

Negotiating for Alliance  
Republican China's Relations with National Socialist Germany  
and the United States, 1937-1941

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## Abstract

Until the late 1930s, National Socialist Germany was a close ally to the Republic of China (or Republican China, ROC). From 1937 to 1941, the Sino-German alliance progressively collapsed against the background of Sino-Japanese War. On the one hand, the ROC attempted hardily to recover its partnership with Germany. On the other hand, it was forced to search for a new ally which could help in resisting Japanese aggression. Ultimately, after the Pearl Harbour attack on December 1941, China tied itself to the United States, an ally which political system was more different from the *Guomindang* (GMD, Chinese Nationalist Party) compared to Germany. My thesis analyzes China's parallel relationships with both Germany and the United States between 1937 and 1941, especially the interplays of domestic politics and foreign relations behind these relationships. ROC's negotiation with both countries for alliance profoundly reshaped the nature of China as a nation-state, the nature of the GMD government as a nationalistic authoritarian regime, and the nature of the Second World War as the conflict of democracy versus totalitarianism.

Jusqu'à la fin des années 1930, l'Allemagne nationale-socialiste était une alliée proche de la République de Chine (ou Chine Républicaine). De 1937 à 1941, l'alliance sino-allemande s'effondra graduellement sur fond de guerre sino-japonaise. D'une part, la République de Chine tenta difficilement de recouvrer son partenariat avec l'Allemagne. D'autre part, elle fut forcée de rechercher un nouvel allié qui pourrait l'aider à résister à l'agression japonaise. Ultimement, après l'attaque de Pearl Harbour en décembre 1941, la Chine se lia aux États-Unis, un allié qui avait un système plus éloigné du gouvernement du Guomindang (GMD, parti nationaliste chinois) que celui de l'Allemagne. Mon mémoire analyse les relations parallèles de la Chine avec l'Allemagne et les États-Unis de 1937 à 1941 et spécialement les interactions entre la politique intérieure et les relations extérieures sous-jacentes à ces relations. Les négociations de la République de Chine avec les deux pays pour la formation d'alliances a profondément réorienté la nature de la Chine en tant qu'État-nation, la nature du gouvernement du GMD en tant que régime autoritaire nationaliste et la nature de la Seconde Guerre mondiale en tant que conflit entre démocratie et totalitarisme.

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## **Romanization of Language**

This thesis employs the pinyin system to Romanize most of the Chinese names of figures, places and terms in English. The use of pinyin than the traditional Wade-Giles system is increasingly popular in the English speaking academia today. There are two important exceptions. First, for those names which are more commonly known for English audiences with their original spelling, notably Chiang Kai-shek, Sun Yat-sen and H.H. Kung and T.V. Soong, I do not switch them to the pinyin system. Second, for the names of the authors from Hong Kong and Taiwan I mention in the both the acknowledgment and the actual text, I prefer to use their own spelling of names. These names include: Chou Whei-min, Liu Wei-K'ai, Chi His-Sheng, Pan Kuang-che, Li Su-Ching, Hsiao Shu-hui, Chiang Yung-chen, and Lawrence Ho. For the Romanization of all Chinese primary sources and secondary literature, I use pinyin system to standardize them no matter whether they are from Taiwan or the mainland.

## Introduction

At the dawn of December 8, 1941, 4 a.m., the city of Chongqing in Southwestern China, the temporary national capital of the Republic of China (or Republican China, ROC) at war, was silent but immersed in fear and anxiety. Japanese aircrafts have been circling above the city for several days, no one could know when they would drop new bombs and cause greater casualties. To both the Chinese national leaders and ordinary citizens, every day seemed like the last day of their vulnerable lives. Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, the supreme leader of the ROC as well as its governing party *Guomindang* (GMD, Chinese Nationalist Party) woke up to an urgent news from the other part of the world in his bed in the hilltop retreat at Huangshan. Just about three hours earlier, on the other side of the Japanese empire, Japanese aircrafts raided Pearl Harbour where the United States' Pacific Fleet was stationed. Chiang was very sensitive about the news. He immediately felt that it might change China's fate in the next years, even decades.

The ROC had been resisting the Japanese invasion for more than four years since July 1937. The Japanese Kwantung Army had occupied Manchuria on September 18, 1931. Between 1931 and 1937, Japan had been consolidating its colonization of Manchuria and increasing its appetite to further invade the interior land of China and conquer larger parts of the latter's territory. Back then, the GMD government concentrated more on its fighting with the Chinese Communist forces as well as some warlord armies in North China than resisting the Japanese aggression. After several years of warfare, in late 1936 and early 1937, Chiang finally agreed to establish a coalition with the Chinese Communist for the preparation of possible Sino-Japanese conflict. The Sino-Japanese War fully started on July 7, 1937. For two and half years until the fall of 1939, this war remained regional in its scale of confrontation. However, after the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939 which sparked the Second World War, China's resistance became an integral part of an unprecedented global conflict. Chiang was aware of the global significance of the Sino-Japanese War. He had been searching for alternatives of foreign help and external collaboration with Eurasian powers since 1937. For four years, the Chinese had been facing the atmosphere of terror, destruction, and defiance brought by the Japanese. Its resistance was simultaneously accompanied by hope, despair and even suspicion. The news of Pearl Harbour attack marked a turning point of everything to China. Now it might be the time Chongqing



needed to make an active decision in its foreign relations for self-survival under the shadow of Tokyo.

However, rather than being pleased or at least satisfied, Chiang's feeling at the moment was complicated. In the past three years China had been searching for various kinds of assistance from the United States. Certainly, Chiang hoped to see a closer relationship between Washington and Chongqing, and an estrangement between Washington and Tokyo. The GMD government had been undertaking the best effort to drag the United States into the escalating tensions with Japan, so that the Americans would choose to help the Chinese in order to contain the Japanese. But when the Pacific War eventually erupted, as he had hope for, Chiang hesitated. What should China do next? Would the Pacific War bring any new change to current Sino-U.S. relations? How could Chiang manage his contact with the U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (F.D.R) in response to Pearl Harbour? What position in international affairs the ROC should choose to stand now?

Four months before, in July, China just officially broke their diplomatic relationship with National Socialist Germany, once an essential partner to the GMD government for a decade. Still, the ROC had not aligned itself to any other specific country yet. These four months were a tough period for China because technically it had no significant ally in international relations despite the fact that it regularly received military support from the United States, the Soviet Union and Great Britain. The end of the Sino-German alliance left a vacuum in diplomacy that the ROC desperately wanted to fill with another ally.

Chiang's hesitation came from two of his deeper concerns. On the one hand, there was no doubt that he wanted to establish an official alliance with the United States as soon as possible. But did this mean China should join the "democracy camp" of the Anglo-Americans and declare war on the Axis powers? Chiang had previously looked widely for possible aid from any country because China's survival in the war of resistance was the top priority. Although he publicly used the "democracy vs dictatorship" dichotomy in state propaganda as well as in diplomacy towards western countries, Chiang himself did not really care which "camp" China should belong to. In fact, the ROC worked very hard to hold its ties with Germany in the last few months before the alliance between Chongqing and Berlin failed entirely. But after Pearl Harbor, affiliation to the "democracy camp" seemed inevitable if China wanted to be a long-term partner of the United

States. Chiang was uncertain the cost of this affiliation yet. He wished to fight the Japanese but not necessarily the Germans or the Italians.

On the other hand, even though Chiang was mostly delighted to see the Chinese and the Americans finally get at each other, he worried whether there were negative consequences that would be brought by a Sino-American alliance, particularly with regard to China's relations with the Soviet Union. Similar to Washington, Moscow had also provided tremendous military help to Chongqing. However, after 1939, the Sino-Soviet estrangement, based on mutual calculation and suspicion, eventually led the Soviets to sign a non-aggression agreement with the Japanese in 1940.<sup>1</sup> Chiang did not know whether his cooperation with the Americans would irritate the Soviets, forcing them to work indirectly with the Japanese in order to pressure the Chinese for compromise.<sup>2</sup> After spending one day with careful consideration, Chiang finally chose to declare war on the Axis to demonstrate his sincerity to the Americans. He was also convinced that the Soviet Union might join the war against Japan sooner or later.<sup>3</sup> He thought that an alliance with the United States carried more benefits than harm. Hence, the Sino-U.S. alliance was established only a few days after Pearl Harbor. This alliance drew to a conclusion the foreign policy of the ROC in the 1930s, but at the same time started a new era of its diplomatic history.

The complexity of decision-making in foreign affairs through which Chiang himself had to go *de facto* reflected China's wartime experience in international relations since 1937. Before the full scale of Japanese invasion that year, the ROC had a stable and reliable ally that it could look into, an increasing mature pattern of collaboration that it could proceed and sustain accordingly, a model of modernity that it could learn from. All these benefits were provided by National Socialist Germany, a rising European power which worked together with China since the establishment of Chiang's government in Nanjing in 1927. The Sino-Japanese War suddenly changed everything and put China into a difficult situation mixed with worry and embarrassment. Due to the Japanese factor, Sino-German relations gradually deteriorated. Friends became

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed analysis of Sino-Soviet relations between 1937 and 1939 was offered by John W. Garver. See John W. Garver, *Chinese-Soviet Relations, 1937-1945: the Diplomacy of Chinese Nationalism* (New York: Oxford, 1988), 301pp.

<sup>2</sup> Chi His-Scheng, *Jianbanuzhang de mengyou: taipingyang zhanzheng qijian de zhong mei junshi hezuo guanxi* (*Allies with daggers drawn: Sino-American military cooperation during the Pacific War, 1941-1945*) (Taipei: Lianjing, 2011), pp.9-14.

<sup>3</sup> Contrary to his belief, Soviet Union only declared war on Japan in August 1945, almost near the end of the Second World War.

antagonists. Between 1937 and 1941, the GMD government worked hard to obtain alternative new alliances but simultaneously made efforts to win Germany back. When the attempts for reconciliation with Germany failed, China finally allied with the United States whose political ideology was more different than Germany's.

### *Research Questions and Framework*

This thesis will explore the interrelated collapse of the Sino-German alliance and the rise of the Sino-American alliance in the period from 1937 to 1941. However, it does not include all foreign powers which the ROC approached to from 1937 to 1941, as for example the Soviet Union as ROC's temporary collaborator. It concentrates on China's relationships with Germany and the United States for two reasons. First, both Germany and the United States played primary roles in ROC's foreign relations during GMD's rule in the mainland before its defeat against in the civil war against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949. The alliance between the ROC and Germany predominantly influenced China's internal political and social development in the 1920s and 1930s. After the defeated ROC had evacuated mainland China for Taiwan in 1949, the alliance with the United States continued to influence ROC politics and even relations between the GMD and the CCP across the Taiwan Strait during the Cold War. In this context, the years 1937-1941 were critical to explain the changes between two eras of ROC's foreign relations and link these two eras together. Even though the Soviet Union provided more alternative support than Germany and the United States between 1937 and 1939, it did not leave the legacy on China as important as the latter two.

Second, both alliances serve as useful case studies for historians to explore the characteristics of GMD politics and foreign policy, the nature of China as a state, and the personality of Chiang Kai-shek as the nation's supreme leader. The developments of these two alliances were interrelated with China's domestic politics and society. They reveal how China looked at itself and at the international relations, especially in the wartime environment which was apart from any other kinds of normal situations. Both alliances also show how the prominent western powers, majorly Germany and the United States, looked at China and themselves.

Despite the fact that this thesis is centered on Sino-German relations and Sino-U.S. relations, it is not a comparative study of the differences and similarities between these two relations. This thesis tends to explore more the transformation as well as continuity of GMD's foreign policy within a few years, and, more importantly, the reasons why these developments happened at all. It is not a comprehensive analysis on China's wartime diplomacy, which is what historians from both China and Taiwan have commonly done in the past. Instead, in order to avoid Sino-centricism in the narrative, this thesis will explain the views of the other sides—Germany and the United States—in detail, particularly why the other sides would make choices either to align with or to estrange itself from China. Overall, this thesis aims to answer a series of fundamentally important questions: Why did the Sino-German alliance collapsed? Was this collapse inevitable, or did both sides actually attempt to make a difference in order to save this partnership? Who was responsible for the end of this relationship? Why would the ROC turn to the United States as a potential ally? Why would the United States be interested in China? How did China and the United States gradually come to an alliance? What were the key factors pushing Chiang Kai-shek and FDR to deepen Sino-U.S. relations in the making of their own foreign policies? To what extent did internal politics of China, Germany and the United States influence their diplomacy? To what extent did Sino-German relations and Sino-U.S. relations conversely bring changes to their domestic policies? By answering these questions, this thesis will focus on the political rather than economic or military relationships between China and Germany, and between China and the United States. Only once the political relationships between China and these two countries moved towards a critical point, the economic and military aspects of these relationships started to matter.

### *Literature Review*

Over the years, an abundance of literature on Sino-German relations and Sino-U.S. relations in the 1930s and 1940s had emerged. However, most of it focused on either Sino-German cooperation before China's war of resistance against Japan in 1937 or the Sino-U.S. alliance after Pearl Harbor in 1941. Few accounts specifically explore the collapse of Sino-German relations and the formation of the Sino-U.S. alliance from 1937 to 1941. In the field of Sino-German relations, William C. Kirby's *Germany and Republican China* is still one of the most

authoritative works in the analysis of the collaboration between China and Germany in the 1920s and 1930s. Although he only dedicated one chapter to describing the end of Sino-German relationship, Kirby discussed this relationship through the lens of China's process of internationalization. He essentially argued that, through this cooperation, Germany provided a model of modernity and an example of a prosperous and powerful nation-state that China wished to follow. In return, China's market of raw materials and industrial sources could tremendously help Germany in the development of its own military-industrial complex. Furthermore, Kirby emphasized that Germany played an essential role in China's modernization, which was the essential reason that held Berlin and Nanjing together for more than a decade.<sup>4</sup> Another historian, J.P. Fox, carefully examined the policy making in the German Foreign Office in Sino-German relations and German-Japanese relations. Despite the fact that Fox limited his analytical timeframe to 1938, *Germany and Far Eastern Crisis, 1931-1938* analyzed how factionalism inside the National Socialist leadership gradually led Germany to turn to Japan and away from China.<sup>5</sup>

Since the early 1990s, the study of Sino-German partnership had been benefitted from new openings of archival sources from both mainland China and Taiwan. Authors seized this opportunity to publish works from an Asian perspective. Taiwanese historian Chou Whei-ming explained German foreign policy toward China from the Taiwanese point of view, especially how the GMD government assessed the German decision-making.<sup>6</sup> Ma Zhendu and Qi Rugao, based in Nanjing University, offered their own interpretation of Sino-German alliance, including the personal relationship between Chiang Kai-shek and Adolf Hitler. They indicated that Chinese deeply-rooted nationalism was the most significant factor determining ROC's response to Germany in this alliance. When the Chinese nationalists could no longer accommodate offense from the Germans in this cooperation, they took the initiative to break the alliance.<sup>7</sup>

The number of works on Sino-U.S. relations during the war of resistance is much higher than on its German counterpart, even though these publications are mostly preoccupied with an the

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<sup>4</sup> William C. Kirby, *Germany and Republican China* (Stanford, 1984), 361pp.

<sup>5</sup> J.P. Fox, *Germany and the Far Eastern Crisis, 1931-1938: A Study of Diplomacy and Ideology* (Oxford, 1985), 464pp.

<sup>6</sup> Chou Whei-ming, *Deguo dui hua zhengce yanjiu (German foreign policy toward China)* (Taipei: Sanmin, 1995), 265pp.

<sup>7</sup> Ma Zhendu & Qi Rugao, *Jiang Jieshi yu Xi Tele: Minguo shiqi zhong de guanxi yanjiu (Chiang Kai-shek and Hitler: a study of Sino-German relations in the Republican era)* (Taipei: Dongda, 1998), 504pp.

