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SHAPING LEVIATHAN'S TEETH: STATE-BUILDING AND MILITARY STRATEGY IN REPUBLICAN CHINA, 1937-1949

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Abstract

Why are some military organizations capable of executing an operational strategy of maneuver warfare? Conversely, why do other militaries remain wedded to an operational strategy of positional warfare? These questions speak to a larger empirical puzzle that regularly frustrates American policymakers attempting to support the militaries of oversea allies; namely, why do the military forces of developing states so often adhere to defensive positional strategies in the face of highly maneuverable opponents?

Explanations that point the finger at mechanisms of military politicization still fail to explain a number of anomalies. Why, for instance, were Chinese Nationalist forces successfully able to implement mobile warfare against invading Japanese armies from 1939-1941 when the ruling Guomindang government had already politicized its military through the use of coup-proofing strategies? Additionally, if military politicization explains the eventual trend towards defensive positional warfare amongst Nationalist armies, then why did Chinese Communist forces under the command of equally politicized party cadres manage to sustain mobile military operations for over a decade from 1937-1948? And why did U.S.-led efforts at reforming and de-politicizing the armed forces of the Guomindang fail to coincide with any noticeable pivot towards the strategies of maneuver warfare that said reforms were supposed to facilitate?

The answer to these empirical anomalies, I argue, lies in an understudied relationship between the development of a state's infrastructural capacity – i.e. the capacity to enforce the state's dictums of taxing and regulating society – through the process of state-building and the amount of logistical support that military organizations can readily draw upon. Put simply, the method by which a developing state can mobilize and distribute war-time resources influences whether military organizations can meet the *heavy logistical demands* of executing a maneuver-

based operational strategy or if militaries must settle for a *less logistically demanding* strategy of hardening existing assets through the use of fortified strongpoint positions.

1. Introduction

Why are some military organizations capable of executing an operational strategy of maneuver warfare? Conversely, why do other militaries remain wedded to an operational strategy of positional warfare? These questions speak to a larger empirical puzzle that regularly frustrates American policymakers attempting to support the militaries of oversea allies; namely, why do the military forces of developing states so often adhere to defensive positional strategies in the face of highly maneuverable opponents? In the example of Republican China, government forces under the ruling Nationalist Guomindang Party had a demonstrated history of executing offensive mobile operations against invading Japanese forces during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Yet despite receiving financial aid, arms shipments, airpower support, training assistance, and shared intelligence from the United States, Nationalist forces ultimately ossified into fighting a passive form of positional warfare; which in turn led to a disastrous defeat at the hands of the more maneuver-inclined armies of rival Chinese Communists during the final years of the Chinese Civil War.

Among the militaries of developing nation-states, the inability of armies to tear themselves away from a self-defeating strategy of positional warfare has – to paraphrase Marx – repeated itself to the point of tragic farce. Time after time, U.S. policymakers have infused massive amounts of capital into outfitting, training, and modernizing the militaries of nascent governments in South Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq, only to witness these organizations' very un-modern adoption of turtle-like positional strategies that would not be out of place in the context of 17th-century siege warfare. In contrast, the poorly equipped, technologically underwhelming, and oftentimes outnumbered armed actors that regularly contest U.S. interests

abroad seem to consistently over-perform expectations by conducting offensive mobile blitzkriegs that regularly threaten to topple U.S.-allied regimes.

To explain the relatively mixed battlefield performance of military organizations in the developing world, academics have generally turned to the civil-military pathologies of developing states for answers. Within the strategic studies literature, scholars point to the prevalence of coup-proofing strategies that seek to politicize military organizations in an effort to contain disloyal sentiments and bolster trustworthy elements.[1] Purges of the officer corps, loyalty-based promotions, and limited horizontal communications between commanders can be effective tools for subordinating the military to a political authority but can also severely curtail the military's capacity for executing complex mobile operations.[2] Alternatively, researchers point to the presence of strong institutional constraints on the monopolizing urges of political leaders as leading to greater civil-military harmony and, hence, politically unencumbered professional militaries that are more capable of executing a wide range of operational strategies.[3]

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[1] Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1957): 82; Eliot Cohen, "Distant Battles: Modern War in the Third World" *International Security* vol. 10, 4 (1986): 168; Stephen Biddle & Robert Zirkle, "Technology, Civil-Military Relations, and Warfare in the Developing World" *Journal of Strategic Studies* vol. 19, 2 (1996): 173-175; James Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing: Its Practice and Consequences in the Middle East," *International Security* vol. 24, 2 (1999): 131-165; Kenneth Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991* (Lincoln: Bison Books, 2004); Caitlin Talmadge, "Explaining Military Effectiveness: Political Intervention and Battlefield Performance" (PhD Dissertation, MIT, 2012): 13-39

[2] See: David D. Kirkpatrick, "Graft Hobbles Iraq's Military in Fighting ISIS," *The New York Times*, November 23, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/24/world/middleeast/graft-hobbles-iraqs-military-in-fighting-isis.html; Keren Fraiman, Austin Long and Caitlin Talmadge, "Why the Iraqi Army Collapsed (and What Can Be Done about It)," *The Washington Post*, June 13, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/06/13/why-the-iraqi-army-collapsed-and-what-can-be-done-about-it/; Joseph Goldstein, "Afghan Security Forces Struggle Just to Maintain Stalemate" *The New York Times*, Jul. 22, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/23/world/asia/afghan-security-forces-struggle-just-to-maintain-stalemate.html

[3] David Lake, "Powerful Pacifists: Democratic States and War," *American Political Science Review* vol. 86, 1 (1992): 24-37; Dan Reiter & Allan Stam, *Democracies at War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Dan Reiter & Allan Stam, "Understanding Victory: Why Political Institutions Matter," *International Security* vol. 8, 1 (2003): 168-179. For skeptical takes on the linkage between democratic institutions and military effectiveness, see: Stephen Biddle & Stephen Long, "Democracy and Military Effectiveness: A Deeper Look" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* vol. 8, 4 (2004): 525-526; Risa Brooks, *Shaping Strategy: The Civil-Military Politics of Strategic Assessment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Michael Desch, *Power and Military Effectiveness: The Fallacy of Democratic*

When applied to the Chinese case, the conventional explanation for the Nationalists' military deficiencies seems clear: the politicization of military organizations by power-hungry leaders stymied the army's ability to effectively coordinate the type of mobile warfare that would have characterized a more competent military force.

Nonetheless, explanations that point the finger at mechanisms of military politicization still fail to explain a number of anomalies. Why, for instance, were Nationalist forces successfully able to implement mobile warfare against invading Japanese armies from 1939-1941 when the ruling Guomindang government had already politicized its military through the use of coup-proofing strategies? Additionally, if military politicization explains the eventual trend towards defensive positional warfare amongst Nationalist armies, then why did Communist forces under the command of equally politicized party cadres manage to sustain mobile military operations for over a decade from 1937-1948? And why did U.S.-led efforts at reforming and de-politicizing the armed forces of the Guomindang fail to coincide with any noticeable pivot towards the strategies of maneuver warfare that said reforms were supposed to facilitate?

The answer to these empirical anomalies, I argue, lies in an understudied relationship between the development of a state's infrastructural capacity – i.e. the capacity to enforce the state's dictums of taxing and regulating society – through the process of state-building[4] and the

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Triumphalism (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Michael Brown et al, *Do Democracies Win Their Wars?: An International Security Reader* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011); Talmadge, "Explaining Military Effectiveness" (2012); Jonathan Caverley, *Democratic Militarism: Voting, Wealth, and War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014)

[4] The process of "state-formation" or "state-building" entails the method by which state leaders are able to overcome entrenched domestic opposition to the state's attempts at coercing, coordinating, and extracting from societal elements. See: Hintze, *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze* (1975); Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime" (1985); Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States* (1992); Downing, *Military Revolution and Political Change* (1992); Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors: An Analysis of Systems*

amount of logistical support that military organizations can readily draw upon. Put simply, the method by which a developing state can mobilize and distribute war-time resources influences whether military organizations can meet the *heavy logistical demands* of executing a maneuver-based operational strategy or if militaries must settle for a *less logistically demanding* strategy of hardening existing assets through the use of fortified strongpoint positions. For Communist enclaves based in the rural province of Shaanxi, the creation of extractive institutions that maximized government penetration into the countryside served the dual purpose of both mobilizing wartime resources and providing a wide-reaching administrative apparatus that facilitated the distribution of supplies to mobile military units engaged in offensive operations near home territory. Conversely, the Nationalists, from their initial base area in the heavily commercialized coastal provinces, opted for a more urban-intensive method of state-building by constructing state institutions that specialized in skimming revenue off the movement of goods diverted through government-controlled customs areas and ports of entry. The Nationalists' metropolitan-centered state apparatus, however, lacked the capacity to quickly deliver supplies to distant military units engaged in mobile operations beyond the narrow reach of ports, towns, and cities.

Change (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Thomas Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan: Building State and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Lopez-Alves, *State Formation and Democracy in Latin America* (2000); Miguel Centeno, *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation State in Latin America* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2003). For a discussion on the conceptualization of the "state," see: *Max Weber, Economy and Society, vol. I*, Guenther Roth & Claus Wittich, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978): 54-56; Hintze, *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze* (1975): 183; Charles Tilly, "Reflections on the History of European State-Making," in *The Formation of National States*, Tilly ed. (1975): 34, 47; Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979): 29-31; Michael Mann, "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms, and Results" *The European Journal of Sociology* vol. 25, 2 (1984): 187-188; Theda Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in *Bringing the State Back In*, Evans, Rueschemeyer, & Skocpol ed. (1985): 7-8, 28

Different state constructs among developing nations, therefore, vary in their infrastructural capacity which in turn can either logistically undermine or facilitate the execution of maneuver warfare. When also accounting for the role of political-military dynamics, the obstacles to adopting the gold-standard of maneuver warfare among the armies of the developing world become increasingly onerous; the effective implementation of a mobile strategy is held hostage by the whims of political-military discord and also by the degree of infrastructural power a state can marshal in service of supplying its armies. Developing states that fail to sustain *both* a low level of political-military discord to coordinate mobile operations *and* a high level of infrastructural capacity to keep mobile units continuously in supply are, therefore, predestined to perennially fighting static wars of position rather than wars of maneuver.

By leveraging within-case comparisons from a historical period that is relatively understudied in the mainstream security studies literature, this project makes several contributions to existing scholarly debates on military behavior and battlefield operations. First, this project identifies an alternative mechanism to variations in military performance that traditional civil-military explanations overlook. Structured in part by Samuel Huntington's famous classifications of "subjective" and "objective"[5] forms of civilian control over military bureaucracies, past treatments of military behavior have coalesced around two categories of causal mechanisms: exogenous political interventions into military affairs (e.g. presidential orders, coup-proofing strategies, legislation on defense budgets, political patronage of military officials, etc.) and endogenous dynamics within military bureaucracies (e.g. professionalization

[5] In Huntington's conception, "objective" control subordinates militaries to civilian authority through the recognition of "a distinct sphere of military competence" that distinguishes military duties from those of political leaders. "Subjective" control seeks to subordinate militaries by maximizing the power of "particular government institutions, particular social classes, and particular constitutional forms." Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (1957): 11, 80-85

through military education, intra- and inter-service competition, internal promotions of military officers, etc.). Such dynamics, however, are narrowly focused on a range of civil-military interactions in which actors compete over the power to make military-related decisions. In other words, resolving the dilemma of "who makes military decisions?" has traditionally taken precedence over addressing the dilemma of "are decisions logistically possible?" It is, therefore, past time for new studies of military organizations to recognize that civil-military dynamics regularly interact with (and are at times even superseded by) logistical constraints that arise from the institutional configurations of extractive state bureaucracies. A military staffed by professional commanders operating independently of meddlesome political operatives can still fail to initiate a carefully planned mobile offensive if state institutions are unable to procure the necessary capital, labor, and foodstuffs required for persistent campaigning.

Second, this project pushes back against the notion that military involvement in internal state-building will necessarily come at the expense of external defense.[6] Caitlin Talmadge summarizes this oft-accepted assumption by noting that "political leaders face inherent trade-offs between protection against external and internal threats. Where leaders prioritize the military's performance of domestic tasks, such as suppression of dissidents, coup protection, fighting insurgencies, or state-building, they are likely to deviate from best practices in ways that harm

[6] For a discussion on the roles that military organizations can play in the process of state formation, see: Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (Free Press, 1964); Stanislav Andreski, *Military Organizations and Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); Amos Perlmutter, "The Praetorian State and the Praetorian Army: Toward a Taxonomy of Civil-Military Relations in Developing Polities" *Comparative Politics* vol. 1, 3 (1969): 382-404; Alfred Stepan, *The Military in Politics: Changing Patterns in Brazil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971); Alfred Stepan, "The New Professionalism of Internal Warfare and Military Role Expansion," in *Armies and Politics in Latin America*, ed. Abraham Lowenthal & Samuel Fitch (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1986): 134-150; Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States* (1992): 192-227; Samuel Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics* (Transaction Publishers, 2002)

performance in conventional war against external adversaries."[7] Yet, as the Chinese case demonstrates, variations in the types of state institutions leaders build to procure wartime resources can, at times, complement the military's ability to defend the state against a conventional military opponent. Both Chinese Communists and Chinese Nationalists embarked on ambitious dual (and dueling) state-building projects that nonetheless varied sharply in their inimical effects on the army's ability to adopt and adapt its strategies. State-building by itself is not necessarily a "distraction" from more important military tasks of external defense or organizational professionalization; instead, the creation of state institutions ought to be viewed in the context of whether or not they supplement certain services that are crucial to effective military performance.

Third, by sourcing my theoretical findings entirely from an analysis of the 20th century Chinese military experience, I demonstrate how even politically fractionalized "coup-proofed" military organizations can still execute complex mobile operations despite not adhering to the best civil-military practices that directly enhance battlefield performance. Aside from promoting a weak "Sino-centric" agenda in a security studies literature that is dominated by lessons drawn from the industrialized west and Israel, this study also aims to highlight the reality that the Huntingtonian model of a professionally competent military bureaucracy imbued with an ethic of apoliticism is rarely a pragmatically achievable goal for developing states. Even scholars who criticize Huntingtonian professionalism as being an inappropriate framework for understanding military behaviors outside of the developed world still focus on "best military practices" that are suspiciously similar to Huntington's own model of a professional military organization (e.g.

[7] Talmadge, "Explaining Military Effectiveness" (2012): 34. See, also: Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing" (1999); Reiter & Stam, *Democracies at War* (2002); Pollack, *Arabs at War* (2004); Kristina Mani, "Militaries in Business: State-Making and Entrepreneurship in the Developing World" *Armed Forces and Society* vol. 33, 4 (2007): 591-611; Vipin Narang & Caitlin Talmadge, "Civil-Military Pathologies and Defeat in War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (2017)

merit-based officer promotions, equitable recruitment standards, professional training standards, etc.).[8] Outside of notably exceptional cases where a bifurcation of political and military spheres of influence was inculcated through decades of institutional reinforcement, armed actors in the developing world are far more commonly intertwined within the world of political administration through interlocking webs of patron-client relations, business interests, ethno-linguistic roots, and other societal linkages. Rare, indeed, is the officer who is content with a life lived in the barracks. While this project adheres to the established convention that heavily politicized armed forces – such as the infamous "coup-proofed" military organization – are on average less capable of executing the complex operations of their less-politicized counterparts, this project also bucks existing convention by theorizing how deeply politically permeated military organizations can execute complex maneuvers *despite* their lack of autonomy from political interference.

Fourth, this project's overt focus on unearthing alternative causal mechanisms to explain military behavior in the armed forces of the developing world, while intrinsically valuable in the theoretical sense, also has important policy implications. For instance, supporters of an American grand strategy of "Offshore Balancing" or mid-level military strategies such as the "Afghan Model" have regularly advocated using indigenous and regional armed forces as a cheaper tool for projecting American interests abroad than conventional troop deployments. Policy initiatives that motivate regional allies to actively pin down, outmaneuver, and contain geopolitical rivals, however, can also be excessively expensive if an underlying deficiency in allied military performance is rooted in the state's infrastructural shortcomings. Improving the infrastructural capacity of a regional ally often entails a laboriously intensive process of restructuring civil administration and local extraction policies. While "cheaper" and more "direct" policy initiatives

[8] Caitlin Talmadge, "The Puzzle of Personalist Performance: Iraqi Battlefield Effectiveness in the Iran-Iraq War" *Security Studies*, vol. 22, 2 (2013): 180-221

aimed at enhancing military capacity such as training regimens, officer-exchange education programs, weapon imports, intelligence-sharing agreements, on-the-ground military coordination, and direct air power support can certainly improve the battlefield performance of regional forces, such policies do little to shield military organizations from the malign effects of a governing state's inability to provide sufficient capital, recruits, and foodstuffs to pay for and sustain military operations. Ironically, in order to realistically ensure the self-sufficiency and battlefield competence of regional military allies, U.S.-sponsored military reforms will conceivably need to engage in the very policies of "state-building" that contemporary policymakers are so desperate to avoid.

The Dependent Variable

By "military strategy," I refer to what B.H. Liddell Hart defines as "the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy"[9] or, as Clausewitz more bluntly describes, "the use of engagements for the object of the war."[10] A "conventional" military strategy emphasizes the attainment of victory by denying an opponent its wartime goals through the destruction or neutralization of opposing military forces.[11] As a result, the logic of denial that underpins conventional military strategies distinguishes them from punishment-based

[9] B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967): 335. See, also: Dan Reiter & Curtis Meek, "Determinants of Military Strategy, 1903-1994: A Quantitative Empirical Test," *International Studies Quarterly* vol. 43, 2 (1999): 364, fn. 1

[10] Carl von Clausewitz, *Carl Von Clausewitz: On War*, Michael Howard, Peter Paret, & Rosalie West ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989): 128.

[11] In many ways, my preferred conceptualization of conventional military strategy is closer to Stephen Biddle's classification of "Operational Art." See: Stephen Biddle, "Strategy in War," *PS: Political Science and Politics* vol. 40, 3 (2007): 461-466

"unconventional" strategies that specifically target non-combatant populations in an effort to attrite the enemy's political will for continued resistance.[12]

While not fully synonymous with military effectiveness, the capacity to carry out specific military strategies is nonetheless a component of most qualitative conceptualizations of battlefield performance since the capacity to execute strategies of maneuver is a standard rubric for high-performing militaries at the operational-tactical level.[13] Military organizations that can successfully prosecute offensive mobile operations or coordinated counterattacks are therefore considered to have higher levels of battlefield effectiveness than militaries that can only garrison static fortifications and concentrate soldiers around friendly assets.

From 1937-1945, variations in Chinese military strategies fell roughly along a continuum of two extremes with a strategy of maneuver on one end and a strategy of position on the other. This classification roughly coincides with previous theoretical efforts at distinguishing between

[12] This distinction is similar to Richard Betts' separation of "strategies of coercion, which aim to change adversaries' policies" from "strategies of control, which impose the objective by destroying capabilities to resist." See: Richard Betts, "Is Strategy An Illusion?" *International Security* vol. 25, 2 (2000): 6. For more on the strategic logic of punishment strategies, see: Bob Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Gil Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars: State, Society, and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Benjamin Valentino, Paul Huth, and Dylan Balch-Lindsay, "'Draining the Sea': Mass Killing and Guerrilla Warfare," *International Organization* vol. 58, 2 (2004): 375-407; Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Alexander Downes, "Draining the Sea By Filling the Graves: Investigating the Effectiveness of Indiscriminate Violence as a Counterinsurgency Strategy," *Civil Wars* vol. 9, 4 (2007): 420-444

[13] One standard conceptualization of military effectiveness is the efficient conversion of resources into fighting power. Other scholars conceptualize military effectiveness as the efficient execution of certain activities ranging from small-unit tactics to maintaining unit cohesion to pulling off combined arms maneuvers. See: Trevor Dupuy, "Measuring Combat Effectiveness," in Stephanie Neuman and Robert Harkavy, eds., *The Lessons of Recent Wars in the Third World* (Lexington: Lexington University Press, 1985): 76-77;); Kenneth Pollack, "The Influence of Arab Culture on Arab Military Effectiveness" (PhD Dissertation, MIT, 1996); Stephen Biddle & Stephen Long, "Democracy and Military Effectiveness: A Deeper Look," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* vol. 48, 4 (2004): 525-546; Risa Brooks & Elizabeth Stanley ed., *Creating Military Power: The Sources of Military Effectiveness*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007): 80-105; Alan Millett & Williamson Murray ed., *Military Effectiveness, Vol 1: The First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 2-26; Talmadge, "Explaining Military Effectiveness" (2012): 15-21

"offensive" and "defensive" strategies, although it should be noted that both maneuver and positional strategies can be utilized in an offensive or defensive manner.[14]

In maneuver warfare, speed and mobility are crucial for enabling friendly forces to acquire and exploit local advantages in firepower.[15] On the attack, maneuver warfare de-emphasizes the role of large-scale frontal assaults in favor of rapidly outflanking an opponent's position while slower-moving units pin down enemy reserves.[16] In the ideal battle plan, an attacking military force would overcome its opponent not through sheer attrition, but through a rapid envelopment that would allow friendly forces to target the soft logistical underbelly that makes up an enemy's rear areas. "The main feature of an offensive battle" Clausewitz remarks, "is the outflanking or by-passing of the defender – that is, taking the initiative."[17] When geography or a particularly expansive enemy fortification renders such a "grand-scale outflanking movement" impractical, however, then the rapid accumulation of a local superiority in numbers is needed to achieve a strategic breakthrough.[18] On the defense, maneuver strategies propose luring enemies into over-extending their supply lines, either through the use of feigned

[14] See: Clausewitz, *On War* (1989): 524. For comparisons between "offensive" and "defensive" doctrines, see: Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine* (1984); Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive* (1989); Kier, *Imagining War* (1997). For a critique of the offensive-defensive classification of military strategies, see: Reiter & Meek, "Determinants of Military Strategy" (1999)

[15] Reiter & Meek, "Determinants of Military Strategy" (1999): 365. See, also: Mao Zedong, *Collected Writings of Chairman Mao: Vol. 2 – Guerrilla Warfare* (Special Edition Books, 2009): 209-213

[16] William Lind, *Maneuver Warfare Handbook* (New York: Westview Press, 1985): 19

[17] Clausewitz, *On War* (1989): 530

[18] Lind, *Maneuver Warfare Handbook* (1985): 21. This particular strategy has a number of similarities with the popular conception of a blitzkrieg attack. The primary difference between the two concepts is in the latter's specific application to armored warfare whereas maneuver warfare in general does not necessarily require mechanized forces. See: Erich von Manstein, *Lost Victories: The Memoirs of Hitler's Most Brilliant General*, Anthony Powell ed. (1958); John Mearsheimer, "Why the Soviets Can't Win Quickly in Central Europe" *International Security* vol. 7, 1 (1982): 3-39; Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (1983): 35-43

retreats or diversionary feints, before the defender counter-attacks spent enemy spearheads in the flanks.[19]

Given its emphasis on avoiding costly battles of attrition, a strategy of maneuver can enable armies to prevail over an equally well-equipped force without suffering heavy casualties in the process. Additionally, wars of maneuver, when expertly initiated, can allow sufficiently aggressive small armies to quickly and decisively defeat a significantly larger military force. Such a strategy, however, is difficult to execute for a number of reasons. First, maneuver warfare requires a high level of coordination between friendly units along with accurate up-to-date intelligence of enemy deployments; lacking either can lead to situations in which mobile spearheads are cut off and destroyed piecemeal or wasted in futile frontal attacks against prepared enemy positions.[20] Secondly, strategies of maneuver are more logistically demanding than defensive strategies in which units remain relatively static or methodical in their advances. Rapidly moving armies that can wrench the initiative from an enemy oftentimes outrun their supply lines, thereby necessitating either the hasty requisition of provisions from local sources or the capture of additional supplies from the enemy.[21] "It is not only necessary to collect large quantities of supplies," De Jomini states, "but it is indispensable to have the means of conveying

[19] John Mearsheimer, "Maneuver, Mobile Defense, and the NATO Central Front" *International Security* vol. 6, 3 (1981): 104-122; Lind, *Maneuver Warfare Handbook* (1985): 21-22; Clausewitz, *On War* (1989): 363-369

[20] For more on the potential dangers of mobile warfare, particularly those of mobile defense, see: Mearsheimer, "Maneuver, Mobile Defense, and the NATO Central Front" (1981): 110-114. For other assessments of the advantages of maneuver doctrines, see: D. Scott Bennett & Allan Stam, "The Duration of Interstate Wars: 1816-1985" *American Political Science Review* vol. 90, 2 (1996): 239-257*;* Allan Stam, *Win, Lose, or Draw: Domestic Politics and the Crucible of War* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1998); Reiter & Stam, *Democracies at War* (2002)

[21] De Jomini, *The Art of War* (2004): 142; Clausewitz, *On War* (1989): 330-337

them with or after the army; and this is the greatest difficulty, particularly on rapid expeditions."[22]

To some military theorists, it is the constant danger of privation that drives armies to manage impressive feats of mobile warfare. Von Manstein, for instance, cautioned against overly investing in the logistical task of constructing "various facilities" designed to "ease the lot of the troops… The upshot is always that troops and formation staffs lose the knack of quickly adapting themselves to the changes of situation which daily occur in a war of movement."[23] Other theorists, however, acknowledge that pre-existing logistical networks help facilitate rapid movement when war breaks out. The act of relying upon captured enemy supplies as a means of procurement, De Jomini argued, can "explain the success of many a rash enterprise," but "it would be absurd to found a system [of logistics]" based on the seizure of an opponent's provisions.[24] Clausewitz in turn, while generally disdainful of supply systems based entirely on pre-established depots, nonetheless comments that "the outcome of a successful maneuver will consist of a strip of land, supply depot, or the like."[25]

In contrast to strategies of maneuver, the tenets of positional strategies (a term I use in favor of the more traditional concept of "attrition strategies") emphasize the role of firepower enhanced by the theoretical military advantages of being on the defensive.[26] "It is easier" Clausewitz remarks, "to hold ground than [to] take it."[27] Specifically, a strategy of position advocates the use of fortifications as force multipliers, allowing relatively small armies to attrite

[22] De Jomini, *The Art of War* (2004): 144
[23] Manstein, *Lost Victories* (1958): 238
[24] De Jomini, *The Art of War* (2004): 146
[25] Clausewitz, *On War* (1989): 337, 541
[26] Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (1983): 34; Reiter & Meek, "Determinants of Military Strategy" (1999); Mao, *Collected Writings of Chairman Mao: Vol. 2* (2009): 209-213
[27] Clausewitz, *On War* (1989): 357

significantly larger attacking forces.[28] Whereas battle fronts in a war of movement are fluid as units seek to outflank one another, positional warfare tends to be characterized by relatively static fronts with territory changing hands gradually and only through great expenditures of firepower.

Although the importance of fortifications makes it easy to classify positional warfare as a primarily "defensive" strategy, there are a number of "offensive" applications to the use of entrenched positions. A string of mutually supporting fortifications staffed by small garrisons, for instance, can ultimately "strangle" an enemy by gradually denying opposing mobile units the room to maneuver freely. As a result, positional strategies on the offensive generally involve the construction of new entrenchments to consolidate existing territorial gains followed by large frontal assaults against enemy strongpoints, whereupon an additional round of territorial consolidation and fortification building will then occur. In its purest defensive iteration, a strategy of position engages solely in the hardening of friendly assets with the intention of giving an enemy no recourse but to engage in a costly frontal assault.

Among military theorists, positional strategies are oftentimes treated as a relatively passive embodiment of warfare, concerned more with force preservation and methodical gains than the attainment of a decisive victory. De Jomini, for example, derides strategies of position as "the old manner of conducting a methodical war, with armies in tents (…), one besieging a city, the other covering it; one, perhaps, endeavoring to acquire a small province, the other counteracting its efforts by occupying strongpoints."[29] Mao, in turn, criticized positional warfare

[28] John Lynn, "Foods, Funds, and Fortresses: Resource Mobilization and Positional Warfare in the Campaigns of Louis XIV," in John Lynn ed., *Feeding Mars: Logistics in Western Warfare from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993): 137-139; John Lynn, *Giant of the Grand Siecle: The French Army, 1610-1715* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 547

[29] De Jomini, *The Art of War* (2004): 135

for "depending exclusively on defense works with deep trenches, high fortresses and successive rows of defensive positions… Positional warfare is […] necessary, but strategically it is auxiliary and secondary."[30] Yet despite being considered "far too Maginot-minded"[31] in theory, strategies of position are advantaged over their maneuver counterparts in terms of logistical ease. Unlike in cases of maneuver warfare where mobile spearheads constantly outrun their lines of supply in pursuit of a decisive killing blow, positional warfare's emphasis on consolidating territorial gains before making additional advances allows logistical trains to catch up with an army's limited progression. To early proponents of positional strategies such as Andre de Roginat, "methodical step by step system of warfare" and its facilitation of accumulating provisions was key to avoiding the supply problems that doomed the overreaching offensives of Napoleon.[32]

Expectations of Existing Theory

Competing civil-military explanations of military behavior can be classified into four schools of thought: a "Neorealist" school, an "Organizational" school, a "Culturalist" school, and an "Institutionalist" school.[33]

The first approach to the study of military strategy, which I label the "Neorealist" school of thought, draws much of its underlying assumptions from structuralist IR theories by emphasizing the causal importance of both military threats to state security and the geopolitical goals of states themselves. Barry Posen, for example, argues that in highly threatening

[30] Mao, *Collected Writings of Chairman Mao* (2009):
[31] Manstein, *Lost Victories* (1958): 81
[32] Martin Van Creveld, *Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977): 76
[33] One of the casualties of this "simplification" is the discounting of a relatively small literature that looks at the relationship between military organizations and civil-society as a determinant of battlefield performance. See: See: Stanislav Andreski, "On the Peaceful Disposition of Military Dictatorships" *Journal of Strategic Studies* vol. 3, 3 (1980): 3-10; Stephen Rosen, "Military Effectiveness: Why Society Matters" *International Security* vol. 19, 4 (1995): 5-31; Stephen Rosen, *Societies and Military Power: India and Its Armies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995)

international environments, state policymakers will actively structure military doctrines to meet the state's political goals of either revising the territorial status quo - leading to offensive military postures - or maintaining the systemic balance of power - leading to defensive military postures.[34] Scott Sagan notes that "the need for offensive capabilities to provide support for allies" can explain the historical proliferation of offensive strategies throughout the armed forces of the European Great Powers.[35] Additionally, John Mearsheimer treats a more focused conception of the conventional balance of military power between two rival/warring states as being the primary indicator of whether a military attacker can realistically adopt a "blitzkrieg" strategy or be forced to choose instead between a more costly strategy of "attrition" and a less territorially ambitious strategy of "limited aims."[36]

A second school of thought dispenses with the focus on severity of threats and instead draws upon the findings of the "organizational model of politics" popularized in the IR literature by Graham Allison.[37] Such an approach treats the development of military strategy as a means through which armed forces are able to attain a generalizable set of organizational goals; namely, to "increase organizational size and wealth... [and] enhance military autonomy."[38] This interpretation of strategic variation is best conveyed in Jack Snyder's analysis of European military strategies in 1914.[39] "A penchant for offense," Snyder argues, "helped the military

[34] Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine* (1984)
[35] Scott Sagan, "1914 Revisited: Allies, Offense, and Instability," *International Security* vol. 11, 2 (1986): 163
[36] John Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); John Mearsheimer, "Number, Strategy, and the European Balance," *International Security* vol. 12, 4 (1988): 174-185
[37] Graham Allison & Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Pearson, 1999)
[38] Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine* (1984): 49 See, also: Kurt Lang, "Military Organizations," in *Handbook of Organizations*, ed. James G. March (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965): 838-878; Stephen Van Evera, "Causes of War" (PhD Dissertation, UC Berkeley, 1984): 282; Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive* (1989): 24-33; Stuart Kaufman, "Organizational Politics and Change in Soviet Military Policy," *World Politics* vol. 46, 3 (1994): 355-382
[39] Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive* (1989)

organization to preserve its autonomy, prestige, and traditions, to simplify its institutional routines, or to resolve a dispute within the organization."[40]

Noticeably, both Neorealist and Organizational theories are better-suited to explaining the *choice* to adopt a specific operational strategy but are less focused on the ability to successfully *execute* a chosen strategy. As a result, a third school of thought, which I term the "Culturalist" approach, criticizes Neorealist and Organizational theories for promoting a functionalist explanation of military operational behavior that exaggerates "the wisdom of civilian intervention and the myopia of military organizations."[41] In turn, Culturalist scholars advocate the study of internalized norms, values, and traditions in shaping strategic preferences and constraining how militaries react to their environmental context.[42] While early Culturalist explanations, such as Elizabeth Kier's work on French and British pre-WWII doctrines, also tackled the rationale behind a military's choice to adopt one strategy over another, other Culturalist scholars have pointed to societal and military subcultures as potentially constraining a military's ability to execute strategic operations. Kenneth Pollack, for example, argues that "certain patterns of behavior fostered by the dominant Arab culture" – e.g. over-centralization, a

[40] Jack Snyder, "Civil-Military Relations and the Cult of the Offensive," *International Security* vol. 9, 1 (1984): 109. For an assessment on how a belief in the superiority of offensive action de-stabilized strategic relations in pre-WWI Europe, see: Stephen Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War," *International Security* vol. 9, 1 (1984): 58-107

[41] Kier, *Imagining War* (1997): 5. Culturalist arguments can be divided into three sub-groups depending on whether strategic/organizational culture is viewed as an independent, instrumental, or intervening variable. I primarily address the most recent literature that treats culture as an intervening variable. See, for example, Alistair Iain Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture," *International Security* vol. 19, 4 (1995): 32-64.

[42] See: Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (1988); Pollack, "The Influence of Arab Culture on Arab Military Effectiveness" (1996); Kier, *Imagining War* (1997); Theo Farrell & Terry Terriff, *The Sources of Military Change: Culture, Politics, Technology* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002); John Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup With a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005); Dima Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the US, and Israel* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); Austin Long, "First War Syndrome: Military Culture, Professionalism, and Counterinsurgency Doctrine" (PhD Dissertation, MIT, 2010). For a critical view of the culturalist argument, see: Michael Desch, "Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies," *International Security* vol. 23, 1 (1998): 141-170

lack of flexibility, discouragement against taking the tactical initiative, information manipulation, and the over-subservience of junior officers – contributed to the "limited effectiveness of Arab armies and air forces from 1945-1991."[43] Contemporary research has since rejected Pollack's primordial conceptualization of culture in favor of explanations that specify the origins of military subcultures and their resulting effects on future battlefield performance. In Austin Long's study of counterinsurgency, the United States' historical struggles with rooting out insurgent groups can be traced to the professional inculcation of lessons drawn from the U.S. Army's nascent formative experience fighting conventional military foes. In direct contrast, Great Britain's relatively successful record of executing its counterinsurgency strategies can be traced back to the military's historical preoccupation as an imperial policing force designed to maintain local order among Britain's far-flung colonial holdings.[44]

The final approach to the study of military strategy, which I label the "Institutionalist" approach, promotes the analytical importance of domestic configurations of institutional authority between civilian politicians and military leaders.[45] Oftentimes, variations in civil-military configurations are viewed as a facet of institutional variation between regime types, although researchers have since emphasized Huntington's original assertion that harmful civil-military pathologies are not exclusive to personalist autocracies.[46] Caitlin Talmadge, for

[43] Pollack, "The Influence of Arab Culture" (1996): 759
[44] Austin Long, *The Soul of Armies: Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Military Culture in the US and UK* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016)
[45] See: Lake, "Powerful Pacifists" (1992); Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change* (1994); Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing" (1999); Reiter & Meek, "Determinants of Military Strategy" (1999); Reiter & Stam, *Democracies at War* (2002); Reiter & Stam, "Understanding Victory" (2003); Deborah Avant, "Political Institutions and Military Effectiveness: Contemporary United States and United Kingdom," in *Creating Military Power*, ed. Brooks & Stanley (2007): 80-105; Brooks, *Shaping Strategy* (2008); Caverley, "The Myth of Military Myopia: Democracy, Small Wars, and Vietnam" *International Security* vol. 34, 3 (2010): 119-57; Carrie Lee Lindsay, "The Politics of Military Operations" (PhD Dissertation, Stanford, 2015)
[46] See: Caitlin Talmadge, "The Puzzle of Personalist Performance: Iraqi Battlefield Effectiveness in the Iran-Iraq War" *Security Studies* vol. 22, 2 (2013): 180-221

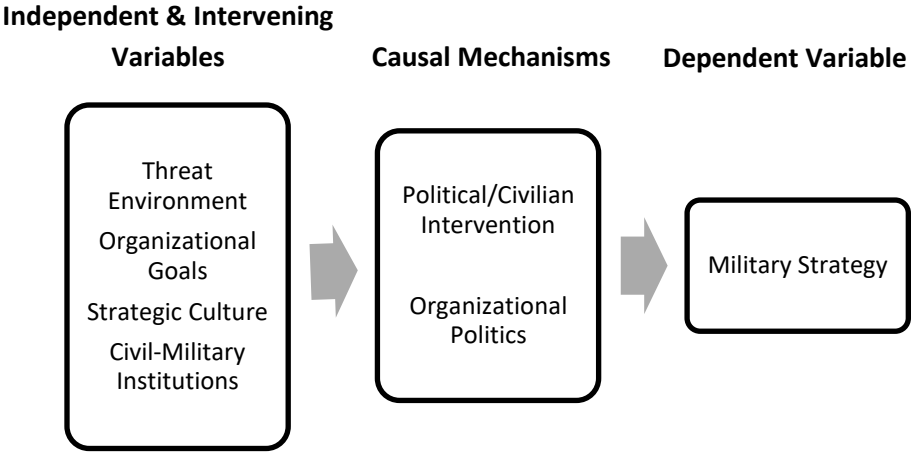
example, demonstrates how authoritarian leaders facing internal threats typically aim to "coup-proof" their military organizations by restricting training, promoting officers based off of loyalty rather than competence, developing divided and centralized chains of military command, and restricting information sharing among military groups, all of which culminates in an armed force that struggle to implement complex battlefield operations.[47] Conversely, autocratic leaders who prioritize external threats are more likely to conduct realistic training regimens, promote officers based off of merit, open up channels of horizontal communication, and adopt other organizational practices that enhance an armed force's ability to execute complex operational maneuvers.

All four schools of thought, despite focusing on a wide variety of factors that could potentially explain variation in military strategy, nonetheless coalesce around two categories of causal mechanisms that predominate in theories of civil-military relations. The first category of causal mechanisms encompasses all exogenous interventions into military decision-making by political leaders. Direct interventions can take on the form of coup-proofing strategies or the insertion of political ideologues into the military hierarchy whereas indirect interventions can revolve around legislation on conscription rates and defense budgets.[48] A second category of causal mechanisms is found in the endogenous processes of bureaucratic politicking that occur within military organizations. Such processes can take the form of professionalizing cohorts through military education, promotion through official military channels, and inter-/intra-service

[47] Caitlin Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army: Battlefield Effectiveness in Authoritarian Regimes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015)

[48] Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (1957): 11, 80-85; Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine* (1984): 59; Snyder, "Civil-Military Relations and the Cult of the Offensive" (1984): 110; Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change* (1994); Kier, *Imagining War* (1997); Williamson Murray, and Allan Millett, *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 367-368; Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Brooks, *Shaping Strategy* (2008)

rivalries.[49] Figure 1.1 provides a schematic overview of the theoretical arguments that dominate the strategic studies literature.



Existing Explanations for Military Strategy

Figure 1.1

The Puzzle of Republican China

How well, then, do existing explanations account for variations in the military behavior of Chinese military forces in the Republican era? I contend that each school of thought provides a plausible theoretical account of why certain Chinese Army Groups successfully prosecuted a particular military strategy, but are otherwise limited when accounting for the historical timing of temporal shifts in battlefield performance that characterized the military operations of the National Revolutionary Army and the Communist Red Army.

