Columbia University Press: 54-56

⁴ Ibid.: 54-56

⁵ Tooze, A. (2014). *The Deluge. The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order, 1916-1931*. London, the Penguin Group: 499

⁶ Henig, R. (2010). *The League of Nations*. London, Haus Publishing Ltd.: 1, 52-53

⁷ There were several disputes that the League managed to solve peacefully in the 1920s: Yugoslavian occupation of Albanian territory in 1921, Greek invasion of Bulgaria in 1925 and Italian occupation of Greek territory in 1926. Ibid.: 88-92

⁸ Ibid.: 106-107

⁹ Henig (2010): 153; Riste (2005, 2001). *Norway's Foreign Relations – A History*. 2nd ed. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget: 134

¹⁰ Leira, H. (2015) "The formative years: Norway as an obsessive status-seeker". In: Carvalho, B. de; Neumann, I. (2015). (edits). *Small State Status Seeking. Norway's quest for international standing*. New York, Routledge: 36

introvert small state mostly interested in its own economic and political interests across the world.¹¹ Geir Lundestad, historian and previous Director of the Norwegian Nobel Institute, has named Norway the “national internationalist”, because of the country’s tendency to promote international cooperation while trying to avoid actual commitments towards this end itself.¹² Lundestad’s term and assessment mainly deals with the period after the Second World War, but Haug has suggested that the same theory applies to Norwegian foreign policy in the interwar era.¹³ This thesis will analyse Norwegian actions during the Sino-Japanese conflict 1931-1938, examine how the dispute was viewed by different foreign policy-makers, and discuss its significance within the larger history of Norwegian foreign policy. Before examining the research question more fully, however, it is necessary to take a closer look at the existing research on Norwegian foreign policy and the Sino-Japanese conflict.

1.2. Literature and research status

1.2.1. Studies of Norwegian foreign policy and foreign services

In 1961, Nils Ørvik wrote about the strategical and military issues that faced contemporary policy-makers in Norway in his book *Sikkerhetspolitikken 1920-1939*.¹⁴ For a long time, it was the dominant study of Norwegian Foreign Policy in the interwar period, and Ørvik’s emphasis on the aspect of security policy would influence subsequent research.¹⁵ In 1996, Odd-Bjørn Fure wrote the book *Mellomkrigstid 1920-1940*, which challenged previous scholars’ narrow scope of study. He claims that many central areas of Norwegian foreign policy had been neglected, because scholars had focused too much on trying to explain the events of the Second World War when researching the interwar era.¹⁶ Furthermore, Fure argues that the emphasis on security policy was counterintuitive, because the term, as we know it, was only a marginal and sometimes absent part of Norwegian foreign policy.¹⁷

¹¹ Berg, R. (2016). *Norsk utenrikspolitikk etter 1814*. Oslo, Det Norske Samlaget: 52; Haug (2012). *Folkeforbundet og krigens bekjempelse. Norsk utenrikspolitikk mellom realisme og idealisme* [PhD Thesis]. Trondheim, NTNU: 35

¹² Lundestad, G. (1985). “Nasjonalisme og internasjonisme i norsk utenrikspolitikk: Et faglig-provoserende essay”. In: *Internasjonal Politikk*, theme ed. 1: 39-54

¹³ Haug (2012). *Folkeforbundet og krigens bekjempelse. Norsk utenrikspolitikk mellom realisme og idealisme*. [PhD thesis]. Trondheim, NTNU: 6-9

¹⁴ Ørvik, N. (1962). *Norsk sikkerhetspolitikk 1920-1939*. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget: 468

¹⁵ Haug (2012): 23-24.

¹⁶ Fure (1996). *Mellomkrigstid: 1920-1940*. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget: 11-12

¹⁷ *Ibid.*: 11-12

Instead, Fure widens the scope of study by showing how policy decisions were made based on economic, political and cultural continuities in foreign relations.¹⁸

Fure's book was part of a larger research project financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which resulted in a multi-authored six-volume series about the history of Norwegian foreign policy. According to the historian Knut Einar Eriksen, Olav Riste was the leader of the project, and had been central to the development of an internationally oriented professional environment for the history of Norwegian contemporary security policy.¹⁹ In regard to the project, Riste wrote the book *Norway's Foreign Relations – A History* in 2001, which was a historical overview of Norwegian Foreign Relations from the Middle Ages until today. Riste provides a theory about Norwegian foreign policy, where he claims that Norway's neutrality was only a supporting element to Norway's continuous dependence on a western great power for security – Britain or the United States.²⁰ In relation to the interwar period, Riste argues that Norwegian neutrality in reality relied on Britain as the ultimate defender should Norway be attacked.²¹ Accordingly, Riste claims that the reason for Norway entering the League was partly to ensure the British connection.²² Riste's continuity theory has gained major support across the field, even though it has been criticised by the historian Hallvard Tjelmeland for implying a certain determinist understanding of Norway's foreign policy course.²³ Meanwhile, Roald Berg has described the hegemonic support for Riste's theory, and Helge Pharo has argued its importance in relation to further research.²⁴

Many Norwegian representatives at the League believed strongly in the “small-state philosophy”, which emphasized the role of the smaller states to act as the guardians of moral in international relations.²⁵ Due to Norway's lack of external threats in the interwar era, Riste claims that it was cost-free for politicians to promote international law and the peaceful settlement of conflicts at the League of Nations.²⁶ Lundestad has challenged this notion and

¹⁸ Haug (2012): 23-24

¹⁹ Eriksen, K. E. (28.07.2015). “Olav Riste”. In: *Norsk Biografisk Leksikon* [Internet]. Available at: https://nbl.snl.no/Olav_Riste [Read 13.11.2016]

²⁰ Riste (2005, 2001): 113

²¹ Ibid.: 113

²² Ibid.: 130

²³ Tjelmeland, H. (2009). “Ein norsk sonderweg i internasjonal politikk etter 1945? Ei kritisk drøfting av Ristetradisjonen”. In: Niemi, E.; Smith-Simonsen, C. (edits.). *Det hjemlige og det globale. Festskrift til Randi Rønning Balsvik*, Oslo.

²⁴ Berg (2016): 15-16; Pharo, H. (2005). “Den norske fredstradisjonen – et forskningsprosjekt”. In: *Historisk Tidsskrift*, 84 (2): 239-255. Available at: https://www.idunn.no/ht/2005/02/den_norske_fredstradisjonen_et_forskningsprosjekt [Read 13.11.2016]

²⁵ Riste (2005, 2001): 130

²⁶ Ibid.: 133

claimed that the idealist argumentation of smaller states was disregarded whenever the discussion touched upon their own issues and interests.²⁷ Haug furthers this argumentation in his PhD thesis, *Folkeforbundet og krigens bekjempelse*. He claims that Norway's policy regarding the League of Nations was essentially a type of small state realism²⁸, which depended on Norway's economical standing and geographical position as Europe's periphery.²⁹ On one hand, Norway applauded the League's role in promoting international law in the relations between states, but was at the same time not interested in increasing its commitments to the organisation. Norway's efforts at the League have been depicted idealistically, but Haug challenges this notion by describing the Norwegian position as "retraction policy" ("avskjermingspolitikk").³⁰ Despite Norwegian politicians emphasizing international law and idealistic principles at speeches at home and at the League's headquarters in Genève, they were in reality trying not to commit more than absolutely necessary to the international organisation.³¹ In the edited anthology *Selvstendig og beskyttet* from 2008, the historian Roald Berg addresses this double-standard in Norwegian foreign policy, and problematize the ethics of both conditional and unconditional cooperation with the greater powers.³² In Berg's book, Haug has written a chapter where he concludes that Norwegian politicians never relied on the collective security system of the League at all.³³ Continuing Riste's argumentation, he claims that Norway instead relied on their implied protector – Great Britain.³⁴

Henrik Thune and Torgeir Larsen has criticised the traditional division of realist and idealist motives in the discourse of Norwegian foreign policy, because such an approach disregards the impact of pull factors from an external context.³⁵ The confines of the nation have limited the understanding of the international framework influencing national foreign

²⁷ Lundestad (1985): 52

²⁸ Haug claims that "small state realism" departs from classical realistic theory, but has been used in geopolitically oriented research. Avoiding the larger political scientific debate, he states that political idealists differs from realists in that they emphasize justice and duty instead of power relations. Haug (2012): 7-8

²⁹ Ibid.: 443-444

³⁰ Ibid.: 443-444

³¹ The economic crisis and the perception that Norway was 'threat-free' were the reasons for not increasing Norway's commitments during relatively peaceful times. In times of conflict, Norwegian delegates dropped the idealist position as soon as there could be consequences to Norwegian interests. Ibid.: 443-444

³² Berg, R. (2008). *Selvstendig og beskyttet. Det stormaktsgaranterte Norge fra Krimkrigen til NATO*. Bergen, Fagbokforlaget Vigmstad & Bjørke AS: 16

³³ Haug (2008). In: Berg (2008): 49-60

³⁴ Ibid.: 49-60

³⁵ Thune, H.; Larsen, T. (2000). "Utenrikspolitikk uten software. En teori om omdømme, populisme og andre politiske trekkrefter i små staters utenrikspolitikk". In: Dale, G. et.al. *Grenser for alt. Kritiske perspektiver på norsk utenrikspolitikk*. Oslo, Spartacus Forlag AS: 70-78

policies. In an attempt to dislodge the study of Norwegian foreign policy from the shackles of national interests and values, the political scientists Iver B. Neumann and Benjamin De Carvalho specify the international orientation of Norway in their book *Small State Status Seeking - Norway's quest for international standing* from 2015. In seeing 'status seeking' as acts undertaken to maintain or improve one's position, they claim that it has been a key notion in Norwegian foreign policy from the start.³⁶ Within their book, Leira shows how Norway sought international status as a sovereign state between 1814 and 1905. After achieving independence, the League became a forum for promoting the image of Norway as a peace-nation.³⁷ This thesis may be confined to the Norwegian nation, but it expands existing research by examining Norway's foreign policy regarding a geographically distant conflict in the international environment of the 1930s. Was Norwegian foreign policy makers uninterested because of the dispute's remoteness? Or, did Norway's distance to the conflicting parties facilitate peace-nation status seeking during the League proceedings?

There is still room for broadening the understanding of Norwegian foreign policy when it comes to choice of sources. In Ingrid Myrstad's master thesis, she claims that historians have emphasized the politics - political decisions, wars, the relationship with great powers and neighbouring countries - and neglected the external foreign services when researching Norwegian foreign policy.³⁸ This thesis will examine sources from different factions of Norwegian policy-making, but most notably I will be using the archives of Norway's foreign legations in China and Japan.

In his book *Utenriksstjenesten* from 1954, Reidar Omang states that the envoys at Norwegian diplomatic and consular stations abroad are part of foreign policy-making.³⁹ In Norway, the government exercise executive authority while the parliament (Storting) have legislative power. Only the most important matters are handled by the Norwegian Council of State with the King and the whole government present. The minister of each department thus exercise executive authority in all other cases. The Minister of Foreign Affairs may also delegate cases to subordinates enabling the Minister to concentrate on the most important matters at hand.⁴⁰ When studying different periods or instances in the history of foreign policy, historians have mainly examined sources from the top of the hierarchy in Norwegian

³⁶ Carvalho; Neumann (2015): 1-17

³⁷ Leira (2015). In: Carvalho; Neumann (2015): 22-39

³⁸ Myrstad, I. (2009). *Generalkonsulatet i Kina, En studie av en svensk-norsk utenriksstasjon, 1842-1905* [master thesis]: 10. Available at: <https://bora.uib.no/handle/1956/3842> [Read 13.11.2016]

³⁹ Omang, R. (1954). *Utenriksstjenesten*. Oslo, Gyldendal Norsk Forlag: 10-12

⁴⁰ Ibid.: 10-12

policy making. The focus has been on Norwegian parliamentary debates, sources from the Ministry in Oslo and the personal letters of significant politicians. The findings from these sources are naturally important, but historians have often neglected examining the full machinery of decision-making in Norwegian foreign policy.

Within the framework provided by Norwegian law and the general instruction for the Foreign Services, Omang argues that the envoys at Norwegian foreign service stations exercise autonomous executive authority.⁴¹ Accordingly, Norway's consular and diplomatic representatives abroad are foreign policy-makers to a certain degree. Thus, the two opening statements of this thesis, by the Foreign Minister and the head of the diplomatic station in China and Japan, both represent relevant views on Norwegian interests in foreign policy-making. However, the Minister's practice of delegating executive authority does not imply that the subordinates may act against the will of the government. The officials at the Foreign Ministry and at the foreign service stations are unconditionally bound by the instructions from the Foreign Minister, and the entire Foreign Ministry apparatus is subjected to the will of the Norwegian Council of State.⁴² The historian Ferry de Goey claims that global historians have shown little interest in the foreign service stations in general.⁴³ Since the archive from the Norwegian delegation in Genève is sorted among the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is reasonable to claim that historians of Norwegian foreign policy often have neglected the archives from Norwegian foreign service stations across the world.⁴⁴

In this regard, it is worth mentioning that Norway's foreign policy machinery was quite limited during the interwar years. Norway had only recently established its own foreign service, and so the Norwegian diplomatic and consular envoys abroad might have had a larger influence on foreign policy than they do today. For instance, Haug claims that the management of cases regarding the League of Nations was generally conducted by the people present at the meetings and conferences in Genève.⁴⁵ Continuing one of Fure's claims, he argues that Norwegian foreign policy in the interwar era was formed by a small, selected elite.

⁴¹ Ibid.: 10-12

⁴² Ibid.: 10-12

⁴³ Goey, F. de (2014). *Consuls and the Institutions of Global Capitalism, 1783-1914*. London, Pickering & Chatto (Publishers) Limited: 11.

⁴⁴ These archives have mainly been used by Foreign Ministry officials and political scientists. Only a few historians have done the same: Neumann, I. B.; Leira, H. (2005). *Aktiv og Avventende. Utenrikstjenestens liv 1905-2005*. Oslo, Pax Forlag A/S; possibly Omang (1954) and some master theses. The Norwegian diplomatic and consular stations in China has been studied by Tepstad, J. (2015). *Norwegian Extraterritoriality in China. A study of how and why Norway abolished its extraterritoriality in China* [master thesis]. Bergen, University of Bergen. and Myrstad, I. (2009). *Generalkonsulatet i Kina, En studie av en svensk-norsk utenriksstasjon, 1842-1905* [master thesis]. Available at: <https://bora.uib.no/handle/1956/3842> [Read 13.11.2016].

⁴⁵ Haug (2012): 27-28

Even less people were involved in deciding the foreign policy towards the League of Nations.⁴⁶ Thus, I argue that a certain influence from the diplomatic and consular officials abroad seem even more probable. Norway only had a few means of gaining information from around the world, which I claim increased the significance of the reports from distant consulates and legations.

1.2.2. Research literature on the League and the Sino-Japanese conflict

The lion's share of literature about the League of Nations is written by contemporary actors or journalists, since researchers today have generally lost interest for the organisation. The most comprehensive study of the League is still *A History of the League of Nations* written by Francis P. Walters, the League's former Deputy Secretary-General. Published in 1952, the book provides a contemporary's insight into the machinery of the organisation, but Walters tend to evaluate the League's efforts in an overly favourable manner.⁴⁷ In his opinion, the Manchurian Crisis was a turning-point in the history of the League, because it broke the common front that worked against another war breaking out.⁴⁸ Here, the Manchurian Crisis is seen as the beginning of the League's period of struggle that culminated with the collapse of the Covenant⁴⁹ system. When the war broke out between China and Japan in 1937, he claims that most members sympathised with China and wanted to help, but that those with the power to help were hindered because they feared Japanese retaliation.⁵⁰ Applying Walters' book in research is problematic, but, as Haug notices, it is difficult to avoid in the lack of alternatives.⁵¹

The literature on the League has often tended to focus on its shortcomings in preventing another war. In recent years, scholars have challenged this notion and argued that the interwar era and the League have to be studied on their own, and not only as explanations for the Second World War. The historian Zara Steiner's book *The Lights that failed* is one good example, even though her focus lies on the interwar period in general and not the League of Nations as such. Her tale of the era is one of post-war reconstruction after the Paris peace settlement, and the new international order brought forward by the European powers by

⁴⁶ Ibid.: 434-435

⁴⁷ Henig (2010): 220; Haug (2012): 15-17

⁴⁸ Walters (1952): 466-467

⁴⁹ The Covenant was the constitution of the League of Nations, drafted in 1919. For more information, please read Henig (2010): 25-53

⁵⁰ Walters (1952): 735

⁵¹ Haug (2012): 16

the late 1920s.⁵² She argues that the collapse of the peace settlement after the First World war was not inevitable, but due to the persistence and severity of the Great Depression which in turn fostered large unemployment rates and socio-political division.⁵³ She has been challenged by later historians, like Adam Tooze who emphasized the role of the United States and their mismanagement in international affairs in the explanation of the Second World War.⁵⁴ Still, Steiner has been important as a framework for later research on the League of Nations.⁵⁵

Henig provides a different approach where she argues that the League's general ineffectiveness mainly originated in fundamental disagreements about the organisations' role.⁵⁶ At the same time, she points out the benefits of the League experience to the creation of the United Nations after the Second World War.⁵⁷ In her article *Back to the League of Nations*, Susan Pedersen similarly dismisses the "rise and fall"-tale of the League and analyses the organisation's significance instead.⁵⁸ She claims that the very mechanisms that made the League effective in some areas (protection of minorities and epidemics control), were factors that hindered disarmament negotiations.⁵⁹ While Walters attributed the League's failures in Manchuria and Abyssinia to the reluctance of the great powers, Pedersen and others have argued the fault to be the League's mechanisms. For instance, she claims that the publicity of the League might have hindered its peacekeeping efforts, because public opinion might have affected what the delegates could and could not say, but not necessarily what they did.⁶⁰ Pedersen mainly mentions the double-edged sword of publicity in relation to the great powers', but I want to examine this further in regards to the Norwegian position. Could it be that public opinion in Norway influenced the delegates to give the impression of promoting idealism, but were in reality most concerned with Norwegian interests?

Norway's role in the Manchurian Crisis has been examined by some scholars, but the conflict's aftermath and the development towards the start of the second Sino-Japanese war is remarkably unstudied. An old but important book on the matter is *The Scandinavian states*

⁵² McKercher, B. J. C. (2007). "Review: Steiner, Z. (2005). *The Lights that Failed: European International History, 1919-1933*". In: *International Journal*, 62 (3): 723-725. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40184874> [Read 13.11.2016]

⁵³ McKercher, B. J. C. (2007): 723-725.

⁵⁴ Tooze, A. (2014): 17-30

⁵⁵ Haug (2012): 17

⁵⁶ Henig (2010): 1-24

⁵⁷ Ibid.: 174-187

⁵⁸ Pedersen, S. (2007). "Back to the League of Nations". In: *The American Historical Review*, ed. 112(4): 1091-1117. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40008445> [Read 13.11.2016]

⁵⁹ Ibid.: 1091-1117

⁶⁰ Ibid.: 1091-1117

and the League of Nations, written in 1939 by the historian Samuel Shepard Jones. It is special because it provides the most extensive literature on the Scandinavian perspective, but Jones tends to view the policies of the states in an overly favourable manner.⁶¹ Jones mentions the Norwegian role since it was the only Scandinavian member of the Council at the time.⁶² He claimed that Norway and the other Scandinavian states saw Japanese actions as a threat to the whole international legal order, and generally urged the greater powers to act in accordance with the obligations of the Covenant.⁶³ The notion that Norway supported League action against Japan has been accepted by most historians studying Norwegian foreign policy.⁶⁴ It has, however, been challenged by historian Hans-Per Hem. In his Candidatus philologiae thesis, *Norge, Folkeforbundet og Manchuria-konflikten* from 1987, he claims that Norway changed position several times during the League proceedings.⁶⁵ At the beginning of the conflict, he argues that the Norwegian delegation was passive and cautious at the Council in an attempt to safeguard Norwegian interests in East Asia.⁶⁶ Then in 1932, Hem claims that they encouraged the League to enforce sanctions against Japan, because the Norwegian effort at the Council had been criticised by Norwegian and Swedish newspapers.⁶⁷ In 1933, he argues that Norway went back to the passive and cautious approach from earlier, because they feared that an active position could endanger their economic interests in East Asia.⁶⁸

In his study of Norwegian foreign policy at the League of Nations, Haug examines Norway's role in the Manchurian Crisis briefly, and challenges the claim that Norway changed position during the League proceedings.⁶⁹ According to Haug, the Norwegian policy at the Council was consistently trying to avoid getting involved.⁷⁰ The reason that Norway promoted the use of sanctions against Japan in 1932 was not criticism from the press, but the fact that other smaller states did it first. Against this backdrop, Haug argues that it would have been more surprising if the Norwegians did not encourage a more active approach.⁷¹ He

⁶¹ As Haug claims, Jones portrays the Scandinavian states' policies in a highly idealistic manner. Haug (2012): 18

⁶² Jones (1939): 256-258

⁶³ *Ibid.*: 256-258

⁶⁴ See Fure (1996): 192-195 and Riste (2005, 2001): 134-135

⁶⁵ Hem (1987): 65

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*: 65-75

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*: 65-68

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*: 75-82

⁶⁹ Haug: (2012): 399-403

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*: 403

⁷¹ *Ibid.*: 401-402

concludes that it was not in Norway's interest that the League implemented a more active stance against Japan.⁷²

Both Haug and Hem provides interesting findings about Norwegian foreign policy regarding the League of Nations and the Manchurian Crisis, but they largely neglect sources from the Norwegian foreign service stations and official representatives in East Asia. The book *Towards Friendship – The relationship between Norway and Japan, 1905-2005*, by the historian Eldrid I. Mageli, draws on some of Hem's argumentation, but also implements sources from the foreign service stations. In the proceedings of the League, Walters claims that large segments of the foreign communities in East Asia sympathised with Japan in the Manchurian Crisis.⁷³ Mageli argues that the same pro-Japanese sentiment was present among the Norwegian community, and that both diplomatic and consular officials in East Asia discouraged their superiors from taking an active stance against Japan.⁷⁴ In an article from 2010, she furthers the findings of the book, and questions Norway's role as a peace-nation during the Manchurian Crisis. Mageli claims that the foreign ministry was relatively indifferent to the events unfolding in East Asia, unless these influenced Norwegian economic and political interests.⁷⁵ She also argues that Norwegian officials favoured Japan, because they saw it as a civilised state and an important commercial partner.⁷⁶

Both Hem, Haug and Mageli illuminates many interesting issues about Norway's foreign policy in East Asia, many of which I will address in this thesis. The main difference between this thesis and previous research is that, I analyse a larger stretch of time than just the Manchurian Crisis. Furthermore, my approach will broaden Hem and Haug's research by examining the sources from Norwegian foreign service stations. Mageli made use of these sources, but does not explore and discuss the material to the fullest since her book is a short overview. Because of this, her interesting findings come across as isolated events. In this thesis I will therefore discuss existing research and new material within the larger context of Norwegian Foreign Policy. Drawing inspiration from Haug's PhD Thesis, I will also discuss his theory about Norwegian small state realism at the League of Nations in regard to Norwegian actions in the Sino-Japanese conflict.

⁷² Ibid.: 403

⁷³ Walters (1952): 469-470

⁷⁴ Mageli (2006): 25-33

⁷⁵ Mageli (2010): 17-18

⁷⁶ Ibid.: 17-18

1.3. Research questions and terminology

The main research question for this thesis is “*What were Norway’s actions in the Sino-Japanese conflict 1931-1938, how was the dispute viewed by different foreign policy-makers, and what does it signify in regard to the history of Norwegian foreign policy?*”. Since the full period has not been studied comprehensively before, this thesis will determine the nature of Norwegian foreign policy regarding the Sino-Japanese conflict, but also ask what considerations the Norwegian position prioritized. The answers to these questions are significant, since they convey what was deemed the most important in Norwegian foreign policy-making, and how diplomatic and consular officials abroad influenced these decisions. These issues are also important today, because it is related to contemporary Norwegian foreign policy in East Asia and, ultimately, Norway’s role in international politics. Furthermore, it can provide insight into the political mind-set of smaller states in international relations.