American perspective in the period from 1941 to 1945. Some extend the period to include the 1930s in order to better understand Sino-U.S. relations in the whole context of anti-Japanese resistance. However, most of these works did not concentrate on the discussion of the early establishment of Sino-U.S. partnership particularly between 1937 and 1941. Many of them simplified this period as purely China's efforts to secure American aid without larger reflection of the alliance-making process.

Dorothy Borg's book *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938* is an older but still useful account that demonstrates how public opinion and domestic political movement as well as bureaucracy inside the White House and the Congress influenced the change of U.S. policy in East Asia. Her work clearly reveals in-depth the ways American internal politics could direct its foreign relations with China and Japan.<sup>8</sup> Michael Schaller's *The U.S. Crusade in China, 1938-1945* pointed out that, in the early development of Sino-U.S. relations, the United States consistently attempted to influence the ROC with its own ideology of liberalism, which American saw as a moral mission for the coming alliance.<sup>9</sup> Recently, a Taiwanese historian based in the United States, Chi His-sheng, developed a more detailed argument firmly based on the existing literature in both Chinese and English languages. Although the book *Jianbanuzhang de mengyou (Allies with Daggers Drawn)* focused mostly on Sino-U.S. military cooperation in the "China Theatre" in World War II, its first chapter assesses the establishment of the alliance and the motivation from both sides behind this establishment. Chi told Chiang's side of the story with emphasis on his decision to work with the Americans. He argued that the tensions between Chongqing and Washington in the later collaboration could be traced back to the formation of the alliance. Both China and the United States mutually distrusted each other from the beginning when they were about to tie themselves to the other.<sup>10</sup>

The openings of new sources in China, Taiwan, Germany and the United States finally led to the rise of revisionist school in the field of Republican Chinese history, including the ROC's foreign policy in the Second World War. With in-depth investigation of these materials, China historians are able to make three new contributions to this scholarly development. First, they

<sup>8</sup> Dorothy Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938* (Harvard, 1964), 674pp.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Schaller, *The U.S. Crusade in China, 1938-1945* (New York: Columbia, 1982), 388pp.

<sup>10</sup> Chi His-sheng, *Jianbanuzhang de mengyou: taipingyang zhanzheng qijian zhong mei junshi hezuo guanxi, 1941-1945 (Allies with dagger drawn: Sino-U.S. military cooperation during the Pacific War, 1941-1945)* (Taipei: Lianjing, 2011), 724pp.

reassessed GMD's performance in both domestic governance and foreign relations during the Sino-Japanese War. Their assessment promote a more balanced, even sympathetic, view about the GMD. For example, Hans van de Ven's *War and Nationalism in China, 1925-1945* challenged the previous predominant "Stilwell-White paradigm" in modern China studies in North America which argued ROC's survival under Japanese aggression largely depended on American help rather than its own efforts. Hans van de Ven believed the GMD government, as still an agriculture-based and semi-colonized state, had made a maximum contribution to resist the Japanese by its own.<sup>11</sup>

Second, in order to provide an overall picture of China's diplomacy in the Second World War, China historians analyzed the interplay between the ROC and all other major Eurasian powers at that time. The past literature mostly wrote China's relations with these powers individually. Rana Mitter's recent monograph *Forgotten Ally: China's World War II* examines ROC's wartime collaboration with almost all Eurasian powers in order to assess China's role during the Second World War. He essentially argues that China's war experience as a "forgotten ally" seriously influenced the nation's path to modernity.<sup>12</sup> In 2014, Hans van de Ven, Diana Lary and Stephen MacKinnon published a co-edited volume *Negotiating China's Destiny in World War II*, in which they argue that China dealt with its allies and neighbors mostly through consistent negotiations. These negotiations changed the nature of China's relationship with these partners.<sup>13</sup>

Third, since the declassification of Chiang Kai-shek's diaries at Hoover Institution at Stanford University in 2009, China historians have been paying more attention to the personality, mentality, and perspective of Chiang as the essential decision-maker. Both Jay Taylor and Yang Tianshi dig into Chiang's personal thoughts in Sino-German relations and Sino-U.S. relations. According to them, Chiang was suspicious and angry about his western allies while he was working with them. He used the alliance with the West to promote China's international prestige

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<sup>11</sup> Hans van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China, 1925-1945* (London: Routledge, 2012), 392pp.

<sup>12</sup> Rana Mitter, *Forgotten Ally: China's World War II, 1937-1945* (Mariner Books, 2013), 480pp.

<sup>13</sup> Hans van de Ven, Diana Lary and Stephen Mackinnon, ed., *Negotiating China's Destiny in World War II* (Stanford, 2014), 336pp.

but he always complained that countries such as Britain and the United States never took the ROC seriously in this diplomatic game.<sup>14</sup>

Same as the above recent literature, my thesis is also based on both published and newly opened archival sources in Chinese and English languages. For Sino-German relations, this thesis mostly used two compiled document collections. One is *Documents on German Foreign Policy* from the State Department of the United States, the other is *Zhonghua minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian: zhanshi waijiao (Important Historical Materials of the Republic of China: Wartime Diplomacy)*. I draw on the latter one for my writings of both Sino-German relations and Sino-U.S. relations. This thesis used multiple archival sources in Taiwan to explore the ROC's cooperation with the United States from the Chinese perspective, such as: the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, Academia Historica, and Kuomintang (KMT) Party History Institute. The *Presidential Chiang Kai-shek File* in Academia Historica also provided Chiang's personal insights of this story, particularly the way he made decisions with regard to both alliances. For the English sources on the American perspective, *Foreign Relations of the United States* and the volumes of *FDR Presidential Documentary History* were essential for this thesis. Overall, these sources reveal the judgment, analysis, and exchanges of not only the top leaders of all governments, but also the subordinate people who worked closely with them and helped to formulate their ideas.

### *The Argument*

Apart from the primary sources, throughout the research process, my idea has been benefitted from the latest development of revisionist scholarship. This thesis makes three essential arguments throughout the chapters. First, in order to fight better the Japanese, the Chinese seriously attempted to influence actively international relations in the late 1930s rather than waiting for developments of events that happened in Europe, North America and East Asia. Accordingly, the ROC internationalized its war with Japan and later contributed to the change of power balance between the Axis powers and the western "democracy world." At the beginning,

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<sup>14</sup> Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-shek and the Struggle for Modern China* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard, 2009), 752pp; Yang Tianshi, *Zhaoxun zhenshi de Jiang Jieshi (In search for the "real" Chiang Kai-shek)* (Shanxi: Shanxi renmin, 2008), 546pp.



China's foreign policy was less disciplined and organized. Chiang Kai-shek did not have clear intention to ally himself with a specific Eurasian country, apart from the existing partnership with Germany which started to deteriorate in late 1937. He made his best efforts to find as much sources of foreign assistance as possible. The ROC mostly hoped to have an international solution of the war, which means, it resorted to the principle of "collective security" with the help of other major Eurasian powers (notably the United States, Britain, France and the Soviet Union). Between 1937 and 1941, China never abandoned this pursuit despite the fact that it did not succeed. However, during this search process, the United States stood out as the most viable potential ally to the ROC because it could partially unite the other powers to help China's war of resistance. Since then, China's foreign policy began to aim particularly at the United States. The Chinese further took an initiative to use the relationship with the Americans to achieve different goals including collaboration with Britain as well as the Soviet Union and improve ROC's international status, not to mention seeking American aid. The ROC also attempted to tailor the direction of U.S.-Japanese relations to favor China's interests, which partially led Washington to its own war with Tokyo. However, Chiang simultaneously worked on the restoration of the declining Sino-German alliance by all means. His contact with both Hitler and FDR went parallel before 1941. Occasionally, he used Sino-German relations to stimulate the United States to accelerate the process of building Sino-U.S. partnership, which to some extent complicated the international environment he faced.<sup>15</sup>

Second, apart from its survival instinct, the ROC instrumentally used its relations with both Germany and the United States to demonstrate its claim of ruling legitimacy and effective state control. An important reason Chiang Kai-shek tirelessly looked for support from the United States as a future ally was because the Americans could help to stabilize Chinese society in terms of its politics, economy and military. Washington was able to prevent Chongqing from the latter's imminent failure of state control, which would cause China's internal destruction leading to entire collapse. Through aligning with the United States, Chiang was also able to convince his subordinates, his rivals inside the GMD government, and the Chinese public that his proposal for the war of resistance was the only way that could bring a good future to China. In the long-term the GMD government could strengthen its legitimacy of authoritarian rule under the Sino-U.S.

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<sup>15</sup> Lu Xijun, "Guomin zhengfu dui ouzhan ji jiemeng wenti de yingdui (Republican China's responses to European war and alliance issue)," *Lishi yanjiu (Historical studies)*, 05(2008): 111-15.

alliance because it proved that the ROC would be able to overcome the current crisis. This legitimacy had been questioned by many GMD officials in the government since the early stage of the Sino-Japanese War in late 1937. The concern of ruling legitimacy and state control also influenced Sino-German relations. Chiang persistently attempted to recover the deteriorating cooperation with the Germans because he strongly believed this cooperation was not only China's key to survive under Japanese invasion, but also the key to achieve a prosperous, unified and modern nation-state based on the German example. However, when Chongqing eventually realized Berlin no longer had any interest in the GMD government but planned to work with the pro-Japan Chinese collaborationists instead, it immediately broke the alliance in order to defend its own legitimacy and thwart the legitimacy of the latter one.

Third, both the United States and Germany imposed their own perception on China when they managed their respective relationship with the ROC. Washington had gone through a change of its ideological preference from isolationism to internationalism from 1937 to 1941. It gradually believed that its participation in China's war with Japan would better suit American geopolitical and economic interests. Also, the American officials as well as the public regarded China as a temporarily weak but "democratic" nation-state struggling with a powerful but "dictatorial" imperial aggressor. Although the GMD government never was a liberal regime, the Americans projected their democracy unto the Chinese, and imagined that the latter one were *de facto* fighting for their values. This fantasy never fit in the reality but it raised the American sympathy toward the ROC. Chongqing also consciously used this sympathy to obtain more aid from Washington. However, the imposition of self-centered perception on China by the United States later planted the seed of future tensions between the two during the Pacific War. Germany once looked at China as an "equal" partner in the 1920s as they were both victims of the post-war Versailles system after World War I. The resentment against European imperialism (although Germany was earlier a part of this imperialism but not the one which gained the fruits from it) brought the two countries together. In the 1930s, their relationship was not "equal" anymore. Germany, under the National Socialist government, became a prominent military power in Europe with ambitions to pursue world dominance, while China was still a semi-colonial country mostly preoccupied with turbulent domestic problems. To achieve global power, Hitler needed to have another hegemonic ally in East Asia whom he could collaborate with. When he found he was not able to impose his thinking on the ROC, he turned to Japan because, in his eyes, that

Asian country could fulfill this hegemonic role. Thus, the decline of Sino-German relations started.

### *The Structure of the Thesis*

This thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter explores the decline of Sino-German relations from 1937 to 1941, particularly Germany's attitude toward the Sino-Japanese conflict and its efforts to mediate this conflict. It also covers China's attempts to rejuvenate the Sino-German alliance after the failure of German mediation and the German withdrawal of military advisors, military export and industrial investment in the ROC. The second chapter covers the first three years (1937-1939) of the ROC's formation of alliance with the United States. It includes China's decision to resort to international mechanism to solve its war problem. The chapter ends with the successful amendment of the Neutrality Act in the U.S. Congress, which was a turning point for the United States to abandon its originally neutral position in the Sino-Japanese War. The third chapter discusses the last two years (1940-1941) of Sino-U.S. relations before the alliance was officially established. It first analyzes the consequences of the U.S. farewell to neutrality, such as the abrogation of the Commercial and Navigation Treaty between the United States and Japan. Then, it addresses how Chongqing continuously drew the American attention for support and managed Sino-U.S. relations to collaborate with Washington's other allies, for example London. Finally, it covers the efforts of the ROC to escalate the tensions between the United States and Japan, so that the United States would naturally align itself with China when the Pacific War erupted.

## Chapter One—From Friends to Enemies: The Downfall of the Sino-German Alliance

The decade of 1926-1936 was the golden era of the Sino-German alliance. Germany participated in the political and social transformations within the Republic of China (ROC) through intensive military, industrial, and financial cooperation. More importantly, Germany provided a concrete model of nation-building to China. Although China never imported the German ideology from Bismarck-style millenarianism to Hitler's National Socialism in its own political development, China's road to pursue modernity was closely modeled on that of Germany.<sup>16</sup> However, in only five years between 1937 and 1941, the remarkable cooperation between the ROC and Germany dramatically collapsed and ultimately ended. National Socialist Germany, formerly China's strongest partner and mentor, became one of its antagonists in the Second World War. After 1949, to the historians from both the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the ROC, China was a part of the anti-Axis camp that resisted against Japan and its ally Germany in the Second World War. This fashion of historiography in the Mandarin academic world tended to forget the close ties between the ROC and Germany before 1941 for many years. Only after the late 1980s and early 1990s, when new Taiwanese archival sources were opened to researchers, did historians have a chance to study the exchanges between the two, particularly the breakdown of the Sino-German alliance.

Yet why did this alliance collapse? Why did both sides choose to abandon this relationship? Could there have been another alternative? Did either side attempt to salvage this relationship? This chapter will provide an overview of the development of Sino-German relations from 1937 to 1941, with special detail provided to the process that led to the alliance's end. It includes five consecutive sections of analysis: the Sino-German alliance in early 1937 before China's war with Japan, the respective preparations of China and Germany for peaceful negotiation with Japan after the war had begun on July 7, 1937, the German failure to mediate in the Sino-Japanese conflict, the ROC's attempts to restore the declining alliance back to its previous strength, and

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<sup>16</sup> The discussion of the modern model Germany provided the ROC in the golden decade of cooperation can be seen in William Kirby's classical monograph on Sino-German relations before 1941. See William C. Kirby, *Germany and Republican China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984.

the end of Sino-German relations in July 1941. In this chapter, my focus is the political rather than economic and military aspects of the Sino-German alliance.

### **Before the War: The ROC-German Alliance in 1937**

Although National Socialist Germany and Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact in November 1936, the agreement between the two did not fundamentally lead to the coming collapse of the Sino-German alliance. Despite the fact that this Pact tied Berlin and Tokyo together ideologically, the GMD government, then based in Nanjing, continued to collaborate with its German counterpart during the first half of 1937. On January 27, the German ambassador to China, Oskar Trautmann, suggested to Chiang Kai-shek that Berlin strengthen the existing relationship with Nanjing. In doing so, he believed the German Foreign Office in *Wilhelmstrasse*, should arrange further contacts of people between the German Embassy in China and the *Handelsgesellschaft für industrielle Produkte* (HAPRO). HAPRO was a private company established in 1934 to facilitate Sino-German industrial and economic exchanges, and connect various business and political groups.<sup>17</sup> Trautmann intended to appease possible Chinese resentment over the agreement between Germany and Japan. He further proposed that the German Foreign Ministry, not Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist leadership, should take full control of policy-making in foreign affairs. Overall, he was convinced that the Foreign Office could appropriately govern the Sino-German cooperation and ensured its direction in the future remained positive.<sup>18</sup>

Trautmann reflected the will of the broader German Foreign Office, but he was only one of the many voices in Germany who raised his opinion to top officials in Berlin regarding China. When it came to East Asian policy, the National Socialist government in 1937 was split into different groups. There were several rivaling factions inside the National Socialist government which revealed serious disagreements on foreign policy. Hermann Wilhelm Göring, the founder of the German secret police (the *Gestapo*) and the Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda

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<sup>17</sup> “The Ambassador in China to the Foreign Ministry (by Trautmann),” January 27, 1937, in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945: From the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry*, vol.4 (London, H.M. Stationery Off, 1949), 341-50.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* But this resentment did not seriously affected the Sino-German alliance.