As a comprehensive explanation of in-case variation in Chinese military strategy, Neorealist explanations fall short in explaining why Nationalist and Communist militaries adopted fundamentally opposing strategies despite both organizations facing similar existential

[49] Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (1957); Kimberly Zisk Marten, *Engaging the Enemy: Organization Theory and Soviet Military Innovation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Stephen Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Grissom, "The Future of Military Innovation Studies" (2006); Long, "First War Syndrome" (2010)

threats in the form of Imperial Japan. Over-time variation in operational strategy also becomes an added puzzle when one considers how the Chinese Nationalists switched between positional and maneuver warfare when combatting the Japanese from 1937-1945 but rigidly stuck to a strategy of positional warfare when fighting a resurgent Communist movement from 1945-1948. In a world where the default state of existence for political entities is that of perennial vulnerability, the nuances of Chinese military adaptation simply do not correlate with larger geopolitical shifts.

Organizational and Culturalist theories suffer from identical weaknesses when applied to the Chinese case. Specifically, without the presence of a large exogenous shock to the military's standard operating procedure, organizational and cultural factors generally predict a lack of change in Chinese operational behavior. From the perspective of Organizational theories, Posen notes that "generally, it is not in the interests of most of an organization's members to promote or succumb to radical change. Innovations in military doctrine will be rare because they increase operational uncertainty."[50] From a Culturalist perspective, Theo Farrell writes that "military culture [can] act as a brake on innovation… Innovation that goes against organizational identity usually requires some external shock to military culture, such as defeat in war, in order to jolt the military into a fundamental rethink of its purpose and core business."[51] Yet given the prevalence of "external shocks" that afflicted Chinese military organizations from 1937-1948, it is not clear why some shocks corresponded with an adaptation in military strategy whereas others did not. Why did early crushing defeats at the hands of the Japanese "jolt" the NRA into adopting offensive maneuver strategies while military defeats at the hands of the Communists failed to trigger a similar innovation? Why did the presence of U.S. military advisors coincide with a

[50] Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine* (1984): 54-55
[51] Theo Farrell, "The Dynamics of British Military Transformation," *International Affairs* vol. 84, 4 (2008): 783.

defensive retrenchment among Chinese units whereas the presence of German military advisors five years earlier had no such effect? In allowing us to assess a priori which exogenous shocks are most likely to trigger changes to strategic operations, Organizational and Culturalist explanations come up short.

According to proponents of an Institutionalist line of reasoning, the NRA's ability to pursue offensive military strategies can be traced to the presence of political interventions that either constrict or facilitate the military's capacity for coordinating and commanding complex operational maneuvers. To be more specific, the leader of the Nationalists, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi), implemented a series of strict political controls on the inner workings of the NRA, leading to constant delays and ill-coordinated maneuvers as Nationalist generals repeatedly hesitated to initiate strategic offensives without the explicit approval of Chiang himself.[52] In short, when Chiang Kai-shek refrained from micro-managing all matters military, the NRA successfully prosecuted offensive maneuver strategies; as Chiang consolidated his decision-making authority over military affairs, the NRA lost its capacity for engaging in offensive military operations and thereby settled on a passive strategy of strongpoint defense. Communist leader Mao Zedong, in contrast, avoided many of the harmful organizational practices adopted by his Nationalist counterpart and therefore helped facilitate the Red Army's development into a force capable of executing impressive feats of maneuver warfare despite its relative lack of mechanization.

Many of the factors that characterize Institutionalist explanations of battlefield performance – namely, the existence of coup-proofing strategies and other deleterious political interventions into military affairs – are present in the Chinese case. The mere existence of these

[52] Chi, *Nationalist China at War* (1982)

dynamics, however, does not always trigger a corresponding change in the operational strategies of the NRA and the Communist Army. While Chiang's coup-proofing endeavors can be interpreted as leading to the NRA's preference for positional strategies in the post-1941 period, it remains unclear why the same coup-proofing methods did not have a similar effect on the NRA's adoption of maneuver warfare against the Japanese from 1938-1941. Likewise, it is unclear why an equally paranoid Communist leadership under Mao Zedong managed to create a military organization with a noted proficiency for maneuver warfare despite being led by a rigidly politicized officer corps constantly being monitored for their ideological purity and loyalty to Mao.

Why then do so many of our existing civil-military explanations struggle to account for the temporal and spatial variations in military strategy observed from a relatively thin slice of Chinese history? The primary culprits for this omission are twofold: (1) the theoretical dominance of elite-focused civil-military mechanisms and (2) a scholarly aversion to historically contingent cases that lack global generalizability. First, existing theories have regularly focused on a relatively narrow range of political interactions in which civilian officials and military actors compete over which groups leverage the most authority over military-related affairs. In other words, the concentration of research agendas has traditionally revolved around the organization of what Michael Mann terms "despotic power," or the power for state actors to make decisions "without routine, institutionalized negotiation with civil society groups."[53] What types of political interventions by civilian officials are most likely to hinder battlefield performance? How do military organizations shield themselves from harmful civilian intervention? Under what conditions do political and military actors harmonize their normally

[53] Mann, "The Autonomous Power of the State," (1984): 188-189

competing interests? Which civil-military pathologies lead on average to more battlefield victories? How do political leaders maintain civilian control over the armed forces without adversely impacting military performance? Less appreciated among civil-military theories is the role of "infrastructural power" or the capacity for state actors to penetrate civil society and logistically enforce political decisions throughout their territory.[54] How do state institutions procure and deliver supplies to armies in the field? To what extent do civil and military organizations need to coordinate their logistical services when engaging in battlefield operations? How does the military's involvement in the expansion of the state's infrastructural capacity impact its own strategic operations?

Typically, the omission of infrastructural capacity as a causal factor can be excused when studying the military organizations of industrialized states where infrastructural capacity is already well developed. Short of extended and destructive periods of total war, the armed forces of industrialized states are unlikely to be hindered in their everyday operations due to a logistical shortage resulting from the state's inability to enforce extractive policies at home. When logistical deficiencies do compromise the execution of military operations, said shortcomings are typically traced back to civil-military mismanagement at the elite level – i.e. civilian politicians and military elites fail to play well together. Civil-military pathologies, therefore, are identified as the root of most operational ills among developed states; state armed forces have the capacity to execute their decisions, but are restrained from doing so by civil-military squabbles or political malpractice. To draw upon the metaphor of the corporeal leviathan, the bodily limbs are distracted from fulfilling their functions by the conflicting thoughts of the head. Within the developing world, however, a highly robust extractive apparatus capable of reaching into civil

[54] Ibid.

society and procuring the revenue, foodstuffs, and recruits necessary for warfighting (not to mention delivering said resources to armies in need) is less of a guarantee. In the most extreme of sorry states, the corporeal leviathan lacks the rudimentary musculature for its limbs to operate (much less the single-minded focus needed to grow them). As a result, the proper execution of a planned military operation must overcome both the deficiencies in civil-military pathology AND a dearth of infrastructural capacity.

A second factor that has allowed the 1937-1948 Chinese military experience to slide under the radar of existing theoretical explanations is the ongoing search within security studies for "generalizable" theories of military behavior. While debating the merits of "generalizability" as a rubric for a theory's intrinsic value or policy relevance is a task which I ultimately avoid, the maximalist search for "law-like" phenomena that can be stretched to encompass a wide population of cases has led to the omission of "outlier" cases that typically fall into the error term. The fact that Chinese Nationalist and Communist military organizations managed to prosecute complex maneuver-based operations (the former haphazardly, the latter consistently) despite adopting "bad" civil-military practices does little to lift their ultimately narrow experience above that of a curious anomaly – interesting from a purely historical perspective, but not a suitable case for widespread inference. Nationalist China's military experience as a theoretical outlier is further underserved by the conventional historical interpretation – originating in part from the scathing assessments of American military advisers such as General Joseph Stilwell – that the East Asian theatre in World War II was a hotbed of Chinese military incompetence resulting from excessive political micro-management. Whereas American, British, Soviet, and German military experiences in the Western and Eastern European theatres have served as an empirical buttress for numerous studies on military innovation and strategic

adaptation, the decade long Chinese struggle to mobilize and coordinate six million men under arms has been perfunctorily treated as a cautionary tale of military ineffectiveness resulting from poor military professionalization practices. Nationalist China is, therefore, not only underappreciated due to its anomalous characteristics, its status as an empirical puzzle that actually subverts the expectations of military professionalism advocates is rarely recognized as such.

It is on the unexamined role of infrastructural capacity in shaping military behavior where I make two theoretical interjections. First, a state's infrastructural capacity limits the range of operational strategies that that state's military can realistically adopt. Even in cases where there is unanimous civil-military agreement on all operational decisions, an army may still fail to execute its given strategy due to a poor procurement and delivery system for military-related resources. Second, in cases where militaries are engaged in both the acts of war-making and state-building, the creation of civil institutions designed to extract taxes runs parallel to the creation of military institutions designed to procure war-time supplies. Depending on how states attempt to marshal the resources necessary for war-making, military organizations can end up fighting in logistical environments that are either highly conducive to an aggressive war of movement or better-suited to a more limited war of position.

Below, I develop a theoretical argument that shows how state-building can impact the execution and adaptation of operational strategy. This framework outlines a process through which modes of state-building affect military behavior through the creation of institutions that are equipped to logistically support certain strategies over others. I then proceed to outline how these "logistical mechanisms" interact with other political-military dynamics to produce several outcomes in the execution of military strategies.

The Argument: State Structures Structuring Strategies

To explain the strategic variation we observe in Republican China's military operations, I argue that two components of state-building need to be accounted for: the mode of state-oriented extraction and the degree of political-military discord between state governments and rival domestic armed actors. Regarding modes of state extraction, the creation of extractive institutions with varying degrees of infrastructural penetration into rural areas provides a logistical backbone that varies in its capacity to support the prosecution of complex military operations typically warranted by an aggressive war of maneuver. As a result, the territorial scope of the state's infrastructural capacity for obtaining and delivering war-time resources to military units pre-selects which military strategies can be realistically adopted by military organizations and which ones cannot.

Two modes of state extraction are important to my theory; both of which are characterized by an emphasis on differing strategies of resource extraction. The first is a "rural-centric" mode of state extraction in which leaders directly appropriate revenue, food, and manpower from across the entire population. The importance of enforcing direct collections from a widely dispersed population leads to the creation of extractive institutions with large administrative staffs deployed throughout sovereign territory in order to maximize infrastructural penetration into rural communities.[55] From this expansive apparatus, official administrators fund state activities primarily through the taxation of land and property, which (while typically collected in legal tender) can be converted to in-kind collections when deemed necessary. The state's ability to both rely on an expanded geography of administrative staff-work and to modify

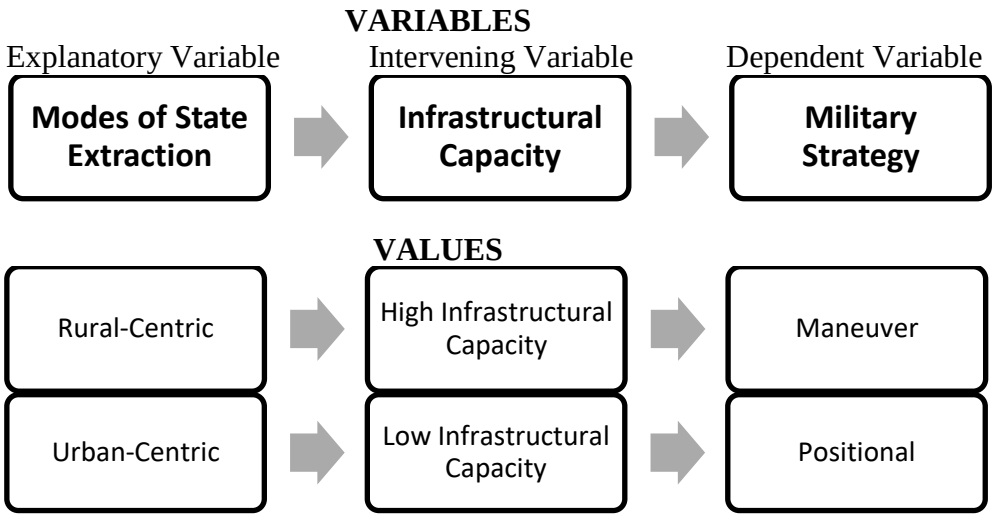
[55] This mode of state extraction can be seen as a parallel of Charles Tilly's conception of a coercion-intensive or capitalized-coercion mode of state formation. Given that Tilly's categorizations generally refer to a long-term organic process of state formation while also accounting for particular alliances between societal groups, I refrain from borrowing his terminology in my own classification. See: Tilly, Coercion, Capital, and European States (1992): 30; Lopez-Alves, State Formation and Democracy in Latin America (2000): 18

currency-based exactions into raw material collections through direct labor coercion provides a crucial logistical advantage for armed forces pursuing mobile strategies that emphasize rapid sustained battlefield operations over long distances. While mobile spearheads and flying columns constantly threaten to outrun military logistical lines, the presence of a pre-existing state apparatus with administrative tendrils capable of reaching into all corners of society and appropriating its material resources for military use can ensure that traveling forces remain in supply and maintain their operational momentum.

A second method of state extraction is an "urban-centric" project in which state leaders accrue resources through taxing the movement of goods.[56] Administrative staff is, therefore, concentrated around nexuses of commercial activity – typically port cities and densely populated townships – where extractive institutions can skim off of ongoing market transactions and imports through duties and tolls. As long as the volume of commercial activity remains sufficiently high and supply chain nodes are within reach of government appropriation, officials can fund state projects without coordinating a large corpus of tax collectors dispersed throughout the realm and updating the state's cadastral knowledge. Relying on an apparatus that anchors itself to the taxation of capital flows, however, comes at a cost in the degree to which state agents can shuttle military necessities to fast-moving armies deployed beyond the limits of city granaries, port holding facilities, and market warehouses. Given the state's curtailed infrastructural penetration in rural locales, armies are constrained to the adoption of a more logistically forgiving strategy of positional warfare. In such scenarios, military operations are confined to either limited aims or city-hopping campaigns in which armies restrict their movements to a predetermined network of highways and railroads designed to route goods

[56] This mode of state-building is similar to Tilly's conception of a capital-intensive mode of state formation. See: Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States* (1992): 30

through government-controlled toll routes and urban markets. At best, militaries will be able to initiate limited tactical encirclements of enemy positions that are systematically halted by the need to re-establish logistical lines; at worst, militaries will ossify into a purely defensive posture of hardening existing strongpoints and territorial assets with no attempts at interdicting enemy movements.



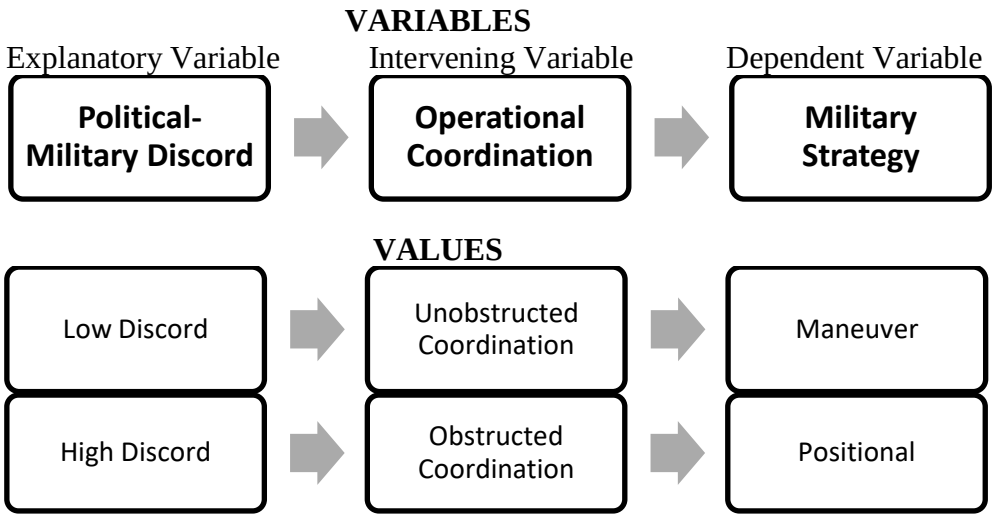
Effects of State Extraction on Military Strategy

Figure 1.2

Processes of state extraction, however, do not operate in a political vacuum, nor do they occur in isolation from political-military tensions that may occur between state factions. As a general rule of thumb, the more complex a military strategy, the more necessary it is for politicians and military officials with influence over operational-strategic decisions to either coordinate their actions or avoid obstructing the tactical initiative of their commanders. High levels of discord among rival armed factions can lead to scenarios in which army divisions fail to reinforce one other or refrain from attacking an enemy in the hopes of buck-passing combat responsibilities off onto neighboring forces. When political leaders insert their own disagreements into the mix, further problems with operational coordination can occur as

politicians evoke budgetary cuts, the diversion of wartime materiel, and the withholding of strategic intelligence in order to bludgeon military actors into complying with a preferred strategic vision. A strategy of maneuver warfare, with its emphasis on close cooperation between combined arms units and a certain degree of tactical freedom among its battlefield commanders, is particularly vulnerable to these negative after-effects of high political-military discord. A strategy of positional warfare, while greatly benefitting from close coordination among armies, can still be executed (albeit sub-optimally) even if individual units refuse to sync their operations and revert to passively garrisoning their positions.

When political-military discord is low, however, coordination obstacles to executing a strategy of maneuver warfare are minimized. Importantly, low political-military discord does not necessarily equate to objective civilian control or a high degree of trust between political and military actors. Generals, armed actors, and politicians can utterly loathe each other yet still deign to either coordinate their battlefield operations out of military necessity or avoid suppressing the tactical initiative of their commanders. While intelligence and coordination failures resulting from fog of war can still occur even under ideal circumstances, political and military decision-makers are nonetheless dissuaded from engaging in the parochial practices of withholding tactical support to other combat units and concealing crucial intelligence. Additionally, when battlefield commanders make impromptu tactical decisions, they can do so with the knowledge that their actions will not be hindered by political micromanagement from above or punished by politically-motivated rivals. Figure 1.3 outlines these causal processes.



Effects of Political-Military Discord on Military Strategy

Figure 1.3

Successfully executing a strategy of maneuver warfare, therefore, requires overcoming two obstacles: (1) a shortage in infrastructural and logistical capacity and (2) a lack of operational coordination between political and military officials. The inability to overcome even one of these two obstacles can lock armies out of adopting the mobile operations needed for maneuver warfare *in spite of* best recruitment practices, training regimens, and renewed efforts at promoting military professionalization.

		Political-Military Discord	
		Low	High
State Extraction	Rural-Centric	Maneuver Strategies (Nationalists 1939-1941) (Communists 1937-1948)	Positional Strategies (Nationalists 1941-1943)
	Urban-Centric	Positional Strategies (Nationalists 1946-1948)	Positional Strategies (Nationalists 1937-1938, 1943-1945)

Interaction of Political-Military Discord and State Extraction

Figure 1.4

Figure 1.4 identifies the possible range of operational outcomes that can occur when accounting for the interaction of state extraction and political-military discord.

Rural-centric state extraction and low political-military discord: In the first category – which serves as the ideal goldilocks case – the development of a far-reaching administrative infrastructure that accompanies rural-centric extraction gives militaries the capacity to (ruthlessly) appropriate foodstuffs, manpower, and other wartime necessities from all corners of society and deliver said goods to rapidly moving divisions. The lack of overt discord between political leaders and military officials further facilitates the execution of mobile warfare by ensuring that political leaders and commanders do not attempt to withhold reinforcements or intelligence from hard-pressed armies engaged in maneuvers abroad. The anti-Japanese campaigns of the Nationalists from 1939-1941 primarily fall into this category.

Rural-centric state extraction and high political-military discord: In the second category, the infrastructural capacity of the state is high enough to logistically support a maneuver strategy, but contentious political-military relations lead to situations in which political and military actors deliberately undermine each other's battlefield command through excessive micromanagement of a rival's operational maneuvers or withholding tactical support from nearby units. This poor operational coordination in turn reduces armies to adopting slow-moving positional strategies in which divisions are regularly unable to take the tactical initiative or marshal rapid-strike forces capable of exploiting openings in an enemy's lines. The frustrated anti-Japanese counteroffensives of the Chinese Nationalists from 1941-1943 fall into this second category.

Urban-centric state extraction and low political-military discord: The third category sees a willingness among political leaders and military officials to coordinate their battlefield operations (or at least refrain from sabotaging each other's military maneuvers for political gain), but logistical shortcomings resulting from the low infrastructural capacity of urban-centric extraction stymie the execution of mobile strategies. Shortages in supply services therefore lock armies into adopting positional strategies. The failed anti-Communist campaigns initiated by the Nationalists from 1946-1948 primarily fall into this third category.

Urban-centric state extraction and high political-military discord: In the final category, low infrastructural capacity leads to minimal logistical support for mobile operations while high political-military discord leads to poor operational coordination of battlefield maneuvers. Faced with the worst of both worlds on the state-building and political-military front, armies are doubly locked into positional strategies. The Nationalists' ill-fated anti-Japanese campaigns of 1937-1938 and 1943-1945 generally fall into this last category.

Assumptions, Limitations, and the "Rentier-Officer Dilemma"

Like all attempts at theoretical simplification, this project makes several assumptions that elide a far more complex empirical picture. Noticeably, my theoretical logic draws no explicit distinction between a "badly executed" strategy of maneuver warfare and a strategy of positional warfare. Armed forces that attempt to prosecute maneuver warfare without the logistical support or operational coordination necessary for effective implementation will, I assume, either regress to positional warfare or will engage in sloppily conducted military operations that look no different from positional warfare in practice.

Secondly, this argument assumes that military organizations have a rank preference ordering that places maneuver warfare above positional warfare. In other words, under ideal conditions in which both positional and maneuver strategies are equally attainable, all military actors will prefer the latter over the former. When military actors do advocate for positional warfare, they do so because they are aware that their armed forces lack the capacity for conducting maneuver warfare, not because positional warfare is a qualitatively superior alternative in theory.

From these two theoretical assumptions come two limitations of my argument. First, by assuming a strict binary between maneuver and positional warfare, my argument relies on an artificial truncation of the dependent variable which fails to account for the full dynamic range of operational strategies that we would expect to observe. In a re-conceptualization of this project, one could disaggregate variation on operational strategy by utilizing a (still admittedly crude) ordinal categorization that distinguishes between "well-executed maneuver warfare, well-executed positional warfare, poorly-executed maneuver warfare, and poorly-executed positional warfare." While there are certainly advantages to this alternative framework, my compression of "well-executed positional warfare, poorly-executed maneuver warfare, and poorly-executed positional warfare" into a single category of "positional warfare" is not necessarily fatal to my argument's ability to answer the primary theoretical impetus of this project – i.e. what mechanisms enable militaries to attain the "gold standard" of consistently executing complex mobile operations?

A second limitation of my argument is its dependence on an "obstacle-centric" understanding of military behavior. In other words, by assuming that military organizations are inherently biased in favor of maneuver strategies, my theory promotes a causal story in which the

path to maneuver warfare lies in the removal of logistical and coordination obstacles to mobile operations.[57] One can imagine, however, a scenario in which both logistical and coordination obstacles are minimized yet military organizations still do not initiate maneuver strategies on account of organizational bias (e.g. officers are trained to prefer positional warfare) or other political rationales (e.g. armies avoid adopting maneuver warfare to ensure that outside patrons continue funding lucrative military re-education programs). While I do not resolve this issue theoretically,[58] I do attempt to address it empirically by showing how Nationalist and Communist leaders actively promoted the use of mobile operations in their wartime orders and battlefield commands.

If the aforementioned two limitations are the result of my argument's efforts towards theoretical parsimony, a third – and more problematic – methodological limitation arises once we account for the empirical realities of porous political-military divisions in the developing world. Once we acknowledge that military generals can simultaneously inhabit multiple "non-military" roles (e.g. provincial governors, local tax collectors, businessmen, large landowners, diplomatic statesmen, etc.), it becomes difficult to argue that changes in modes of extraction and levels of political-military discord operate independently of each other. In other words, *the theory's "explanatory variables" are not actually independent in reality*.

This limitation is best-encapsulated in what can be termed the "rentier-officer dilemma"; namely, how can central governments build-up a state's infrastructural capacity *without* triggering backlash from military officers eager to protect their politically-motivated rent-seeking

[57] In one sense, my argument shares company with certain civil-military explanations of battlefield effectiveness, which typically argue for the removal of political obstacles to efficient military behavior while assuming that unhindered "professional" military actors will gravitate towards the "best" battlefield practices.
[58] One potential theoretical response is to argue that existentially threatening international environments (such as total war) push military organizations to prefer maneuver strategies over positional ones, although I find mixed evidence for this assertion within the Chinese case.

privileges? To elaborate on this problem, a regime in a developing nation that seeks to effectively prosecute a strategy of maneuver warfare needs to accomplish two goals: (1) minimizing political-military discord so that battlefield operations can be properly coordinated and (2) expanding the state's infrastructural power so that state-led military operations can be adequately supplied. The most immediate short-term solution to reducing political-military discord is in the distribution of economic rents to military decision-makers who may otherwise be unwilling to coordinate operational maneuvers. In doing so, however, governments curtail their own ability to consolidate infrastructural power over modes of resource extraction; potentially leading to supply shortages for future military operations. If governments instead focus on consolidating infrastructural power, then such efforts can antagonize military decision-makers whose rent-seeking privileges are at risk of being abolished or subsumed by the state. These military officers cum rent-seekers, in turn, can stymie future battlefield operations by refusing to coordinate with other commanders until they receive additional economic guarantees. To summarize: policies designed to resolve logistical shortcomings trigger coordination problems, whereas policies designed to incentivize coordination among rent-seeking officers trigger logistical problems down the line.

From a methodological perspective, the rentier-officer dilemma limits this project's ability to measure the *independent causal effects* of state extraction and political-military discord on military strategy. By extension, it is also impossible to measure the precise magnitude of variation in military strategy that is triggered by shifts in extractive practices or political-military discord. The rentier-officer dilemma does *not* mean, however, that it is impossible to study how state extraction and/or political-military discord affects the execution of military strategies in developing states. Rather, the fact that state extraction and political-military discord typically do

not vary independently of each other necessitates a more careful disentangling of the *causal mechanisms* underlining both variables' relationship with operational military strategy. Identifying the observable implications of these mechanisms and tracing their recurrence throughout the relevant case history is just as crucial (if not more so) than calculating a coefficient of determination.

Process-Tracing Endogenous Mechanisms

At a baseline level, this project derives its theoretical claims from a comparative case study of the Chinese Nationalists' military campaigns against Japanese forces from 1937-1945 and the successive campaign against Chinese Communist forces from 1945-1949. By focusing on an 11-year expanse that encompasses the 1937-1945 Sino-Japanese War and the 1946-1949 Chinese Civil War, I ask two historical inquiries: (1) Why did the Chinese Nationalists struggle to consistently execute a strategy of maneuver warfare against Japanese and Chinese Communist forces? (2) Why did the Chinese Nationalists momentarily succeed in pursuing a strategy of maneuver warfare against the Japanese from 1939-1941?

To answer these inquiries, I simultaneously draw upon two different comparisons which John Stuart Mill identifies as the "method of difference" and the "method of agreement." Specifically, I utilize the method of difference – i.e. the search for differences across most similar cases – when comparing the Chinese Nationalists' brief two year success with maneuver warfare to the rest of their relatively poor military record. Likewise, I utilize the method of agreement – i.e. the search for commonalities across least similar cases – when comparing the Chinese Nationalists' inconsistent military experiences with maneuver warfare to the Chinese Communists' far more consistent record with maneuver warfare.

Mill's methods of comparison, however, are ultimately insufficient at fulfilling their primary goal of identifying the necessary causes of variation across or within cases. While deliberately selecting case comparisons on the independent and dependent variables can be useful for ruling out potential alternative hypotheses of military behavior (at least within the context of the selected cases), the methods of agreement and difference say nothing about the actual mechanism that links a potential cause to an observed outcome. As a result, I use process-tracing to identify the causal linkages that connect practices of state extraction and political-military discord to how militaries pursue their operational strategies.

What are the standards through which we can tease out and trace individual causal mechanisms from their empirically endogenous contexts? From a qualitative perspective, asking such a question is slightly disingenuous since no universal evidentiary standard can be consistently applied given the variegated and unsystematic ways through which all primary evidence is acquired, preserved, and made available to historically-conscious social scientists.[59] Nonetheless, it is possible to roughly outline a general rubric from which to assess how one might trace a causal mechanism, even if that rubric implies an overly idealized standard for cultivating historical "data."

First, I measure variation in state extraction by looking for three observable indicators revolving around the extraction of taxes, the mobilization of labor, and the degree of government control over local manufacturing industries. For rural-centric extraction, central governments engage primarily in the following activities: (1) directly levying taxes on land, (2) overcoming

[59] Quantification systematically compiles multiple interpretations of raw, unsystematic historical evidence (culminating in an "objective dataset"), which maintains an illusion of standardized rubrics for the study of political phenomena. That being said, the need for *some* rubric of systematizing raw, uncultivated "data" is still warranted for the purpose of the social scientific enterprise.

local resistance to the mobilization of rural labor, and (3) cultivating rural dependence on government service provision.[60] For urban-centric state extraction projects, central governments prioritize a different set of activities: (1) levying taxes on commerce and trade, (2) engaging in policies of external financing by borrowing from international allies, and (3) cultivating urban dependence on government service provision.

Political-military discord in turn can be measured through the occurrence of public disputes between political leaders and their generals over two primary issue areas. When political-military discord is high, leaders and generals disagree over (1) the appropriate distribution of rents and (2) who has primary authority over operational decision-making. Conversely, low political-military discord occurs when (1) political leaders turn a blind eye to the rent-seeking behavior of their generals and/or actively grant additional rent-seeking authorities to their generals and (2) when political leaders refrain from questioning and undermining the operational decisions of their generals.

Second, I measure the dependent variable by identifying several operational and tactical-level maneuvers that military units must be able to execute in order to qualify as having successfully adopted a strategy of maneuver warfare. The most important of these actions include: (1) mobile defense-in-depth operations, (2) breakthrough and exploitation operations, and (3) coordinated operations that involve the use of hammer and anvil tactics. Although, historically speaking, combined arms operations are another prominent rubric for measuring maneuver warfare, the general infrequency with which Chinese Nationalist and Communist army

[60] These measurements roughly co-align with three of the infrastructural mechanisms identified by Slater & Fenner, specifically: extracting revenues, coercing rivals, and cultivating dependence (the fourth mechanism - citizen registration - is, for lack of reliable evidence and "objective" comparative standards, omitted from my analysis). See: Dan Slater & Sofia Fenner, "State Power and Staying Power: Infrastructural Mechanisms and Authoritarian Durability" *Journal of International Affairs* vol. 65, 1 (2011): 15-29

groups made use of airpower and independent mechanized divisions renders such a metric as more-or-less irrelevant. Conversely, the failure to adopt a strategy of maneuver warfare or the adoption of positional warfare is indicated by the following actions: (1) static forward-defense operations; (2) attritional offensives and advancing-strongpoint operations; and (3) the absence of hammer and anvil tactics.

To determine whether variation in the capacity to execute a strategy of maneuver warfare is the result of shortcomings in logistical support or politically-motivated obstructionism (or a combination of both), I outline a number of standards for distinguishing between the two mechanisms. If an observed failure to adopt maneuver warfare is the result of supply shortages resulting from a lack of infrastructural capacity, then we would expect to observe evidence indicating the following: (1) an inability for government administrators to systematically collect direct taxes and/or foodstuffs from the rural population; (2) an inability for administrators to enforce conscription standards among the local population; (3) a lack of transportation infrastructure for delivering collected materiel to frontline armies; (4) recorded justifications that blame a shortage of supplies/recruits for a decision to adopt any of the operational actions indicating positional warfare. If, however, the obstacles to the proper execution of maneuver warfare come from coordination obstacles resulting from political-military discord, then we would expect to observe evidence indicating the following: (1) the withholding of reinforcements and intelligence from armies under the command of political/military rivals; (2) conspiring with political allies to avoid providing tactical support to the armies of political/military rivals; (3) deliberate attempts to undercut the operational authority of political/military rivals in the middle of active military operations.

Keen observers will point out that, given how intertwined coordination and logistical mechanisms are in reality, it is notoriously difficult to disentangle their effects from each other. For instance, poor coordination resulting from political-military discord over rent-seeking behavior generals could also lead to logistical shortages down the line as military officers deliberately hoard supplies for parochial gain. Conversely, logistical shortages resulting from extractive policies could also lead to an aggrandizement of political-military discord as the selective development of administrative infrastructure can be used to target and subsume the rent-seeking authorities of certain political/military rivals. Given the potential for endogenous interactions between mechanisms, empirically isolating their causal processes would seem to be all but futile.

Endogeneity, however, deserves to be accounted for as a component of any causal explanation; not simply reduced to a methodological obstruction for proper causal inference that scholars ought to "control for." Rather than compartmentalize endogeneity by searching for an instrumental variable that can capture the "independent" effects of state extraction or political-military discord, this project aims to embrace the role of endogeneity by identifying the observable patterns of behavior one should observe given a pair of "non-independent" mechanisms. As outlined by the expectations of the "rentier-officer dilemma," logistical and coordination mechanisms may be endogenous, but they also interact in a specific way. Namely, as we observe a reduction in political-military obstacles to operational coordination, the economic rents that leaders trade away in order to remove said obstacles should lead to increased logistical difficulties in adequately procuring wartime resources for armies in need. Likewise, when we observe an improvement in infrastructural power for the purpose of improving logistics, the push for enhanced state extraction should lead to increased coordination problems

among rent-seeking political and military leaders. Put differently, variation in infrastructural capacity and coordination obstacles *covary* with one another, but are *not collinear*; hence, the reciprocal interaction between endogenous mechanisms can be observed as varying along certain predictable lines.

If the reciprocal interactions of endogenous mechanisms can be observed to follow certain patterns, then it is also crucial to specify the conditions under which endogenous mechanisms do *not* interact according to established trends. In other words, what are the conditions that enabled Chinese Nationalist and Communist forces to "escape" the rentier-officer dilemma by successfully improving both logistical services and operational coordination without either improvement undercutting the other? Process-tracing can provide an answer to the aforementioned question by underlining the importance of temporal sequencing. Specifically, the longstanding effects of the rentier-officer dilemma are embodied differently depending on whether the afflictions of limited state extraction and high political-military discord beset leaders *sequentially* or *simultaneously*. When an exogenous shock (such as geographical displacement by outside invasion) removes the construction of state infrastructure as a long-term consideration, leaders can devote their efforts to resolving political-military discord while temporarily bracketing the problem of building up a reliable state apparatus that can functionally administer a wide territorial space. Leaders who establish some form of institutional permanency in alleviating political-military squabbles (as the Communist leadership did during the retreat of the Long March) can later pivot back to the construction of infrastructural capacity while shielding their gains in the former. Leaders who either fail to resolve political-military disputes before pivoting back to the construction of state infrastructure (such as the Nationalist leadership during the retreat to Sichuan Province) or who attempt to tackle political-military discord and

state extraction simultaneously (such as the Nationalists after the relocation of their new wartime capital to Chongqing) are in turn ill-prepared to escape the feedback loop of the rentier-officer dilemma.

A final tool for identifying the causal effects of endogenous mechanisms is to lean on the historical particularities of a selected case study and find instances where certain mechanisms are least likely to occur. To ascertain whether observed logistical shortcomings are the result of deficiencies in infrastructural capacity (as my theory would expect) or the result of deliberate sabotage from disgruntled generals and politicians, I look to the parochial divisions that split the armed forces of the Chinese Nationalists into central government and provincial armies.[61] Whereas central government armies loyal to the ruling Guomindang party typically received the best equipment and training, provincial armies loyal to regional governors and commanders were regularly treated with short thrift by the Nationalist government. As a result, logistical shortages that afflicted central armies were *least likely* to be the result of high political-military discord and more typically the result of deficiencies in the Nationalist state's infrastructural capacity.

Empirical Evidence and the Problem of Inference

The evidence that I draw upon for this project is primarily archival, with a particular emphasis on collecting battlefield orders, post-conflict reports, private personal recollections of Chinese decision-makers, and political and financial reports compiled by Chinese and/or international observers. Important collections that provide the bulk of my primary evidence include: the published collections of Academia Historica, the Historical Library of Academia Sinica, the Second Historical Archives of China, along with the private collections of the Hoover

[61] Obviously, this technique can only apply to an analysis of the Chinese Nationalists, which was riven with parochial divisions between central government and provincial armies; the Chinese Communists faced no parallel split among the composition of their armed forces.

Archives. Additional materials are drawn from the College Park branch of the U.S. National Archives while secondary histories provide an important supplement to fill in any gaps with my empirical analysis.

As a pool of primary sources that covers a range of Nationalist, Communist, and outsider perspectives, historical materials from 1937-1948 have the advantage of being relatively accessible to foreign scholars while escaping much of the censorship practices that afflict more politically-charged contemporary cases – although, it should be noted that there is a noticeable decline in the availability of historical materials pertaining to the Chinese Civil War when compared to those of the earlier Sino-Japanese War.[62] A wide availability of historical sources from divergent viewpoints, however, is not without its methodological issues. Specifically, primary documents are unsystematically compiled and always written by actors with their own political agendas in mind; therefore, systematic and objective standards of measurement are near impossible to attain when working from primary sources. Even ostensibly "technocratic" and, therefore, "unbiased" reports from professional bureaucrats are not immune to personal subjectivity since the technocrat's eye is ostensibly trained to look for specific administrative issues while ignoring those that do not fit into an established rubric or model.

To further complexify the search for accuracy in causal inference, the compilations of documents that make up an archive are also a product of larger biases at several systemic levels. Nationalist administrators who were forced to relocate government operations from Nanjing to Chongqing in the face of advancing Japanese forces and later forced to evacuate government

[62] Ongoing censorship practices under the Chinese Communist Party are most egregious when pertaining to archival collections on the Chinese mainland, of which the Nanjing-based Second Historical Archives [SHAC] is most relevant to my interests. Published collections from SHAC, however, are still available in volume form even if the hard documents themselves are increasingly inaccessible to historians and researchers. In contrast, the Taipei-based historical collections of Academia Historica and Academia Sinica as well as the Stanford-based collections of the Hoover Archives are continuously open to academics.

operations to Taiwan in the face of Communist military advances made a conscious decision to preserve certain official documents while destroying others deemed important enough to be purged, but not significant enough to warrant relocation with other essential papers. Other surviving documents were either deemed irrelevant or were scheduled for destruction but ultimately (and fortuitously) spared for lack of time. The resulting paper trail left behind in the Nationalist wake was in turn curated by the impromptu destruction of occupying Japanese and Communist soldiers eager for loot before finally falling under the stewardship of politically-appointed archivists who imposed their own deliberate standards for culling the remaining materials.[63]

The intrinsic messiness of raw primary "data" and the problem it bears for "objective" operationalization and causal inference is not a unique challenge to political scientists; historians have devoted their entire discipline to resolving the thorny issue of how to extract an "accurate" narrative from the leftover morass of the past (or even if such an exercise is epistemologically warranted). Resolving this problem is not a task that I accomplish with this project, but addressing it as an ongoing struggle is crucial for two reasons. First, acknowledging the interpretive limitations of historically-minded qualitative research is needed to dispense with the shallow genuflection towards case studies as the ideal tools for capturing "how events actually happened" (whether those events are causal mechanisms or other processes obscured by the trend towards large-N data aggregation and the acceptance of causal homogeneity). While in-depth and comparative case studies do have an advantage in providing a more detail-oriented and process-driven narrative, such "small-N" exercises still rely upon a culled mass of evidence that

[63] Obviously, this is a rough approximation of the journey that many Chinese historical documents underwent before finding themselves cited and culled by my own historical interpretation. Such a narrative ignores distinctions in the preservation methods between central government and provincial archives, the shifting censorship standards of successive political regimes, and the wear and tear of time!

is collectively authored and edited by archivists, historical figures, and the impersonal micromanagement efforts of the technocratic state. In such a sense, even the most objective of small-N researchers with no pre-established priors for how to interpret archival evidence data are still vulnerable to accepting the inherent value-driven standards imposed by the selective preservation of primary sources.