1.3.1. Clarification of terms

In his book *Norsk utanrikspolitikk etter 1814*, Roald Berg explains that “foreign policy” is the part of governance that deals with the state’s relationship to other states.⁷⁷ This task comprises of both securing the interests of the state, and protect the state’s citizens in regard to foreign governments and international or intergovernmental organisations, like the United Nations, the European Union and so forth.⁷⁸ Riste has pointed to a difference between the Norwegian and English term for foreign policy.⁷⁹ In English, the term “foreign policy” means a course of action adopted and pursued by a government, while “foreign relations” signifies the various modes in which one country or state, is brought into contact with another by political and commercial interests. The Norwegian term “utenrikspolitikk”, however, usually covers the meanings of both the English terms.⁸⁰ This thesis will deploy the usual English understanding of 'foreign policy', but it is an important notion to keep in mind in order not to misunderstand the Norwegian literature.

This thesis will study Norway’s actions in the Sino-Japanese conflict, but what does the term “Norway” signify? The simple answer is that it means the Norwegian government. However, during the interwar period Norway experienced profound political and social

⁷⁷ Berg (2016): 7

⁷⁸ Ibid.: 7

⁷⁹ Riste (2005, 2001): 9

⁸⁰ Ibid.: 9

disunity, which Riste claims was only partially solved before the Second World War. The entire interwar period was characterised by rapidly changing minority governments, which increased the Norwegian parliament's influence on the formation and management of Norwegian foreign policy.⁸¹ In this kind of environment, is it even possible to talk about a continuous Norwegian position regarding the Sino-Japanese conflict? Despite changing governments, Haug claims that Norwegian foreign policy at the League was decided by a small, selective elite.⁸² As this thesis will show, Norway's position in the conflict largely paralleled its League policy of small state realism. Furthermore, I will argue that Norway's position is highly consistent. The course of Norwegian foreign policy was not radically changed by the swiftly changing governments or the parliament taking the lead. Instead, the development seems to have happened over time due to the changing international environment. This is also consistent with Riste's theory of the continuity of Norwegian foreign policy within a changing international framework.

When this thesis applies the term "the Sino-Japanese conflict", it refers to the period from the Manchurian Crisis in 1931 until the end of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1945. This closely follows the official Chinese historical narrative, referred to by the political scientist Zheng Wang, where the Manchurian Crisis is seen as the beginning of fourteen years of Japanese occupation.⁸³ The term is not meant to imply that there was one continuous conflict between China and Japan from 1931 until 1938.⁸⁴ The term is used as a means to generalize the complex development from the Manchurian Crisis until the war starts. To clarify, the geographical entity called Manchuria constitutes the northernmost provinces of today's China: Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang and parts of Inner Mongolia.⁸⁵ After 1905, Japan gained a sphere of influence in Southern Manchuria due to their victory over Russia. Through a semi-governmental railway company, they gained control of the railway network and towns nearby. After military detachments had been stationed in the area, Japan held direct control of

⁸¹ From the summer of 1920 until the spring of 1935, Norway had 9 cabinets where none lasted longer than 2 years. Ibid.: 111-114

⁸² Haug (2012): 434-435

⁸³ Wang (2012): 56

⁸⁴ For instance, there was an important cease-fire agreement between the two countries between the Manchurian Crisis 1931-1933 and the start of the war in 1937. Nish, I. (December 1990). "An Overview of Relations between China and Japan, 1895-1945". In: *The China Quarterly*, no. 124 (601-623). Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/654639> [Read 13.11.2016]

⁸⁵ *Oxford Dictionaries* "Manchuria" [Internet] Available at: http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/Manchuria#m_en_gb0496460 [Read 13.11.2016]

Southern Manchuria through a formal colonial apparatus.⁸⁶ The term “Manchuria” is controversial in itself, because it signifies earlier Chinese rulers’ and foreign attempts at portraying this region as different from the rest of China in order to claim it for themselves.⁸⁷ Keeping that in mind, this thesis will still make use of the term since it was common when referring to the geographical area at the time.

In this thesis, I use the system of transliteration from Mandarin Chinese known as “hanyu pinyin” (Chinese phonetics). The exceptions will be when the person or place in question is better known by its English transliteration than the Chinese counterpart.⁸⁸ Before the Chinese Communist Party developed a method for writing their language with the Latin alphabet, a lot of Chinese names and places had a version that only foreigners used which differed from the original Chinese term in both spelling and pronunciation.⁸⁹ Chiang Kai-Shek is fairly well known in the Western world as a leader of the Nationalist Party, Kuomintang. In Mandarin Chinese, however, he was called Jiang Jieshi and was the leader of the Guomindang. Whenever I use the old, foreign term for a Chinese person or place, I will provide the contemporary Chinese term in the footnotes. I will abbreviate the “Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs” as the “NMFA” in the footnotes as well.

1.3.2. Delimitation of time

The scarce historical research about this topic has mainly concerned itself with Norway’s position during the Manchurian Crisis. In order to study Norwegian foreign policy regarding the Sino-Japanese conflict at greater length, I have decided to examine the period from the Manchurian Crisis started on 18th of September 1931, and as far as 1938 when the second Sino-Japanese War had begun. This thesis will only deal with the first two years of the war (1937-1938). Primarily, this is because the beginning was the most relevant and interesting with regards to the involvement of Norway and the League of Nations. Norway returned to unconditional neutrality in 1938, and the League had exhausted all options of collective action in the conflict by that point. Additionally, the Allied powers decided on a 'Europe First' strategy as soon as the Second World War started in 1939.⁹⁰ Germany invaded Norway in April 1940. During the German occupation of Norway from April 1940 to May 1945, the

⁸⁶ Mageli, E. (2010): 23; Young, L. (1998). *Japan’s Total Empire. Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism*. Berkeley, University of California Press: 3-4

⁸⁷ Westad, O. A. (2012). *Restless Empire, China and the World Since 1750*. London, The Bodley Head: 117-118

⁸⁸ Such as the Mukden-incident, which happened in the city of Mukden, which is known as Shenyang today.

⁸⁹ This part draws heavily on Westad (2012): ix

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*: 267

Norwegian government sought refuge in Britain.⁹¹ The aim of their foreign policy was naturally to gain Norwegian sovereignty back, and being situated in London made it difficult to keep in contact with the overseas foreign service stations.⁹² It would have been possible to extend the time frame of this thesis until 1945, since one of the Norwegian foreign service stations in China survived the war.⁹³ Ultimately, however, I decided not to do so because of the lack of space.

1.4. The primary sources

Most of the source material for this thesis is from the Norwegian National Archives (Riksarkivet) in Oslo. The National Archives provides electronic lists of contents of both archives I have focused my research upon, which has helped a great deal towards finding and collecting the relevant sources.⁹⁴

The first archive is called “Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina- RA/S-2610”. This archive is from the Norwegian legation between 1920 and 1950, which means that the documents are both from when it was situated in Beijing and Shanghai. The archive consists of 12 shelf meters, and was in principle separated from the archive of General Consulate when both foreign service stations were in Shanghai.⁹⁵ This archive also contains significant material from the Norwegian legation in Tokyo, which I have made use of in this thesis. I examined the archive from the General Consulate in Shanghai as well, but did not find anything relevant that could not already be found at the archive of the Norwegian legation. Most of the material I have gathered from this archives consists of reports, letters and telegrams between the Norwegian legation in Tokyo, the General Consulate in Shanghai, the Norwegian delegation to the League of Nations and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Often, a report written at the legation in Tokyo was sent to both the General Consulate and the Foreign Ministry, and then the latter forwarded the report to the Norwegian delegation in Genève. Secondly, this thesis has used material from the archive named

⁹¹ Riste (2005, 2001): 140-182

⁹² Neumann; Leira (2005): 213-217

⁹³ For more information, please read Tepstad, J. (2015). *Norwegian Extraterritoriality in China. A study of how and why Norway abolished its extraterritoriality in China* [master thesis]. Bergen, University of Bergen: 103-104.

⁹⁴ In accordance with the source criticism in the book *Å gripe fortida* by Astri Andresen, Sissel Rosland, Teemu Ryymin and Svein A. Skålevåg, I have chosen to analyse the archives that I found to be the most relevant to my research questions. Andresen, A; Rosland, S; Ryymin, T.; Skålevåg, S. A. (2012). *Å gripe fortida. Innføring i historisk forståing og metode*. Oslo, Det Norske Samlaget: 45

⁹⁵ The Norwegian legation became an embassy in 1943. Arkivportalen. "Utenriksstasjonene, Den norske legasjon i Kina". Available at: <http://www.arkivportalen.no/side/arkiv/detaljer?arkivId=no-a1450-01000001365910>

“Utenriksdepartementet, Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet – RA/S-6418”. It consists of 2 shelf meters of material from the Norwegian delegation to the League of Nations between 1920 and 1939. The source material I have used from this archive also consists of reports, telegrams and letters between the delegation in Genève, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Oslo, the General Consulate in Shanghai and the legation in Tokyo.

In addition to the National Archives, I have used material from the Archives of the Norwegian parliament (Stortingsarkivet). I have studied the national budgets of Norway and the parliamentary debates (Stortingsforhandlingene), which are digitally available to the public. Additionally, I have examined the reports from closed meetings at the Norwegian parliament. This material is available to the public, and was stored on a CD by the Archives of the National Parliament in 2000. This thesis also contains statistics provided by the *Statistical Yearbook of Norway*, edition 1931 and 1938. These are electronically available through the home page of Statistics Norway (Statistisk sentralbyrå).

Since this thesis focus on Norwegian foreign policy and foreign services, I have not made use of the personal archive of Nicolai Aall, general consul in Shanghai, at the Norwegian National Library. This is because I find it unlikely that this archive would provide additional relevant information, which is not revealed in the official archives from the Norwegian foreign services. There is also an archive called “Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden i Tokyo, Japan - RA/S-2416”, which I have not used since it only contains material from the time after the research period of this thesis (1940-1955). In accordance with the historian Ludmilla Jordanova’s guidelines on source criticism in *History in Practice*, I have identified the relevant sources, read them critically and accurately, evaluated them and integrated the findings into this thesis.⁹⁶

1.5. The Norwegian Foreign Services in East-Asia

In the interwar era, it was not common for Norway to have embassies or ambassadors. Instead the diplomatic stations were called legations, and were headed by a minister serving as Norway’s most important diplomatic representative in foreign countries. The word “sendemann” (envoy) was also used interchangeably with “minister” before 1943. In addition

⁹⁶ Jordanova, L. (2006). *History in Practice*, 2nd ed. London, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc: 159-160. In this thesis, I have only modified the sources in two regards. I have changed the contemporary writing of the letter “ø” to its modern form “o”. Additionally, I have replaced the underlining of any word in the original source with italics, in accordance with the historical journal *Historisk Tidsskrift*’s guidelines for references. Fulsås, N. (edit.) (2016). *Historisk Tidsskrift*, 95 (1): 201-202. Available at: https://www.idunn.no/file/pdf/66847385/ht_2016_01_pdf.pdf [Read 13.11.2016].

to the minister, Norway had salaried and unsalaried consuls all over the world, which served as non-diplomatic representatives primarily tending to commercial and consular matters.⁹⁷ The period between the two world wars represented an era of change for the Norwegian Foreign Services from so-called “old diplomacy” to “new diplomacy”. Neumann and Leira argues that this meant a general shift towards professionalisation and standardisation.⁹⁸ Accordingly, the leadership at Norwegian legations were now supposed to be diplomats rather than consuls. The reorganisation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1922 also valued enhancing the Norwegian representation overseas, as long as it did not happen at the expense of the legations in Europe.⁹⁹ According to the national budgets from 1919 to 1937, there were primarily three places in Asia and the Pacific that had Norwegian representation: Australia, India and China/Japan. Throughout the period, the Foreign Ministry had a salaried minister to China/Japan and salaried general consul in China, while Australia only had one general consul and India had an unsalaried one.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the minister to China and Japan was the only Norwegian diplomatic representative in Asia at the time.

1.5.1. Norway’s representatives and foreign service stations in East Asia

From 1920 until 1941, the Norwegian foreign ministry operated with a joint minister position to China and Japan.¹⁰¹ This system of dual accreditation meant that he served as national representative to China in addition to Japan where he resided.¹⁰² Between 1931 and 1935, this position was occupied by Ludvig C. M. Aubert. Within the Norwegian state administration, it was tradition for officials to have a background in law (*candidatus juris*).¹⁰³ This was the case with Aubert too, who had been working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since the dissolution of the union with Sweden in 1905. After having been general consul of Montreal

⁹⁷ Neumann; Leira (2005): 542-545

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*: 71-74

⁹⁹ Neumann and Leira (2005): 71-74

¹⁰⁰ This is based on Norway’s national budgets 1919-1937. *Stortingsarkivene*. *Indst. S. LXIII*. (1919): 143-145; *Indst. S. LXXVI*. (1920): 142-144; *Indst. S. LXXV*. (1921): 153-156; *Innst. S. LXXVIII*. (1922): 147-148; *Innst. S. LXXVIII*. (1923): 144-146; *Innst. S. C.* (1924): 128-130; *Innst. S. C.* (1925): 59-62; *Innst. S. C.* (1926): 65-68; *Budgett-innst. S. III B.* (1927): 75-78; *Budgett-innst. S. III B.* (1928): 85-89; *Budgett-innst. S. Nr. 128 B.* (1929): 83-86; *Budgett-innst. S. III B.* (1930): 87-90; *Budgett-innst. III B.* (1931): 72-75; *Budgett-innst. III B.* (1932): 92-96; *Budgett-innst. III B.* (1933): 71-74; *Budgett-innst. S. III B.* (1934): 94-98; *Budgett-innst. III A.* (1935): 95-96; *Budgett-innst. III B.* (1936): 95-96.

¹⁰¹ Mageli (2006): 25-33

¹⁰² Neumann, I. B. & Leira, H. (2005): 542, 545. The legation in Tokyo was established in 1931, but there had been a legation in Beijing since 1919. It merged with the General Consulate in Shanghai when the minister moved to Tokyo, however, and left the general consul Nicolai Aall as *charge d’affaires* of the Norwegian legation/General Consulate in Shanghai. Mageli (2006): 28, 33

¹⁰³ Omang (1954): 95-96

for 12 years, Aubert got promoted to the position as minister in Tokyo.¹⁰⁴ When he left East Asia in 1935, the position as joint minister was handed over to Finn Koren. With a background in law, he was from the same generation of foreign ministry officials as Aubert. Having previously served as general consul in the Japanese city of Kobe, Koren would function as joint minister to China and Japan until the Second World War started.¹⁰⁵

To travel in the 1930s was a time consuming undertaking, which meant that the joint minister in Tokyo only visited China occasionally.¹⁰⁶ Thus, the system of joint minister was a clear limitation of Norwegian diplomatic services in China, and lasted until 1942 when diplomatic relations with Japan were discontinued because of the war.¹⁰⁷

The Norwegian foreign ministry also had consuls in several cities, but these were unsalaried positions usually occupied by non-Norwegian nationals.¹⁰⁸ The exception was the general consul in Shanghai, Nicolai Aall. Even though many of his counterparts and supervisors moved and were replaced, he stayed in China from 1920 until after the Second World War.¹⁰⁹ The Norwegian poet, Nordahl Grieg, mentions Aall in a travelogue from visiting a famous bar in Shanghai, and remarks the man as being “one of the very few managing to keep his cool during all the commotion out here”.¹¹⁰ It is, however, unknown whether Grieg was referring to the civil war or the circumstances at the bar. With a background in Law, Aall made his career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to my sources, he was regarded suitable as a consul but not for a diplomatic position. When the minister in Tokyo asked for a leave of absence, he mentioned a concern on whether Aall could fill his position or not.¹¹¹ This was not because of any unfavourable personal trait on

¹⁰⁴ Steenstrup, B. (03.07.2016, 1948). “Ludvig Cæsar Martin Aubert”. In: *Hvem er Hvem?* ed. 5. Available at: <http://runeberg.org/hvemerhvem/1948/0030.html> [Read 13.11.2016]

¹⁰⁵ Høibo, G. J. (1941). “Finn Koren”. In: *Slekten Koren: utarbeidet på grunnlag av Prost L. St. Korens familieopptegnelser og riksarkivar Kristian Korens stamtavle av 1898*: 122. Available at: <http://www.nb.no/nbsok/nb/1cdd62327b5c22bf32c24f5b2bc95233.nbdigital?lang=no#121> [Read 13.11.2016]; Mageli (2006): 33

¹⁰⁶ The journey between Tokyo and Beijing took about 5-10 days. Mageli (2006): 33

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.: 33, 46

¹⁰⁸ In addition to the general consulate in Shanghai, Norway had unsalaried consuls in the Chinese cities: Xiamen, Guangzhou, Changsha, Yantai, Wuhan, Yingkou, Shantou and Tianjin in 1931. Stortingsarkivene. Innst. S. C. (1925): 59-62; Innst. S. C. (1926): 65-68; Budgett-innst. S. III B. (1927): 75-78; Budgett-innst. S. III B. (1928): 85-89; Unknown author to the Brazilian legation in Beijing (18.08.1931). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0020

¹⁰⁹ Steenstrup, B. (03.07.2016, 1973). “Nicolai Aall”. In: *Hvem er Hvem?* ed. 11. Available at: <http://runeberg.org/hvemerhvem/1973/0614.html> [Read 13.11.2016]

¹¹⁰ “[...] nordmannen Nicolai Aall, en av de meget faa som har klart at holde hodet rolig under al ophisselsen herute”. Grieg, N. (1927). *Kinesiske Dage*. Oslo, Gyldendal: 78. Available at:

<http://www.nb.no/nbsok/nb/42ff066686acce05eec2f5d791c667ee?index=5#77> [Read 13.11.2016]

¹¹¹ Lauritz Grønvold to the NMFA (24.02.1925). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0020.

Aall's part, but due to him being a businessman which meant he could not legally hold the title of charge d'affaires in Japan. Since Aall's company competed with other Norwegian businesses in China and Japan, another concern was that they might not look fondly upon further incorporating him into the work of the official legation.¹¹² According to Mageli, however, Aall still gained the title of charge d'affaires at the legation in China, when the minister moved to the new legation in Tokyo in 1931.¹¹³

1.5.2. Norwegian interests in China and Japan

Originally, the most important prospects for Norwegians coming to China had been shipping, missionary work and well-paid positions in the Chinese custom services. The Sinologist Erling von Mende claims that both shipping and missionary work in China became economically, politically and religiously important to Norway after the 1890s.¹¹⁴ In their book about Norwegians in Shanghai the last 150 years, the authors Seeberg and Filseth emphasize shipping in particular as a crucial component in the development of the Sino-Norwegian relationship.¹¹⁵ Shipping and shipbuilding were also some of the few areas where Norway and Japan stood on relatively equal footing. The Norwegian merchant fleet increased by 40 % between 1929 and 1939, which meant it became the fourth largest in the world after Britain, the US and Japan.¹¹⁶ The Japanese shipping boom of the 1920s and 30s had made them one of Norway's most serious rivals in the Far East.¹¹⁷ Still, Norwegian ships frequently arrived in Japanese harbours during the 1930s. In fact, Mageli claims that, between 1907 and the Second World War, Norway held the position as the fourth or fifth most important shipping nation in Japanese waters, after Japan, Great Britain, USA and occasionally Germany.¹¹⁸ Thus, it is clear that shipping represented the most important Norwegian economic interest in China. The economist Charles F. Remer estimated that Norwegian investments in China were close

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Mageli (2006): 33

¹¹⁴ Mende, E. von (1972). "Norges Økonomiske Interesser i Kina i det 19. Århundre og Unionsregjeringens Holdning til Disse". In: Norge – Kina, Kompendium fra seminar våren og høsten 1972. Oslo, University of Oslo: 1

¹¹⁵ Seeberg, S.; Filseth, G. (2000). I Yangzidragens Rike, Nordmenn I Shanghai gjennom 150 år. Oslo, Chr. Schibsteds Forlag A/S: 15, 17, 25. The popular history book was financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but sparked some controversy since two of the initial authors withdrew from the project because of a disagreement regarding the use of primary sources. Tepstad (2015): 15

¹¹⁶ Brautaset, C.; Tenold, S. (2008). "Globalisation and Norwegian Shipping Policy, 1850-2000" in *Business History*, ed. 50(5): 568. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00076790802245949> [Read 13.11.2016]; Riste (2005, 2001): 128

¹¹⁷ In: Mageli (2006): 91

¹¹⁸ Ibid.: 79-91

to 500,000 US dollars in 1931.¹¹⁹ In comparison, he claims that total foreign investments in China amounted to just over 3 billion USD in 1931.¹²⁰

As shown in the graph below, the total export value of Norwegian exports to a selection of countries from 1913 to 1937 suggest that the trade of goods with Japan became more important than the one with China.¹²¹ The export value of goods to Japan were slightly lower than the one to China from 1913 to 1929. In the 1930s, however, the export value of goods to Japan gradually increased while the exports to China decreased to less than half the value of 1925. It is important to note that the 1920s was a period of economic decline in Norway, and improved only after 1933.¹²² The export value of goods to Japan reached a low point in 1929 and 1931, but from then on there is a general increase until the beginning of the Second World War. In 1935, the export of goods to Japan had in fact increased to an almost five times higher value than in 1931, which amounted to 3.28 % of Norway's total export value that year. According to my sources, the trade balance with both countries was completely in Norway's favour making the import values of goods close to irrelevant.¹²³ The main import articles from China was tea and silk, but as general consul Aall put it in 1934: "Chinese imports to Norway are of very small significance".¹²⁴ The imports from Japan were modest throughout the period as well, and mainly comprised of manufactured textiles, fodder, manufactured tallow, oil and rubber.¹²⁵

¹¹⁹ Remer, C. F. (1933). *Foreign Investments in China*. New York, The MacMillan Company: 663

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*: 58

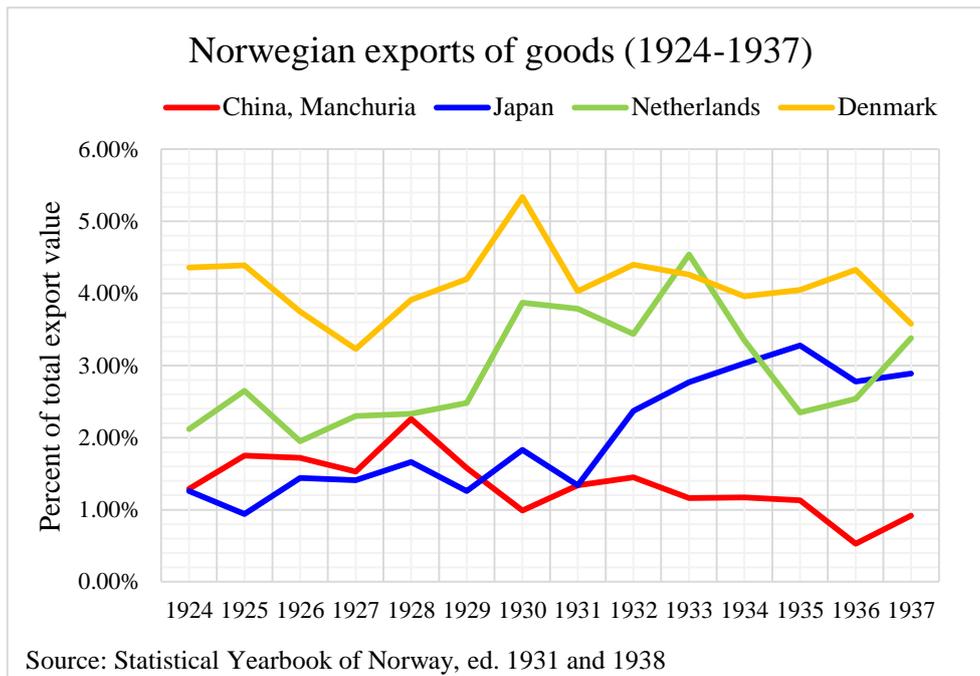
¹²¹ Mageli assess the trade balance too, but only briefly. Mageli (2006): 29

¹²² Furre, B. (2000): 39

¹²³ *Statistical Yearbook of Norway*, ed. 1931: 106; *Statistical Yearbook of Norway*, ed. 1938: 129; Stortingsarkivet, Møte for lukkede dører, Stortinget 1925-1939. 82. ordentlige Storting 1933 (29.06.1933): 153-184; Stortingsarkivet, Møte for lukkede dører, Stortinget 1925-1939. 83. ordentlige Storting 1934 (05.03.1934): 27-28

¹²⁴ My translation, the original quote reads: "Chinas eksport til Norge, er av meget liten betydning". Nicolai Aall to the NMFA (March/April 1932), Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0033.

