

# Chiang Kai-shek's Strategy Development and Transition of Top Priorities in Sino-Japanese War

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## **Introduction**

On August 15, 1945, Japan officially accepted the Potsdam Declaration proposed by the Allied Forces. The unconditional surrender through the acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration meant the end of Japan's war with China (hereinafter referred to as the Sino-Japanese War) as well as that with the United States, Britain and the Netherlands. While maintaining superiority over China in the Sino-Japanese War over about eight years, Japan failed to defeat the country. Why did Japan face its defeat without defeating China?

A well-accepted answer to the question from earlier studies<sup>1</sup> is that China drew Japan into a long war of endurance and achieved an indirect victory over Japan through the outbreak of the Japan-U.S. war. Furthermore, Chiang Wei-kuo<sup>2</sup> (1916-97) in his memoir writes that China took advantage of the Second Shanghai incident (hereinafter referred to as the Shanghai Battle) to break Japanese forces' lines of operations and pave the way for the endurance

strategy for the full spectrum of the armed forces,<sup>3</sup> leading researchers to believe that China had already developed the war of endurance and diplomacy strategy at the time of the Shanghai Battle. This means that the Shanghai Battle plunged Japan into Chiang Kai-shek's trap and made Japan's defeat decisive.

On September 14, 1937, amid the Shanghai Battle, however, Chiang Kai-shek in his diary wrote his hesitation about whether to have a runoff in Shanghai and whether to deepen deployment for long resistance.<sup>4</sup> Then, China's diplomacy with the Soviet Union and the United States was sluggish. These facts indicate that China's strategy was gradually developed during the course of the war into the endurance strategy.

I have never found any study on the process of Chiang Kai-shek's strategy development. Present studies have assessed the Sino-Japanese war only retrospectively, without clarifying the process of China's strategy development during the war. So, they only conclude that Japan failed to defeat China because China's diplomatic strategy eventually guided Japan into the Pacific War and drew it into a prolonged war. They fall short of answering military questions including what Japan should have done to defeat China and what the top priorities were.

It is said that "generals always prepare for the previous war." If Japan is unaware even of the previous war because studies on the Sino-Japanese war have been botched since the war is remembered less than the Japan-U.S. war in the postwar period,<sup>5</sup> Japan may be in an extremely disadvantageous position in facing China.

In this paper, I would like to review the process of Chiang Kai-shek's strategy development and clarify its characteristics while

learning much from earlier studies. This paper focuses on the period between July 1937 and December 1941 when Chiang Kai-shek was apparently developing his strategy.

### **1. Expansion of war and retreat of "peace negotiations" strategy**

On July 7, 1937, a shooting incident at the Marco Polo Bridge triggered an armed conflict between the 29th Army of the Chinese Nationalist Party known as the Kuomintang<sup>6</sup> and Japanese forces stationed in China. On July 8, Kuomintang President Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975) in Nanjing received a report on the fighting with Japanese forces and immediately ordered "no withdrawal," "full mobilization" and "the northward dispatch of two divisions." This is because Chiang believed that he "could not hope for a peaceful settlement without aggressive preparations to show off his determination"<sup>7</sup> in order to avoid escalation of the conflict. Chiang Kai-shek wanted to avoid the escalation because he feared that Japan with military supremacy over the Kuomintang forces would build a second Manchukuo in North China and expand it throughout China.<sup>8</sup>

While ordering responses to the conflict, however, Chiang Kai-shek failed to find Japan's war objective,<sup>9</sup> wondering whether Japan was trying to defeat China or achieve the independence of North China. Anyway, Chiang Kai-shek then believed that Japan would gain nothing from a new war with China.<sup>10</sup> He thought that if Japan dispatched its naval forces to the Chinese coast for a naval blockade to take control of China, the country would threaten Western powers' economic interests in China and have no choice but to antagonize the rest of the world including not only China but also Britain.<sup>11</sup> To Japan that had been increasingly

isolated since its secession from the League of Nations in 1934, any new war with China was expected to be diplomatically disadvantageous.

Chiang Kai-shek also thought that it would be difficult for Japan to build a new independent state like Manchukuo in North China.<sup>12</sup> This is because Japan failed to maintain security while deploying 100,000 troops in Manchukuo after the Manchurian Incident. Following the rise of anti-Japan nationalism through the May Fourth Movement in 1919, Chinese people's anti-Japanese sentiment was gaining momentum. After the Manchurian Incident on September 18, 1931, anti-Japanese movements including terrorist attacks disturbed public peace. If a second Manchukuo were created, Japan would have to station more troops there to substantially increase its financial burden. Given these points, Chiang Kai-shek failed to find any significance for Japan to start a war with China.

Meanwhile, the time was not right for Chiang Kai-shek to fight with Japan. The Chiang-led Kuomintang, though solidifying its position as the central government, was fiercely struggling for power with rebel warlords and the Chinese Communist Party led by Mao Zedong (1893-1976).<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the Kuomintang took a policy of maintaining internal security and repelling any foreign invasion, trying to avoid external frictions until the unification of China. Particularly, the Kuomintang implemented a ban on anti-Japanese movements, the promotion of Sino-Japanese friendship and other foreign and domestic policies to prevent the Sino-Japanese confrontation from escalating, as bilateral trade was increasing. Under these policies, it tried to achieve domestic unification and improve China's national power before seeking to

expel the foreign powers by recovering interests from them and repealing unequal treaties with them.

In fact, the Japanese government set out a policy of resolving the conflict locally without escalating it, meaning that it did not necessarily intend to launch any all-out war. Based on the instructions from the Japanese and Chinese governments, negotiations on a ceasefire agreement took place from July 8 to 11. On July 12, the Matsui-Chin The-chun ceasefire agreement was concluded locally, calling for the withdrawal of both Japanese and Kuomintang troops.<sup>14</sup>

On the previous day (July 11), however, Japanese forces ordered the Kwantung Army, the 20th Division and the Navy to send troops to North China. Then Japanese Prime Minister Fumimaro Konoe (1891-1945) concluded that the Chinese forces would succumb if Japan decided to send troops.<sup>15</sup> The reinforcement led the ceasefire agreement to serve as securing war preparations. This is because the Japanese reinforcement in North China came as China was dominated by a sense of crisis over the potential second Manchukuo and mobilizing troops to demonstrate its determination to block Japan from building the second Manchukuo.

On July 15, Chiang Kai-shek, who might have misunderstood the massing of Kwantung Army troops as indicating an all-out attack, noted that he got information that Japan would launch an all-out attack and decided to send the Central Army northward to Baoding southwest of Beijing.<sup>16</sup> He mischaracterized the ceasefire negotiations as buying time for Japan's all-out attack.<sup>17</sup> The Japanese reinforcement heightened Chiang Kai-shek's sense of crisis.

On July 17, Chiang Kai-shek released a Lushan statement (the so-called last life-or-death situation statement), clarifying his readiness for a war of resistance domestically and externally (the statement was announced to the Chinese people on July 19):

"As far as we are a weak nation, we, if facing a life-or-death situation, will have no choice but to rescue the survival of our state even at the cost of the whole nation. If the last life-or-death situation comes, we will have no choice but to sacrifice anything to wage a thorough war of resistance. If we remain undecided, wander around or cherish the faintest hope of an easy way out, our nation will plunge into irreversible difficulties and misfortunes."<sup>18</sup>

However, the statement was not a declaration that the Kuomintang would immediately launch a war of resistance. Rather, Chiang Kai-shek placed hopes on a solution through diplomatic negotiations. This is because he designed the statement to indicate peace as the best solution and demonstrate his readiness for a thorough war of resistance to achieve the simultaneous withdrawal of Japanese and Chinese troops.<sup>19</sup> This means that Chiang Kai-shek attempted to make a stepping stone to a peaceful solution by showing off his determination.

A major reason for Chiang Kai-shek's hope for a peaceful solution was the issue of how to procure goods during an all-out war. China then had no capacity to produce modern weapons, depending on imports for military supplies. On July 17, military officers concluded that they should put China into the same situation as that for the Manchurian Incident without fighting,

because the Japanese Navy boasting its absolute advantage could ban all military goods or materials imports into China from a wide range of countries to make it difficult for China to procure military goods after China and Japan are qualified as belligerent countries in the wake of their diplomatic break.<sup>20</sup> Kuomintang military leaders, including Ho Ying-chin (1890-1987) and Hsu Yung-chang (1887-1959), thought that the Kuomintang would take six to 12 months to prepare for a war with Japan and should concede as much as possible.<sup>21</sup> This means that the Kuomintang and Chiang Kai-shek thought that they should avoid any war even at the cost of tolerating North China being separated.

However, Chinese forces attacked Japanese forces in Langfang on July 25 and in Guanganmen on July 26. In response to the Langfang and Guanganmen incidents, Japan on July 27 decided to send three more divisions to North China and gave the Japanese China Garrison Army a new task to conquer Chinese forces in the Beiping-Tianjin region to stabilize the region.<sup>22</sup> The China Garrison Army began to attack Beiping (now called Beijing) on the day and took control of the city on July 28.<sup>23</sup>

This series of events forced Chiang Kai-shek to change his approach. In response to the reported fall of Beijing, Chiang Kai-shek told a press conference that he reached the last life-or-death situation, calling on the Chinese people to sacrifice for the state and win the final victory.<sup>24</sup> While the Japan-China conflict escalated rapidly in the wake of the Marco Polo Bridge incident, Chiang Kai-shek thought that he should quickly resolve the conflict. Finally, however, he had no choice to declare a war of resistance domestically and externally.