If the previous point seems to undercut the premise of this project's methodology, it also paradoxically inspires the strongest justification for why a case-driven approach is needed. Within the field of political science, the qualitative case-driven methodological tradition (whether interpretivist or positivist in approach) actually seeks to engage with the systemic and non-systemic biases that afflict the preservation of primary materials. In contrast, alternative quantitative approaches have traditionally either dismissed the veracity of observational evidence outright – supported in part by the experimentalist push for data collected "in the field" through random selection – or have sidelined the issue of historical bias in primary sources by relying upon a standardized coding of secondary sources, expert opinions, and journalistic accounts. This is not to say that alternative methodological approaches are less valid than case-driven studies – large-N researchers obviously cannot be case specialists in every single one of their observations – nor is it to imply that quantitative methodologists cannot comprehend the problem of inherent biases introduced through archival preservation – comparativists and area specialists who employ econometrics regularly face this problem when trying to quantify data collected from provincial and state archives. Rather, the point of comparison is intended to highlight how case-driven research is needed to complement quantitative projects that prioritize the minimization of selection bias and the objectivity of measurement standards. When the self-selection of historical materials into archival collections renders true randomization and the

creation of standardized metrics as unrealistic, the historian's eye is needed to establish an applicable narrative from the detritus of time.

As a result, however, the evidence supporting my theory is necessarily – for lack of a better term – "messy"; there are few, if any, truly standardized observable indicators that could be consistently applied across geographic locales and across time. Yearly budgets and tax receipts (self-reported by Chinese administrators) are used to denote variation in extractive practices at certain points in time while anecdotes about agronomic practices, the distribution of state granaries, the construction of highways, and the staffing of industrial factories are alternatively used to indicate similar extractive dynamics at different points in time. Evidence for large-scale changes in military strategy is equally scattered. A theoretical shift in strategic operations is at times indicated through post-battle reports by American military advisors and at other times indicated through a collection of tactical-level orders from field commanders delivered over the course of a campaign. To hedge against the danger of an ecological fallacy, I demonstrate whenever possible how variations in state-building practices and the execution of military strategies occur across multiple levels of analysis.

The remainder of this dissertation proceeds as follows. Chapters 2 and 3 delve into the state-building projects of the Chinese Nationalists during the 1937-1945 Sino-Japanese War and the 1945-1949 Chinese Civil War respectively. I trace how variations in the Nationalists' struggle to mobilize the resources of their shrinking economic base interacted with the simmering antagonisms between government officials and provincial militarist leaders to repeatedly stymie mobile military operations. At times, contestation over shrinking rents among generals and government administrators led to poor operational coordination. At other points in time, a focus on developing urban-based infrastructure led to insufficient logistical support for

troops operating in the countryside. And in certain perverse scenarios, poor operational coordination and poor logistics subverted any realistic adoption of maneuver warfare as a meaningful strategy. A brief two-year exception to this trend lasted from 1939-1941 when the Nationalist government embarked on a renewed policy of rural mobilization while avoiding any overt efforts to infringe upon its generals' economic rents, leading to a period in which Nationalist armies performed surprisingly well in executing a strategy of maneuver warfare against Japanese forces.

With the defeat and eventual retreat of Japan at the end of WWII, Nationalist forces reoccupied lost territories and embarked on a new campaign of rebuilding administrative institutions. Upon reoccupying its original urban base on the eastern coast, the Guomindang's initial priority was the build-up of its administrative presence in the cosmopolitan cities, particularly the port municipalities that could unlock access to increasingly larger shipments of foreign aid and trade. While the Nationalist leadership managed to suppress much of the political-military discord that had plagued its operations during the Sino-Japanese War, its abandonment of a rural-based policy of extraction and its dependence on a logistical infrastructure based near cities and urban townships ultimately doomed its armies into adopting a self-defeating strategy of positional warfare.

Chapter 4 of this dissertation offers a reassessment of the Nationalists' military performance in comparison with that of the Communists. I finally conclude with several thoughts on the importance of linking the theoretical insights drawn from a primarily comparativist state-formation literature with the insights of a primarily IR security-studies literature.

2. The Nationalists and the Sino-Japanese War

This section covers the Nationalists' successes and failures in executing their operational strategies throughout the 8 years of the Sino-Japanese War while tracing their connection to divergences in the Guomindang's policy of suppressing political-military discord and its process of monopolizing various modes of extraction. As a foreground to the variation of my primary case study, the Chinese Nationalists endured multiple years of veering from one operational strategy to another. Roughly divided into time periods, the Nationalists executed a strategy of positional warfare from 1937-1938, a strategy of maneuver warfare from 1939-1941, and returned to a strategy of positional warfare from 1941-1949. The final pivot to positional warfare would ultimately characterize the Nationalist's primary military strategy throughout the remainder of its political regime on the Chinese mainland and would extend until the Nationalists' final defeat at the hands of the Communists in the 1945-1949 Chinese Civil War. Table 2.1 outlines the temporal shifts in Nationalist military strategy and how they correlate with changes in my theory's explanatory variables.

EV_1: State Extraction	(1937-1938) Urban-Centric	(1939-1943) Rural-Centric	(1943-1949) Urban-Centric	
EV_2: Political-Military Discord	(1937-1938) High	(1939-1941) Low	(1941-1947) High	(1947-1949) Low
DV: Military Strategy	(1937-1938) Positional	(1939-1941) Maneuver	(1941-1949) Positional	

Timeline of Variation

Table 2.1

To further emphasize some of the puzzling dynamics of the Nationalist case, much of the temporal variation observed in the National Revolutionary Army's military performance defy

many of the most common explanations for why some military organizations successfully execute strategies of maneuver warfare and others do not. Geographically speaking, many of the Nationalists' mobile operations were conducted in rugged provinces where mountainous terrain stymied the mobility of enemy Japanese combatants; in contrast, most of the positional warfare fought from 1937-1938 and later from 1945-1949 occurred in relatively flat terrain that should have been most conducive to mobile operations. Experience-wise, the Nationalist armies that successfully executed mobile operations were a mix of German-trained central government forces and less well-trained provincial armies; yet these very same units also became locked into adopting a strategy of positional warfare in spite of their past success with mobile warfare. Finally, the Nationalists managed to sustain a campaign of maneuver warfare for nearly three years despite being afflicted by widespread corruption, a lack of centralized military command, a surfeit of military officers promoted based off of loyalty, and a highly politicized corps of generals who at one point or another had all fought each other on the battlefield.

At the same time, it is important to emphasize what this project does *not* attempt to accomplish. As a blow-by-blow account of all military battles and all tactical-level engagements that occurred during 1937-1949; this project admittedly falls short.[1] Given that the Sino-Japanese War and the Chinese Civil War covered a geographical expanse that easily exceeded the geographical scope of the Western front in WWII, simply summarizing the sheer volume of military engagements is a task worthy of several large tomes. My primary focus is to cover the heaviest military engagements that occurred in the provinces of Hunan, Henan, Hebei, Guangxi, Shandong, and the entire northeast region of Manchuria. While not capturing the full

[1] For an in-depth operational review of the most important military engagements of the Sino-Japanese War, see: Hsu Long-hsuen & Chang Ming-kai, *History of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945)* (Taipei, Chung Wu Publishing Co., 1971)

geographical expanse of both military conflicts, the coverage of my empirical evidence does encompass a wide range of military theatres led by generals of varying professionalism and occupied by troops of varying provenance.

Nationalist State-building and the Prelude to War: 1927-1937

Roughly speaking, "pre-war" China was split among several societal strata. At the highest nominal level was the internationally recognized Guomindang (Nationalist) government, which was dominated by its leader, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek[2] (Jiang Jieshi). While the Guomindang's political and administrative sway was strongest in the three eastern coastal provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Shandong and the two interior provinces of Henan and Anhui, the majority of mainland China's provincial patchwork fell under the influence of regional militarists (i.e. warlords) who commanded their own privately armed retinues and ruled individual provinces as quasi-fiefdoms. Below the provincial level were the municipal administrators composed of baozhang officials, sub-county bureaucrats, large landholders, and village/town heads. Those local-level cadres were officially (and occasionally unofficially) responsible for collecting the taxes and fulfilling the recruitment quotas imposed by both the central government and the provincial militarists. At the lowest level were the roughly 250 million small landholders (i.e. peasants) who made up China's primarily subsistence-based agrarian society. These citizens would be subject to the vast majority of quota fulfillments and taxation efforts imposed from above.

In a certain sense, the challenges of state-building facing the Guomindang government during the 1927 to 1937 period known as the "Nanjing Decade" were not unique to the Chinese

[2] For the most part, I reproduce Chinese names according to their pinyin transcriptions with the arbitrary exception of several high-level Guomindang officials whom I refer to using their more common Wade-Giles moniker (e.g. Chiang Kai-shek rather than Jiang Jieshi).

context. Namely, political leaders such as Chiang Kai-shek sought to mobilize domestic labor into a cohesive military force, extract revenue from domestic populations, and eliminate or co-opt local militarists who operated outside of the government's official authority. Put more succinctly, the primary considerations of the central government according to a 1928 census report were "how to keep track of every individual in the country so as to be called up for military service, tax him, or apprehend him if a criminal."[3]

By far the most pressing issue facing the Guomindang government was the difficult task of bringing to heel the multiple militarist cliques that dominated the anarchy of China's political landscape since the collapse of the Qing dynasty. Despite the military accomplishments of the Guomindang in crushing internal rebellions and co-opting rival factions, provincial militarists consistently resisted the Nationalist drive to centralize administrative power over military coercion and direct taxation. Outside of the Guomindang's primary strongholds near the commercialized coastal sectors, inland provincial militarists built sub-bureaucratic institutions in the form of banks and regional tax offices that helped finance the expansion of autonomous private militias, police, and other "local defense" forces.[4] These rival organizations, buttressed by the personalist networks of established local elites, became notoriously difficult to uproot, resulting in repeated contests of authority between central government and provincial forces that flared into full-blown violence of varying magnitude.[5]

[3] Cited in Amrit Lal, "Census Practices and Population Statistics of Kuomintang China (1911-1949)" *Genus*, vol. 22, 1/4 (1966): 303

[4] Lloyd Eastman, "China Under Nationalist Rule: Two Essays" (1980): 47-48

[5] U.S. State Department Central Decimal Files [USSDCDF], "Tsinan dispatch: Military Affairs in the Tsinan Consular District during the month of July, 1932" August 2, 1932, Box 7216, 893.20/372, U.S. National Archives, College Park, MD; USSDCDF, "Tientsin dispatch: Disbandment of Szechuan provincial troops; developments at Omeishan, Szechuan along military lines" Aug 15, 1935, Box 7216, 893.20/556. It should be noted that many of the provincial militarists who stymied the Nationalist state-building project were themselves equally frustrated in their own attempts at consolidating provincial power by the intransigence of other local elites and informal power brokers.

Accompanying the government's ambitious task of eliminating and co-opting rival militarists was the difficult chore of developing an administrative apparatus that was capable of mobilizing and regularly extracting resources from China's overwhelmingly agrarian population.[6] During the Qing dynasty, local administration had been organized according to the much-maligned baojia system, which aimed to group and register families into basic units for the purpose of census-keeping, local defense, and inevitably taxation. The dynasty's collapse, however, compounded by the flagrant abuses of unscrupulous baozhang officials, had rendered the most current baojia registers as hopelessly outdated. The illegal and un-registered seizures of small subsistence farms by powerful gentry ensured that taxes levied according to existing baojia calculations either overestimated the taxable assets of land-deprived family units or underestimated the amount of taxable wealth accumulated by predatory landholders.[7]

In an effort to update and revitalize the baojia system, the Guomindang engaged in a number of nation-wide projects aimed at reforming broken tax laws, implementing cadastral surveys, and inserting competent (and reliably loyal) bureaucrats into baozhang administrative positions that would oversee extraction from China's "under-governed" – and therefore, fiscally "barren" – regions.[8] However, given the political challenges of wresting control over land taxes away from locally embedded provincial elites combined with the pressing fiscal imperatives of constantly staving off internal and external military rivals, Nationalist state-builders typically

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Lloyd Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution: China Under Nationalist Rule, 1927-1937*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974): 85-86; John Fitzgerald "Warlords, Bullies, and State-Building in Nationalist China: The Guangdong Cooperative Movement, 1932-1936" *Modern China*, vol. 23, 4 (1997): 422

[6] An estimated four out of every five Chinese were employed in agriculture. Eastman (1980): 52

[7] Arthur Young, *China's Nation-Building Effort, 1927-1937: The Financial and Economic Record* (Hoover Institution Pres, 1971): 69; Theodore White & Annalee Jacoby, *Thunder out of China* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1946): 43-44

[8] Second Historical Archives of China [SHAC] "Caizheng bu gongbu sheli shuiwu zhengli yanjiu weiyuanhui ling [The Ministry of Finance announces the establishment of the Taxation Research Committee]" Nov 28, 1930, *Zhonghua Minguo Shi Dang'an Ziliao Huibian* [ZHMGSDAZLHB], *caizheng jingji*, no. 1, ed. Hu Duojia & Du Jishun (Jiangsu Ancient Books Publishing House (1979): 122

curtailed projects aimed at expanding the state's capacity for leveraging new exactions in favor of collecting more immediate and accessible short-term revenues from customs duties and consumption taxes.[9]

Nanjing's state-building initiative therefore found itself torn between two contradictory political incentives. On the one hand, centralizing government control over China's factors of production necessitated an aggressive deracinating of regional militarists and other proverbial "stationary bandits" that embedded themselves into the societal fabric of surrounding provinces. On the other hand, the central government also had a vested interest in maintaining cordial relations with militarist groups whose active political and military support (or tacit neutrality) facilitated the Guomindang's ascension into the echelons of Chinese politics.

As leader of a reactionary party elevated by decidedly non-reactionary Chinese elites, Chiang Kai-shek faced the persistent dilemma that afflicts all inheritors of a revolutionary legacy: paying for revolutionary promises was expensive. Lofty visions of societal betterment peppered Nationalist speeches and engendered fervent policy initiatives in government map-rooms, but quickly petered out in execution once hapless administrators were thrust out of their ministry offices into the tangled web of kleptocratic ties that flourished in the provinces.[10] Armed with an ambitious mandate but no infrastructural teeth to execute their mission, government comptrollers were repeatedly stymied in their efforts to tackle the chimera of cadastral illegibility by shortcomings in technical skills, diversionary bribes from provincial militarists, inconsistent instructions from the upper levels of the state bureaucracy, and the

[9] Robert Bedeski "State-Building in Modern China: The Kuomintang in the Prewar Period" *Institute of East Asian Studies* (Berkeley: China Research Monograph, 1981): 135; SHAC, "Caizheng jianli weiyuanhui qing ling chi ge jun jinzhi renyi jie kuan cheng [The Financial Supervisory Committee will order the military to prohibit unnecessary withdrawals]" Dec 17, 1927 ZHMGSDAZLHB, *caizheng jingji*, no. 1 (1979): 173

[10] SHAC, "Songziwen guanyu zhengli bu wu jingguo qingxing cheng ji baogao shu [T.V. Soong's report on addressing the current state of affairs]" May 29, 1928 ZHMGSDAZLHB, *caizheng jingji*, no. 1 (1979): 176-192

occasional threat from peeved village leaders who made little effort to distinguish between government tax collectors and the roving bandits of past dynasties.[11]

Desperate for steady sources of income but unwilling to overtly contest the powerful militarists who monopolized local sources of revenue, the Guomindang directed the onus of its fiscal deprivation towards China's burgeoning (and, therefore, conveniently vulnerable) capitalist classes. While modern non-agricultural sectors only amounted to around 13 percent of China's net domestic product,[12] the small community of businessmen and industrialists situated in urban cities nonetheless controlled a highly concentrated source of capital that the government eagerly sought to appropriate. Before 1928, the Guomindang had simply strong-armed Chinese capitalists into providing generous loans to fund Nationalist military campaigns – a task made easier by a shared fear of the Communist Party's growing influence in the commercial port city of Shanghai.[13] Upon Chiang Kai-shek's successful territorial consolidation of China's eastern seaboard, the leader of the Guomindang opted for a more conciliatory tone through the appointment of his pro-business and anti-militarist brother-in-law T.V. Soong (Song Ziwen) as Minister of Finance.[14] Soong's eventual replacement in 1933 by H.H. Kung (Kong Xiangxi) – another one of Chiang's brothers-in-law – would ultimately signal an end to the pretense of an equitable partnership through the establishment of state-owned enterprises boasting government

[11] SHAC, "Caizheng bu qing shen ling gesheng zunzhong zhongyang tong, caizheng zhuzhi yi wei guo ke cheng [The Ministry of Finance requests that the provinces respect the fiscal orders of the central government]" Dec 20, 1927 ZHMGSDAZLHB, *caizheng jingji*, no. 1 (1979): 173-174

[12] Dazhong Liu & K.C. Yeh, *The Economy of the Chinese Mainland: National Income and Economic Development, 1933-1959* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965): 89

[13] Parks Coble *The Shanghai Capitalists and the Nationalist Government, 1927-1937* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1980): 49; Eastman (1980): 23-25; Van de Ven (2003): 126-127. See, also: Bergere, *The Golden Age of the Chinese Bourgeoisie 1911-1937*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)

[14] U.S. State Department Central Decimal Files [USSDCDF], "Shanghai dispatch: Criticism of China's military system by Mr. T.V. Soong, Minister of Finance, March 7, 1933" Box 7216, 893.20/422, U.S. National Archives, College Park, MD; Coble, *The Shanghai Capitalists* (1980): 49

backed monopolies on commodities and manufactured goods, effectively supplanting the old capitalist classes and cementing the Guomindang's control over China's commercial and industrial sectors.[15]

A more important benefit of subordinating the urban capitalist classes was that it assured government access to the lucrative receipts collected from customs duties and consumption taxes imposed on goods and commodities flowing through China's richest port cities – Shanghai in 1933, for instance, received over half of China's foreign trade and a quarter of all domestic trade.[16] By 1937, government borrowing and indirect taxes constituted the bulk of the Guomindang's net capital while the collection of land taxes remained under the de facto purview of local militarists and governors at the provincial and sub-provincial county (xian) levels.[17] Self-reported figures from the Chinese Ministry of Information placed customs taxes as making up around 53 percent of the government's national revenue receipts. Other indirect taxes in the forms of salt revenues and consolidated taxes on mining, tobacco, and wine would make up another 41.5 percent of national revenue. Direct taxes, in contrast, were a mere 4 percent of national revenue, the bulk of which came from income taxes rather than taxes on property and land.[18] "Receipts from the land tax," according to the Guomindang's 1924 political program, "should all belong to the local governments" – a generously hollow gesture which merely acknowledged the existing status quo for the next decade and a half.[19] However, "customs

[15] Coble, *The Shanghai Capitalists* (1980): 250-253; Julia Strauss, *Strong Institutions in Weak Polities: State Building in Republican China, 1927-1940* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998): 116
[16] Coble, *The Shanghai Capitalists* (1980): 2
[17] Second Historical Archives of China [SHAC], "Guomin zhengfu zongdongyuan jihua dagang guanyu caizheng jinrong shishi fang'an [Outline of The National Government's Total Mobilization Plan and the Implementation of its Financial Plan]," Aug 30, 1937 [ZHMGSDAZLHB], vol. 5: 1 (1997): 11-13 See, also: Fitzgerald (1997): 422
[18] Chinese Ministry of Information, *China Handbook, 1937-1943* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1943): 200
[19] Ibid: 57

duties," according to the 1934 proposal of the GMD Fourth Central Executive Committee, "must be handled by the Central Government. Local government must not interfere."[20]

Whereas rural society remained an incomprehensible morass to the central government and was therefore locked off to government-sponsored taxation, the urban cities that served as the hubs of Chinese industry, banking, and commercialized exchange were a veritable bounty of exploitable capital and newly accessible infrastructural tools for revenue-starved Guomindang apparatchiks. Consolidated taxes on goods such as tobacco, wine, matches, sugar, flour, and other commodities could be regularly collected from factories, distilleries, and mills which (military observers worriedly pointed out) were normally concentrated around cities and ports of entry.[21] Educated urban youths eager to escape military service were keen on selling their talents to the Guomindang's expanding bureaucracy for relatively meager government salaries (and the more rewarding potential for collecting official bribes). A thin but increasingly developed network of highways and railroads connected urban markets which in turn could be peppered with government toll booths (not all of them legal) for imposing additional levies on the overland transport of goods.[22] And, in an ironically beneficial holdover from China's Century of Humiliation at the hands of European powers, the professional bureaucratic staff of the city-

[20] Hsu & Chang, *History of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945)* (1985): 21

[21] Ibid: 63, 202; SHAC, "Shanghai shi mianfen ye tongyegonghui deng, qing jian zheng mianfen te shui yi wei mianfen ye zhi shiyue bu cheng [Shanghai Flour Industry Association to the Ministry of Industry on reducing the special tax on flour]" July 25, 1931, ZHMGSDAZLHB, *caizheng jingji*, no. 6 (1979): 283

[22] SHAC, "Jiaotong bu linian tielu gaikuang [The Ministry of Communications' overview of the railways over the years, 1927-1937]" ZHMGSDAZLHB, *caizheng jingji*, no. 9 (1979): 132-133; "Quanguo jingji weiyuanhui fazhan quanguo gonglu jianshe jihua shu [The National Economic Commission's construction plan for a national highway]" Oct 1933, ZHMGSDAZLHB, *caizheng jingji*, no. 9 (1979): 137; USSDCDF, "Regarding Military activities in Fukien Province: Enlargement of aviation field and construction of roads and installation of long-distance telephones, under orders of General Chiang Kai Shek," Mar 5, 1934, Box 7216, 893.20/482

based Sino-Foreign Salt Inspectorate continued to collect lucrative salt taxes on behalf of the central government.[23]

More importantly, government control over the richest cities on the east coast drastically improved the Guomindang's efforts towards co-opting its domestic rivals through the selling of government titles. While bribery was already a commonly used tool for appeasing potentially rebellious militarists, the selling of government positions and official favors were typically less effective at facilitating local alliances unless accompanied by a large lump sum payment in cash.[24] With the influx of new revenues drawn from indirect taxes, however, the resulting increase in rent-seeking opportunities substantially improved the value of a mid- to high-level government position. Official titles under the Guomindang, aside from their intrinsic value, now gave title-holders the authority to impose profitable taxes on the movement of multiple consumer goods without the hardship of actually traveling outside the confines of a Ministry office.[25] Well-positioned toll collectors could, with government sanction, regularly collect profits from an incoming train of merchants and farmers eager to sell their goods in city markets; a far more lucrative occupation than trudging out into the surrounding villages and directly wresting goods from local landholders. Rival militarists who were perennially short of cash to support their private armies also quickly found it to be in their best fiscal interests to curry favor with a Nationalist government that served as gatekeeper to the primary nexuses of international commercial activity.

Although the Guomindang's occupation of a commercialized economic base was a boon in staving off the omnipresent danger of fiscal and political collapse, Chiang Kai-shek and his

[23] Strauss, *Strong Institutions in Weak Polities* (1998)
[24] Young, *China's Nation-Building Effort* (1971): 422-423
[25] Edward McCord, *Military Force and Elite Power in the Formation of Modern China* (Routledge Press, 2016)

military advisors were acutely aware of the logistical difficulties in defending their fragile state apparatus from external threats.[26] Aside from the general ills of factional politics and the relative disorganization of Chinese military forces, Nationalist officials pointed to three military vulnerabilities which corresponded with the Guomindang's urban-centric policies of extraction. First, the rich coastal cities where government presence was strongest provided a tempting target for hostile Japanese forces occupying the neighboring region of Manchuria, which had fallen to Japanese troops during the 1931 Mukden incident. Second, the concentration of heavy industry and arms manufacturing plants around urban centers compounded the vulnerability of the Nationalist war machine to any outside invasion force that could decapitate the central government from its urban base. Finally, while the Guomindang's coastal enclaves were among the most commercially developed of China's regions, they were also heavily dependent on food imports from the surrounding provinces. Lacking a domestic supply of grains and cereals that was not dependent on market forces, Chinese generals warned, would exacerbate the problem of feeding Nationalist troops once wartime prices for foodstuffs inevitably skyrocketed and consumables became scarce.

To address the aforementioned military weaknesses, Nationalist military planners drew up several initiatives proposing a redistribution of factories and arsenals into the interior provinces.[27] Additionally, government officials advocated the construction of military granaries

[26] SHAC, "Ziyuan weiyuanhui ni ju guofang gonglu chubu gaijin jihua [The Resources Committee's plans for improving the roads for national defense]" Jan 1937, ZHMGSDAZLHB, *caizheng jingji*, no. 9 (1979): 145-153; USSDCDF, "Regarding Efforts of the National Government to Improve its military position," Apr 29, 1936, Box 7216, 893.20/574

[27] SHAC, "Junzheng bu guanyu xiuzheng junxu pin zhizao fanmai quid guize zhi canmou benbu gonghan zao pin [The Ministry of Political Affairs on the revision of the rules regarding the munitions manufacturing and sales ban]" July 13, 1935, ZHMGSDAZLHB junshi, no. 1 (1979): 323-325

throughout the surrounding countryside.[28] Like most government efforts to further expand infrastructure into the periphery, however, these pre-war initiatives met with limited success. In rural Guangxi Province, for example, anti-Guomindang militarists Li Zongren and Bai Chongxi tentatively acceded to the construction of government-owned arsenals in their region but maintained a tight grip on local food production, direct taxation, and labor mobilization.[29] Institutionally, the Ministry of Food was empowered with additional authorities to appropriate grain stores from Chinese farmers, but these directives were rarely enforced unless mid-level administrators were accompanied by armed soldiers. In other provinces, the Guomindang came to rely upon unreliable semi-autonomous county officials and allied militarist governors to promote the expansion of infrastructural projects. Unsurprisingly, without regular government enforcement, many of these regional power brokers proceeded to use government sanction as an excuse for leveraging additional exactions which then filled their personal coffers.[30]

If the Guomindang's performance in cementing its administrative clout in the rural countryside seemed underwhelming, the government's lack of success in penetrating beyond its metropolitan comfort zone was at least offset by Chiang Kai-shek's ability to effectively counterbalance against his numerous domestic rivals. By 1931, personalist challengers to the Nationalist regime came from multiple directions. In the south, Guangdong Province fell under the jurisdiction of General Chen Jitang, a prodigy of one of Chiang's leftist political adversaries. To the southwest, Guangxi Province was rigidly controlled by Generals Li Zongren and Bai Chongxi, who repeatedly clashed with Chiang Kai-shek in 1928 and again in 1930. In the

[28] SHAC, "Guojia zongdongyuan sheji weiyuanhui guanyu zhiding zhan shi minzhong tuanti gongzuo zhidao gangyao cao'an mi han [The National General Mobilization Design Committee's letter on the preliminary guidelines for the mobilization of wartime civil society labor]," August 13, 1937, ZHMGSDAZLHB, zhengzhi, no. 5 (1997): 1-4
[29] Robert Bedeski, "Li Tsung-jen and the Demise of China's 'Third Force'"*Asian Surey* vol. 5, 12 (1965): 616-628
[30] Hoover Archives, "Unnamed research file: 'The Chinese Government verbally recognizes the existence of this growing problem…'" Norman D. Hanwell Papers, Research Files, 3.8

northwest, Shanxi Province was firmly in the grip of General Yan Xishan, who had used the anti-government fallout of the Mukden incident as an excuse to expel Guomindang influences from the region. In the western interior, Sichuan Province and Yunnan Province fell respectively under the personalist rule of General Liu Xiang and Governor Long Yun, who were relatively shielded from government meddling by geographical distance. Additional obstacles to Chiang's leadership could also be located within the ranks of the Guomindang itself. From the depths of the Guomindang's party cadres, Wang Jingwei, a former leftist who led a short-lived rival government in Wuhan, had secretly conspired with Yan Xishan to form a new counter-government to Chiang's regime. Rounding out the long list of potential threats to the Guomindang were hostile elements of the Chinese Communist Party, which had carved out several independent soviets in the provinces of Jiangxi, Hubei, Henan, and Anhui, and the Japanese forces of the Kwantung Army garrisoning newly occupied Manchuria.

An anti-Chiang militarist coalition consisting of Generals Li Zongren, Bai Chongxi, Yan Xishan, and former GMD General Feng Yuxiang had briefly contested Guomindang governance from May to September of 1930 before conceding to Chiang's rule. While Chiang quickly sacked Feng Yuxiang – who lacked a territorial base of his own – from any effective military command, Li & Bai's hold over Guangxi Province and Yan's control of Shanxi province preserved their independent military commands from further government reprisals. Unwilling to expend additional funds in an effort to uproot and outright eliminate his militarist foes, Chiang grudgingly accepted his defeated rivals' affirmations of loyalty before turning his attention to destroying enemy Communist soviets in Jiangxi, Hubei, Henan, and Anhui province. By 1934, Nationalist forces successfully drove Communist forces out of their enclaves and into Shaanxi (not to be confused with neighboring Shanxi) province. Yet shortly thereafter, seditious

deliberations among rival militarists resurfaced in 1936 when Li Zongren & Bai Chongxi formed a tentative anti-Chiang alliance with Chen Jitang. This conspiracy quickly disintegrated when Chen's domestic support in his home province collapsed and the Guangdong militarist went into exile, resulting in an isolated Li and Bai backing down yet again.

In reviewing the state-building legacy of the chaotic Nanjing decade, it is less striking to comment on the administrative shortcomings of the Nationalist state than to comment on the fact that the Nationalist state even managed to exist as a semi-functioning entity. For all of its institutional weaknesses – and there were many – the Guomindang government was not without its administrative and military accomplishments. Certain institutions, such as the Ministry of Finance, were relatively competent in executing their official duties, at least within the spatial confines of the central government's primarily urban base. Core components of the National Revolutionary Army were well-equipped and had been trained to a high standard of military cohesion, although a worrisomely high number of divisions were composed of provincial forces loyal to militarist generals who donned the cap of government command according to their own political convenience. The revenues collected from indirect taxation, while never capable of fully satisfying the Nationalists' growing military expenses, continued to grow with the gradual expansion of China's commercial sectors. And, most importantly, the majority of Chiang's domestic rivals had been cowed into accepting the nominal authority of the Guomindang.

Counterbalancing this list of achievements were the litany of administrative problems that continued to plague the Nationalists, even within provinces where the central government's military presence was strongest. First, the Guomindang's infrastructural penetration into the rural countryside remained anemic. While Nationalist state planners did pinpoint this weakness in their own official reports, the constant fiscal demands of quelling domestic uprisings pushed

administrators to divert scarce funds away from rural ventures and more towards infrastructural projects that complemented the government's ability to tax the readily accessible flow of commerce flowing in and out of port cities.[31] The construction of inter-city railroads and highways, along with the accompanied string of official and unofficial toll booths that peppered these routes, were a logistical boon for the overland transport of goods (and, if need be, troops) between city-based markets and locales, but had little bearing on the Guomindang's ability to regularly extract foodstuffs and conscripts from the surrounding spate of villages and townships that were not physically linked with the commercial markets of Shanghai and Tianjin.

Second, when imposing its extractive diktat on the rural population, the Guomindang preferred to buck-pass the messy duties of local administration off onto bureaucratically unreliable intermediaries who had already accumulated a certain degree of regional influence. At the highest provincial level, these actors included the militarists and self-proclaimed governors who had carved out quasi-fiefdoms during the anarchy that succeeded the collapses of the Qing Dynasty. At the sub-county level, these actors consisted of the large landowners and the regularly crooked baozhang officials who coordinated and administered the traditional baojia family units. Efforts to expand state administration beyond the confines of urban areas, on the rare occasions during which they were pursued, typically focused on co-opting local actors as a matter of convenience; there was little political will for undertaking the laborious process of replacing homegrown "bad apples" with competent officials. In the rare cases where a corrupt official was successfully replaced by an honest broker, said newly-minted officials quickly learned that the traditional system of *guanxi* – i.e. facilitating political dealings through personal

[31] SHAC, "Songziwen guanyu yayun shibing suo xu jingfei, han gonglu gongji zhi sunweiru dian [Telegram from T.V. Soong to Sun Weiru regarding the funds required for the soldier escorts and the supplies of the Han highway]" Oct 2, 1935, ZHMGSDAZLHB, *caizheng jingji*, no. 9 (1979): 215

contacts and networks – remained the only practical way of executing any administrative decision.

Finally, the Guomindang's inability to outright uproot and eliminate competing militarist generals ensured that any comprehensive strategic coordination of its fractious armed forces would require a constant re-litigation of military decisions with multiple competing voices. Up until 1937, the Nationalists' unusual success in accommodating the interests of rival militarists had depended on a mix of selective coercion and material concessions in the form of cash payments or granting access to lucrative taxes. But further bargaining success hinged on the assumption that the growing funds of China's economic development would continue to be available for the purposes of buying militarists' loyalties and paying for the expansion of central government forces.

Infrastructural Mechanisms	Nationalist Policy (1927-1937)	Overall Assessment of State-Building
Extraction	**Sources of Financing**: Customs Duties, Income Taxes, Value-Added Taxes, Foreign Loans **GMD Monopolies**: Salt, Urban Heavy Industry	High levels of extraction from urban commercial transactions. Low levels of extraction from rural land taxes and property taxes
Coercing Local Rivals	**Targets of Coercion**: Urban Capitalists, Provincial Militarists	Urban Capitalists forced to provide loans to GMD Provincial Militarists partially coerced into recognizing GMD authority
Cultivating Dependence	**Targets of Co-optation**: Urban Capitalists, Provincial Militarists, (Rural) Large Landholders, (Rural) Baozhang Officials	Urban capitalists highly dependent on GMD sanction for conducting business Low dependence of Provincial Militarists, Large Landholders, and Baozhang Officials on GMD subsidies

Mechanisms of State-building (1927-1937)

Table 2.2

1937-1938: High Political-Military Discord and Urban-Centric Extraction

It was in the context of ceaseless conflicts with rival domestic factions and administrative shortcomings in rural governance that the Guomindang faced the danger of a Japanese invasion from Manchuria. To Nationalist leaders, the peril of external intervention by the Japanese Kwantung Army necessitated, now more than ever, the rapid subordination of China's competing cliques under the leadership of the Guomindang. Only a cohesive and undivided China under the command of a singular authority, Chiang Kai-shek reasoned, could hope to resist its foreign enemies; a rationale that was repeatedly vocalized through Chiang's dictum of "first internal pacification, then external resistance."[32] "The history of the rise and fall of dynasties in the past demonstrates that only after order has been imposed upon the country can resistance to foreign invasion be offered," Chiang recounted to his generals at Nanchang, "[…] We should remember that national salvation demands control of the heart."[33] To the militarist cliques that made up the targets of Chiang's ire, the Guomindang's obsession with fighting its own national kin was a needless distraction from the more immediate threat of Japanese invasion. The solution to China's ills, Chiang's rivals argued, was to put aside personal ambitions of ruling the country and to form a unified alliance in resistance of foreign conquest.

Both self-serving arguments for how to resist Japanese aggression ultimately came to a head through an auspicious power-play by a disgruntled ex-militarist. In the 1936 Xi'an Incident, Zhang Xueliang, a former Manchurian militarist turned Guomindang general, amassed a small coterie of co-conspirators to successfully take Chiang Kai-shek hostage; forcing the Nationalist leader to officially end hostilities with his hated Communist rivals while recognizing the creation of a "United Front" composed of his former domestic enemies. In exchange for Chiang's

[32] Parks Coble, *Facing Japan: Chinese Politics and Japanese Imperialism, 1931-1937* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991): 241

[33] USSDCDF, "Regarding Nanchang Military Conference" May 10, 1933, Box 7216, 893.20/442, USNA, College Park

agreement to form an anti-Japanese alliance, the Communist Party and other rival militarist cliques promised to recognize the Guomindang's authority as the nominal leader of China's national resistance efforts.

In the official annals of Chinese history, the Xi'an Incident was the crucial impetus that finally convinced Chiang Kai-shek to temporarily allay his ambitions for a Sinicized Fronde and begin the process of standing up to Japanese aggression. In actuality, the Nationalist leader had been poring over the details of his anti-Japanese war plans with his German military advisors well before Zhang Xueliang "forced" Chiang's hand. In 1934, Chiang informed General Hans von Seeckt – the head of the Guomindang's German Advisors Group[34] – that a defense against Japan would rely on a series of strongpoint positions which were to be held at any costs. A skeptical von Seeckt remarked that static fortifications could be easily bypassed; instead, the German general countered, a more suitable defense plan would rely on a defense in-depth which utilized mobile reserves that could speedily rush to counter enemy movements.[35] In 1935, von Seeckt's successor, General Alexander von Falkenhausen, followed up with his own military proposal, further doubling down on the need for mobile units that could be quickly deployed to areas of crisis.[36] Given the importance of the eastern coast to China's national defense industry, an alternative strategy of "trading space for time" by falling back to prepared defensive positions and gradually withdrawing to the interior province of Sichuan would be inadvisable; Nationalist forces, von Falkenhausen argued, were better served contesting areas near the eastern cities of

[34] For more on the Sino-German relationship, see: William Kirby, *Germany and Republican China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984); Liang Hsi-huey, *The Sino-German Connection: Alexander von Falkenhausen Between China and Germany, 1900-1941* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1978)

[35] Donald Sutton, "German Advice and Residual Warlordism in the Nanking Decade: Influences on Nationalist Military Training and Strategy" *China Quarterly*, 91 (1982): 400

[36] Second Historical Archives of China [SHAC], "Deguo zongguwen Fakenhaosen guanyu Zhongguo kangri zhanbei zhi liangfen yijianshu," [German chief adviser Falkenhausen's two proposals regarding China's anti-Japanese military preparations] *Minguo dang'an*, no. 2 (1991): 25-27. See also: Sutton (1982): 401

Xuzhou, Zhengzhou, Wuhan, Nanchang, and the capital of Nanjing while only falling back to the rugged interior of Sichuan province as a "last base of defense."[37]

In the months preceding the Japanese invasion, the Chinese General Staff Department released two war plans which combined elements of positional warfare preferred by Chiang Kai-shek with elements of maneuver warfare as advocated by the German Advisors Group. The first war plan advocated a long-term process of initially resisting Japanese advances before steadily falling back to pre-built defensive positions "while seizing any opportunity to take to the offensive."[38] In such a scenario, mobile guerrilla elements would operate behind Japanese lines while regular forces would anchor their resistance on a string of fortifications and defense works.[39] The second war plan embodied (and in some ways, even exceeded) von Falkenhausen's relatively aggressive proposal by advocating an outright interdiction of Japanese landings followed by a direct thrust into Northern China and potentially into Japanese-occupied Manchuria.[40] In this scenario, mobile elements in the form of Chiang's German-trained reformed divisions would deliver a vicious counterblow akin to a blitzkrieg in miniature.