¹²⁵ I have not been able to find the specific export articles, but only the general commodity groups as they were recorded in the *Statistical Yearbook of Norway*, ed. 1931; *Statistical Yearbook of Norway*, ed. 1938.



The total export value of goods from Norway to China and Japan should not be overestimated, however. Between 1930 and 1937, the export to China represented only 0.53-1.45 % of Norway's the total export value of goods. During the same time, the exports value to Japan amounted to 1.34 % at its lowest and 3.28 % at its highest. The export value of goods to China stayed low throughout the 1930s, while the one to Japan increased overall. In comparison, Norway's most important market for goods export was Great Britain with a total of 28.07 % in 1931 and 25.14 % in 1937. Thus, the exports of goods to Japan and China was not that important to Norway in general.

The value of exports to Japan is, however, comparable to the exports to other European countries. The graph indicates that the export of goods to Japan was worth more than the one to the Netherlands in 1935. When the second Sino-Japanese War started in 1937, the exports to Japan were not far off from the total export values of goods to Denmark and Netherlands, and far more valuable than the one to China. The fact that the total export value to Japan is comparable to the one to the Netherlands is interesting, because the former had to be transported a far greater distance. This means that the value of the exports to Japan were sufficient to make the increased transportation costs worthwhile.

The total export value of goods to China remained lower than the one to Japan throughout the 1930s. Thus, official trade statistics suggest that Japan was worth more than China as a market for the Norwegian trade of goods 1931-1937. Furthermore, the statistics provided above does not include the export of services (shipping in particular), which

probably was Norway's most important export to China and Japan. To Norway, China's significance lay in its possibly vast market for Norwegian products. Japan, on the other hand, had become a great power and competitor that continuously challenged Norway in several key areas.¹²⁶ The trade in East Asia might not have been of great importance to Norway in general, but it was quite significant to some industries. In shipping and paper exports, Norway was at the fore in East Asia, competing with other Scandinavian countries, Japan, Great Britain, the US and Germany. For instance, Mageli claims that the export of synthetic silk to Japan in 1934 saved at least one Norwegian company from the recession.¹²⁷

1.6. Thesis structure

The main objectives of this thesis is to analyse Norway's actions in the Sino-Japanese conflict 1931-1938, study how the dispute was viewed by different foreign policy-makers, and discuss its significance in relation to the history of Norwegian foreign policy. In order to answer the research questions, this thesis is divided into five chapters. This first chapter has introduced the research topic and questions, positioned them within the historiography and determined the method and framework for the rest of this thesis. In the following, the Sino-Japanese conflict is divided into three research chapters in chronological order. Each of these chapters will show the perspectives in both Genève and East Asia (and Oslo if applicable), in order to determine how the Sino-Japanese conflict was seen by different Norwegian foreign policy-makers.

In chapter 2, I examine Norwegian actions during the Manchurian Crisis from 1931 until 1933. I will argue that Norway continuously tried to avoid getting involved, and held a low profile during the proceedings of the League. Norwegian foreign policy were decided based on the country's economic interests in East Asia and status seeking to become a perceived peace-nation. Furthermore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs relied on the first hand information of the Norwegian diplomatic and consular representatives in East Asia, whose reports were often coloured by the representatives' opinion of the conflict and the two countries involved.

The third chapter analyses Norwegian actions during the Sino-Japanese ceasefire from 1933 until 1937. Since the Manchurian Crisis ended with the League members condemning Japan, I argue that the following years were characterized by Norway attempting to restore the

¹²⁶ Mageli mentions shipping, whaling, ship-building and the paper industry in particular. Mageli (2006): 53-54, 88-92, 115-123

¹²⁷ Ibid.: 36-37

relationship in order to safeguard and develop its interests in East Asia. Despite Norwegian proclamations of altruist motivations, it was trade, shipping and industry interests that really mattered to the foreign policy-makers. At the same time, they were generally careful to comply with the League and the international community's expectations, because a deviate foreign policy course could potentially hinder Norway's status seeking ambitions.

Chapter 4 deals with Norway's actions in 1937 and 1938 regarding the second Sino-Japanese war. I will argue that Norwegian foreign policy still revolved around not getting involved, but now it was mainly motivated by the emerging need for national security. Along with other smaller members, Norway tried to hinder the League's efforts on China's behalf, because they worried that it could pull the country into a war between the great powers. Meanwhile, two very different images of the war were communicated to the Ministry from the foreign service stations in East Asia. From his viewpoint in Shanghai, general consul Aall was eager to dismiss the Chinese descriptions of Japanese warfare. The reports from Tokyo, on the other hand, emphasized the country's symptoms of militaristic dictatorship.

The fifth and final chapter of this thesis will provide my conclusion based on the research findings, and discuss Norway's position regarding the Sino-Japanese conflict within the larger history of Norwegian foreign policy.

Chapter 2: The Manchurian Crisis 1931-1933

On the 18th of September 1931, a bomb explosion in Northern China initiated a larger crisis that would become the first of the League's failures at peacekeeping.¹²⁸ The Chinese appeal to the League and to the United States¹²⁹ made the Manchurian Crisis an international issue.¹³⁰ By bringing the matter to the League, the conflict became an issue for Norwegian foreign policy-makers as well, and even more so since Norway was at the centre of proceedings as a non-permanent member of the Council.¹³¹ According to Haug, it was a mystery that Norway agreed to a seat at the Council at all, since it departed from the usual Norwegian notion of staying outside of power politics in international affairs.¹³² This chapter will examine the onset of the conflict first, by analysing Norway's actions during the proceedings, and the perspective in East Asia provided by numerous reports by Nicolai Aall and Ludvig Aubert. Then, I will discuss my findings in relation to the League's final report and verdict of the Manchurian Crisis, which led to the Japanese withdrawal as a member of the League. In the end, this chapter adds the discussions in the Norwegian parliament which dealt with the conflict briefly in 1932 and 1933. As this chapter will show, Norwegian foreign policy in the Manchurian Crisis is crucial to the understanding of Norway's actions in the Sino-Japanese conflict in general, because it lay the foundation for the rest of the period.

2.1. The Mukden Incident

The incident that triggered the conflict happened in the city of Mukden in Manchuria.¹³³ At the time, it was difficult to ascertain who had initiated the conflict, because both China and Japan blamed each other.¹³⁴ According to Steiner, the matter received a confused response at the League of Nations at first, mainly because the dispute was regarded as very remote to an

¹²⁸ Steiner, Z. (2005). *The Lights that failed: European International History 1919-1933*. Oxford, Oxford University Press: 707

¹²⁹ The United States was not a member of the League of Nations. As one of the signatories of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, however, it had agreed to renounce war as an instrument of national policy, and to solve conflicts only through peaceful means. Henig (2010): 59-62, 105-106

¹³⁰ Steiner (2005): 720

¹³¹ Fure (1996): 192. The Council was designed to be the main engine of the League with the great power members taking the primary lead. It comprised of the permanent great power seats (Britain, France, Italy, Japan, and later Germany) and four smaller non-permanent seats. Henig (2010): 27, 43

¹³² Haug concludes that Norwegian policy-makers might have agreed just because it was their turn and that the timing seemed feasible. Haug (2012): 32

¹³³ Today's Chinese city, Shenyang, was internationally known as Mukden at the time. Burkman, T. W. (2008). *Japan and the League of Nations, Empire and World Order, 1914-1938*. Page 166. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wqrcq.12> [Read 13.11.2016].

¹³⁴ Young (1998): 57-58

organisation that was fundamentally Eurocentric in its concerns.¹³⁵ The United States, the Soviet Union and Britain were the three foreign powers most involved in East Asia, and only the latter was a member of the League. At the same time, the Netherlands and France were inclined to side with Japan, because they viewed it as the better bet in relation to their colonial interest in the region. Both Germany and Italy maintained a low profile as well showing no inclinations the one way or the other for now. Seeing that none of the great power members favoured intervention, Steiner argues that it became the responsibility of the smaller states to make the defence of China a test of the League's prestige.¹³⁶ While the discussions went on in Genève, the Japanese army occupied the city of Mukden and large parts of Manchuria. Furthermore, as retaliation against anti-Japanese protests in Shanghai, the Japanese attacked the city in January 1932. Being a cosmopolitan city with a large foreign settlement, the bombing of Shanghai got wide international attention and condemnation. The Japanese ended up leaving Shanghai after four months, but their efforts of consolidating the occupied territories in the northeast would soon result in the establishment of the Japanese-aligned puppet state, "Manchukuo".¹³⁷

2.1.1 Initial discussions at the League of Nations

A few days after the Mukden Incident, the Council of the League of Nations had their first meeting regarding the Manchurian Crisis. Japan was present as a great power and permanent member, while China had just taken the seat as non-permanent member of the Council. Both sides were called upon and agreed to withdraw their troops as soon as possible.¹³⁸

What was Norway's initial reaction to the conflict in East Asia? At first, Steiner claims there was a general sense of optimism amongst the Council members regarding the conflict.¹³⁹ The initial meetings were attended by the Norwegian representative Birger Braadland, Foreign Minister of the Farmers' Party (Bondepartiet) government. According to a report made by an unnamed member of the Norwegian delegation, Braadland supported the effort towards joint military withdrawal, but also expressed his grave concern should the

¹³⁵ Steiner (2005): 722

¹³⁶ Ibid.: 722-724

¹³⁷ Ebrey, P. B. (2010, 1996). *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*, 2nd ed. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 282. Manchukuo was also called Manzhouguo, which means the Land of the Manchus (a Chinese ethnicity). Westad (2012): 250

¹³⁸ Steiner (2005): 720

¹³⁹ Ibid.: 720

situation develop into a serious conflict between two members of the League of Nations.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, the unnamed Norwegian delegate assured the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that he was convinced there soon would be a satisfactory solution to the conflict: “[...] I hope that when we gather for a new meeting [...] we will get to congratulate both the League of Nations and the two governments in successfully finding a final solution to this matter”.¹⁴¹ The initial Norwegian reaction was based on a belief that the conflict would be temporary, and that a peaceful solution was at hand. This belief continued during the next meetings in late September, because the delegation could report that the Council had received reassuring telegrams from the Japanese government.¹⁴² In the report, the unnamed delegate admitted that the Japanese and the Chinese description of events differed somewhat from each other. Still, his report expressed a general optimism and pride that the League had acted as quickly as they did.¹⁴³

Why was there such a moderate response to the Mukden-incident in Genève initially? Steiner argues that this was because the most engaged great powers in East Asia – The United States, Britain and the Soviet Union - were preoccupied with other matters.¹⁴⁴ The Soviet Union was in no position to answer militarily, while Britain, having just left the gold standard, faced a major financial crisis. In the meantime, the United States were combating the persisting Depression, and were unprepared to pay much attention to the events in East Asia.¹⁴⁵ According to Henig, another reason for the muted response was the particular circumstances of the conflict, which came to shape the perceptions of the League members.¹⁴⁶ Even before the crisis, Japan had the right to station troops in the area to protect their enterprises, nationals and interests. Furthermore, Manchuria was not technically one of the 18 provinces of China, since it had been ruled by different independent warlords since 1911. This facilitated the Japanese portraying their role in Manchuria as maintaining order against corrupt and unlawful Chinese elements. Henig also claims that Western governments

¹⁴⁰ Unnamed Norwegian delegate to the NMFA (22.09.1931). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0003

¹⁴¹ My translation, the original quote reads: "[...] jeg haaper at naar det samles til et nytt moete [...] at vi da kan lykoenske baade folkeforbundet og de to regjeringer med at det har lykkes aa komme til en endelig loesning av spoersmaalet". Ibid.

¹⁴² Unnamed Norwegian delegate to the NMFA (25.09.1931). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0003

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Steiner (2005): 720

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.: 720

¹⁴⁶ Henig (2010): 135-137

perceived Japanese actions in Manchuria through a fundamentally racial filter.¹⁴⁷ For instance, since significant restrictions on Japanese immigration had been implemented in the United States, Henig claims that some argued it to be reasonable that Japan expanded into a country “[...] where there was a yellow race already”.¹⁴⁸

Despite the promising initial reports from the delegation, a solution was far from imminent when the Council met again in October. This time, the Council decided to adopt a resolution stating that Japan had to withdraw their troops from occupied territories before their next meeting on the 16th of November.¹⁴⁹ In a telegram to the Foreign Ministry, the Norwegian delegation explained that the negotiations had been prolonged because of the conflict’s complexity. They also confirmed their goal of staying objective, while finding a solution in accordance with the guidelines provided by the Covenant. The delegation maintained that there was no reason to believe the conflict would drag on for much longer. Braadland had supported the resolution proposal, and believed it would be implemented by both China and Japan. At the meeting, he had also expressed confidence in the desire for peace in both countries, and in the weight of the world opinion. Lastly, Braadland had underlined the importance of the cooperation with the United States, who had been allowed to participate in the Council’s proceedings regarding the Manchurian Crisis.¹⁵⁰

How did Norwegian foreign policy-makers consider the League’s proceedings and the prospect of solving the conflict? Hem claims that Braadland foresaw two possible approaches for the League.¹⁵¹ They could either continue negotiations with both parties, or take the more drastic step and act according to article 16 of the Covenant, which dealt with the economic, political and military consequences for any member defying League obligations by resorting to war.¹⁵² According to Hem, Braadland wrote that: “In my opinion, the [approach of enforcing article 16] would cause significant qualms. It would most likely lead to Japan withdrawing from the League of Nations, and provides little prospect of preventing a warlike conflict”.¹⁵³ The League of Nations’ decided to solve the Manchurian Crisis through

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.: 137-138

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.: 137-138

¹⁴⁹ Steiner (2005): 140

¹⁵⁰ The Norwegian delegation to the NMFA (24.10.1931). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0003

¹⁵¹ Hem (1987): 66

¹⁵² The Avalon Project. (December 1924, 2008). *The Covenant of the League of Nations*.

¹⁵³ My translation, the original quote, as referred by Hem, reads: “Etter min oppfatning vil [det å håndheve artikkel 16] medføre vesentlige betenkeligheter. Den vil etter all sannsynlighet føre til at Japan trekker seg ut av Folkeforbundet, og gir liten utsikt til at kunne hindre en krigersk konflikt”. Birger Braadland (1931). In: Hem (1987): 66

multilateral negotiations in the beginning, which suited the Norwegian government well. Between 1931 and the spring of 1932, Hem argues that Norway assumed a particularly cautious and passive role at the Council.¹⁵⁴ He illustrates this with a quote from an interview with the foreign minister, Braadland, at the time: “[In this matter] we have to consider Norwegian interests to avoid overextending ourselves. This would hurt both ourselves and the case. It would be best to exercise some caution. There are no benefits to causing an empty demonstration that would be misunderstood”.¹⁵⁵ According to Haug, this was an approach that suited the Norwegian government as well.¹⁵⁶

Hem claims that Norway was criticised in Norwegian and Swedish newspapers for its passive attitude at the Council during the Manchurian Crisis.¹⁵⁷ As the only Scandinavian state on the Council between 1930 and 1933, Jones argues that Braadland did not take as strong a stand as the Swedish Foreign Minister had done during the Corfu Affair¹⁵⁸ a few years earlier.¹⁵⁹ Jones admits that the two cases were not entirely similar, but claims that Braadland did not take any lead against Japan in 1931 because of the Great Powers’ attitude.¹⁶⁰ According to Steiner, undertaking forceful measures under any article of the Covenant was extremely delicate for the great powers, because they did not want to risk war with another great power.¹⁶¹ Meanwhile, both Norwegian and other Scandinavian newspapers argued that Norway’s actions should reflect its responsibilities as a small power and its obligations as a member of the League.¹⁶² In their view, Japan was overextending the concept of justified self-defence, and endangered the whole international order in the process. According to Jones, however, Braadland did not take an active stance against Japan yet, but supported the Council’s efforts to negotiate between the involved parties.¹⁶³

The situation in East Asia continued to deteriorate further in January 1932, when the Japanese army bombed Shanghai to retaliate against anti-Japanese protests there. The

¹⁵⁴ Hem, H. (1987): 67

¹⁵⁵ My translation, the original quote, as referred by Hem, reads: “Å ta litt hensyn til de norske interesser så man ikke ror seg for langt ut. Det vilde jo skade både oss selv og saken. Det er best å vise en viss forsiktighet. Det er jo til ingen nytte å lage en tom demonstrasjon som vilde bli misoppfattet”. Birger Braadland (1932). In: Hem, H. (1987): 67

¹⁵⁶ Haug (2012): 399-400

¹⁵⁷ Hem (1987): 67

¹⁵⁸ The Corfu Incident was an Italian-Greek dispute that was submitted to the League of Nations in 1923. Henig (2010): 88-93

¹⁵⁹ Jones (1939): 256

¹⁶⁰ Jones (1939): 256

¹⁶¹ Steiner (2005): 724-730, 733-734

¹⁶² Hem: 67-68

¹⁶³ Jones, S. S. (1939): 256-257

operations were conducted from the International Settlement in Shanghai, and were widely recorded by Western expatriates and journalists in the area.¹⁶⁴ It was decided to hold a Special session of the Assembly in early March, the second of its kind in the history of the League.¹⁶⁵ At this meeting, Hem claims that Braadland showed initiative to advocate the use of sanctions against Japan, and the Swedish delegate openly criticised the League for not acting sooner.¹⁶⁶ Hem argues that, in the course of two weeks, Braadland and the government had changed their stand from “considering Norwegian interests to avoid overextending”, to “take appropriate action in accordance with the Covenant”.¹⁶⁷ The government explained it as a response to the failed negotiations up until then, but Hem argues that it was the criticism from the media that made them have a change of heart.¹⁶⁸

Hem’s arguments have been challenged by Haug, who points to the fact that Braadland was not alone in advocating a more active approach.¹⁶⁹ Braadland was just one of many, who participated in a small rebellion against the lack of will to settle the conflict through a firmer approach. According to Haug, it was the Belgians that initiated the criticism, followed up by Switzerland and Czechoslovakia.¹⁷⁰ With this backdrop, he argues that it would have been even more remarkable if Braadland had not said anything.¹⁷¹ Steiner claims that the Assembly were in general more sympathetic to China’s cause than the Council.¹⁷² When the special Assembly continued on the 11th of March, she states that speaker after speaker blamed the great powers for failing to protect China, disgracing the League’s principles and drawing out the proceedings.¹⁷³ Haug admits that one cannot dismiss the effect of the press criticism on the Norwegian government’s decision, but argues that it was neither the only nor the main explanation.¹⁷⁴ As mentioned above, Norway had been inclined to take a passive role at the Council in the Sino-Japanese conflict. This foreign policy course became very difficult to pursue, however, when the discussions moved to the Assembly, where the mood among the other smaller states promoted the League’s implementation of sanctions.

¹⁶⁴ Ebrey (2010, 1996): 282; Walters (1952): 484

¹⁶⁵ The first Special session of the Assembly had been held to discuss the admission of Germany. Steiner (2005): 737

¹⁶⁶ Jones (1939): 257-258

¹⁶⁷ Hem (1987): 72-80

¹⁶⁸ Hem also mentions Norway’s own imperialist ambitions in Greenland at the time, but disregards its influence in this matter because of the timing of Braadland’s change of attitude. *Ibid.*: 72-80

¹⁶⁹ Haug (2012): 400-402

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*: 400-402

¹⁷¹ Haug (2012): 400-402

¹⁷² Steiner (2005): 736-737

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*: 736-737

¹⁷⁴ Haug (2012): 401

According to Haug, Braadland's speech was the first and only Norwegian encouragement of applying the sanctions policy of the League.¹⁷⁵

2.1.2 Reports from the East Asia

How was the Manchurian Crisis seen by Norwegian foreign policy-makers in East Asia? Henig claims many western diplomats in Japan knew what the Japanese army was planning in Manchuria, because they had seen the emergence of deep-seated nationalist sentiment challenging the League-friendly policies of the Japanese government.¹⁷⁶ Initially, Ludvig Aubert, the Norwegian minister to China and Japan, was in Shanghai. Thus, the chargé d'affaires in Tokyo, Christian P. Reusch, was a bit cautious in his interpretation of events to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was also lacking information according to his first report on the conflict: "By the time this message arrives, Norwegian newspapers will probably have provided more reliable information about the conflict's emergence than the legation is able to at this point. Here one only gets the official Japanese reports which put the blame solely on the Chinese troops".¹⁷⁷ At the time, it must have been difficult to determine the severity of the conflict. After all, there had been several incidents between China and Japan before.¹⁷⁸ When the conflict grew more severe, however, it became clear to Reusch that the Japanese government was not in control of their own military.¹⁷⁹ "As a neutral observer", Reusch wrote, "I cannot avoid getting the impression that the position of the [Japanese] government would be strengthened only by approaching the army's stance in the Manchurian question".¹⁸⁰

According to Steiner, Reusch was right – the Japanese government was losing control over the army in Manchuria.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, a small group of nationalist officers started a series of political assassinations that continued until the summer of 1932. Steiner claims that nothing the League could do would have prevented the formal inauguration of the new puppet

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.: 400-402

¹⁷⁶ Henig (2010): 139

¹⁷⁷ My translation, the original quote reads: "Norske aviser vil ved denne skrivelses fremkomst antagelig ha bragt mer pålidelige meldinger om konfliktens opkomst enn legasjonen for øieblikket er istand til å gi. Her får man kun de offisielle japanske beretninger som legger skylden helt ut på de kinesiske tropper". Christian Reusch to the NMFA (21.09.1931). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078.

¹⁷⁸ Young (1998): 55

¹⁷⁹ Christian Reusch to the NMFA (19.10.1931). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078

¹⁸⁰ My translation, the original quote reads: "En neutral iagttagger [kan] ikke undgå å få inntrykk av at regjeringens stilling kun kan styrkes på én måte, nemlig ved at den legger sin politikk i Manchuriaspørsmålet nærmere op til hærens". Christian Reusch to the NMFA (19.10.1931). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078.