When Chiang Kai-shek made the statement, however, he had

yet to set out any clear strategy. While Japanese forces were attacking Beiping, he thought that it would be impossible to avoid a war as Japanese had already been assaulting Beiping and that if Beiping fell, he would have to prudently consider "peace negotiations," "no war and no peace" or "negotiation and resistance."<sup>25</sup> He was thus agonizing over his future strategy. While shifting to an approach of resistance without seeking peace negotiations, Chiang Kai-shek was well aware of China's military inferiority and undecided about whether he should adopt the "no war and no peace" policy of prolonging the war while avoiding a frontal war or the "negotiation and resistance" policy of continuing negotiations while fighting to move negotiations to China's advantage. In this way, Chiang Kai-shek clearly had multiple strategic initiatives. Contrary to the well-accepted theory, however, he had not clarified a strategy of waging a war of endurance to win over Japan.

Chiang Kai-shek made the statement on such uncertain war, apparently because Chinese people regarded the life-and-death situation as the Great Wall and the fall of the ancient capital of Beiping as significant. Chinese people saw the land south of the Great Wall as China and the land beyond the wall as barbarian country. Any attack on the ancient capital of Beiping beyond the Great Wall was reminiscent of barbarians' invasion. Undoubtedly, Japan made a strong impact as the invader. Japan's military invasion into Beiping was more significant than its earlier policy of separating North China. The invasion came after the Kuomintang's decision to leave North China in the same situation as in Manchuria, inflaming Chinese people's anti-Japanese nationalism. Chiang Kai-shek clearly took this point into account

in making the statement.

## **2. Shanghai Battle and "negotiation and resistance" policy**

On July 30, Japanese forces conquered Tianjin and launched a mopping-up campaign in the whole of the Beiping-Tianjin region. Chinese forces in North China established defensive positions to continue defensive operations and prepared for the next China-led operations. However, Chinese forces made the preparations in Shanghai, instead of the main battleground of the Beiping-Tianjin region in North China.

On August 12, Chiang Kai-shek became commander in chief of the Kuomintang's army and navy. On August 13, about 50,000 Chinese troops surrounded and attacked only less than 5,000 troops of the Japanese Special Naval Landing Forces deployed for the security of Japanese residents in Shanghai. Of the Chinese forces that were 10 times as strong as the Japanese forces, some 30,000 troops were organized and trained by German military advisers, representing China's elite military unit armed with German weapons. Also participating in the Chinese forces was the Air Force trained by former U.S. Army Air Corps Captain Claire Lee Chennault (called Chen Nate in Chinese) (1893-1958), who was invited as arranged by Chiang Kai-shek's wife Soong Mei-ling. Chiang Kai-shek thus used his biggest trump card. Chiang Kai-shek mobilized such big military power in Shanghai for two reasons. First, Chiang Kai-shek was confident of winning the battle.<sup>26</sup> He thought that in Shanghai where Chinese forces had built stronger defensive positions than in North China, the prevailing elite unit and the Air Force could defeat the Japanese unit. Second, Chiang Kai-shek attempted to take advantage of

Western powers' intervention to settle the battle in Shanghai, an international city where Western powers' interests were complicatedly entangled, as was the case with the January 28 (first Shanghai) incident in 1932.<sup>27</sup>

While Japan and China were effectively at war then, the Japanese and Kuomintang foreign ministries were continuing peace negotiations in the absence of any bilateral diplomatic break or declaration of war. Japan proposed the so-called Three Principles of Hirota: (1) a thorough crackdown on anti-Japanese movements, (2) China's tacit recognition of Manchukuo and Manchukuo's economic and cultural partnership with North China, and (3) anticommunist cooperation, suggesting that China separate not only Manchuria but also North China. Fearing that North China would become a second Manchukuo, Chiang Kai-shek in the last life-or-death situation statement explained the situation in which it was difficult for China to avoid a war with Japan and spelled out four conditions for peace, including China's territorial and sovereignty integrity and the rejection of the Japanese 29th Army's intervention in the Beiping-Tianjin region.<sup>28</sup>

At a time when Japanese forces were expanding occupation in North China, the Chinese side had no choice but to take advantage of war achievements for leading Japan to accept the conditions even to some extent. At a Kuomintang conference on August 7, Chiang Kai-Shek ordered the continuation of anti-Japanese resistance and the foreign minister's peace negotiations with Japan, noting that China should not easily abandon diplomatic peace negotiations while continuing resistance.<sup>29</sup> This indicates that Chiang Kai-shek adopted the "negotiation and resistance"

policy<sup>30</sup> as his basic strategy and attempted to make the Shanghai Battle a decisive one and draw Japan into peace negotiations through a third party's mediation.

However, Chiang Kai-shek did not necessarily consider a strategy for a long war of endurance. On July 13, 1934, he told the Lushan officer training corps that China, though inferior to Japan in science, supply and military power, could resist Japan's invasion by establishing defensive positions at various locations to continue resistance, even without overthrowing the adversary.<sup>31</sup> From mid-1935, he built strongpoints in Sichuan to prepare for the war of resistance.<sup>32</sup> This means that Chiang Kai-shek adopted the "negotiation and resistance" policy, instead of the "no war and no peace" policy for the prolonged war strategy he once considered. He had some reasons to adopt the "negotiation and resistance" policy through a decisive battle. As noted earlier, China had no choice but to depend on foreign countries for military supplies for a prolonged war, but Japan as one of the world's biggest naval powers could implement a naval blockade to make it difficult for China to sustain a war. This problem was one of the reasons.

However, the biggest reason for Chiang Kai-shek to attempt the decisive battle then was a domestic power struggle. He chose to win a preemptive victory in Shanghai because Communist Party politicians and local warlords could become ambitious and engineer conspiracies to trigger a civil war if the war with Japan were prolonged beyond one year.<sup>33</sup>

The immediate problem was that Han Fu-chu who had control of Shandong Province ignored the anti-Japanese resistance policy of the Kuomintang government and protected Japanese residents. While Shandong Province was on the route between the main

battleground of North China (Beiping-Tianjin region) and the then Chinese capital city of Nanjing, Chiang Kai-shek thought that Han Fu-chu would not necessarily follow the Kuomintang government. Chiang Kai-shek's policy of maintaining internal security and repelling any foreign invasion since the Manchurian Incident represented a compromise with Japan. As Japan's invasion made progress, the Chinese Communist Party calling for defeating Imperialist Japan increased its power.

In the face of these problems, Chiang Kai-shek apparently attempted to exploit the Kuomintang's favorable position in Shanghai to win a quick victory for advantageous peace negotiations with Japan. The domestic political struggle led Chiang Kai-shek to adopt the "negotiation and resistance" policy.

### **3. Kuomintang-CCP alliance achieved through Shanghai Battle**

In the initial phase of the Shanghai Battle, Chinese forces gradually tightened the noose around Japanese troops with aerial bombardment and elite ground troops' fierce assault. China continued to build up forces until August 20, boosting the number of troops deployed in Shanghai to 300,000. Japanese troops took and defended downtown positions with the sea on the back under cover of naval bombardment, waiting for reinforcements. For Chiang Kai-shek, the all-out attack on Shanghai had yet to be successful, with Nankou crying havoc, indicating a situation of grave concern.<sup>34</sup>

On August 23, two divisions sent from Japan landed in Shanghai, changing the battle situation. Japanese forces then launched a fierce assault, leading to a seesaw battle. Both Japanese and Chinese forces repeated reinforcements. Finally,

China deployed 73 divisions (with more than 500,000 troops) against six Japanese divisions (with more than 200,000 troops). While the Japanese forces had superiority in terms of equipment, the Chinese forces took advantage of their numerical superiority to make up for their inferiority in equipment. The battle was fierce enough to force the Japanese forces to take one month to advance 10 kilometers.

In September, the Japanese forces advanced further, leading the Chinese forces to lose ground. In mid-September, Chiang Kai-shek hesitated as to whether to gather troops for a runoff in Shanghai or deploy troops inward for a long resistance or whether to lure enemy forces into a southern battlefield south of the Yellow River.<sup>35</sup> By September 16, he began to consider giving up on a runoff in Shanghai and withdrawing forces there.<sup>36</sup>

On September 22, 1937, Chiang Kai-shek approved the Kuomintang's alliance with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in apparent consideration of the situation after the Shanghai Battle, establishing united anti-Japanese resistance arrangements that he led. The alliance was proposed by Zhou Enlai on July 15, 1937, just after the Marco Polo Bridge incident. Then, however, Chiang Kai-shek rejected the proposal because of ideological differences with the CCP. Behind the then establishment of the Kuomintang-CCP alliance, Chiang Kai-shek might have considered the need to maintain the people's support and get help from the Soviet Union after the withdrawal from Shanghai.

