Despite diplomatic efforts in Washington and Tokyo at the end of World War I, contention and discord surfaced between the United States and Japan as both countries sought to secure their position and prestige in China. A little-known confrontation between American soldiers and Japanese police and civilians in Tientsin, China, contributed to strained diplomatic relations between the two countries. Diplomats, the press, soldiers, and history contributed to the fracas in Tientsin, which was interpreted differently by the United States and Japan.

The Tientsin incident involved a clash between American soldiers and Japanese police and civilians in which two Americans were injured and detained illegally. Both sides had different explanations for the fracas. Japanese officials claimed that American soldiers raided Japan's concession in Tientsin and harmed their nationals. Americans disputed such an accusation and argued that their troops were attacked in the French concession by a mob of Japanese. In Washington, Peking, and Tientsin, diplomatic officials had difficulty obtaining complete facts related to the incident and two years would pass before the conflict would be settled. Although the Tientsin incident did not become an international crisis, it provided a representation of the tension and animosity found in China among American and Japanese populace, soldiers, press, and diplomats.

In 1919, most Americans were unaware that the 15th U.S. Army Infantry had been based in northern China since 1912, after the uncertain founding of the Chinese Republic. Fearing instability and xenophobia in China in 1912, the United States decided to safeguard its citizens by exercising the authority granted under the Boxer Protocol of 1901, which included a provision that allowed foreign nations to station troops in China to secure passage for their civilians between Peking and the sea in order to avoid repeating the crises of the 1900 Boxer Uprising. Stationed in a sovereign country and part of an international force, the U.S. regiment had to juggle relations with the Chi-
nese and other foreign troops. By 1919, approximately 1,325 Americans were stationed in Tientsin.¹

Located eighty-five miles southwest of Peking, Tientsin was important to foreign governments as China's second major port and dominant trading center in the north. By 1919, more than 10,000 foreigners resided in seven foreign concessions situated south of the city of 800,000 Chinese. The United States did not have a foreign settlement in Tientsin; however, since 1913, Americans maintained a consulate within England's concession area. Although Chinese constituted a majority of the population within settlements' boundaries, consuls of each concession held extraterritorial jurisdiction that left Chinese with little sovereignty. Settlements were self-contained communities where more than 260 nonnative firms conducted business and foreign nationals could purchase property. Foreigners modeled their establishments upon remembrances of their native countries with churches, theaters, social and athletic clubs, and a racecourse in an effort to distance themselves from China's reality.²

Japan was a major world power by 1919 with only the United States and England politically and economically stronger; however, Ameri-

1. "Our Relations with Japan," San Francisco Chronicle, 18 Mar. 1919, 18; Charles W. Thomas, III, The United States Army Troops in China: 1912-1937 (Stanford, Calif., 1937), 3, 12-22, 50; The Fifteenth Infantry Regiment, 1861-1953 (n.p., 1953), 5. The Thomas report provides the most concise, detailed record of the 15th U.S. Army Infantry in China of which few accounts exist. The regiment originally arrived in China in 1900 to assist in suppressing the Boxer Uprising and end the Boxers' siege of the foreign legation compounds in Peking. The Boxers, a flourishing secret society in northern China, had sought to violently expel all foreigners and Christians from China and were eventually joined by the armed forces of the ruling Ch'ing Dynasty. At that time, the 15th U.S. Infantry did not remain in China along with the other foreign troops from Japan, Russia, Britain, and France. Article IX of the Boxer Protocol of 1901 between China and the foreign powers reads: "The Chinese Government has conceded the right to the Powers in the protocol annexed to the letter of the 15th of January, 1901, to occupy certain points, to be determined by an agreement between them, for the maintenance of open communication between the capital and the sea." Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1901 [hereafter cited as FRUS], app., 316. The Chinese Revolution of 1911 brought about the sudden end of Manchu rule and ushered in the brief Republican period. The Republican era would soon dissolve into factionalism and the contentious warlord era. Due to uncertainty and instability in China and due to foreign powers strengthening their garrisons, the secretary of state ordered troops from the Philippines to be sent to North China. The 15th U.S. Army Infantry returned to China in January 1912.

2. O. D. Rasmussen, Tientsin: An Illustrated Outline History (Tientsin, 1925), 107, 263, 283, 304; Albert Feuerwerker, The Foreign Establishment in China in the Early Twentieth Century (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1976), 2-8, 18, 37. By 1900, Britain, France, Germany, Japan, Russia, Belgium, Italy, and Austria-Hungary each possessed a concession in Tientsin. The United States maintained consulates in Canton, Hankow, Mukden, and Shanghai along with Tientsin. Rasmussen's book contains invaluable photographs that demonstrate the European-style structures used in order to create a familiar setting for the foreign nationals. Another book that provides detail about Tientsin, particularly about