Paul Joseph Goebbels advocated tying Germany to Japan and Italy in order to counter Britain, the Soviet Union, France, and possibly the United States. They believed Berlin should favour Tokyo over Nanjing. Others from the German Foreign Office were anxious about provoking open conflict with the Anglo-Americans as well as the French if the Germans became too close to the Japanese and Italians. The Foreign Minister Konstantin von Neurath, Commander-in-Chief of the German Armed Forces Werner von Blomberg, and the Minister of Economics Hjalmar Schacht, advocated for German neutrality with regard to the escalating Sino-Japanese tensions.<sup>19</sup> None of the sides could predominantly prevail against the other in determining Germany's foreign policy in East Asia. Therefore, as the result of the internal power struggle between these two political groups, neutrality appeared to be the overall attitude by the National Socialist government toward both China and Japan in general. Trautmann saw himself as allied with Neurath, Blomberg, and Schacht. His report on January 27, 1937, explained his expectations that the Foreign Office should not let Göring and Goebbels negatively impact the current Sino-German alliance.

Trautmann later spoke with Chiang Kai-shek directly in order to respond to the Chinese leaders' doubts about the Anti-Comintern Pact. In his meeting with the Generalissimo on March 22, Trautmann attempted to convince Chiang that the Sino-German alliance would continue to be stable and prosperous, and was immune to the changes in the political climate in East Asia brought by the Pact.<sup>20</sup> He defined this Pact as a purely "ideological" agreement in order to fend off the Communist influences from the Soviet Union in the north, far from any kinds of military or political coalition.<sup>21</sup> In order to avoid mutual misunderstanding, Trautmann only used the word "consensus" based on common ideological interests rather than "alliance" to define the nature of current German-Japanese relations when he explained Berlin's policy toward Tokyo to Chiang.<sup>22</sup> To demonstrate further his sincerity, he tried to convince Chiang that there were more

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<sup>19</sup> Zhang Beigen, "1933-1941 nian de zhong de guanxi (Sino-German relations, 1933-1941)", *Lishi yanjiu (History studies)*, 03(2005): 115.

<sup>20</sup> "The Ambassador in China to the Foreign Ministry (by Trautmann)," March 22, 1937, in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945: From the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry*, vol.4, 589-92.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

politicians in Berlin who supported China over Japan, and that these people should be able to actively contribute to the existing Sino-German cooperation.<sup>23</sup>

Although Trautmann repeatedly reaffirmed the strength of the Sino-German alliance to Chiang, the Generalissimo still sent H.H. Kung (the vice-premier of the ROC Executive Yuan) to Berlin in June 1937 to discuss the Pact. On June 10, while the Foreign Minister von Neurath was travelling around Eastern Europe, Kung met his son-in-law Hans von Mackensen and the Minister of Economics Schacht instead. Mackensen again comforted Kung that Germany had neither interest nor motivation to participate in the political affairs between China and Japan in East Asia.<sup>24</sup> Schacht simultaneously explained to Kung that the Pact was signed under the special circumstance of German rapid rearmament for self-protection. Berlin needed to show off its strength to potential opponents (Schacht implied “Moscow”) and cooperation with Tokyo was an integral part of this strategy.<sup>25</sup> The Germans, he claimed, only wanted to manipulate the Japanese military power in East Asia as an effective factor of deterrence to demonstrate that Germany was not isolated from Europe but concerned about its impact in another continent as well.<sup>26</sup>

Kung later visited Adolf Hitler who was staunchly against any form of Communism. Hitler promised Kung that the Pact would never harm the Sino-German relations because Germany urgently needed China's economic and industrial resources. Although Hitler emphasized the financial aspects of Sino-German relations, he was aware that there were risks for Germany to keep positive relations with both China and Japan.<sup>27</sup> However, the Führer was prepared to run the risk.<sup>28</sup> There were two reasons for Hitler's willingness to do so. On the one hand, Hitler had a Euro-centric view of international affairs. His immediate objective was strengthening Germany's political and military power against Britain and France in Western Europe. He paid little

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<sup>23</sup> “The Ambassador in China to the Foreign Ministry (by Trautmann),” March 22, 1937, in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945: From the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry*, vol.4, 589-92.

<sup>24</sup> J.P. Fox, *Germany and the Far Eastern Crisis, 1931-1938: A Study in Diplomacy and Ideology*, 224-5.

<sup>25</sup> “Minute by the President of the Reichsbank (By Schacht),” June 10, 1937, in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945: From the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry*, vol.4, 846-7.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> J.P. Fox, *Germany and the Far Eastern Crisis, 1931-1938: A Study in Diplomacy and Ideology*, 226-7.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

attention to East Asia. This viewpoint never changed, even after the collapse of the Sino-German alliance. To Hitler, Berlin would certainly benefit from its close partnership with Tokyo in terms of ideological and geopolitical stability in East Asia, which in return allowed him to have more time to prepare his overall rearmament scheme in Europe. On the other hand, Hitler knew that he would need to make a clear choice between China and Japan, as both sides were his collaborators. However, he still had hopes that a *détente* between Nanjing and Tokyo could be reached. His wishful thinking made him believe an open conflict in East Asia could be possibly postponed, even prevented. At least in the early 1937, a total war between these two countries was not yet inevitable yet. Hence, Hitler decided not to address Sino-Japanese tensions unless they resulted in a major military conflict.<sup>29</sup> He simply knew Kung's concern without doing anything. His approach to Asian policy made both Sino-German and German-Japanese partnerships stagnate for several months until July 1937. When Kung's visit concluded on June 15, Chinese and German leaders still fundamentally agreed on the Soviet Communist threat to the world and the mutual benefits China and Germany could provide each other. The ROC had no objection on any ambitions of Germany as long as it sustained this alliance.<sup>30</sup>

### **Balancing: The Road to German Mediation of Sino-Japanese War**

Throughout the first half of 1937, Germany sought political balance internally and externally. Externally, Berlin attempted to reach a diplomatic equilibrium between Tokyo and Nanjing, working with both since late 1936. Despite the fact that the Germans were aware that this equilibrium would not long, they used it to temporarily distance themselves from the tensions in East Asia, leaning neither towards China or Japan. Within the German government, the pro-China and pro-Japan factions had equal powers to compete with each other; neither side could have the dominant advantage to direct the German Foreign Office in its Asian policy. Both political balances were interrelated and mutually influenced. At a surface level, it appeared as though the National Socialist government had near stagnated in its relations with China and Japan until July 7, 1937.

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<sup>29</sup> J.P. Fox, *Germany and the Far Eastern Crisis, 1931-1938: A Study in Diplomacy and Ideology*, 226-7.

<sup>30</sup> "Memorandum by the Head of Political Division," June 15, 1937, in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945: From the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry*, vol.4, 866-8.



As Chinese and Japanese soldiers fired against each other near the Marco Polo Bridge on July 7, 1937, heated discussions had already begun amongst German officials in Berlin. For example, Ernst von Weizsäcker, the soon-to-be Secretary of State at the German Foreign Office, quickly reassessed the Anti-Comintern Pact due to the open conflict between China and Japan. He indicated that the Pact did not provide any basis for Berlin to exert influence on Tokyo. In contrast, he worried that Tokyo might manipulate this Pact to justify its aggression against China.<sup>31</sup> Weizsäcker did not want Germany to leave the ROC with an impression that the Pact was partially designed to facilitate the Japanese military action in China. Hence, as he later told the Japanese ambassador in Berlin, Kintomo Mushanokōji, who asked Germany to stand on the Japanese side in this coming conflict, Berlin did not think the Pact would have anything to do with Tokyo's current behaviour in East Asia.<sup>32</sup> Weizsäcker was afraid that Japan would push China to an extreme reaction in a war that was beyond Germany's control.<sup>33</sup>

In contrast to Weizsäcker's concern, Herbert von Dirksen, the German ambassador to Japan, was more pessimistic about the role Berlin could play in the conflict between Nanjing and Tokyo. He did not think Germany could stay out from this war and remain completely neutral, as Japan would take the German attitude seriously in planning its next action.<sup>34</sup> However, he did not want the German Foreign Office to be involved in this conflict either. Therefore, he suggested that Berlin should ensure that German military advisers who currently served Nanjing should be limited in their future activities there.<sup>35</sup> He implied that German advisers should possibly restrict themselves from working for Chiang Kai-shek and his army. In Dirksen's eyes, any single contribution they would make to the GMD military development would seriously damage the German neutrality in the Sino-Japanese War. These contributions would directly and indirectly strengthen China's resistance against Japan. They might give Tokyo a perfect excuse to accuse

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<sup>31</sup> "The German Foreign Ministry to the German Embassy in China," June 28, 1937, in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945: From the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry*, vol.1, 742.

<sup>32</sup> "Memorandum," June 28, 1937, in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945: From the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry*, vol.1, 744-5.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> "The German Ambassador in Japan (Dirksen) to the German Foreign Ministry," August 23, 1937, in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945: From the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry*, vol.1, 754-5.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

Berlin of assisting Nanjing in fighting its true ally. Although Dirksen did not further question the presence of these advisers in Chiang's army, he made his suggestions known in Berlin. A month later, on September 25, the German ambassador Trautmann ordered the advisers to refrain from participating in combat despite the fact that the National Socialist government still allowed them to work with the Chinese.<sup>36</sup> In order to accommodate different attitudes toward Nanjing and Tokyo, Hitler defined the nature of German-Japanese relations more as symbolic rather than a true collaboration. Germany still needed the partnership with the ROC to earn profits and exchange for the raw materials necessary to develop German military and industry. On August 16, the Führer told his subordinates that he would "adhere, in principle, to the idea of cooperating with Japan."<sup>37</sup> The next day, he ordered HARPO to deliver weaponry and other military equipment to China according to the previously signed contract.<sup>38</sup> However, he simultaneously felt it necessary to not offend Japan, in order to "save face."<sup>39</sup> Hence, he privately ordered the HARPO to deliver military equipment to the Chinese secretly.<sup>40</sup>

The ROC attempted to find the middle ground between the two ideological antagonists, Germany and the Soviet Union. Nanjing certainly hoped to tilt Berlin to its side against Tokyo. However, at the same time it knew that it could not only rely on Berlin for its wartime survival. The Soviet Union was far from a perfect alternative, but a viable one given the fact that the ROC currently had almost no other options for allies. Diplomats from Nanjing had been talking to the Soviet ambassador from Moscow Dimitri Bogomolov about possible collective security measurements against Japan since late 1936. Bogomolov suggested to mutual agreements of assistance to the Chinese in April 1937 even before the Sino-Japanese War.<sup>41</sup> After the war broke out in 1937, Chiang Kai-shek met Bogomolov in person and asked the Soviet Union to send the

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<sup>36</sup> "The German Ambassador in China (Trautmann) to the German Foreign Ministry," September 25, 1937, in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945: From the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry*, vol.1, 763.

<sup>37</sup> William C. Kirby, *Germany and Republican China*, p.234.

<sup>38</sup> Han Xifu & Jiang Kefu ed., *Zhonghua minguo shi dashiji (Chronology of important events in Republican Chinese history)* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011), vol.8, 5560.

<sup>39</sup> Ma Zhendu & Qi Rugao, *Jiang Jieshi yu Xi tele: minguo shiqi de zhongde guanxi (Chiang Kai-shek and Hitler: Sino-German relations in the Republican Era)*, 362.

<sup>40</sup> Han Xifu & Jiang Kefu ed., *Zhonghua minguo shi dashiji (Chronology of important events in Republican Chinese history)*, vol.8, 5560.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 5396.

ROC 350 aircraft, 200 tanks, and 234 cannons within a month.<sup>42</sup> These aid was eventually offered to China. Although the German military advisers had been responsible for training the Chinese army, Chiang still requested that Joseph Stalin deploy Soviet military specialists to participate in China's preparations for the war with Japan.<sup>43</sup> Soviet assistance led Nanjing and Moscow to sign the Sino-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact on August 13. This Pact gave the ROC political assurance of Soviet help. It also ensured that neither side would make a deal with Japan behind the other's back even though Chiang Kai-shek remained in doubt about Soviet sincerity.<sup>44</sup> Finally, both Chiang and Stalin hoped that this Pact might develop further, and perhaps enlarge the British and the Americans in this Pacific rivalry.<sup>45</sup>

Ironically, while China expected the Soviet Union to whole-heartedly embrace the Sino-Soviet cooperation, it itself remained suspicion of the relationship between the two. To Chiang, China's survival was only a part of his concerns when it came to Stalin. Possibly, his bigger concern was to use the Soviet Union instrumentally in order to deter domestic political challenges from the CCP. The GMD and the CCP had been fighting each other for almost a decade until the Xi'an Incident in December 1936. When Chiang fled to Xi'an, the capital city of Shaan Xi Province in China, to appease insurgent CCP forces, his subordinates, Marshall Zhang Xueliang (previous warlord of the now Japanese occupied Manchuria) and General Yang Hucheng (warlord of Shaan Xi) arrested him and held him as a hostage. Both Zhang and Yang hoped to use this action to force Chiang into a truce with the CCP in order to fight the Japanese. The solution to this Incident was to establish the GMD-CCP United Front. However, Chiang's distrust of the Soviet Union only grew afterwards. He found that Zhang and Yang had been receiving Soviet aid even before the Incident. After Chiang was released, he agreed to compromise with Zhang and Yang and agreed to cooperation with the CCP under the Soviet mediation. It was Stalin who stopped the CCP leader Mao Zedong from attempting to kill Chiang after he had been kidnapped.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Han Xifu & Jiang Kefu ed., *Zhonghua minguo shi dashiji (Chronology of important events in Republican Chinese history)*, vol.8, 5535.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> John W. Garver, *Chinese-Soviet Relations, 1937-1945: The Diplomacy of Chinese Nationalism*, 21-2.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Li Yunzhi, "Chiang Kai-shek and Joseph Stalin during World War II," in Hans van de Ven & Diana Lary & Stephen R. Mackinnon ed., *Negotiating China's Destiny in World War II*, 144-5.

Chiang suspected that the Soviet Union played a major role in plotting the whole Incident together with the CCP. The primary reason he decided to work with the Soviets was because he believed the CCP would at least temporarily cease agitation against his government if Nanjing had found Moscow as the official collaborator. In Chiang's eyes, a coalition with Stalin was a political strategy to help him to deter domestic Communists and maintain short-term domestic political stability. In fact, it was Chiang's suspicion of Communism that eventually drove him to approach the Soviet Union as an alternative partner to National Socialist Germany.

But Hitler did not share in Chiang's perspective. Berlin looked at the Sino-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact differently. Germany was afraid that the Soviet Union was plotting to pull the ROC into its sphere, and that the Chinese and the Soviets were even plotting together against the Germans.<sup>47</sup> China's numerous efforts to persuade Germany that the Pact was designed to keep the ROC neutral rather than leaning toward Communism were not convincing to Hitler.<sup>48</sup> Berlin was increasingly skeptical about Nanjing's interactions with Moscow, just as Nanjing was suspicious of Berlin's intentions to strengthen its relationship with Tokyo. Both sides tried to demonstrate to each other their adherence to the alliance, but simultaneously both sides thought the other would collude with their enemy. Göring nearly lost his patience with the endless posturing; in early October, he began to urge Berlin to halt any assistance to Nanjing and adopt an open pro-Japan policy. The German Foreign Office rebuffed his suggestion, but Göring had his voice heard by the Führer.<sup>49</sup>

As the process of Japanese aggression in China accelerated, mediation between Nanjing and Tokyo now seemed necessary. The Japanese, however, did not want negotiation as they were winning battles in China.<sup>50</sup> The efficiency with which the Japanese army occupying Chinese territories increased the influence of the hawk faction in the Japanese government. Hence, the

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<sup>47</sup> "Memorandum (By Gaus)," August 30, 1937, in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945: From the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry*, vol.1, 756-7.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Cai Bingyan, *The Search for Allies: Chinese Alliance Behavior from 1930 to the End of WWII*, Master's Thesis (Hawaii: Hawaii Pacific, 2009), 30-1.