Particularly, it was important for Chiang Kai-shek to maintain support from the people. Supporting Chinese forces' fierce battle with Japanese forces in Shanghai was not only Chinese forces'

high morale, but also Shanghai people's positive participation in and support for the war of resistance and assistance from people throughout China.<sup>37</sup> The Shanghai Battle led Chinese people's anti-Japanese sentiment to gain momentum. If the Kuomintang mobilized all Chinese forces for a runoff with Japanese, lost the runoff and had no choice but to accept an unfavorable peace treaty, it would lose popular support and leadership to the CCP. As Chiang Kai-shek noted on the occasion of the later Trautmann peace mediation, he thought that if the Kuomintang accepted Japan's demands, a revolution would occur in China to topple the Kuomintang.<sup>38</sup>

This was because China failed to receive foreign intervention or any concession from Japan despite its propaganda criticizing Japan's earlier military actions as violating international law including the League of Nations Covenant, the Nine-Power Treaty and the Paris Treaty for the Renunciation of War. A Japanese peace proposal made through Britain then remained almost unchanged from the Three Principles of Hirota, demanding the designation of a demilitarized zone in North China, a crackdown on anti-Japanese movements, anticommunist cooperation, the tacit recognition of Manchukuo and the resolution of the North China government.<sup>39</sup>

Chiang Kai-shek, who sought to achieve national unification under the Three Principles of the People,<sup>40</sup> might have assumed that if Chinese people's growing anti-Japanese popular nationalism were connected to communism to topple imperialism, the CCP would rapidly expand. Furthermore, he had no prospect for international support. His decision to continue war while wooing the CCP might have been appropriate for his plan to pave

the way for getting help from the Soviet Union while maintaining popular support.

However, the Kuomintang-CCP alliance brought about no change to the Shanghai Battle situation. By October 25, Japanese forces broke through the Chinese siege, forcing China to withdraw troops to international concessions south of Shanghai. On November 5, Japanese ground troops landed on Shanghai from Hangzhou Bay south of the city. Fearing wear damage through a pincer assault, Chiang Kai-shek immediately ordered his forces to withdraw from Shanghai, ending the Shanghai Battle on November 12 at last.

Due to the defeat in the Shanghai Battle, Chiang Kai-shek fell short of resolving the Japan-China conflict in its early stage. Rather, he plunged into a situation in which he had no choice but to woo the CCP that he saw as his enemy. This was because Chiang Kai-shek was overconfident of his military power and had no choice but to adopt the runoff in Shanghai due to concern over his power struggles with the CCP and other domestic forces. Eventually, the Shanghai Battle demonstrated that his elite troops could not prevail against Japanese military power.

#### **4. Withdrawal from Nanjing and transition of top priorities**

China, while losing ground in the Shanghai Battle, explored international solutions to the conflict with Japan. At a November 3-24 conference of the Nine-Power Treaty in Brussels, China criticized Japan's invasion. However, the conference ended with the policy maintained of imposing no international sanctions on Japan. China failed to get international sympathy.

Before the end of the conference, Chiang Kai-shek, who might

have been aware of the course of the conference, gave up on any international solution and decided to shift to the endurance strategy, as indicated in his speech to the Lushan officer training corps on July 13, 1934. The strategy called for establishing defensive positions at various locations to continue resistance.<sup>41</sup>

Subsequently, Chiang Kai-shek announced to relocate the capital to Chongqing on November 20. He moved most of the government agencies to Hankou in Zhongyuan and the Kuomintang headquarters and some other government agencies to Chongqing in Sichuan. While designating Chongqing as the new capital, Chiang Kai-shek relocated most of the government agencies to Hankou apparently because he was concerned that if Sichuan were isolated, the war of resistance would become difficult to continue. Sichuan surrounded by mountains had few routes to receive military goods shipments. Therefore, the three Wuhan cities (Hankou, Hanyang and Wuchang that are now collectively called Wuhan), where multiple railways and the Yangtze River passing through Sichuan crossed, represented the last bastion that China had to defend to get military supplies until a route to transport supplies from areas out of Japanese forces' scope of influence<sup>42</sup> was completed.

The declaration of the Kuomintang government's relocation, issued on the day, explained that international sympathy and the unity of the people were required to continue the war of resistance as the fighting with Japan was to become a war of endurance.<sup>43</sup> The declaration is interpreted as calling for the people's cooperation to continue the national war of resistance until resolving the war by getting international sympathy, after the Shanghai Battle demonstrated that it would be difficult for China

to reverse Japanese forces' military superiority.

Meanwhile, Japanese forces advanced west from Shanghai and broke through defense lines around Nanjing by December 1. On December 6, they besieged Nanjing. Then, there were only 150,000 troops led by Chiang Kai-shek and Tang Sheng-chih, as well as local residents, in Nanjing. Chiang Kai-shek departed from Nanjing in the early morning on December 7 and moved to Wuhan via Nanchang and Lushan. On December 13, Japanese forces took control of Nanjing, which had already lost its strategic significance in the absence of Chiang Kai-shek and Kuomintang government agencies. The defense of the city was no longer a top priority for Chiang Kai-shek.

##### **5. First Konoe statement and Chiang's "no peace" policy**

On December 17, Chiang Kai-shek in Wuhan issued a statement to the people on his forces' withdrawal from Nanjing.<sup>44</sup> Its summary follows:

"The essence of China's final victory in the war of endurance would be not in Nanjing or any other large city but in the vast and strong minds of people in villages throughout China. People throughout the country in the current situation should confirm the significance of continuing resistance up to the last moment without sticking to temporary fights and believe in the final victory.

- (1) The war of resistance to Japan is a war between the Three Principles of the People and an iron fist and violent imperialism. It is a war for invaded people to win independence and survival from invaders.

- (2) Hundreds of millions of people throughout the country will win the final victory after remaining unflagging, scrambling through corpses, demonstrating resistance as needed and driving Japanese forces into a corner.
- (3) Japan's invasion of China in fact represents the beginning of Japan's global invasion. China's war of resistance is significant as a battle for the nation's independence and as a battle for international peace and justice."<sup>45</sup>

The statement had three significant points. First, it clarified a policy of organizing civilians for guerrilla warfare. As far as guerrilla warfare using civilians is implemented, all the people must understand the significance of their fighting and unite their minds. This may be the reason the statement emphasized the survival and independence of the nation.

Second, the statement clarified a confrontation between the Three Principles of the People and the imperialism to set out an anti-Japanese ideology to override the confrontation between communism and the Kuomintang's Three Principles of the People because the principles did not fit communism that was seeking to overthrow the imperialism.

Third, the statement defined Japan as a global invader, indicating China's noble purpose of fighting for international peace and justice. China was seeking international sanctions on Japan. At a time when China's military inferiority remained unchanged, the statement might have clarified China's stance in a bid to attract international sympathy.

Furthermore, the statement might have been politically designed to appease the people shaken by the fall of the capital

city of Nanjing.<sup>46</sup> However, the long war of endurance in the statement did not indicate any "no war and no peace" policy. This is because Chiang Kai-shek was seriously considering a peace deal with Japan while calling for a victory in a long war of endurance.<sup>47</sup> He then regarded the "negotiation and resistance" policy as a basic strategy. This might have been because behind-the-scenes peace negotiations were being mediated by Germany, leading him to hope that negotiations could make progress depending on developments in the long war of endurance.

On January 16, 1938, however, Chiang Kai-shek was deeply shocked. Japan issued the so-called first Kono statement refusing to deal with the Kuomintang. This led him to assume that Japan would not regard the Kuomintang as a legitimate Chinese government but lead a puppet regime established in a Japanese-occupied region in North China or some other government to become a legitimate one. A peace deal with Japan was likely to dash Chiang Kai-shek's hopes to unite China under the Three Principles of the People. According to Chiang Kai-shek's diary, he decided to reject a peace deal with or a surrender to Japan.<sup>48</sup> This means that he rejected a peace deal based on conditions proposed through negotiations as mediated by then German Ambassador to China Oskar Trautmann<sup>49</sup> and made up his mind to wage a long war. Then, Chiang Kai-shek began to go in the direction of a thorough resistance strategy based on the "no war and no peace" policy.

However, the problem was that China was not able to produce modern weapons for a long war. It was important for China to secure foreign support and transportation routes. It was required to obtain foreign support while protecting transportation routes.

Nevertheless, Chiang Kai-shek coordinated ideologies with the CCP as his arch-rival, rejected a peace deal and began to go in the direction of the "no war and no peace" strategy in order to domestically secure the legitimacy of his Kuomintang government.

## **6. Battles of Xuzhou and Wuhan, and Development of "no war and no peace" strategy**

After the first Konoé statement, Japan's North China forces (North China Expeditionary Army) went south on the Jin-Pu railway to join its Central China forces (Central China Expeditionary Army) that were going north on the same railway after the Battle of Nanjing. They planned to join in Xuzhou, a strategic point in East China. The north-south Jin-Pu railway crossed the Longhai railway in Xuzhou. If Xuzhou fell, shipments from the Yellow Sea side would have been shut down.

Japanese forces gathered 13 divisions or 300,000 troops to launch a siege and annihilation battle in Xuzhou on April 7. In response, Chinese forces mobilized 450,000 troops in the city. Japanese forces suffered massive losses when attacking concrete fortresses. Chinese forces lost ground to Japan's dominant air power and saw their lines of defense collapsing on May 7. They decided to abandon Xuzhou to conserve elite troops. Japanese forces conducted a large-scale aerial bombing on Xuzhou on May 13 and conquered the city on May 19.