The organization intended to execute these ambitious war plans was the National Revolutionary Army [NRA], which roughly numbered some 1.7 million men on paper. In reality, a good portion of the rosters were filled with hollow recruits who existed in name only; generals who avoided updating their official registrars regularly pocketed the government-distributed wages for soldiers who had either died, deserted, or retired. At the core of the NRA were the 300,000 regulars of the central government armies, which included the elite divisions trained

[37] SHAC, "German chief advisor Falkenhausen's two proposals" *Minguo dang'an*, no. 2 (1991): 27
[38] Cited in Jui-Te Chang, "The Two Armies on the Eve of the War" in Peattie et al., *The Battle for China* (2011): 86. See also: Van de Ven (2003): 158-159
[39] See: SHAC, "Zhanlue de fangyu jieduan [Strategic Plans for the Defensive Phase, Jan. 1937]," *Kangri Zhanzheng Zhengmian Zhangchang* [KRZZZMZC], vol. 1 (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2008): 3-23
[40] Chang (2011): 87; Van de Ven (2003): 159

under von Falkenhausen and von Seeckt. These soldiers received the highest quality training and equipment while typically being led by officers trained at the elite Whampoa (Huangpu) Military Academy. Due to Chiang Kai-shek's early career as First Commandant of the school in 1924, many of the Whampoa officers had personal connections to the Generalissimo himself and were therefore typically favored for military and political promotions over other candidates who lacked the cohort networks of the Whampoa graduates.[41] Top graduates of Whampoa who would later serve in high-level military positions included Tang Enbo and Du Yuming, Older graduates of the earlier and equally prestigious Baoding Military Academy also served in a number of officer positions within the central government's armies, but due to Chiang's lack of recent connections to the Baoding cadets (despite having attended Baoding as a young recruit in 1906), the latter would gradually over time be overlooked for top military positions although they still held substantial political cachet given their pedigree.[42] Senior Baoding graduates who would command China's armies included Chen Cheng,[43] Xue Yue, and Bai Chongxi.

While Chiang's school connections and favoritism towards the Whampoa officers combined with the general professionalism of the older Baoding officers ensured that the central armies would remain loyal to his military command, the Generalissimo's influence over operational affairs declined sharply when confronted with the remaining troops of the NRA. Unlike the relatively cohesive divisions that made up the central armies, the bulk of the NRA consisted of a hodgepodge of individual armed forces led by the provincial militarists and their own lackeys. Some militarists were relatively benign, regularly working alongside the

[41] USSDCDF, "Regarding New Whampoa Academy: Inauguration of a Military Officers' Training Corps at Hai Hui Seu, near Kuling" Aug 15, 1934, Box 7217, 893.223/4

[42] Chang Jui-Te, "Nationalist Army Officers During the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945" *Modern Asian Studies* vol. 30, 4 (1996): 1033-1056

[43] Chen Cheng, upon graduating from Baoding, would later attend Whampoa, although he never truly integrated with the clique of Whampoa officers who would eventually dominate Guomindang politics.

Guomindang in exchange for government subsidies while doing their best to promote the industrialization and economic development of their own province. Others wanted nothing to do with the Guomindang and actively took a hostile stance against any perceived government intervention. Most militarists, however, vacillated between multiple conciliatory and revanchist roles according to their own strategic calculus; at times governing their provinces as proxies of the Guomindang, at other times ignoring government summons out of spite or in hopes of a bribe, and sometimes competing with each other for a larger share of provincial spoils or government allowances.[44] Among the provincial armies, troop quality varied drastically from the highly trained Guangxi regulars of Li Zongren and Bai Chongxi to the incompetent Yunnan militias of Long Yun. The below-average reliability of the provincial armies in turn made them the target of much derision by von Seeckt and later von Falkenhausen, both of whom repeatedly advised Chiang to demobilize incompetent divisions in an effort to free up defense spending for other parts of the NRA. Prominent militarists who would go on to command substantial provincial armies on behalf of the Guomindang included Guangxi province's Li Zongren & Bai Chongxi, Shanxi province's Yan Xishan, Yunnan province's Long Yun, Shandong province's Han Fuju, and Guangdong province's Zhang Fakui.

The NRA's organizational structure was, in a number of ways, a microcosm of the problems the Guomindang faced in its efforts to administer its own territory. If the Nationalist state-building project was characterized by a modestly weak central government struggling to impose its will on a collection of semi-autonomous rural provinces throughout the periphery, then the NRA reflected those dynamics in the form of a central Military Affairs Commission that

[44] USSDCDF, "Regarding: Military Operations in the Tsinan Consular District During Sept, 1932. The Shantung Civil War" Oct 8, 1932, Box 7216, 893.20/387; "Disposal of LiChi-Ch'un's Troops" July 22, 1933, Box 7216, 893.77/2940; "Disbandment of Szechuan Provincial Troops," Aug 15, 1935, Box 7216, 893.20/556; "Regarding Arms and ammunition being shipped to the Yunnan government by the central authorities," Box 7217, 893.24/54

aimed to impose its strategic vision on a collection of semi-autonomous provincial armies. From a comparative perspective, the methods that enabled Chiang Kai-shek to maintain the loyalty of the central armies were no more sophisticated than the mechanisms that enabled provincial militarists to maintain control over their own private forces; personalist networks and the selective distribution of sinecures were ubiquitous across all Nationalist forces regardless of training standards.[45] Any successful wartime strategy, therefore, depended on the Guomindang's ability to balance between the interests of Whampoa and Baoding-educated officers who commanded the central armies and the interests of the militarists who commanded the provincial armies. As an illustration of this balancing act, of the ten initial war zones that formally divided China's territorial expanse, half of them were led by a general who had at some point rebelled against the Guomindang.[46]

Political-Military Dispute	Nationalist Policy (1927-1937)	Overall Assessment of Political-Military Discord
Rent-Extraction	Intermittent disputes between GMD and Provincial Militarists over collection of land taxes. Lucrative political offices granted to Whampoa and Baoding officers over Provincial Militarists	Moderate discord
Operational Authority	Low government recognition of Militarist operational autonomy Low Militarist recognition of government operational authority No integration of Central and Provincial army commands	High discord

Sources of Political-Military Discord (1927-1937)

Table 2.3

[45] Shi Bolin, "Lun kangzhan shiqi guomin zhengfu de zhan shi zhengzhi tishi [On the Wartime Political System of the Nationalist Government during the Anti-Japanese War," in *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu,* issue 1, no. 11 (Institute of Modern History, 1994): 25-41

[46] Chi, *Nationalist China at War* (1982): 87

Nationalist war plans were finally put to the test when on July 7, 1937 Japanese forces attacked a small Chinese garrison stationed at the Marco Polo Bridge, initiating hostilities that would escalate into the Second Sino-Japanese War. Faced with an existential threat in the form of a qualitatively superior military opponent, several provincial militarists who had once opposed the Guomindang's consolidation on the mainland belatedly rallied to the side of Chiang Kai-shek in accordance with the agreement signed at Xi'an. To further demonstrate the government's reconciliation with its former militarist opponents, Feng Yuxiang – once one of the most powerful militarists who opposed Chiang (and the subject of unconfirmed rumors that he baptized entire battalions with a fire hose) – was dug out of forced retirement and given overall command of the 6th War Zone. The most significant coup for the Guomindang came in the incorporation of the previously hostile armies of Guangxi militarists Li Zongren and Bai Chongxi.[47] In witnessing the creation of a new Chinese United Front, American observers noted approvingly that "the actuality of Chinese unification […] is evident from this list of outstanding leaders of diverse factions joined together under Chiang [sic] command."[48]

Underneath the veneer of national unification, however, cooperation among political-military factions was at worst tenuously fragile and at best conditional on the understanding that Chiang would act aggressively to repel the Japanese invaders. Although Guangxi militarists Li Zongren and Bai Chongxi voluntarily marched their provincial armies to the front lines, both generals also left the defense of their home province in the hands of a loyalist, Huang Xuchu, who continued to administer the region in their name. Other northern militarists such as Shanxi governor Yan Xishan, Shandong governor Han Fuju, and Hebei governor Song Zheyuan were

[47] Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China* (2003): 199
[48] USSDCDF, "Nanking dispatch: Command of the Chinese fighting forces on the several fronts under Chiang, Sept. 12, 1937" Box 7216, 893.20/625

more refrained in sending their provincial forces into battle, preferring instead for Chiang's elite divisions to carry the bulk of the fighting.[49] Militarists whose home provinces were farther away from the front lines, such as Yunnan governor Long Yun, belatedly mobilized their local forces but made no hurried effort to march them to Chiang's aid. Even the diplomatic concession of re-calling Feng Yuxiang from retirement proved to be problematic as many of his former officers were none too pleased to find themselves placed back into positions of subservience.[50] Tellingly, General Zhang Xueliang and his Xi'an co-conspirators had vanished from their military commands into the purgatory of government-sponsored house arrest; an absence which did not go unnoticed by watchful militarists. China's military factions were willing to acknowledge the necessity for cooperation to the point where they avoided any open hostilities between each other, but terminal suspicion of former enemies and Chiang's shaky commitment to the United Front made full-blown coordination difficult.[51]

Positional Warfare During the Battle of Shanghai

The rapid fall of Beijing and Tianjin to the Japanese ultimately convinced Chiang to adopt an aggressive war plan that would interdict Japanese landings, open up a new front near Shanghai, and force the Japanese to dilute their attack by re-directing forces to check Chinese counter-attacks.[52] Committed to this ambitious counter-offensive were the elite German-trained Chinese divisions fostered under von Falkenhausen's guidance and the relatively well-equipped Guangxi regulars of Li Zongren and Bai Chongxi.[53] Additional provincial armies of substandard

[49] Van de Ven (2003): 191-193; Li Tsung-jen (Li Zongren), *The Memoirs of Li Tsung-jen*, Te-kong Tong & Li Tsung-jen, eds. (Boulder: Westview Pres, 1979): 52

[50] Chi Hsi-Sheng, *Nationalist China at War: Military Defeats and Political Collapse, 1937-1945* (University of Michigan Press, 1982): 85

[51] Chi Hsi-Sheng, *Nationalist China at War* (1982): 42; Lloyd Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction: Nationalist China in War and Revolution, 1937-1949* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984): 127

[52] Van de Ven (2003): 197-198

[53] Ma Zhengdu, *Cansheng: Kangzhan Zhengmian Zhanchang Daxieyi* (Guilin: Guangxi Shifan Daxue Chubanshe, 1993): 90-91; Yang Tianshi, "Chiang Kai-shek and the Battle of Shanghai and Nanjing" in Drea & Peattie (2011): 152

quality under the commands of Yan Xishan and Han Fuju, whose home provinces were closest to the front lines, were tasked with holding their defensive positions in the face of Japanese advances while providing military support to Nationalist counter-offensives. The reformed Communist divisions of the Eighth Route Army would provide support by initiating diversionary guerrilla attacks against Japanese supply lines.

The resulting battle of Shanghai would lead to enormous Chinese losses and highlighted a number of deficiencies in Nationalist military operations. While the regulars of the central government armies and the provincial Guangxi divisions acquitted themselves well in battle, logistical support behind the frontlines was noticeably abysmal.[54] In a post-battle assessment of the Shanghai counter-offensive, Commander in Chief Chen Cheng bluntly stated that "we lack the ability to supply our troops on the front lines… China is still a pre-modern country with poor management."[55] Lacking the administrative infrastructure or a sizeable staff dedicated to the handling of food procurement and transportation, Nationalist armies on the march haphazardly engaged in the practice of impressing local civilians to assist in the conveying of supplies.[56] Additionally, lacking any holding facilities of their own, troops would frequently engage in the traditional practice of "renting" local houses and temples for their own use.[57] While in theory government law required civilians to be compensated through the municipal offices of the newly created Commission for Military Requisition and Compensation Assessment, the lack of

[54] The term "Central Army" is used here to refer to the military units that were under the direct control of the Guomindang whereas the "National Revolutionary Army" refers to the larger organization consisting of central army units as well as the provincial armies of local elites that were nominally allied to the Guomindang. F.F. Liu estimates that by 1937, the central army consisted of around 300,000 men within a 1,700,000 strong force. F.F. Liu, *A Military History of Modern China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956): 112; Van de Ven "The Military in the Republic" (2000): 114-115

[55] He Zhilin, *Chen Cheng xiansheng huiyilu: kangri zhanzheng*, vol. I (Taipei: Guoshiguan, 2004): 65

[56] Ibid: 64

[57] USSDCDF, "Nanking Dispatch: Chinese performance and communications for month of July, 1937" Aug 2, 1937, 893.21/103; *Dongbei kangri lianjun shiliao bianxiezu* (1987): 152

appropriate channels for enforcing claims along with the rapidity of the Nationalist collapse eliminated any chance of fiscal recompense.[58] Inter-city highways and railroads, designed in part to quicken the movement of soldiers to the front line, were overcrowded by a press of refugees and civilians fleeing in the opposite direction, essentially strangling the transportation of reinforcements and supplies, which could not be rerouted through subsidiary rail lines or auxiliary roads. In a blistering critique of his generals at a military conference in Nanyue, Chiang personally accused his officers present of failing to coordinate their movements and supply lines.[59] A failure to adequately deliver military necessities – particularly food and reinforcements – to frontline troops, the Generalissimo lamented, had allowed an otherwise promising counteroffensive to quickly peter out.[60]

While logistical trains snagged in the rear, strategic coordination on the front was no better. Decades of internecine warfare among the Guomindang, the Communists, and militarist cliques had engendered a heap of mutual mistrust between Chinese military officials that the United Front could only paper over. In a world where the currencies of political power consisted of the private armed retinues that one could mobilize, former militarists turned Guomindang generals were understandably reluctant to throw their armies into battle on behalf of a government that had tried to eliminate them months earlier. This perennial suspicion among Chinese generals, many of whom continued to nurse old grudges towards their newfound military colleagues, paralyzed the Nationalist counteroffensive. Attacks, when launched, were typically unsupported by the troops of nearby divisions; Nationalist armies, when making a defensive stand, were often left unreinforced. For example, the provincial armies of Shanxi

[58] USSDCDF, "Subject: Military Requisitions Law" July 30, 1937, Box 7216, 893.20/634
[59] "Chiang's Speech at First Nanyue Military Conference" November 26, 1938, *Zhonghua mingguo zhongyao shiliao*, vol. 2: 139-147
[60] Ibid: 145

militarist Yan Xishan were tasked with supporting the central army group of General Tang Enbo – a Guomindang loyalist – by embarking on diversionary attacks against Japanese positions while central forces held the city of Nankou. Yan Xishan's unwillingness to communicate with other Nationalist generals and his reluctance to commit more than a token of his least reliable forces, however, ensured that the Japanese quickly surrounded and overran Tang's position.[61] Han Fuju replicated a more egregious feat by withdrawing entirely in the face of Japanese forces. Despite Chiang's furious orders that the Shandong militarist make a stand in his own province, Han retreated even further into the interior, opening up the Nationalist flank to Japanese reprisals.[62] In contrast, the enemy's military units, Chiang ruefully admitted, were "closely coordinated and integrated in a vertical and horizontal manner" while their "transportation and communications are strong and agile."[63]

What began as an intended counterstrike against the Kwantung Army quickly devolved into an uncoordinated operational strategy of positional warfare in which Chinese divisions ensconced themselves in defensive fortifications, doing little more than engaging in do-or-die stands or withdrawing from the field entirely once supporting forces failed to show up. The bulk of the combat missions therefore fell unofficially on the shoulders of the central government armies, which Chiang had tasked with the most difficult objectives of holding the cities that would receive the brunt of the Japanese offensives. While the German-trained troops of Chiang's crack divisions held their own against the Japanese, three months of fending off successive

[61] Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China* (2003): 195
[62] Ibid.
[63] SHAC, "Jiang weiyuan zhang dui di yi ci nanyue junshi huiyi xunci [Chairman Jiang's speech at the first Nanyue military conference]," Nov 27, 1938, *Zhonghua mingguo zhongyao shiliao chubian* [ZHMGZYSLCB], vol. 2 (1981): 162

combined arms assaults eventually forced the much-depleted central armies to follow their provincial counterparts into a lengthy retreat.

State-Building Abjured: "Trading Space for Time" and the Retreat Westward

The fall of Shanghai in late November of 1937 followed by the loss of the capital, Nanjing, in December capped off the initial phase of anti-Japanese resistance. As the Guomindang retreated west into the interior provinces, Chiang abandoned von Falkenhausen's proposal for a blitzkrieg-lite counteroffensive against Japanese positions and acknowledged that future Chinese resistance would depend on a positional defense of China's interior communication lines.[64] "We must be awakened to the necessity of building defenses at all times and in all places," Chiang urged his officers in one of his many exhortative speeches, "we must […] refrain from saying that the old weapons and old tactics could not be used in a modern war. You should all know that during the World War rifles and trench mortars were highly useful."[65] On December 13, 1938, the Guomindang released a new operational war plan calling for "the creation of new strongpoint fortifications in the hilly areas of eastern Hunan, western Jiangxi, and southern Henan with strong forces stationed there to wait for the enemy."[66] Additionally, the National Revolutionary Army would "engage in guerrilla warfare" as a means of delaying the Japanese advance while rear provinces built up their defenses.[67] At its core, the new Nationalist war plan envisioned a war of attrition in which Chinese forces gradually retreated westward, giving fierce resistance along the way. This policy of "trading space for time," it was hoped, would over-extend Japanese supply lines by taking advantage of China's vast interior while

[64] SHAC, "Chiang's Speech at Wuhan," Jan 11, 1938, *Zhonghua mingguo zhongyao shiliao chubian*, vol. 2: 68
[65] USSDCDF, "Three Lectures Delivered by Chiang Kai-Shek," Feb 18, 1938, Box 7216, 893.20/658
[66] SHAC, "Chiang's War Plans to General Xue Yue," Nov 1938, *Kangri zhanzheng zhengmian zhanchang*, vol. I: 18-19
[67] Ibid: 18

giving the shattered central armies time to reconstitute themselves.[68] Given China's massive manpower base, Chiang argued that it would only be a matter of time before the Japanese divisions were exhausted and depleted of reinforcements.

In the scramble to retreat westward, efforts to re-build state administration were limited to short-term projects of mobilizing labor for the construction of defensive emplacements, road maintenance, and – more commonly – scouring surrounding regions for whatever materiel and consumable goods could be transported back to the rear provinces.[69] Any homestead, farmland, livestock, or food store that could not be dismantled and shipped away was destroyed in a ruthless display of Fabian enterprise. In the most controversial effort to impede the Japanese advance, retreating Nationalist soldiers excavated the protective dikes holding back the Yellow River, allowing a devastating torrent to flood into the Japanese-occupied provinces of Anhui and Jiangsu.[70] Unsurprisingly, reforms aimed at improving administrative governance in the rural countryside were not a high priority for a government still in the transition phase of administrative displacement.

It was in the chaos of retreat, however, that the Nationalists scored one of their most famous and unexpected tactical victories near the town of Taierzhuang, during which provincial troops under the command of Generals Li Zongren and Bai Chongxi coordinated with reinforcing government soldiers under the command of General Tang Enbo to successfully encircle and maul two pursuing Japanese divisions.[71] While the battle itself was not reflective of

[68] SHAC, "Jiang weiyuan zhang di yi ci nanyue junshi huiyi xunci [Chairman Jiang at the first Nanyue military conference]," Nov 28, 1938, ZHMGZYSLCB, vol. 2: 171-179
[69] SHAC, "Guomin zhengfu kangzhan jianguo gangling caizheng jinrong shishi fang'an [The Implementation of the Financial Plan of the National Government's Anti-Japanese War]," Aug 1938, ZHMGSDAZLHB, caizheng jingji, no. 1 (1997): 13-19
[70] See: SHAC, "Huanghe jue di [The Yellow River breaks its banks]" ZHMGSDAZLHB, zhengzhi, no. 5 (1997): 416-433
[71] Li Zongren, *Tai'erzhuang kangzhan huiyi lu* (Chuangjin Publishing House, 1943)

any noticeable improvements to the Guomindang's supply services – which continued to remain chaotic and relegated to plunder and burn initiatives – it did demonstrate how lowered friction between government commanders and "unreliable" militarists could facilitate the successful execution of mobile operations. Tang Enbo's willingness to accede to Li Zongren's overall command rather than contest the Guangxi militarist's operational autonomy helped avoid much of the internal squabbling that handicapped Nationalist planning during the Shanghai campaign. Such cooperation, however, was more of an exception rather than a rule.

A short-term effort to re-establish the Guomindang's wartime capital in Wuhan ended in October of 1938 when Japanese forces captured the city, forcing the government to relocate its administrative staff into the city of Chongqing. From its new provisional capital nestled in rugged Sichuan province, the Guomindang found itself in an unfamiliar region which, given its historical lack of commercial activity, had traditionally held a high level of autonomy even during the height of the Nanjing decade. While the recent death of Sichuan militarist Liu Xiang in January of 1938 had left a political void in the province which the Guomindang eagerly filled, the lack of a pre-existing government infrastructure necessitated the rebuilding of state institutions from scratch. Obstructing this project of government reconstruction were the typical problems of cadastral illegibility and resistance from regional militarists, who were none too pleased to suddenly find themselves in such close geographic proximity to the Guomindang's administrative core.

Planned expansions of government administration into the neighboring province of Yunnan also met substantial pushback from its local militarist governor Long Yun who, unlike his Sichuan neighbor Liu Xiang, still held the advantage of being very much alive. As a border province that simultaneously connected China to a trickle of French supplies diverted through

Indochina and to another lifeline of British supplies coming in through Burma, Yunnan was strategically placed as a gateway to receiving military aid from the outside world.[72] Chiang, who could no longer rely upon aid shipments by sea, was doggedly determined to take over and develop Yunnan as an interior base of operations while Long Yun was equally determined to maintain his hold over the in-demand real-estate that he had occupied for the past decade.

The Guomindang's desperate scramble to mobilize the resources of its severely diminished economic base laid the foundation for a protracted struggle between government administrators and the confounding web of local interests arrayed against any state demand for additional exactions. While Chinese troops fought to repel Japanese attacks on the front, provincial elites and established local intermediaries maneuvered to repel the government's administrative consolidation in the rear. Complicating this division between the "war-making front" and the "state-making front" was the government's reliance on militarists to mobilize the manpower for extended war-making while being simultaneously engaged in a state-making project that had the ultimate goal of eliminating administrative reliance on militarist brokers. For the next two years, the Guomindang managed to balance between these competing interests through the selective distribution of economic rents to militarist intermediaries in exchange for greater government access to previously inaccessible rural provinces. While this short-term accommodation was in effect, strategic military operations against Japan gradually pivoted towards a more concerted execution of mobile counter-offensives designed to keep Japanese advances off balance rather than passively waiting for enemy offensives to hit static troop positions. How then were these two phenomena interrelated? And why did the Nationalists

[72] USSDCDF, "Subject: Shipment of war materials arrives at Yunnanfu," Jan 29, 1938, Box 7218, 893.24/367; "Yunnanfus dispatch No. 226 to the Embassy, Peiping," Sept 3, 1936, Box 7218, 893.24/198; "Subject: Arms Shipments May 1 to 14, Yunnanfu, China," May 14, 1938, Box 7218, 893.24/406

temporarily succeed in shifting to a strategy of maneuver warfare despite losing its best and most well-equipped forces?

1939-1941: Low Political-Military Discord and Rural-Centric Extraction

After two years of war, most of the physical infrastructure and sources of revenue that had buttressed the Nanjing-era Nationalist state were either destroyed or captured by the Japanese. In outlining the dire financial straits of the Guomindang, Nationalist financial advisor Arthur Young notes:

> "Occupation of the chief ports cut off most of the customs yield. The salt revenue (…) fell drastically because much of it came from salt produced from sea water in areas that the enemy soon occupied. The consolidated excise taxes were hard hit, because they came from factory production which mostly was in the occupied regions. China had no productive direct taxes. The loss of major cities in east and central China containing the only important capital markets made it harder to borrow from the public for war costs."[73]

Denting Nationalist resistance efforts even further were the near-crippling losses suffered by the central armies most loyal to Chiang. Reforming the shattered divisions of the government's best forces would take time, during which Nationalist military operations would fall on the shoulders of the heretofore divided provincial armies. Adding insult to injury, von Falkenhausen – who had been a crucial voice of military experience and guidance for Chiang throughout the 1930s – was recalled by his Nazi superiors in conjunction with Hitler's decision to eliminate all military support to China on behalf of the newly signed German-Japanese alliance.

At the same time, wartime defeat in extremis was not without its positive externalities. On the political-military divide, the physical manifestation of an existential Japanese threat no longer contained to occupied Manchuria and the littoral provinces did more to engender strategic

[73] Arthur N. Young, *China and the Helping Hand: 1937-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963): 40

cooperation among squabbling militarist factions than past efforts at coalition-building.[74] With the loss of the eastern seaboard, militarist-controlled interior provinces that had once been relatively insulated from Japanese aggression by virtue of geographical distance (particularly Hunan, Henan, and Guangxi province) now found themselves on the front lines as the Japanese continued to advance inland. Keen to prevent their home bases from falling to the enemy, former militarists turned Nationalist generals pivoted to Chiang as the more familiar devil to accommodate.[75]

Guangxi militarists Li Zongren and Bai Chongxi in particular urged many of their militarist compatriots to cement their alliance with the Guomindang while excoriating malcontents who were reluctant to do so. Making good on his promise to commit wholly to the United Front, Bai Chongxi willingly left his province to join Chiang's general staff as the newly appointed Deputy Chief of Staff, a promotion which conveniently offered no troop commands. Li Zongren retained control over the Guangxi armies but accepted a promotion as commander of the Fifth War Zone, which required him to deploy his forces outside of their home region and into the heavily contested province of Hubei.[76] According to the warnings of Long Yun and the recently-deceased Liu Xiang, such shows of loyalty to the Guomindang would only lead to Chiang's gradual undermining of the Guangxi clique's military autonomy.[77] Chiang himself would give weight to these suspicions by appointing Zhang Fakui, a former Guangdong militarist turned Guomindang loyalist, to be commander of the 4th War Zone encompassing Guangxi province. Nonetheless, even the most cynical of observers could grudgingly admit that Chiang

[74] Lloyd Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction: Nationalist China in War and Revolution, 1937-1949* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984): 143; Li Tsung-jen & Te-kong Tong, *The Memoirs of Li Tsung-Jen* (1979): 321-322
[75] USSDCDF, "Political Report for July-August, 1937," Box 7141, 893.00 P.R./139: 63
[76] Graham Hutchings, "A Province at War: Guangxi Province During the Sino-Japanese Conflict," *China Quarterly*, 108 (1986): 656
[77] Li Tsung-jen & Te-kong Tong, *The Memoirs of Li Tsung-Jen* (1979): 321-322

had at great cost to his central armies offered serious resistance to the Japanese even in the midst of militarist buck-passing. This costly display of commitment to anti-Japanese resistance, while perhaps not fully assuaging the concerns of militarist commanders, at least indicated that Chiang's calls for national unity were not completely self-serving.

From the horrendous losses of military defeat arose a mutually dependent relationship between the Guomindang and its militarist interlocutors. In depending heavily on the local provincial armies of its former militarist rivals for national defense, the central government was ill-positioned to punish belligerent officers for shirking their military duties and also less willing to undermine local battlefield operations executed by militarist commanders. One notable exception was the highly publicized show-trial and execution of Shandong militarist Han Fuju, whose abandonment of his home province in the initial phase of the war and his resulting listlessness as a "disgraced" general rendered him a relatively easy target for government scapegoating.[78] Most militarist generals who retained control of their landed provincial fiefdoms and the private armies to defend them, however, continued to command their army divisions with a relative degree of insularity from government intervention. Yet at the same time, Chinese militarists who now found their provinces under direct threat of Japanese occupation were increasingly eager to acquire additional financial and materiel aid from the Guomindang, which – in spite of its much-diminished military and fiscal position – still remained the primary intermediary for selectively distributing cash acquired through foreign loans and, most importantly, a curtailed trickle of armaments that were only available from government-controlled arsenals and foreign imports.[79]

[78] Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China* (2003): 201
[79] USSDCDF, "Political Report for October, 1938," Nov 14, 1938, Box 7142, 893.00 P.R./151: 27-28

Unable to rely on their own militarist colleagues to reinforce and resupply their provincial armies, militarist generals struggled to obtain financial and military assistance from British, French, and Soviet financiers, who were in turn reluctant to underwrite loans to non-state actors that could potentially undermine the Guomindang's war effort.[80] By virtue of its status as the official representative of the Chinese war effort, the central government held tentatively onto a position as kingmaker: an entity that was too weak to enforce political-military cooperation through brute force, but still possessing enough limited grants, sinecures, and military materiel to incentivize political-military collaboration from hard-pressed actors eager to curry its favor.[81]

Political-Military Dispute	Nationalist Policy (1939-1941)	Overall Assessment of Political-Military Discord
Rent-Extraction	Selective GMD distribution of military equipment to Provincial Militarists GMD refrains from overtly undermining Militarist rent privileges	Low Discord
Operational Authority	Nominal Militarist recognition of GMD operational authority GMD refrains from challenging Militarist operational autonomy High GMD dependence on Provincial armies Selective integration of Central and Provincial army commands	Low Discord

Source of Political-Military Discord (1939-1941)

Table 2.4

Factories, Labor Mobilization, and Bribes: Expanding Infrastructural Power in the Rural Provinces

As an exogenous shock that uprooted the Nationalists from their traditional economic base, the Japanese invasion also triggered three developments in 1938 that propelled the

[80] Zeng Ruiyan, "Kangzhan shiqi guomin zhengfu de qiaowu gongzuo [The Nationalist government's overseas affairs during the Anti-Japanese War]" in *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu*, issue 1, no. 11 (1994): 42-70
[81] Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction* (1984): 82

Nationalist shift towards a rural-centric project of resource extraction. First, the dislocation of a large swathe of China's population combined with the government's strong ties to Chinese industrial capitalists gave the Guomindang a degree of influence in deciding which rural regions would receive the benefits of supporting China's new wartime industrial base.[82] With refugees continuously pouring into the countryside, there was no shortage of unemployed manpower that could be mobilized in service of the war effort. Having initiated the process of dismantling its eastern factories and arsenals in advance of Japanese spearheads, the Guomindang selectively chose to re-distribute its heavy industry throughout the rear provinces of Sichuan and Yunnan, and throughout the frontline provinces of Hunan, Henan, and Guangxi.[83] Many of these manufacturing bases would operate at a severe net loss, but nonetheless served as crucial sources of military production that employed the labor of the surrounding local and refugee populace.[84] Most importantly, relocated factories and arsenals were administered by government personnel; an arrangement that militarists and local governors tolerated on the basis of military necessity and their own lack of domestically-sourced technical knowledge of heavy industry.[85] Government-owned/sponsored factories and arsenals, therefore, were some of the first noticeable harbingers of an expanded government role in the mobilization of rural labor.

[82] SHAC, "Junwei hui zhengzhi bu guanyu jiaqiang minzhong tuanti guanli dian [The Political Department of the Military Commission on strengthening the management of the masses]," June 4, 1939, ZHMGSDAZLHB, zhengzhi, no. 5 (1997): 7-8

[83] SHAC, "Jingji bu guanyi changkuang nei qian qingxing de baogao [The Ministry of Economic Affairs' report on the situation regarding the internal relocation of factories and mines]" 1937-1944 ZHMGSDAZLHB, *caizheng jingji*, no. 6 (1979): 379-381; "Chen Shizhen baogao banli henan ge chang qianyi qingxing cheng [Chen Shizhen's report on the migration of various factories in Henan]"Jan 1, 1938, ZHMGSDAZLHB, *caizheng jingji*, no. 6 (1979): 415-416; Chang Kia-ngau, *The Inflationary Spiral: The Experience in China, 1939-1950* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1958): 213-214; William Kirby "The Chinese War Economy" in Hsiung & Levine (1992): 190

[84] SHAC, "Gongchang qianyi jiandu weiyuanhui di yi ci huiyi jilu [Record of the first meeting of the Factory Migration Supervision Committee]" Aug 10, 1937, ZHMGSDAZLHB, *caizheng jingji*, no. 6 (1979): 381

[85] Chinese Ministry of Information, *China Handbook, 1937-1945* (1947): 301

At the ground level, the Japanese disruption of commercial markets for everyday sundries also led to a groundswell of popular-based initiatives in the form of village cooperatives designed to supplement local demand for textiles and light manufactured goods.[86] While the self-industry of rural communities was not a state-planned enterprise, the Guomindang was not above inserting itself into the drudgery of village life, so long as there was the potential for future taxable gains. Initially, the Guomindang's treatment of the growing cooperative movement was of cursory interest; self-sufficient village-based cooperatives were too small to provide significant quantities of surplus wartime materials and were unlikely to grow into anything more than a light industrial base for wartime production.[87] Yet on the urging of his finance minister, H.H. Kung, Chiang Kai-shek conceded in 1938 to the creation of the Chinese Industrial Cooperatives (CIC), which would coordinate and provide loans to its member co-ops.[88] Over the next two years, as the CIC grew in its membership, Nationalist administrators partially revised their initial expectations of the co-op movement. As a primarily local-led initiative, village cooperatives organically fulfilled local subsistence demands with relatively little social upheaval. Additionally, underwriting loans for village cooperatives was a relatively inexpensive endeavor, even as the number of member co-ops fostered under the CIC increased from a low of 69 in 1938 to a high of 1,284 in the span of a single year. In exchange for a marginal sum of borrowed money, village co-ops provided a diverse array of consumer goods while servicing and maintaining local roads that connected rural markets.[89] Most importantly, each co-op that turned

[86] Hoover Archives, "Chinese Industrial Co-operatives" James Bertram, *The World-Telegraph*, April 6, 1939, vol. 1, 114, Nym Wales Papers, Box 3: 24, Stanford, CA; F. Tillman Durden "Co-Operatives Spreading Over China" *NYTimes*, Aug. 15, 1939, vol. 2, 66, Nym Wales Papers, Box 3: 31

[87] Hou Kun Hong, *Liangzheng shiliao: junliang, zhanhou liangzheng, tongji ziliao*, vol. 6 (Taipei: Guoshiguan, 1998): 69

[88] Ministry of Information, *China Handbook 1946 Addendum* (1947): 379-380

[89] Hoover Archives, "Industrial Co-operatives Forward Reconstruction, The China Press, Shanghai, Oct 10, 1939" Nym Wales Papers, Collected Writings: Hadley, Watson, 3:40

to the CIC for funds could become a channel for the Guomindang to make further inroads into reorganizing rural society for wartime purposes.

Finally, the forced transplant of the Guomindang into the interior provinces helped upend the tacit arrangement that divided administrative responsibilities over the collections of food and recruits between central government and provincial militarists. In the immediate short term, the Guomindang opted for a compromise policy of providing financial incentives to induce regional elites to turn a blind eye while government agencies such as the Office of Military Supplies and the Bureau of Agricultural Affairs haphazardly assimilated the bureaucratic functions of mobilizing food and recruits across the interior provinces.[90] In the most direct sense, this process entailed the proliferation of Guomindang administrators among local villages with the goal of organizing a commune of self-subsistence farmers into a collective base of wartime food production.[91] Yet what modicum of social engineering that could be accomplished in the mass procurement of grain was less prevalent in matters of military recruitment, where the Guomindang continued to rely almost entirely upon the fearsomely abusive baozhang officials to meet conscription quotas.

By far, the largest contributions to expanding infrastructural capacity came through the Guomindang's policy of rapidly co-opting low-level administrators into the bureaucratic apparatus of the central government. The process of assimilation typically took the form of granting government office to regional baozhang officials or local village heads who were then

[90] Van de Ven (2003): 259; Shen Tsung-han, "Food Production and Distribution for Civilian and Military Needs in Wartime China, 1937-1945" in Sih, ed. (1977): 172-173

[91] SHAC, "Caizheng bu ni ju di er qi zhan shi caizheng quan ji jihua zhongxin gongzuo [The Ministry of Finance's Plans for the Implementation of the Second Phase of its Wartime Fiscal Plan]," April 11, 1939, ZHMGSDAZLHB, caizheng jingji, no. 1 (1997): 67-30

hurriedly tasked with the enforcement of conscription and food quotas.[92] This hasty grafting of regional "staff" – or, more precisely, individuals who had attained their local office through clientelism and crookery – onto a growing state apparatus inevitably led to rampant inefficiencies as multiple newly formed regional institutions were assigned conflicting responsibilities over mobilizing foodstuffs and labor.[93] The management of wartime food procurement and distribution in 1938, for instance, fell under the purview of a byzantine web of central and regional organs such as the Office of Military Supplies, the Ministry of Economic Affairs' Bureau of Agricultural Affairs, the Ministry of Food, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, along with separate local institutions established by provincial militarists in their respective war zones.[94]

Yet the confusing and messy manner through which the administrative tendrils of the government permeated the countryside was also perversely useful in shielding the Guomindang from militarist pushback to a steady government-led erosion of rural autonomy. While the institutional responsibilities of newly co-opted regional administrators remained obscure and crudely delineated, provincial militarists also had difficulty gauging the extent to which their personal collection of rents through direct land taxes was steadily being subverted by the Guomindang. On-ground tax officials and baozhang administrators typically adjudicated their overlapping duties to the Guomindang and provincial militarists by erring on the side of over-exaction.[95] Provincial land rents levied by governing militarists and national grain procurements levied by the central government all combined into an increasingly onerous burden on the

[92] SHAC, "Shehui bu zhishi nong yun zhongxin gongzuo midian [Secret telegram from the Ministry of Social Affairs to the Agricultural Transportation Center]," April 29, 1939, ZHMGSDAZLHB, zhengzhi, no. 5 (1997): 142
[93] Hoover Archives, "*Chinese Local Administration Under the National Government* [Unpublished Manuscript]," p. 48, Xu Daolin Papers, Box 1
[94] Van de Ven (2003): 264; Chinese Ministry of Information, *China Handbook, 1937-1945* (1947): 99
[95] Hoover Archives, "Chapter Two: The Province - Central agencies in the province" Xu Daolin Papers, p. 42

Chinese peasantry. Likewise, Nationalist leaders were unaware of the degree to which the appointment of regional administrators with ill-specified authorities was undermining the efficiency of government food procurement and conscription efforts in the countryside.[96] On paper, the number of military recruits and food tonnage steadily rose between 1939-1941, propelled by the inertia of expanding government administration over "unclaimed" sources of rural farmland and labor. So long as the Ministry of Information continued to point to a positive trend in gross exactions, the inherent unsustainability of the Guomindang's increasing exactions remained under the radar of top government officials.[97]

How successful were the Guomindang's efforts at mobilizing rural labor and financing its war effort through direct labor extraction? Compared to the poorly implemented cadastral projects of the Nanjing decade, there were certainly improvements to Nationalist state-building within the "brown spots"[98] of unoccupied China's territorial expanse. Government intervention in local affairs was most directly felt through the Guomindang's monopolization of heavy manufacturing and arsenal production, which remained one of the key areas of government consolidation that regional militarists never seriously contested. Less forceful in its degree of government intervention but no less significant in scope was the provision of government loans to village co-ops for the provision of light manufactured goods and other sundries. Cultivating the local community's dependence on the government for financial assistance was still limited to a transactional exchange in which villages borrowed money to jump-start cooperative enterprises that paid the government back in consumer goods production; but over time the Guomindang

[96] SHAC, "Shehui bu chao song Zhejiang sheng zhan shi ce jin nong yun gongzuo jihua dai dian [Telegram of the Ministry of Social Affairs' copy of Zhejiang Province's wartime plan for agricultural transport]" Sept 2, 1939, ZHMGSDAZLHB, zhengzhi, no. 5 (1997): 151

[97] White & Jacoby, *Thunder Out of China* (1946): 69-70

[98] Guillermo O'Donnell, "On the State, Development, and Some Conceptual Problems: A Latin American View with Some Glances at Some Post-Communist Countries" *World Development* 21 (1993): 1359-1360

would use the selective withholding of loans to become increasingly involved in coordinating and directing co-op activities through the CIC.