<sup>50</sup> Ma Zhendu & Qi Rugao, *Jiang Jieshi yu Xi tele: minguo shiqi de zhongde guanxi (Chiang Kai-shek and Hitler: Sino-German relations in the Republican era)*, 374.

hawks could radicalize Japan's foreign policy.<sup>51</sup> The hawks dominated Japan's policy toward the ROC, particularly after the Japanese troops had successfully occupied Nanjing and forced the GMD government to remove its capital to Chongqing.<sup>52</sup> But the dove faction also found legitimate reason to fight back after the Japanese attack on Shanghai which brought international criticism and pressure against Tokyo.<sup>53</sup> After intense internal debates, the Japanese government came to the consensus that negotiations were acceptable if the result was in favour of Japan. On October 21, the Japanese Foreign Minister Kōki Hirota implied to German Ambassador Dirksen that Japan was ready to negotiate with China if one of China's current allies was willing to moderate this conversation.<sup>54</sup> A week later Dirksen agreed to forward Hirota's request for mediation to the German Foreign Ministry.<sup>55</sup>

### **Balance Crumbled: Germany's Failure of Mediation**

Japan could not wait to propose negotiation with China way before the ROC agreed. In November, the Japanese submitted a four article proposal to the Chinese for consideration. First, since the GMD government acquiesced to the functional autonomy of Outer Mongolia, an autonomous government should be established in Inner Mongolia granting the same status to Outer Mongolia under international law. Secondly, in North China, a demilitarized zone would be created along the Manchurian border to a point south of the Beiping (Beijing)-Tianjin railway line. Here a troop of Chinese police commanded by Chinese officers could maintain order. Thirdly, a demilitarized zone larger than the present one would be created in Shanghai, to be controlled by international police. Both China and Japan would commit to fight Bolshevism

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<sup>51</sup> Chou Whei-ming, "Deguo dui manzhouguo ji Wang zhengquan de waijiao taidu (German diplomatic attitude toward Manchukuo and Wang Jingwei's government)," *National Chengchi University History Bulletin*, 05(2005): 159-60.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ma Zhendu & Qi Rugao, *Jiang Jieshi yu Xi tele: minguo shiqi de zhongde guanxi (Chiang Kai-shek and Hitler: Sino-German relations in the Republican Era)*, 374.

<sup>54</sup> Han Xifu & Jiang Kefu ed., *Zhonghua minguo shi dashiji (Chronology of important events in Republican Chinese history)*, vol.8, 5641.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p.5653.

together. Lastly, the Japanese terms demanded a reduction of customs duties on Japanese goods and the protection of rights of Japanese nationals in China.<sup>56</sup>

Dirksen himself thought these terms were reasonable and that the Chinese should accept them.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, he suggested that the Japanese government should pressure German military advisers in China to influence Chiang Kai-shek to compromise.<sup>58</sup> As the GMD government relocated the ROC's national capital in Chongqing on November 20, 1937, China had not given an immediate reply to the Japanese offer. But some officials in Chongqing tried desperately to get Germany involved. Chen Lifu, Chiang's trusted aide as well as the head of the GMD Investigation Section of the Organization Department (*Zhongyang zuzhi bu diaocha ke*), told Trautmann that China would like to return the previous Japanese occupied colonies (mostly in Shandong Province) to German hands if Berlin agreed to mediate the conflict between Chongqing and Tokyo.<sup>59</sup>

Trautmann waited patiently for a response from Chiang Kai-shek, who finally gave his answer at 5pm on December 2 to both Germany and Japan. Chiang accepted German mediation and insisted that Germany should fully participate in Sino-Japanese negotiations throughout the whole process.<sup>60</sup> He left two comments on the Japanese articles: first, ROC's sovereignty in North China could not be violated, but Chiang agreed to appoint someone who was not anti-Japan to govern the region. Secondly, the subject of Inner Mongolia could be discussed, but only in secret. The Japanese government should totally avoid publicizing the negotiations.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> "The German Ambassador in Japan (Dirksen) to the German Foreign Ministry," November 3, 1937, in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945: From the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry*, vol.1, 778-9.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> "The German Ambassador in Japan (Dirksen) to the German Foreign Ministry," November 8, 1937, in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945: From the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry*, vol.1, 783.

<sup>59</sup> Guo Hengyu & Mechthild Leutner, *Deguo waijiao dang'an: 1928-1938 nian zhi zhong de guanxi (German diplomatic archives: Sino-German relations 1928-1938)* (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1991), 91. Germany once had colonial possession in Shandong Province of China, however, the Germany colony was conceded to Japan after the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. This place was still under Japanese occupation in the early Sino-Japanese War.

<sup>60</sup> Han Xifu & Jiang Kefu ed., *Zhonghua minguo shi dashiji (Chronology of important events in Republican Chinese history)*, vol.8, 5687.

<sup>61</sup> Han Xifu & Jiang Kefu ed., *Zhonghua minguo shi dashiji (Chronology of important events in Republican Chinese history)*, vol.8, 5687.

Trautmann immediately forwarded Chiang's reply to the Japanese Foreign Minister Hirota through the German Ambassador in Japan, Dirksen. On December 23, Hirota drafted the preconditions of peaceful negotiation, claiming that the talk could begin only when the ROC was willing to fulfill all the following conditions: First, the ROC should accept Japan's conception of Manchuria as an independent political entity and being anti-Communist collaboration with Japan and Manchuria based on this conception. Secondly, the ROC should allow Japan to sign an agreement with Manchuria for economic cooperation (mostly this consisted of deals allowing the Japanese to construct railways across Manchuria). Thirdly, the ROC should pay war compensation to Japan. Lastly, in some regions (which the Japanese did not specify), it would be necessary for the ROC to refrain from stationing troops there, to eliminate the possibility of resistance.<sup>62</sup>

Tokyo insisted that Chongqing ought to demonstrate its honesty and commitment to anti-Communism. The Japanese would stop their military operations only after the Chinese accepted these proposed preconditions.<sup>63</sup> The Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Chonghui soon responded to these articles on behalf of the ROC in his conversation with Trautmann. Wang refused to compromise on the sovereignty of North China, but he believed the other articles were still negotiable.<sup>64</sup> However, Wang looked forward to hearing a more detailed explanation of the war compensation and economic cooperation demands from Hirota.<sup>65</sup>

Hirota did not genuinely want to negotiate with China. The negotiation was more a pretense and excuse for the Japanese to gain more time to prepare further invasion in China. When Dirksen presented the memorandum of German mediation to Hirota, the Foreign Minister asserted that the Japanese government intended to give stricter offers in the new talks due to "the

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<sup>62</sup> "Waijiaobu cheng Jiang Zhongzheng de shi Taodeman tiaoting zhong ri zhanzheng yu ri fang jieqia jingguo ji ri fang tiaojian (Trautmann mediation of the Sino-Japanese War and the Japanese offers, presented to Chiang Kai-shek by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs)," January 12, 1938, *Academia Historica, Geming wenxian: dui de waijiao (Revolutionary writing: Sino-German relations)*, Box 2, 1.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> "Taodeman fang Wang Chonghui tanhua jilu dui ri fang suo ti tingzhan si xiang tiaojian zhi fei zhengshi shuoming (Memorandum of conversation between Trautmann and Wang Chonghui: China requested Japan to give informal explanation of four articles of peace negotiation offer)," January 12, 1938, *Academia Historica, Geming wenxian: dui de waijiao (Revolutionary writing: Sino-German relations)*, Box 1, 1.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

change of circumstance.”<sup>66</sup> On the other side, Chiang also wanted to continue the Chinese resistance because it provided him a great opportunity to unify the Chinese nation, both mentally and physically. He was convinced that it would be better to turn down the Japanese offer at that moment because Japan would increase its demands endlessly, so long as the ROC continued to make concessions. Hence, Chiang refused Hirota’s proposal. On January 16, 1938, Tokyo officially declared an end of its negotiation with Chongqing, and withdrew its recognition of the GMD government.<sup>67</sup> Despite the fact Berlin tried tirelessly to deliver clear messages between Chongqing and Tokyo in order to let both China and Japan understood each other better, the German mediation still failed ultimately. This failure seriously damaged the credibility of the German Foreign Office in the eyes of the National Socialist leadership. Pro-Japanese Nazis found ample reasons to accuse the staff of the *Wilhelmstrasse* of being incompetent in dealing with Sino-Japanese relations. The Foreign Minister in Berlin, Neurath, soon took the blame. Joachim von Ribbentrop, more in-line with the Führer politically and diplomatically, replaced Neurath in the position, marking the triumph of the National Socialist leadership in the internal power struggle and the rise of its predominance in German foreign policy.<sup>68</sup> Hitler further managed the result of mediation to favour of Japan. On February 4, disregarding severe protests from the Chinese Ambassador in Berlin Cheng Tianfang, he announced to the Reichstag (the pseudo-Parliament of National Socialist Germany) the diplomatic recognition of Manchukuo, the puppet state founded by Japan since its occupation on September 18, 1931.<sup>69</sup>

The failure of German mediation signified the end of Berlin’s efforts to seek a political balance between Chongqing and Tokyo. Afterward, the National Socialist government gravitated

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<sup>66</sup> Han Xifu & Jiang Kefu ed., *Zhonghua minguo shi dashiji (Chronology of important events in Republican Chinese history)*, vol.8, 5694.

<sup>67</sup> William C. Kirby, *Germany and Republican China*, p.235.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, p.235; “Zhu de dashi Cheng Tianfang zi Bolin cheng Jiang weiyuanzhang baogao Xitele zai guohui yanshuo xuancheng de jiang chengren wei manzhouguo gu wo zhengfu si ke mingling zhaozhui yi shi buman bing xiang de fang yanzhong kangyi dian (Telegram: Chinese ambassador in Germany Cheng Tianfang reported to Generalissimo Chiang on Hitler’s speech of recognition of Manchukuo in Reichstag, Cheng proposed the Chinese government could possibly withdraw its ambassador in Germany and protest),” February 20, 1938, in *Zhonghua minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian dui ri kangzhan shiqi di san bian: zhanshi waijiao (Preliminary edition of Republican China’s important historical materials, volume three: wartime diplomacy)* (Taipei: Zhongguo guomindang zhongyang weiyuanhui dangshi weiyuanhui, 1981), 679.



towards Japan as the new Foreign Minister Ribbentrop aligned more closely with the pro-Japanese faction Göring and Goebbels among them, with possible support from Hitler behind the scenes as well. Two weeks after the recognition of Manchukuo on 4 February 1938, the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Weizsäcker informed Cheng Tianfang that Berlin planned to withdraw German military advisers from China in order to remain in a state of “true” neutrality.<sup>70</sup> During the same period, Göring ordered to terminate the military shipments to the ROC through HAPRO Company.<sup>71</sup>

The Chinese could do nothing to stop Göring. However, they desperately clung to Trautmann, hoping he could persuade Hitler not to withdraw the German military advisers based on legal and financial reasons. For example, Chongqing argued that Berlin would harm the Chinese trust on the Germans if it unilaterally ended the individual contracts of these advisers with the GMD government.<sup>72</sup> Also, this withdrawal would severely damage the financial standing of those military advisers currently in the country. They would be “stranded in China, in debt and without travelling money.”<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, the Chinese efforts were in vain. In June, Berlin officially demanded all China-based military advisers to leave the ROC as soon as possible. Chiang Kai-shek had no option but to let them go.

All these developments were byproducts of the failure of German mediation between the ROC and Japan. This failure distracted Chiang’s attention away from making concentrated decisions to deploy military forces and design strategies.<sup>74</sup> Without the support of German advisers and the HAPRO Company, the GMD army failed in its efforts to defend many of China’s territories.

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<sup>70</sup> “Zhu de dashi Cheng Tianfang zi Bolin cheng Jiang Weiyuanzhang baogao wei de zhengfu zhaohui zaihua guwen fang de waicizhang Huaiseke zhi tanhua qingxing dian (Telegram: Chinese ambassador in Germany Cheng Tianfang reported to Generalissimo Chiang on his talks with Weizsäcker about German withdrawal of military advisers in China),” February 24, 1938, in *Zhonghua minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian dui ri kangzhan shiqi di san bian: zhanshi waijiao* (Preliminary edition of Republican China’s important historical materials, volume three: wartime diplomacy), 684.

<sup>71</sup> William C. Kirby, *Germany and Republican China*, 235; Cai Bingyan, *The Search for Allies: Chinese Alliance Behavior from 1930 to the End of WWII*, 31.

<sup>72</sup> “The German Ambassador in China (Trautmann) to the German Foreign Ministry,” April 30, 1938, in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945: From the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry*, vol.1, 856-7.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ma Zhendu & Qi Rugao, *Jiang Jieshi yu Xi tele: minguo shiqi de zhongde guanxi* (Chiang Kai-shek and Hitler: Sino-German relations in the Republican era), 387.

Losses to the Japanese struck at the heart of Chinese confidence. Many GMD officials publicly doubted that the ROC would be able to survive against Japanese aggression if it kept fighting, exposing internal disagreements in Chongqing.<sup>75</sup> These disagreements had profound impacts on Chinese politics for the next two years. Contrary to popular scholarly interpretation however, while the failure of German mediation did badly damage the Sino-German alliance, it did not completely ruin the political relationship between Germany and the ROC. During the next three years, as this chapter will discuss, certain politicians from both sides, especially the Chinese, became seriously devoted to restoring the alliance.

### **A Herculean Task? China's Attempts to Recover the Alliance**

The German withdrawal of military advisers as well as the shutdown of HAPRO Company in 1938 prompted resentment from politicians in both Germany and the ROC. In Berlin, numerous underground resistance groups had been plotting to seize power from the hands of Hitler's National Socialist leadership since the mid-1930s.<sup>76</sup> Some of them secretly approached Chiang Kai-shek to inquire whether it would be possible for the resistance organization to have the Chinese support for future mutiny. In return, they promised to restore Sino-German relations and continue German investment in China. Chiang eventually chose to abstain; he never gave the German resistance a clear-cut answer to their invitation, nor he did he ever show much interest in their proposal.<sup>77</sup> There are two reasons for this. First, Chiang saw a gloomy future for the groups involved in German resistance. He believed it was too difficult to turn the National Socialist government upside down and revise its foreign policy at the moment. Given the high risks the resistance faced, Chiang was careful to avoid getting his government involved in a factional struggle in Berlin. Secondly, German resistance came from domestic dissatisfaction with the National Socialist dictatorship, its ideology, and the scheme to conquer Europe, which was far

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<sup>75</sup> Ma Zhendu & Qi Rugao, *Jiang Jieshi yu Xi tele: minguo shiqi de zhongde guanxi (Chiang Kai-shek and Hitler: Sino-German relations in the Republican era)*, 387.

<sup>76</sup> Although this thesis does not discuss the German resistance against National Socialism domestically, the detailed and thorough analysis about resistance movements can be found in Peter Hoffmann's monograph. See Peter Hoffmann, *The History of the German Resistance, 1933-1945* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT, 1977), 853pp.

<sup>77</sup> Liang Hsi-huey, *The Sino-German Connection: Alexander Von Falkenhausen between China and Germany 1900-1941* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1978), 143-4.

from Chiang's concern. The Generalissimo never much cared how Hitler would deal with Germany and Europe because Europe did not directly affect the Chinese homeland.<sup>78</sup> Some of the rationale behind previous Sino-German cooperation in the 1920s and early 1930s came from Chiang's belief that the pattern of German socio-economic development could be a valuable model for the GMD to follow. However, Chiang himself was not a fascist, and he had no time and energy to spare since the archenemy Japan was already attacking at home. Nevertheless, the invitation from German resistance reminded Chiang that there was a possibility to put the Sino-German alliance back on a positive track.