Chiang Kai-shek in his diary wrote a pessimistic comment describing the fall of Xuzhou as deeply regrettable.<sup>50</sup> This was because Japanese forces were expected to go west along the Longhai railway, take control of Zhengzhou and Kaifeng, where the north-south Jinghan railway crossed the east-west Longhai

railway, and move south along the Jinghan railway to Hankou to which capital functions were transferred. Chiang Kai-shek thought that as Xuzhou was like the snakehead, Japanese forces would surely take control of Hankou.<sup>51</sup> Hankou was far more important than Guangdong.<sup>52</sup> The three Wuhan cities, including Hankou, represented Central China's political, economic and commercial center where the north-south Yuehan railway starting from Hong Kong crossed the Yangtze River as an east-west channel. The potential loss of the three Wuhan cities, including Hankou, would also mean that of transportation routes linking Shanghai and Hong Kong to Sichuan, making it impossible for the Kuomintang to continue the war of resistance in Sichuan, including Chongqing as its capital. The loss of Xuzhou might have been a painful defeat for Chiang Kai-shek.

On June 3, however, Chiang Kai-shek made a positive comment on the Battle of Xuzhou. "In a long war, a temporary withdrawal does not indicate a defeat. If a strategic withdrawal leads to the achievement of a goal, it may mean a victory."<sup>53</sup> Behind the change in Chiang Kai-shek's assessment of the Xuzhou defeat might have been prospects for international support. Since the start of the Sino-Japanese war, Chiang Kai-shek had continued omnidirectional diplomacy with great powers including Britain, the United States, France and the Soviet Union. On May 30, Chiang Kai-shek got the Soviet Union's commitment to provide weapons to CCP guerrillas, dispatch advisers and give a loan worth 160 million yuan in exchange for the approval of the Soviet Union's special interests in regions such as Xinjiang and Ningxia. He also accelerated the construction of the so-called Chiang support route between the then British colony of Burma and

Yunnan south of Sichuan (hereinafter referred to as the Burma route). Britain and France, though taking a neutral position regarding the Sino-Japanese War, provided military goods to China in exchange for their mining interests in Yunnan. If the Burma route were completed, it would allow the Kuomintang to continue the war of resistance in Sichuan. In the critical situation after the defeat in Xuzhou, Chiang Kai-shek took advantage of Chinese interests to secure international support. On June 9, Chiang Kai-shek ordered government agencies, the Kuomintang headquarters and universities in Hankou to move to cities such as Chongqing in Sichuan and Kunming in Yunnan.<sup>54</sup>

Meanwhile, Japanese forces were going west along the Longhai railway in the direction of Kaifeng. They also began to charge forward to Hankou along the Yangtze River. On June 4, Kaifeng fell under an all-out Japanese attack. In reaction to Japanese forces' invasion, Chiang Kai-shek breached the Zhengxian Huayuankou embankment (east of Kaifeng) to cause the Yellow River to flood to halt the advance of Japanese forces. The flood hit a total area of 3,000 square kilometers in Henan, Anhui and Jiangsu provinces, drowning hundreds of thousands of local residents.<sup>55</sup> The route for the advance of Japanese forces became muddy, stranding Japanese forces' vehicles, battle tanks and heavy firearms after their westward advance along the Longhai railway.<sup>56</sup>

However, Japanese forces advancing west along the Yangtze River captured fortresses one after another, going in the direction of Wuhan. The military commission, the only government organization left in Hankou, met July 6-10 to discuss how to respond to the Japanese advancement.<sup>57</sup> At the meeting where

the CCP's call for resistance to Japan was dominant, a policy of defending Wuhan to the death was adopted. As a result, Chinese forces mobilized all 1.1 million available troops to counter Japanese forces' 120 ships, 500 aircraft and 12 divisions or 350,000 troops.<sup>58</sup> However, Japanese forces with excellent equipment destroyed the Chinese defense lines and conquered the three Wuhan cities on October 24. Both the Japanese and Chinese forces suffered massive losses. Casualties totaled 200,000 for the Japanese forces against more than 400,000 for the Chinese forces.<sup>59</sup> While suffering heavy losses, Chiang Kai-shek got away from the three Wuhan cities, withdrew along with surviving troops and implemented a scorched earth campaign in Changsha before going to Chongqing.

Even after losing the three Wuhan cities, Chiang Kai-shek was not pessimistic. Sichuan, separated by vast precipitous mountains from Zhongyuan (the Central Plains), would be difficult for Japanese forces to capture through large-scale military operations. Furthermore, the direct distance between Wuhan and Chongqing was as long as 700 kilometers. Clearly, it would not be easy for Japanese forces to capture Chongqing by travelling across precipitous mountains while supporting long logistics lines. While having demonstrated their dominant military superiority, Japanese forces found it difficult to militarily defeat Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang protected by the natural fortresses and long distance. This meant a deadlock situation in which Japan or China could not settle the war. Chiang Kai-shek and his Kuomintang with military inferiority had no choice but to depend on diplomatic efforts while waging guerrilla warfare. Then, Chiang Kai-shek found that it would be important to step up

diplomacy with the United States.

On October 28, Chiang Kai-shek in his diary wrote: "As for whether to declare war against the enemy, our country does not have to worry about the declaration because our coastline has been blockaded. If our country declares war against Japan, the United States may invoke the Neutrality Act to ban oil and steel exports to Japan. This may work to our advantage."<sup>60</sup> This measure, which was not put into practice, was attempted to take advantage of the U.S. Neutrality Act that banned military goods exports to warring countries unless there would be no major impact on U.S. national security. While China secured military goods through negotiations with Britain, France and the Soviet Union, Japan depended heavily on the United States for key military supplies such as steel and oil and was expected to have difficulties in continuing war efforts if without trade with the United States. Chiang Kai-shek was aware that Japan supported its war efforts with trade with the United States. At a military conference in November, the Kuomintang government decided to switch over from the defensive to the offensive by adopting a war of endurance focusing on guerrilla warfare using civilians.<sup>61</sup>

The defense of the three Wuhan cities had been viewed as a top priority because their loss to the enemy would make it difficult for China to continue the war of resistance by forcing its goods transportation routes to be shut down. Due to the construction of the Burma route and support from Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union, however, their defense was no longer a top priority. This allowed China to move its capital as the stronghold for resistance to Japan to a location out of Japanese reach.

After the Wuhan Battle, in fact, Japan made no major military

operation until the 1944 Continent Cross-through Operation, although some relatively small battles took place in Changsha, Nanchang and other locations at the entrance of the precipitous mountains. At last, Chiang Kai-shek successfully developed arrangements to implement the "no war and no peace" strategy.

## **7. Impacts of Japanese responses under second and third Konoe statements**

The loss of the three Wuhan cities meant that the Kuomintang lost all major modern cities east of the Central Plains. Chiang Kai-shek's promotion of China's unification under the Three Principles of the People faltered in the face of Japan's dominant military power. After the South Chahar Autonomous Government was established in Zhangjiakou as Japan's first puppet regime in China in September 1937, other Japanese puppet regimes were created one after another, including the North Shanxi Autonomous Government (created in October 1937) in Datong, the Provisional Government of the Republic of China (December 1937) in Pingbei and the Reformed Government of the Republic of China (March 1938) in Shanghai. Nominally, Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang was positioned as a local political party.

Then, Japanese Prime Minister Konoe issued two statements following the first one. The second Konoe statement dated November 3 pointed out that Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang slumped from the position of the largest Chinese political party to a local one, declaring that Japan would forge ahead with the construction of a new order to secure permanent stability in East Asia (New East Asian Order).<sup>62</sup> The statement also clarified that Japan would not reject the Kuomintang's participation in the

construction of the new order if the Kuomintang abandoned its traditional guidance policy and reshuffled its organization. The traditional guidance policy meant the anti-Japanese and pro-communist policy. The reshuffle was interpreted as the elimination of CCP members from the Kuomintang.

The statement opened the door for negotiations to Chiang Kai-shek but effectively urged him to dissolve his regime promoting anti-Japanese policy under a national union including the CCP and abandon the people he attempted to unify under the anti-Japanese slogan. The dissolution was expected to allow the CCP, known for its consistent slogan of overthrowing imperialism, to take leadership in anti-Japanese movements and communize China after the Sino-Japanese war. This may be the reason Chiang Kai-shek in his diary on November 5 indicated his strong sense of caution against the Konoe statement suggesting that the dissolution of his regime be a basic condition for the construction of the new East Asian order.<sup>63</sup>

The third Konoe statement on December 22 called for the thorough military sweeping of the anti-Japanese Kuomintang government and noted that Japan would coordinate relations with China as Japan was promoting the construction of the new East Asian order in cooperation with like-minded people and the construction was gaining momentum with rehabilitation movements seen in various regions in China.<sup>64</sup>

Behind the third Konoe statement, Kuomintang Vice President Wang Jingwei known for his peace deal policy broke away from Chiang Kai-shek and cooperated with the Japanese. The rehabilitation movements referred to Japanese puppet regimes. The statement meant that Wang Jingwei would head the

Kuomintang to unite the puppet regimes after its abandonment of the traditional guidance policy and organizational reshuffle. Japan thus nominally opened the door for negotiations to the Kuomintang with the second Konoe statement under a plan to create a new Kuomintang on its own to establish a legitimate Chinese government. Eventually, Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang would lose its legitimacy. In his diary on the day, Chiang Kai-shek expressed hatred for Wang Jingwei.<sup>65</sup>

These Japanese statements clearly narrowed the range of strategies that Chiang Kai-shek could adopt. If a peace deal strategy were adopted, a Wang Jingwei-led Kuomintang would acquire legitimacy and become a Japanese puppet regime. If Mao Zedong under his slogan of thorough resistance unified the people after a peace deal and won a victory against Japan, China would become a communist country. Anyway, it would become difficult for Chiang Kai-shek to achieve his goal of a country under the Three Principles of the People. Developments since the Marco Polo Bridge incident demonstrated that Chiang Kai-shek could not get favorable peace deal terms and conditions with the "negotiation and resistance" policy. Ultimately, Chiang Kai-shek had no choice but to hold fast to the "no war and no peace" strategy in order to weaken Japan in some way and finally win a showdown with Japan. However, he had no prospect for any option other than guerrilla warfare to weaken Japan.