Whereas the Guomindang's rural administration was at its most "Weberian" in the staffing and management of manufacturing centers throughout the rural periphery, other expansions in infrastructural power looked more akin to what Karen Barkey describes as "a negotiated enterprise."[99] In Guomindang-led efforts at expanding free China's agricultural output, the deployment of agronomic specialists helped the government make some headway in rural social engineering. The collection and dispersal of food and the taxing of revenues gained from surplus agricultural sales, however, was managed by a conglomeration of rent-seeking militarists and Guomindang administrators – with the latter occasionally moonlighting as rent-collectors for the former.[100] So long as the peasantry could shoulder the burden of being doubly squeezed by the whims of overlapping regional and state organs, the financing of the Chinese war machine through direct labor extraction proceeded with neither the Guomindang nor the provincial militarists overly concerned with curbing the predations that were cannibalizing rural China's resource base.[101]

[99] Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge University Press, 2008): 1

[100] SHAC, "Shehui bu chao song hubei sheng nongmin yundong gongzuo jihua dai dian [Telegram of the Ministry of Social Affair's copy of the Hubei Provincial Peasant Movement Work Plan]" Aug 24, 1939, ZHMGSDAZLHB, zhengzhi, no. 5 (1997): 150

[101] SHAC, "Sichuan ziyang xian nongmin yin Guomindang yi zheng ke nüe jinxing baodong bei zhenya tusha yougan wenjian [Releated Documents on the Guomindang's violent treatment of peasants in Ziyang County, Sichuan Province]"Feb 1939, ZHMGSDAZLHB, zhengzhi, no. 5 (1997): 164

Infrastructural Mechanisms	Nationalist Policy (1939-1943)	Overall Assessment of State-Building
Extraction	**Primary Sources of Financing**: Land Taxes, Value-Added Taxes, Forced Borrowing, Foreign Loans **GMD Monopolies:** Rural Heavy Industry	Low levels of extraction from urban commercial exchanges. Moderate levels of extraction from land taxes and rural commercial exchanges
Coercing Local Rivals	**Targets of Coercion:** (Rural) Small Landholders	High levels of rural impressment and conscription
Cultivating Dependence	**Targets of Co-optation**: Provincial Militarists, Rural Administrators, Village Co-ops	Provincial Militarists, Rural Administrators, and Village Co-ops highly dependent on GMD subsidies Provincial Militarists highly dependent on GMD-produced armaments

Mechanisms of State-building (1939-1943)

Table 2.5

Mobilizing Rural Supply Chains: The Battles of Changsha and the Pivot to Maneuver Warfare

In September of 1939, the Japanese made a drive towards the city of Changsha in Hunan Province. Having reaped the horrors of engaging the Japanese in head-on engagements during the Shanghai campaigns, Chinese commanders made several adjustments to their wartime strategies in preparation of what would ultimately be the first of four Japanese campaigns to take Changsha. Spurred on by the resolutions of the Nanyue conference, a new network of granaries and depots were constructed that would allow for the faster transit of supplies to frontline units.[102] Supported by teams of oxen, coolie labor, and the occasional truck appropriated by the Ministry of Economic Affairs for the purpose of in-kind taxation, the hastily cobbled together

[102] Ch'i (1982): 53

supply apparatus that arose from the post-Shanghai reforms would serve a crucial purpose in shipping and building up food reserves for future Chinese counter-attacks.[103]

Additionally, reforms to the logistical system were accompanied by a relaxation of Chiang's earlier proposals calling for generals to make do-or-die stands at cities and strongpoints. In a telegram to General Xue Yue in April of 1939, Chiang advised his commander to allow Japanese forces to first "enter Changsha and then [have Chinese forces] counter-attack with a mighty offensive before they [the Japanese] have consolidated their positions."[104] General Chen Cheng summarized the operational adjustments to mobile warfare in more general terms:

> Henceforth the emphasis of our war efforts is not predicated on the gain or loss of cities, but on whether we can seize the initiative and conduct mobile warfare throughout the entire country… Under the general principle of mobile warfare, our army must not only engage in frontal and flanking attacks, but also aggressively operate behind enemy lines. Such a strategy will make it impossible for the enemy to cover all points, put the pressure on it both in the front and in the rear, and render it incapable of doing anything right.[105]

In a series of three successive battles over Changsha ranging from 1939-1941, Nationalist forces would adopt the pattern of retreating in the face of Japanese offensives while flanking units encircled enemy spearheads to destroy them piecemeal. To what extent were these military successes attributable to improvements in the Guomindang's infrastructural capacity and its containment of political-military discord with militarist generals?

When viewed in comparison to the logistical fiascoes of 1937, the distribution of government staff among rural society provided the Guomindang with relatively more control over coordinating the procurement and delivery of food and materiel to marching armies. The cadres of government tax collectors, military logisticians, and Guomindang monitors, however,

[103] Hoover Archives, "Letter to General Stilwell from Robert McClure, Dec. 9, 1941" Stilwell Papers, Box 34: 21,
[104] SHAC, "Order by Generalissimo Chiang to Xue Yue about Abandoning Changsha and then Counter-attacking the Enemy, April 15, 1939" *Zhonghua minguo zhongyao shiliao*, vol. II: 2, p. 433
[105] Cited in: Ch'i, *Nationalist China at War* (1982): 54-55

could not have successfully accomplished their goals without the assistance of droves of co-opted local administrators and landed gentry who were eager to attach themselves to the nodes of logistical routes and extract a toll of transit. These co-opted cohorts of baozhang officials, influential landowners, local elites, and a panoply of county-level "stationary bandits," in turn, could not have accomplished their task of moving supplies to armies in transit without the conscripted labor of thousands of Chinese peasants. The shipment of bales of harvested crops or crates of ammunition to government warehouses and beyond, therefore, relied on a supply chain riven with interstices where the movement of goods was motivated not by professional staff-work or bureaucratic standard operating procedures, but rather by a local agent's ability to bluff, coerce, or finagle a reluctant laborer into moving a set of deliveries through to the next military granary or warehouse (sans an "appropriate" self-sponsored cut of the delivered goods). When compared to the process through which provincial militarists collected land or property taxes in kind (few direct taxes were collected in paper currency given the unreliable liquidity of cash assets), modes of military supply were practically indistinguishable in their administrative infrastructure.[106]

To illustrate a "typical" NRA supply chain, many procurements began with a local official (almost always a baozhang overseer or a well-connected individual with residential knowledge) cobbling together a group of armed men and visiting nearby homesteads to collect a portion of harvested crops.[107] The armed contingent that accompanied the collector could at times be a handful of troops provided by the province's militarist overseer, a band of government soldiers garrisoned in the area to protect zones of supply, or simply hired muscle (who had

[106] USSDCDF, "National Food Administration's Attempt at Price Control and Official Reaction," Dec 12, 1940, Box 5869: 893.50/215

[107] Hoover Archives, "China's Wartime Progress by Dr. H.H. Kung, President of the Executive Yuan and concurrently Minister of Finance, June 3, 1939" Nym Wales Papers, 16:4, News Clippings 1937-1945

deserted from military service). In the most efficiently executed scenario, a sympathetic village head would bargain with military collectors to negotiate a regular communal contribution that would cover the requested payment of an entire parish. Provided that the collection officers brought along their own transportation – sometimes a fleet of diesel trucks provided by the Ministry of Interior and at other times a train of draft animals appropriated from previously visited townships – military procurement was simply a matter of tasking households to bring a portion of their stockpiled cereals to a central location and into the waiting hands of collection officers who would depart once the agreed upon amount had been amassed.[108]

In cases where a village leader voluntarily or involuntarily abjured his duties to collectively bargain and/or collectors did not bring along their own modes of transportation, hapless farmers and peasants who wound up in the crosshairs would be tasked with personally transporting their contributions to the nearest collection station under armed guard.[109] Since using chattel to facilitate the laborious trek carried the risk of arbitrary expropriation, most individuals opted to carry bundles of crops on their backs or used rickety carts that were hopefully too substandard to warrant a second glance from a greedy eye, although usually soldiers would appropriate mules and other pack animals regardless.[110] These trains of "self-employed" laborers in turn trudged across poorly maintained rural roads – sometimes passing through toll booths or municipal depots manned by a local official of vague provenance who took a portion of the transported goods – before ultimately arriving at a military distribution

[108] USSDCDF, "Conditions in Honan and Shensi Provinces: Transmission of Memorandum of Conversation with Mr. Graham Peck," Mar 12, 1942, Box 5845: 893.00 P.R./207 PS/ET
[109] USSDCDF, "China Information Service, Issue 37: New China Weekly News Letter, No. 22, Dec 8. 1939," Jan 31, 1940, Box 5838, 893.00/14511: 2
[110] USSDCDF, "Conditions in Honan and Shensi: Report by Graham Peck – Report on the First War Area," Apr 10, 1942, Box 5845: 893.00 PR/208 PS/VC

center.[111] Upon arrival, the almost certainly exhausted drudge would wait at the mercy of a government-appointed logistics officer and his staff as the received amount was measured and recorded. In exchange for his military contributions, an individual could at best expect to receive a paper receipt denoting the monetary value of the contribution and promising a repayment in government currency at some scheduled point in the future.[112] These promissory notes were, for all practical purposes, essentially worthless once one factored in the rampant inflation resulting from the Guomindang's efforts to finance the war through printing money.

Individuals who walked away from a collection center with a paper note of no monetary value were relatively more fortunate than those who suffered impressment into extended military service by logistical officers looking for extra hands to ferry supplies.[113] Failing to account for "spoilage" or being accused of criminally under-delivering could land a laborer into indefinitely accompanying a convoy of vehicles and draft animals tasked with distributing foodstuffs from collection points to forward granaries.[114] Only upon delivery to forward repositories could a conscripted person expect to be relieved of his burden as local soldiers took it upon themselves to ferry consumables to their respective units. Laborers who managed the journey were then left with the task of finding their own way back home or unceremoniously conscripted into permanent service.

From the perspective of foreign observers who witnessed this transit of supplies, the predatory and wholly un-standardized logistical infrastructure that buttressed Chinese military

[111] USSDCDF, "News Release, The China Information Committee: Ten National Lines for Stage Transportation," Oct 21, 1940, Box 5838, 893.00/1**89 1/2[doc damaged]: 697
[112] USSDCDF, "Conditions in Honan and Shensi: Report by Graham Peck – Report on the First War Area," Apr 10, 1942, Box 5845: 893.00 PR/208 PS/VC
[113] White & Jacoby, *Thunder Out of China* (1946): 63-64
[114] USSDCDF, "Reorganization of Social Department of the Kuomintang as the Ministry of Social Affairs of the National Government" Sept 25, 1941, Box 5840, 893.00/14804

operations was hopelessly antiquated and in desperate need of an administrative overhaul. In certain respects, ongoing critiques of Chinese logistics were on point.[115] The quality of available physical infrastructure remained on average relatively poor and the 1937 tendency to militarily appropriate pre-existing buildings as ad-hoc holding facilities for billeting troops and supplies continued apace.[116] The density of highways and railroads remained high near urban centers while diffusing into thin arteries the further one travelled into the rural expanse of unoccupied China's countryside. Provincial roads traversed by logistical trains were typically poorly maintained and unsuitable for mechanized travel, requiring goods and materiel to be transmitted by foot or pack animal.

Yet in other ways, Nationalist logistical services did witness tangible improvements. For one, the sheer scale of forced labor mobilization to facilitate procurement and delivery services was drastically larger than what had been on offer from 1937-1939. The fact that foreign military observers noted the endemic character of civilian impressment as a flaw to be fixed is indicative of the degree to which Chinese logistics had massively exploited the backbreaking labor of its peasantry.[117] This undoubtedly came at an increasingly unacceptable cost to China's rural populace, who continued to be squeezed by the exactions of local gentry, provincial militarist overlords, and the Guomindang itself. Yet as primeval and inhumane as Nationalist procurement and supply services may have appeared from the perspective of an outsider, there was also an underappreciated dependability behind the use of foot and draft-based supply lines. Manual transportation was – while undoubtedly less efficient than its mechanized counterpart – far more

[115] USSDCDF, "Observations of American Correspondent on Extended Trip Through War Areas, Nov 17, 1941" Box 5845, 893.00 P.R./206
[116] USSDCDF, "Chinese Military Expropriation Law and Regulations Governing the Enforcement Thereof" Apr 13, 1943, Box 5860, 893.20/784
[117] USSDCDF, "Observations of American Correspondent on Extended Trip Through War Areas, Nov 17, 1941" Box 5845, 893.00 P.R./206

durable as a mode of supply than the vehicle-based convoys that fed the armies of more industrialized nations. Trucks required near constant maintenance, well-maintained roads of sufficient width to incorporate two-way travel, and regular stops at pre-situated fueling stations along a set itinerary – infrastructure which the Nationalists did not have in spades outside of their most secure rear areas and which were also vulnerable to Japanese bombing runs. The average human laborer by comparison could travel across nearly any terrain, was more easily replaceable, and required far less maintenance than a typical vehicle. Any sustenance that a laborer was provided – typically amounting to little more than meager rations and a place to sleep – could in turn be scrounged or appropriated from the surrounding countryside.

If the success of maneuver warfare depended on the continued and reliable circulation of supplies throughout the countryside to frontline units, then the Guomindang's primitive system of logistics achieved those goals in a more pragmatic fashion than the system of trucks and mechanized arrivages envisioned by Chiang's foreign military advisors. The arteries of Nationalist China's supply lines were adaptable in ways that Japanese logistical trains – which were dependent on pre-existing roads and rail lines – were not. In areas where the Japanese broke through Chinese lines (as was often the case) and ravaged the countryside, supply trails could be easily dismantled and re-diverted through more secure locations. When Japanese forces withdrew from an area, Chinese logistical trains could be re-established in an unoccupied area without investing heavily in rebuilding the region's physical infrastructure to facilitate mechanized transport. It is important to note, however, that the malleability of Chinese supply was heavily dependent on the fact that much of the fighting took place within or near the most agriculturally productive frontline provinces such as Hunan and Henan. If logistics could be quickly re-established in a war zone, then it was only because there were copious laborers to be

conscripted and crops to be requisitioned. A dedicated system of highways and railroads might have been fixed in its itinerary, but at least it was capable of facilitating long-distance overland transportation through regions that were barren of appropriable goods.

At the same time, low political-military discord resulted in a noticeable improvement to Nationalist military operations. Specifically, the policy of formally integrating the command staff of central and militarist forces became an established practice in the war fronts of the 5th and 9th War Zones (commanded by Li Zongren – a Guangxi militarist – and Chen Cheng – a GMD loyalist – respectively), encompassing the frontline provinces of Hunan, Henan, and Hubei.[118] Tellingly, the militarist generals who were amenable to coordinating and communicating with central army command were those who had most vocally promoted the United Front and actively committed their forces during the early phases of the War, such as Li Zongren. Yan Xishan, whose abysmal performance in 1937 was salvaged by his abject contrition to Chiang Kai-shek post-Shanghai and a politically calculated execution of one of his own subordinates (no doubt spurred by Han Fuju's fatal ignominy and the presence of Japanese divisions bearing down on his home province), benefited the most from the Guomindang's oversight by taking command of resistance efforts in the 2nd War Zone. In contrast to his earlier tepid defense of Shanxi, Yan took advantage of his operational autonomy to adopt a policy of guerrilla warfare in coordination with Communist forces.[119] Other militarists, such as Long Yun, continued to balance between lofty declarations of loyalty to the United Front while engaging in limited engagements to showcase their commitments to national resistance.

[118] Te-kong Tong & Li Tsung-jen, *The Memoirs of Li Tsung-jen* (1979): 360-365

[119] Chun Chunpu, "Yan Xishan yu di er zhan qu de dong ji gongshi [Yan Xishan and the second offensive season]" in *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu*, issue 2, no. 12 (1994): 89-97

Ultimately, a combination of enhanced military coordination and a more dependable system of supply helped anchor the Nationalists' mobile defense during the first battle of Changsha. Overseeing military operations in the 9th War Zone was General Chen Cheng, a Chiang loyalist and an active critic of the poor logistical and strategic coordination behind the Shanghai campaign. Intent on avoiding a similar fiasco, Chen's own wartime preparations entailed a mass recruitment drive and the mobilization of Hunan province's available manpower to maintain supply lines and repair roads when necessary.[120] Putting into practice his goal to "eliminate the concept of private interests, to convert all armies into genuine national armies, and to thoroughly eliminate the erroneous notion of self-preservation and self-protection," Chen also adopted the lessons learned from the cooperation between Li Zongren and Tang Enbo at Taierzhuang by establishing communication channels between the central and provincial armies under his command.[121] Such preparations would be crucial as the Nationalist war plan required over 200,000 provincial and central army soldiers to coordinate a closely timed pincer operation against an attacking Japanese force of 100,000 men.

The resulting battle was a set-piece demonstration of how Chinese troops, when well-supplied and led through integrated staff-work, could effectively prosecute a strategy of mobile defense. The Japanese 11th Army under the command of General Yasuji Okamura frontally assaulted Chinese defenses, easily brushing aside Nationalist positions as was typical of most early engagements. Yet unlike in the Shanghai campaign when a single turned flank usually led to the collapse of an entire Chinese front line, Nationalist forces gradually retreated to pre-

[120] "Di jiu zhanqu guanyu di yi ci Changsha huizhan zhan qiandiwo xingshi gaiyao ji zhanchang zhuangtai de baogao [Report on the enemy's situation and the battlefield preparations in the ninth war zone before the first battle of Changsha]" Oct 11, 1939, KRZZZMZC, vol. 2: 1076-1079; Xiao Yiping, "Ji zhong kangri genjudi de dui di douzheng [The fight against the enemy in the anti-Japanese base area]" in *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu*, issue 2, no. 12 (1994): 121-133

[121] Chi, *Nationalist China at War* (1982): 87

established defense works. As Japanese forces neared Changsha and proceeded to surround the city, Nationalist divisions under the command of General Xue Yue began their own encirclement of the enemy's over-extended spearhead.[122] Realizing that their limited supply lines were in danger of being cut off, Japanese commanders quickly beat a hasty retreat with the Chinese in pursuit.

While the successful defense of Changsha was a highlight of the Nationalist war effort, it was also fought under relatively ideal circumstances. Chen Cheng himself was a Baoding graduate whereas many of the Nationalist commanders who prosecuted the most successful battlefield operations at Changsha, such as Xue Yue and Guan Linzheng, were Whampoa graduates and therefore among some of Chiang's most competent officers. Additionally, many of the troops that fought at Changsha were central government soldiers, who typically performed better than the provincial troops that fought in a more subsidiary role. Japanese forces in turn also admittedly overplayed their hand by relying on a highly aggressive offensive that quickly over-extended itself, rendering Japanese divisions vulnerable to Nationalist encirclement. Nonetheless, there were telltale signs that the outcome at Changsha was not driven solely by a unique confluence of ideal generalship, quality troops, and Japanese over-aggression. Smaller-scale engagements had shown that even under-equipped provincial armies could prosecute their own mobile counter-offensives.[123] Throughout the most contested war zones, Nationalist commanders were replicating a pattern of drawing in attacking Japanese forces and surrounding the enemy as they advanced, although the majority of these encirclements were of a significantly

[122] "Xueyue zhi jiangjieshi midian [Secret Telegram from Xue Yue to Chiang Kai-shek]" Oct 24, 1939, KRZZZMZC, vol. 2: 1080-1082; USSDCDF, "Political Report for October 1939," Nov 18, 1939 Box 7142, 893.00 P.R./163: 9-10
[123] USSDCDF, "Significant Military, Political, and Economic Developments During 1939" Feb 17, 1940, Box 5838, 893.00/14532; "Di jiu zhanqu guanyu zhan qian zuigao tongshuai bu zhi zuozhan zhidao gaiyao [Summary of the supreme command's operational coordination of the 9th war zone]" Oct 1939, KRZZZMZC, vol. 2: 1079-1080

smaller scale than the one demonstrated at Changsha.[124] Although the Japanese usually were able to fight their way out of most Chinese encirclements, there was nonetheless optimism among Nationalist high command that the tide was gradually turning in China's favor.

The Apogee of Maneuver Warfare: The 1939-1940 Winter Offensives

Spurred on by the success of a maneuver strategy during the first battle of Changsha, the Nationalists in December of 1939 mobilized around 80 divisions amounting to roughly over 500,000 men in an ambitious Winter Offensive that would be tasked with recapturing a number of occupied provinces. During the second Nanyue Military Conference in October of 1939, Chiang Kai-shek outlined his hopes for retaking the initiative from the Japanese. "Although our arms and equipment are not enough to help us pursue a complete large-scale counter-offensive," Chiang admitted, "like at Changsha, we must examine ways to avoid [enemy] strongpoints while attacking weak points and take advantage of the enemy's mistakes in order to attack them from all sides."[125] The Supreme Military Affairs Commission would parrot Chiang's warnings on December 18th by cautioning Chinese generals to avoid fixed enemy positions.[126]

There were some tangible concerns, however, over whether the NRA could conceivably make the shift from a mobile defense to a mobile offense. Although the Nationalists' success at parrying Japanese attacks had boosted morale, Chinese mobile counter-offensives had normally been conducted in regions where food and labor could be readily mobilized by the coercive arms of the state. Taking the fight to the Japanese in regions where the Nationalists' administrative infrastructure would not be on hand to cobble together supply lines was potentially too ambitious for the NRA's limited logistical capabilities. Additionally, the low political-military discord

[124] White & Jacoby, *Thunder Out of China* (1946): 62
[125] Chiang Kai-shek, "Generalissimo Chiang's Speech at the Second Nanyue Military Conference," *Zhonghua minguo zhongyao shiliao*, vol. II: 1, pp. 193-194
[126] Ch'i, *Nationalist China at War* (1982): 58

following the failed Shanghai counter-offensives had been structurally sustained through the balkanized nature of the Chinese war effort, in which conflicting central and militarist commanders each had relative free reign to conduct military operations within their own war zone. As a result, the Guomindang only felt comfortable asserting its military orders through official chains of command in rear areas – such as Sichuan – where central government armies vastly outnumbered provincial forces, but were decidedly more circumspect when cajoling compliance in frontline regions – such as Hunan, Henan, and Hubei – where government army units were normally outnumbered by provincial armies.[127] To execute a large-scale coordinated mobile operation against the Japanese would require the timely cooperation of multiple war zones commanded by rivalrous personalities who, while ostensibly loyal to Chiang, detested one another. Minimizing political-military discord among competing factions remained manageable so long as the Guomindang was strategic in its internal balancing, but promoting the active cooperation needed for successful offensive mobile operations was a far more difficult task.

At the same time, there were a number of factors that seemed to support Chiang's calls for a renewed military offensive. After several years of impressive territorial gains, Japanese armies were no longer making inroads against Chinese positions. Where the Japanese still found some limited military success, over-stretched supply lines and Chinese threats to turn the flanks of forward Japanese units usually negated any such gains. By 1939, the bulk of Japanese forces had become mired in northern China while a separate contingent was deployed in a holding action to the south. Given these signs of stasis in the movements of the war front, Chiang Kai-shek predicted that the Japanese had reached the limits of their offensive capacity.[128] Spread out

[127] Ibid: 59-60

[128] SHAC, "Jiang weiyuan zhang dui di er ci nanyue junshi huiyi xunci [Chairman Jiang's speech at the second Nanyue military conference]," ZHMGZYSLCB vol. 2 (1981): 193

and staving off multiple threats from the 1st, 2nd, 5th, and 9th War Zones, over-extended Japanese armies were, in Chiang's mind, thus highly vulnerable to a concentrated Chinese counteroffensive.

Military stalemate, while a positive sign that the Japanese were increasingly exhausted, had also begun resuscitating a number of political problems for the long-term sustainability of the United Front. As Japanese attacks became increasingly less ambitious, the festering distrust between government and militarist generals that had been put on hold during the worst years of the Nationalist retreat threatened to re-surface. Growing perceptions that the worst of the Japanese threat was gradually subsiding risked a return to the "normalcy" of pre-war Republican politics in which competing generals and militarists used their troop deployments to contest each other's territorial claims.[129] Taking the fight to the Japanese, Chiang hoped, would – if not inculcate a culture of political-military cooperation – at the very least contain the political-military discord that had helped doom early Nationalist resistance efforts.[130]

Finally, a successful military offensive could be used to convince foreign powers that military aid to China would not be a wasted investment.[131] Although defensive victories at Taierzhuang and Changsha had demonstrated stiffening resolve among Chinese forces, few Nationalist victories had actually culminated in territorial reversals against the Japanese. Without a tangible expansion of Free China's territory, the Guomindang would be forced to finance and supply its war effort from a shrinking and increasingly contested economic base. Tensions with Long Yun over who would manage and control the crucial supply lines linking China to the

[129] USSDCDF, "Political and Economic Conditions in West China" May 15, 1940, Box 5838, 893.00/14548
[130] SHAC, "Jiang weiyuan zhang dui di er ci nanyue junshi huiyi xunci [Chairman Jiang's speech at the second Nanyue military conference]," ZHMGZYSLCB vol. 2 (1981): 193-194
[131] Ibid.: 191, 195

outside world threatened to foment anti-government violence, which was averted by Chiang's personal intervention plus a substantial financial sinecure to the Yunnan militarist.[132] The Guomindang could only continue playing the role of fiscal mediator, however, if it could expand its sources of external financing. Soviet aid had partially substituted for the loss of German military assistance, but Stalin's reluctance to further antagonize Japan on his eastern border while Hitler rampaged in Western Europe limited the degree to which Soviet material and financial relief were forthcoming. The United States provided another potential source of military aid, but American neutrality remained a constraining force. To convince either the Soviet Union or the United States to step up their military assistance would require the Chinese to achieve more than a few defensive victories against the Japanese.

The resulting Winter Offensives of 1939-1940 were at once the highlight of Nationalist mobile operations while at the same time a telling expose on the limits of the Nationalists' military revitalization. Nationalist war plans called for a concerted attack throughout North China with Chen Cheng's 9th War Zone, Li Zongren's 5th War Zone, and Yan Xishan's 2nd War Zone spearheading the initial assault.[133] The remnants of Chiang's last German-trained mechanized division would be held in reserve to exploit openings or reinforce gaps wherever necessary. Of the armies stationed in the three primary war zones, the highest hopes fell onto Chen Cheng's troops, which were disproportionately composed of central government armies commanded by Whampoa and Baoding officers. High expectations also fell on Li Zongren's Guangxi regulars, which had been reinforced by a substantial number of government divisions. The lowest expectations for military gains fell on Yan Xishan's Shanxi regulars. At best, Yan's

[132] Lloyd Eastman, "Regional Politics and the Central Government: Yunnan and Chungking" in ed. Paul K.T. Sih, *Nationalist China During the Sino Japanese War* (1977): 337-339
[133] Stephen MacKinnon, "The Defense of the Central Yangtze" in *The Battle for China* (2011): 202-204

forces would be able to coordinate with Communist guerrillas to divert Japanese reserves into the mountainous regions of Shanxi province while Chen and Li's armies swept aside Japanese resistance in the Yangtze River Valley.

Before the Winter Offensive could even begin, the Japanese pre-empted the Chinese by launching a surprise November assault into Guangxi province and catching the 4th War Zone's commander, Zhang Fakui, off-guard. With Li Zongren's Guangxi regulars deployed up north in preparation for the Winter Offensive, Chiang in turn was forced to funnel his mobile reserves south to prevent the Japanese from cutting off China's access to its overland supply routes in British-controlled Burma.[134] Using the rugged terrain of Guangxi to their advantage, Zhang Fakui's local forces combined with Chiang's reinforcements commanded by Bai Chongxi and Du Yuming managed to stem the Japanese advance at the Battle of Kunlun Pass but were unable to recapture the now-occupied provincial capital of Nanning.[135] Although Japanese casualties were high, the deployment of Chiang's only mechanized division into a holding action to the south deprived Nationalist commanders up north of a powerful offensive unit.

A month later in December of 1939, Chinese forces in the 9th and 5th War Zones launched a concerted attack against the Japanese 11th Army. Using infantry infiltration tactics under the cover of darkness, Nationalist troops permeated Japanese frontal positions and proceeded to sabotage communication lines and railways. In the heady early days of the Winter Offensive, poorly entrenched Japanese units were sent reeling as Chinese armies surrounded and annihilated enemy positions using small arms fire and hand grenades. General Okamura, in recounting the

[134] SHAC, "Liu Fei zhi Xu Yongchang deng qian cheng [Liu Fei to Xu Yongchang and others]" Nov 23, 1939, KRZZZMZC vol. 2: 916

[135] SHAC, "Bai Chongxi zhi Jiang Jieshi He Yingqin midian [Secret Telegram from Bai Chongxi to Chiang Kaishek and He Yingqin]" Dec 13, 1939, KRZZZMZC vol. 2: 927

panic spurred by the initial Nationalist onslaught, remarked that "we had never seen the Chinese army undertake such a large-scale and determined attack."[136]

Operational coordination on the Nationalist fronts was haphazard, ranging from exemplary to deplorable depending on the War Zone. As expected, Chen Cheng's units had the best performance, quickly advancing into occupied parts of Hubei and Hunan province.[137] Noticeably less impressive was Yan Xishan's perfunctory efforts to expand his zone of control from Shanxi province. Unbeknownst to the Guomindang, Yan, who was increasingly concerned by the Communists suffusing his home province with guerrilla fighters, negotiated an arrangement with the Japanese to cease hostilities in exchange for Yan turning on his Communist allies. As a result, the Shanxi militarist spent the early stages of the Winter Offensive targeting Communist guerrillas rather than supporting Chen Cheng and Li Zongren.[138] Equally disappointing was the performance of General Gu Zhutong's supporting 3rd War Zone which, despite marshaling fourteen divisions and an artillery contingent against a single over-stretched Japanese division, failed to accomplish its relatively limited goal of severing one of the 11th Army's supply routes along the Yangtze River. After only three days of fighting, poorly coordinated Nationalist armies tepidly withdrew, prompting a severe rebuke from Chiang, who had pinned high hopes on Gu's leadership given his background as a Baoding veteran.[139]

Ultimately, like the Ardennes Counteroffensive in Western Europe that would follow five years later, the 1939-1940 Winter Offensive – despite inflicting heavier than usual casualties on the Japanese – failed to achieve any of its long-term strategic goals; Japanese military operations

[136] Cited in: Hans Van de Ven, *China at War: Triumph and Tragedy in the Emergence of the New China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018): 128
[137] Ch'i, *Nationalist China at War* (1982): 58
[138] Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China* (2003): 241
[139] SHAC, "Jiang weiyuan zhang dui liuzhou junshi huiyi xunci [Chairman Jiang's speech at the Liuzhou military conference]," ZHMGZYSLCB vol. 2 (1981): 248

were not fatally disrupted while the more limited goal of re-gaining portions of lost territory was achieved only in an ephemeral sense.[140] Although operational mobility was moderately high so long as Chinese units initiated their mobile offensives from or near home territory, the Guomindang's strategy of enmeshing logistical services with state-based agencies designed for domestic resource mobilization meant that military units were devoid of institutionalized supply services once they attacked into occupied regions where Nationalist administration was nonexistent.[141] Ad hoc arrangements were made by local commander to mobilize civilians as footmen for shuttling supplies to armies on the march, although many communities had since wisely vacated from the most violent war zones. In a desperate pinch, soldiers themselves became suppliers for their own units, carrying plundered equipment on their backs and foraging whenever possible.[142] As units advanced deeper into enemy territory, however, the need to disperse more manpower into the ravaged countryside for the purpose of keeping an army fed and resupplied gradually withered away an army's ability to act offensively, much less react quickly to enemy movements.[143]

As the Winter Offensive faded from hunger and equipment shortages, Chen Cheng and Li Zongren gradually withdrew their forces. Lacking the second wind of Chiang's now Guangxi-based mechanized divisions, the increasingly emaciated northern armies were unable to exploit many of the stunning breakthroughs that had characterized their initial military success.[144] By mid-February, Japanese forces reconsolidated and counter-attacked Chinese divisions, ultimately driving back Nationalist forces to their original positions. Ironically, Chiang's hope that the

[140] USSDCDF, "Political Report for December 1939," Jan 23, 1940, Box 5845: 893.00 P.R./165: 9-10
[141] SHAC, "Jiang weiyuan zhang dui liuzhou junshi huiyi xunci [Chairman Jiang's speech at the Liuzhou military conference]," ZHMGZYSLCB vol. 2 (1981): 246-248
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ch'i, *Nationalist China at War* (1982): 58-60; Van de Ven (2003): 243
[144] SHAC, "Telegram from Li Zongren to Chiang Kai-shek," May 20, 1940, KRZZZMZC vol. 2: 1001

Winter Offensives might disrupt or delay future enemy attacks had instead aggrandized Japanese belligerence. While the Nationalists had successfully convinced the Japanese that the Chinese were more than capable of continuing their resistance, Japanese high command took the lesson of the Winter Offensive as reason to double down on their offensive doctrine.[145] Understandably frustrated by the see-sawing morass that characterized Japanese military operations on the Chinese mainland, General Okamura renewed calls for the politically besieged Konoye Cabinet to divert additional reinforcements for the Imperial Army in an effort to find a decisive military solution to the China quagmire.

To summarize the NRA's overall performance during the Winter Offensives, Nationalist forces demonstrated an impressive capacity to at least partially promote an aggressive variant of maneuver warfare, which up until 1939 had been primarily reactive and defensive in its execution. Such a performance was in sharp contrast to the poorly supplied and poorly coordinated Shanghai counter-offensive, which was conducted with relatively better-trained and better-equipped soldiers (although admittedly against more concentrated Japanese units as well). Yet at the same time, there were telling weaknesses to the Nationalists' military performance that constrained their ability to sustain a truly offensive mobile campaign for very long.

First, while rural-centric extraction had since improved Nationalist supply services, sustaining defensive mobile operations near the Nationalists' economic base was easier than sustaining offensive mobile operations in enemy-occupied territory. To be fair, well-coordinated Nationalist offensives initiated by Li Zongren and Chen Cheng lasted roughly a month before they ultimately collapsed for want of sustenance and reinforcements. Nonetheless, the simple reality remained that – as impressive as the Winter Offensives may have initially been – the

[145] USSDCDF, "Political Report for May 1940" June 12, 1940, Box 5845: 893.00 P.R./170

long-term viability of maneuver warfare was dependent on fighting in regions where the Guomindang's infrastructural power was at its highest and where food and labor could be mobilized from the surrounding areas.

A second limitation was the Guomindang's inability to engender political-military cooperation by forcing the issue through a concerted military offensive. While rival Nationalist generals and provincial militarists were willing to put aside their differences and coordinate military operations *in the face of Japanese attacks*, there was less incentive to cooperate when Chinese armies were pushed to go on the offensive against defending Japanese forces. Few Nationalist units were willing to serve the role of anvil to a flanking force's hammer attack without the protection of defensive emplacements, and provincial armies were particularly reluctant to carry on attacks outside of their home province. Yan Xishan's parochial decision to actively conspire with the Japanese was the most egregious example of provincial considerations undermining operational coordination, although Gu Zhutong's inability to convince the provincial forces under his command to mount a serious challenge against numerically weaker Japanese forces was equally galling.

Ultimately, the Nationalists were most competent when committed to a strategy of mobile defense. Allowing the Japanese to first attack into a province had the advantage of spurring local provincial armies to cooperate with central government forces while also enabling Nationalist forces to fight with the logistical support of regional extractive institutions. Once Chinese armies tried to go on the offensive and extend their mobile operations outside of their war zones, supply problems and poor military coordination re-emerged to undermine any long-term strategic gains. From the end of the Winter Offensives up until the end of the Sino-Japanese War (and World War II at large), the Nationalists therefore decided to cleave to a strategy that

they knew best: maneuver warfare relegated to state-held territory. Yet starting in 1941, foreign observers would begin noticing an increasing laggardness in the NRA's military operations, even in regions where the Guomindang had deployed its best central forces.[146] To some cynical-minded American officials observing this trend, the Nationalists were playing a Machiavellian game of free-riding off the United States' entry into WWII in the hopes of reaping the hard-fought political rewards of Japanese surrender in the Pacific.[147] This unsympathetic portrayal, while influential among early post-war accounts of the Chinese theatre, overestimates the degree to which Chiang Kai-shek could dictate China's military policy in the latter years of the Sino-Japanese War. Instead, the stagnation of China's operational strategy into positional warfare was less the result of Guomindang realpolitik and more the result of two different phenomena. The first was the rapid breakdown in the political-military alliance between the central government and provincial militarists in 1941, the second was the Nationalists' 1942 re-orientation towards urban-centric extraction in an effort to capitalize on American Lend-Lease aid.

1941-1945: The Rise of Political-Military Discord and the U.S.-Sponsored Shift to Urban-Centric Extraction

Japanese backlash to the Winter Offensive culminated in a second attempt to retake Changsha in September of 1941, this time with a larger force supported by newly introduced Zero-fighter planes, which had demonstrated their fearsome reputation over the last month by shooting down the Nationalists' outdated air force over Chongqing without a single downed Japanese pilot. Whereas the first battle of Changsha had seen the Nationalist defenders enjoying a two-to-one numerical advantage, by 1941 Chinese defenders under the command of Xue Yue

[146] USSDCDF, "Memo to Secretary of State: The Stilwell Mission," Mar 10, 1943, Box 5860: 893.20/781
[147] USSDCDF, "Reported Views of General Chiang Kai-shek; His Responsibility for Lack of Full Chinese Cooperation in the War" March 23, 1944, Box 5843: 893.00/15338; See: White, *Thunder Out of China* (1946); Joseph Stilwell, *The Stilwell Papers* (1991)

had been whittled down to a 1:1 numerical parity with their Japanese attackers. In the resulting battle, both sides furiously attempted to outflank and envelop the other, with Japanese troops finally reaching the city after several days of heavy fighting.[148] Urban combat within the heavily bombarded streets of Changsha, however, slowed the offensive to a halt and a Nationalist counter-push in neighboring Hubei province threatened to encircle the Japanese. After a month of fighting, Japanese forces once again withdrew from combat.[149]

While the second successful defense of Changsha demonstrated that the NRA was still capable of executing mobile counter-offensives with a certain degree of verve, the fighting in 1941 concealed a number of crucial political-military developments that would rapidly erode the Guomindang's heretofore grudging but tame alliance with regional militarists. The first warning sign occurred in December of 1940 when Chiang Kai-shek, increasingly fearful of growing Communist military influence in central China, demanded that "insubordinate" Communist forces abandon their deployments in Anhui province, to be replaced by more loyal Nationalist troops. This tension ultimately culminated in the infamous New Fourth Army Incident of January 1941when Nationalist troops attacked and annihilated the Communist-led New Fourth Army.[150] While the Guomindang's ire was not ostensibly targeted towards other provincial militarists, the re-emergence of hostilities between "allied" Chinese forces was a signifier that the Guomindang's adherence to the United Front was wearing thin.