¹⁸¹ Steiner (2005): 736-737

state of Manchukuo on the 9th of March 1932.¹⁸² At the same time, the Japanese government could do nothing, except stall their own recognition of the new state.¹⁸³

Similarly, Reusch regarded the Japanese government as being caught in a catch 22-situation.¹⁸⁴ Firstly, the Japanese demanded direct negotiations with China without any third parties involved, which Reusch commented would be refused by the Chinese until the Japanese troops had been withdrawn.¹⁸⁵ Secondly, the Japanese demanded governmental control of the anti-Japanese movement. Here, Reusch agreed that the movement had become large and dangerous, but still not comparable to the persecution of Chinese in Korea under Japanese leadership.¹⁸⁶ Last but not least, they refused to withdraw any troops from Manchuria before the Chinese had established peace, order and security in the occupied territories. Reusch, on the other hand, claimed that: “to this the Chinese could argue with some justification that during the Manchurian Crisis the Japanese government have not shown themselves as possessing the necessary power either, but has entrusted it to the army”.¹⁸⁷ Lastly, Reusch wrote that he was of the opinion that Japan’s actions could not be classified as self-defence anymore.¹⁸⁸ Still, he reasoned that the Japanese would concur if the League of Nations decided on a reasonable timeframe for withdrawing the Japanese troops from the occupied territories.¹⁸⁹

The Norwegian minister to China and Japan, Ludvig Aubert, moved from Shanghai to Tokyo shortly after the Mukden Incident. From early November 1931, he wrote most of the reports back to the Foreign Ministry, and his view on the events was slightly different from Reusch’s interpretation. After a visit to the Japanese foreign minister, he sent his first report. Whereas the usual reports to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were about 2-4 pages long, Aubert wrote nine pages which can be seen as a reflection of his deep concern regarding the drama in Manchuria. Aubert wrote that he saw it as part of his minister task to tell not only the facts, but also his thoughts on what was happening “so that our government may then

¹⁸² Ibid.: 736-737

¹⁸³ Ibid.: 736-737

¹⁸⁴ Christian Reusch to the NMFA (23.10.1931). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ My translation, the original quote reads: “Til dette kunde kineserne med en viss rett svare at heller ikke den japanske regjering under krisen i Manchuria har vist sig i besiddelse av den fornødne styrke, men har overlatt ledelsen til hæren”. Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

decide how to act. Thus, I will safely assume that my claims will not be misunderstood”.¹⁹⁰ He believed that the League of Nations’ main concern in the matter was a fear of losing prestige if they did not demonstrate their influence on a mighty nation like Japan.¹⁹¹ Aubert on the other hand claimed that “a too excessive and firm performance towards Japan would by no means advance the goal [of a settlement between China and Japan].¹⁹² He argued that there was no reason to doubt the Japanese when they said that they were not starting a war.¹⁹³ Thus, Aubert recommended letting China and Japan mostly resolve the conflict themselves.¹⁹⁴ In his opinion, Norway should follow the US and declare its neutrality in the conflict, because he saw it as the safest and most righteous position for Norway as well.¹⁹⁵

Why did Aubert recommend the Foreign Ministry to stay neutral in the conflict? Later in his report, he explained his views more thoroughly and argued that:

“China is filled with inner strife, individual power lust, ubiquitous corruption, unreliability and bluffs in international relations. Furthermore, in recent years the country has shown a growing tendency to ignore international commitments and to violate the rights of foreign countries. When foreign countries still hesitate to surrender their extraterritoriality and their territorial rights from before, it is especially due to these characteristics of the Chinese people and also because of the fear of being harmed by the Chinese if they let go”.¹⁹⁶

He continued with the statement mentioned in chapter 1, where he argues that Japan is Norway’s best ally as “protector of civility in the Far East” because they can “stop China from spreading its lawlessness”.¹⁹⁷ These quotes signify Aubert’s tendency to portray the conflict as being based on “inherent” differences between Chinese and Japanese culture and mentality. He puts China and Japan in juxtaposition where the Japanese has to stop the

¹⁹⁰ My translation, the original quote reads: “Så kan vor Regjering derefter bestemme hvorledes den vil handle. ”Jeg går derfor trygt ut fra at mine uttalelser ikke vil bli misforstått”. Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (02.11.1931). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078.

¹⁹¹ Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (02.11.1931). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078

¹⁹² “[...] en altfor vidtdreven og konsekvent optreden overfor Japan [vil] langt fra føre til målet [om en løsning mellom Kina og Japan]”. Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ My translation, the original quote reads: “Kina er opfyldt av indre strid, individuell maktsyke, korrupsjon på alle hold, upålitelighet og bluff i internasjonale forhold. Dessuten har landet i de senere år vist en voksende tendens til å ignorere internasjonale forpliktelser og til å krenke fremmede lands rettigheter. Når fremmede land ennu nøler med å opgi sin ekstraterritorialitet og sine territoriale rettigheter fra før, har det ikke minst på grunn av disse karakteregenskaper hos det kinesiske folk og dessuten på grunn av frykt for overlast fra kinesisk side om man slipper taket”. Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

“power hungry, non-reliable and immoral” Chinese. Hence, Aubert’s accounts border on determinism in that he portrays the conflict as an unavoidable clash between two inherently different peoples.

Aubert’s view on the conflict is also significant because it exemplifies a tendency mentioned by Walters, where critique of the victim was an effective means of justifying unlawful actions by the aggressor.¹⁹⁸ Apparently, this strategy met with a lot of success both during the Manchurian Crisis and the Italian invasion of Ethiopia later on. According to him, the argumentation was first implemented by the Japanese, and then continued by many members of the European communities in East Asia.¹⁹⁹ Steiner mentions the same phenomenon.²⁰⁰ According to her, the great-power diplomacy in the region had been based on the Washington treaties of 1921-1922, where the signatories agreed to respect Chinese sovereignty while enjoying equal economic opportunities.²⁰¹ However, the signatories could and did interpret the agreements as it suited them and their own interests in the 1920s. Meanwhile, the emerging Chinese nationalism challenged these assumptions, and directly influenced the signatories’ commercial and political interest in China through anti-foreign demonstrations and boycotts.²⁰² Like Aubert’s report illustrates, some foreigners sided with Japan in the Manchurian Crisis. As Henig puts it, they saw the conflict as a Japanese attempt at establishing law and order in Manchuria.²⁰³

Being situated in Japan and hearing mostly Japanese versions of the conflict certainly influenced the view of the Norwegian emissaries, but the difference between Aubert’s and Reusch’s accounts is striking. Where Reusch tried to portray both sides to the conflict, Aubert mostly tells the Japanese version portrayed as the truth. If he distinguished between a Japanese and a Chinese version of events, he elaborated on the former and only mentioned the latter briefly. Aubert’s view is actually more similar to the reports made by Nicolai Aall, who was general consul in Shanghai. To illustrate, here is a quote from Aall: “Chinese politicians [...] elaborate on all of China’s good qualities. [...] But we must not let them fool us. China is not the country that these gentlemen would like Europe to believe”.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁸ Walters (1952): 469

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.: 469

²⁰⁰ Steiner (2005): 708-711

²⁰¹ Ibid.: 708-711

²⁰² Ibid.: 708-711

²⁰³ Henig (2010): 137

²⁰⁴ My translation, the original quote reads: “[...] kinesiske politikere [...] forteller verden om alle Kinas gode egenskaper. [...] Men vi må ikke la oss bluffe av dem. Kina er ikke det land som disse herrer gjerne vil ha

There is an implicit, and sometimes explicit, argument of Aubert's that the League of Nations did not fully understand the Japanese perspective in the Manchurian Crisis. To exemplify, the Japanese demanded that the Chinese had to guarantee the safety of Japanese subjects in China before they would withdraw any troops. After getting a Chinese declaration promising the safety of Japanese subjects, the Japanese still did not withdraw their troops. Aubert argues that this was due to the Japanese government believing that the Chinese government did not to a sufficient degree control neither the regular troops nor the bandits.²⁰⁵ He claimed that: "Of the hereto incoming telegrams from Europe it seems to be apparent that the League's Council [...] does not fully understand the need for Japan to demand such a declaration submitted by China".²⁰⁶ Aubert also emphasized that other foreign diplomats in Tokyo felt that the League did not understand the situation from a Japanese perspective.²⁰⁷ According to this line of thought, the Japanese military might not have acted as the international community would have desired them to, but Japan should still be allowed to demand respect for their rights.²⁰⁸ One might disagree with Aubert's last point, but it is worth mentioning that Britain had responded by sending troops against anti-British demonstrations in Shanghai in 1927.²⁰⁹ If the British could ignore the Washington treaties when their interests were threatened, why could not Japan do the same? In the end, this inconsistency would become the basis for the Japanese argument that the League was operating with a western bias on assumptions of oriental inferiority.²¹⁰

How significant were Aubert, Reusch and Aall's opinions on the conflict? Like discussed in chapter 1, the diplomatic and consular representatives abroad had some influence on the making of Norwegian foreign policy.²¹¹ To the Ministry in Oslo, they primarily served as sources of information. In the case of Aubert and Aall, it is clear that the information they conveyed to the Foreign Ministry was coloured by their personal opinions on the Chinese and the Japanese. For instance, Aubert wrote that he feared the League would treat Japan and China as equals and on the same grounds, by which he meant that they would focus on

Europa til å tro". Nicolai Aall to the NMFA (28.09.1932). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0075

²⁰⁵ Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (09.11.1931). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078

²⁰⁶ My translation, the original quote reads: "[...] Av hertil innløpne telegrammer fra Europa synes det å fremgå at Forbundsrådet [...] ikke helt forstår nødvendigheten for Japan av å forlange sådan erklæring avgitt av Kina".

Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Steiner (2005): 712

²¹⁰ Ibid.: 741

²¹¹ Omang (1954): 10-12

Japanese “military blunders” and disregard the historical reasons for the conflict.²¹² His recommendation for the delegates in Genève was thus to get more time to consider the case, because in his opinion “the Japanese mentality works slower than the Chinese and is not as «resourceful». [...] it would be unjust not to give Japan the full opportunity and time to make their case”.²¹³

2.2. The Lytton Report

In 1932, the League decided to send a commission of inquiry to gather information and determine the situation in East Asia.²¹⁴ Named after its leader the British Lord Lytton, the Lytton Commission started its extensive travels on the 29th of February 1932.²¹⁵ Just a few weeks before the Lytton Report was submitted to the League of Nations, a related issue was brought before the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Japanese had recently established the “independent” state of Manchukuo under the leadership of the last Qing emperor, Pu Yi.²¹⁶ On 19. September 1932, Aall in Shanghai wrote a telegram and forwarded a letter from the Chinese government to the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs.²¹⁷ According to the letter, the Japanese government had formally recognised the state of Manchukuo on the 15th of September, and Aall was inquiring about Norway’s position in the matter.²¹⁸ He wrote that: “Norwegian government requested take measures in order to deal effectively whole situation”.²¹⁹ Aubert reported that the question of recognition had been discussed a lot in Tokyo as well.²²⁰ He mentioned rumours that the Soviet Union was considering recognition, that the Americans would forward an official protest against Japan and et cetera.²²¹ All in all, the Norwegian representatives appear to have followed the development and actions of other countries very closely.

The Lytton Report was submitted on September 24th 1932, and represented a “substantial vindication of the Chinese case on all fundamental issues” according to

²¹² Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (09.11.1931). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078

²¹³ My translation, the original quote reads: “Den japanske mentalitet arbeider langsommere enn den kinesiske og er ikke så «resourceful». [...] det vilde være urett ikke å gi Japan full anledning og tid til å iredtelegge sin sak”. Ibid.

²¹⁴ Burkman, T. W. (2008): 167-168

²¹⁵ Steiner (2005): 739

²¹⁶ The Qing emperors were ethnic Manchu people, and originated from the area of Manchuria. Westad (2012): 7

²¹⁷ Nicolai Aall to the NMFA (19.09.1932). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0004

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

Walters.²²² Thomas W. Burkman, Professor of Asian studies, has challenged this notion, and argues that it cannot count as an absolute condemnation of Japan.²²³ According to him, it recognized Japanese colonial interests and rights in the region, but also stated that the actions of the Japanese army in Manchuria could not be classified as self-defence.²²⁴ Burkman claims that the Lytton report's conclusion on the creation of the new state Manchukuo was that it had not been a spontaneous act by the people of Manchuria.²²⁵ According to him, the report concluded that the new state had no support in the Chinese population, and was completely dependent on the Japanese troops stationed there.²²⁶

Walters claims that differing attitudes regarding the report divided the small and great powers of the Assembly.²²⁷ To the smaller states, it was a question of principle that the League displayed its capability to react when a major power took aggressive action against a weak one. The great powers, on the other hand, were hesitant to risk this course of action, because they felt they were the ones who would suffer the most from possible retaliations by Japan.²²⁸ Steiner claims that the report was unsatisfactory to both the Japanese army and government.²²⁹ Even though Japan's objections to the report were presented to the League on the 6th of December 1932, the most nationalist Japanese were already preparing to reject the League for what they saw as discriminating policies.²³⁰ It would still take some time and a lot of discussion before the League could decide a course of action.

How was the Lytton Report received by the Norwegian foreign policy-makers in East Asia? As soon as the document became available, reports came rushing in from the Norwegian foreign service stations in East Asia. Minister Aubert wrote seven pages about its reception in Japan and his own personal dismissal of the report. The main critique of his was that: "[...] it is essentially an office work, which does not sufficiently consider the many previous episodes that has created the mood between Japan and China".²³¹ Furthermore, Aubert considered the Commission not competent to ascertain the historical events' influence

²²² Walters F. P. (1952): 491

²²³ Burkman, T. W. (2008): 170

²²⁴ Ibid.: 168-170

²²⁵ Ibid.: 168-170

²²⁶ Ibid.: 170

²²⁷ Walters (1952): 493-495

²²⁸ Ibid.: 493-495

²²⁹ Steiner (2005): 741

²³⁰ Ibid.: 741

²³¹ My translation, the original quote reads: "[...] den er vesentlig et kontorarbeide, som ikke tar tilstrekkelig hensyn til de mange forutgående episoder som har skapt atmosfæren mellom Japan og Kina". Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (13.10.1932). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0004

on the relationship between the Chinese and the Japanese, because they had not experienced the events themselves.²³² He also saw it as highly unlikely that Japan would accept any of the proposals provided by the report.²³³ Thus, he recommended the League to swallow the bitter pill quickly, and acknowledge that it was powerless in this conflict.²³⁴

In Genève, Steiner claims that some smaller states challenged the dilution of the proceedings and demanded positive action, even though there were scarce agreement on what that action should be.²³⁵ In contrast to this, Norway maintained its passive role according to Haug, because it did not wish to get involved.²³⁶ Mageli has also pointed out that Norwegian business men discouraged the Norwegian government from taking a clear stance against Japan, because they saw the country as a more important business partner than China.²³⁷ Accordingly, Aubert argued in a report that:

“Through our large shipping and our trade, we are a nation [...] that has great interests outwards, more than most other countries with similar populace, and we have to expect other nations’ benevolence. To put this at stake through an overly bold [...] implementation of the Covenant’s articles would hardly serve neither ourselves nor the prospect for peace”.²³⁸

He admitted that his proposal might seem hard to fathom, but argued that the situation in East Asia was just too difficult, too peculiar and too complicated to call for anything less than caution.²³⁹ Therefore, he recommended that Norway should not act according to the Lytton Report, because he thought it to be based upon theory, not experience.²⁴⁰

I agree with Haug that there was never any real change in Norway’s foreign policy regarding the Manchurian Crisis.²⁴¹ It was in the country’s interest to stay passive and avoid getting involved. Like Haug has argued, the speech where Braadland advocated using sanctions against Japan was motivated by the other smaller states’ offensive at the

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Steiner (2005): 741

²³⁶ Haug (2012): 403

²³⁷ Mageli (2006): 26-30

²³⁸ My translation, the original quote reads: “Vi er en nasjon som gjennom vår store skibsfart og vår handel [...] har store interesser utadtil, mere enn de fleste andre land av lignende folketall, og vi må regne med andre nasjoners velvilje. Å sette denne på spill ved en altfor aktiv [...] anvendelse av Forbundspaktens paragrafer vil neppe komme hverken oss selv eller fredssaken synderlig til nytte”. Ludwig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (13.10.1932). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0004

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Haug (2012): 403

Assembly.²⁴² It had been a necessity forced by peer pressure in order to uphold Norway's international reputation. This argument is furthered by the fact that Norway continued the passive position after the small state offensive in March. During the discussion of the Lytton report, Jones claims that the Scandinavian delegates encouraged the Assembly to base any further action on the findings of the Commission.²⁴³ In the delegation's instructions from the Norwegian government, it said that: "With regard to the Sino-Japanese conflict and the Lytton report, the Government believes that the solution one must pursue has to be adapted to the particular mentality that prevails among the applicable East Asian states".²⁴⁴ Here the government applies the same sentiment and wording as Aubert; the conflict is not a "regular" one, but based on historical, maybe inherent, differences in Japanese and Chinese mentality. If the conflict was seen as "particular" in this way, the logic follows that it would require a "particular" solution. Thus, I argue that it signified a Norwegian attempt at avoiding the "overly bold implementation of the Covenant's articles", which Aubert mentioned.²⁴⁵ This agrees with Haug's claim that the Norwegian effort at the Council was a continuous effort to avoid getting involved.²⁴⁶

The instructions to the Norwegian delegation underlined the importance of not encouraging a decision based on principle, because the government feared it could lead to the partial dissolution of the League of Nations.²⁴⁷ The weight of the world's opinion was highlighted again as a means to slowly work towards a solution. The instructions left it to the delegation to decide whether to express the Norwegian opinion openly or not, but it suggested keeping a close eye on what the other smaller states said and did.²⁴⁸

At the meeting, many smaller states' delegates held firm speeches condemning Japanese actions. The Norwegian delegate, Rolf Andvord, considered them 'too firm' in their expressions, and wrote that he thought the speech by fellow Norwegian delegate Christian

²⁴² Ibid.: 401-402

²⁴³ Jones (1939): 258

²⁴⁴ My translation, the original quote reads: "Med hensyn til den japansk-kinesiske konflikt og Lytton-rapporten er Regjeringen av den opfatning, at den løsning som man må søke å tilstrebe må være avpasset efter den særlige mentalitet som finnes hos de angjeldende østasiatiske stater". *Instruks for delegasjonen til den ekstraordinære Forsamling* (02.12.1932). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0004

²⁴⁵ Ludwig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (13.10.1932). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0004

²⁴⁶ Haug (2012): 403

²⁴⁷ *Instruks for delegasjonen til den ekstraordinære Forsamling* (02.12.1932). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0004

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

Lous Lange was better received.²⁴⁹ In Andvord's opinion, the speech was: "firm in content but polite in expressions and underlined [...] primarily the importance of reaching reconciliation and agreement. I believe that Dr. Lange's speech, [...] somewhat more than the previous speeches, was capable of creating an environment precisely for this purpose".²⁵⁰ Furthermore, he added that the Japanese delegates had approached them afterwards and praised Norway for "once again in the ongoing conflict showing "sagesse et comprehension" [wisdom and understanding]".²⁵¹

During a meeting between several smaller states, the Norwegian delegation did not support what Andvord called the 'strong resolution proposal' forwarded by Sweden, Ireland, Spain and Czechoslovakia.²⁵² In the end, the proposal was rejected by the Assembly, and Andvord wrote that: "I believe it must be considered lucky for Norway, by not joining [the proposal], having avoided to antagonise Japan unnecessarily".²⁵³ This, he argued, would improve Norway's position as an intermediary.²⁵⁴ After Japan ultimately rejected the League's settlement proposal, however, even the great powers saw no other alternative than to follow the Lytton Report and condemn Japanese actions in Manchuria. Accordingly, on February 24th 1933 the Assembly declared that Japan had broken the Covenant, and announced that its members would refrain from recognizing the Manchukuo state neither de jure nor de facto.²⁵⁵ The Japanese delegates present responded by leaving the meeting, and one month later Japan officially announced its decision to withdraw from the League of Nations. In the end, a moral condemnation was as far as the great powers were willing to go, and many smaller states concluded that the great powers were unwilling to use the League's security system on their behalf.²⁵⁶ The Japanese withdrawal from the League meant that the case was handed over to a commission, which, according to Walters, "[...] retired into

²⁴⁹ Rolf Andvord to the NMFA (07.12.1932). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0004

²⁵⁰ My translation, the original quote reads: "[Talen var] bestemt i innholdet men meget høflig i formen og understreket [...] først og fremst betydningen av å komme til forsoning og overenskomst. Jeg tror at dr. Langes tale [...] i noget høiere grad enn de tidligere taler var egnet til å skape en atmosfære netop til opnåelse av disse mål". Ibid.

²⁵¹ My translation, the original quote reads: "[...] at Norge atter en gang under den pågående konflikt hadde vist 'sagesse et compréhension". Ibid.

²⁵² Rolf Andvord to the NMFA (11.12.1932). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0004

²⁵³ My translation, the original quote reads: "Jeg tror det må ansees for heldig at Norge ved ikke å slutte sig til [forslaget] har undgått unødige å komme i noget motsetningsforhold til Japan". Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Steiner (2005): 743-744

²⁵⁶ Ibid.: 749-750

oblivion” until it was revitalized for the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937.²⁵⁷

The League might have been a forum for Norwegian status seeking as a peace-nation, but during the Manchurian Crisis it was deemed more important to avoid getting involved and risk national interests. If sanctions had been implemented against Japan, it would have strengthened the League’s credibility to protect its smaller members. Seeing that Norwegian foreign policy-makers tried to avoid the implementation of sanctions, maybe Haug is right when he claims that Norway never really relied on the collective security system of the League for protection.²⁵⁸ China had been invaded, and the League seemed more anxious to preserve its image than solving the conflict. In regard to all this, what conclusions were being drawn in Norway?

2.3. Parliamentary discussion in Norway

The Norwegian parliament did not discuss the Manchurian Crisis as a specific topic at any point, but the conflict is mentioned during parliamentary discussions regarding the happenings at the 12th and 13th General Assembly of the League of Nations. To the Members of Parliament, the Manchurian Crisis was significant on the same grounds as it was to the League of Nations – as a matter of principle. The League was founded to avoid a future war. Letting aggressive actions undertaken by a member go unpunished would therefore severely compromise the League’s credibility and reputation. Why should any other member believe the League would act on their behalf, when it had not been able to prevent one member from occupying another?

At the parliamentary debates on the 10th of June 1932 and the 16th of June 1933, there appears to have been a feeling of disappointment towards the League and its capability to protect the smaller nations. Norwegian politicians had never been utterly convinced in the first place, but the development in the Manchurian Crisis had shaken even the League’s strongest spokesmen in Norway. A member of the Conservative Party (Høyre), Harald Gram, expressed his disappointment that the League “[...] in such an important matter as the Manchurian conflict had not have been able to accomplish anything whatsoever”.²⁵⁹ The Labour Party (Arbeiderpartiet) had been against membership from the start, and submitted

²⁵⁷ Walters (1952): 495-496

²⁵⁸ Haug (2008). In: Berg (2008): 49-60

²⁵⁹ My translation, the original quote reads: “[...] at man i et så viktig spørsmål som den mansjuriske konflikt overhodet ikke har kunnet utrette nogen verdens ting”. Harald Gram (16.06.1933). *Forhandlinger i Stortinget*. Stortingsarkivene, Folkenes Forbund (Storting 1933). S. tid: 1745.

proposals to withdraw from the League at both meetings. The proposals were quickly rejected, but their argumentation resonated with what the other attendees were feeling. One of the major issues was the fear that the smaller states did not have any real influence versus the great powers. Both members from the Conservative Party and the Labour Party voiced such concerns.²⁶⁰ The fear was that Norway would be drawn into the politics of the great powers without any real say, which in turn could endanger Norwegian interests.²⁶¹

At the first of the two meetings, the leader of the Liberal Party (Venstre), Johan Ludwig Mowinckel, stated that: "[...] there could have been used a stronger and braver voice than what has been the case. [...] The opposition between the great powers [...] has made it difficult to use the voice that according to theoretical considerations should be right".²⁶² Here, he referred to Norway's performance at the Council regarding the Manchurian Crisis. This first part might seem like regret, but further on he argued that theoretical considerations will always be influenced by practical politics.²⁶³ Even if there was no escaping the politics and interests of the great powers, he did not think it was reason enough to disown the whole project that the League of Nations represented.²⁶⁴ He continued:

"Even though the conflict in the East has not been solved as swiftly and as well and in the way we thought was right [...] there can hardly be doubt that the League of Nations nevertheless has exercised a considerable influence on the conflict's development, and no one knows what would have happened if the League had not existed".²⁶⁵

Norway's performance at the Council was discussed at the meeting on 16th of June 1933 as well. Bound by its obligations in the League, Norway had officially condemned Japanese actions in Manchuria.²⁶⁶ Yet, Harald Gram expressed a fear that Norway had not made its voice heard during the three years at the Council.²⁶⁷ Some Members of Parliament

²⁶⁰ *Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, Stortingsarkivene, Folkenes Forbund (Storting 1932). S.tid: 1821-1833

²⁶¹ *Forhandlinger i Stortinget*, Stortingsarkivene, Folkenes Forbund (Storting 1932). S.tid: 1821-1833;
Forhandlinger i Stortinget, Stortingsarkivene, Folkenes Forbund (Storting 1933). S. tid: 1743-1760

²⁶² My translation, the original quote reads: "[...] der kunde vært ført en sterkere og modigere tale i den konflikt enn tilfelle har vært. [...] Motsetningene mellom stormaktene [...] har medført at det ikke har vært så ganske lett å før den tale som efter teoretiske betraktninger skulde være den rette". Johan L. Mowinckel (10.06.1932).