Support for the Chiang Kai-shek-led Kuomintang's war of resistance was limited to British supplies transported through the Burma route completed on December 1, French supplies via northern French Indochina, Soviet supplies and a \$25 million U.S. loan (the so-called Wood Oil Loan) clinched on December 15.

## **8. Contradiction between the Kuomintang and CCP, and two top priorities**

The relocation of the capital to Chongqing made it easier for Chiang Kai-shek to prevent Japanese forces from trampling down the capital but brought about headaches. His concerns at the time of the Shanghai incident were coming true.<sup>66</sup> In his diary on January 6, 1939, he wrote as follows:

"The damned invader is not an urgent problem, but there are the following four problems that are closely linked to the ebb and flow of the nation and the results of the war of resistance and should be countered firmly:

- (1) The CCP is attempting its development.
- (2) Guerrilla forces in occupied areas are disorganized and confused.
- (3) Local rebels are rampant in CCP-controlled areas.
- (4) Military service systems are confused."<sup>67</sup>

Undoubtedly, the chances for Japanese forces to invade the capital declined. The chances for Japan to defeat Chiang Kai-shek militarily decreased remarkably. At the same time, however, Chiang Kai-shek's influence east of the Central Plains dropped remarkably. This was because military spending shortages were serious. Chiang Kai-shek sent guerrilla troops to non-Japanese-occupied areas east of the Central Plains for guerrilla warfare, continuing seesaw guerrilla battles with Japanese forces in key positions such as Nanchang and Changsha.

Meanwhile, the CCP was based in Shanxi Province, sending the

Eighth Route Army and the New Fourth Army to non-Japanese-occupied areas in Jiangsu and Anhui Provinces to conduct operations out of the Kuomintang's control. The CCP promoted the rent and interest reduction movement and the mobilization, education and management of farmers, activating its own war of resistance and nation-building activities.<sup>68</sup> This was because Chiang Kai-shek provided most of the limited financial resources primarily to Kuomintang forces and little to the CCP's Eighth Route Army and New Fourth Army, requesting the CCP to make self-help efforts.<sup>69</sup> As a result, the CCP conducted guerrilla operations independent from Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang. With their aggressive offensive, CCP forces liberated villages viewed as available for its capture regardless of whether or not they were occupied by Japanese forces, expanding their power more and more.

As the CCP began to get out of the control of Chiang Kai-shek, Kuomintang forces brutally killed 400 troops of the CCP Eighth Route Army in the Boshan Incident on April 30 and attacked the CCP New Fourth Army in the Pingjiang Incident in Hunan Province on June 12. The CCP Eighth Route Army expanded its strength, went south and began to build its base in Subei around October 1940, while the CCP New Fourth Army in southern Anhui Province began to advance north independently. The Kuomintang could not ignore the CCP's moves to take control of northern and central Jiangsu Province.<sup>70</sup> The Kuomintang felt a sense of crisis about the CCP's moves to secure areas under its control and expand its strength. Then, Kuomintang forces attacked New Fourth Army troops advancing north. This triggered a series of armed conflicts between Kuomintang and CCP guerrilla troops.

While facing off with Japanese forces, Kuomintang and CCP forces conflicted with each other, racing to expand their control and woo and organize people.

The Kuomintang-CCP confrontation, which Chiang Kai-shek seemingly covered with anti-Japanese ideology, intensified in this way. This may be because Chiang Kai-shek lost his influence and unifying force to the extent that he only maintained united resistance arrangements depending on insecure support, while the advancement of Japanese forces as the common enemy of the Kuomintang and CCP was visibly stalled. Then, top priorities for the backland Kuomintang government in Chongqing, Sichuan, were foreign aid through Chiang support routes and its domestic legitimacy amid ideological confrontation.

## **9. Japan's responses and China's foreign policy – Towards Japan-U.S. war**

While Chiang Kai-shek and the CCP confronted each other, Japan intensified its offensive regarding the two top priorities.

As explained above, Japan successfully developed cooperative relations with Wang Jingwei and created pro-Japanese regimes in areas that it occupied, expanding a clear area free from battles with Japanese forces. Furthermore, Japan united these pro-Japanese regimes into a new Kuomintang government. In March 1940, Japan carried out a capital relocation ceremony in Nanjing to claim the Wang Jingwei-led Kuomintang government as China's legitimate central government. The clear area then was far wider than in late 1938, covering most of China's Central Plains and coastal zones, which included three northeastern China provinces in the north, Ningbo in the south and Huhhot in

the west. The area's population reached 200 million.<sup>71</sup> Residents in the clear area including Manchukuo stayed in Japan, travelled to Hankou and engaged in trade with Japan. Even amid the war, economic and human exchanges remained active between Japan and China. As pro-Japanese regimes called for building permanently peaceful relations between Japan and China and opposing communism and the Soviet Union, Japan emphasized its solidarity with Chinese residents in the clear area and treated them preferentially.<sup>72</sup> Japan was then desperate to spread a new East Asian order as an ideology in China, counter the anti-Japanese ideology and woo Chinese people.

Meanwhile, Japan in an early stage knew that goods and support from abroad were important for Chiang Kai-shek. Before the capture of Wuhan in 1938, Japanese forces implemented an operation to capture Guangdong to cut off a route for the transportation of goods from Britain via Hong Kong. After the fall of Wuhan, Japanese forces took control of key coastal points for a maritime blockade. Nevertheless, Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang survived thanks to British, French and Soviet supplies through the northwestern, French Indochina and Burma routes. Japan could not block these supplies that came from British and French colonies. These Chiang support routes were Chiang Kai-shek's lifeline.

Chiang Kai-shek promoted diplomacy to maintain the lifeline. On June 21, 1939, he asked the United States to block Japan from invading French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies.<sup>73</sup> In response, the United States notified Japan of the cancellation of the Japan-U.S. Treaty of Amity and Commerce and annexed protocols in protest of Japan's invasion of China on July 26. This

meant that the United States could exclusively impose economic sanctions on Japan.<sup>74</sup> In this way, the United States demonstrated potential economic sanctions to counter the Japanese action.

The United States cooperated with China in a bid to prevent Japan from Manchurianizing the whole of China. Since 1900, the United States had consistently retained an equal opportunity and open door policy for diplomacy, indicating concern about quasi-colonies controlled by Japanese puppet regimes. Since the founding of Manchukuo in 1932, particularly, the United States had consistently maintained a policy of not recognizing Japanese puppet regimes and criticized these regimes for promoting closed economic activities in Manchukuo, North China and Central China, deepening its confrontation with Japan. Given that it was difficult for the United States to directly support China under its Neutrality Act, the United States indirectly supported Chiang Kai-shek by hinting at potential economic sanctions.

In this way, Chiang Kai-shek took advantage of diplomacy with Britain, the United States, France and the Soviet Union to enhance the lifeline routes for receiving foreign supplies. Regarding how to deal with Japan, however, Chiang Kai-shek had no choice but to explore opportunities while maintaining his government. He thus maintained the "no war and no peace" policy.

A sudden about-face came on developments in Europe. On October 14, 1933, Germany seceded from the League of Nations, focusing on its rearmament. Germany moved into Rhineland in March 1936 and annexed Austria in 1938, expanding its influence. Just after signing the German-Soviet nonaggression treaty on August 23, 1939, Germany invaded Poland suddenly on

September 1. In response, Britain and France declared war against Germany. Chiang Kai-shek might have expected to see the war in Europe expanding. On the day after Germany's invasion of Poland, he wrote as follows in his diary:

"Who would be the winner in the European war? I imagine that Britain and France would undoubtedly win. If we participate in the British-French camp, Japan may fail to do so. If Japan compromises after our participation in the European war, our difficulties will increase. Therefore, I will make an independent decision while defending the southwest. If we join Britain and France, Japan may be led to oppose Britain and France. This will be favorable for us. If we and Japan participate in the British-French camp, our anti-Japanese stance will remain unchanged. We will retain the Nine-Power Treaty and the League of Nations Covenant to achieve our territorial and sovereign integrity. The sole objective of our country's policy on the European war is to participate in the democratic camp and simultaneously and jointly resolve the Sino-Japanese war and the European war when cutting a peace deal with Japan."<sup>75</sup>

In this way, Chiang Kai-shek's next strategy was to participate in the European war. He thought that if China joined the British-French camp, the Sino-Japanese war would be handled and resolved as part of a multilateral war, irrespective of whether Japan would take part in that camp or the other one. If Japan participated in the German camp, the situation would be more favorable for China. If Japan refrained from participating in the

European war, China's difficulties would increase. Any result would depend on what Japan would do. Chiang Kai-shek was effectively betting his fate on what Japan would do.