[148] SHAC, "Yangsen guanyu di er ci Changsha huizhan zhi jiantao yu suo jian suo wen di jun zhi xin zhanfa de baogao [Yang Sen's report reviewing the second Changsha battle and the enemy's new tactics]" Oct, 1941, KRZZZMZC, vol. 2: 1151-1154

[149] See: SHAC, "Di jiu zhanqu guanyu di er ci Changsha hui zhan qian diwo xingshi gaiyao de baogao [The Ninth War Zone's Summary report on the enemy's deployment and the battlefield situation before the Second Battle of Changsha]" Sept – Oct, 1941, KRZZZMZC, vol. 2: 1127-1130

[150] See: SHAC, "Dui e nan gan bei xinsijun xiji [The Attack on the New Fourth Army in northern Hubei province]" ZHMGSDAZLHB zhengzhi, no. 3 (1997)

The second major development that would undermine the Guomindang's partnership with provincial militarists was the government's decision to begin centralizing all forced collections of in kind land taxes.[151] As renewed Japanese advances led to the loss of food-producing regions, the ballooning of war costs, and an increasingly compressed economic base, the Eighth Plenary Session of the Guomindang's Central Executive Committee in July of 1941 formally announced the handover of the land tax from the provinces to the central government.[152] In two speeches to the Third National Finance Conference, Chiang Kai-shek justified the "the transfer of land grants to the central government" by referring to the importance of "the cooperation of military and political elements in the rear and providing a basis for unifying the country in times of war… [The government] must achieve two goals, one is balancing the state's fiscal revenues and expenditures, and making more equitable the national burden."[153] As was typical of the Guomindang's attempts at balancing overlapping responsibilities among its increasingly redundant bureaucracies, official duties for the logistics of taxation were split between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Food with the former responsible for collections and the latter responsible for distribution and transport.[154]

With the extension of government authority into the realm of direct taxations on land, the Guomindang resolved to simultaneously address the issues of financial inflation and routine starvation among Chinese troops.[155] In kind collections of grains, wheat, and other cereals had

[151] SHAC, "Caizheng bu bian song zhi zhan shi san nian jihua caizheng jinrong bufen [The Ministry of Finance's fiscal department's three-year plan for the war]," Mar 15, 1941, ZHMGSDAZLHB, caizheng jingji, no. 1 (1997): 142-147
[152] Chinese Ministry of Information, *China Handbook, 1937-1945* (1947): 196
[153] SHAC, "Jiang jieshi zai di san ci quanguo caizheng huiyi kai bimu shi shang suozuo xunci [Chiang Kai-shek's speech at the opening and closing ceremonies of the Third National Finance Conference," June 16, 1941, ZHMGSDAZLHB caizheng jingji, no. 1 (1997): 601-602
[154] Chinese Ministry of Information, *China Handbook, 1937-1945* (1947): 197
[155] Young, *China's Wartime Finances*: 25-26; Tsung-Han Shen, "Food Production and Distribution for Civilian and Military Needs in Wartime China, 1937-1945," in ed. Paul K.T. Sih, *Nationalist China During the Sino-Japanese War*, 1937-1945 Exposition Press, 1977): 183-185

the benefit of bolstering the always insufficient food reserves of the military while being relatively unaffected by the near-worthlessness of the government's official *fabi* paper currency.[156] Another rationale for the government's intervention in the collection of land taxes was the curtailment of Russian military aid on April 13, 1941 with the signing of the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact.[157] Deprived of its primary foreign military supplier, the Guomindang lost a crucial advantage in its campaign to manage government-militarist relations. Suddenly, military equipment and foreign cash borrowed from abroad were no longer readily available, thereby diminishing the Guomindang's ability to support local allies and co-opt internal rivals through materiel and financial subsidies. Forced into an autarkic position by the geopolitics of World War II, the Guomindang became increasingly desperate for additional revenues. "Economic difficulties," Chiang noted, "are now 70 percent and the military difficulties 30 percent of the war problem now facing the nation."[158]

The cost of pushing for the government's monopolization of rural taxation was an ulcerous escalation in political-military discord. Practically, there was little that the Guomindang could immediately do to increase its in-kind collections. Government administration in the rural countryside was still dependent on local gentry, baozhang officials, and village leaders to mobilize the manpower necessary for extraction and delivery.[159] However, whereas previously municipal administrators managed the conflicting needs of their government and militarist overseers by extracting taxes for both, the act of doing double duty as central and provincial

[156] Ibid.
[157] Military History Research Department, Academy of Military Sciences, *Zhongguo kangri zhanzheng shi*, vol. 2 (Beijing: People's Liberation Army Press, 1994): 4
[158] USSDCDF, "The Situation in the Far East General Summary" Apr 3, 1941, Box 5840, 893.00/14728
[159] USSDCDF, "Control Held over Szechuan Rice Supply by Landlords and Unlikely Effect the New Land Tax Will Have on Landlords Control" Sept 22, 1941, Box 5872: 893.5018/29

stooge was now officially recognized as illegal and carried the risk of punishment.[160] To enforce its declaration and to redistribute the pressures of military food consumption across unoccupied China's remaining provinces, the Guomindang redeployed a number of its central armies throughout the interior.[161] Regional militarists who chafed at the executive diktats of Chiang Kai-shek correctly deduced that such a reshuffling or army divisions also had an ulterior motive of displacing provincial armies from their home bases and replacing them with central government forces.[162] Chiang himself, being continuously frustrated by what he perceived as the unreliability of provincial armies during the Winter Offensives, further fomented the flames of dissension by limiting central government supplies and subsidies to provincial armies while promoting the merits of self-sufficiency for each war zone.[163] "Food and clothes for officers fighting at the front should be collected based off the principles of self-reliance" Chiang announced at a 1942 military conference in Xi'an, "There is no reason to be hungry or cold so long as soldiers possess the skills to engage in cultivating the land, raising cattle, forestry, irrigation, and weaving."[164]

Militarists also found much to criticize with the Guomindang's policy of throwing provincial armies into the fray while central armies lay in reserve to deliver the counterblow against over-extended Japanese forces. While such a strategy had proven effective in anchoring the Nationalists' policy of mobile warfare, it was now progressively seen by militarist commanders as a cynical ploy used by Chiang to bleed his provincial armies dry while keeping his precious central government divisions intact.

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[160] SHAC, "Jiang weiyuan zhang dui di san ci nanyue junshi huiyi xunci [Chairman Jiang's speech at the third Nanyue military conference]," Oct 20, 1941, ZHMGZYSLCB vol. 2 (1981): 367-380; USSDCDF, "Resume of the Economic and Political Situation in China and Suggestions for Action" Apr 14, 1941, Box 5869: 893.50/245 1/6

[161] USSDCDF, "Establishment of 1942 Quota under Wartime Food Program" July 17, 1942, Box 5872: 893.5018/37 PS/ET

[162] Chi *Nationalist China at War* (1982): 100-103

[163] Chi, *Nationalist China at War* (1982): 99

[164] "Generalissimo Chiang's Opening Remarks at the Xi'an Military Conference" (September 6, 1942) *Zhonghua minguo zhongyao shiliao*, vol. 2, 1: 404-405

As the Guomindang redirected scarce military supplies to central government forces, provincial militarists responded by hoarding supplies of their own and refusing to sally out from their positions to engage the Japanese.[165] In Shanxi province, Yan Xishan's inward re-orientation towards combatting Communist guerrillas – despite coming at a cost to anti-Japanese military operations – proved to be a politically advantageous pivot as it synchronized with Chiang's own anti-Communist sentiments.[166] In Yunnan province, Long Yun's policy of shirking his "official" administrative duties to the Guomindang received a more punitive reaction from the central government, which responded by increasing the number of government soldiers garrisoned in the region.[167] A besieged Long Yun in turn expanded his own provincial retinues while holding his private armies close at hand in the city of Kunming from which the Yunnan militarist oversaw his shrinking fiefdom. These forces alongside the central government divisions sent to watch over them would revert to passively garrisoning their zones of control while warily keeping an eye on steadily advancing Japanese armies in neighboring Guangxi province but doing little to stem the latter.

Although renewed contestation over the land tax increased political-military discord which in turn undermined the coordination of mobile military operations in certain regions, other pockets of military resistance managed to resist that trend. The 9th War Zone, which was the site of repeated clashes over Changsha, remained an area where the NRA continued to adopt a strategy of maneuver warfare. Tellingly, the Guomindang's administrative infrastructure was relatively more developed in this region while many of the government's best central forces were

[165] Chi, *Nationalist China at War* (1982): 104
[166] USSDCDF, "Significant Military, Political and Economic Developments in and with Respect to China During 1940," Jan 29, 1941, Box 5839, 893.00/14662: 19-20
[167] Eastman, "Regional Politics and the Central Government," (1977): 339

also deployed in the same area.[168] These armies would successfully defend Changsha a third time in December of 1941 when General Xue Yue replicated his earlier feat by drawing in advancing Japanese forces and counter-attacking the enemy's flanks. This time, as Japanese divisions attempted a hasty withdrawal, they were beset by ambush parties and fierce mortar fire from nearby Chinese units that had been harassing Japanese supply lines using guerrilla tactics.[169]

More surprising was that the 5th War Zone, which was still garrisoned by Li Zongren and Bai Chongxi's expatriate Guangxi divisions, also performed relatively well when coordinating with government armies in order to execute mobile operations.[170] Li and Bai, despite their concerns with the Guomindang's efforts to target the traditional rent-seeking privileges enjoyed by provincial militarists, avoided following their militarist colleagues down the route of military passivity for two reasons. First, the Japanese pre-Winter Offensive drive into the Guangxi Clique's home province ensured that the mutually dependent relationship between the Guomindang and the Guangxi militarists remained intact.[171] Chiang Kai-shek was determined not to let the Japanese overrun Guangxi, which was the last territorial buffer between the enemy and the overland supply routes in Yunnan – this, ironically, is also what enabled Long Yun to avoid taking any military responsibility for the defense of his own home province since Chiang would have defended Yunnan from Japanese incursions anyways. Conversely, Li Zongren and Bai Chongxi were aware of how dependent the defense of their home province had become on

[168] SHAC, "Guomindang di jiu zhanqu jingwei hui guanyu 1941 nian liubaijiushiyi yuefen cai jin gongzuo baogao [Report of the Guomindang 9th War Zone's Economic and Trade Commission on work conducted from June to November, 1941]," Dec 1941, ZHMGSDAZLHB caizheng jingji, no. 1 (1997): 665

[169] SHAC, "Di jiu zhanqu guanyu di san ci Changsha huizhan qian diwo xingshi gaiyao de baogao [The Ninth War Zone's report on the enemy's deployment and battlefield situation before the Third Battle of Changsha]" Feb 1942, KRZZZMZC, vol. 2: 1165-1167

[170] USSDCDF, "Naval Attaches Report: General Summary of the Political, Economic, and Military Developments in China – May 1 to June 10, 1940" June 10, 1940, Box 5845: 893.00 N.I. REPORTS/247

[171] Yuan Yansha, "Jiang, Guizhi di wu zhanqu jundui zhenggong fangmian de mingzheng'andou [Aspects of Political Infighting Between Chiang and the New Guangxi Clique in the Fifth War Zone]," in Mo Naiqun, ed., *Xin Guixi Jishi,* vol. 30 [A History of the New Guangxi Clique] (Nanning Shi: Guangxi Qu Zheng Xie Wen Shi Ban, 1990): 253-265

central government divisions.[172] Second, Chiang's appointment of an outsider, Zhang Fakui, to oversee the military defense of Guangxi did little to subvert Li and Bai's administrative sway in the region. Through their connections with Huang Xuchu, the Guangxi militarists retained control over local channels of recruitment and taxation. [173] Local rents where therefore not threatened by the Guomindang; rather, the danger of Japanese occupation did more to undermine Li and Bai's rent-seeking behavior than Chiang himself.

To review, the central government's pursuit of monopolizing the rural-based land tax drove a decisive wedge between provincial militarists and the Guomindang. The resulting intensification of political-military discord became a hindrance to Nationalist military operations as regional militarists ceased coordinating with government forces and reverted to passively garrisoning their troops in order to retain their provincial autonomy. Foreign military aid from the Soviet Union, which the Guomindang had strategically distributed among the NRA to cajole compliance and cultivate the dependency of provincial armies through government subsidies, gradually ceased after 1941, thereby removing a crucial tool of government co-optation.

[172] USSDCDF, "Office of Strategic Services Research and Analysis Branch: Kwangsi-Kwangtung Leaders," Feb 26, 1944, Box 5843: 893.00/2-2644

[173] Graham Hutchings, "A Province at War: Guangxi Province During the Sino-Japanese Conflict," *China Quarterly*, 108 (1986): 656

Political-Military Dispute	Nationalist Policy (1941-1945)	Overall Assessment of Political-Military Discord
Rent-Extraction	GMD undermines militarist rent-privileges by subsuming all collections of the land tax	High Discord
Operational Authority	Low Militarist recognition of GMD operational authority GMD challenges Militarist operational autonomy High GMD dependence on Provincial armies Low integration of Central and Provincial army commands	High Discord

Sources of Political-Military Discord (1941-1945)

Table 2.6

The Joy and Curse of Lend Lease: The Pivot to Urban-Centric Extraction

The despondency that accompanied the abatement of Soviet military aid in April was ultimately lifted when the United States declared war on Japan in December of 1941. With the United States' military intervention into WWII, the exhausted Nationalist war machine – which had single-handedly tied down over a million Japanese troops across the span of four arduous years – became the target of expanded shipments of American Lend Lease aid. Such a geopolitical shift would be received as a godsend by the Guomindang, which had dealt with wartime scarcities by appropriating new sources of revenue and resources while struggling to maintain the active military cooperation of provincial agents whose rentier economies were being undermined by the state's growing military consumption.

Alongside growing tensions with provincial militarists, many of the mechanisms through which the Guomindang previously exerted its influence in the rural countryside were also coming under increased strain as want of money and raw materials paralyzed municipal state

organs from administering their duties effectively.[174] The Chinese Industrial Cooperatives was perennially short of cash and less invested in providing loans to village co-ops that could not justify their wartime contributions beyond the provision of consumer goods for rural communities. Those co-operatives that were able to acquire government loans quickly learned that borrowed monies were woefully insufficient to cover the skyrocketing black market prices for necessary raw materials. Burning through cash reserves to pay for the needed materials was a temporary solution for village co-ops to continue operating, but the amount of produced goods was barely enough to repay the CIC for the cost of the initial loan.[175] Rising interest rates, late fees, and growing membership dues further ate into any surplus that might have been produced. By the end of 1942, the CIC was well past the point of facilitating light industrial production in the countryside, becoming instead another predatory state institution. Heavy industry fared somewhat better since government-controlled arsenals and factories received priority for raw material deliveries and financial loans.[176] However, resource scarcity still led to nation-wide declines in industrial output, which were further aggrandized by the subpar quality of Chinese-produced small arms, ammunition, and light artillery.[177]

American military aid represented a potential solution to many of the Guomindang's aforementioned ills. Staffing the administrative organs that would manage and coordinate the delivery of imported supplies opened up new opportunities for rent-seeking, thereby allowing the Guomindang to once again play the role of kingmaker by selectively offering lucrative

[174] USSDCDF, "Memo describing visit to Chinese Industrial Cooperatives in the northwest and discussing difficulties facing the movement," July 18, 1942, Box 5840, 893.00/14878: 5-17
[175] Ibid.: 5-7
[176] Ibid.: 6; SHAC, "Jingji bu gongye si guanyu guoying minying qingzhong gongye banli zhuangkuang baogao [The Ministry of Economic Affairs' report on the status of state-owned and private light and heavy industry]" 1943, [ZHMGSDAZLHB], *caizheng jingji*, no. 6 (1979): 145-151
[177] SHAC, "Jingji bu bian kangzhan liu nianlai woguo gongye jishu zhi jinbu [The Ministry of Economic Affairs' report compiling the progression of China's industrial technology for the past six years]" Oct 1943 [ZHMGSDAZLHB], *caizheng jingji*, no. 6 (1979): 225-245

government positions overseeing aid distribution to local and provincial rivals. The quality of American-made arms and materiel were substantially higher than anything that could be produced in China's limited array of struggling arsenals and village co-ops, and were thus also a more useful instrument for cultivating the loyalties of favored Chinese regiments by equipping them with U.S.-manufactured rifles, uniforms, rations, etc. Finally, the availability of substantially larger financial loans provided a much-needed lifeline of cash that was simultaneously insulated from Chinese inflation while allowing the Guomindang to continue its propensity for addressing administrative roadblocks through co-optation whenever possible.

As 1942 rolled around, the most pressing issue facing the Nationalists was how to expand the central government's administrative and physical infrastructure so as to better accommodate and distribute American aid shipments to the primary war zones. Continuous labor coercion throughout the countryside meant that the Nationalists already had a baseline means of delivering supplies throughout their own territory, but there had been little work done on improving the infrastructure of facilities capable of receiving large volumes of imported supplies. The Japanese invasion of Guangxi province had since cut off Free China's access to its last seaport, therefore eliminating any chance of using transatlantic shipping routes to directly receive foreign supplies, and overland routes linking Burma to Yunnan Province were too narrow to accommodate more than a trickle of supplies. It would be several months before the roads through Burma could be expanded and improved to the point where larger shipments could be trucked across the mountainous border. Supplies could also be flown from Assam, India over the mountainous "Hump" of the Himalayas and into Yunnan, but the flight itself was dangerous to the few American pilots assigned to the task given the lack of reliable meteorological knowledge regarding the mountainous terrain. Additionally, airfields capable of receiving aid

flown across the Himalayas and into Yunnan were practically non-existent in most war zones, with only the wartime capital of Chongqing in Sichuan and the provincial capital of Kunming in Yunnan being equipped with any substantial air facilities.[178]

Given the low likelihood that the Nationalists would be able to recapture a saltwater port from the Japanese, a plan was put into place in which the bulk of impressed labor would be tasked with the construction of airfields and warehouses in Yunnan province – which had been delegated as the primary receiving area of all U.S. shipments. New barracks, hotels, and mess halls would be constructed to accommodate the presence of U.S. service members and military advisors sent to coordinate the distribution of supplies and the training of Chinese troop divisions.[179] The site of these facilities would be concentrated around several city-based nodes interconnected by an expanded network of highways and rail-lines. To ensure that the nexuses of this network fell firmly under the control of the Guomindang, Chiang Kai-shek announced the creation of the China Service of Supply, which was officially responsible for the management of all received Lend-Lease supplies (and conveniently overseen by Chiang's son-in-law).[180]

The Guomindang's renewed interest in the development of Yunnan province as a holding and distribution base for overland and airborne supply shipments once again brought Chiang Kai-shek back into potential conflict with Long Yun. While Chiang preferred to avoid dealing with the Yunnan militarist entirely, Long Yun also controlled the provincial capital of Kunming, which was the region's main transportation hub. All primary highways and railroads in Yunnan were connected to the city. Supplies flown or driven over the Burma-India-Yunnan border would

[178] Hoover Archives, "Report of the China Theater to the Chief of Staff of the Army, 24 Oct 1944 to Feb 1946," Albert Wedemeyer Papers, United Forces China Theater: Mao Tse-tung, 82.22
[179] SHAC, "Kongjun diwulu siling bu yewu baogao shu [Operations Report from the Air Force Fifth Road Command]" Apr 3, 1942, KRZZZMZC vol. 3: 1986
[180] Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China*, 1911-1945 (New York, 1971): 203

have to first be routed through Kunming before they could then be distributed to the other War Zones.[181] Any attempt to circumvent the provincial capital would require using lengthy mountain roads which could barely accommodate the width of one pack animal going in a single direction and were completely impassable to motor vehicles. Unwilling to delay the receipt of aid shipments and fearful that any direct attempt to remove Long Yun would result in the latter sabotaging Kunming's transportation infrastructure, Chiang gingerly accommodated Long, allowing the Yunnan militarist to take part in the infrastructural and economic development of his province while receiving a cut of supply deliveries.[182]

As the United States expanded its military efforts against Japan in the Pacific, direct American military assistance to China first took the form of an American Volunteer Group – better known by its nickname, "The Flying Tigers" – composed of a handful of fighter pilots under the command of Claire Chennault. In Chennault, Chiang found a kindred spirit who seemed to share the Generalissimo's values while promoting a modernist framework for improving the military deficiencies of the NRA. A firm believer in the strategic potential of maintaining air superiority, Chennault indulged Chiang's dreams of creating an elite Chinese Air Force capable of contending with the Japanese air divisions that had regularly bombed Chongqing at their leisure. Long envious of Japan's uncontested supremacy of the skies and enamored with the idea of supplying beleaguered forces from the air irrespective of logistical deficiencies on the ground, Chiang devoted an intensive amount of resources to building up

[181] Hoover Archives, "Report of the China Theater to the Chief of Staff of the Army," Albert Wedemeyer Papers, United Forces China Theater: Mao Tse-tung, 82.22
[182] Lawrence Rosinger, *China's Wartime Politics* (Princeton University Press, 1944): 54-55

airfields near Kunming and outfitting them with training offices for the creation of a new elite air corps composed entirely of Nationalist pilots.[183]

Opposing Chiang and Chennault's ongoing obsession with air power was the man that President Franklin Roosevelt assigned to serve as Chiang's Chief of Staff and to oversee the distribution of American Lend-Lease aid. General Joseph Stilwell, in contrast to Chennault, had a low opinion of Chiang's political acumen and openly derided what he perceived to be the Nationalist leader's complete ineptitude in handling military affairs:

> CKS [Chiang Kai-shek] rules through personal influence and by means of his gang, who hold all the key positions in the government. He maintains a balance of power by playing off one influence against another. He controls the army through his appointments of its officers (Many positions in the army offer excellent chances for money-making)… Despite his apparent despotic power, he does not dare disturb the structure by tearing out any of its members, for fear of amalgamating the opposition to where it may threaten his hold… I am satisfied that he will never dare to undertake a thorough purge of crooks and incompetents in the army until it is too late… The war has been mismanaged from the start, commanders in the field have been constantly hampered in their duties, and most of the failure can be traced right back to his door. That China is still in the ring is more in spite of, than on account of him.[184]

Although Stilwell was somewhat sympathetic to Chiang's distrust of his own military generals – "[Chiang's] narrow viewpoint is largely due to bitter experience; many of the men he has to use have at some time or another been in open rebellion against him"[185] – Stilwell nonetheless pointed to the Generalissimo as the crux of China's perceived passiveness in opposing the Japanese. Weakening Chiang's stifling grip on military decision-making – either through his removal or through the creation of independent military battalions that were not beholden to Chiang himself – would be needed if military reforms were to have any chance of

[183] See: SHAC, *Kangri Zhanzheng Zhengmian Zhanchang*, vol. 3 (Fenghuang chuban she, 2005)
[184] Hoover Archives, "Memorandum for the Secretary of War" June 27, 1942, Joseph W. Stilwell Papers Box 20.25: 21
[185] Ibid.

success.[186] Once ruthlessly pruned of its political elements, Stilwell hoped, the National Revolutionary Army could finally become a professional military force capable of executing the offensive mobile strategies needed to expel the Japanese. At the same time, Stilwell clashed with Chennault over the latter's assertion that the American Volunteer Group be deployed to provide fighter and logistical support for Chinese units on the front lines. It was better, Stilwell argued, to keep American pilots close to Yunnan where they could defend the air and land routes that shipped supplies from Burma and India into China's interior.[187]

Chiang, from his own perspective, balked at the notion that diffusing power through liberal reforms or creating more independent brigades would somehow solve the intransigence or undermine the embeddedness of China's militarist factions. Even more galling was Stilwell's presumption that reforming the NRA was simply a matter of summoning up enough political will to implement "corrective measures" by removing incompetent generals and replacing them with professional officers. Many of the "incompetents" that Chiang would have dearly loved to eliminate still possessed powerful local connections which, in combination with their private retinues, made them practically untouchable short of being removed by force. Having wrangled for the past decade and a half with China's entrenched militarist cliques using a combination of assimilation, containment, and outright coercion, Chiang viewed his Chief of Staff's policies as being hopelessly naïve.[188]

Both Chiang and Stilwell agreed that rising political-military discord between the Guomindang and the provincial militarists was paralyzing the NRA's ability to effectively

[186] Hoover Archives, "Oct. 5, 1943 Diary Entry" Stilwell Papers, Box 41.1, p. 48
[187] Hoover Archives, "June 28, 1943 Diary Entry" Stilwell Papers, Box 41, File 41.1
[188] Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-shek and the Struggle for Modern China* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2011): 481

maneuver against the Japanese. Both men, however, vehemently disagreed over how to address the problem. Buying off the militarists and inducing them to peacefully disband their cash-gobbling forces would require money reserves that the Guomindang no longer possessed, whereas coercing the militarists into forced retirement would require strengthening exhausted and over-stretched central government forces. Both of these solutions, Chiang resolved, could be implemented if U.S. financial and military assistance were generously forthcoming.[189] The professional-minded Stilwell, however, scoffed at the notion of using U.S. dollars to buy off predatory regionalist generals and supplement the despotic powers of the Generalissimo. The solution to China's ills, Stilwell countered, lay in professionalizing its military by first tackling the root of the country's endemic clientelism; which entailed the removal of men like Chiang and their replacement with democratically elected leaders. Chiang in return furiously denied Stilwell's calls for building up a new U.S.-trained Chinese division under Stilwell's own independent command, arguing that there were already enough Chinese armies to feed and pay for.[190] Stilwell retaliated by limiting the distribution of Lend-Lease materiel, which was – ironically – one of his few means of leverage over Chiang.[191] The Generalissimo responded by complaining directly to Chennault and then later to President Roosevelt in an effort to have Stilwell removed, although nothing came of his efforts.

Chiang Kai-shek ultimately conceded to the creation of a new China Expeditionary Force under Joseph Stilwell's direct command. These troops would be trained by American advisors and outfitted with U.S. equipment and arms, but would also be overseen by Luo Zhuoying, one of Chiang's trusted (and less important) commanders. The first combat test for the expeditionary

[189] Chiang Kai-shek, "Letter to Roosevelt, June 1943" State Department Central Files, Box 7??? 893.00/1068
[190] Charles Romanus & Riley Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, Office of the Chief of Military History, Dept of the Army (1956)
[191] Hoover Archives, "July 18 Diary Entry" 1944, Stilwell Papers, Box 41.1, p. 34

force occurred much too soon in January of 1942, when Japan invaded Burma to cut off the last remaining overland supply route to China in Southeast Asia. While both Chiang and Stilwell would have preferred that the expeditionary had additional time to train, both men – in one of their few cases of agreement – decided that the Guomindang would have to send reinforcements to aid British defenders in protecting the Burma Road. Unwilling to trust what he perceived as Stilwell's overly aggressive generalship, Chiang reinforced the expeditionary force with another army under the command of Du Yuming, who was to keep an eye on preserving the integrity of Nationalist forces and to also keep an eye on Stilwell.

Stilwell's departure south to stem the Japanese invasion of Burma provided a momentary respite for Chiang, who – despite having to give up some of his best equipped troops to accompany a man he detested – decided to make use of his time out from under Stilwell's gaze by consolidating the China Service of Supply's growing control over the management of U.S. delivered shipments. Until larger volumes of Lend-Lease aid could arrive, Guomindang officials, alongside Long Yun's "administrators" were assigned to delivering American military aid meant for Chennault's American Volunteer Group. With the creation of a Board of Transport Control, Chiang also made moves to centralize his authority over all trucking routes in China and, by extension, the distribution of goods trucked into Yunnan from Burma.[192] Yet underneath this veneer of official delegation, the Guomindang also used the opportunity to provide in-demand government jobs to its loyalists.

The opportunity for profiting off of American supplies proved to be too good of an opportunity for many municipal and local officials, who took it upon themselves to skim a

[192] USSDCDF, "Telegram to Secretary of State, Kuning via Chungking," May 5, 1942, Box 5840, 893.00/14846; Hoover Archives, "Memorandum for Colonel Chennault, Oct 10, 1941" Claire Chennault Papers, Box 1, Folder 7-5 Transportation.

portion off of deliveries. In some cases, the "spillage" was interpreted by American observers as bureaucratic inefficiencies that were typically stereotyped onto "pre-modern" societies. Such was the case when Chennault noticed that Chinese-constructed hostels for American pilots in Kunming were significantly farther from the city's aerodrome than anticipated. This distance necessitated a large fleet of motor vehicles to ferry pilots back and forth across the city, which in turn allowed Chinese drivers and other officials the opportunity to siphon away a helping of gasoline deliveries that could then be sold for high prices on the local black markets. "It is desired to point out that A.V.G. [American Volunteer Group] use of motor vehicles could be greatly reduced if the new Hostel was made ready for occupancy," Chennault remarked in one of his numerous complaints, "we have repeatedly urged the completion of this Hostel and it is now several months since it should have been finished."[193] At other points in time, rent-seeking behavior took on a more blatant form through outright theft and the diversion of convoy trucks to alternate routes from which they typically returned with a significantly reduced load.[194] American officers tasked with working alongside Nationalist generals in or near Yunnan would regularly be frustrated by what they perceived to be the "inertia" of Nationalist personnel in supplying the needs for U.S. pilots.[195] Fortunately for Chiang, given Chennault's closeness to the Generalissimo, the commander of the A.V.G. was willing to make excuses on behalf of the Nationalists. When confronted with yet another example of discrepancies in the official accounting of gasoline shipments, Chennault responded by noting that overcharging on Chinese

[193] Hoover Archives, "Letter from C.L. Chennault to General P.T. Mow, Dec 12, 1941" & "Letter from C.L. Chennault to Colonel S.M. Weng, C.C.S.: Information as to consumption of fuel and motor oil, March 18, 1942" Claire Chennault Papers, Box 1, Folder 7-5 Transportation.

[194] Hoover Archives, "Memo from C.L. Chennault to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek: Charges against Colonel C.T. Chien for diverting and misappropriating property belonging to the American Volunteer Group, Jan 7, 1942" Claire Chennault Papers Box 1, Folder 2-8 China National Military Council President.

[195] Hoover Archives, "Letter from E.E. Macmorland to Brig. General C.L. Chennault, Aug 11, 1942" Claire Chennault Papers, Box 1, Folder 8-6 U.S. Army Forces in the Far East

gas "was done in order to protect the driver of the gas truck – as far as I ever learned, gas thus accumulated on the books remained in the storage dump for eventual issue."[196]

The American Volunteer Group's frustrating experience working with the Guomindang was a microcosm of the Nationalists' new policy of deliberately manipulating supply bottlenecks for the purposes of maintaining the government's "market share" of available Lend-Lease shipments. Shortages in materiel shipped from the United States were partially determined by the ruggedness of the terrain and therefore outside the control of the Guomindang; the central government, however, did have influence in directing resource flows to certain locations through the construction of physical and administrative infrastructure such as air fields, hostels, depots, and staffing them with government lackeys. These locations were almost universally centered near urban centers, where the Guomindang's administrative presence was strongest. While U.S. planners advocated the creation of multiple distribution and collection points in the rural interior so as to avoid lengthy bottlenecks in large cities such as Kunming, the Guomindang maintained an interest in ensuring that there were a limited number of nodes within Lend-Lease supply chains; it was easier to maintain control over a handful of large distribution points than it was to control a more diffuse network of smaller modules peppered throughout the countryside.[197] Establishing multiple auxiliary stations that could independently receive and allocate supplies risked allowing Lend-Lease equipment to fall into the hands of provincial militarists outside of Chiang's coterie of trusted insiders.

[196] Hoover Archives, "Letter from Chennault to Colonel Clinton D. Vincent, Aug 4, 1943" Claire Chennault Papers, Box 1, Folder 8-48 U.S. Army Forces 14th Air Force 68th Composite Wing

[197] Hoover Archives, "Letter from Albert Wedemeyer to General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff War Department, Chungking, China," December 10, 1944, Albert Wedemeyer Papers, United Forces China Theater: George C Marshall, 82.23

By establishing a Nationalist-led cartel over supply bottlenecks within Free China, the Guomindang maintained a degree of administrative leverage over its subordinates in a manner that had not been replicated since the urban-centric extractive policies of the Nanjing decade.[198] Although the fiscal value of American Lend-Lease equipment flown and trucked into Yunnan province could not match the worth of trade goods that once flowed into the ports of Shanghai, the central government's access to a source of capital that was otherwise unavailable to other Chinese factions gave the Guomindang a means of keeping together its highly strained coalition of squabbling militarists and generals.[199] Even as provincial militarists seethed at Chiang Kai-shek's blatant favoritism in prioritizing the equipment needs of his central armies above all others, this growing resentment rarely spilled over into full-blown military hostility. The Guomindang always reserved the right to unlock a taste of Lend-Lease materiel for intransigent actors; enough to tease most rivals into backing down for hopes of more supply shipments. For the most extreme cases, the central government could hold out the reward of a lucrative administrative job that put individuals in direct contact with Lend-Lease materiel.[200] Even the lowliest of laborer positions offered some opportunity for avarice; therefore making such jobs far more attractive than their pitiful government salary would initially suggest. Drivers could pilfer surplus alcohol and gasoline stocks meant for the running of their vehicles.[201] Handlers could scrounge about in warehouses as strategic bottlenecks led to pileups of crates of materiel in

[198] SHAC, "Xingzheng yuan chao fa jiaqiang zhan shi caizheng heli tongchou zhengce yi yu guo ji er li kangzhan xunling [The Executive Yuan takes over and strengthens the fiscal rationality and overall planning of the war to benefit the military effort]," Jan 9, 1943, ZHMGSDAZLHB caizheng jingji, no. 1 (1997): 162-164
[199] SHAC, "Guomin zhengfu 1942 nian du guojia sui chu zong yusuan biao [The National Government's total annual budget for 1942]," 1942, ZHMGSDAZLHB caizheng jingji, no. 1 (1997): 224-233
[200] Lloyd Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction* (1984)
[201] Hoover Archives, "No. 616: Memo from Albert Wedemeyer to His Excellency, The Generalissimo, Chungking, China," Jun 18, 1945, Albert Wedemeyer Papers, United Forces China Theater: Memoranda to the Generalissimo April 5 - June 4, 1945, nos. 500-598, 85.3

government-owned depots.[202] Construction workers could appropriate building materials from their work sites. And above them all, municipal managers could write off these deficiencies in account books as inevitable wartime losses resulting from Japanese bombing campaigns, extant banditry, mechanical breakdown, spoilage with faulty materials, or as overcharges to insure against any of the previously listed damages.

Although American personnel on the ground were appalled to witness the blatantly neo-patrimonial workings of the Nationalist state, there was little that U.S. officials could do to staunch the flow of Lend-Lease materiel to unregistered corners unknown. American soldiers and pilots who observed outright theft or shady crookedness had little recourse but to threaten punishment by reporting such actions to their superiors, who were in turn stymied by their lack of knowledge of which Nationalist official to complain to.[203] Inured by the moral hazard of America's military commitment to the East Asia Theatre, the Guomindang made little effort to reform its patron-client organization. Some efforts were made by U.S. managers to segregate deliveries meant for American personnel in order to avoid cross-contamination with the activities of the China Service of Supply, but did little to adjust the latter's operations.[204] Joseph Stilwell was one of the few individuals most willing to repeatedly contest Guomindang practices but even he could only threaten to temporarily reduce the flow of supplies on the American end, which was at times counterproductive in cajoling Chiang Kai-shek to release more supplies for Chinese forces, but had little authority to countermand the goings-on of the China Service of Supply or its

[202] Hoover Archives, "Reel 22 – Chinese Army" Gilbert Stuart Papers, Box 1: 31; "No. 578: Memo from Albert Wedemeyer to His Excellency, the Generalissimo, Chungking, China," May 19, 1945, Albert Wedemeyer Papers, United Forces China Theater: Memoranda to the Generalissimo April 5 - June 4, 1945, nos. 500-598, 85.3
[203] Hoover Archives, "Reel 22 – Chinese Army" Gilbert Stuart Papers, Box 1: 31
[204] Hoover Archives, "Report of the China Theater to the Chief of Staff of the Army, 24 Oct 1944 to Feb 1946," Albert Wedemeyer Papers, United Forces China Theater: Mao Tse-tung, 82.22

subsidiary institutions. As the Chief of Staff himself ruefully admitted in a diary entry on April Fool's Day, "I have no troops, no body-guard, no authority to shoot anybody."[205]

If patronage and clientelism hindered the comfort and operations of the American Volunteer Group, then they were simultaneously the glue from which the Guomindang was able to cobble together a semi-functioning administrative apparatus. Few Chinese officials co-opted into the Guomindang's neopatrimonial bureaucracy did their jobs for the paltry pay assigned to their positions; many took their jobs for the promised access to supplementary forms of income. Notably, the Guomindang's conduct *was no less corrupt or predatory than its earlier behavior in the rural countryside*; the primary difference was that state extraction had begun shifting away from taxing the inhabitants of exhausted rural hamlets and relocating to the cities in order to collect dues on the resource and material flows of American-sponsored military imports. In other words, the administrative tendrils of the state were gradually retracting from permeating the rural provinces back into the cityscapes. This undoubtedly exposed the inner workings of the Nationalist state to a more international audience in the form of U.S. personnel stationed in China, and many of their blunt observations about Nationalist dysfunction inspired early accounts of why the Guomindang failed to adequately contest the Japanese in the later years of WWII. While dysfunction certainly existed in the manner through which the Nationalists trafficked American materiel, the more pertinent dynamic afflicting the Nationalists' military potential was that the trafficking (however dysfunctional) became increasingly constrained geographically.

While the Guomindang's manipulation of Lend-Lease deliveries were a harbinger of future activities to come, the trickle of American aid delivered in 1942 was not enough to

[205] Hoover Archives, "Diary Entry 4/1/42" Joseph Stilwell Papers, Box 41, Folder 41.1 Transcripts of Diaries

warrant a complete transition from rural-centric to urban-centric extraction. Direct labor mobilization in the rural provinces and the collection of in-kind taxes remained the primary methods through which the Nationalists financed and sustained their military operations against the Japanese, although such activities were becoming increasingly difficult as the war zones shrunk in size and food-producing regions in the frontline provinces of Henan and Hunan fell to Japanese advances.[206] In an effort to re-balance the government's budget, Chiang announced in December of 1942 that new land taxes would be imposed on the richest landholders, while "the number of government employees within each of the ministries and commissions in the Central Government and provincial governments shall be reduced, and those eliminated from the offices shall be placed at work in border regions or rural productive enterprises."[207] A crucial blow to the Nationalists' rural-centric state project finally unfolded in 1942 when an unnatural spring drought led to a drastic reduction in grain production within the Guomindang's primary food basket of Henan province. The Nationalists' overly taxing wartime grain requisitions and conscription quotas, however, did not readjust to accommodate the declining harvest, and by winter of 1942 a ruinous famine afflicted the region. By 1943, the partly man-made and partly natural ecological disaster had gutted Henan's population and stripped the province of its economic and military potential, with over 2 million Chinese dying of hunger and an additional 4 million fleeing the region.

The inhabitants of surrounding provinces, who were already struggling to feed themselves while supporting the voracious appetites of the NRA, dealt with the shock of receiving Henan's starving refugee population by resorting to the most desperate tools available

[206] SHAC, "Jingji bu tongji chu guanyu ziyuan weiyuanhui 1939-1943 nian zhuyao junyong wuzi chanliang tongji biao [Statistics of the primary military assets of the Resources Committee from 1939 to 1943, prepared by the Statistics Department of the Ministry of Economic Affairs]" Jan 1943 ZHMGSDAZLHB, *caizheng jingji*, no. 6 (1979): 351-353
[207] Chinese Ministry of Information, *China Handbook*, 1937-1945 (1947): 477

to a long-suffering society; revolt. Small landholders, who had gamely borne the burden of excessive taxation and labor impressment for over half a decade, violently responded to the central government's perceived lack of empathy for its own citizens.[208] While rebellious citizens could do little in the face of armed Nationalist divisions (even half-starved army units were more than capable of brushing aside local resistance to their wartime appropriation), "home territory" for the Nationalists was nonetheless significantly more dangerous to operate in. Retreating Chinese forces and shattered units that had once sheltered themselves in local towns and villages became targets for retribution as peasants and farmers took their rage out on isolated Japanese and Nationalist soldiers alike.[209] Foraging parties had to be significantly larger and well-armed, which required peeling off more soldiers from the front lines to address societal turbulence in the rear.