Chiang wanted Sino-German rapprochement to find new German support to bolster his legitimacy against his archenemy inside the GMD, Wang Jingwei. As one of the earliest followers of Sun Yat-sen, the founder of the Republic as well as the GMD, Wang became Chiang's biggest competitor inside the Party beginning in the mid-1920s.<sup>79</sup> Until his death in the mid-1940s, Wang was convinced he was the rightful successor to Sun Yat-sen. He argued that he had inherited the essence of Sun's revolutionary philosophy, not to mention that he had worked with Sun even longer than Chiang had. To Wang, Chiang was a thief who stole the throne that originally belonged to him. His pessimism also convinced him that Chiang's policy towards Japan was flawed, and would drive the country into a hell of relentless warfare. Peace, and only peace, was the only proper and realistic solution to the problem of Japanese aggression.<sup>80</sup> Apart from this "realistic" consideration, Wang was ideologically inclined towards a pan-Asianist alliance with Japan rather than further collaboration with the West.<sup>81</sup> He secretly left Chongqing on May 8, 1939 and afterwards frequently negotiated with the Japanese about the establishment of his own collaborationist government beginning in early 1940. He named Nanjing as the capital city of his new government, tried his best to replicate Sun Yat-sen's political customs, and accused Chiang of being an ally of the Communists.<sup>82</sup> Then, he built up an official alliance

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<sup>78</sup> Liang Hsi-huey, *The Sino-German Connection: Alexander Von Falkenhausen between China and Germany 1900-1941* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1978), 143-144.

<sup>79</sup> A brief introduction of Wang's background story before the Sino-Japanese War can be seen in Rana Mitter's newest monograph. See Rana Mitter, *Forgotten Ally: China's World War II, 1937-1945*, 28-9.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Rana Mitter, *Forgotten Ally: China's World War II, 1937-1945*, 216.

with Japan on March 30 and started to contact other countries for recognition.<sup>83</sup> In Chiang's eyes, Wang's behavior posited the most severe challenge to his own authority. Although he was aware that Germany was now keen on working with Japan, he decided to attempt to win back Germany. A Dealing with one of the most powerful countries in the West, Chiang would be able to weaken Wang's legitimacy and promote his own influence in foreign affairs by dealing with the Germans behind Wang's back.

Chiang replaced Cheng Tianfang with Chen Jie as the new Chinese ambassador in Berlin, hoping to refresh the diplomatic network. On August 26, 1939, Chen Jie met the Secretary of State Weizsäcker at the Foreign Office to bring up the subject of mutual alliance. Chen Jie told Weizsäcker that the ROC could accept the new Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact between Berlin and Moscow.<sup>84</sup> He further implied that Chongqing was looking for possible rapprochement.<sup>85</sup> However, the overall attention of German foreign policy had already shifted back to Europe in 1939 as the National Socialist government was preparing the invasion of Eastern Europe. As Weizsäcker put it directly, unless the ROC changed its mind with regard to renegotiating with Japan, which Hitler wished to see, Germany was not interested in any olive branch from the ROC.<sup>86</sup> From late 1939 to mid-1940, there was no significant improvement in Sino-German relations. Chongqing was partially discouraged by Berlin's apathy because Germany spent more time on attacking Europe than dealing with East Asia. Hence, the ROC began to pay more attention to approach other countries for assistance, notably the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and France.

The GMD government realized it had to compete with Japan for German favour if there was still to be a chance at salvaging relations. It would be a "herculean task" to restore the alliance, and Chongqing would have to make a sustained effort to win Berlin back. Chiang himself

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<sup>83</sup> Han Xifu & Jiang Kefu ed., *Zhonghua minguo shi dashiji (Chronology of important events in Republican Chinese history)*, vol.8, 6255.

<sup>84</sup> The Soviet Union had signed Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact (also named "Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact") on August 23, 1939. Previously the National Socialist government perceived the Soviet Union as future enemy and criticized China's efforts to secure the Soviet aid. Chiang had been expecting a final open war between Berlin and Moscow. However, this new Pact between two ideological antagonists was totally unexpected for Chiang.

<sup>85</sup> "Memorandum by the State Secretary," August 26, 1939, in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945: From the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry*, vol.7, 333.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

offered two major reasons to the Germans why they should reconsider their relationship with the ROC. First, the German-Japanese alliance would aggrandize megalomaniac Japanese ambitions in Asia, resulting in increasing Japanese military aggression in Southeast Asia. As an important part of the British, French, and even American colonial interests, Japanese aggression in Southeast Asia provoked future conflicts between Germany's ally Japan and the Western powers. Secondly, due to mutual commitment based on the alliance, a Japanese invasion of Asia would extend the German military presence from Europe to the far side of the globe, diluting German efforts in Europe.<sup>87</sup> In Chongqing, Chiang was not working alone. In fact, a large group of Chinese political and intellectual elites who once studied in Germany and currently served the GMD government had been extremely active in trying to improve Sino-German relations since early 1939. They openly called for renewed cooperation between Berlin and Chongqing.<sup>88</sup>

China's attempt to recover its relationship with Germany became more urgent after Germany, Italy, and Japan finally established an alliance as the Axis powers in the fall of 1940. On September 27, 1940, the three countries signed the Tripartite Pact in Berlin, pledging mutual defense. Wang immediately announced that his government looked forward to working with the Axis.<sup>89</sup> Since the Axis were increasingly powerful in the eastern hemisphere, Chiang was particularly afraid that he would lose his legitimacy as the only internationally recognized Chinese leader if the Axis decided to work with Wang Jingwei. Chinese contact with the British and Americans was still not solid, therefore the ROC did not *de facto* have a significant international partner in 1940. Different from the Axis powers or West Europe, who already saw that there were two camps and prepared to choose sides, Chiang did not care much whether he should work with the National Socialists or the "liberal world" as long as one of them could help the ROC ensure survival during a Japanese invasion. On November 11, 1940, he again sent Chen Jie to talk to Ribbentrop in Berlin and repeat the Chinese request. However, at this time,

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<sup>87</sup> "Jiang weiyuanzhang zai Chongqing jiejian deguo zhuhua daiban bide gaoyi riben canjia deguo zuozhan jiangyu de buli zhu qi chuanda de zhengfu tanhua jilu (Chiang Kai-shek talked to the representative of German embassy in China to forward message that Japanese participation in German warfare would be detrimental to Germany)," June 1, 1940, in *Zhonghua minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian dui ri kangzhan shiqi di san bian: zhanshi waijiao* (Preliminary edition of Republican China's important historical materials, volume three: wartime diplomacy), 693.

<sup>88</sup> William C. Kirby, *Germany and Republican China*, 258.

<sup>89</sup> Han Xifu & Jiang Kefu ed., *Zhonghua minguo shi dashiji* (Chronology of important events in Republican Chinese history), vol.8, 6381.

Ribbentrop disagreed with Chen Jie's proposal and even implied that Germany might possibly recognize Wang's government if Chiang refused to restart peaceful negotiations with Japan.<sup>90</sup> Chen Jie forwarded this message to Chiang, and urged him to continue the Chinese resistance but to not entirely abandon the hope of a negotiated peace.<sup>91</sup> Chiang only agreed to peace negotiations if both Japan and Germany would respect China's demand that Japanese troops be withdrawn from the mainland.<sup>92</sup> The German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop dodged Chiang's demand and even told him not to worry about Wang's government. Germany eventually postponed the discussion of Wang and the ROC postponed the discussion of peace negotiation in return.<sup>93</sup> China's attempts to recover the alliance did not result in any significant change. The restoration of Sino-German relationship was certainly a "herculean task," but this time, Hercules failed to beat the Nemean Lion.

### Epilogue: Farewell to the Alliance

Ironically, although China made every effort to save the Sino-German relationship in the years 1939 and 1940, it was also China that took the initiative to end this relationship in 1941. The essential reason was that Chongqing could no longer endure Berlin's recognition of Wang's collaborationist government. By 1941, the GMD no longer designed its foreign policy around

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<sup>90</sup> "Memorandum by an Official (Stahmer) of the Dienststelle Ribbentrop," November 11, 1940, in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945: From the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry*, vol.11, 515-7.

<sup>91</sup> "Zhu de dashi Chen Jie zi Bolin cheng Jiang weiyuanzhang baogao de waizhang yuewang mitan biaoshi ru chengren nanjing wei zuzhi de yibi suizhi yuci zhongde guanxi buwuyingxiang dian (Telegram: Chinese ambassador in Berlin Chen Jie reported to Generalissimo Chiang his secret meeting with German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop, noted that Sino-German relations will be seriously influenced if Germany and Italy recognized the puppet government in Nanjing)," November 11, 1940, in *Zhonghua minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian dui ri kangzhan shiqi di san bian: zhanshi waijiao (Preliminary edition of Republican China's important historical materials, volume three: wartime diplomacy)*, 698-700.

<sup>92</sup> "Jiang weiyuanzhang zi Chongqing zhi zhu de dashi Chen Jie zhishi de waizhang wanshu woguo kangzhan zhi mudi ji zhong de guanxi zhi zhongyao bing qing qi shenshen kaolv de zhi yuandong zhengce (Generalissimo Chiang Telegraphed Chinese ambassador Chen Jie to forward German Foreign Minister China's purpose of resistance, the importance of Sino-German relations and China's request of Germany to carefully consider its policy in the Far East)," November 21, 1940, Ibid, 700.

<sup>93</sup> "Zhu de dashi Chen Jie zi Bolin cheng Jiang weiyuanzhang baogao de waizhang renwei weiyuanzhang madianci yiwei jujue yanhe gu weiyu zanzheng gezhi dian (Telegram: Chinese ambassador in Berlin Chen Jie reported to Generalissimo Chiang that the German Foreign Minister believed Chiang had rejected the German proposal, Germany had to temporarily bypass this discussion)," November 24, 1940, Ibid, 701.

saving the nation from Japanese invasion. In China's relations with Germany, as well as with the other western countries, Chiang Kai-shek made the legitimacy of the Chinese state and the GMD's effective control of China key goals of his foreign policy, goals he had inherited from the earlier revolution launched by Sun Yat-sen. Sino-German relations had been in decline for years, despite the best efforts of Chinese diplomats, but it was the disagreement between the ROC and Germany on the legality of Wang's authority that finally brought this cooperation to an end.

Chongqing had been aware of the possibility that Berlin might recognize Wang Jingwei since early 1941. On February 2, Chen Jie sent his report back to the ROC Foreign Ministry, predicting that Germany would recognize Wang's collaborationists in order to strengthen the current Axis alliance. As the Foreign Ministry was in correspondence with American President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill at that time, Chen urged Chongqing to side with the British and the Americans rather than the Germans since Germany and Britain had been at war since 1939.<sup>94</sup> In Germany, the pro-Japan faction was calling for recognition of Wang's government.<sup>95</sup> But both Ribbentrop and Hitler were still reluctant to terminate relations with Chiang immediately. To them Wang was simply not powerful and legitimate enough to replace Chiang as representative of China. If possible, they preferred a coalition between Wang and Chiang so that both leaders could speak on behalf of a unified China.<sup>96</sup> To both Chiang and Wang, this proposal was like putting two kings on the same throne. Neither of them could accept such an idea.

Berlin finally decided to recognize Wang over Chiang. Japanese pressure was one reason behind the decision. Another reason was that Germany continued to hope for peace negotiations between China and Japan in order to "stabilize" East Asia, so that it concentrate on the conquest

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<sup>94</sup> "Zhu de dashi Chen Jie zi Bolin zhi waijiaobu baogao de ri guanxi yi ri yi jiashen qie de chengren nanjing wei zuzhi zhi shuo yizai jinrun (Telegram: Chinese ambassador Chen Jie in Berlin reported to the Chinese Foreign Ministry that German-Japanese relations were deepening and German recognition of Nanjing puppet government was under planning)," February 2, 1941, in *Zhonghua minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian dui ri kangzhan shiqi di san bian: zhanshi waijiao* (Preliminary edition of Republican China's important historical materials, volume three: wartime diplomacy), 702.

<sup>95</sup> "The Ambassador in Japan to Foreign Ministry," June 25, 1941 in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945: From the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry*, vol.13, 17.

<sup>96</sup> "The Charge d'Affaires China to the Foreign Ministry," June 27, 1941, in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945: From the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry*, vol.13, 29-30.

of Europe. Since the German government gradually realized that there would never be peace negotiations between China and Japan under Chiang's leadership, Germany turned to Wang. Hitler used Wang as a tool, an agent to achieve his plan for the East. It was hoped that recognizing his government would give Wang legitimacy he could leverage in negotiations with the Japanese. It was also an attempt to humiliate Chiang, as his previous attempts to restore the ROCs alliance with Germany had not been successful. The German Foreign Ministry informed both its ambassador in China and its embassy in Chongqing of the decision to recognize Wang in advance in late June. The Germans told the Chinese that they regarded Wang's government as the "second Manchuria."<sup>97</sup> The German diplomats in China could do nothing to alter Ribbentrop's decision. Chiang worried that there was a possibility of collective action behind this recognition. He was convinced that Italy, Romania, Slovakia, and other countries who had recently joined the Axis powers would follow Germany to name Wang's government as the only legitimate Chinese authority.<sup>98</sup> Hence, Chiang quickly warned the National Socialist government that Chongqing would terminate its relationship with Berlin if they did not withdraw this statement of provocation. He used this warning to demonstrate not to the Germans but to his GMD subordinates, as well as local Chinese warlords (who submitted to him only in name), that his legitimacy was stronger than Wang's. It was he who held the real power, not his rival in Nanjing. As nothing changed in Berlin, Chongqing announced the end of the Sino-German relationship on July 2. The GMD government declared war on the National Socialists in December 1941.

Why did the Sino-German alliance collapse between 1937 and 1941? Japan was an important factor, but Japanese involvement does not explain everything. I argue that a change in the role played by both countries in international relations respectively drove the wedge between them. When China and Germany established their alliance in the 1920s, their mutual relations were based on the break with European imperialism.<sup>99</sup> Germany as loser of the First World War was a victim of the post-war Versailles system. China was also treated unfairly by this system. It was at

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<sup>97</sup> Chou Whei-ming, "Deguo dui manzhouguo ji Wang zhengquan de waijiao taidu (German diplomatic attitude towards Manchukuo and Wang Jingwei's government)," 164-5.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> William C. Kirby, "The Internationalization of China: Foreign Relations at Home and Abroad in the Republican Era," *The China Quarterly*, 150(1997): 449-50.



the same time suffered from domestic warlordism which almost tore the country apart. These two countries cooperated as equal partners, at least in principal. However, throughout the mid-to-late 1930s, Germany again became a major European power due to its military and industrial development under the leadership of the National Socialist Party, while China was in an even weaker situation than in the 1920s because of continuing Japanese aggression. Germany regarded itself as the world power of the future and was eager to proceed with its plan of dominating Europe. China had been struggling for its own survival without any ambition to be a great power even in Asia. Hence, China and Germany were no longer “equal” partners. The different roles they played in their own respective regions (Europe and Asia) contributed to different understandings of their mutual relationship, thus created a potential source of friction.

There are two essential reasons why Germany turned from China to Japan. First, Germany and Japan shared certain ideological similarities. Japan was more willing to engage with Hitler’s anti-Communist scheme in Asia and Europe than the ROC. Secondly, China was not an ideal partner for Germany with regard to its ambition to dominate Europe. Germany needed a powerful ally that could assist it in stabilizing international relations in Asia, leaving Germany free to concentrate on its own plan to pursue power in Europe. Berlin had a Euro-centric view of international affairs. It developed connections in Asia mostly to supply necessary resources to support eventual hegemony in Europe. China was not “qualified” as Germany’s ally because it was losing the war against Japan with poor military performance and low morale. China was not available to help Germany to maintain the political order in Asia because it was preoccupied by the struggle for survival. Hitler did not want to pick the “loser” in the Sino-Japanese conflict, because this “loser” could not contribute much to Berlin’s effort to develop hegemony in the Eurasian continent. In the long-term, this decision might have even weakened Germany’s own efforts because China continuously demanded extensive military and economic aid. Certainly in Berlin’s eyes Tokyo had comparatively fewer resources to offer compared to Chongqing. Most sources the Japanese could offer to the Germans were the raw materials based in Japanese occupied Manchuria. However, Japan took every initiative to offend other regional powers, without holding back and it seemed to be a rising hegemonic power in Asia. Hitler needed an aggressive ally. He believed the Japanese imperialism in Asia would be beneficial to Berlin’s strategy to conquer Europe as a threat to the British and French empires in the Asia-Pacific region. Also, his mentality told him an offensive imperial power in East Asia like Japan was a

good match for Germany. They were both ambitious conquerors. The rise of German power and the decline of Chinese power made Berlin feel that Chongqing was useless as a partner in international relations. Hence, Hitler decided by the late 1930s to favour Japan over China in the Sino-Japanese War.