Strangely, however, Germany kept away from military actions after invading Poland. The strange silence was broken by German forces' invasion into the Netherlands in May 1940. Subsequently, Germany forced Belgium, Luxembourg and France to surrender by June. Furthermore, Germany led Allied forces including British and French troops to withdraw from Dunkirk and launched aerial bombing on Mainland Britain.

Such European developments were totally unexpected for Chiang Kai-shek. As France surrendered, with Britain plunging into difficulties, Chiang Kai-shek feared that the Kuomintang could lose French or British support.

Japan for its part attempted to take advantage of such situation to defeat Chiang Kai-shek. On June 24, 1940, Japan asked Britain to stop the transportation of Chiang support supplies through the Burma route and Hong Kong. On July 17, a Japan-Britain agreement on a halt to the Burma route transportation was announced in Tokyo.

Chiang Kai-shek was struck by the announcement to the extent to which he had to reconsider his strategy. In his diary on July 18, he wrote: "Last night, Japan and Britain announced an agreement on a halt to the Burma route transportation in Tokyo. The Japanese are already proceeding with its plan. I have one million troops mainly in Sichuan. Should we fight or defend? What would Japan lead us to do?"<sup>76</sup> What strategy should be adopted if the supply route were lost? Chiang Kai-shek was forced to make an extremely difficult decision.

Then, Chiang Kai-shek conveyed China's predicament to U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt and requested him to exert indirect pressure on Japan. Roosevelt responded that the United States had legal difficulties in intervening in China but would consider halting transportation.<sup>77</sup> The United States was a favorable neutral country for Chiang Kai-shek, but he could not get any positive U.S. support.

Fortunately, however, the United States amended the Neutrality Act in October 1939, with its relations with Japan deteriorating extremely. While Germany remained silent in the wake of its invasion into Poland, a key amendment to the Neutrality Act was passed in the United States. On October 27, 1939, the Neutrality Act was amended to allow U.S. military goods exports to warring countries. Britain took advantage of military goods imports from the United States under the amendment to resist Germany's intensifying offensive. The Neutrality Act amendment dramatically changed the meaning of U.S. support for China from indirect support to positive help including the provision of weapons.

Furthermore, the deterioration of Japan-U.S. relations led U.S. support for China to gain momentum. On July 23, 1940, Japan negotiated with the Vichy regime, a French government in exile in French Indochina, and advanced to northern French Indochina to shut down the French Indochina route for China. In response, the United States passed legislation to subject oil and iron scrap exports to approval on July 26, exerting pressure on Japan. In a manner to counter U.S. pressure, Japan signed the Tripartite Pact to form an alliance with Germany and Italy on September 27, 1940.

Chiang Kai-shek then thought that the Germany-Italy-Japan

alliance came as a hard-to-get development, paving the way for China to win the war of resistance.<sup>78</sup> While having formed the alliance, Japan held fast to neutrality. This was because the pact was an offensive and defensive alliance for cooperation in responding to attacks from new enemies. The alliance was formed to avoid new participants in the three countries' wars, failing to have any impact on the Sino-Japanese War or Germany's advancement in Europe. Nevertheless, Chiang Kai-shek became confident of China's victory in the war of resistance because the alliance was extremely significant for China's diplomacy. The alliance transformed Japan from a threat in Asia to an enemy of the British-American camp.

U.S. legislation to ban aviation gasoline exports to areas other than the western hemisphere came as a sanction on Japan that became an enemy of Britain and the United States. U.S. restrictions were imposed on oil supply to Japan in addition to iron supply. Oil and iron were indispensable for sustaining war. Furthermore, the United States reopened the Burma route in October and provided China with a \$50 million loan and American volunteer fighter pilots organized into the so-called Flying Tigers. China thus got direct support from the United States. At last, Chiang Kai-shek successfully stabilized replenishment that had been a major source of concern for him.

Japan for its part hesitated to launch an invasion into Burma that meant its clear hostility to Britain and the United States. To resolve the issues of the Sino-Japanese War and natural resources, Japan began to consider going south. Japan concluded a neutrality treaty with the Soviet Union to eliminate Soviet threats on April 13, 1941, and advanced to southern French Indochina to secure a

stronghold for obtaining oil resources in Dutch Indochina on July 28. In retaliation, the British-American camp decided on an oil embargo on Japan and froze Japanese assets. Left unable to secure resources, Japan repeated diplomatic negotiations with the United States but eventually launched war against Britain, the United States and the Netherlands on December 8, 1941. In his diary on the day, Chiang Kai-shek wrote that the day was the most pleasant in recent years.<sup>79</sup>

Chiang Kai-shek was named the Supreme Commander of Allied forces in the China war zone on January 5, 1945, in a situation that would bring about the best result of the European war for China—China's participation in the British-American camp and Japan's in the other camp. As China was one of the U.S. strongholds against Japan amid the Japan-U.S. war, China successfully got massive U.S. support including loans.<sup>80</sup> China effectively won against Japan.

However, Chiang Kai-shek remained unable to achieve another top priority. That was his domestic legitimacy. It was no exaggeration to say that Chiang Kai-shek undertaking diplomacy was internationally recognized as representing a legitimate Chinese government. Domestically, however, his legitimacy was not established. Since moving his stronghold to Sichuan, he had nearly lost his ruling power east of the Central Plains, where Japanese forces confronted the CCP. East of the Central Plains, the National Bureau of Investigation and Statistics (also called the Blue Shirts Society) and the Bureau of Investigation and Statistics of the Kuomintang Central Executive Committee (the so-called CC Clique) conducted intelligence and information operations for the Kuomintang. Based on the operations, the

Kuomintang implemented guerrilla warfare, anti-Japanese terrorist attacks, Hanjian (pro-Japanese traitor) hunting and the diffusion of the Three Principles of the People in an organized manner. It also used radios and movies to call for anti-Japanese resistance. In reaction, Japanese forces conducted soothing and pacification operations (security restoration, propaganda, ideological propagation and economic stimulus measures to lead people in Japanese-occupied areas to turn pro-Japanese) and security operations to expel communists, diffuse the "new East Asian order" ideology and attract public support to make Japanese puppet governments legitimate.

However, CCP forces rather than Kuomintang forces tormented Japanese forces and their puppet regimes.<sup>81</sup> The CCP took advantage of its anti-Japanese ideology to expand its influence throughout the Sino-Japanese war. The CCP emphasized that all classes (including petite bourgeoisie, bourgeoisie, intelligentsia, workers and farmers) should form a united front. The CCP excluded bourgeoisie and landowners from its regime and confiscated their assets before the war but suspended such policy during the war. It lowered farm rents and interest on loans to lead all classes to focus on anti-Japanese resistance. CCP members engaged in farming to increase food production and CCP troops adhered rigidly to military rules and supported farming to win farmers' affection and trust.<sup>82</sup> In this way, the CCP reconciled its and Chiang Kai-shek's anti-Japanese ideology with the communist ideology to win public support and deepened its connections with citizens by working together with them to produce farm products. Some citizens joined the CCP forces, allowing the number of CCP troops to rise to some 500,000 in late

1940 to pose threats to the Japanese forces.<sup>83</sup>

When Japan surrendered in 1945, population in CCP-controlled areas totaled nearly 100 million. Since the CCP expanded its influence by deepening connections with farmers, it featured fundamental differences from the Kuomintang's control characterized by the establishment of urban political organizations and the deployment of military forces.<sup>84</sup> Consequently, the CCP built a new kind of nation east of the Central Plains out of Chiang Kai-shek's reach through the war.

When the war ended in 1945, Chiang Kai-shek urged the CCP to surrender, triggering a civil war between the Kuomintang and CCP. Supported by the Soviet Union, the CCP took control of Japanese-occupied areas to expand its influence more and more, defeating Chiang Kai-shek who fled to Taiwan. As Chiang Kai-shek's ideology of the Three Principles of the People was defeated by the communist ideology transformed by the anti-Japanese ideology, the Kuomintang failed to win public support and lost its domestic legitimacy to the CCP. Chiang Kai-shek, who was extremely sensitive to domestic conditions such as public support, legitimacy and CCP threats, lost the final domestic struggle to the CCP. This means the failure of Japan's attempt to make its puppet regimes legitimate by winning public support to end the Sino-Japanese War.

## **Conclusion**

This paper made clear two facts regarding Chiang Kai-shek's strategy development, implying why Japan failed to defeat China despite its continuation of offensive operations over eight years.

The first fact is that Chiang Kai-shek's strategy had not been

consistent since the Marco Polo Bridge incident. Chiang Kai-shek's basic strategy transitioned from "peace negotiations" to "no war and no peace," to "no peace negotiations" and to "negotiation and resistance." Therefore, his top priority transitioned from the capital city of Nanjing to the three Wuhan cities as a transportation hub and to the Chiang support routes after the capital's relocation to Chongqing. Japan failed to track the transition. The strategy and priority transition is undoubtedly attributable to China's depth and Chiang Kai-shek's foresight and judgment capacity.