Forhandlinger i Stortinget. Stortingsarkivene, Folkenes Forbund (Storting 1932). S.tid: 1825

²⁶³ *Ibid.*: 1825-1827

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*: 1825-1827

²⁶⁵ My translation, the original quote reads: "Selv om konflikten i Østen ikke er blitt løst så hurtig og så godt og på den måte vi mente var riktig, [...] er der vel neppe tvil om at folkeforbundet allikevel har øvet en meget stor innflytelse på konfliktens utvikling, og ingen vet hvordan det hadde gått hvis ikke forbundet hadde vært til".

Ibid.: 1825

²⁶⁶ Mageli (2006): 34

²⁶⁷ Harald Gram (16.06.1933). *Forhandlinger i Stortinget*. Stortingsarkivene, Folkenes Forbund (Storting 1933). S. tid: 1745-1746

expressed discontent that the Norwegian representation had been ensured by an official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Erik Colban, whenever the foreign minister was unavailable.²⁶⁸ Across the political spectrum, they agreed that “a regular bureaucrat” had not been enough to represent Norway at such important meetings.²⁶⁹ The leader of the Conservative Party, Carl Joachim Hambro, expressed regret that Norway had not played as big a part the last three years as Sweden had done a few years earlier.²⁷⁰ Hambro reasoned that this was the direct result of the delegate not inhabiting a truly representative political position.²⁷¹ In his opinion, the smaller nation’s perspective was invaluable at the Council, because they represented the only intermediaries capable of expressing the hard truths that the great powers dared not.²⁷² Prime minister Mowinckel, on the other hand, concluded it to be the great powers’ fault that the conflict ended like it did, since they had hesitated due to their interests in the region.²⁷³

After the Manchurian Crisis and the Japanese and German withdrawal in autumn 1933, Ørvik claims that Mowinckel started attempting to release Norway from its sanction obligations as a League member.²⁷⁴ At the same time in East Asia, China and Japan concluded a ceasefire agreement without foreign intervention.²⁷⁵

2.4. Concluding remarks

Over the course of the Manchurian Crisis, I agree with Haug that Norwegian actions in Genève were consistently close to that of a passive observer.²⁷⁶ The shift from the Council to the Assembly involved a small state offensive against the reluctance of the great powers. Braadland joined the smaller states out of peer pressure, but it did not involve a change in foreign political priorities. This is made clear by the fact that the Norwegian delegation resumed the passive approach when the Lytton report arrived. Norway opposed utilizing the League’s collective security system in the Manchurian Crisis, which confirms Haug’s

²⁶⁸ *Forhandlinger i Stortinget* (16.06.1933). Stortingsarkivene, Folkenes Forbund (Storting 1933). S. tid: 1744-1760

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*: 1744-1760

²⁷⁰ Carl J. Hambro (16.06.1933). *Forhandlinger i Stortinget*. Stortingsarkivene, Folkenes Forbund (Storting 1933). S. tid: 1748-1752

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ Johan L. Mowinckel (16.06.1933). *Forhandlinger i Stortinget*. Stortingsarkivene, Folkenes Forbund (Storting 1933). S. tid: 1751.

²⁷⁴ According to Ørvik, Mowinckel proposed this idea at a meeting with the other Nordic foreign ministers in September 1934, which means that he decided on this path before the failed sanctions against Italy could take place in 1935-1936. Ørvik (1961): 22-23

²⁷⁵ Steiner (2005): 750-751

²⁷⁶ Haug (2012): 402-403

argumentation that Norway relied on Britain's and not the League's protection.²⁷⁷ Thus, my findings agree with Haug's claim that Norway exercised "retraction policy" towards the League.²⁷⁸ Norwegian foreign policy-makers sought status as a peace-nation in Genève, but backed out when it could lead to actual commitments or affect national interests.

The reports from East Asia are important, because they do to a larger degree convey what interests were prioritized in the making of Norwegian foreign policy. I argue that Norway's actions in Genève closely followed the recommendations received from Aubert and Aall, whose reports were frequently coloured by them seeing the conflict through a "racial filter". They strongly advised the government to stay neutral in the conflict, because they believed it to be in Norway's interest to avoid antagonising Japan in order to protect political and economic interests in the region. Furthermore, their reports tended to side with Japan, because Aall and Aubert thought the occupation would keep the Chinese from violating foreign treaty rights.

Like Haug suggests, it is probable that the reluctance of the great powers enabled the Norwegian passivity in the conflict.²⁷⁹ In the end, many Members of Parliament reasoned that Norway could have done more at the Council, but the ultimate blame was placed on the great powers. The members of parliament did not attach importance to Norwegian actions during the Council proceedings, even though the passivity might have been enabled by the very element they blamed for the League's failure.

²⁷⁷ Haug (2008). In Berg (2008): 49-60

²⁷⁸ Haug (2012): 443-444

²⁷⁹ Ibid.: 403

Chapter 3: The Sino-Japanese ceasefire 1933-1937

The ceasefire agreement between China and Japan from May 1933 represented a small window of respite in the Sino-Japanese conflict. Disappointed by the proceedings of the League, the Chinese government agreed to the Japanese demands in order to face the Communist upheaval in the country. The continued Japanese occupation meant that the Great Wall was all that separated them and China for now.²⁸⁰ While the League licked its wounds from the Manchurian Crisis and Disarmament Conference, Norway was relatively free to pursue its economic interest in East Asia. The conflict had changed the game somewhat, however. Japan had emerged as a serious threat to Western trade interests in East Asia, and one whom Norway had to deal with when pursuing national interests in the region.²⁸¹ This chapter will first examine Norwegian actions after the Manchurian Crisis. While upholding its obligations as a member of the League, I argue that the Norway attempted to mend the relationship with Japan in order to further its interests in East Asia. Ultimately, this chapter analyses the Norwegian position and foreign policy-makers view regarding the newly-established state Manchukuo. This part of the Sino-Japanese conflict is significant to the general analysis in this thesis. Norway continued the foreign policy from earlier, but this period further illuminates the extent to which political and economic interests were emphasized in foreign policy-making.

3.1 The aftermath of the Manchurian Crisis

The Norwegian approach of remaining impartial in the conflict had ultimately failed when the League decided to adopt the Lytton report. By condemning Japan, the government had antagonised the largest power in Asia and possibly endangered regional Norwegian interests in the process. Mageli argues that the Manchurian Crisis made the relationship between Norway and Japan no longer marginal and peripheral.²⁸² The conflict had certainly turned the gaze of the world upon Japan, which made it all the more important to the Norwegian government to be careful when dealing with anything related to the Japanese that could draw international scrutiny. The direct communication with the Japanese government was carried

²⁸⁰ Kitchen, M. (January 2014). *A World in Flames. A Short History of the Second World War in Europe and Asia 1939-1945*: 141. Available at: <http://www.tandfebooks.com/isbn/9781315846460> [Read 13.11.2016]; Nish, I. (December 1990): 618

²⁸¹ Henig (2010): 152

²⁸² Mageli (2006): 34-35

out by the diplomatic representatives in East Asia. As established in chapter 1, the Norwegian representatives abroad exercised independent executive authority within the framework of law and instruction.²⁸³ During the proceedings of the League, minister Aubert in Tokyo had continuously kept the Norwegian government informed about the Japanese attitude towards Norway's actions in the League. He still occupied the position as joint minister to both China and Japan. Since Norway had taken part in a significant international conflict between the two countries through the League proceedings, his position must have required more skilful diplomacy than ever before.

3.1.1 The possibility of a weapons embargo against China and Japan

Despite the Manchurian Crisis ending with the Japanese withdrawal from the League of Nations, Henig claims that there remained one final issue for the League to settle.²⁸⁴ This was on whether or not to enforce a weapons embargo against Japan and/or China.²⁸⁵ Already in March 1932, Aubert reported that he had heard rumours about the American Congress and British parliament discussing possible prohibition on the export of arms to China or Japan.²⁸⁶ According to Aubert, the Norwegian government had once before been asked to provide figures over Norwegian exports of arms to China.²⁸⁷ This export had apparently been relatively large, but “[...] not as major as rumour would have it” if we are to trust the words of Aubert.²⁸⁸

The historian Christine Myrvang mentions the Norwegian export of military material to East Asia briefly in her book about the Norwegian Kongsberg Weapons Factory (Kongsberg Våpenfabrikk). The end of First World War meant a general decrease in demand of military material, and Myrvang claims that the factory thus attempted to expand their exports to foreign markets during the interwar period.²⁸⁹ For instance, a new type of anti-aircraft guns was developed by the factory in 1933, and sold to China, Argentina, Iran and a number of European countries.²⁹⁰ Furthermore, Myrvang argues that Japan became a significant market for the factory's exports of whaling equipment before the Second World

²⁸³ For more information, please read Omang (1954): 10-12

²⁸⁴ Henig, R. (2010): 152

²⁸⁵ Ibid.: 152

²⁸⁶ Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (03.03.1932). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene. Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Myrvang, C. (2014). *Troskap og flid. Kongsberg Våpenfabrikks historie 1814-1945*. Oslo, Pax Forlag A/S. Page: 515, 541.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.: 579-580

War. According to her estimates, the Kongsberg Weapons Factory produced a total of 70 whale cannons in 1937, in which 19 were sold to Japan.²⁹¹ Norway's membership in the League meant that certain restrictions were imposed on the exports of arms. In 1935, Norwegian producers were prohibited from exporting weapons to countries at war, unless the League had defined it as legal defensive war. According to Myrvang, however, these restrictions were often avoided by selling arms to one country, who in turn exported the weapons to the nation that were at war.²⁹² In June 1939, she claims that the Kongsberg Weapons Factory sold 20 000 rifles to the Nationalist government of China.²⁹³ Conclusively, Aubert's thoughts on the possibility of a weapons embargo was that:

“It would be a shame to let such a good opportunity to export a commodity that provides excellent profits go to waste. [...] One could even risk being accused of violating our neutrality if prohibiting the export of munitions to one or both countries [...].”²⁹⁴

Meanwhile, the British delegates in Genève declared that they would suspend the exports of arms to both China and Japan in February 1933, and encouraged other members to follow their example.²⁹⁵ In a letter to the delegation in Genève, Rolf Andvord²⁹⁶ expressed concern that an embargo on weapons could expand the conflict, especially if only enforced against Japan.²⁹⁷ He saw it as less worrisome if the embargo covered both countries, but added that such a policy would be difficult to justify towards the Chinese.²⁹⁸ His main point was, however, that: “The Norwegian side will obviously not raise any objections if it turns out that there is a general inclination towards implementing embargo on export of weapons to

²⁹¹ Ibid.: 557-558

²⁹² Ibid. 570-571

²⁹³ Ibid.: 571. Interestingly, Myrvang claims that the Norwegian type of rifle that the Chinese requested was the same as the ones the Americans had used during the anti-foreign Boxer Rebellion in China in 1899-1901. Ibid.: 355

²⁹⁴ My translation, the original quote reads: “Det vilde jo [...] være synd å la gå fra sig en så god anledning til å eksportere en handelsvare som gir god fortjeneste. [...] Man kunde jo til og med risikere beskyldninger for nøytralitetsbrudd om man nu nektet tillatelse til utførsel av krigsmateriell til et eller begge av de to land [...]”. Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (03.03.1932). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene. Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078

²⁹⁵ Henig, R. (2010): 152

²⁹⁶ Rolf Andvord, mentioned in chapter 1, was part of the Norwegian delegation and head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' League of Nations department at the time. Holtmark, Sven G. (13.02.2009). “Rolf Andvord”. In: *Norsk biografisk leksikon* [Internet]. Available at: https://nbl.snl.no/Rolf_Andvord [Read 13.11.2016]

²⁹⁷ Rolf Andvord to Christian L. Lange (12.04.1933). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0005

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

Japan”.²⁹⁹ It appears that the matter was not important enough for Norwegian foreign policy makers to risk standing out in Genève. Andvord added that the Norwegian delegates would only have to speak against the proposal if it started including the withdrawal of diplomatic foreign legations in Japan.³⁰⁰ His slight worry was soon proven unfounded, however, because it turned out that no one else was interested in a weapons embargo either. Unlike many others, Britain was not a major arms exporter to East Asia. At the League, their attempt was thus met with silence.³⁰¹

3.1.2 Dealing with the aftermath of Norwegian policies

In the available source material, there is no mentioning of any Chinese anger or repercussions against Norway for its foreign policy in the Manchurian Crisis. The reason for this might be that Norwegian foreign policy-makers had not acted specifically against China in a way that could have made them stand out in Genève. Additionally, the source material suggests that there was scarcely any communication between Chiang Kai-Shek’s government and the Norwegian foreign service stations. Thus, if the bilateral relationship was slightly damaged by Norwegian actions, it is possible that the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs would not have known. At the same time, it was Japanese actions that had been the target of Norwegian condemnation. How did they respond?

In this regard, the Norwegian government pursued a policy of having its cake and eat it too - a balancing act where Norway sought international status as a peace-nation, but simultaneously prioritized its own national interests above all else. In this case, the Norwegian interest was to preserve and safeguard its significant shipping and industry interest in East Asia, which required being on good terms with the region’s great power, Japan. In light of the proceedings in Genève, there were several occasions where Norway was mentioned in an unfavourable manner in Japanese newspapers. The first instance was regarding an appeal sent to the Japanese delegation by Norway and 11 other members of the Council in February 1932.³⁰² According to Steiner, the appeal urged Japan to exercise restraint by virtue of its position as a great power and member of the Council.³⁰³ In his report,

²⁹⁹ My translation, the original quote reads: “Dersom det skulde vise sig at det er almindelig stemming for å gjennomføre embargo for utførsel av våben til Japan, vil det selvfølgelig ikke fra norsk side bli reist innvendinger herimot”. Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Henig, R. (2010): 152

³⁰² Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (20.02.1932). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene. Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078

³⁰³ Steiner (2005): 733

Aubert expressed regret that Norway had taken part in it, since it had not been directed towards the Chinese as well.³⁰⁴ In his view, the note was “a strategical and psychological mistake” that would not achieve anything except damage Norway’s relationship with Japan.³⁰⁵ After Braadland took part in the smaller states’ efforts to enforce sanctions against Japan in March 1932, Aubert wrote back to the foreign ministry that Japanese newspapers had once more featured the small powers at the Council in an unfavourable way.³⁰⁶ In both circumstances, the negative publicity had not been directed towards Norway in particular, but Aubert was afraid that the mentioning of Norway could endanger their interests in the area.³⁰⁷

As minister to China and Japan, Aubert seems to have gone to great lengths to ensure Norwegian interests by appeasing the Japanese. After a few days of negative publicity, Aubert took the opportunity to explain the Norwegian position to Kenkichi Yoshizawa, the Japanese minister of Foreign Affairs. He argued that the Norwegian government wanted to remain impartial in Genève, but also had to comply with traditions from similar cases that were “characteristically Norwegian”.³⁰⁸ In other words, the explanation given to the Japanese was that the Norwegian government did not want to pick a side, but that they had to do what was expected of them. According to Aubert’s report, Yoshizawa replied that the ideals of the League were shared by Japan, but that these were not applicable in Manchuria and China.³⁰⁹ Apparently, Aubert continued to say that he personally sympathised with the Japanese position, because he had lived in China and seen the conditions there first hand.³¹⁰ “After having made the Minister of Foreign Affairs aware that I did not view Japan antagonistically, I drew his attention towards [the negative press releases] and asked whether they were authorised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or [not]”.³¹¹ According to Aubert’s report, Yoshizawa appreciated being informed and intended to investigate the matter.³¹² In addition, Yoshizawa apparently added that he personally had: “[...] in Genève, like elsewhere, always treated the different countries in the same way [...]. This would be a principle of his in the

³⁰⁴ Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (20.02.1932). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene. Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (10.03.1932). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene. Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ My translation, the original quote reads: “Efter således å ha gjort det forståelig for utenriksministeren at jeg ikke så på Japan med antagonistiske øine, henledet jeg hans oppmerksomhet på [de negative pressemeddelelser] og spurte om de var autorisert av utenriksministeriet eller [ikke]”. Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

future as well”.³¹³ By revealing his personal view, Aubert claimed to have gained the trust of Yoshizawa which enabled the minister to ask for - what he really wanted - political interference against the negative press. For the purposes of this thesis, it is irrelevant whether Aubert told the truth or not about his encounter with Yoshizawa, because the significance lies in the fact that he reported it in this manner to the Foreign Ministry. This means that they knew Aubert expressed his personal opinions to preserve the relationship with Japan, despite of his views departing from what the Norwegian government could allow itself to express publically.

The Japanese press continued to be angry at the smaller states for wanting to apply article 15 for some time, however. The criticism was based on the (somewhat aptly) notion that the smaller states did not attempt to understand the conflict, because they were acting on principle to secure themselves for the future.³¹⁴ According to Aubert, the Deputy Foreign Minister, Matsuzo Nagai, divided the smaller states into two blocks - sympathising states and anti-Japanese states.³¹⁵ Since Nagai had regarded Norway to be among the latter group, Aubert quickly headed out to investigate. Less than a week later, he could happily announce that, apparently, the Deputy Foreign Minister was angriest at the South-American states.³¹⁶ When Aubert got the chance to talk with Nagai himself, the Deputy Foreign Minister confirmed that he regretted Norway’s position in the conflict, but that his anger was mostly meant for the South-American states for “[...] following every whim of the United States”.³¹⁷ According to Aubert’s report, Nagai concluded that: “[...] Japan greatly appreciated maintaining a friendly connection with Norway”.³¹⁸ The last part might represent a polite comment or a conscious strategical move by a trained diplomat. However, by being careful and letting someone else take the fore at the League discussions, Norway appear to have escaped the direct anger of the Japanese government.³¹⁹

³¹³ My translation, the original quote reads: “[...] i Genève som annetsteds alltid behandlet de forskjellige land på same måte [...]. Det vilde være hans prinsipp også i fremtiden”. Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (01.04.1932). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene. Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (09.04.1932). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene. Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078

³¹⁷ Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (30.04.1932). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene. Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078

³¹⁸ My translation, the original quote reads: “[...] Japan satte den største pris på å vedlikeholde en vennskapelig forbindelse med Norge”. Ibid.

³¹⁹ It is possible that Aubert portrayed his own success in appeasing Japanese officials in an untruthful manner. They might have been angrier at the Scandinavian states than he conveyed in his reports. The Foreign Ministry had limited means of obtaining first-hand information from the region, however. Thus, Aubert’s accounts are

By keeping a low profile in the League and allowing Aubert to appease the Japanese whenever necessary, it seems that the Norwegian government avoided any real harm to their relationship with the official Japan both during and after the Manchurian Crisis. There is no mentioning of any negative publicity about Norway in Japanese press in Aubert's reports after May 1933. Thus, I presume that it either stopped, became less severe over time or that Aubert just ceased to report it.

Were there any consequences of the negative publicity? Pressure from interest groups and the foreign envoys in East Asia made Norwegian shipping and trade interests one of the most important reasons for keeping a low profile during the Manchurian Crisis and afterwards. In March 1932, Hem claims that Braadland received several letters from different Norwegian business organisations, who advised him against doing anything in Genève that could antagonise their business partners in East Asia.³²⁰ According to Hem, the shipping and export industries were especially worried, because they claimed to have already lost quite a few orders because of Norwegian policies in Genève.³²¹ As seen in the last chapter, this matched the view of Aubert and Aall as well. During the same time, Aubert also mentioned that Norwegian business men in Tokyo were being questioned by their Japanese peers about why Norway was acting "so anti-Japan" in Genève.³²² Apparently, both business men and officials from the Foreign Ministry believed that Norway's actions in Genève could influence its economic interests in East Asia.

There are sources suggesting that also the delegation at the League was concerned that Norwegian foreign policy in Genève could influence its interests in China. In 1934, Norway supported re-electing China as a non-permanent member at the Council. The general consul in Shanghai, Aall, had been against this. In a letter to the Foreign Ministry dated the 1st of September 1934, he argued that:

"China needing the help of the League of Nations for its restoration is *one* matter. It is not certain, however, that Chinese representatives at the League of Nations would be a truly useful addition on the League's part. At least, one has to remember that Chinese politicians are boundlessly irresponsible".³²³

likely to have been the basis for Norwegian foreign political decision-making in East Asia, whether his reports were truthful or not.

³²⁰ Hem (1987): 78

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (30.04.1932). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene. Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078

³²³ My translation, the original quote reads: "At China trenger folkeforbundets hjelp til sin rekonstruksjon er *en* ting, at kinesiske representanter i Folkeforbundet skulde bety virkelig nyttig tilvekst for F.F. er derimot kanskje

The election of non-permanent seats for the Council is also mentioned in a report made by Johan Ludwig Mowinckel, the Norwegian foreign minister and prime minister, to the Secretary General of Foreign Affairs, August W. S. Esmarch.³²⁴ According to Mowinckel, China was not re-elected for a seat at the Council.³²⁵ Since the Nordic delegations could not agree to vote in unison beforehand, Mowinckel claimed that Norway and Denmark voted in favour while Sweden and Finland voted against.³²⁶ The reason for the Norwegian support was partially that the Council would lack Asian representation otherwise (not counting Turkey). First and foremost, however, Mowinckel says that he considered “[...] the extensiveness of our trade political interests in China, and found it most appropriate to vote as we did”.³²⁷

For some reason, Mowinckel was apparently more preoccupied with protecting Norwegian economic interests in China than the General Consul in Shanghai. While Aall argued according to what would benefit the League, the prime minister was more considerate of the bilateral relationship with China. As explained in chapter 1, official Norwegian trade statistics suggests that Japan was more important than China for Norwegian economic interests from 1931 to 1937. Thus, Aall’s lack of consideration towards Norway’s relationship with China makes more sense. Maybe he reasoned that Norwegian interests in the region would persevere regardless of the bilateral relation? After all, Japan had emerged as a serious threat to Western trade interests in East Asia after the Manchurian Crisis.³²⁸ Therefore, Aall might have seen the Japanese as the better bet in securing Norwegian interests in the region.

Norwegian foreign policy in Genève do not seem to have damaged Norway’s official relationship with neither the Chinese nor the Japanese government. At the same time, the source material suggests that Mageli is right when she claims that Japan became a competitor to Norway in several areas.³²⁹ During unofficial discussions at the Norwegian Parliament, the competition from Japan was highlighted several times in 1933 and 1934. However, the

ikke sikkert. Ialfald må man huske på at kinesiske politikere er bundløs uvederheftige”. Nicolai Aall to the NMFA (01.09.1934). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene. Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0075

³²⁴ Steenstrup, B. (03.07.2016, 1948). “August Wilhelm Stiernstedt Esmarch”. In: *Hvem er Hvem?*, ed. 5.

Available at: <http://runeberg.org/hvemerhvem/1948/0030.html> [Read 13.11.2016]

³²⁵ Johan L. Mowinckel to August W. S. Esmarch (17.09.1934). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0006

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ My translation, the original quote reads: “[...] så store som våre handelspolitiske interesser er i China [...] fant vi det riktigst [...] å stemme som vi gjorde [...]” Ibid.