The deterioration of Sino-German relations began in early 1938 damaged the confidence of Wang Jingwei and his political allies in China's future resistance against Japan. Wang accelerated his efforts to form a political rival to Chiang Kai-shek and look for compromise with the Japanese. Wang believed that the current crisis would ruin the whole of China if allowed to continue. He was convinced that the only way to save China was to establish a new GMD government and collaborate with the Japanese in order to end the enlarging antagonism between these two countries. Wang also seized the opportunity to style himself as the "true" heir to Sun Yat-sen and his revolutionary legacy. The rivalry between Chiang and Wang was a competition over both GMD political orthodoxy and between different approaches to save China from Japanese aggression. Wang's rise soon drew German attention. Berlin found itself in a dilemma regarding its China policy. Germany realized Chiang's government in Chongqing was the only legitimate internationally recognized representative of China. Although Germany withdrew military advisors and ended significant investment as well as military-industrial exchanges with China, it did not entirely abandon the Chongqing government as a traditional diplomatic partner. However, after the failure to mediate peace negotiations between Japan and China in early 1938, Berlin lost its confidence in the possibility of bringing peaceful to the region with the Chongqing government as a partner. In the eyes of the National Socialist leaders, Wang's government in Nanjing offered the potential to find peaceful solution of the Sino-Japanese War but Wang, excommunicated by the GMD Central Committee in 1939, was relatively weak. He had far less political strength than Chiang in Chinese politics. In the first half of the year 1941, Germany intended to facilitate a political coalition between Chiang and Wang so that they could unite together to represent China and achieve peace. The Japanese clearly opposed this idea because he never accepted their offers in the negotiations, and Chiang intended to completely oust Wang.

Berlin eventually decided to recognize and support Nanjing for two reasons: First, it wanted was to see a peace between China and Japan in order to stabilize political order in Asia. Wang had stressed to the Germans the capability of his government to successfully negotiate peace for

some time. Germany gambled on Wang's government, hoping that they could do what Chiang could not. . Secondly, Berlin did not think Chongqing was strong enough to see the war through to the end. The National Socialist leaders thought Chiang's government would gradually collapse under further Japanese aggression, while Wang's government might survive because it agreed to work with the Japanese. Hitler miscalculated the future direction of Sino-Japanese War in the end. He selected the Chinese collaborationists based on his false judgment.

From late 1938 to 1941, China had been making its best efforts to restore Sino-German cooperation. Chongqing approached Berlin several times for rapprochement without success. It failed to prevent Berlin from supporting Wang's government. When Germany finally recognized Wang on July 1, 1941, Chiang immediately announced the termination of Sino-German alliance. Why was Chiang so nervous about the German recognition of Wang's camp? Why did he finally decide to break the Sino-German alliance? Chiang broke the alliance because doing so was the only way he could demonstrate that the Chongqing government was the only legitimate representative of China. He was afraid that the German recognition of Wang would increase Wang's political strength, enabling him to challenge Chiang as ruler of China, as they both claimed themselves to be the only legitimate political heir of Sun Yat-sen and the Chinese nationalist revolution. China was not totally unified under Chiang's leadership even in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Chiang feared that other warlords or political groups outside of his control would support Wang instead because Germany (China's most important ally) recognized the collaborationists in Nanjing now. It is in this context that Chiang took the initiative to finally break the Sino-German alliance. Ending the alliance was not merely a protest against Germany. It was also an attempt to thwart Wang Jingwei by denying him the legitimacy that came with international recognition.

From 1937 to 1941 China also sought assistance from the Soviet Union as well. But the GMD government never aimed to align itself with Soviet Communism as the Germans suspected. In fact, China deliberately kept itself distant from the Soviet Union because it worried that a close relationship with the Soviets would provide an opportunity for the CCP to grow into a major threat to the GMD. Mutual suspicion between Chongqing and Moscow finally evolved into Sino-Soviet estrangement after the Soviet Union signed the Nonaggression Pacts with Japan and Germany separately. After 1939, the amount of Soviet aid to China declined significantly.

Although China and the Soviet Union became allies after 1941, their relationship was within a larger framework of a grand anti-fascist coalition initiated by the British and the Americans. China and the Soviet Union did not come to an effective alliance as China had with Germany before 1941. Since Britain, Germany, and the other European powers were busy with affairs in Europe and not willing to help, Chiang had no other choice but to search for a new partnership across the Pacific Ocean, preferably, the United States.

## CHAPTER TWO—Finding Alternatives of Alliance: Sino-U.S. Relations, 1937-1939

Sino-U.S. relations made significant progress after the dramatic deterioration of the Sino-German alliance in the first half of 1938— particularly after the Germans withdrew military advisors, as well as their wartime assistance to China. Past historians from both China and the West have tended to define China's foreign policy toward the United States in the late 1930s as "endurance while waiting for the situation to change" (*ku cheng dai bian*).<sup>100</sup> The Republican Chinese government kept on fighting the Japanese until changes in international relations led the United States to take an active role in helping China. According to this interpretation, the ROC was more passive than active in its foreign strategy, relying on the transformation of the international environment to benefit China. In that case, *Ku cheng dai bian* could be a diplomatic gamble. This chapter gives an alternative explanation of China's U.S. foreign policy during this period. It argues that China has actually taken initiative in approaching western powers, predominantly Great Britain and the United States, ever since 1937. As indeed, the ROC's diplomacy affected the international atmosphere, just as the international environment affected the ROC.

Why the United States though? Was it simply because the United States would become the most prominent Pacific power? Did the Chinese view the Americans with a better image than that of the other westerners like the British and French? Also, why was the United States willing to adjust its foreign policy to favour China's interests? There has been abundant literature focusing on the Sino-U.S. economic and military cooperation during the Pacific War from 1941 to 1945. But why and how did both sides come to each other in the first place? This chapter will analyze the formation of the Sino-U.S. alliance from 1937 to 1939, concentrating on the political aspects, particularly the transition of both sides in their diplomatic insights and goals.

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<sup>100</sup> Chang Chung-tung, *Hu Shi wu lun (Five discourses of Hu Shi)* (Taipei: Dongda, 1987), 333pp; Hu Huijun, *Kangri zhanzheng shiqi de Hu Shi: qi zhanzheng guan de bianhua ji zai meiguo de yanjiang huodong (Hu Shi in the Sino-Japanese War: the change of his war perspective and his speech activities in the United States)* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang University, 2013), 144; Yang Tianshi, *Jiang Jieshi midang yu Jiang Jieshi zhenxiang (Chiang Kai-shek's secret archives and his truth)* (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian, 2002), 612pp; Zhang Zugong, "Jiang Jieshi yu kangzhan shiqi lianmei zhiri mubiao de shixian (Chiang Kai-shek and the realization of China's goal to coalition with the United States against Japan)," *Jiang hai xuekan*, 03(2010): 174-81; Chen Yongxiang, "Hu Shi, Song Ziwen yu kangzhan shiqi de mei yuan waijiao (Hu Shi, T.V. Soong and diplomacy for American aid during the war of resistance)," *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu (Journal of war of resistance studies)*, 02(2011): 113-23; Jonathan Fenby, *China's Generalissimo and the Nation He Lost* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2004), 564pp.

## The Outbreak of War and the Increasing American Attention to China

The American evaluation of China's geopolitical significance was very different from the National Socialist Germany. From 1931 to 1936, Japan had progressively promoted its power into the Chinese interior. Washington had already built up a consensus with regard to the prospect of international relations in this region, facilitated by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.<sup>101</sup> The United States came to believe that a unified and strong China ruled by the Republican Chinese government, not Japan, could profoundly contribute to the security and stability in East Asia.<sup>102</sup> The Americans also believed that they should not doubt the role of Chiang Kai-shek's leadership in governing China safely and effectively. The survival and longevity of Chiang Kai-shek's power were the "key elements" for the country to protect American interests and preserve the peace of East Asia in general.<sup>103</sup> Despite the fact that praise on Chiang never indicated any possibility of more American involvement in China's domestic and foreign affairs, the trust in his personality kept Washington's eyes on Nanjing and later substantially affected the orientation of U.S. policy toward East Asia.

The Republican Chinese government also paid close attention to the United States. Before the full start of the Sino-Japanese War, Nanjing did not think about the United States' world power or its significance in East Asia, but he thought of its interests in China, due to its prevalent financial and missionary presence. China already had the National Socialist Germany as its existing ally. It seldom would consider another external partnership. After Chinese and Japanese soldiers fired against each other in the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, the Chinese Embassy in Washington quickly delivered a message to the U.S. Government on July 12<sup>th</sup>, 1937, hoping that the United States would participate in solving the conflict between China and Japan. In the Chinese statement, the Embassy called the United States a "*guanxi guo* (related country)", which means the United States should be involved in the Sino-Japanese conflict because it had relevant interests in China.<sup>104</sup> From Nanjing's perspective, its request to Washington was legitimate since the Americans in China would be affected by this newly started Sino-Japanese War regardless of

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<sup>101</sup> I will refer to "President Franklin Delano Roosevelt" as "President Roosevelt" hereafter.

<sup>102</sup> Michael Schaller, *The U.S. Crusade in China: 1938-1945*, 10-12.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Han Xifu & Jiang Kefu ed., *Zhonghua minguo shi dashiji (Chronology of important events in Republican Chinese history)*, vol.8, 5479.

which side would win. However, the U.S. Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, rejected the Chinese proposal as he did not want to infuriate the Japanese government.<sup>105</sup>

Secretary Hull wanted to “localize” (*difanghua*) the Sino-Japanese conflict by isolating and diminishing the problem gradually.<sup>106</sup> The Marco Polo Bridge Incident pushed the United States back to the question of whether it could still remain indifferent toward the tensions between belligerents.<sup>107</sup> When Secretary Hull gave his public statement on the current clash in North China, he was cautious in choosing words as he did not want to differentiate “aggressor” and “victim” in his statement. He announced that the United States should adopt the policy of “strict impartiality” in order to prevent any potential American interference in East Asia. However, he appealed to “moral suasion” to the American public and aimed to make them have a more sympathetic understanding of what China confronted.<sup>108</sup>

While the United States revealed ambiguity in its judgment, China had its own reservation about whether it should immediately go to war with Japan. However, a few weeks after the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War on July 7, 1937, by the end of July, the Republican Chinese government had told U.S. ambassador in China, Nelson Trusler Johnson that it still hesitated to break its political relationship with Japan entirely.<sup>109</sup> Nanjing feared that a radical reaction would provoke further retaliatory aggression from Tokyo, which it was not ready for.<sup>110</sup> Roughly during the same period, Chiang Kai-shek had regular meetings with other ambassadors from the West, notably Great Britain, France and the National Socialist Germany. Chiang asked all of them respectively whether they could pressure Japan to stop attacking. The ambassadors from all these three countries believed both China and Japan should learn how to restrict themselves from further action.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Han Xifu & Jiang Kefu ed., *Zhonghua minguo shi dashiji (Chronology of important events in Republican Chinese history)*, vol.8, 5479.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5525.

<sup>107</sup> Dorothy Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938: from the Manchuria Incident through the Initial Stage of the Undeclared Sino-Japanese War* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1964), 533.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 533-4.

<sup>109</sup> “The Ambassador in China (Johnson) to the Secretary of States,” July 29, 1937. In *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter as “FRUS”) (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1949) 1937, vol.3, The Far East, 295.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> Cai Bingyan, *The Search for Allies: Chinese Alliance Behavior from 1930 to the End of WWII*, 59.

At the same time, Japan competed with China for influence on the West. When Japanese military troops started a battle in Shanghai, Tokyo sent out a request to both Washington and London asking them to persuade Nanjing to retreat and come to a compromise.<sup>112</sup> The Anglo-Americans responded with a policy of non-direct involvement. As the U.S. ambassador Johnson described, “we stated that any understanding which Japanese and Chinese might reach would have to be through direct negotiations by both sides.”<sup>113</sup> Thus, the British and the Americans withdrew their civilians from Shanghai despite the fact that Chiang Kai-shek was determined to fight the battle to protect the formers’ assets in Shanghai by all means of sacrifices.<sup>114</sup> The withdrawal of these assets in Shanghai unintentionally encouraged the Japanese to invade more because they feared no Western interference now. This lack of action disappointed China and made it gradually rely more on the war mediation offered by National Socialist Germany, which influenced the later development of the Sino-German alliance.

From August to October 1938, the United States only expressed its disagreement with Japan’s China policy in oral statements. Secretary Hull commented Japanese behaviour as completely “unresponsiveness”. He questioned whether Japan would have reasonable policies to guarantee “rights, interests, susceptibilities and safety” in China.<sup>115</sup> On October 5, President Roosevelt gave the well-known “Quarantine Speech” in Chicago to call for a blockade of “aggressors” in the international warfare.<sup>116</sup> It is important to note he did not identify who the “aggressor” was in the Far East. On the one hand, President Roosevelt did not want to crystalize Washington’s dissatisfaction with Tokyo. On the other hand, he did not want to encourage the growing domestic activism which argued that the U.S. State Department should have more participation in solving the Sino-Japanese conflict. President Roosevelt worried this activism would quickly irritate Japan.<sup>117</sup> After the “Quarantine Speech,” President Roosevelt hoped to ease the tension in

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<sup>112</sup> “The Ambassador in China (Johnson) to the Secretary of State,” August 13, 1937. In *FRUS*, vol.3, The Far East, 397.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*, 398-9.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, 398-9; Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-shek and the Struggle for Modern China*, 148.

According to Jay Taylor, Chiang kept putting his major Nationalist modern force to the later battle of Shanghai in order to demonstrate to the Western powers how determine he was to fight against the Japanese.

<sup>115</sup> “The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Japan (Grew),” September 2, 1937. In *FRUS*, vol.3, The Far East, 505-8.

<sup>116</sup> Han Xifu & Jiang Kefu ed., *Zhonghua minguo shi dashiji* (Chronology of important events in Republican Chinese history), vol.8, 5626.

<sup>117</sup> Michael Schaller, *The U.S. Crusade in China: 1938-1945*, 14.



East Asia by international collaboration without military or economic sanctions.<sup>118</sup> From the other continent across the Pacific Ocean, Chiang Kai-shek, the Chinese leader, was thinking along with the U.S. President. Those international solutions ended up being the frameworks of Nine Power Treaty and the League of Nations.

### **The ROC, the Nine Power Treaty and the League of Nations**

On August 20, 1937, the Chinese ambassador in the United States, Wang Zhengting, met with Secretary Hull and his special adviser on political relations, Stanley Kuhl Hornbeck, to propose a group mediation on the Sino-Japanese War. In this meeting, Wang noted that Nanjing hoped to appeal to the League of Nations and invoke the Nine Power Treaty with the assistance of Washington. Hornbeck later summarized it saying that “It is the sincere conviction of the Chinese government that the relationship among the nations can be governed by the realization and fulfillment of the noble principles enunciated and reiterated by Secretary of State Cordell Hull, and state the realization and fulfillment of these principles can only be attained by the full operations of all countries.”<sup>119</sup> Wang referred twice to the U.S. State Department by mentioning both the League of Nations and the Nine Power Treaty.<sup>120</sup> I argue that such an emphasis on the American impact reflected more than China’s acknowledgment of the United States as a rising Pacific power. The Chinese perceived Americans as easier to approach than other western powers because the United States had more direct relations with the international organizations China wanted to work with.

The Nine Power Treaty was the product of the Washington Naval Conference. This Conference was organized between 1921 and 1922 when a group of western naval powers convened to discuss the ways of naval disarmament to release the geopolitical tensions in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>121</sup> Through discussions, nine participant countries finally came to an agreement that the U.S. Open Door Policy in China should be applied to all nine countries in this

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<sup>118</sup> Dorothy Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938: from the Manchuria Incident through the Initial Stage of the Undeclared Sino-Japanese War*, 536-9.