This fact runs counter to the generally accepted theory that Chiang Kai-shek took the initiative to prolong the war of endurance and transformed it into a multilateral war. Rather, Chiang Kai-shek had to continuously change his strategy and top priority as Japanese forces correctly targeted his top priority. Consequently, he had no choice but to wage the long war of endurance in Chongqing under the "no war and no peace" strategy. Then, Chiang Kai-shek closely watched changes in the international environment and persistently explored diplomatic solutions. Finally, rapid changes in the European situation and policy measures that Japan took to terminate the Sino-Japanese War stimulated the United States and led to the Japan-U.S. war and the multilateral war. Clearly, Japan made a strategic error. Then, Chiang Kai-shek successfully seized the good opportunity. While remaining inferior militarily, Chiang Kai-shek continued to rebuild his strategy depending on the changing situation, joining winners at last.

Why did Japan make the strategic error? This paper does not discuss any answer to this question, which may have to be

reorganized and studied anew.

The second fact was that Chiang Kai-shek's various decisions were susceptible primarily to domestic factors such as power struggles, public support and how to secure legitimacy. Chiang Kai-shek sought to cut a peace deal with Japan even at the cost of some concessions but shifted to the "negotiation and resistance" strategy upon the fall of Beijing in consideration of public support. He also abandoned the "negotiation and resistance" strategy he retained between the Shanghai Battle and the first Kono statement because the statement denied his legitimacy. The resurgence of his dispute with the CCP emerged from his concern about the CCP's increasing domestic presence. Chiang Kai-shek tried to maintain public support by taking anti-Japanese resistance measures through the Blue Shirts Society, the CC Clique and radio broadcasts to counter the "new East Asian order" ideology of Japanese puppet regimes. For Chiang Kai-shek who sought to unite China, it was extremely significant to secure his domestic legitimacy. As far as Chiang Kai-shek tried to continue the war of resistance through guerrilla warfare, people had to serve as a locomotive, meaning that public support was another top priority for him.

Chiang Kai-shek thus transitioned top priorities and decided strategies for extremely political reasons by putting greater emphasis on his legitimacy and public support than on military rationality. This style characterized Chiang Kai-shek seen as China's leader then and was apparently attributable to China's conditions then.

China then was not a modern state with a giant centralized governing system but a country where warlords were rampant.

Chiang Kai-shek was struggling with the CCP before efforts to unify and build a state. No modern centralized government had been developed. This is the reason China easily relocated its capital then.

In contrast, Japan seems to have conducted accurate military operations meeting modern military theories. In modern times, it has been conceived that a nation would win a war against an enemy by taking control of the enemy's top priorities like military forces, leaders and the capital, as advocated by Carl von Clausewitz. In an attempt to defeat Chiang Kai-shek, Japanese forces conquered the capital and took control of China's economic centers such as transportation hub cities. Japan attempted to apply military theories for a modern centralized state to an enemy in an earlier development stage. As a result, Chiang Kai-shek repeatedly relocated government functions and established them in Sichuan finally to explore comeback opportunities, but he had no reason to surrender to Japan. This is because his top priorities were not tracked by Japanese forces.

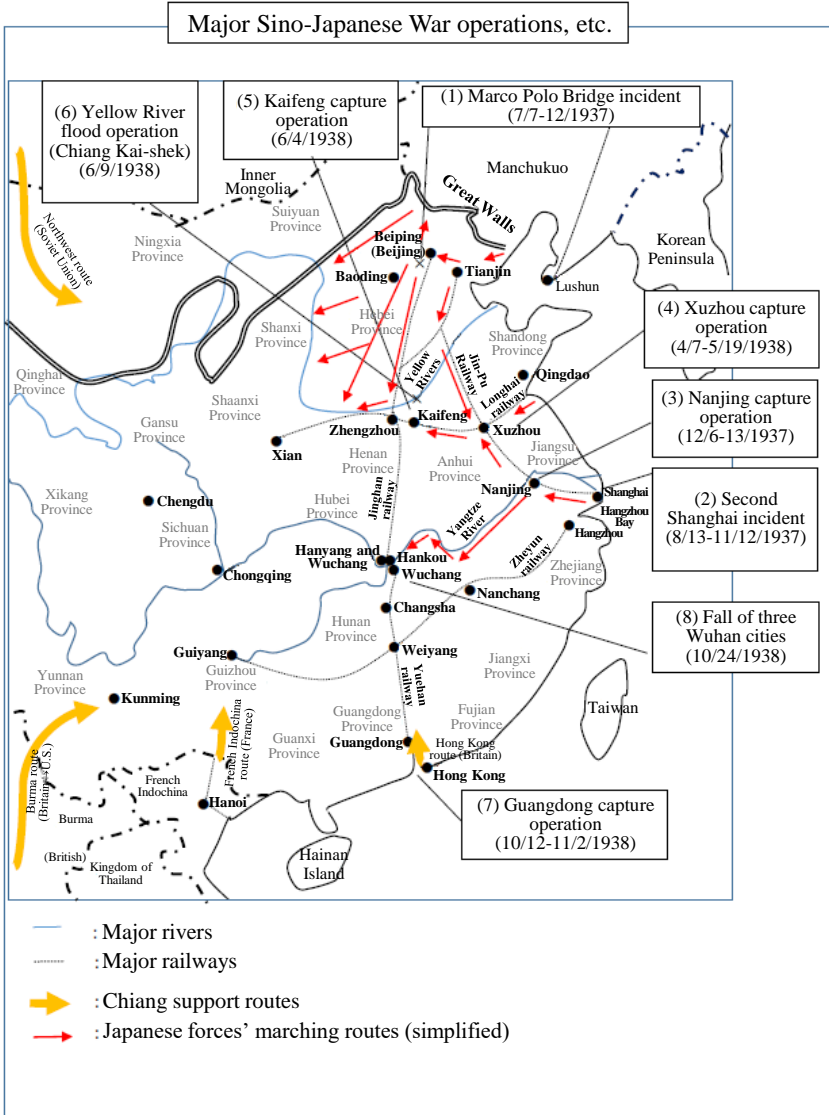
Because the national unification had not been achieved in China then, however, Chiang Kai-shek was sensitive to his domestic legitimacy. The first Kono statement and other Japanese actions to deny Chiang Kai-shek's legitimacy encouraged him to make up his mind not to seek a peace deal. Citizens' anti-Japanese resistance consciousness that drove the war of resistance was incorporated into Chiang Kai-shek and CCP strategies to allow guerrilla warfare to be sustained.

Japanese forces expanded military operations to the limit under the belief that Japan would immediately defeat China by waging a modern-style war, while Chiang Kai-shek was led by political

and diplomatic interactions to adopt the war of thorough resistance while seeking to cut a peace deal at some point. In this way, Japan and China were led to prolong their war more and more. A lesson we learn from the Sino-Japanese war may be that a nation planning to wage a war against an enemy must become aware of everything from the enemy's national conditions to its people's consciousness.

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Chiang Kai-shek's Strategy Development and Transition of Top Priorities in Shino-Japanese War(KUTOH Shinya)



(Prepared by the author)

<sup>1</sup> For instance, Kobayashi Hideo, *Sino-Japanese War – From War of Annihilation to War of Attrition*, Kodansha, 2007 concludes that Japan that stuck to a war of annihilation failed to respond to a war of attrition. Iechika Ryoko, *Chiang Kai-shek's Diplomatic Strategy and Sino-Japanese War*, Iwanami Shoten, 2012 argues that Chiang Kai-shek took advantage of diplomacy to draw Japan into an international conflict (Pacific War). Kikuchi Kazutaka, *Military History of China's Anti-Japanese Resistance 1937-1945*, Yushisha, 2009 concludes that China exploited its vastness to expand and sustain guerrilla warfare before the outbreak of the Pacific War finally forced Japan to distribute its military power and be defeated.

<sup>2</sup> Chiang Kai-shek's second son.

<sup>3</sup> Chiang Wei-kuo, *Eight Years of War of Resistance to Japan*, Waseda Publishing, 1988, p.72.

<sup>4</sup> Yang Tian Shi, *True Chiang: Chiang Kai-shek Diaries Interpretation*, Shanxi People's Publishing House (Dayuan), 2008, pp. 231-232; Iwatani Nobu, *Expansion of Sino-Japanese War – Focusing on between Marco Polo Bridge Incident and Second Shanghai Incident*, Journal of Military History, Vol. 53 No. 2, 2018, p. 20; Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.127.

<sup>5</sup> Hatano Sumio, Tobe Ryoichi, et al., *Sino-Japanese War – Definitive Edition*, Shinchosha, 2018, p.7.

<sup>6</sup> The Kuomintang then put almost all warlords other than Manchukuo and the CCP through the 1926-1927 Northern Expedition and the 1934-1936 Long Marches (to expel communists). Therefore, it was also called national government.

<sup>7</sup> Iwatani, op. cit., (Footnote 4), p.5.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Zhang Xiu Zhang, *Chiang Kai-shek Secret Diaries*, Unity Press (Beijing), 2007, p.504 (Chiang Kai-shek Diary, July 8, 1937); Huang Ren Yu, *Read from Large Historical Perspective Chiang Kai-shek Diaries*, Jiuzhou Press (Beijing), 2007, p.163; Yang Tian Shi, op. cit., (Footnote 4), p.223; Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.114.