³²⁸ Henig (2010): 152

³²⁹ Mageli mentions shipping, whaling, ship-building and the paper industry in particular. Mageli (2006): 53-54, 88-92, 115-123

members of parliament agreed to refrain from increasing the customs on some products, because they feared that it might affect the relationship with Japan and thereby Norway's economic interests in East Asia.³³⁰ Furthermore, the source material from the aftermath of the Manchurian Crisis may suggest that Norway's relationship with Japan was prioritized above the one with China. The system of joint minister meant that Norway lacked a diplomatic representative, who could have nourished the country's relationship with Chiang Kai-Shek's government. The source material suggests that minister Aubert and general consul Aall had scarcely any contact with the Chinese government officials. Japan was a great power able to facilitate or hinder Norway in pursuing its interests in the region, while China's significance was based on its possibly large market. Even though Norwegian foreign policy-makers attempted to preserve the relationship with Japan in several ways, the efforts were kept within the boundaries that were allowed by the League. In this regard, the Norwegian communication with Manchukuo in 1934 was an exception.

3.2 Norway's stance on Manchukuo

Manchukuo had been the main point of disagreement between Japan and the majority of the League's members during the League's final treatment of the Manchurian Crisis. By adopting the Lytton report, the League admitted Japanese rights in Manchuria, but refused to recognise Manchukuo as an independent state. This also became the League's policy after the Japanese had withdrawn its membership.³³¹ Burkman points out that there was some sympathy for the Japanese case amongst the delegates in Genève, however.³³² When it ended with the Japanese withdrawal, some of them questioned whether the non-recognition policy had been the wisest course of actions for the League.³³³ Between 1932 and 1942, Westad argues that, relatively speaking, Japan invested much more in Manchuria than any Western country did in their colonies.³³⁴ After seeing the rapid development, even some of the traditional elites in Manchuria starting working more closely with the new state and the Japanese.³³⁵ Given the Norwegian priority on its economic interests in East Asia, the quickly-developing and prosperous Manchukuo might have piqued their interest.

³³⁰ Stortingsarkivene. Møte for lukkede dører, Stortinget 1925-1939. 82. ordentlige Storting (29.06.1933). *Innstilling fra finans- og tollkomiteen om tollavgifter fra 1. juli 1933* (Budgett-innst. S. nr. 149); Stortingsarkivene. Møte for lukkede dører, Stortinget 1925-1939. 83. ordentlige Storting (05.03.1934). *Innstilling fra finans- og tollkomiteen om undlatelse av å sette i kraft visse tollforhøielser* (Innst. S.A.).

³³¹ Henig, R. (2010): 151

³³² Burkman, T. W. (2008): 173

³³³ *Ibid.*: 173

³³⁴ Westad (2012): 251-252

³³⁵ *Ibid.*: 251-252

3.2.1 The establishment of the state and its implications

In what way did the establishment of the state affect Norway? According to Mageli, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs received a telegram from the new foreign minister of Manchukuo in April 1932, who communicated that he wished to establish formal diplomatic relations between his country and Norway.³³⁶ Shortly after, the general consul Aall was tasked with finding out how other countries were responding to the letter. Aall informed the Ministry that neither Denmark, Sweden nor Switzerland had responded at all, which also became the Norwegian approach for the time being.³³⁷ The establishment of the new state had driven the Chinese to deliver a formal protest to Japan, who denied any responsibility in the matter.³³⁸ The whole affair raised several issues that had to be addressed by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, however. Aubert highlights this concern in a report from February 1932: "An independent Manchuria will cause a discussion of different international issues, such as the validity of treaties concluded between China and other powers, [...] extraterritoriality [...] et cetera".³³⁹

These issues involved Norway as well, since it was one of the countries that had concluded treaties with China in the past.³⁴⁰ The treaty rights granted Norwegian citizens various privileges, such as extraterritoriality, which was important to all foreigners because the Chinese government was seen as incapable of ensuring their safety.³⁴¹ In the master thesis *Norwegian extraterritoriality in China*, Jens Tepstad claims that Norway had entered an agreement with the Nationalist government in April 1931, in which it would keep its extraterritorial rights until the other treaty powers also agreed to abolish theirs.³⁴² The possibility of having to dissolve its extraterritoriality added another layer to Norway's position regarding Manchukuo. Aubert thus kept a close eye on what the other treaty powers were doing.³⁴³ In a report from 1936, he claimed that Japan had declared its intention of

³³⁶ Mageli (2006): 37

³³⁷ Ibid.: 37

³³⁸ Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (22.03.1932). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene. Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078

³³⁹ My translation, the original quote reads: "Et uavhengig Mansjuria vil forårsake en drøftelse av forskjellige internasjonale problemer, såsom gyldigheten av de traktater som er sluttet mellem Kina og andre makter, [...] eksteritorialretten [...] etc." Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (24.02.1932). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene. Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078

³⁴⁰ Wang (2005): 89

³⁴¹ Tepstad, J. (2015): 47-55

³⁴² Ibid.: 98-99

³⁴³ Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (24.02.1932). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene. Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078

abolishing its extraterritoriality in Manchukuo soon.³⁴⁴ He only mentioned it briefly, without drawing a link to Norwegian extraterritoriality, which seems to indicate that he was not too worried that they would have to keep their promise to the Chinese already. After all, the Mukden Incident had postponed the whole negotiation of treaty rights between the great powers and the Nationalist government.³⁴⁵

The Norwegian government seems to have been careful to comply with its obligations as a member of the League regarding Manchukuo. This is important, because open, individual divergence from the Covenant could potentially hinder Norway's status seeking quest of being perceived as a peace-nation internationally.³⁴⁶ In a letter to the Foreign Ministry in 1933, Aubert mentioned that Norway had an honorary consul in the city of Yingkou whose consular district comprised of Manchuria as a whole.³⁴⁷ The Nationalist government did not require exequatur³⁴⁸ for unsalaried consuls, however, so Norway could keep its consul in Manchukuo without stepping on anyone's toes. Should the rules regarding exequatur change, Aubert admitted that he saw no other solution than to dismiss the consul.³⁴⁹

Both minister Aubert and general consul Aall recommended the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to recognise Manchukuo as an independent state. Aubert did not recommend this bluntly, but implied it several times. In August 1932, he sent an article featuring the legal aspects of Japanese recognition of Manchukuo. It was written by the British lawyer Thomas Baty³⁵⁰, and Aubert commented that: "[It] can [...] hardly fail to impress Europe and America that a man of [his] stature [...] emphasizes that Japan's recognition of Manchukuo does not signify neither a violation of China's sovereignty nor the Washington Treaty of 1922³⁵¹".³⁵²

³⁴⁴ Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (22.01.1936). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene. Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078

³⁴⁵ Westad (2012): 166-169; Wang (2005): 89

³⁴⁶ For more information about Norwegian status seeking as a peace-nation, please read: Leira (2015). In: Carvalho; Neumann (2015): 22-39

³⁴⁷ Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (19.05.1933). Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0005

³⁴⁸ Exequatur is the diplomatic term for a receiving state's acceptance of a another country's consul. Neumann; Leira (2005): 543

³⁴⁹ Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (19.05.1933). Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0005

³⁵⁰ Thomas Baty became a legal adviser to the Japanese Foreign Ministry in 1916. He formulated the legal justification of Japanese actions in Manchuria. For more information, please read: Clark, M. (2016) "British Contributions to the Concept of Recognition during the Interwar Period: Williams, Baty and Lauterpacht". In: McCorquodale, R; Gauci, J. eds. *British Influences on International Law, 1915-2015*. Leiden, British Institute of International and Comparative Law.

³⁵¹ The Washington Naval Treaty of 1922 was an extension of the United States' Open Door Policy. It determined the status of China, and limited the naval arms race in Asia. Westad, O. (2012): 130-132; Spence, J. (1999). *The Search for Modern China*, 2nd ed. New York, W. W. Norton & Company: 360

The issue of recognition became a recurring theme in Aubert's reports from 1932 and onwards. It is highly likely that it was a much discussed topic in the foreign settlement, because Aubert often wrote that there were rumours that one country or another was considering recognising Manchukuo.³⁵³ Aall, on the other hand, was more explicit about his views: "If looking at the matter modestly, practically and objectively, there should be every reason for the powers to recognise the new state [...]".³⁵⁴ He admitted that there were certain arguments against recognition, but emphasized that the new state and its people were becoming prosperous and peaceful.³⁵⁵ Since the Europeans and Americans primarily came to East Asia to trade, Aall believed that:

"[...] whatever theories one has to present with regard to lofty assurances of altruist interest in the Far Eastern people; - it is trade, shipping and industry interests that will ultimately have the final say. I believe that [...] the practical man reasons like this: recognise the new state, allow it the chance to develop [...]. They will have effective government, peace and order and thus, commerce and prosperity".³⁵⁶

Despite the government's obligations as a member of the League, both Aall and Aubert saw recognition of Manchukuo as a way of pursuing Norwegian economic interests in East Asia. At the same time, they could not do anything without the government's approval. The changing Norwegian governments of the 1930s generally took great care in staying impartial, or follow the policies of Great Britain and other Scandinavian states in international matters that did not concern Norwegian key interests.³⁵⁷ As mentioned previously, however, Norway's communication with Manchukuo was an exception in this regard.

³⁵² My translation, the original quote reads: "[Det] kan [...] neppe undgå å gjøre inntrykk i Europa og Amerika at en mann av [hans] anseelse [...] fremhever at Japans anerkjennelse av Mansjukuo ikke betyr en krenkelse hverken av Kinas suverenitet eller av Washington-traktaten av 1922". Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (23.08.1932). Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0004

³⁵³ Ludvig C. M. Aubert to the NMFA (13.09.1932). Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0004

³⁵⁴ My translation, the original quote reads: "Ser man helt nøkternt, praktisk og objektivt på tingen skulde det jo være all foranledning for maktene til å anerkjenne den nye stat [...]". Nicolai Aall to the NMFA (06.03.1934). Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0006

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ My translation, the original quote reads: "[...] hvad teorier man fra tid til annen enn måtte fremsette i forbindelse med høitflyvende forsikringer om uegennyttig interesse for Østens folk; - det er handelens, skibsfartens og industriens interesser, som til syvende og sist får det avgjørende ord. [...] Jeg tror nok at [...] den praktiske mann resonnerer som så: Annerkjenn den nye stat, la den få en chance til å utvikle seg [...]. Der vil bli et effektivt styre, fred og orden og dermed handel, liv og rørelse." Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Haug (2012): 7-11, 435-436; Riste (2005): 112-113

3.2.2 The Norwegian-Manchurian communication

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs received a telegram from the Foreign Minister of Manchukuo on the 1st of March 1934, which announced the inauguration of Pu Yi as emperor of the state.³⁵⁸ As noted earlier, this was not the first telegram expressing wishes to establish diplomatic ties between Manchukuo and Norway. Neither was it addressed to Norway in particular, seeing that a great many countries received the same telegram.³⁵⁹ The next day, a reply was sent to Manchukuo in the name of the Norwegian Foreign Minister. It contained the following: “Have honour acknowledge receipt your telegram announcing accession to throne of Manchoutikuo of new emperor and join Your Excellency’s wishes for development of good relations between the two countries”.³⁶⁰ Instead of following the earlier approach of not responding, the Norwegian Foreign Minister (apparently) had replied that he too hoped they could establish a positive relationship with Manchukuo.

The delegate in Genève, Hersleb Birkeland, expressed a certain confusion in his letter dated the 8th of March 1934.³⁶¹ According to Birkeland, the League of Nations’ information department had notified him about the Norwegian response to the telegram from Manchukuo.³⁶² Furthermore, he had been told that only ten states had responded, and that these included Norway, the Vatican, Lithuania, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Liberia.³⁶³ In her book, Mageli points out the absurdity of the whole situation, particularly with regard to the unusual party of states Norway had placed itself amongst.³⁶⁴ According to Birkeland’s letter, the telegram had caused quite a fuss within the information department.³⁶⁵ Thus, he requested more extensive information from the ministry, and reasoned (rather hopefully) that it was all based on some misunderstanding.³⁶⁶ According to Birkeland, the matter was only made worse

³⁵⁸ Minister of Foreign Affairs in Manchukuo to the NMFA (01.03.1934). Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0006

³⁵⁹ Mageli (2006): 41

³⁶⁰ 'Manchoutikuo' is an uncommon spelling of Manchukuo. Norwegian Foreign Minister to the Foreign Minister of Manchukuo (02.03.1934). Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0006

³⁶¹ Hersleb Birkeland to the NMFA (08.03.1934). Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0006.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ According to Mageli, there were 8 states in total: Norway, Lithuania, Liberia, El Salvador, The Vatican, Nepal, Turkey and the Dominican Republic. Mageli (2006): 41-42

³⁶⁵ Hersleb Birkeland to the NMFA (08.03.1934). Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0006

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

by the fact that the Norwegian delegate, Christian Lous Lange, had been Chairman of the committee responsible for the League's policy of non-recognition of Manchukuo.³⁶⁷

Before Birkeland's letter reached the Foreign Ministry, however, Rolf Andvord sent a copy of the correspondence with Manchukuo along with a note asking the delegation to inform the League of Nations' information department about the communication with Manchukuo.³⁶⁸ One interesting aspect to this note is that it reveals the writer of the response telegram to Manchukuo to be Rolf Andvord, head of the Foreign Ministry's League of Nations department, and not foreign minister Mowinckel as suggested on the telegram.³⁶⁹ The next day, someone within the Foreign Ministry sent a telegram to the delegation saying to cancel the previous request.³⁷⁰ This implies that either the Foreign Ministry had realised the unpleasant situation they had put themselves in, or maybe the letter from Birkeland had finally arrived. Nevertheless, they were slow to respond to his request for an explanation. On the 19th of March, Birkeland wrote another letter saying that he had been questioned about the response telegram in Genève, and did not know what to say since he had not yet received any instructions.³⁷¹ He had explained to the interested parties that he: "assumed the telegram was meant as an act of courtesy to acknowledge the reception of the telegram from Manchukuo".³⁷² Firmly convinced that the telegram did not imply Norwegian recognition of the new state, Birkeland further suggested that it probably had been written by some young, subordinate officer or based on a clerical error.³⁷³

A few days later, a letter from the Foreign Ministry instructed the delegation to tell anyone who asked that the telegram to Manchukuo had not been a declaration of Norwegian recognition of Manchukuo or its government.³⁷⁴ Judging by the available source material, these were the only written instructions that the Norwegian delegation received from the Foreign Ministry regarding the matter. Birkeland wrote back to the Ministry soon after

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Rolf Andvord to the Norwegian delegation at the League of Nations (13.03.1934). Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0006

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ The telegram said: "3 mit nr 19 av 13 dennes annulleres = noreg". "Nr 19" being the Ministry's file number for the previous letter by Andvord, which was sent "av 13 dennes" or on the 13th of the current month. Telegram from unnamed author to the Norwegian delegation at the League of Nations (14.03.1934).

Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0006

³⁷¹ Hersleb Birkeland to the NMFA (19.03.1934). Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0006

³⁷² My translation, the original quote reads: "[...] [han] gikk ut fra at telegrammet var ment som en høflighetsakt for å erkjenne mottagelsen av telegrammet fra Mansjukuo". Ibid.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Rasmus I. B. Skylstad to the Norwegian delegation at the League of Nations (16.03.1934). Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0006

receiving the letter, and asked for further information.³⁷⁵ If there were any further explanation provided by the Ministry, I have not been able to track them down at the National Archives.

Mageli is the first (and only) historian to analyse the disputed response telegram to Manchukuo. Based on new source findings, I disagree with Mageli's claim that the response telegram signified a Norwegian recognition of Manchukuo.³⁷⁶ She is mistaken when she claims that the Foreign Ministry's explanation of the telegram was that it had been written by mistake and by "a young, subordinate officer".³⁷⁷ The source material clearly suggests that these were Birkeland's explanations given without instructions from the foreign ministry.³⁷⁸ The only clarification provided by the Ministry was that the telegram was not a recognition of Manchukuo.³⁷⁹ It is puzzling that the Ministry did not offer any more explanation to the Norwegian delegation. If the telegram was written by mistake, then why did not the Ministry use this excuse? The time it took before someone at the Ministry realised the exposed Norwegian position is curious as well. The original response letter was sent on the 2nd of March, and the delegation was asked to inform the League's information department 11 days later. In the end, it took the Ministry 12 days before cancelling the former request, which implies that they had finally realised the mistake, or at least its embarrassing consequences.

I argue that the telegram cannot be regarded as an official Norwegian recognition of Manchukuo, since the Ministry clearly denied it. The response telegram might just have been a clerical error by Andvord. If so, it is surprising that he overlooked the mistake twice – first, when writing the response telegram; second, when instructing the delegation to inform the League's information department. Still, I argue that the response telegram at most might signify an individual attempt by Andvord at reaching out to Manchurian or Japanese authorities.

Fure has pointed to the tendency of elitism in Norwegian foreign policy making.³⁸⁰ Haug agrees and claims that Norwegian foreign policy was shaped by just a few people in the

³⁷⁵ Hersleb Birkeland to the NMFA (20.03.1934). Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0006

³⁷⁶ Mageli (2006): 42

³⁷⁷ Ibid.: 42

³⁷⁸ Hersleb Birkeland to the NMFA (19.03.1934). Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0006; Rasmus I. B. Skylstad to the Norwegian delegation at the League of Nations (16.03.1934). Utenriksdepartementet. Den norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0006

³⁷⁹ Rasmus I. B. Skylstad to the Norwegian delegation at the League of Nations (16.03.1934). Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0006

³⁸⁰ Fure (1996): 12

interwar era.³⁸¹ Accordingly, Norwegian foreign policy towards the League was decided by an even smaller circle.³⁸² Thus, it is possible that Andvord acted alone without the rest of the Ministry being aware. He had been head of the Foreign Ministry's League of Nations' department since 1929, and part of the Norwegian delegation during the entire Manchurian Crisis. It is therefore unreasonable to presume that he did not know about the League's non-recognition policy regarding Manchukuo. The same year that the telegram was sent, in 1934, Andvord was transferred to London where he served as Secretary to the legation.³⁸³ His many years of Norwegian policy making regarding the League came to an end – could it be that he was transferred because of the telegram?³⁸⁴

Even though the Ministry officials might have wished for it, the Norwegian communication with Manchukuo was not forgotten by the international community just yet. In addition to other delegates at the League, both Chinese and Japanese officials and newspapers demanded an explanation.³⁸⁵ Thus, the Norwegian delegation had to repeat the same phrase “not meant as a recognition” over and over again.³⁸⁶ In the end, the instructions regarding the Sino-Japanese conflict for the League of Nations 15th Assembly from the Foreign Ministry to the Norwegian delegation read as follows: “It is based on a misunderstanding when it has been suggested that Norway intended to recognise Manchuria as an independent state without regard for the League of Nations' stance in this matter”.³⁸⁷

3.3. Concluding remarks

Norway joined the (almost) unanimous League condemnation of Japanese actions in Manchuria, but political and economic interests in East Asia made any further action

³⁸¹ Haug (2012): 434-435

³⁸² Ibid.: 434-435

³⁸³ Steenstrup, B. (03.07.2016, 1973). “Rolf Andvord”. In: *Hvem er Hvem?*, 11th ed. Available at: <http://runeberg.org/hvemerhvem/1973/0022.html> [Read 13.11.2016]

³⁸⁴ According to an article written by the historian Sven G. Holtsmark, Andvord became the Norwegian ambassador to the Soviet Union in 1942. Holtsmark claims that Andvord's optimistic reports might have encouraged the emergence of the Norwegian 'bridge-building policy' (brobyggingspolitikken) towards the Soviet Union after the Second World War. Holtsmark, Sven G. (13.02.2009) “Rolf Andvord”. In: *Norsk biografisk leksikon* [Internet]. Available at: https://nbl.snl.no/Rolf_Andvord [Read 13.11.2016]. The following is only my speculation, but interesting nonetheless. If the telegram represented a gesture of reaching out to Japanese/Manchurian authorities, could it be seen as paralleling Andvord's optimism towards the Soviets?

³⁸⁵ See letters from the Norwegian delegation at the League of Nations to the NMFA (March-May 1934). Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0006

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ My translation, the original quote reads: “Det beror på en misforståelse når det har vært antydnet at Norge skulde ha til hensikt å anerkjenne Mansjuria som selvstendig stat uten hensyn til Folkeforbundets holdning i denne sak”. Instructions from Johan L. Mowinckel to the delegation for the 15th Assembly of the League of Nations. (01.09.1934). Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0006

undesirable to the Norwegian government. At the same time, the source material suggests that peer pressure might have influenced Norwegian decision-making, if the alternative had been risking Norwegian status seeking by standing out in Genève. In light of this, the foreign policy-makers were generally careful to comply with the expectancies of the League and the international community. In this regard, the communication with Manchukuo in 1934 demonstrated the embarrassment experienced on Norway's part when standing apart from its peers in Genève.

Berg claims that keeping Norway neutral in war was one of the most important aims of Norwegian foreign policy until 1940.³⁸⁸ Accordingly, Norway might have joined the moral condemnation of Japanese action in Manchuria, but it was not in the country's interest to explicitly side with either party in the Sino-Japanese conflict. Haug claims that Norway considered itself "threat-free" until the end of the 1930s, and was therefore uninterested in other countries' ventures as long as it did not affect Norwegian shipping or industries.³⁸⁹ Norwegian actions during the Sino-Japanese ceasefire support this claim. This chapter has shown how the relationship with Japan increased in importance as means to pursue Norwegian interests in East Asia. Although the Norwegian government had failed to remain neutral in the Manchurian Crisis, they seem to have avoided damaging the relationship by treading carefully in Genève and Oslo. The Ministry implicitly allowed Aubert to express his personal sympathy for Japan to Japanese officials in order to preserve the relationship.

On one hand, Norway sought international status as a peace-nation, but were at the same time most concerned with its own economic and political interests. As Aall argues: "[...] whatever [...] lofty assurances of altruist interests in the Far Eastern people; - it is trade, shipping and industry interests that will ultimately have the final say".³⁹⁰

³⁸⁸ Berg (2016): 12

³⁸⁹ Haug (2012): 8

³⁹⁰ My translation, the original quote reads: "[...] hvad [...] høitflyvende forsikringer om uegennyttig interesse for Østens folk; - det er handelens, skibsfartens og industriens interesser, som til syvende og sist får det avgjørende ord." Nicolai Aall to the NMFA (06.03.1934). Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0006

Chapter 4: the start of the second Sino-Japanese war

In January 1937, the new minister to China and Japan, Finn Koren, wrote a report to the Foreign Ministry with one clear message – Japan was arming for war.³⁹¹ Westad claims that Chiang Kai-Shek had expected a war with Japan ever since the Manchurian Crisis started in 1931.³⁹² According to Westad, Chiang Kai-Shek tried to postpone an open conflict with Japan as long as possible in order to have time arming up, mobilising Chinese unity and seek foreign assistance.³⁹³ However, when large-scale hostilities started in 1937, there was no turning back.³⁹⁴ On 7th July 1937, fighting started on the Marco Polo Bridge at the buffer zone between Manchukuo and Beijing. After the Chinese refused to comply with demands, Japanese soldiers started pouring into Northern China. The Chinese responded by attacking a Japanese ship near Shanghai. The battle for the city raged back and forth until the Japanese gained control in November, and started closing in on the Chinese capital, Nanjing.³⁹⁵ According to the British Historian Rana Mitter, Chiang Kai-Shek did not expect much support from other countries when the second Sino-Japanese War started.³⁹⁶ The League had failed to prevent the Italian occupation and defeat of Abyssinia³⁹⁷. The Spanish Civil War from 1936 had also brought Germany and Italy closer together.³⁹⁸ While the United States was keeping out of European affairs, the great powers left at the League, France, Soviet Russia and Britain, tried to resist the increasing, concerted aggressions from Italy, Germany and Japan.³⁹⁹

Fure argues that neutrality returned as a main idea within Norwegian foreign policy from 1936, because of the failure of the League's collective security system in the Abyssinian Crisis.⁴⁰⁰ Furthermore, the attempted sanctions against Italy had demonstrated the risk it posed to Norwegian interests and neutrality. Between 1936 and 1938, Norwegian foreign policy thus gradually moved away from the League's collective security system. First, the

³⁹¹ Finn Koren to the NMFA (28.01.1937). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene. Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078

³⁹² Westad (2012): 253

³⁹³ Ibid.: 247-257

³⁹⁴ Ibid.: 247-257

³⁹⁵ Ibid.: 247-257

³⁹⁶ Mitter, R. (2013). *China's War with Japan 1937-1945*. London, the Penguin Group: 76-77

³⁹⁷ The Italian invasion of Abyssinia, also known as the Abyssinian/Ethiopian Crisis, was a large-scale Italian attempt at establishing their own north-east African empire 1935-1936. The League's attempts to stop Mussolini failed, and Italy left the League of Nations in December 1937. Henig (2010): 154-172

³⁹⁸ Ibid.: 172

³⁹⁹ Ibid.: 172

⁴⁰⁰ Fure (1996): 202-210

Norwegian government attempted a position of conditional neutrality where it would be neutral in war, but might enforce voluntary sanctions through the League.⁴⁰¹ This process also involved increased cooperation between the smaller states at the League. The so-called Oslo group, consisting of the Nordic states and the Benelux countries, delivered a joint declaration in July 1936, where they announced that they did not consider themselves bound to the obligations of Article 16 of the Covenant⁴⁰². Since the main goal was to avoid getting involved in a war between the great powers, Norway and other small members attempted to gain a freer position regarding the use of sanctions.⁴⁰³

Both the shift towards neutrality and the small state cooperation are closely connected to Norwegian actions regarding the second Sino-Japanese War. As explained in chapter 1, however, this thesis will only deal with the beginning of the war (1937-1938). I will examine the perspective of the Norwegian foreign emissaries to China and Japan. Their opinions of the war were communicated back to Norway, and often forwarded to the delegation in Genève. Firstly, however, I will examine Norwegian delegates' view of the conflict, and how they acted during the League's proceedings. Norway did not have a seat at the Council anymore, but still followed the discussions there closely.