[208] SHAC, "Jiangjingxiu guanyu hubei zhushan xian minzhong fandui xin xian zhi ji zheng liang chou ding fasheng baodong qingxing cheng [Jiang Jingxiu on the riots against the new county system and the levying of grain harvests in Zhushan County, Hubei Province]" July 1, 1942, ZHMGSDAZLHB, zhengzhi, no. 5 (1997): 197

[209] SHAC, "Chenghouzhi deng guanyu sichuan suining xian min bukan yi zheng yapo yu zhujun chongtu zao zhenya qingxing dian ji jiangjieshi xunling gao [Cheng Houzhi on the suppression of the riots in Suining County, Sichuan Province, by the army garrison on the instructions of Chiang Kai-shek]" May-June, 1943, ZHMGSDAZLHB, zhengzhi, no. 5 (1997): 209

Infrastructural Mechanisms	Nationalist Policy (1943-1945)	Overall Assessment of State-Building
Extraction	**Primary Sources of Financing**: Lend-Lease Aid, Land Taxes, Value-Added Taxes, Foreign Loans **GMD Monopolies:** American Lend-Lease Aid	High levels of extraction from American aid shipments and urban commercial exchanges High levels of extraction from land taxes
Coercing Local Rivals	**Targets of Coercion:** (Rural) Small Landholders, Provincial Militarists	High levels of rural conscription and impressment High Provincial Militarist and Small Landholder resistance to GMD coercion
Cultivating Dependence	**Targets of Co-optation**: Provincial Militarists, Rural Administrators	Low Provincial Militarist and Rural Administrator dependence on GMD subsidies

Mechanisms of State-building (1943-1945)

Table 2.7

American Lend-Lease aid, even in increasing volumes, could never fully close the gap between the Nationalists' voracious wartime needs and the economic reality of unoccupied China's cannibalized resource base.[210] Foreign military assistance, however, was the only alternative source of revenue upon which the Nationalists could hope to reliably fund its war effort and maintain the patron-client relations that sustained their wartime coalition. Cracks in the political-military alliance between the Guomindang and provincial militarists already existed from the central government's appropriation of the land tax, but the paralyzing effects of such discord were mostly contained to war zones predominantly occupied by provincial armies. By 1943, however, even the Guomindang's best central armies – upon which Chiang lavished the vast majority of American Lend-Lease equipment – were struggling to pull off the mobile operations that they had once executed more-or-less effectively in years prior, thereby adopting

[210] SHAC, "Caizheng bu tongji chu bianzhi zhi kangzhan shiqi shuishou sunshi zong baogao biao [Report by the Statistics Department of the Ministry of Finance on the Tax Loss in the Anti-Japanese War]," Nov 1944, ZHMGSDAZLHB caizheng jingji, no. 1 (1997): 396-400

what could best be described as a passive form of positional warfare.[211] Throughout the remaining war zones, armies stationed on the front lines sheltered behind the walls of cities and townships in the face of Japanese advances.[212]

Early diagnoses of the aforementioned trend revolved around whether Chiang Kai-shek's strategic and political acumen were to blame. To Stilwell, Chinese passivity was confirmation of Chiang's Machiavellian plan to coast off the U.S. war effort against Japan while hoarding American military supplies for a future showdown with the Communists.[213] Chiang responded by pointing out that he constantly spent his days railing at his generals for failing to act more aggressively against the enemy.[214] Stilwell in turn accused the generalissimo of stymieing military operations through excessive micromanagement; Chinese generals were not engaging the Japanese in combat because they could not piece together a comprehensive battle plan from the daily contradictory commands coming from above.[215] Chiang countered by accusing Stilwell of having the causal chain backwards; military micromanagement was necessary *because* generals would not engage the Japanese unless repeatedly prodded and pushed from above.[216] Both arguments, however, were superseded by larger structural shifts in the thinning out of rural state agencies that accompanied the re-orientation towards urban-centric extraction. Irrespective of generalship or operational coordination, logistical deficiencies resulting from the lack of administrative infrastructure in the rural provinces would culminate in a far more comprehensive paralysis of Nationalist military strategy from which the Guomindang would never fully recover.

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[211] USSDCDF, "Training and Supply Systems and Hospitalization of Chinese Armed Forces," Jan 14, 1944, Box 5865: 893.25/2
[212] Chi Jingde, *Zhonguo Dui Ri Kangzhan Sunshi Diaocha Shi Shu* (Taibei: Guoshiguan, 1987): 16
[213] Hoover Archives, "July 20 Diary Entry" Stilwell Papers, Box 41.1, p. 35
[214] Chiang Kai-shek, "Generalissimo Chiang's Speech to the Fourth Nanyue Military Conference, February 12-13, 1944" *Zhonghua minguo zhongyao shiliao*, vol. II: 1, p. 502
[215] Hoover Archives, "Diary Entry 4/1/42" Joseph Stilwell Papers, Box 41, 41.1
[216] Hoover Archives, "June 24, 1942" Joseph Stilwell Papers, Box 41, 41.1

Operation Ichigo and the Retrenchment of Positional Warfare

In April of 1944, the Japanese Army mobilized over a half-million troops in a last ditch effort to neutralize the Guomindang and re-divert much-needed forces from the morass in China to the defense of the home islands. The planned Ichigo Offensive would have the ambitious goals of eliminating the Nationalists' most dangerous armies, overrunning forward air bases from which the American Volunteer Group launched repeated raids, and linking up the disconnected war fronts. In the north, the 12th Army would attack Henan province; in Central China, the 11th Army would make its fourth assault on the city of Changsha before driving south to connect with the 23rd Army; the combined 11th and 23rd Armies in turn would then drive towards Guangxi province, potentially overrunning the region and threatening Yunnan.

Arrayed against the Japanese were a million Nationalist soldiers that had been partially retrofitted with American military equipment. Notably, the three main Japanese attacks would be contested by some of the Nationalists' strongest units commanded by several of Chiang's most competent commanders. Tang Enbo – who helped execute the envelopment of Japanese attackers at Taierzhuang – defended Henan province; Xue Yue – who executed the thrice successful mobile defense of Changsha – would defend the city again for the fourth time; and Bai Chongxi – who, although not as prominent as his Guangxi compatriot, Li Zongren, nonetheless had the pedigree of being a Baoding graduate – commanded the defense of Guangxi province. Both Tang (a graduate of the Imperial Japanese Army Academy) and Xue (a Whampoa graduate) commanded a composite force of central government and provincial armies while having the privilege of being relatively well-supplied compared to their militarist counterparts. Bai, being a Guangxi militarist, commanded provincial armies that were less well endowed, but nonetheless received an influx of Lend-Lease equipment given the importance of his province to the protection of Yunnan. Additionally, the percolation of airfields throughout the interior had

extended the operational range of Chennault's fighters; for the first time in a major military engagement, the Nationalists would have a rough parity in air power compared to the Japanese.

The first phase of Operation Ichigo began with a Japanese drive into central Henan on April of 1944. Immediately targeting Tang Enbo's best government divisions, Japanese units succeeded in shattering central army units while Chinese provincial armies, who were typically the first to be thrown into frontal holding actions against Japanese offensives, quickly retreated after offering token resistance. With the rapid overrunning of Henan province (which had never fully recovered from the 1942-1943 famine), the second phase of the offensive proceeded with a drive towards the cities of Changsha and Hengyang in Hunan province.

In the fourth battle of Changsha, General Xue Yue once again attempted to replicate his earlier feats by outflanking Japanese attackers but was crucially stymied by his subordinates' refusal to hold the city of Changsha. In a dismal display of military negligence, the NRA's 4th Army, which had been tasked with garrisoning the city, retreated in direct contravention to Xue's orders, allowing the Japanese to enter and capture the city. Unlike in past battles where the temporary loss of Changsha was immediately followed by Nationalist units encircling the city to cut off Japanese spearheads, no such counter-attack materialized.

The Nationalist defense of the city of Hengyang was noticeably better conducted than at Changsha but was also based entirely upon "do or die stands" conducted by soldiers garrisoning interlocking fortified positions surrounding the city. The stiffened defense of Hengyang was, much to the surprise of the ailing Tojo cabinet, a significant obstacle to the Japanese 11th Army, which had expected to capture the city in two days. After over a month of grueling positional

warfare, the defending Chinese 10th Army under the command of Fang Xianjue surrendered to attacking forces in August of 1944 and completed the Japanese conquest of Hunan province.

The final phase of the Ichigo Offensive concluded with a combined assault by the 11th and 23rd Army into Guangxi province in an effort to take the neighboring cities of Guilin and Liuzhou. Having been reinforced with the remnants of the defenders at Hengyang and a new shipment of American military equipment, defending forces under the command of Bai Chongxi prepared for the Japanese assault by reinforcing the cities with additional pillboxes and trenches. These fortifications enabled Nationalist defenders to hold for ten days before the Japanese captured Guilin and Liuzhou.

To what extent did rising political-military discord and the atrophying of rural-centric extraction impact the Nationalists' military operations? Why did the Guomindang's best armies commanded by generals with an established record of executing mobile operations prove unable or unwilling to adopt their past strategy of maneuver warfare? Throughout the eight months of the Ichigo Offensive, Nationalist military operations suffered from both poor military coordination and a more pervasive shortage of logistical staff.[217] Chiang pointedly criticized the failure of supply services to provide for the needs of frontline troops, although he himself bore some of the blame by refusing to send requested supplies to General Xue Yue during the siege of Changsha and to General Fang Xianjue during the siege of Hengyang.[218] It is important, however, not to over-estimate the extent to which Chiang's selective distribution of military aid can be blamed for the operational passivity of the Nationalist defenders. The Guomindang did in

[217] Chiang Kai-shek, "Budui shou junxu junxi yu bingzhan buzhi kutong shiqing [The reality of troops' suffering from poor supplies, medical services, and depots]", "Junxu bu jianquan junxu yewu ji bu hefa you bu heli shiqing [The reality of a flawed supply system and its illegal and unfair management]", cited in: *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao*: 370-373

[218] Ibid.; Rana Mitter, *Forgotten Ally: China's World War II* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013): 323-324

fact supply the 4th Army at Changsha and the 10th Army at Hengyang in preparation of the Japanese attack. Since both armies were core central government units loyal to Chiang, the generalissimo's refusal to release more aid for the besieged defenders had more to do with his calculation that both Changsha and Liuzhou were already lost than with a political effort to bleed a rival dry. More important was the ubiquitous shortage of supply service mechanisms that had since been limited to a narrow strip of administrative staff manning the primary highways connecting cities to one another. While stockpiling enabled troop garrisons to hold out for a time, the hollowing out of the rural substructure consisting of local cadres willing to procure and deliver supplies on the NRA's behalf all but precluded Nationalist units from launching mobile countermoves of their own. Absent any co-opted rural administrators to subsidize logistical operations and with few means of appropriating goods aside from the tactically questionable choice of dissipating entire army divisions to forage for themselves in the middle of combat operations, Nationalist commanders who tried to out-march Japanese divisions were left floundering as the task of deploying their own soldiers to procure grain stores from mutinous peasants drastically limited their range and speed of movement.[219]

Poor operational coordination among provincial and central army units also helped stymie Nationalist military operations, although its effect was more limited. The Nationalist policy of throwing provincial armies in the path of Japanese attacks to blunt enemy advances while central armies were held in reserve proved to be an inviable strategy as many provincial units retreated rather than face the Japanese head on. While Bai Chongxi's provincial forces did make a concerted stand at Guilin and Liuzhou, there was no effort to coordinate mobile

[219] Guo Zonghuai, "Guo Zhonghuai deng yaoqiu yancheng Tang Enbo deng ti an ji Guomin Canzheng jueyi [Guo Zhonghuai and others' resolution demanding punishment for Tang Enbo and others]" (1945), *Zhonghua minguo shi dang'an shiliao huibian*, vol. 5: 2 (1991): 114-115

operations on any scale during the defense of both cities. However, other cases of poorly timed withdrawals such as the disastrous early retreat at Changsha were initiated not by provincial forces but rather by central army units, and therefore cannot be blamed entirely on political-military discord between the Guomindang and militarist commanders. In other cases of military passivity, the withdrawal of provincial forces only occurred after central army units had been shattered in combat, which would have likely occurred even had provincial and central armies closely coordinated their operations.

The Ichigo Offensives demonstrated that the NRA, while still capable of holding its own in attrition-based slugfests against Japanese forces, no longer possessed the operational mobility of its past incarnations. Japanese strategic gains, however, were ultimately ephemeral as the explosive territorial gains of their rapid conquest proved to be too large to fully defend. Additionally, Chiang Kai-shek's refusal to negotiate with the Japanese ensured that the Ichigo Offensive failed to achieve its primary goal of freeing up soldiers for the defense of the home islands. Desultory back-and-forth attacks across central and southern China continued for some time, but no major strategic offensives would again be executed by either side throughout the remainder of the war.

Assessing the Nationalists from 1937-1945

In reviewing the Nationalists' military performance, the most generous conclusion to be found is that the Guomindang managed to piece together a fractious coalition of rivalrous military commanders and prosecute a strategy of maneuver warfare for at least two years. By engaging in a massive mobilization of China's rural population, the Guomindang created a voracious leviathan that drew vast amounts of wartime resources while still preserving the rent-seeking privileges of their militarist rivals for a surprisingly long period of time. Put bluntly, the

Nationalists had been dealt a weak hand from the very beginning but still played it as best as they could. A more cynical conclusion would note that "maneuver warfare" was actually limited to a mobile defense that never actually amounted to a mobile offense capable of reversing Japanese territorial gains. Additionally, the Nationalist "state" was a cumbersome animal that never achieved any permanent institutional presence at the municipal level; preferring instead to buck-pass extractive duties off onto local intermediaries. The "infrastructural power" of the Nationalist state therefore only existed in an ephemeral sense and immediately evaporated once municipal administrators could no longer procure the rents that made "public service" so attractive.

Both conclusions are warranted, although several important dynamics should be emphasized. First, it is important to avoid holding the Nationalists' administrative apparatus up to the standards of a fully professionalized Weberian bureaucracy. Given the ingrained nature of clientelist politics and the deeply embedded system of relying upon one's personal connections (i.e. guangxi) to facilitate any administrative decision, the Guomindang's method of negotiating its way into the countryside through bribes and patronage to local gentry was a method that, while undoubtedly less efficient than relying upon a chain of professional bureaucrats all the way down, still enabled the central government to execute its diktats in far flung regions. It is difficult to predict whether the Guomindang would have taken a more measured approach to constructing a fully professional bureaucratic state had the Japanese not invaded, although it is almost certain that the rapid escalation of wartime costs brought about by the military disasters of 1937 pushed the central government into relying on whatever fiscal shortcuts were available rather than take time to train and equip a fully functioning bureaucratic corps capable of permeating the vast hinterlands of China's interior.

Second, while Joseph Stilwell sorely under-appreciated the method behind the perceived madness of Chiang Kai-shek's internal politicking, he was not wrong to point out that the Guomindang's policy of accommodating the rent-seeking interests of militarist cliques was fundamentally opposed to the need for streamlining logistics efforts and reducing fiscal waste. The Nationalists were successful at balancing between the two interests for some time, but were never successful at fully rooting out the contradiction behind the rentier-officer dilemma; doling out generous rents to militarist officers diminished the government's access to much-needed sources of revenue in the rural provinces whereas expanding government access to additional modes of domestic financing ran into pushback from militarist officers. The only time the Guomindang found itself enjoying the creature comforts of low political-military discord and high levels of rural-based extraction occurred when provincial militarists were directly threatened by Japanese occupation and therefore turned a blind eye to the government's growing role in rural extraction. Such a solution to the rentier-officer dilemma, however, was also made possible by the relatively untapped economic potential of rural China's hinterland. So long as there were "new" sources of revenue to appropriate from the countryside, rural financing could avoid directly challenging the traditional privileges of provincial militarists. Once soaring war costs pushed government and militarist finances past the pareto frontier, however, the temporary cap on political-military discord quickly disintegrated.

The purpose of focusing on the Guomindang's struggles with the rentier-officer dilemma is important not because it necessarily absolves the Nationalists of blame for their ultimate predicament, but because it contextualizes the theoretical process through which Chinese state-building and war-making were intertwined. State-building activities of financing war and stemming internal challenges to the Guomindang's authority did not have a universally negative

effect on military performance. Promoting unqualified militarists to government positions may have been a politically convenient ploy to address internal dissent, but it could also lead to improved military performance by temporarily reducing mutual suspicions between provincial and central armies that would have otherwise stymied operational coordination. Heavy-handed approaches to rural extraction may have forced military cadres into distinctly "un-professional" roles of policing grain tax shipments, but such activities also developed the regional infrastructure that would take over logistical duties once soldiers were needed to fight on the front lines.

Alternatively, when the politicization of Nationalist military operations did impede the NRA's military performance, it did not do so through the expected mechanisms hypothesized by civil-military theorists, who normally focus on obstacles to "best" military practices such as professional training standards, merit-based promotions, and communication channels between military forces. To be certain, a lack of professionalism combined with incompetent military officers and poor communication certainly caused the NRA a great deal of trouble, particularly when attempting to coordinate military operations with provincial forces (where many of the aforementioned afflictions tended to fester). However, merit-based promotions and loyalty-based promotions were not necessarily mutually exclusive. Generals loyal to the central government could be incompetent or capable; likewise, provincial militarists who had fewer ties to the government could also vary in their military capabilities. When Chiang Kai-shek appointed less-skilled commanders to lead his forces, he at least had the sense to try and avoid giving them command over the most crucial war zones.

One continuing area of concern is whether political-military discord or methods of resource extraction are the primary culprits of changes in the Nationalists' military strategy.

Given that variation in the Nationalists' military strategy from 1937-1945 roughly correlated with changes in levels of political-military discord, there remains the possibility that political-military discord serves as the "master variable" to explain all strategic shifts. In the next section, I use the example of the 1945-1949 Chinese Civil War to demonstrate how political-military discord is, by itself, insufficient to explain the strategic behavior of the Nationalists. Specifically, the last four years of the Guomindang's tenure on the mainland witnessed multiple attempts to improve on the political-military front by removing incompetent generals, promoting officers with an established record of executing maneuver warfare, and granting operational independence to said officers. Yet these attempts all came to naught due to the government's continued reliance on a mode of urban-centric extraction. The delimiting of government extraction – and, by extension, logistical support – to the cities ultimately contained the NRA to a strategy of positional warfare.

3. The Nationalists and the Chinese Civil War

After Japan's unconditional surrender to the Allies at the conclusion of World War II, the Chinese Nationalists found themselves thrust back into hostilities with other domestic factions, the largest and most dangerous of which were the Chinese Communists led by Mao Zedong. As Japanese forces withdrew from their occupied territories, Nationalist and Communist divisions scrambled to re-occupy the liberated regions. With the aid of a massive American airlift, the Guomindang retook its former provinces on the eastern coast. The Communists in turn established their new stronghold in Manchuria, where occupying Soviet troops delayed their departure until Mao could send his armies into the region. A desultory attempt to negotiate a power sharing arrangement between Chiang and Mao through the mediation of the U.S. special envoy George C. Marshall broke down in June of 1946 and by July, Communist and Nationalist forces squared off once again.

This section covers the resulting military hostilities with an emphasis on showing how the Nationalists' infamously counter-productive strategy of positional warfare was the direct result of a state-building project that emphasized urban-centric modes of resource extraction. Despite tangible improvements in the Guomindang's efforts to reduce political-military discord – first by successfully removing prominent militarists from political power and second by appointing professional military officers to command their forces – the Nationalists' inability to extend their administrative infrastructure into the rural countryside locked the NRA to a strategy of passively garrisoning cities where they could be resupplied from air and a narrow sliver of easily severed rail lines and highways.

The 1945 Post-War Transition: Urban-Centric Extraction and High Political-Military Discord

Before facing the Communists, the Nationalists had made several political, military, and economic strides. From a political perspective, the Guomindang considerably improved its political position vis a vis the provincial militarists. With the abatement of the Japanese threat, the central government, now flush with stockpiled American equipment and favorable loan rates from U.S. financiers, renewed its campaign of weeding out the likes of Li Zongren, Bai Chongxi, and Long Yun. After the Ichigo Offensive deprived the Guangxi Clique of their home province, both Li and Bai became entirely dependent on government subsidies to continue paying and outfitting their provincial armies.[1] This in turn enabled Chiang Kai-shek to promote his former rivals to positions within the Guomindang that sidelined them from any real decision-making authority. Li was "rewarded" with the post of Director of Beiping Headquarters in 1945, effectively removing him from command of his own Guangxi divisions. Bai, who had loyally served Chiang throughout the Sino-Japanese War, was initially given command of several government divisions in 1945 but eventually shuffled into the ceremonial job of Minister of Defense. In Yunnan province, the Japanese surrender finally gave the long gestating central armies in the region an excuse to move against Long Yun, who was arrested on October 1945 by government troops under the command of Du Yuming. Long would later be quietly flown out of Kunming to serve out the remainder of his days as a government lackey (although he would eventually escape to join the Communists in 1948). The only prominent militarist who managed to avoid being targeted by both the Guomindang and the Japanese was Yan Xishan, whose willingness to cut deals with enemy Japanese commanders and pivot to anti-Communist activities assured the continued political autonomy of Shanxi province under his rule.

[1] USSDCDF, "Report from Service: Chiang Kai-shek's Treatment of the Kwangi Clique, March 21, 1945," Box 7262: 893.00/3-2145

From a military perspective, the Guomindang had also come out of the Sino-Japanese War substantially stronger than before. On paper, the NRA had exploded to well over 4 million men under arms. Additionally, the steady improvement of American Lend-Lease deliveries during the final years of WWII enabled Chiang to retrofit some of his central armies with surplus American tanks, giving the Nationalists the rare luxury of possessing a handful of mechanized divisions. Most importantly, Chiang Kai-shek and Claire Chennault's concerted efforts to invest in air power had paid dividends in the rejuvenation of the Republic of China Air Force's formerly ailing fleet of outdated Soviet craft. By 1945, the Nationalists' air force had since been retrofitted with the latest American planes and manned by experienced Chinese pilots trained abroad in the United States. Abetting this process of military renewal was Joseph Stilwell's successor, General Albert Wedemeyer, who unlike his predecessor agreed with Chiang that the development of an air transportation network would be crucial for helping the Nationalists administrate and oversee China's vast territorial space.[2]

Finally, by reoccupying the coastline, the Nationalists regained the port facilities through which shipping could once again flow. Collateral damage, plunder, and deliberate sabotage by retreating Japanese forces, however, had damaged much of the physical infrastructure in the region, although a number of urban factories had managed to escape wartime destruction.[3] The Guomindang's priorities, therefore, were to immediately repair the airfields, highways, rail lines, and port facilities of its cosmopolitan centers so as to re-establish overland and trans-Pacific

[2] Hoover Archives, "No. 853-7: Memo from Albert Wedemeyer to His Excellency, The Generalissimo," Jan 9, 1946, Albert Wedemeyer Papers, United Forces China Theater: Memoranda to the Generalissimo, Jan – April 1946, 86.1
[3] SHAC, "Jingji bu guanyu zhan shi jiqi dianqi gongye gaikuang de baogao [The Ministry of Economic Affairs' report on the general situation of wartime and electric machinery]" 1945, [ZHMGSDAZLHB], *caizheng jingji*, no. 6 (1979): 301-302; Caizheng bu tongji chu bianzhi zhi zhan shi tudi shui ji qishui zhengshou shu'e biao [The Statistics Department of The Ministry of Finance's report on wartime land tax and property tax collections]," Sept, 1946, ZHMGSDAZLHB vol. 5: 1 (1997): 588-592

international trade routes.[4] Favorable terms of trade with the United States combined with international loans provided the initial capital from which the Guomindang could jump its post-War economy. Foreign manufacturing companies were also contracted to begin re-development of China's anemic industrial sectors, although the task of auctioning off factories to different corporations was haphazardly executed due to the continual search among municipal officials for bribes.[5]

The central government made additional efforts to reduce its national expenses by demobilizing provincial armies, although this policy proved to be counterproductive.[6] With the removal and/or sidelining of powerful militarists such as Long Yun, their headless troop divisions were typically let go without retroactive pay. Although army officers could typically retire having pocketed a comfortable amount of their own soldiers' salaries, regular foot soldiers whose pay had been in arrears for many months either finagled their way into employment with other military units or more commonly took to banditry.[7] Those demobilized soldiers who were able to return home usually discovered that village and town life were significantly less viable than before. As a result, rampant lawlessness throughout the rural countryside left a bitter taste in the minds of many small landholders who had shouldered the inordinate burden of sustaining the Nationalist war effort only to be abandoned to the whims of wandering ex-soldiers.[8]

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[4] SHAC, "Junshi weiyuanhui binggongchang ku zhengji jihua [The Military Committee's plan for consolidating arsenal warehouses]" Aug 1945, ZHMGSDAZLHB, *caizheng jingji*, no. 6 (1979): 508-525

[5] Suzanne Pepper, Civil War in China: The Political Struggle, 1945-1949 (University of California Press, 1978): 16-32

[6] SHAC, "Caizheng bu dui canzheng yuan deng feihuang guanyu junfei pangda yusuan ruhe pingheng wenti koutou xunwen de dafu [The Ministry of Finance's reply to Deng Feihuang's question regarding how to balance military expenditures]," 1945, ZHMGSDAZLHB vol. 5: 1 (1997): 307-309

[7] Hoover Archives, "No. 666-7: Memo from Albert Wedemeyer to His Excellency the Generalissimo, Chungking, China," July 27, 1945, Albert Wedemeyer Papers, United Forces China Theater: Memoranda to the Generalissimo April 5 - June 4, 1945, nos. 500-598, 85.3

[8] Hoover Archives, "The Black Book: The Military Situation China," Albert Wedemeyer Papers, United Forces China Theater: "Black Book" vol. 7, Section 1-2, 86.4

Infrastructural Mechanisms	Nationalist Policy (1945-1949)	Overall Assessment of State-Building
Extraction	**Primary Sources of Financing**: Lend-Lease Aid, Foreign Loans, Customs Duties **GMD Monopolies:** American Lend-Lease Aid	High levels of extraction from American aid shipments and urban commercial exchanges
Coercing Local Rivals	**Targets of Coercion:** (Rural) Small Landholders	Low levels of rural conscription and impressment High Small Landholder resistance to GMD coercion
Cultivating Dependence	**Targets of Co-optation**: Urban Capitalists	High Urban Capitalist dependence on GMD sanction

Mechanisms of State-building (1945-1949)

Table 3. 1

Within the newly restored capital of Nanjing, however, the growing unruliness of country life was a distant issue. On paper at least, the demobilization of several army groups had drastically lowered military expenses. Freed-up government revenues and emergency food reserves were directed towards retraining and re-supplying the core central armies that were steadily being mobilized up north for a final showdown with the Communists. The removal of militarist generals from the NRA's primary command structures ensured that many of these divisions would be suffused with officers from Chiang's favored Whampoa Clique, although a question continued to remain over who was best suited to prosecuting the military campaigns against the Communist strongholds in Manchuria.

Based off of past military successes, the most competent candidates for commanding Chiang's forces in Manchuria were Chen Cheng, Xue Yue, Tang Enbo, and Li Zongren. All four had demonstrated a solid grasp of military tactics and were, most importantly, strong advocates of a strategy of maneuver warfare, having executed mobile operations at multiple points in their

military careers. Of the initial lot, Li Zongren was immediately disqualified on account of his militarist background and growing detestation of Chiang. Chen Cheng was a more reasonable candidate, having been trained at both Baoding and Whampoa while serving as one of Chiang's favorite generals. The general's professionalism had also won him plaudits from international observers as he was one of the few Nationalist officers that Joseph Stilwell genuinely liked.[9] Such accolades and prestige, however, had enabled Chen to form a clique of his own loyalist officers, which regularly clashed with a rival clique that revolved around Tang Enbo. Tang's own reputation had since been diminished somewhat by his defeat at the hands of the Japanese in 1943.[10] Not one to stoke the egos of his own subordinates, Chiang decided instead to appoint Chen as his Chief of General Staff, where the general could be closely watched by the generalissimo. Four-time defender of Changsha General Xue Yue was another equally promising candidate whose close relationship with Chennault had earned him the nickname of the "Asian Patton." Unlike Chen, however, Xue did not command Chiang's full trust as the general had been an early supporter of the 1936 Xi'an conspirators.

Overall command of the Nationalist forces in Manchuria would ultimately be given to General Du Yuming, a slavish Chiang loyalist whose willingness to countermand Joseph Stilwell's orders during the Sino-Japanese War earned him a significant amount of enmity from Stilwell (and substantial praise from Chiang himself).[11] Other assessments noted that the general was "intelligent in a very smart (slick) way" but, aside from making "a great fortune out of the

[9] Hoover Archives, "Diary Entry Oct 9, 1942" Joseph Stilwell Papers, Box 41, File 41.1
[10] Hoover Archives, "[List of] Chinese" Albert Wedemeyer Papers, United Forces China Theater: General, 86.3
[11] Hoover Archives, "Memo for General Stilwell: The following is brief estimate of the Chinese commanders in the Chinese Expeditionary Force" Joseph Stilwell Papers, Box 34, File 204, 84.32; "Diary Entry 4/1/42" Joseph Stilwell Papers, Box 41, File 41.1

Army," was relatively "weak" in combat.[12] Coordinating alongside Du's central armies would be General Hu Zongnan's divisions deployed in neighboring Shandong province. Although Hu also shared Chiang's close confidence, his role in the Sino-Japanese War had been limited to keeping an eye on Communist activities in Shandong and thus his wartime prestige was not nearly as pronounced as that of Du Yuming – a disparity that Hu sought to fix.[13]

To summarize the Nationalists' domestic position going into 1946, politically and militarily the Guomindang was at its highest peak since the Nanjing decade, having eradicated and neutralized the most prominent militarist voices in its ranks while gradually consolidating the NRA under the command of a select group of loyalists. With the benefit of international recognition granted to a victorious member of the Allied Powers, the Guomindang also began making steady strides in its economic recovery by acquiring generous loans from the United States.[14] Yet underneath the rosy exterior of post-war optimism were several lingering problems. First, there was a noticeably stark divide between the lethargic recovery of the rural provinces and the prioritized recovery of the urban cities. Given that the vast majority of the central government's post-war investment was pouring into China's cosmopolitan regions, few hamlets and towns witnessed any concerted attempt to alleviate their lot. Nor was there a noticeable decline in the Guomindang's demands for crops and cereals to feed both its still sizeable armies and the influx of citizens re-inhabiting the cities. In some cases, rural provinces fared even worse than during the highpoint of the Sino-Japanese War on account of the rapid influx of banditry resulting from the government's sudden demobilization of thousands of unwanted provincial

[12] Hoover Archives, "[List of] Chinese" Albert Wedemeyer Papers, United Forces China Theater: General, 86.3
[13] SHAC, "Hu Zongnan yaoqiu diaopai jundui zhi shan bei zhi jiangjieshi dian [Telegram from Hu Zongnan to Chiang Kai-shek requesting the dispatch of troops to north Shaanxi]" Dec 1940, ZHMGSDAZLHB, *zhengzhi*, no. 2 (1979): 188
[14] Arthur Young, *China and the Helping Hand: 1937-1945* (Harvard University Press, 1963)

units. The Guomindang's policy of hoarding emergency wartime supplies collected from the villages rather than redistributing them back to rural communities did little to alleviate the pain.

Second, although provincial militarists such as Li Zongren, Bai Chongxi, and Long Yun had been swiftly neutralized, the concentration of military command posts to Chiang loyalists did not necessarily reduce the amount of political-military friction inherent in Guomindang politics. The absence of government and militarist officials squabbling over rents had since been replaced with the clique-ish pettiness of Whampoa generals squabbling over who would receive the largest share of supplies, military equipment, or prestigious command posts. While most commanders were dedicated to Chiang, such bottom-up devotion to the generalissimo did not translate into any horizontal integration of military command and control. The effective management of such messy affairs of state, Wedemeyer cynically noted, would have required a Disraeli, Churchill and Machiavelli all combined in one."[15] Chiang's solution to these problems was to try and force the issue by deploying rival armies next to each other; although rather than obliging generals to coordinate their military operations, this only led generals to send their strategic disagreements to Chiang for mediation. Contrary to reducing political-military discord, the forced inter-mixing of generals into the same area of operations increased the amount of disputes that Chiang had to personally arbitrate.

[15] Hoover Archives, "Letter from Albert Wedemeyer to General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff War Department, Chungking, China," December 10, 1944, Albert Wedemeyer Papers, United Forces China Theater: George C Marshall, 82.23

Political-Military Dispute	Nationalist Policy (1945-1947)	Overall Assessment of Political-Military Discord
Rent-Extraction	Regular disputes among Whampoa Officers, Baoding Officers, and American-trained Officers. Lucrative political offices granted to Whampoa Officers over Baoding and American-trained Officers	High discord
Operational Authority	High government intervention in resolving military disputes over operational coordination High military recognition of government operational authority No integration of separate army commands	Moderate discord

Sources of Political-Military Discord (1945-1947)

Table 3. 2

1946-1947: Guomindang Offensives in Manchuria

During the late 1945 scramble for territory abandoned by the Japanese, the United States special envoy George Marshall sought to negotiate a ceasefire between Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong. Although both the Nationalists and the Communists agreed to a momentary cessation of large-scale hostilities, ongoing skirmishes between their forces continued while Marshall fruitlessly tried to formulate a power-sharing arrangement that would satisfy both sides. As talks rapidly broke down, Chiang and his generals began to formulate a war plan for eliminating the Communist stronghold in Manchuria and finally uniting the entire mainland under the Guomindang.

Drawing from their military experiences in combatting the Japanese, both Du Yuming and Hu Zongnan advocated a rapid mobile offensive that would use the Guomindang's elite mechanized divisions to divide, encircle, and crush the Communists' best armies. Unlike past

strategies of mobile warfare, which typically saw the Nationalists throwing their weakest provincial armies into the fray while reserving their best units for the decisive blow, Du Yuming and Hu Zongnan's proposal was more akin to the Japanese's policy during Ichigo of deliberately seeking out the enemy's crack armies for immediate destruction. Holding the central government's best forces in reserve, Du warned, would only prolong military hostilities and potentially give the Communists time to shuffle reinforcements to critical areas.

The plodding force assigned to the 1946 Manchurian offensive was once again a heterogeneous composition of elite central armies and lesser provincial units. The recent forced demobilization of several provincial divisions had slightly re-oriented the balance of power in favor of central government forces, but Chiang kept many better-trained provincial armies – such as Li and Bai's Guangxi troops – intact rather than risk allowing them to return to their home regions and re-establish their autonomy from the Guomindang. Ideally, Du hoped, these competent but less motivated provincial armies would serve a subsidiary role in mopping up isolated Communist units while the mechanized central forces progressed rapidly into enemy territory. Other armies that were poorly equipped and poorly trained would be relegated to garrison duty or protecting supply routes from Communist guerrillas. Spearheading the Nationalist offensives would be the cream of the government's elite forces, the famous New 1st Army. Formed from the remnants of the China Expeditionary Force, the New 1st Army had accumulated its veteran status fighting Japanese forces in Burma and was almost entirely trained and equipped by American military personnel.

Immediately from the outset, Du Yuming's plan for a grand strategic offensive into Manchuria went awry. Whereas the Japanese had previously been willing to play into the Nationalists' hands by launching their own military attacks that could then be outflanked, the

Communists in contrast refused to engage the Guomindang's central armies while relying on guerrilla forces to infiltrate behind Nationalist lines and sabotage enemy infrastructure.[16] Relatively light Communist resistance, however, did not necessarily translate into rapid territorial gains for the central government. Given the NRA's dependence on military supplies selectively distributed along rail lines, Communist insertion attacks against the Guomindang's tenuously fragile logistics network could hold up military advances for days as government engineers scrambled to catch up with guerrilla activities. Whenever Du diverted forces south to clear up Communist guerrillas, frontline enemy units would launch their own attacks against weakened Nationalist units, thereby forcing Du to whiplash his divisions back and forth in response to ongoing crises.[17] In Shandong province, Hu Zongnan's forces were running into similar difficulties, as they too were dependent on supplies delivered from central headquarters along a narrow sinew of railways. Although Nationalist troop divisions had been assigned for the sole purpose of protecting government infrastructure, these relatively under-trained and under-equipped forces were unable to prevent Communist guerrillas from brazenly capturing government air fields and railway sections near the cities of Dezhou, Tai'an, Changtien, and Zhoucun.[18]

As the central government's best forces became mired in Manchuria, Hu Zongnan proposed an alternative plan to break the military deadlock. Rather than have the Guomindang pour more troops and supplies into supporting Du Yuming's offensive, Hu insisted that Chiang divert reinforcements to his Shandong front in preparation for a westward thrust into Shaanxi province and capturing the Communist wartime capital at Yan'an. Eager for a quick victory,

[16] USSDCDF, "Summary Military Attache Report for period May 21 to 28" June 3, 1946, Box 7265, 893.00/6-326
[17] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Nanking to Secretary of State," June 6, 1947, Box 7270, 893.00/6-547
[18] USSDCDF, "Telegram to Secretary of State: Tsingtao via Navy," June 20, 1946, Box 7265, 893.00/6-2046

Chiang agreed to Hu's plan and re-deployed 150,000 soldiers and seventy-five of his precious aircraft to the Yan'an campaign.[19]

In March of 1947, the NRA's 1st and 29th Armies struck west into the political heartland of the Communist government. From the map room, it appeared as if the NRA had finally recaptured its operational mobility; arrows indicating the extent of government advances stretched longer over the course of several short days as central armies penetrated deeper into enemy territory. In a single week, Hu's triumphant divisions entered the city of Yan'an, elating the normally cautious Chiang for the first time in many months. The fall of the Communist government's political center was an enormous public relations victory for the Guomindang, although international observers warned that the "mobility" of Hu Zongnan's military units appeared to have been deliberately facilitated by the Communists. American observers in the region noted that Mao, having been forewarned of Hu's offensive, ordered the evacuation of the city well in advance of the campaign. In a telling bit of foreshadowing, U.S. intelligence analysts made several pertinent predictions:

> It has long been apparent that the Communists […] never had any real intention of defending Yenan… Rather it is more in keeping with their long developed tactics to evacuate any given point in the face of enemy pressure, draw him into a pocket, and thereafter gradually sap his strength with guerilla tactics. Furthermore government lines are seriously extended into territory which can be counted upon to be hostile in all respects. US officer in charge of Executive Headquarters Liaison group, on his return from Yenan [Yan'an] reported that […] holding Yenan and surrounding areas and maintaining order would immobilize 17 government brigades.[20]

Suspicions of a Communist ploy became even more pronounced as additional reports on the ground began to directly contradict the exultant claims of the Guomindang's propaganda machine. The government's report of heavy fighting for Yan'an seemed to be opposed by press

[19] Westad, *Decisive Encounters* (2003): 150-152
[20] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Nanking to Secretary of State," March 24, 1947, Box 7269, 893.00/3-2347

observations that there was "no recent war damage [...] with exception of central library which was destroyed by Communists;" government figures of having captured 10,000 Communist prisoners were opposed by reports from a U.S. military attaché who witnessed nothing "in excess of eight hundred [prisoners], majority of whom were inferior troops, probably local militia."[21] More dangerous were the ongoing supply problems afflicting the government troops in the area. With the Communists leaving behind no grain stores in the city, supplies would have to be delivered by road from the provincial capital at Xi'an (which amounted to a 4-5 day trip) or flown in by airlift.[22]

Hu Zongnan's costly detour into Shaanxi province ultimately did not serve the government's hope of shattering the Communists' morale. More importantly, the substantial resources and men that Chiang had invested in the capture and maintenance of Yan'an essentially deprived Du Yuming of their use. Back east in Manchuria, the New First Army, which had entered Manchuria with 40,000 men, had taken 12,000 casualties, none of which were replaced by the central government as the majority of available replacements had been committed to the Shaanxi region.[23] Additionally, Communist attacks against crucial railroads and communication lines continued to delay supply trains on the occasion that they could be mobilized.

During the years when the Guomindang depended on rural-centric modes of extraction, government institutions such as the Ministry of Food, Interior, and Transportation could draw upon their own ranks of municipal officials and co-opted rural gentry to help procure the supplies needed for military operations. Even as rudimentary mechanized transportation services

[21] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Nanking to Secretary of State," April 10, 1947, Box 7269, 893.00/4-1047
[22] Ibid.
[23] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Nanking to Secretary of State," May 5, 1947, Box 7270, 893.00/5-447

floundered and Japanese incursions captured government rail lines, local administrators spread out among the rural provinces could often forcefully push the burden of transport off onto the shoulders of the citizenry and deliver supplies by foot or draft animal. Although municipal officials had since relocated to the more lucrative rent opportunities offered by the cities while rural communities had been long since bled dry from over-predation, Du Yuming nonetheless attempted to replicate a rural-centric supply apparatus by redeploying 50 "peace preservation corps regiments" throughout the countryside.[24] Poorly disciplined and typically unconnected to the local communities they were "protecting," these units were usually capable of nothing more than appropriating food for their own consumption while counterproductively dissolving in the face of Communist guerrillas.