<sup>10</sup> Zhang Xiu Zhang, op. cit., (Footnote 9) p.504 (Chiang Kai-shek Diary, July 8, 1937).

<sup>11</sup> Chiang Kai-shek, *Foe or Friend*, Zhang Jing & Murata Yujiro, *Foe or Friend 1925-1936*, Iwanami Shoten, 2016, p.237. This contribution by

Chiang Kai-shek (in the pen name of Hsu Tao-lin) was carried in *Diplomatic Review December 1934*.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 237-238.

<sup>13</sup> Hatano Yoshihiro, *Research on Modern Chinese Warlords*, Kawade Shobo, 1973) Details are written in and after Chapter 8.

<sup>14</sup> Details of negotiations are written in National Institute for Defense Studies, *War History Study: China Incident Army Operation (1)*, Asagumo Shinbunsha, pp.156-172; Cai Dejun (translated by Liu Jie), *Local Negotiations after Marco Polo Bridge Incident and Nanjing Kuomintang Government Measures*, Military History Society of Japan, *Various Aspects of Sino-Japanese War*, Kinseisha, 1997.

<sup>15</sup> Shoji Junichiro, *Breakout of Sino-Japanese War and Konoe Fumimaro's Response*, *Journal of National Defense*, Vol.15 No.3, 1988, p.79.

<sup>16</sup> Iwatani, op. cit., (Footnote 4), p.6; Huang Ren Yu, op. cit., (Footnote 9), p.171.

<sup>17</sup> Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.114 (Chiang Kai-shek Diary, July 22, 1937).

<sup>18</sup> Chiang Wei-kuo, op. cit., (Footnote 3), p.36.

<sup>19</sup> Yang Tian Shi, op. cit., (Footnote 4), p.225; Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.144.

<sup>20</sup> Huang Ren Yu, op. cit., (Footnote 9), pp.169-171; Iwatani, op. cit., (Footnote 4), p.6.

<sup>21</sup> Iwatani, op. cit., (Footnote 4), pp.6-7.

<sup>22</sup> National Institute for Defense Studies, op. cit., (Footnote 14), p.220.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 225-226.

<sup>24</sup> Excerpt from Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.115. "Last life-or-death situation," *Central Daily News*, July 30,1937.

<sup>25</sup> Iwatani, op. cit., (Footnote 4), p.14; Zhang Xiu Zhang, op. cit., (Footnote 9) p.512 (Chiang Kai-shek Diary, July 27, 1937).

<sup>26</sup> Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.123; Iwatani, op. cit., (Footnote 4), pp.18-19.

<sup>27</sup> Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.123.

<sup>28</sup> National Institute for Defense Studies, op. cit., (Footnote 14), p.205.

<sup>29</sup> Iwatani, op. cit., (Footnote 4), p.14.

<sup>30</sup> Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.117 notes that Chiang Kai-shek then took aggressive military actions that were not understandable under the principle of "no war and no peace."

<sup>31</sup> Kobayashi, op. cit., (Footnote 1), pp.61-62.

<sup>32</sup> Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.90.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.122; Zhang Xiu Zhang, op. cit., (Footnote 9), pp.515-516 (Chiang Kai-shek Diary, August 13, 1937).

<sup>34</sup> Excerpt from Iwatani, op. cit., (Footnote 4), p.20; Yang Tian Shi, op. cit., (Footnote 4), p.229 quoted only "redouble concerns."

<sup>35</sup> Excerpts from Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.127 (Chiang Kai-shek Diary, September 14, 1937).

<sup>36</sup> Excerpts from ibid and Yang Tian Shi, op. cit., (Footnote 4), pp.231-232 (Chiang Kai-shek Diary, September 16, 1937. "Losses or gains in Shanghai would have no impact on final results. We do not necessarily have to focus on them."

<sup>37</sup> Kikuchi, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.40.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.43.

<sup>39</sup> Tobe Ryoichi, *Peace Feelers—China Incident Peace Talks Participants*, pp.67-71.

<sup>40</sup> The Three Principles of the People represent an ideology that was advocated by Sun Yat-sen and inherited by Chiang Kai-shek. The three principles are nationalism, democracy and socialism, suggesting an ideology calling for improving civic life through the recovery of sovereign rights, the development of a national governing body by elected parties and the state-led enhancement of modernization and social welfare. They feature a democracy with strong state power.

<sup>41</sup> Kobayashi, op. cit., (Footnote 1), pp.61-62.

<sup>42</sup> Then, the Burma route for ground transportation between Burma and Yunnan was under construction.

<sup>43</sup> Excerpts from Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.133. "National Government Capital Return Declaration"

<sup>44</sup> Kikuchi, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.48; Ho Ying-chin, *History of Eight-Year War of Resistance*, Chinese Army General Headquarters in Nanjing, 1955, pp.43-45; Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), pp.141-142.

<sup>45</sup> Kikuchi, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.48.

<sup>46</sup> Kikuchi, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.48.

<sup>47</sup> Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.148. "I am concerned that there is no change in the international situation. I have no choice but to continue the war of endurance" (Chiang Kai-shek Diary, January 10, 1938). "I consider that if China truly abandons the pro-communist and anti-Japanese policy, it would lead to peace in East Asia" (Chiang Kai-shek Diary, January 12, 1938).

- <sup>48</sup> Zhang Xiu Zhang, op. cit., (Footnote 9) pp.544-545 (Chiang Kai-shek Diary, January 17, 1938); Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.148.
- <sup>49</sup> National Institute for Defense Studies, op. cit., (Footnote 14), pp.465-467. Conditions included cooperation, the establishment of demilitarized zones, Japan-Manchukuo-China economic cooperation and reparations.
- <sup>50</sup> Huang Ren Yu, op. cit., (Footnote 9), p.208 (Chiang Kai-shek Diary, May 19,1938); Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.162.
- <sup>51</sup> Excerpts from Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.179. "Generalissimo Chiang Chung-cheng Documents" (General data with table 80).
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid. "Generalissimo Chiang Chung-cheng Documents" (General data with table 80).
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.162; Zhang Xiu Zhang, op. cit., (Footnote 9) p.552 (Chiang Kai-shek Diary, June 3, 1938).
- <sup>54</sup> National Institute for Defense Studies, *War History Study: China Incident Army Operation (2)*, Asagumo Shinbunsha, 1976, p.84.
- <sup>55</sup> Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.180.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>57</sup> National Institute for Defense Studies, op. cit., (Footnote 52), p.85.
- <sup>58</sup> Kikuchi, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.85.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid., p.79.
- <sup>60</sup> Hatano Sumito, Tobe Ryoichi, et. al., op. cit., (Footnote 5), p.103.
- <sup>61</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>62</sup> Takeuchi Minoru, The 21st Century China Research Institute, *Japan-China Relations Documents*, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, 2005, pp.223-224.
- <sup>63</sup> Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.199.
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp.227-228.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid., p.201; Zhang Xiu Zhang, op. cit., (Footnote 9) p.573 (Chiang Kai-shek Diary, December 22, 1938); Huang Ren Yu, op. cit., (Footnote 9), p.220.
- <sup>66</sup> Same as in Footnote 33. Zhang Xiu Zhang, op. cit., (Footnote 9) p.573 (Chiang Kai-shek Diary, August 13, 1937); Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), pp.122-123. "(If the war with Japan is prolonged,) CCP politicians and local warlords may become ambitious and likely to engineer conspiracies and cause a civil war. Therefore, the period would be about one year."
- <sup>67</sup> Excerpts from Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p. 222 (Chiang Kai-shek Diary, January 6, 1939).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., pp. 223-224.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>70</sup> Kikuchi, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.107.

<sup>71</sup> Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.206.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p.207.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, p.248.

<sup>74</sup> Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: A History of U.S.-Japan Relations*, Norton, 1988, p. 189.

<sup>75</sup> Zhang Xiu Zhang, op. cit., (Footnote 9) p.587 (Chiang Kai-shek Diary, September 2, 1939; Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), pp.243-244.

<sup>76</sup> Zhang Xiu Zhang, op. cit., (Footnote 9) p.587 (Chiang Kai-shek Diary, September 2, 1940); Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.249.

<sup>77</sup> Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1), p.250. "Soong Tzu-wen meeting with Chiang Chung-cheng," "Generalissimo Chiang Chung-cheng documents" (Revolution document – Diplomacy with U.S.—General negotiations 1).

<sup>78</sup> Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1) p. 252; Zhang Xiu Zhang, op. cit., (Footnote 9) p.587 (Chiang Kai-shek Diary, September 28, 1940.

<sup>79</sup> Excerpts from Iechika, op. cit., (Footnote 1) p. 257 (Chiang Kai-shek Diary, December 9, 1941).

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p.259.

<sup>81</sup> Iwatani Nobu, *Japanese Forces' Security War in China; War History Research International Forum Report: Historical Analysis of Irregular War*, National Institute for Defense Studies, 2018, p.65.

<sup>82</sup> Hatano, op. cit., (Footnote 13), p.532.

<sup>83</sup> Iwatani, op. cit., (Footnote 81), p.67.

<sup>84</sup> Hatano, op. cit., (Footnote 13), p.534.