<sup>119</sup> “Memorandum by the Adviser of Political Relations (Hornbeck),” attached with “The Chinese Embassy to the Department of State”, August 28, 1937. In *FRUS*, vol.3, The Far East, 490-1.

<sup>120</sup> “Memorandum by the Adviser on Political Relations (Hornbeck),” August 20, 1937. In *FRUS*, vol.3, The Far East, 3-5.

<sup>121</sup> Milestones: The Washington Naval Conference, 1921-1922, *Office of the Historian*, U.S. Department of State, <<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/naval-conference>>

Conference.<sup>122</sup> Hence, they signed the Nine Power Treaty to internalize the economic benefits they could get in China. Although it accepted the Japanese predominance in Manchuria, the Nine Power Treaty respected China's territorial integrity and the principle of equal economic opportunity among all nations in China.<sup>123</sup> In the case of Sino-Japanese War, the ROC attempted to engage all western signatories to pressure Japan to retreat from northern and eastern China for the reason that Japan violated the Treaty and offended equal chances of other powers to earn profits in China due to its military occupation of Chinese territories. For similar reason, Britain and France intended to intervene in the warfare under the context of transnational collaboration. Without the United States, however, it would be very difficult to bring effective changes to the current situation.

At this time, Washington deliberately distanced itself from the positions of London and Paris.<sup>124</sup> Hornbeck replied to the Chinese noting that "there was nothing new on the subject of the Nine Power Treaty."<sup>125</sup> Secretary Hull added that the United States wanted to observe the development of the Sino-Japanese conflict first, before committing to China.<sup>126</sup> Washington politicians were still overcrowded in the disillusion of American internationalist crusade proposed by President Woodrow Wilson after the First World War.<sup>127</sup> Due to the objections of Britain and France, as well as other western imperial powers, President Wilson failed to implement the principles of pacifism and self-determination among nation-states in the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, which frustrated the Americans for almost two decades. Therefore, the Americans had been no longer interested in foreign intervention during the 1920s and the early 1930s. The prudent attitude toward China was no more than a byproduct of the American disappointment of the international system in the 1930s.

In 1937, The ROC did not abandon its pursuit of western allies. Nanjing believed it should use the power of a larger global institution, the League of Nations, to push other western countries to the front. Also, in order to address the crisis in East Asia, Britain and France felt it was necessary

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<sup>122</sup> The United States, Britain, Japan, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal and China.

<sup>123</sup> Milestones: The Washington Naval Conference, 1921-1922, *Office of the Historian*, U.S. Department of State, <<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/naval-conference>>

<sup>124</sup> "Memorandum by the Chief of Division of Far Eastern Affairs (Hornbeck)," August 6, 1937. In *FRUS*, vol.3, The Far East, 333-4.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Robert E. Osgood, *Ideals and Self-Interest in America's Foreign Relations: The Great Transformation of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 364.

to open a multinational conference in Brussels for formal discussion in October 1937. Both London and Paris soon showed how much they had to rely on Washington for this conference. Since the United States was not a member of the League of Nations, Britain and France organized an Advisory Committee affiliated with, but not included in the Council of the League of Nations, which allowed them to pull the United States into the diplomatic game.<sup>128</sup> However, they proposed to exclude China from the discussion.<sup>129</sup> Chinese representatives angrily objected the British-French idea, and simultaneously seized every opportunity to realize this Brussels Conference.

On September 3, the Chinese ambassador, Wang Zhengting, met Secretary Hull and Hornbeck again for American support. Apart from repetitive request for American support in the League of Nations, Wang told Hull and Hornbeck that the Republican Chinese government prepared to invoke the discussion of Article 16 and Article 17 from the Covenant of the League of Nations in the Conference.<sup>130</sup> Both articles concurred “collective defense” principle, which could possibly release China’s current tensions with Japan by bringing international solution to the Sino-Japanese conflict.<sup>131</sup> Secretary Hull explained that the League of Nations once failed to apply Article 16 to the Italy-Ethiopian conflict in Africa.<sup>132</sup> He believed the Covenant of the League of Nations was ineffective in reality and China’s action “might neutralize the benefits of an appeal

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<sup>128</sup> Tao Wenzhao, Yang Kuisong and Wang Jianlang, *Kangri zhanzheng shiqi zhongguo dui wai guanxi (China’s Foreign Relations during the Sino-Japanese War)* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2009), 46-7.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> “Memorandum by the Adviser on Political Relations (Hornbeck),” September 3, 1937. In *FRUS*, vol.4, The Far East, 11-2.

<sup>131</sup> The Article 16 wrote countries “will mutually support one another in resisting any special measures aimed at one of their member by the covenant-breaking State, and that they will take the necessary steps to afford passage through their territory to the forces of any of the Members of the League which are co-operating to protect the covenants of the League.”

The Article 17 was supplement to the last one. It wrote “The State or States not Members of the League shall be invited to accept the obligations of membership in the League for the purpose of such dispute, upon such conditions as the Council may deem just...If a State so invited shall refuse to accept the obligations of membership in the League for the purposes of such dispute, and shall resort to war against a Member of the League, the provisions of Article 16 shall be application as against the State taking such action.”

See full versions of the League of Nations Covenant in *The Avalon Project*, Department of Law, History and Diplomacy, Lilian and Goldman Library, <[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/leagcov.asp#art16](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp#art16)>

<sup>132</sup> In the second Italy-Ethiopian War from 1935 to 1936, the Italian government under Benito Mussolini ordered troops to invade Ethiopia. The League of Nations hoped to mediate the war through the implementation of Article 16 in the Covenant. However, Britain and France adopted the policy of “appeasement” toward Italy. The implementation of Article 16 failed in the end.

to the League through the bad effects of a rebuff.”<sup>133</sup> In this case, China would even irritate Japan and cause the latter’s revenge. Wang said China did not expect a positive result, as its goal was to draw worldwide attention to increase the possibility of foreign intervention.<sup>134</sup> Under the pressure of China as well as Britain and France, the United States finally agreed to participate in the Brussels Conference.

Different from what the ROC conceived, the United States proposed “constructive measures”. The idea was to satisfy Japanese desire by giving it more access to raw materials and manufactured goods in China. Also, the United States believed it should create a buffer state in Inner Mongolia together with Britain and the Soviet Union in order to ease Japan’s anxiety about Russian Communism.<sup>135</sup> In return, Japan would develop a plan to progressively withdraw its military forces from China to reassure western powers who had equal commercial and naval interests in East Asia.<sup>136</sup> What about China though? The ROC had to calm down domestic anti-Japanese nationalistic sentiment to reduce the animosity between public of the two countries.<sup>137</sup> The U.S. proposal was to some extent similar to the appeasement that Britain and France had practiced with Italy in its colonial war on Africa. Washington even predicted that Tokyo would not accept this proposal.<sup>138</sup> However, the United States began to look at the Sino-Japanese War from a humanitarian perspective. Washington did not question Tokyo’s motivations to go to war with Chongqing but the casualty of human lives as well as social destructions the war brought.<sup>139</sup>

The United States also worried that Japan would potentially align itself with National Socialist Germany and Italy. Its worry came from Germany’s rejection of participation in the Brussels Conference. According to the U.S. ambassador in Japan, Joseph Clark Grew, during the Conference, Italy aimed to “destroy the moral effect which might be sought in unanimous

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<sup>133</sup> “Memorandum by the Adviser on Political Relations (Hornbeck),” September 3, 1937. In *FRUS*, vol.4, The Far East, 11-2.

<sup>134</sup> “Memorandum by the Adviser on Political Relations (Hornbeck),” September 3, 1937. In *FRUS*, vol.4, The Far East, 11-2.

<sup>135</sup> Dorothy Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938: from the Manchuria Incident through the Initial Stage of the Undeclared Sino-Japanese War*, 402-3.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid*, 403-4.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>138</sup> “Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs (Hamilton),” October 12, 1937. In *FRUS*, vol.4, The Far East, 596-600.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*.

condemnatory resolution by voting against it.”<sup>140</sup> Washington clearly noticed the fascist and anti-Communist nature of the Japanese government. It is believed this nature would extend to the sphere of Japan’s foreign policy and motivate Japan to consolidate its cooperation with Germany and Italy. Together these three totalitarian states would pose a subversive threat which could break the current international law.<sup>141</sup> Arguably, the United States had already been inclined to group the Anglo-Americans and the German-Japanese-Italian against each other as “democracy” versus “dictatorship.” However, since there was no Tripartite Pact signed among Tokyo, Berlin and Rome in 1937 (the Axis Powers only finalized their alliance in 1940), Washington was afraid to push Tokyo to accelerate its collaboration with its collaborators in Europe.

The U.S. proposal got a negative reaction from Japan. The Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kōki Hirota, criticized the proposed Brussels Conference in front of U.S. ambassador Joseph Grew. He asserted that this Conference demonstrated the League of Nations had already favoured China. Such a useless conference would not help to mediate the Sino-Japanese War but sustain it, Hirota was convinced China would keep its fighting as encouraged by the West.<sup>142</sup> Hirota further warned Grew that this Conference would not only deteriorate the prospect of Sino-Japanese peace negotiation but also escalate the conflict between the two.<sup>143</sup> In response to the Japanese protest, the U.S. Department of State did not adopt any punitive measures against Japan.<sup>144</sup> The Americans disagreed with coercive measures, which they believed would not fit the Conference since it aimed to achieve peaceful negotiation.<sup>145</sup> American diplomat Norman Davis and his associates officially announced Washington’s general attitude:

- a. The United States is in no way, and will not be in any way, a part to joint action with the League of Nations.
- b. The United States policy does not envisage the United States being pushed out in front as the leader in, or suggestor of, future action.

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<sup>140</sup> “The Ambassador in Japan (Grew) to the Secretary of State,” October 15, 1937. In *FRUS*, vol.4, The Far East, 612-6.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> “The Ambassador in Japan (Grew) to the Secretary of State,” October 15, 1937. In *FRUS*, vol.4, The Far East, 80-1.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> Dorothy Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938: from the Manchuria Incident through the Initial Stage of the Undeclared Sino-Japanese War*, 540.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

- c. On the other side of the picture, the United States cannot afford to be made, in popular opinion at home, a tail to the British kite, as has been charged and is now being charged by the Hearst press and others.<sup>146</sup>

The Brussels Conference only ended with a firm decision to give China moral support, rather than military and economic support in its war against Japan.<sup>147</sup> Japan managed this result to expand its aggression in China. Through this Conference, Tokyo realized how important Washington would be to East Asia. Hence, it began to compete with Nanjing for American help. Ironically, while Nanjing was asking Washington to convince Tokyo to stop the invasion, Tokyo made many efforts to persuade Washington to pressure Nanjing to accept Japanese offers.<sup>148</sup> The United States chose to distance itself further from Sino-Japanese mediation because it did not want to reveal any prejudice on either side. It was afraid of antagonizing Japan so it only offered sympathy to China.<sup>149</sup> Without engagement with the Americans, the Chinese fought by themselves and eventually lost its capital Nanjing in December. The Republican Chinese government announced its plans to remove its capital to Chongqing, which Chiang believed to be a “more advantageous position to direct national affairs as a whole and put up prolonged resistance.”<sup>150</sup>

### **Fence Sitting: The United States between China and Japan, 1938**

After the resettlement of China’s wartime capital in Chongqing, Sino-U.S. relations remained stagnant until the late 1938. Washington continued to disengage from the Sino-Japanese War and felt more comfortable being a remote observer. Chongqing turned to Berlin for the help of war mediation. At the moment, it paid attention to both Berlin and Washington. Hence, the ROC did

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<sup>146</sup> “Memorandum from the File of President Roosevelt’s Secretary,” from “The Secretary of State to Mr. Norman H. Davis”, October 18, 1937. In *FRUS*, vol.4, 84-6.

<sup>147</sup> Tao Wenzhao, Yang Kuisong and Wang Jianlang, *Kangri zhanzheng shiqi zhongguo dui wai guanxi (China’s Foreign Relations during the Sino-Japanese War)*, 50-1.

<sup>148</sup> “The Ambassador in Japan (Grew) to the Secretary of State,” November 16, 1937. In *FRUS*, vol.4, The Far East, 690-7.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Text of A Statement Issued by the Chinese Government on November 20, 1937, in regard to the Removal of the National Capital from Nanking to Chungking, attached in “The Chinese Embassy to the Department of State”. In *FRUS*, vol.3, The Far East, 703-4.

not fully concentrate on the development of its relationship with the United States in the first half of the year 1938.

Although Washington chose to become an observer but not a participant in Chongqing's crisis, it inevitably could not ignore the pressure of the Japanese offense. On December 12, 1937, the Japanese forces attacked the American gunboat U.S.S. Panay, which was anchored alongside Yangzi River near Nanjing. The gunboat sank under this attack which caused numerous casualties. On the same day, the British gunboat H.M.S. Ladybird was shelled by the Japanese ground troops by cannon.<sup>151</sup> Since Britain wanted to spend more time on its military policy in Europe against the background of the rearmament of Germany, it hesitated to leave its battleships to Asia to respond to the Japanese challenge. France also wanted Britain to concentrate on Europe rather than returning to Asia because it feared confronting the German-Italy alliance alone.<sup>152</sup> Therefore, Britain again threw this issue to the United States for proper solution.

However, the United States did not want to accept the British request to handle this crisis. Certainly Washington was angry about what Tokyo had done. President Roosevelt even believed the Japanese attack reflected its fundamental purpose to exclude all the western presence in China, particularly around the Yangzi River. It seemed Tokyo also wanted to intimidate Chongqing and thwart its will of resistance.<sup>153</sup> But the U.S.S. Panay Crisis only partially raised Washington's attention to East Asia. Washington would not punish Tokyo for this crisis, as long as Tokyo could provide a reasonable explanation. The Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hirota, later defended Japan noting that Japan misjudged the target in its military operation. It aimed to shoot at the Chinese, but due to the foggy weather, it was unable to recognize the American flag on the gunboat. Hirota apologized and promised compensation.<sup>154</sup> Despite the fact that Chiang Kai-shek fully seized this opportunity to appeal to further western interference in

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<sup>151</sup> Taiwanese scholar Yang Fanyi from National Chengchi University gave a detailed elaboration about the development of these two events in the second chapter of his published Master's thesis. I will not cover them in my work here. See Yang Fanyi, *Meiri Panai hao shijian yu zhongmei guanxi: 1937-1938 (U.S.S. Panay Crisis and the Sino-American Relations)* (Taipei: National Chengchi University, 2012), 49-68.

<sup>152</sup> Yang Fanyi, *Meiri Panai hao shijian yu zhongmei guanxi: 1937-1938 (U.S.S. Panay Crisis and the Sino-American Relations)*, 84.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, 83.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, 90-1.

China, the White House only assessed whether or not a war between democracy and dictatorship would be possible due to this Crisis. The Americans did not change their policy.<sup>155</sup>

The U.S.S. Panay Crisis raised British awareness of how their interests in China might be endangered. London worried that Tokyo would march its military forces to the south, threatening the security of its trading port, Hong Kong. Hence, Britain asked the United States whether it accepted to conduct joint “parallel actions” which was the co-operative naval defense together against Japan in East Asia.<sup>156</sup> Washington replied to London that it only agreed to sit in “parallel line” together without deploying any naval troops to East Asia.<sup>157</sup> In that case, the Americans believed the British should not assume them to agree to joint “parallel actions” because they were convinced that the Nine Power Treaty was still effective in the containment of Japan. Both the Chinese and Japanese could resolve their conflict via legal process.<sup>158</sup> Washington wished Tokyo to remember its interests in China. Those interests include the preservation of rights of American nationals, respect for American property and financial rights and equal commercial opportunity even in the Japanese occupied areas of China.<sup>159</sup> Overall, the United States deemed that its interests would not be seriously harmed even if Japan predominantly controlled China.