Highly contentious relations among politically appointed Nationalist generals and among their subordinates also contributed to Nationalist woes. Du Yuming and Hu Zongnan regularly competed over their share of reinforcements and equipment with both generals incessantly lobbying Chiang for additional supplies and troop divisions on behalf of their war front.[25] At the same time, coordination between the Manchurian and Shandong fronts was poorly conceived and typically only possible when Chiang personally appealed to his generals for harmony.[26] Yet even the generalissimo struggled to maintain a firm hand on his generals from time to time with Hu Zongnan at one point outright refusing the General's personally delivered plea to deliver reinforcements from Shandong to the Manchuria front.[27] Tensions were no less prevalent between generals and their military subordinates. Du Yuming, in particular, did not get along well with Sun Lijen, the commander of the New First Army and one of the few Nationalist

[24] Ibid.
[25] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Nanking to Secretary of State," May 8, 1947, Box 7270, 893.00/5-847
[26] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Nanking to Secretary of State," July 1, 1947, Box 7271, 893.00/7-147
[27] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Nanking to Secretary of State," Aug 26, 1947, Box 7271, 893.00/8-2547

officers educated entirely by American advisers. In May, Du "promoted" Sun to the position of Deputy Commander and essentially deprived the general of his military command; lacking any of the Whampoa and Baoding connections that could have protected him from Du's political maneuverings, Sun had little choice but to accept.[28]

In the face of pervasive supply problems and the gradual ebbing away of his military strength, Du Yuming made the decision to consolidate his limited territorial gains until government reinforcements and supplies could arrive to alleviate his logistical shortfall. Although this ostensibly handed the initiative back to the Communists, Nationalist armies still possessed a number of military advantages; specifically better equipment, more men under arms, and the ability to resupply isolated garrisons from the air. For Du's strategy of positional defense to be successful, however, government garrisons would need to mutually support one another in the face of Communist attacks. Instead, individual divisions stayed relatively immobile behind their fortifications, allowing Communist armies to bypass larger strong points and target smaller garrisons with local superiority in numbers.[29] When generals called for military aid, nearby commanders would demur with the excuse of protecting their own sections from alleged Communist assaults.[30] Chiang in turn assured his commanders that he would send another 100,000 men to Manchuria, although such resupply efforts failed to immediately materialize due to relief columns regularly being delayed by severed transportation lines.[31]

Overall, the first phase of the Guomindang's Manchuria offensive ran into the same logistical difficulties that mobile Japanese divisions encountered during their offensives into

[28] USSDCDF, "General Sun Li-jen's Removal from Command of the New First Army in Manchuria," June 2, 1947 Box 7270, 893.00/5-1447
[29] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Mukden to Secretary of State," June 2, 1947, Box 7270, 893.00/5-3147; "Telegram from Mukden to Secretary of State," June 4, 1947, Box 7270, 893.00/6-347
[30] "USSDCDF, "Telegram from Nanking to Secretary of State," June 3, 1947, Box 7270, 893.00/6-447
[31] USSDCDF, "Deterioration of the Military Situation in Manchuria," June 10, 1947, Box 7270, 893.00/6-747

China's interior. Ironically, the Nationalists' earlier role as a scrappy underdog living off the land in the face of a stronger mechanized opponent had since been co-opted by the Communists, who lacked any mechanized transport services of their own. Now, the Nationalists were, like the Japanese opponents they once fought, the cumbersome mechanized force struggling to get by on a trail of poorly maintained roads while their infantry-dominant opponent maneuvered freely through the countryside. Unlike Japanese command, however, Nationalist armies also had to deal with high levels of political-military discord among Whampoa generals, Baoding generals, and a smaller sub-class of politically isolated American-trained officers. The government's centralization of American military equipment, emergency food reserves, and precious airplanes also served as an added hurdle as typically supplies could only be dispatched after direct confirmation from Chiang himself, whose intelligence on war front dynamics was not always up-to-date. As a result, even though generals such as Du Yuming and Hu Zongnan were fervent advocates of using mobile warfare to encircle and crush Communist divisions, their own military operations belied their strategizing.

1947-1949: Urban-Centric Extraction and the Shift to Low Political-Military Discord

As the Nationalist position in Manchuria degraded, the growing realization that the Communists were a potent existential threat on par with the Japanese in years past led to fitful, but tangible reductions in political-military discord. Chiang, desperate to salvage the Nationalist offensive, removed the ambitious but collegially challenged Du Yuming from military command and replaced him with General Chen Cheng in August of 1947. Chen, in his position as Chief of Staff, had been unremitting in calling for wide encirclements of Communist divisions rather than passively hoping for the enemy to throw themselves at prepared Nationalist strongpoints. Upon

his appointment to overall command, Chen announced to news reporters that "hereafter mobile warfare will be adopted, placing emphasis on inflicting casualties rather than holding areas."[32]

To turn the tide, Chen immediately began cleaning house among his regional officers by purging Du Yuming's loyalists and other squabbling commanders that Chen deemed overly corrupt or incompetent.[33] The replacement of old personnel with new military professionals under Chen's guidance was regarded as a promising start by the rank and file, which in turn led to a considerable improvement in morale.[34] At the same time, Chiang unleashed much-needed reserves and supplies for the Manchuria front with an additional promise that Chen's 500,000 troops would receive priority for future supply shipments. As a result, Du Yuming's policy of forcing grain procurements at bayonet-point and the impromptu practice of local conscription were officially countermanded. Soldiers were instead ordered to purchase their grains from the local population, although sky-high black market prices and overall scarcity made such a policy difficult to enforce. For the first time in several months, American observers noted approvingly that Nationalist forces had begun reacquiring much of their early pep:

> The arrival in Manchuria of reinforcements and materiel, the repair of damaged railway trackage, the arrest of corrupt high officers and the deferring of conscription during haresting have raised the morale of Government soldiery and of civilians. If General Chen can maintain this momentum […], there may be hope of his achieving success in the difficult task of defending and possibly expanding the wedge of territory still retained by the Chinese Government in Manchuria.[35]

Although promising improvements to the political-military front were afoot, there was little Chen could do to immediately fix the Nationalists' anemic supply network, which – despite

[32] USSDCDF, "Memorandum on Civil War in Northeast China," Aug 14, 1947, Box 7270, 893.00/8-1447
[33] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Mukden to Secretary of State," Sept 8, 1947, Box 7271, 893.00/9-647; "Telegram from Mukden to Secretary of State," Sept 27, 1947, Box 7271, 893.00/9-2547
[34] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Mukden to Secretary of State," Sept 11, 1947, Box 7271, 893.00/9-947
[35] USSDCDF, "Memo on Improvement in the Situation in Manchuria Subsequent to Chen Cheng's Assumption of Authority in that Area," Sept 24, 1947, Box 7271, 893.00/9-2247

Chiang's reinforcements – had not improved in terms of administrative breadth or spatial reach. Supplies still had to be trafficked by train or plane or on roads wide enough for mechanized transport. As a result, upon taking over for Du Yuming, Chen Cheng quickly realized that his hope of resuscitating a mobile offensive against Communist forces was logistically unsustainable. Flying columns sent out to support neighboring armies were limited to traveling by road and were easily surrounded by mobile Communist units that were not tied down by mechanized transport services. In one embarrassing fiasco, the Nationalist 49th Army was completely annihilated by Communist encirclement after having just arrived to reinforce the Manchuria front.[36] In a separate incident, Chen ordered the 55th Army to interdict an expected Communist attack, only for the unit to be ambushed and routed.[37] While the American-trained New First and Sixth Armies were still capable of beating back any conventional Communist attack, Chen's reliance on moving his two best armies back and forth in response to Communist incursions was – like Du's reactionary strategy beforehand – gradually wearing down even these elite units.[38]

As Communist offensives became increasingly more ambitious, Chen's military position worsened. The general's order countermanding Du Yuming's grain appropriations had since relapsed as Nationalist troops reverted to gouging the local populations out of sheer desperation.[39] As Communist armies swept through Manchuria, Chen Cheng reverted to his predecessor's strategy of turtling up Nationalist forces into strongpoint garrisons protecting the major cities. With the advantage of air power and interlocking pillbox defenses, these city garrisons easily repelled the few Communist attempts to capture them; although this strongpoint

[36] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Mukden to Secretary of State," Oct 6, 1947, Box 7271, 893.00/10-347
[37] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Mukden to Secretary of State," Oct 5, 1947, Box 7271, 893.00/10-447
[38] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Mukden to Secretary of State," Oct 6, 1947, Box 7271, 893.00/10-347
[39] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Mukden to Secretary of State," Nov 12, 1947, Box 7272, 893.00/11-847

doctrine came at the cost of allowing Communist armies to march uncontested throughout ostensibly "government-controlled" territory while collecting food supplies and destroying physical infrastructure at their leisure.[40] In summarizing the state of the Nationalist position in Manchuria, U.S. analysts made several pertinent observations:

> In a predominantly agrarian society such as China's, the occupation of an urban center is of continuing military value to the occupying force in proportion to the degree of full and free economic and political intercourse obtaining between that city and its adjacent countryside… If this condition does not obtain, the mere military occupation of a city […] becomes a source of weakness to the occupying force… In North China and Manchuria […] the Government forces involved soon became irrevocably committed to the garrisoning of occupied cities and the guarding of lines of communication. In so doing, they lost the capability of offensive sweeps through the countryside contiguous to these garrisons with the aim of preventing the consolidation of Communist military strength in rural areas.[41]

Chen's abandonment of maneuver warfare in favor of a positional strategy did seem to momentarily stabilize the Manchurian front. At the general's behest, Nationalist armies abandoned several forward outposts and re-located to more defensible positions that were closer to government supply stations. A December 1947 Communist attack near the city of Siping crumbled in the face of surprisingly strong Nationalist resistance although a short-lived government counteroffensive in January of 1948 failed to make any headway.[42] With Chiang trafficking additional supplies and reinforcements towards the Manchurian theatre, Chen continued to hold out hope that if he could marshal sufficient foodstuffs and materiel while surviving through the winter season, the Nationalists might eventually retake the initiative. Such a rosy outlook, however, was undermined by the bleak assessment of the U.S. military mission stationed in the region, which noted that there was "no particular advantage apparent moving

[40] USSDCDF, "Memo Prepared by Vice Consul Fred E. Hubbard on the Objectives and Success of Communist Sixth Offensive," Nov 24, 1947, Box 7272, 893.00/11-2447

[41] USSDCDF, "Memo on Assessment of Current Military Position of Central Government and Suggested Application of American Military Assistance," Dec 6, 1947, Box 7272, 893.00/12-647

[42] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Mukden to Secretary of State," Jan 6, 1947, Box 7272, 893.00/1-648; "Telegram from Mukden to Secretary of State," Jan 9, 1947, Box 7272, 893.00/1-948

quantities foodstuff into China except to supply immediate areas surrounding Shanghai, Canton [Guangzhou], Tsingtao [Qingdao], Peiping [Beiping] and Tientsen [Tianjin] since government entirely incapable moving or distributing goods beyond these points."[43]

The momentary stabilization of the military front was ultimately short lived. A devastating Communist Winter Offensive executed by General Lin Biao circumvented Chen's fortified stronghold at Shenyang and split Nationalist forces in two while capturing the crucial railway lines that had connected Manchuria to the rest of northern China.[44] This embarrassing military defeat was quickly followed by an increasing number of calls from rival Whampoa generals to have Chen Cheng removed from command.[45] Chen's own reputation as a no-nonsense officer who won hard-fought victories was in tatters by the end of 1947, and his reliance on a diminishing cohort of professional soldiers drew heated criticism even among members of his Baoding circle; such as Bai Chongxi, who advocated ramping up local recruitment to bolster Nationalist ranks.[46] Most notably, Chen's heavy-handed tactics in removing officers that he deemed corrupt or too beholden to Du Yuming – while initially effective at clamping down on domestic friction – had also made him a number of enemies within the powerful Whampoa clique. Without tangible military victories to justify Chen's purges of Nationalist personnel, the Baoding general's emboldened critics maneuvered behind the scenes to have him removed from command. Beset by political pressure from his generals and aware that Chen's lack of military success was having a counterproductive effect on local

[43] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Mukden to Secretary of State," Feb 5, 1948, Box 7273, 893.00/2-548
[44] Westad, *Decisive Encounters* (2003): 177
[45] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Mukden to Secretary of State," Jan 13, 1948, Box 7272, 893.00/1-948
[46] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Nanking to Secretary of State," Dec 12, 1947, Box 7272, 893.00/12-1247

morale, Chiang reluctantly shuffled his star general off to recuperate from "illness" and had him replaced with General Wei Lihuang.[47]

In reviewing Chen Cheng's military record, the general made a number of significant strides in initially quashing the political-military discord that had festered under Du Yuming's command, although tempering this friction did little to improve the logistical obstacles that continued to bedevil Nationalist military operations. Even as Chiang diverted additional reinforcements and materiel to Chen's war front, the easily interdicted movement of convoys along a skeletal span of supply routes remained a glaring weakness of the NRA. And with continued military setbacks eating away at Chen's polished standing, military officials and political agents who had been displaced by the general's policies were keen to stir up discontent among Chen's subordinate officers and his superiors. As a result, Chen Cheng – who had rarely ever respected the well-connected Whampoa class of officers – never fully resolved the problem of high political-military discord and had almost no control over the infrastructural weaknesses of the Guomindang's supply services. To his own chagrin, the general ultimately wound up adopting the very same positional strategies that he himself had lambasted throughout his own career.

Economic Collapse and the Last Gasp of Positional Warfare

The man who would take over command of the Manchuria front until the end of the war, General Wei Lihuang, lacked Chen Cheng's star pedigree, but possessed a professional pragmatism which earned him plaudits from the American generals who had worked with him during the Sino-Japanese War, although some regarded him as "unimaginative" in his military

[47] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Mukden to Secretary of State," Jan 24, 1948, Box 7272, 893.00/1-2448

offensives.[48] More importantly, whereas Chen Cheng's esteemed military reputation had been burnished primarily by his victories against the Japanese, Wei Lihuang's military record was filled with distinguished victories against the Communists during the early 1930s. Being relatively well-liked by his colleagues and junior officers, Wei had the Generalissimo's ear while also possessing the military class networks to help shield him from the political reprisals that ultimately sank the careers of the un-connected Sun Lijen and the self-alienating Chen Cheng.[49]

Upon taking over command, Wei's immediate efforts were focused on alleviating the NRA's endemic supply problems. A rapid assessment of the Nationalists' crumbling supply system resulted in the general urgently shifting some of his best staff to areas where logistical problems were most severe.[50] Additionally, Wei took it upon himself to add his voice to a growing chorus of Nationalist appeals for additional American military aid; quietly declaring to U.S. representatives that Chen Cheng's optimistic military assessments had been wildly inaccurate.[51] A dearth of materiel was crippling military operations, Wei noted, and such shortages precluded him from "waging any type [of] counteroffensive or even relieving besieged garrisons."[52] What was needed, the general pleaded, was for the United States to "furnish weapons and ammunition" and another "200 transport planes" to replace the Nationalist air force's over-worked cargo fleet and rejuvenate the government's rapidly degrading ability to airlift supplies to troops in need.

To Chiang, Wei was no less blunt in his cynicism, but tempered his assessment by arguing that three additional government armies of 40,000 men each would be enough for him to

[48] Hoover Archives, "[List of] Chinese" Albert Wedemeyer Papers, United Forces China Theater: General, 86.3
[49] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Mukden to Secretary of State," Feb 19, 1948, Box 7273, 893.00/2-1948
[50] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Mukden to Secretary of State," Feb 14, 1948, Box 7273, 893.00/2-1448
[51] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Mukden to Secretary of State," Feb 20, 1948, Box 7273, 893.00/2-2048
[52] Ibid.

retake all of the territory lost under Chen and Du's generalship.[53] Until "sufficient troops [were] sent northeast [to] restore and keep open rail communication," the Nationalists' military position would remain committed to defending a shrinking enclave of heavily fortified "islands.[54]" The generalissimo, on his end, balked at the number of forces Wei requested. Chiang had already deprived his other war fronts of skilled troops in order to reinforce the Manchuria theatre while Chen Cheng was in command; now Wei Lihuang was requesting an additional 120,000 men with the same promises that Chen had once given to the generalissimo. Additionally, Wei's pleas for reinforcements had to be balanced against the demands of Chiang's other generals; Bai Chongxi pushed heavily for Chiang to redirect personnel away from Manchuria towards his own failing central front, Hu Zongnan requested additional men to stem Communist advances in Shandong province, and Fu Zuoyi and Yan Xishan were asking for more soldiers to help bolster their positions in Shanxi province. Chiang ultimately decided to airlift several units from the south in a last-ditch effort to strengthen the Manchurian front, which he deemed the most important theatre.[55] Such a maneuver risked weakening the government's hold in the southern provinces which were beset by a loosely organized group of Communist guerrillas, but given that the bulk of the Communist armies were stationed up north, Chiang calculated that a decisive victory in Manchuria would counterbalance any temporary setbacks elsewhere. In any case, victorious Nationalist troops could always be sent back south again to clean up pockets of resistance.

As Chiang Kai-shek funneled additional forces north for a final showdown with the Communists, the Guomindang's capacity for fiscal extraction in intramural China remained confined to the cities where the government's administrative presence was strongest. A few half-

[53] Ibid.
[54] USSDCDF, 'Telegram from Mukden to Secretary of State," Mar 3, 1948, Box 7373, 893.00/3-348
[55] Westad, *Decisive Encounters* (2003): 190

hearted attempts to rejuvenate heavy industry in the rural countryside were abandoned as Communist guerrillas typically destroyed any new machinery or equipment transported outside the confines of city walls.[56] Within the economic stronghold of Shanghai, well-connected industrial capitalists had benefited by taking over factories owned by Japanese puppet administrators, but want of material resources and sky-high prices made business in manufacturing a corrosively unprofitable venture. Government-sponsored taxation by cohorts of soldiers and administrators quickly gobbled up whatever surplus remained. Chinese capitalists – who had patiently tolerated the predations of the Guomindang – took the failed state of their commercial activities as grounds to criticize the central government for its many broken promises. Having thrown their financial support to the Guomindang, business leaders had been plied with assurances of substantial government compensation and the choicest corporate contracts to make up for their wartime sacrifices; these pledged profit-margins never came to pass, and the bourgeoisie were furious in their condemnation of the government.

In 1948 a desperate economic reform program led by Chiang's own son, Chiang Ching-kuo [Jiang Jingguo], was implemented in the commercial stronghold of Shanghai with the intention of uprooting the most predatory of government administrators while stabilizing market prices. At the same time, the central government implemented a ruthless crackdown on traders who either hoarded their goods or attempted to move them outside of the cities to avoid being slammed with additional taxes. For a month and a half, the skyrocketing prices of food fell back down to normal levels and government soldiers were able to purchase grains in the local markets. Such apparent success pushed Chiang Ching-kuo to extend his reform program to encompass the entirety of Zhejiang, Anhui, and Jiangsu province, but unbeknownst to the generalissimo's

[56] USSDCDF, "Telegram from Mukden to Secretary of State," Feb 5, 1948, Box 7273, 893.00/2-548

ambitious progeny, the short-term stabilization was illusory.[57] Traders and merchants circumvented the cities entirely as it was no longer profitable to sell goods at the artificially low price ceilings imposed by the central government; it was far more lucrative to sell grain and commodities on the black markets. Civil and military granaries found themselves rapidly depleting their food stocks while mills and factories closed down for want of raw materials. The commercial exodus from the cities further aggrandized the impoverished conditions of civilians who happened to live in the most allegedly prosperous and cosmopolitan centers on the Chinese mainland. As poor as wartime conditions had been in Chongqing during the Sino-Japanese War, at least civilians living in the cities managed to avoid much of the mass starvation that would later afflict the rural countryside; now, the Guomindang could barely even feed its own citizenry much less spare additional food for its military.[58]

The one viable lifeline that continued to sustain the Guomindang was financial assistance from the United States, although President Harry Truman was increasingly reluctant to pour additional economic aid into what seemed like a bottomless money pit in China.[59] With the announcement of the Truman Doctrine in 1947, Chiang Kai-shek remained confident that American loans would be readily available for the Guomindang as it fought against the Chinese Communists; it therefore came as a shock to the generalissimo that a strong contingent of Europe firsters, including the secretary of state George Marshall, were pushing for a limit to the United States' military and financial involvement.[60] A fierce lobbying campaign by Chiang Kai-shek's wife, Song Meiling, and his brother in law, T.V. Soong [Song Ziwen], combined with pressure from U.S. Republicans convinced Truman to sign the China Aid Act in April of 1948, although

[57] Pepper, *Civil War in China* (1978): 125
[58] Westad, Decisive Encounters (2003): 183-185
[59] Ibid: 159
[60] Ibid: 186-187

disagreements over how to distribute said aid would delay any actual shipments until November. By then, however, the balance of power had shifted decisively to the Communists.

As financial collapse afflicted the Guomindang's economic base, logistical lapses irreversibly trended upwards on the military front. With the Nationalists unable to feed even their own citizenry, supply shipments to and from rear granaries to military storehouses gradually ceased. Resupply missions for Nationalist garrisons were now almost entirely dependent on air shipments. In late September of 1948, the commander of the Communist forces in Manchuria, General Lin Biao, initiated his offensive to drive out Wei Lihuang's forces and complete the Communist takeover of Manchuria. In what would be known as the Liaoshen Campaigns, Communist troops first attacked the government garrison at Jinzhou. Upon hearing of the Communist attack, Chiang ordered Wei to send a relief force and lift the siege. The conservative-minded Wei, in turn, refused to march out and was convinced that the attack on Jinzhou was a Communist ploy intended to draw his slower forces out of the safety of Shenyang where they could be encircled by the enemy. Only when Chiang threatened Wei with insubordination did the general reluctantly order his troops to counterattack.

The resulting military disaster of the Guomindang's counter-offensive played out exactly as Wei predicted. Although government armies moved relatively quicker than expected due to recapturing several railway stations from which they shuttled troops further north, Communist armies rapidly pounced on Wei Lihuang's forces and proceeded to encircle them.[61] A Nationalist attempt to initiate a hammer and anvil attack fell into disarray when the "hammer" force under the command of Liao Yaoxiang was surrounded and overrun at Heishan, and by the end of

[61] Te-kong Tong & Li Tsung-jen, *The Memoirs of Li Tsung-jen* (1979): 473

October, both Jinzhou and Wei's military headquarters at Shenyang were lost.[62] The defeat in Manchuria essentially broke the back of the NRA and costed the Guomindang the remaining bulk of their best central armies. Many of the Nationalist soldiers killed and captured were the last bulwark of the U.S.-trained army groups that had sustained the Nationalists' military campaigns. Wei Lihuang, for his troubles, would be scapegoated and thrown into house arrest as the remaining Nationalist garrisons fell one by one to the Communist advance.

The conclusion of the Liaoshen Campaigns in November of 1948 was quickly followed by the Huaihai Campaigns which ultimately concluded a little over two months later in January of 1949. Although desperate resistance would continue in certain areas – particularly those under the command of Tang Enbo and Hu Zongnan – these short-lived battles were a re-tread of the typical model in which static Nationalist garrisons were starved out or bombarded into submission by besieging Communist forces. The inflow of additional U.S. military surplus from the China Aid Act helped sustain the Guomindang's resistance for a while, but Chiang eventually made the decision in December of 1948 to re-divert the bulk of these aid shipments to Taiwan, where the central government was making plans to relocate its political operations.

Assessing the Nationalists from 1946-1949

Overall, the Chinese Civil War illustrates how reductions in political-military discord by themselves are not sufficient to overcome the logistical inertia resulting from a purely urban-centric form of extraction and procurement. While the existential threat of the Communists did not lead to the creation of any unified command structure in the NRA, it did spur several much-needed reforms. The most important of these included the sidelining of provincial militarists who had dominated political and military decision-making during the Sino-Japanese War and the

[62] Westad, *Decisive Encounters* (2003): 196-197

promotion of military officers with an established record of advocating and executing mobile operations against the Japanese. These reforms, however, ultimately fell short in rejuvenating the Nationalists' capacity for maneuver warfare because they did not address the underlying structural limitations of the Guomindang's supply system.

In some sense, wartime scarcity can be blamed for much of the Nationalists' inability to fully implement their ambitious mobile offensives. Put differently, the Nationalists' logistical struggles had less to do with the infrastructural capacity of their administrative apparatus and more to do with the nation-wide shortages that arise when fighting a non-stop military conflict over the course of an entire decade. As the primary explanation for the Guomindang's logistical troubles, however, nation-wide shortages of food, materiel, and willing recruits do not account for all of the variation in military performance that we observe. For one thing, the Guomindang's successful prosecution of maneuver warfare during the apogee of its anti-Japanese campaigns was initiated under equally pressing resource constraints and significantly less outside military aid. Secondly, anti-Communist military operations in Manchuria were given priority in the distribution of supplies since the majority of Chiang's best units were stationed in the region; yet despite receiving the most favorable logistical treatment out of all of the Guomindang's armies, these American-trained divisions still failed to attain the operational mobility that their far less-trained counterparts had possessed seven years earlier. Finally, while U.S. military aid during the Chinese Civil War never reached the heights of Lend-Lease deliveries during World War II, the Guomindang's policy of hoarding Lend-Lease aid while receiving surplus U.S. equipment left over from WWII ensured that the central government had, at least in the early stages of the civil war, a considerable stockpile of food, ammunition, fuel, and other materiel for its armies.

Far more debilitating than overall scarcity was the fact that Nationalist supply convoys could only be safely delivered along a thin network of railways and highways. Severing even one of these routes, as the Communists repeatedly did throughout the course of 1946-1949, was enough to cause a significant backlog of government shipments. In contrast, when Japanese attacks penetrated deep into Nationalist territory from 1940-1941, Nationalist supply trains simply detached themselves from the major railways and circumvented enemy attacks by marching through the rough countryside, although this was only made possible through the Guomindang's ruthless mobilization of the surrounding region's civilian manpower. The eventual loss of any significant administrative infrastructure in the rural countryside and the prioritization of laying the groundwork for an urban-centric mode of financing government policies, therefore, both prevented the Guomindang from effectively supplying its best armies, even as Chiang Kai-shek diverted copious amounts of reinforcements and emergency materiel to his divisions in Manchuria.

4. Reassessing the Nationalists

In the official narrative of the Republican Era, the Nationalists are always unfavorably compared to their Communist counterparts. Whereas the Nationalists were the corrupt and greedy administrators in league with the oligarchs and the landed classes, the Communists were the noble resistance fighters who fought on behalf of the under-privileged peasantry. Whereas Chiang Kai-shek was an autocratic Christian convert who threw in his lot with the imperialist West, Mao Zedong was the peasant-born revolutionary who overthrew the shackles of foreign domination. Whereas the National Revolutionary Army was made up of criminals and thieves, the People's Liberation Army was made up of honest Chinese citizens and dutiful patriots.

While there is obviously an element of myth-making in the aforementioned narrative, it nonetheless captures several commonly held beliefs about why the Chinese Communists successfully overwhelmed their Nationalist counterparts using a strategy of maneuver warfare whereas the latter failed to achieve the same goal. These theories typically revolve around three factors, all pertaining to the qualities of Mao Zedong's leadership: (1) Mao's strategic vision regarding the tenets of operational mobility, (2) the loyalty that Mao inspired among his generals, and (3) Mao's eloquence in appealing to the concerns of the Chinese peasantry whose logistical support would be decisive. Even the preservation of historical materials from the Communist perspective are curated to support such an interpretation of the Communists' successes vis a vis the Nationalists. A quick overview of primary documents that are still readily available to academic researchers reveals an overabundance of material incorporating letters from Mao to his generals, Mao's personal musings, Mao's speeches, Mao's writings regarding theories of maneuver warfare, Mao's theories of social revolution from below, etc.

Even if researchers have since taken a more skeptical view of the "great man" narrative that surrounds the cult of Mao's leadership – and the implied leadership deficiencies of Chiang Kai-shek – there is still a general acceptance that the Communists did certain things "correctly" in relation to the Nationalists: namely, inculcating an appreciation for the strategic merits of maneuver warfare among its relatively unified political-military leadership and possessing the foresight to appeal to a primarily peasant-based constituency that would provide the manpower to replenish Communist ranks. To what extent then can the Nationalists be blamed for pursuing their political-military aims "incorrectly"? Could the Guomindang have maintained the operational mobility of its armed forces if it had replicated the "successful" Communist model that enabled the People's Liberation Army to maneuver its way to victory?[1]

A meaningful effort to hold the Nationalists and Communists to similar standards immediately runs into obstacles when one considers the sheer disparity of administrative and military tasks delegated to each actor. Whereas the Communists could focus on a relatively contained state-building project limited to the single province of Shaanxi, the Nationalists had to engage in a state-building endeavor that encompassed the majority of the interior mainland. While the Communists possessed an – at times overstated – degree of cohesion among their leaders, they also never faced the prodigious task of cobbling together a national political-military coalition made up of rival generals, provincial militarists, landed gentry, and other elite holdovers from the old estates of the Qing Dynasty. Whereas the Communists established an institutional permanence to their soiree with land reform in the rural countryside, the Nationalists' attempts at reforming the political administration of the rural hinterlands were

[1] Pun intended

accompanied by the massive headache of simultaneously funding, manning, and equipping the vast majority of military operations against an overbearingly hostile Japan.

The purpose of highlighting these distinctions is not to fully absolve the Nationalists of any wrongdoing – of which there was plenty to note – nor is it intended to minimize the difficulties faced by the Communists, but rather to indicate how the straightforward theoretical differences between the Communists and the Nationalists do not necessarily translate to clear-cut policy initiatives for how the Nationalists should have acted differently. To illustrate my point through analogy, consider a scenario where two circus performers of equal ability are forced under threat of termination to participate in an act where each will have to demonstrate their expertise in juggling and unicycle riding. The first performer, however, is told from the outset to simultaneously balance on a unicycle and juggle whereas the second performer merely needs to demonstrate an expertise in each skill individually without combining them until a later deadline. If the first performer understandably fumbles given the higher bar of difficulty set for their act, it makes little sense to accuse them of failing because they didn't follow the same practice regimen set for the second performer. Such was the error of U.S. observers and journalists who personally visited the relatively well-run Communist enclaves in Shaanxi province and extrapolated the localized accomplishments of Communist political-military administration from their Yan'an headquarters as an achievable model for the Nationalists to implement on a nation-wide scale throughout the remainder of free China.

From a theoretical perspective, international assessors were correct to point out that the Nationalists lacked both a unified military command and efficient logistics outside of urban areas – all qualities which the Communists possessed – and that these deficiencies prevented the NRA from consistently sustaining its mobile operations. From a policy perspective, however, the U.S.

sponsored proposal to reform the Nationalist military machine by uprooting incompetent/corrupt military officials and administrators who stymied operational planning and the free flow of supplies severely underestimated the difficulty of eradicating the clique-ish political-military interests that dominated Nationalist politics while also underappreciating the structural advantages underlying the Communist enterprise. To be fair, both the Nationalists and the Communists had to "ride the unicycle" of reducing political-military discord while "juggling" the complexities of wartime extraction, but the scale and temporal sequencing of each task were vastly dissimilar. The Communist's geographical displacement at the hands of the Nationalists in 1934 allowed Mao Zedong to focus exclusively on culling political and military challengers to his authority within the ranks of the Communist party. By the time the Communists resettled in their new wartime capital at Yan'an a year later, Mao's monopoly on political and military decision-making had been secured, thereby allowing the Communist party to initiate its policy of rural extraction (in a single province) without worrying about high levels of political-military discord. In contrast, the Nationalists' geographical displacement at the hands of the Japanese in 1937 never offered Chiang Kai-shek the opportunity to weed out challengers to his rule, many of whom had provincial power bases outside of the party ranks of the Guomindang. By the time the Nationalists resettled in their new wartime capital at Chongqing, the central government was still negotiating its political and military diktats alongside multiple provincial militarists, thereby drastically increasing the difficulty of enforcing a long-term policy of rural extraction. Indeed, much of the Nationalists' success in weeding out provincial militarists as prominent veto players in military decision-making was only made possible due to the destructive swathe left in the wake of Japanese military offensives through said militarists' provincial home bases.

At the end of the day, the effective execution of a Nationalist strategy of maneuver warfare could never fully extricate itself from the web of military-socio-economic-political forces that dominated Republican China. The generals depended on government extraction for logistical support; the government and the provincial militarists both depended on the landed gentry and the baozhang officials for rural extraction; the gentry and the baozhang depended on small landholders to supply the labor and harvests for fulfilling government quotas. Streamlining and increasing the amount of fodder or manpower that could be funneled to army units in need would inevitably conflict with the landed gentry, baozhang elites, and provincial militarists whose preferred livelihood depended on non-government sources of "pay." But to crack down on such avarice risked fracturing the political-military coalition that stood as the bulwark against external foes. Ensconced in their enclaves in Shaanxi province, the Communist state-building experiment could tolerate the strong-arming of crooked local administrators and the wrenching away of rural rents from provincial militarists while safely ignoring the fear that such activities would undermine national military operations in a different war zone or weaken the Communists' ability to oversee the task of national military defense.

Theorizing from Anomalies

Having taken into consideration the difficulty of drawing clear-cut policy implications from the Chinese Nationalists, what then are some of the actual theoretical and policy takeaways of this project? Put differently, is it even possible to draw generalizable theoretical or policy implications from an in-depth case analysis of an unsuccessful Nationalist regime that conducted a series of (ultimately failed) military operations over an 11-year time period that occurred in the first half of the 20th century?

As a whole, this thesis is an informal paean to the practice of drawing theoretical insights from "empirical puzzles," which other scholars regularly dismiss as "anomalies" or "standard error." The primary purpose of burying one's nose in the mechanistic weeds of a singular case is not intended to tease out the most generalizable theoretical maxims for global application, but rather to fundamentally question existing expectations by showing how allegedly "universal" theoretical insights can be subverted in unexpected ways. If scholars fall victim to the danger of generalizing inappropriate applications from anomalous cases, then the flip side of such errors is to apply overly generalized explanations to anomalous cases. Such academic considerations extend even into the realm of policymaking, where political leaders inappropriately dismissing the subjects of their oversight as "anomalies" or "un-representative of the norm" can have a far more damaging impact on society. The contemporary and historical prevalence of perniciously flippant language such as "Iraq will be different" or "Vietnam was an anomaly that doesn't apply to the wider world" or "Building democratic peace worked in Western Europe and can work in Afghanistan" has kept alive a dangerously blithe attitude among policymakers towards the role of anomalies in tripping up even the most powerful states. If anything, both academics and policymakers could do more to get lost in the weeds and observe the individual trees before confidently proclaiming which weeds can be harmlessly culled or which forests can be logged for maximal output. To give credence to my admittedly didactic claim, I conclude with a probing discussion of how my analysis of the Chinese Nationalists might lead us to question the premises of several established topics in the IR, comparative, and security studies literature.

The Indeterminacy of Existential Threats and Exogenous Shocks

The dynamics of a perceived existential threat forcing rival groups to band together for their own survival has been widely applied to explain the occurrence of civil-military harmony,[2] authoritarian durability,[3] and the makeup of political coalitions.[4] In a more extreme variation of this narrative, the role of the existential threat can take on the role of an exogenous shock that brutally forces parochial interest groups to undertake necessary reforms that they would never deign to execute in the luxury of peacetime. Within the realm of military behavior, the shocking jolt provided by a decisive defeat or an unexpected military setback is a tried and true explanation for shifts in organizational or strategic practices – from Jena-Auerstädt to Prussia's military revitalization; from Operation Barbarossa to the Soviet military awakening. Yet the Nationalist military experience subverts such expectations in two distinct ways: (1) existential threats can inflame political-military disagreements rather than induce compromise and cooperation; (2) exogenous shocks can weaken incentives for military reform and change rather than strengthen them.

First, the looming threat of Japan's imperialist ambitions did surprisingly little to stem the violent political-military squabbles that dominated the better part of the Nanjing decade from 1927-1937. Even with the successful Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, Chinese factions devolved into an extended period of vicious finger-pointing as the Nationalists, Communists, and militarists each accused the other of failing to adequately contest the true threat presented by the Japanese. Much of this drawn-out contestation can be attributed to the disagreement regarding what effective military opposition to the Japanese should look like in practice. In the

[2] Michael Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999)
[3] Dan Slater, *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge University Press, 2010)
[4] Eckart Kehr, *Economic Interest, Militarism, and Foreign Policy: Essays on German History* (University of California Press, 1977)

Nationalists' eyes, anti-Japanese opposition should be rooted in a united political entity firmly under the control of a streamlined and administratively efficient central government. In the eyes of the Communists and the provincial militarists, anti-Japanese opposition should be rooted in a unified alliance of China's military factions, each cooperating to oppose a common enemy while still maintaining their own provincial autonomy. The fundamental incompatibility of these two opposing solutions – one proposing centralization, the other confederation – to Japanese imperialism sustained a period of highly contentious political-military discord even as Japanese forces continued to probe China's war-readiness from their base area in Manchuria.

Second, the exogenous shock of the Japanese invasion in 1937 and the resulting geographic displacement of the Nationalists less than a year later did not – calls for reform notwithstanding – spur any actual reforms to the ongoing standard operating procedure of promoting officers based off of loyalty, appointing military officers to lucrative political positions, and relying on crooked local intermediaries to oversee the crucial dimensions of rural logistics. In fact, the inherent system of military clientelism that Nationalist reformers railed against during their early idealistic years only became more embedded in the lifeblood of the Nationalists' wartime resistance. Such was the reality of the "exogenous shock" that afflicted the Guomindang, as it neither wiped the slate clean of conservative elements opposed to military reform (i.e. provincial militarists) nor did it expose anti-reformist parties as political cuckolds. Instead, the shock of military and political defeat was a benefit to the provincial militarists who were most opposed to military reform, as the Nationalists became increasingly dependent on provincial armies for national defense and could ill-afford to push a reform-minded platform without losing the support of said armies.

As a result, academics should be increasingly cautious before assuming that existential threats or more severe exogenous shocks will automatically trigger internal balancing or subvert standard systemic practices. While survival-based explanations are theoretically elegant, they nonetheless say very little about the mechanisms that facilitate cooperation or the mechanisms that inflame contention. If concerns about existential survival induced George Clemenceau to quip that "war is too important to be left to the generals," then the same concerns about survival also induced (the admittedly fictional) Jack D. Ripper to retort that "war is too important to be left to the politicians." Cooperation can be a product of threats to one's existence; but conflict over how best to assure one's survival can also result from the same threats. Shock-based narratives are even more egregious since they can be used to illustrate a clean "break" from the past without bothering to theorize how previous practices may have conditioned systemic changes or the causal process through which change actually occurred. An exogenous shock can either harm actors promoting change or it can harm actors promoting the status quo; neither is necessarily guaranteed simply by virtue of having been exposed to a systemic tremor.

Within the civil-military and security studies literature, "threats" and "shocks" are the theoretician's playthings when accounting for variation in military behavior. There is no doubt that threats can incentivize changes in military practices, but the transition from incentives to concrete action is beset with political obstacles. In the Nationalist case, top Chinese political and military officials all acknowledged the dangerous reality of their situation and repeatedly harped on the need to execute a strategy of maneuver warfare in the face of Japanese and Communist encroachments. The failure of the Nationalists to sustain mobile operations, therefore, was not a failure of strategic vision, it was not the result of a blasé attitude towards the existential threat of Imperial Japan and the Communist revolution, it was not the result of any wanton stupidity of the

Nationalist leadership, nor was it the result of the [tautological] inability to "summon the political will to do what must be done." Rather, the sticky obstacles of high political-military discord and a primarily urban-centric resource base were too difficult to permanently overcome.

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