4.1. The Chinese appeal to the League of Nations

The Chinese delegation appealed to the League in September 1937.⁴⁰⁴ By bringing the war close to the foreign settlements in Shanghai, Chiang Kai-Shek had caught the international community's attention.⁴⁰⁵ Walters claims that the Chinese did not expect the members' full support, but that they tried to secure the League's moral backing, some material assistance and cooperation with the Americans.⁴⁰⁶ Prior to the meeting of the Assembly, foreign minister Halvdan Koht received three letters from Norwegian non-governmental organisations.⁴⁰⁷ These letters requested the Norwegian delegation to act in accordance with the principles of the Covenant, and not support any resolution containing the approval of intervention in Spain,

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.: 202-210

⁴⁰² Article 16 was the core of the League's collective security system, and dealt with the consequences for members who resorted to war. Among other measures, this included the severance of trade and financial relations with the aggressor. Avalon Project (December 1924, 2008). "Article 16". In: *The Covenant of the League of Nations*.

⁴⁰³ Fure (1996): 202-205

⁴⁰⁴ Walters (1952): 733-734

⁴⁰⁵ Mitter (2013): 96-97

⁴⁰⁶ Walters (1952): 733-734

⁴⁰⁷ Norsk Lokomotivmannsforbund to Halvdan Koht (08.09.1937); Norsk Kvinnesaksforening to Halvdan Koht (10.09.1937); Norges Fredsforening to Halvdan Koht (September 1937). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0008.

the Japanese occupation of Manchuria or the Italian occupation of Abyssinia.⁴⁰⁸ After receiving the letters, Koht soon summoned all the Nordic delegations to try to reach a joint position regarding the above-mentioned issues. According to the report from the meeting, Carl Joachim Hambro, president of the Norwegian parliament, revealed that the Chinese would request exemption from paying their contingent of 1937 because of the state of war in their country.⁴⁰⁹ He argued that the League would do well to comply with China's request, but the Swedish delegate objected that such an exemption could entail naming Japan as the aggressor.⁴¹⁰ It is worth pointing out that, in this case, the Swedish were the ones suggesting a more careful approach. As mentioned in chapter 1, Pedersen argues that the international attention towards the League might have hindered its peacekeeping efforts.⁴¹¹ The publicity of the League proceedings affected what the delegates could say but not their actions, which in turn created a gulf between reality and public expectation that became a force for destabilization.⁴¹² Even though they might act in another direction, it was important for the Norwegian delegation to appear to the public as the peace-nation it wanted to be perceived as. Conclusively, the Nordic delegations could not reach an agreement, so they decided to wait and see how the meeting went.⁴¹³

How did the League respond to the Chinese appeal? The matter was first treated at the League by the committee, which had been established at the end of the Manchurian Crisis.⁴¹⁴ The Japanese claim of acting in self-defence was rejected, and the committee concluded that their actions represented treaty violations. The Assembly quickly endorsed the Committee's resolutions, which gave the Chinese the moral support they had been looking for.⁴¹⁵ The resolution contained a condemnation of Japanese bombardment of Chinese towns as well, but

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid. It is understandable that there were rumours about what the League would do about Italy. The sanctions against Mussolini had been abandoned for some time, and Norway had actually entered a new trade agreement with Italy a few months earlier. Bakke, B. L. (2016). *Norge og konflikten mellom Italia og Etiopia 1935-1936: interesser og påvirkningskraft* [master thesis]: 91-93. Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/2412986> [Read 13.11.2016]

⁴⁰⁹ Halvdan Koht to the NMFA (27.09.1937). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0008

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Pedersen (2007): 1092-1093

⁴¹² Ibid.: 1098-1099

⁴¹³ Halvdan Koht to the NMFA (27.09.1937). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0008

⁴¹⁴ The Advisory Committee on the Far East consisted of the committee of nineteen, which had been set up in order to enforce and monitor the League's past and present resolutions regarding the Manchurian Crisis, and Canada and the Netherlands. Steiner (2005): 736; Nish, I. H. (2009). *Japan's struggle with internationalism: Japan, China and the League of Nations*. Abingdon, Routledge.

⁴¹⁵ Walters (1952): 734-735

Mitter notes that once again the League provided words instead of real assistance.⁴¹⁶ In reality, the resolution did not go much further than what had already been declared by the adoption of the Lytton report. According to Walters, the Assembly was almost entirely on China's side, in contrast to the Manchurian Crisis when some approved of Japanese action and opposed League intervention.⁴¹⁷ Even so, Mitter claims that the Western powers did close to nothing at this stage of the war: "[...] despite wringing their hands about the fate of China (and the markets they wished to exploit) [...]".⁴¹⁸ Koht's report suggests that this was the case with the Nordic delegations as well.⁴¹⁹ They viewed the Chinese request with sympathy, but found it more important to avoid getting involved.⁴²⁰

After the resolution had been adopted, the battle for Shanghai continued. In earlier wars between China and Japan, China had agreed to negotiations after a few early defeats. During the winter of 1937-1938, the Japanese government realized that Chiang Kai-Shek was determined to fight the war hoping for international assistance.⁴²¹ Meanwhile, the Western powers became aware as well that the situation would not be a short-lived disturbance.⁴²² The Chinese had requested the League's material support, and asked the members to refrain from helping Japan in any way. In October 1937, the Assembly could not do more than encourage its members to consider what aid they could provide, since most members were unwilling to do anything that could expose them to Japanese retaliation.⁴²³ A conference between the signatories of the Nine-Power Treaty⁴²⁴ in November failed as well. Still, the Chinese delegation continued to appeal to the League and encourage the members to act in accordance with past resolutions and the Covenant.⁴²⁵

4.1.1. The split between the greater and smaller members

How did Norwegian foreign policy-makers perceive the Chinese appeal? On the 29th of January 1938, the Norwegian delegate Einar Maseng sent a report to the Foreign Ministry

⁴¹⁶ Mitter (2013): 97

⁴¹⁷ Walters (1952): 735

⁴¹⁸ Mitter (2013): 101

⁴¹⁹ Halvdan Koht to the NMFA (27.09.1937). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0008

⁴²⁰ My translation, the original quote reads: "Alle så dog med sympati på den kinesiske henvendelse [...]" Ibid.

⁴²¹ Westad (2012): 258

⁴²² Mitter (2013): 96-101

⁴²³ Ibid.: 96-101

⁴²⁴ The Nine-Power Treaty was the result of the Washington Naval Conference in 1921-1922, in which the United States, Great Britain, Belgium, France, Netherlands, Italy and Japan affirmed the sovereignty and integrity of China. This was an integral part of the American Open Door Policy, in which the United States tried to avoid being pushed out of China by other powers. Westad (2012): 130-132

⁴²⁵ Walters (1952): 735-737

about the recent Council meeting regarding the Sino-Japanese conflict. He claimed that the Chinese representative had taken advantage of the situation when the greater members confirmed their allegiance to the Covenant.⁴²⁶ Apparently, one of the smaller powers had expressed apprehension that the consequences of the League ignoring the Covenant would fall on the smaller members.⁴²⁷ To this, Maseng wrote that: “[the Chinese representative] emphasized that the members had failed to fulfil their duties, which naturally was taken amiss during the observance of the anniversary”.⁴²⁸ Maseng found the Chinese declaration offensive.⁴²⁹ This was not because it was untrue – several members had used similar terms about the League’s action before - but because the Chinese delegation placed blame on all the members. As seen in chapter 2, Norwegian foreign policy-makers were eager to blame the great powers for the League’s failures while avoiding to mention the role played by the smaller states. The League meetings were increasingly characterised by a divide between the greater and smaller powers. Norway and the other Oslo states aimed to avoid getting involved in a war between the greater powers. The concern was that the smaller states would lose their say in international politics, if they were forced into sanctions determined by the self-interests of the great powers.⁴³⁰

According to Maseng’s report, the great powers at the Council were investigating the possibilities of aiding China.⁴³¹ In his view, the great powers’ attempts at helping China had to be understood in relation to the smaller states’ plan to make sanctions optional for each individual member.⁴³² Maseng wrote that: "If the League’s great powers execute such a serious measure [...] – a measure that likely will contain a very severe stance [...] towards the aggressor – the smaller states’ attempt will lose much of its moral strength”.⁴³³ If the great powers’ attempt at aiding China failed, Maseng considered it beneficial to the position of the smaller states.⁴³⁴ Assuming that the smaller states managed to avoid getting involved in the

⁴²⁶ Einar Maseng to the NMFA (29.01.1938). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0008

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

⁴²⁸ My translation, the original quote reads: “[Den kinesiske representanten] fremhevet [...] at medlemmene hadde sviktet sine plikter, og dette skurret naturligvis sterkt under jubileumshøytideligheten”. Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Fure (1996): 202-205

⁴³¹ Einar Maseng to the NMFA (29.01.1938). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0008

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ My translation, the original quote reads: “Hvis Forbundets stormakter gjør et såvidt alvorlig tiltak [...] – et tiltak som sannsynligvis vilde trekke efter sig en meget skarp holdning [...] overfor aggressøren – vil småstatenes aksjon tape meget av sin moralske kraft”. Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

East-Asian conflict, it would be easier to do the same should a major war break out in Europe.⁴³⁵ According to Haug, Norwegian foreign policy makers seldom questioned the value of the League's collective security if military sanctions lay beyond the interpretation of the Covenant.⁴³⁶ The line of thought that Maseng represented is a token of that, but it also points to Fure's claim that the Norwegian government had started abandoning the collective security system provided by the League.⁴³⁷

According to Maseng, the discussions at the Council went rather slowly, because the great powers were deeply divided about the plan forward.⁴³⁸ He commented that: "As before, it turns out that power political considerations determine whether the collective system should apply or not".⁴³⁹ At the same time, Maseng claimed that many of the smaller states were worried that a firm Council resolution would provide a solid basis for actions by the great powers against Japan, which in turn would have to engage the League on a whole other level than before.⁴⁴⁰ According to Maseng, the international media had given the great powers' discussions on the Sino-Japanese conflict disproportionate praise, whereas the cooperation of the United States was almost taken for granted.⁴⁴¹

The discussions turned out less fruitful than the press anticipated, however. On the 3rd of February 1938, Maseng could happily announce that the great powers' efforts had been unsuccessful.⁴⁴² According to him, the resolution declared that the Council trusted the most interested members to consider all possible measures to solve the conflict.⁴⁴³ Maseng claimed that the smaller states at the Council had worked towards diluting the original draft as much as possible.⁴⁴⁴ In his opinion, the resolution was satisfactory, because it did not take the Chinese appeal too far while still containing some significance.⁴⁴⁵ He concluded that: "The authority of the great powers [...] has not been strengthened by this affair. [...] It will not be

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Haug (2012): 34, 411-426

⁴³⁷ Fure (1996): 180-210

⁴³⁸ Einar Maseng to the NMFA (30.01.1938). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0008

⁴³⁹ My translation, the original quote reads: "Det viser sig nu som tidligere at de maktpolitiske betraktninger er bestemmende for hvorvidt det kollektive system skal anvendes eller ikke". Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Einar Maseng to the NMFA (03.02.1938). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0008

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Einar Maseng to the NMFA (15.05.1938). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0076

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

easy for [...] [them], to maintain their leadership over the smaller members in the time to come”.⁴⁴⁶

4.1.2. The return to unconditional neutrality

At a meeting of the Assembly in September, the Chinese delegation made a formal attempt at initiating the usage of sanctions against Japan.⁴⁴⁷ They argued that the previous resolutions adopted by the League had not managed to stop the war in China.⁴⁴⁸ Furthermore, they urged the members to implement measures against the Japanese usage of poison gas and bombing of open cities⁴⁴⁹ in China.⁴⁵⁰ Firstly, they proposed applying article 17 of the Covenant, which dealt with consequences for aggressive acts committed by non-members.⁴⁵¹ Second, the Chinese asked the League to enforce a ban on the exports of weapons, ammunition, airplanes, oils and some raw materials to Japan.⁴⁵² The request went through several commissions and secret Council meetings before the final resolution was finished. The Council declared that the members were allowed to carry out measures against Japan provided by article 16, but left it up to each member to decide whether to enforce it or not.⁴⁵³ Maseng commented triumphantly that:

“The usage of article 16 in this case, [...] is naturally of the utmost significance as precedent. The neutral representatives have in a specific case declared article 16 applicable and legalised the action that individual members might wish to do, but simultaneously asserted that they, in accordance with their neutrality policy, will not participate in any action themselves”.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁴⁶ My translation, the original quote reads: “Stormaktenes autoritet [...] er ikke blitt styrket ved denne affære. [...] Det vil ikke bli lett for [...] [dem], i den tid som nu kommer, å fastholde de små medlemmer under sin ledelse”. Einar Maseng to the NMFA (03.02.1938). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0008

⁴⁴⁷ Walters (1952): 738

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.: 738

⁴⁴⁹ If a city is declared an 'Open City', it means that the government has decided not to defend it, because according to international law it is prohibited to bomb an undefended city. The Avalon Project (18.10.1907, 2008). “Article 25”. In: *Laws of War: Laws and Customs of War on Land*. Hague Conference of 1907, Hague IV.

⁴⁵⁰ Walters (1952): 738

⁴⁵¹ The Avalon Project. (December 1924, 2008). “Article 17”. In: *The Covenant of the League of Nations*.

⁴⁵² Christian L. Lange to the NMFA (17.09.1938). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0076

⁴⁵³ Walters (1952): 738

⁴⁵⁴ My translation, the original quote reads: “Den bruk som der i dette tilfelle er gjort av artikkel 16, [...] er selvsagt av den aller største betydning som precedens. De nøytrale representanter har, i et konkret tilfelle, erklært artikkel 16 for anvendelig og legalisert den aksjon som enkelte medlemmer måtte ønske å foreta, men samtidig erklært at de selv, i henhold til sin nøytralitetspolitikk, ikke vil delta i noen aksjon”. Einar Maseng to the NMFA (01.10.1938). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0076

When the Chinese made the attempt to secure the application of sanctions in September, the Norwegian delegate Christian L. Lange had considered their proposal to be reasonable.⁴⁵⁵ The Chinese account of the warfare made an impression on the League members, but it was already too late. Walters argues that most countries had already declared that they did not see themselves as bound to the obligations of the Covenant anymore.⁴⁵⁶ Norway had never wanted to get involved if it risked national interests. The belief in international cooperation had been severely weakened among both smaller and greater members - Koht considered it a return of the old power politics, according to Riste.⁴⁵⁷ The failures of the League caused a loss of political influence, which made it easier for members to avoid adhering to the Covenant when they did not want to.⁴⁵⁸ In February 1938, the British had declared that the smaller states would not be supported by the League if they were attacked.⁴⁵⁹ Riste argues that the nominal character of Norway's League membership was finally illuminated in July 1938, because the Norwegian parliament unanimously declared an unconditional neutrality.⁴⁶⁰

At the same time, the delegation in Genève and the Ministry in Oslo received reports from the foreign service stations in East Asia. General consul Aall and minister Koren described the resolutions' reception in both China and Japan, but their accounts also serve to further clarify the Norwegian interests at stake in the conflict. Additionally, they provide valuable insight into the foreign community in East Asia's perspective on the events at the battlefield.

4.2. Reporting the war in East Asia

On the 5th of November 1937, Aall wrote an agitated report to the Foreign Ministry about what he called "the Chinese propaganda" regarding the war.⁴⁶¹ He claimed that the Chinese were conveying an incorrect and exaggerated portrayal of the warfare in an attempt to deceive the League of Nations and the international community as a whole.⁴⁶² Despite his warnings, Aall argued that the Norwegian press seemed to believe the "propaganda" which only

⁴⁵⁵ Christian L. Lange to the NMFA (17.09.1938). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0076

⁴⁵⁶ Walters (1952): 735-738

⁴⁵⁷ Riste (2005, 2001): 129-137

⁴⁵⁸ Henig (2010): 173

⁴⁵⁹ Fure (1996): 202-214

⁴⁶⁰ Riste (2005, 2001): 135-136

⁴⁶¹ Nicolai Aall to the NMFA (05.11.1937). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0008

⁴⁶² Ibid.

furthered the Chinese case.⁴⁶³ He exemplified his argument with a Norwegian newspaper article claiming that the Japanese were intending to wipe out Nanjing, and another one saying that the city was already annihilated.⁴⁶⁴ In contrast, Aall claimed to have spoken with a British diplomat who had recently been there, and quoted him saying: “You would not notice [the Japanese bombardments] [...] unless you go out of your way to find the places where bombs have been dropped, you would not see them”.⁴⁶⁵ In retrospect, Aall’s dismissal of the events at Nanjing might seem abhorrent.⁴⁶⁶ Still, he was partially correct in arguing against the notion that Nanjing had been annihilated in early November, since the city did not fall until the 12th of December 1937. However, it seems likely that Aall’s source was mistaken when dismissing the destruction caused by bombings of Nanjing. Mitter claims that the city was subjected to heavy aerial warfare from mid-August, and to such a degree that most of its population had fled by the end of the month.⁴⁶⁷

In this case, it is clear that Aall’s personal opinions of the Chinese coloured what was reported back to the Foreign Ministry. In general, his reports signify that he believed the Chinese to be untrustworthy, and that they were trying to deceive the international community. The report on “Chinese propaganda” is a continuation of his profound negative view of the Chinese people. In his defence, however, it is worth mentioning that the circulation of information was restrained. It was difficult for anyone to know exactly what was happening in Nanjing. Most foreigners had left the city during early autumn, and the Chinese newspapers were constrained from reporting the full reality of the war. The Chinese press also left when Nanjing surrendered, and scarcely any foreign journalist was allowed to enter the city.⁴⁶⁸

Even if Aall’s account was correct at the time he wrote it - that the press exaggerated the destruction of the city before it happened - the report did not reach the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before much later. On the 17th of December 1937, the Foreign Ministry forwarded a copy of Aall’s report to the Norwegian delegation at the League of Nations.⁴⁶⁹ Thus, they

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶ The city experienced the worst atrocities against civilians in a captured city during the whole of the Second World War. Westad (2012): 259

⁴⁶⁷ Mitter (2013): 119-128

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.: 119-128

⁴⁶⁹ The NMFA to the Norwegian delegation at the League of Nations (17.12.1937). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0008

received Aall's letter long after the Japanese had conquered the city.⁴⁷⁰ When the League gathered to review the possibility of aiding China in January, Aall's report challenging the "Chinese propaganda" had been communicated to the delegation. At the same time, it is worth noting that many delegations might have received similar reports, because his position was not that uncommon among the foreign community in China. Mitter claims that there was a general distrust towards the Chinese government among the foreigners.⁴⁷¹ Chiang Kai-Shek was seen as fighting a hopeless battle, because he relied on the international community to come to their aid. The main concern of many foreigners was how their own interests were affected by the war. For instance, Mitter quotes a British diplomat worrying about the effect the Chinese government's "irresponsibility" would have on their interests in China.⁴⁷²

How was the war portrayed by Norwegian foreign policy-makers in Japan? Koren provides a more objective account of the war than Aall does. In January 1938, Koren wrote a report on the situation in Japan where he claimed that the tendency towards military dictatorship had become obvious by recent events.⁴⁷³ According to his report, an admiral had initiated mass arrests on political opponents, after having just been appointed Minister of Internal Affairs.⁴⁷⁴ Furthermore, the prisoners were thrown into what Koren called 'Japanese versions of the German concentration camps' without a trial.⁴⁷⁵ He argued that: "[...] Overall, there can be no doubt that the leadership is determined to bring a fortunate end to the conflict with China no matter the cost."⁴⁷⁶

Koren admitted he had hoped the fall of the capital Nanjing would put an end to the conflict, but that he had come to realise that it could continue indefinitely.⁴⁷⁷ He claimed that the recent Japanese attack on an American gunboat in waters near Nanjing had made Japan more careful not to challenge the members of the League.⁴⁷⁸ According to Mitter, this confrontation could potentially have started hostilities between Japan and the United States, but was avoided because the Japanese government quickly took responsibility and paid

⁴⁷⁰ Mitter (2013): 128

⁴⁷¹ Mitter (2013): 108-109

⁴⁷² Ibid.: 108-109

⁴⁷³ Finn Koren to the NMFA (20.01.1938). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ My translation, the original quote reads: "[...] alt i alt, kan der ikke herske tvil om at man på ledende hold er fast bestemt på å føre konflikten med China til en heldig avsluttning koste hvad det koste vil." Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

compensation.⁴⁷⁹ Koren argued that the United States was growing increasingly suspicious of Japanese intentions, at the same time as France and Britain were looking for an excuse to put action behind words.⁴⁸⁰ Koren's view is similar to Maseng's concurrent concern that the great powers attempted to gain a firm Council resolution, which could provide a solid basis for joint action against Japan.

There is a striking difference between the accounts of Aall in Shanghai and Koren in Tokyo. One would expect Aall to provide the most vivid portrayal of the warfare since he was situated in China, but it is actually Koren who goes the most into detail about the war itself. While Aall's reports focus on advising the Foreign Ministry based on his opinions of the Chinese, Koren emphasizes describing the larger picture of how the war is viewed by different governments. The difference might be explained by the fact that Aall was a non-diplomatic consul while Koren was a minister. Still, such reasoning neglects that the general consul's negative view of the Chinese was shared by the former minister Aubert as well. Their view was not isolated either. Compared to similar sentiments during the Manchurian Crisis, mentioned by Walters, it seems to have been a general tendency among the foreign communities in China and Japan at the time.⁴⁸¹

4.2.1. The Japanese response to the League resolutions

Despite the war, the most important Norwegian objective in East Asia remained its economic interests. This becomes clear when examining Koren's reports on the reception of the League proceedings in Japan. In late September 1938, the Japanese completely rejected the League's resolution that article 17⁴⁸² of the Covenant was applicable in the conflict, and that individual members could individually apply sanctions against Japan.⁴⁸³ As a response, Koren claimed that the Japanese government had declared that it would withdraw all remaining cooperation with League organs.⁴⁸⁴ Furthermore, he wrote about a statement saying that any country resorting to sanctions against Japan would be met with counter-measures from the Japanese

⁴⁷⁹ Mitter (2013): 127

⁴⁸⁰ Finn Koren to the NMFA (20.01.1938). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0078

⁴⁸¹ Walters (1952): 469-470

⁴⁸² Article 17 of the Covenant dealt with disputes where one or more states were not members of the League. In other words, the League had invited Japan to accept the obligations of membership for the purposes of the conflict, but this was rejected by the Japanese. According to the terms in the Covenant, their rejection then made the provisions of Article 16 applicable. The Avalon Project. (December 1924, 2008) "Article 16"; "Article 17". In: *The Covenant of the League of Nations*.

⁴⁸³ Finn Koren to the NMFA (08.10.1938). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0076

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

government. Koren wrote that: “The most important matter [in this regard] is the threat of reprisals against states that will enforce sanctions against Japan.”⁴⁸⁵

Because of the joint declaration on sanctions policy from the Oslo states, Koren expressed that he assumed the Norwegian government did not intend to resort to sanctions.⁴⁸⁶ Ten days later, Koren reported that the Belgian government had declared that they did not intend to carry out sanctions against Japan.⁴⁸⁷ Since Belgium was an Oslo state, he wrote that he found their conduct somewhat “distasteful”.⁴⁸⁸ They had not discussed it with the other governments beforehand, and Koren viewed it as a pre-emptive attempt at winning Japanese favour before the other Oslo states.⁴⁸⁹ In other words, gaining Japanese favour was still on the table despite the war. In accordance with Norway’s newly established unconditional neutrality, it was in the country’s interest to maintain the relationship with both China and Japan for as long as possible.

4.2.2. Defending Norwegian extraterritoriality

In his master thesis, Tepstad claims that the original Norwegian position regarding their extraterritorial rights in China was based on the notion that it was necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Norwegians in the country.⁴⁹⁰ As mentioned in the last chapter, the Norwegian government had agreed in 1931 to abolish extraterritoriality when all other treaty powers did the same. Tepstad is mistaken, however, when he claims that the joint agreement finished the discussions on extraterritoriality between China and Norway.⁴⁹¹ It is true that the war with Japan would reduce the matter’s importance to the Chinese government.⁴⁹² In December 1936, nonetheless, the Chinese envoy in Oslo rejuvenated the debate by asking whether the Foreign Ministry could cooperate with other Nordic countries and renounce their extraterritoriality.⁴⁹³ Koht wrote that he had checked with both the Swedish and the Danish Foreign Ministry, and neither of them had received similar requests.⁴⁹⁴ According to Koht,

⁴⁸⁵ My translation, the original quote reads: “Det for oss vel viktigste punkt i [dette] er trusslen om repressalier overfor stater som måtte ville øve sanksjoner overfor Japan”. Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Finn Koren to the NMFA (18.10.1938). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0076

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁰ Tepstad (2015): 101

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.: 101

⁴⁹² Tepstad (2015): 101

⁴⁹³ Halvdan Koht to the Norwegian General Consulate in Shanghai (08.12.1936). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0061

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

Denmark was unwilling to do anything in this regard before the great powers did.⁴⁹⁵ He, thus, asked for the opinion of the general consulate in Shanghai.⁴⁹⁶

On 13th of March 1937, Aall answered the request by writing a report justifying Norwegian extraterritoriality in China.⁴⁹⁷ He claimed that the reason for only appealing to Norway was that neither Denmark nor Sweden had the same treaty relationship with China.⁴⁹⁸ Aall admitted that many Chinese found extraterritoriality humiliating, but argued that it was their own fault since they: “[...] after all has not reached as high a civilisation yet”.⁴⁹⁹ The Chinese envoy had apparently argued that Norway would benefit from abolishment.⁵⁰⁰ Mitter claims that this happened to Germany after losing their extraterritoriality in China as part of the Versailles Treaty of 1919, because they could trade with the Chinese as equals.⁵⁰¹ In this case, Aall argued that the abolishment of extraterritorial rights was insignificant to the trade with China, because Germany’s trade had gradually expanded in general since the First World War.⁵⁰² His major concern with abolishment was that it could threaten Norwegian economic interests. Aall claimed that Norwegian exports did not suffer from the business men having extraterritorial rights, because the Chinese buyers did not care about the issue.⁵⁰³ Furthermore, he argued that the shipping industry, Norway’s most important source of revenue in the area, would deteriorate if the government decided to surrender extraterritoriality.⁵⁰⁴ In addition to emphasizing the importance of treaty rights for the boat crews, he claimed that the Chinese government would push Norway and other actors out of the shipping industry in the region.⁵⁰⁵ He admitted that: “[...] the relinquishment of extraterritoriality will naturally occur, and when the time comes Norway obviously has to follow”.⁵⁰⁶ Yet, Aall argued against taking the lead in this matter, but wait for the initiative of Great Britain, the United States and France.⁵⁰⁷

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ Nicolai Aall to the NMFA (13.03.1937). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0061

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁹ My translation, the original quote reads: “[...] endnu tross alt ikke er naadd saa høit i sivilisasjon [...]”. Ibid.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ Mitter (2013): 162-163

⁵⁰² Nicolai Aall to the NMFA (13.03.1937). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0061

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ My translation, the original quote reads: “[...] selvfølgelig maa opgivelsen av exterritorialretten komme og selvfølgelig maa Norge følge med, naar tiden kommer”. Nicolai Aall to the NMFA (13.03.1937). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0061

⁵⁰⁷ Nicolai Aall to the NMFA (13.03.1937). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0061

Maybe adhering to Aall's advice, the Foreign Ministry did not make any attempts towards abolishment yet. In fact, it did not happen before 1943, when the great powers relinquished their extraterritoriality partly as a reward to China for allying with Britain and the United States during the Second World War.⁵⁰⁸ In December 1937, however, a letter from Sten Bugge, a missionary priest who had recently been in China, conveyed a challenge to the Ministry's plan of waiting for someone else to take initiative.⁵⁰⁹ The priest had written an article in Norwegian that harshly criticised the system of extraterritoriality for its unfairness and inconsistency. Furthermore, Bugge argued that there was no reason to keep this treaty right anymore since China had developed its law system significantly.⁵¹⁰ To capture a Norwegian readership, he also drew a parallel between Norwegian extraterritoriality and the privileges enjoyed by the Hanseatic merchants in medieval Norway.⁵¹¹ Presuming that most Norwegians disliked the history of Hanseatic dominance, he argued that it was a repeat of that story where Norwegians were on the wrong side.⁵¹²

Bugge's view did not sit well with neither the general consul in Shanghai nor the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Bugge had addressed the letter to the Principal Officer Thorgeir Siqueland at the Ministry, who had been vice consul in Shanghai for many years.⁵¹³ In a letter to Aall, he claimed that the article was not a well-written product.⁵¹⁴ More importantly, however, Siqueland stated that he did not want it published at all, because he believed it could harm Norwegian interests.⁵¹⁵ He claimed to have tried to dissuade Bugge from publishing, but had only managed to convince him to wait for Aall's opinion on the matter.⁵¹⁶ In June 1938, Aall wrote a reply to Siqueland where he agreed with him, and argued that: "[...] not much is required before the Chinese initiates boycotts [...] [The person], who would defend extraterritoriality's continuation, would not be able to speak his mind if he was to consider Norwegian interests in this country".⁵¹⁷

⁵⁰⁸ Tepstad (2015): 101-104

⁵⁰⁹ Sten Bugge to Thorgeir Siqueland (13.12.1937). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0061

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ Steenstrup, B. (03.07.2016, 1973). "Thorgeir Thobias Siqueland". In: *Hvem er Hvem?* ed. 11. Available at: <http://runeberg.org/hvemerhvem/1973/0502.html> [Read 13.11.2016]

⁵¹⁴ Thorgeir Siqueland to Nicolai Aall (31.12.1937). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0061

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

⁵¹⁷ My translation, the original quote reads: "[...] det [skal] ikke så meget til før kineserne begynner boikotter [...] Den, som skal forsvare exterritorialrettens beståen, vil derfor ikke kunne si sin mening fritt dersom han skal

Along with the letter, Aall attached a note meant for Bugge (as long as the priest promised not to make it public).⁵¹⁸ Here, Aall admitted that consular jurisdiction could be a nuisance because it took a lot of time, and he often received complaints from dissatisfied Norwegians.⁵¹⁹ On the other hand, he challenged the notion that the Chinese law system had improved significantly, because he claimed to have seen countless examples proving the opposite.⁵²⁰ Consequently, he argued against publishing the article because he claimed the great powers and “the rest of civilised society” would see Norway as a “busybody”.⁵²¹ According to Aall, there would also be many complaints from Norwegian business men, who would suddenly have to pay salary taxes.⁵²² Aall’s final argument was that the timing was wrong. In his mind, Norway should not give up its extraterritorial rights while the situation was so precarious, and there was no way of knowing the outcome of the war.⁵²³

After promising to give up extraterritoriality at the same time as the other treaty powers, the Norwegian Foreign Ministry tried to avoid the subject altogether hoping that it would prevent them from having to take the lead. Aall mentioned many reasons for keeping the treaty rights to Bugge, but it is clear that he left out the most important reason - Norwegian economic interests in China. Both he and Siqveland feared Chinese reprisals should Bugge’s article become public. Furthermore, it would become more difficult for the Foreign Ministry to defend extraterritoriality, if the article spurred popular support of abolishment.

4.3. Concluding remarks

In 1939, Maseng looked back at the League’s proceedings regarding the conflict between China and Japan, and wondered what might have been done differently had the pressure of fascism been less severe in Europe.⁵²⁴ It is clear that Norwegian priority lay elsewhere at the time. When the matter of aiding China did arise at the League, Norway’s priority was to avoid endangering its neutrality. While the Norwegian delegation in Genève attempted to make the support to China voluntary, Finn Koren was warning the government of the militaristic

ta hensyn til norskes interesser i dette land”. Nicolai Aall to Thorgeir Siqveland (07.06.1938). Riksarkivet. Utenriksstasjonene, Ambassaden/Legasjonen i Beijing, Kina. RA/S-2610/D/Da/L0061

⁵¹⁸ Ibid.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

⁵²¹ Ibid.

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Einar Maseng to the NMFA (20.01.1939). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/2/D/Da/L0008

situation in Japan. Aall, on the other hand, remained a sceptic of anything Chinese, and sent many reports trying to adjust what he saw as the West's uncritical acceptance of the Chinese portrayal of the war.

As seen during the debate on extraterritoriality, Norway still pursued political and economic interests in East Asia. As the world grew more unstable towards the end of the 1930s, national security became more important. At the League, the smaller states started cooperating to free themselves from the sanctions policy of the League, in order to avoid getting involved in a war between the great powers.⁵²⁵ Given the reliance on Britain for protection, the failure of the collective security system was not seen as important to the national security of Norway. Defending the new world order, which Norway had helped create, was not a foreign political priority at the end of the 1930s.

After Norway returned to unconditional neutrality, the foreign legations in China and Japan would remain open for some time. The Norwegian government closed the legation in Tokyo shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on the 7th of December 1941.⁵²⁶ The Japanese closed the General Consulate in Shanghai by force in April 1942, since it represented the Norwegian exile government in London. Shortly after, however, a new Norwegian legation was established at China's wartime capital Chongqing, where it would remain until after the war.⁵²⁷

⁵²⁵ Fure (1996): 202-210

⁵²⁶ Mageli (2006): 46

⁵²⁷ Tepstad (2015): 103-104

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Norway's actions in the Sino-Japanese conflict can generally be described as attempts to remain neutral and avoid getting involved. This was not because Norwegian foreign policy-makers deemed the conflict irrelevant. On the contrary, the dispute between China and Japan was a situation where two different national concerns preoccupied Norwegian foreign-policy makers. Firstly, the conflict happened in East Asia, where foreign policy-makers considered Norway to have significant political and economic interests. Secondly, the dispute challenged the internationalist project that the League of Nations represented. Norway had joined the organisation partly out of fear of isolation, but also in the hope of establishing a new world order where great power politics was replaced with multilateral cooperation based on international law. From the onset in 1931, the Sino-Japanese conflict threatened the notion that the smaller states had succeeded in creating a world order where "right instead of might" had become the new paradigm of international affairs. From early on, Norwegian foreign policy-makers realized the conflict's significance. Despite proclaiming support to the League's ambitions, Norway did close to nothing to help the organisation and its system of collective security succeed.

In the Manchurian Crisis 1931-1933, the Norwegian government consistently acted like a passive observer in Genève. This position was started by foreign minister Braadland, who assumed a cautious and passive role at the Council in order to protect Norwegian interests in East Asia. When the League's proceedings moved to the Assembly, however, the general mood in the League shifted and became more sympathetic towards China's case. Faced with the fellow smaller states' offensive to make the League respond firmly to Japanese actions, Braadland encouraged the implementation of sanctions in order to avoid standing out from his peers. Thus, it is clear that Norway's recommendation of applying sanctions came out of pressure from peers and changed circumstances, and not a change in priority of foreign political interests. During the discussions of the Lytton report in Genève, the Norwegian delegation continued the position of passive intermediary despite fellow smaller states suggesting a firmer approach. The motivations for the Norwegian actions are made more clear in the reports from minister Aubert in Tokyo. Throughout the Manchurian Crisis he recommended his government to stay neutral during the proceedings, because he believed it unwise to antagonize Japan with regard to Norwegian interests in East Asia. The League was

used as a forum for Norwegian status seeking to be recognised as a peace-nation, but only when it was a cost-free pursuit. When the defence of idealist principles could lead to actual national commitments, Norway backed out. After the League's failure in the conflict became clear, Norwegian politicians blamed great power politics. They did not attach importance to the Norwegian role at the Council, even though the object of their criticism - the great powers' reluctance in the conflict - had enabled Norway to maintain the passive position.

At the first part of the Sino-Japanese conflict (circa 1931-1936), Norway's actions gave economic interests prominence. During the Manchurian Crisis and the following ceasefire, the source material also suggests the attentiveness of Norwegian foreign policy-makers towards the international perception of their country. In 1933, Norway's attempt to remain neutral in the Sino-Japanese conflict failed in theory, because it had to give in to the (almost) unilateral condemnation of Japanese action at the League. Norway joined in the moral condemnation, but it was not in the country's interest that the League's settlement of the Sino-Japanese conflict went any further. The source material shows that Norwegian foreign policy-makers would have been willing to implement an embargo in order to avoid standing out in Genève. Given Norwegian status seeking to be perceived as a peace-nation, it is clear that Norway was attentive towards, and careful to comply with, the expectations of the international community. At the same time, it was not in Norway's interest to apply sanctions or embargos, because it could endanger Norwegian political and economic interests and potentially pull the country into an unwanted war. After the Manchurian Crisis, minister Aubert made a great effort at preserving and improving his country's relationship with Japan despite Norway's condemnation of Japanese actions. Japan's standing in East Asia at the time made it an important country to be on good terms with in order to safeguard Norwegian interests in the region. The trade balance and the system of joint-minister situated in Tokyo suggest that Norway in part neglected its relationship with China in favour of Japan. Because of Norwegian status seeking and obligations as a League member, however, the foreign-policy makers were careful to stay within the boundaries allowed by the League.

It was not in Norway's interest to pick a side in the Sino-Japanese conflict, and probably even less so at the end of the 1930s. Corresponding with Riste's argumentation, this was due to the Norwegian reliance on Britain for security.⁵²⁸ It also agrees with Haug's claim that Norway implicitly dismissed the League's collective security system throughout the

⁵²⁸ Riste (2005, 2001): 113

1930s.⁵²⁹ Secondly, Norway had already begun the return to official neutrality when the second Sino-Japanese war started. Norwegian diplomats still attempted to win favour with the Japanese in order to safeguard national interests in East Asia, but it is clear that protecting Norway's national security and neutrality became the most important foreign political concern. To Norway, the significance of the League proceedings was not about the second Sino-Japanese war itself, but on whether or not it would lay the foundations for pulling Norway into a major war in Europe. Thus, Norway and other smaller states challenged the greater powers' attempt to make the League offer collective assistance to China. The success of the smaller states, in making the enforcement of article 16 voluntary, did in practice render the League's collective security system useless. Norway returned to unconditional neutrality in 1938. Given the implied protection from Britain, the failure of the collective security system was not significant to Norwegian national security. It was important with regards to the new world order, which Norway had supported building, but it was not a foreign political interest that was prioritized by Norwegian foreign policy-makers.

In accordance with Haug's theory about Norwegian foreign policy at the League, Norway's actions in the Sino-Japanese conflict was a type of small state realism.⁵³⁰ Norway exercised a "retraction policy" ("avskjermingspolitikk") towards the League's collective security system, which was enabled by the economic crisis and the impression of the country's "threat-free" geographical position.⁵³¹ According to Henig, there was a considerable divide between reality and public expectation of the League's abilities in the 1920s.⁵³² The letters from Norwegian interest groups to Foreign Minister Halvdan Koht suggest that there were public expectation for Norway to act idealistically during the League's treatment of the second Sino-Japanese war.⁵³³ By having officially affirmed a neutral position, Norwegian foreign policy-makers might have appeared like the peace-nation they claimed to represent. In reality, however, national interests were prioritized above idealist expectations. During the Manchurian Crisis and the following ceasefire, Norway's actions were decided based on the country's economic interests in East Asia, but it was also balanced out by the need to act in accordance with Norwegian status seeking ambitions. At the start of the second Sino-Japanese

⁵²⁹ Haug (2008). In Berg (2008): 49-60

⁵³⁰ Haug (2012): 435-436, 443

⁵³¹ Ibid.: 435-436, 443

⁵³² Henig (2010): 106-107

⁵³³ Norsk Lokomotivmannsforbund to Halvdan Koht (08.09.1937); Norsk Kvinnesaksforening to Halvdan Koht (10.09.1937); Norges Fredsforening to Halvdan Koht (September 1937). Riksarkivet. Utenriksdepartementet. Den Norske delegasjon til Folkeforbundet. RA/S-6418/1/D/L0008.

war, however, the project of status seeking was to a larger degree neglected since national security had become the main priority of Norwegian foreign policy-makers. Thus, Norway and other small states tried and succeeded in hindering the League collectively aiding China out of national interests.

Norway's efforts at the League has been depicted idealistically in the past.⁵³⁴ Despite the swiftly changing governments, Norway's actions suggest a consistent foreign policy that put Norwegian political and economic interests before idealist principles. The Sino-Japanese conflict was never important in itself, but because of what it could potentially represent in terms of Norway's national security, economic interests and international status. On one hand, the political motivation factor for Norway was to seek international status as a peace-nation. Because of this, Norwegian delegates and politicians encouraged a world system based on multilateral cooperation in accordance with international law. At the same time, it was a key notion within Norway's foreign policy to avoid challenging the power structures of international affairs, because that could lead to unwanted involvement in "other people's wars". Norway's foreign policy was consistent throughout the Sino-Japanese conflict, but the motivations behind it changed along with the shifting circumstances of the 1930s. Therefore, foreign policy-makers grew increasingly more concerned about the consequences of advocating idealism. While Norway was regarded as lacking external threats, it had been easy to advocate idealism in Genève. When the conflicts of the 1930s made the world situation grow unstable and divided, however, Norway returned to neutrality hoping to avoid getting involved in a possible war. Thus, Norwegian status seeking became a lesser priority in the late 1930s than earlier. Given the reliance on Britain for protection, Norway was not directly affected by the Sino-Japanese conflict damaging the collective security system. Towards the end of the conflict, Norway's actions were based on the need to defend neutrality and economic interests.

The influence of the reports from East Asia should not be underestimated, because Norwegian actions generally paralleled the recommendations made by Aall, Koren and Aubert. The 'racial filter' through which Aall and Aubert viewed the conflict coloured the information, which foreign policy-makers in Norway and Genève based their decisions upon. At the same time, Pedersen claims that the publicity of the League influenced what delegates

⁵³⁴ Jones' idealist portrayal of the Scandinavian effort in the Manchurian Crisis has been furthered by later scholars like Fure and Riste. Jones (1939): 256-258; Fure (1996): 192-195; Riste (2005, 2001): 134-135

said, but not what they ended up doing.⁵³⁵ The source material suggests that the same was true with regard to the Norwegian delegation. Norway sought status as a peace-nation, which made it important to keep up appearances towards the public. At first, maintaining Norway's passive position was aided by the reluctance of the great powers. Their hesitation enabled Norwegian foreign policy-makers to assume the role of observer at the Council, which did not hinder Norway from joining the complaints of fellow smaller states when the League ultimately failed. At the start of the Sino-Japanese war, Norway could continue its position against League intervention due to the split between the smaller and greater powers at the League.

Did Norway's actions in the Sino-Japanese conflict depart from the foreign policy of other Scandinavian states? Haug's thesis does not discuss the Nordic cooperation at the League to a large degree, because he claims that it was situational and not an expressed foreign political approach.⁵³⁶ Haug refers to the historian Ingemar Ottosson, who claims that Sweden and Norway had completely different preconditions based on trade pattern and geography.⁵³⁷ According to Haug, there were more political similarities between Denmark and Norway regarding their League policies.⁵³⁸ In relation to the Sino-Japanese conflict, Danish foreign policy therefore seems like the best basis for a comparative approach.

In the book *China and Denmark. Relations Since 1674*, the historian Mads Kirkebæk illuminates many similarities between Norwegian and Danish foreign policy in East Asia.⁵³⁹ He claims that trade was the main priority of Denmark's policies towards China between 1912 and 1949, which was reflected by the Danish representation there working for political neutrality and economic privileges.⁵⁴⁰ Thus, Kirkebæk argues that economic interests benefitted from Denmark having no direct share in the Sino-Japanese conflict.⁵⁴¹ He does not go into detail about the different disputes between China and Japan, but Denmark's foreign political course seems to have been based on similar motivations as Norway. Thus, it is likely that Norwegian actions and motivations in the Sino-Japanese conflict were not unique. At the

⁵³⁵ Pedersen (2007): 1091-1117

⁵³⁶ Haug (2012): 436

⁵³⁷ Ottosson also claims that Norway exhibited a larger degree of scepticism towards the League than Sweden. Ottosson, I. (1986). *Krig i fredens interesse eller neutralitet till varje pris? Sverige, NF och frågan om kollektiv säkerhet 1935-1936*. Lund, Liber. Referred to in Haug (2012): 18

⁵³⁸ Here, Haug especially refers to the findings in the PhD thesis *Fred og folkeret. Internationalismens status og rolle I dansk udenrikspolitik 1899-1939* by Karen Gram-Skjoldager in 2008. Haug (2012): 21-22

⁵³⁹ Kirkebæk, M. (2001). "The Establishment of a Danish Legation in China in 1912". In: *China and Denmark. Relations Since 1674*. Brødsgaard, K. E.; Kirkebæk, M. (edits). Copenhagen, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.: 107-108

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.: 108

same time, there is still need for further comparative research of the Scandinavian policies in East Asia, because such an approach would be able to illuminate a more complex portrayal of the events than I have been able to do here.

In his essay, Lundestad claims that it is the inner nature of economy and politics to gain as much as possible for the least amount of effort.⁵⁴² According to him, Norway has been particularly successful in this regard, all the while Norwegians continue to believe in their country's moral superiority.⁵⁴³ Not even the communication with Manchukuo made the international community question Norwegian motivations or allegiance to the Covenant. Neumann and Carvalho claims that status seeking is a central motivation in the policies of smaller states, and they hypothesize that it is even more the case than with great ones.⁵⁴⁴ Since Norway lacks military strength, it has needed another way of asserting its position in the world. In the Sino-Japanese conflict, an interplay of national interests caused the passivity of the self-proclaimed peace-nation. Still, the Norwegian public and foreign policy-makers continued to believe in the "small state philosophy" that their country was a guardian of moral in international relations.

⁵⁴² Lundestad (1985): 54

⁵⁴³ Ibid.: 54

⁵⁴⁴ Carvalho, B. de; Neumann, I. (2015): 1

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