Both the ROC and Japan hoped to compete for the American attention in the Sino-Japanese War. As Japan won more battles in China, the Chinese Nationalist troops had to retreat to the South. When Tokyo planned to seize the City of Hankou, a place which Chongqing symbolically commemorated as the initial site of 1911 Revolution to overthrow the Qing Empire, Chiang Kai-shek ordered to defend this city by all means. The Republican Chinese government attempted to convince the United States that they would never surrender and the British and the Americans should see the promising future of resistance.<sup>160</sup> At the same time, Japan informed the United States that it hoped to have American support as well. Japan expected to dominate China but it

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<sup>155</sup> Dorothy Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938: from the Manchuria Incident through the Initial Stage of the Undeclared Sino-Japanese War*, 542-3.

<sup>156</sup> “Memorandum on Possible Peace Terms for Communication to the United States Government,” attached to “The British Permanent under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Cadogan) to the Adviser on Political Relations (Hornbeck),” February 14, 1938. In *FRUS*, 1938, vol.3, The Far East, 89-93.

<sup>157</sup> “Memorandum on Possible Peace Terms for Communication to the United States Government: Analysis and Comment,” attached to “The Adviser on Political Relations (Hornbeck) to the British Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Cadogan),” April 13, 1938. In *FRUS*, vol.3, The Far East, 141-53.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> “The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Japan (Grew),” June 25, 1938. In *FRUS*, vol.3, The Far East, 203-5.

<sup>160</sup> “The Ambassador in China (Johnson) to the Secretary of State,” July 27, 1938. In *FRUS*, vol.3, The Far East, 228-39.



could not solve the great difficulties of governance there without financial collaboration with the United States.<sup>161</sup> The United States eventually preferred China over Japan because of Tokyo's monopoly of the East Asian market, which made Washington see no prospect for profits.<sup>162</sup>

The stagnation of U.S.-China relations did not last after the summer of 1938. Although domestic isolationism in foreign policy was still strong, more Americans became convinced that the U.S. internationalist ideal in world affairs could *de facto* match realpolitik.<sup>163</sup> External moral intervention was compatible to the American self-interests, demonstrated by the case of East Asia.<sup>164</sup> Chongqing felt that the possible turn of Washington's foreign policy direction might be potentially beneficial to the Chinese resistance. Hence, Chiang Kai-shek decided to appoint a new Chinese ambassador who could cater to the changing of American diplomatic ideology. Hu Shi seemed to be the most appropriate person to accomplish this task.

### **Going to the States: Hu Shi and His Ambassadorship**

On December 13, 1937, a notable and courteous gentleman arrived in the Astor restaurant in New York. As the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Peking University, he came to attend the forum hosted by the American Foreign Policy Association. This forum was specifically organized to discuss the ongoing warfare in East Asia, which attracted upper class U.S. audiences, as well as Chinese and Japanese journalists. This gentleman made a statement in the forum, stating that China was now fighting alone for its survival against the ferocious aggression of its Eastern neighbour, Japan, who plotted to humiliate the Chinese people by unlimited expansion. This statement brought him into an argument with two Japanese editors from well-known journals, *Osaka Mai-nichi* and *Tokyo Nichi Nichi*, who were also at the forum, which drew wide attention from the Americans.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> "The Ambassador in Japan (Grew) to the Secretary of State," July 27, 1938. In *FRUS*, vol.3, The Far East, 239-41.

<sup>162</sup> Text of a noted delivered by the American ambassador to the Japanese government on October 6, 1938. Later released by the Department of State in Washington D.C. on October 27, 1938. Also published in press by Reuter on October 28, 1938. *Academia Sinica*, Institute of Modern History, 1.

<sup>163</sup> Robert E. Osgood, *Ideals and Self-Interest in America's Foreign Relations: The Great Transformation of the Twentieth Century*, 17.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> "China Cause Wins Cheers at Forum", *New York Times*, November 14, 1937. *Academia Sinica*, Institute of Modern History, 1.

This gentleman, Hu Shi, visited cities like New York and Washington D.C. for external political support for the wartime China since the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War. He came to the United States even before he was appointed as the Chinese ambassador to Washington in late 1938. Born on December 17, 1891 in the Anhui Province and raised in Shanghai, Hu Shi was one of the early generation of Republican Chinese scholars who received funding appropriated from the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Program to continue his education in the United States. He firstly came to study agriculture at Cornell University, and he later transferred his major to philosophy and literature. He then went to Columbia University to complete his doctorate in philosophy under the supervision of John Dewey. He returned to China in 1917 to start his teaching career in Peking University, where he remained until 1938. After the Sino-Japanese War broke out, Hu Shi came to the United States again frequently in order to call for American attention to the ROC. On September 17, 1938, Chiang Kai-shek appointed him to replace Wang Zhengting as the new Chinese ambassador to Washington. This ambassadorship lasted for almost five years until his resignation in 1942.<sup>166</sup>

Why did the Republican Chinese government choose Hu Shi? Hu Shi was far from the only important figure who contributed to the formation of Sino-U.S. Partnership. But his ambassadorship showed that Chongqing preferred someone who was educated by American values to convince Washington (the true Americans) in its diplomacy. Hu Shi embraced liberalism and the U.S. political system since the early days when he was still a graduate student in New York. In the 1920s and early 1930s, he advocated them to both the Republican Chinese government and the public. Despite the fact that Chiang Kai-shek and other Chinese Nationalist officials disliked his proposals, they eventually decided to send him to work with President Roosevelt and Secretary Hull because they believed no one except him could do the task. Hu Shi's appointment started a new era of China's diplomacy with the United States. The delegation of T.V. Soong as Chiang's personal representative in June 1940 and the visit of Madame Chiang Kai-shek to the U.S. Congress in 1943 both took references from Hu Shi's ambassadorial experience in North America.

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<sup>166</sup> Taiwanese scholar Chang Yung-chen has recently published two volumes on Hu Shi's early life biography, describing how his American education had an impact on his later academic and political careers. See Chang Yung-chen, *Shewoqishui: Hu Shih (No One Can Achieve But I: Hu Shi's Biography)* (Taipei: Lianjing, 2011), vol.1, 720pp. And Chang Yung-chen, *Shewoqishui: Hu Shih (No One Can Achieve But I: Hu Shi's Biography)* (Taipei: Lianjing, 2013) vol.2, 968pp.

Hu Shi was previously reluctant to accept this appointment because he thought his cohorts in Chinese academia would regard him as a coward, fleeing from domestic warfare. He eventually agreed to go after his close friends and colleagues persuaded him to.<sup>167</sup> Although he was hesitant to be the Chinese ambassador, Hu Shi had been one of the strongest advocates of Sino-U.S. cooperation since the 1930s, even when most other people believed the National Socialist Germany should be China's essential partner. In his English writings, Hu Shi critically observed the changing balance of power across the Pacific Ocean, noting that Japan was gradually losing its hegemonic dominance in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>168</sup> The Soviet Union might fill the power vacuum in East Asia.<sup>169</sup> However, the ROC preferred the United States over the Soviet Union to take the leadership role to bring peace and order to the current anarchy of international relations based on the principle of "collective security."<sup>170</sup>

Hu Shi's ambassadorial work was based on these writings. In order to indicate the importance of the U.S. participation in Pacific diplomacy, he gave speeches to a wide range of American audiences across different social classes and areas. These audiences included politicians from U.S. Congress, business leaders, ordinary citizens, religious communities, media professionals, legal groups and universities intellectuals, whom he was most familiar with.<sup>171</sup> Hu Shi knew that both President Roosevelt and Secretary Hull could not ignore public opinion. He believed that was how democracy worked in the United States.<sup>172</sup> His strategy was to formulate a positive image of China and spread sympathy so that the American people would push the Washington politicians to help China.<sup>173</sup> In doing so, Hu Shi used many significant analogies in his speeches. For example, in his speech on December 4, 1938 in New York, Hu Shi referenced the history of the American Independence War at Valley Forge when he described Chinese resistance against Japanese. He argued that the reason the Americans succeeded in obtaining independence was

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<sup>167</sup> Hu Shi's former student at Peking University, Luo Jialun, wrote a meticulous memoir about how Hu Shi faced this ambassadorship and why he accepted it in the end. See Luo Jialun, "Events Leading to Hu Shi's Becoming Chinese Ambassador to the United States," *Chinese Studies in History*, 01(2008): 61-7.

<sup>168</sup> Hu Shi & Zhou Zhiping, "The Changing Balances of Forces in Pacific", *English Writing of Hu Shih*, vol.3: *National Crisis and Public Diplomacy* (Beijing & Berlin: Springer, 2013), 36-7.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Hu Shi & Zhou Zhiping, "The Changing Balances of Forces in Pacific", *English Writing of Hu Shih*, vol.3: *National Crisis and Public Diplomacy*, 67-8.

<sup>171</sup> Hu Huijun, *Kangri zhanzheng shiqi de Hu Shi: qi zhanzheng guan de bianhua ji zai meiguo de yanjiang huodong* (*Hu Shi in the Sino-Japanese War: the change of his war perspective and his speech activities in the United States*), 84.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid, p.125.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, p.136.

because they had support from the French against the British colonizers. The situation the Chinese faced at this time was similar to the Americans when they were fighting at the Valley Forge. Chongqing hoped Washington could give a helping hand, similar to what Paris did two hundred years ago.<sup>174</sup> In another speech on March 23, 1942, Hu Shi stated that the Chinese were fighting for “a way of life”, and that they were standing with American democracy to save those western beliefs in the East.<sup>175</sup> Without Hu Shi’s propaganda, which provoked empathy among ordinary Americans, it would take longer time for the United States to turn to internationalism in its foreign policy. This ideological rejuvenation was followed by the amendment of Neutrality Act in 1939.

### **Farewell to Fence Sitting: The Amendment of Neutrality Act**

In 1939, China primarily focused on pushing the United States to amend its Neutrality Act in Sino-U.S. relations. Chongqing prioritized the persuasion of Washington with regard to the approval of the new Neutrality Act as the central task in Chinese policy toward the Americans this year. On October 1, 1938, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent Hu Shi instructions with regard to his new ambassadorship. The Ministry particularly highlighted that Hu Shi and his ambassadorial group should prevent the U.S. Congress from using the Neutrality Act before Japan completely blocked China.<sup>176</sup> The ROC believed the amendment of the Act was crucial in the new development of Sino-U.S. relations after 1939.

From the Chinese perspective, the Neutrality Act was the large obstacle that kept the Americans out of East Asia. The U.S. Congress passed the Neutrality Act in 1935, revised it in 1937. This Act seriously restricted any actual American participation to the belligerent states in case of war. It developed a licensing system to control the transportation of arms by American vessels; it prohibited any American ships or gunboats from entering the war zone of any belligerent states; and it declared an embargo on the ammunition exportation to any countries engaging in warfare. Congress also announced the principle of “cash and carry”, which meant

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<sup>174</sup> Hu Shi, *Rongren yu ziyou: Hu Shi yanjiang lu (Tolerance and liberty: selection of Hu Shi’s speech)* (Beijing: Jinghua chubanshe, 2005), 126-30.

<sup>175</sup> Hu Shi, *Rongren yu ziyou: Hu Shi yanjiang lu (Tolerance and liberty: selection of Hu Shi’s speech)*, pp.136-142.

<sup>176</sup> “Waijiaobu zhi Hu Shi dian (Telegram from Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Hu Shi),” October 1, 1938, see Hu Shi, *Hu Shi ren zhu mei dashi qijian wanglai diangao (Corresponding telegrams about Hu Shi’s ambassadorship in the United States)* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1978), 1.

other countries could only buy American weapons with cash and they had to carry those purchased items themselves. To make the true claim of “Neutrality”, the United States would apply this Act to any regional or worldwide warfare regardless of its nature, origin and consequence.<sup>177</sup>

The ROC could not afford the risks brought by the implementation of the Act. First, Chongqing did not care whether Washington would deliver any favourable military conditions to other countries in Europe, but the rules of the Act frustrated its hopes to obtain any possible assistance. Second, the restriction of any American ship or gunboat to enter a war zone mean the United States would evacuate its troops from East Asia quickly. As long as the Americans had no military presence there, the Chinese had no excuse to ask for intervention because Japanese no longer directly affected the American military.<sup>178</sup> Third, this Act was more beneficial to countries such as Britain and France who still had minimum financial strength to negotiate any possible trade agreements with the United States using “cash and carry” provision. However, China’s economy was highly devastated in 1938 and 1939, and the Republican Chinese government simply lacked the fund to buy American arms.<sup>179</sup> Lastly, even if they could purchase those arms they worried Japan would attack their vessels during the transportation and damage everything they bought. National Socialist Germany had already withdrawn its military advisers as well as industrial investment in China due to the deterioration of Sino-German relations in 1938. In this case, the ROC feared the current Neutrality Act would ruin its prospect for any future help from the outside and eventually cause the internal collapse of Chinese politics and society.

Chongqing was not the only one who wanted to change the Act. In Washington, President Roosevelt also saw the necessities for amendments. Roosevelt did not want to antagonize the Chinese because there were still American nationals living in China. The Japanese aggression had already threatened their security. President Roosevelt worried the implementation of the Act would bring new animosity toward the Americans from the Chinese.<sup>180</sup> At the same time, despite

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<sup>177</sup> “Shishi ribao: Meiguo xin zhongli fa’an yu zhongli zhidu (News Daily: the U.S. Neutrality Act and its institution of ‘neutrality’),” April 1936. *Academia Sinica*, Institute of Modern History, *Department of North American Affairs*, Box. 1, 34-42.

<sup>178</sup> “Telegram: Hu Shi (Washington) to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Chungking),” March 3, 1939. *Academia Sinica*, Institute of Modern History, *Department of North American Affairs*, Box.2, 59.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (New York: Oxford, 1979), 146.

the fact that the isolationists still acted strongly against amendment, Roosevelt felt increasing pressure from public who wanted to postpone the implementation of the Act.<sup>181</sup> He decided to revise the Act in the Congress. However, in his mind, President Roosevelt still ranked Britain and France above China, and he wanted to modify the Act more for preventing European warfare than for saving China.<sup>182</sup>

In Chongqing, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs proposed ways to push for the amendment, but it also foresaw the difficulties to do so. The Minister Xu Mo suggested that the first step to success was to ask the United States to differentiate “aggressor” and “victim” in any war case.<sup>183</sup> The Chinese believed the concept of “neutrality” the Americans emphasized in the Act was unconvincing without a distinction of participants in the warfare. Without further differentiation, the United States appeared weak in the defense of its “neutrality” because other countries could say the U.S. government actually leaned towards the “aggressor” by not helping the “victim”. For example, with the effects of the “cash and carry” principle, China was not able to import American arms but Japan was. Hence, the international community could criticize the United States for selling arms to Japan to help it invade China, which violated the fundamental principle of “neutrality.”

True “neutrality” should maintain justice and fairness. True “neutrality” should be able to restore peace between belligerents. In the following months, Chongqing used this argument to negotiate with Washington. However, in order to differentiate “aggressor” and “victim” in warfare, state of war must be recognized first. Belligerents needed to declare war with each other officially. The ROC had not made any declaration of war on Japan so far. Under this circumstance, who in Washington was able to claim the “neutrality” between Chongqing and Tokyo? Could this person be President Roosevelt, and would he be willing to exercise this authority? These questions puzzled Chinese officials including Chiang Kai-shek and Hu Shi. Nevertheless, China understood how strong the impact President Roosevelt could make in passing the new Act. In the following months, they aimed to expand his influence and instrumentally used this influence to affect the decision-makings of the White House and Capitol Hill.

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid, 188-9.

<sup>182</sup> Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945*, 188-9.

<sup>183</sup> “Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Hsu Mo) to the Chinese Embassy (Washington)”, Document No. 1317, date unknown. *Academia Sinica*, Institute of Modern History, *Department of North American Affairs*, Box.2, 92.

Chongqing simultaneously looked forward to talk to the person mostly related to the amendment apart from President Roosevelt. This person was Senator Key Pittman, the Chairman of the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations until 1940. He originally presented the “cash and carry” principle to the Congress in early 1939. Later in April, he revised his proposal and claimed the Neutrality Act was to be only valid for countries mutually engaging in warfare.<sup>184</sup> Pittman assumed China and Japan would not officially declare war on each other. Hence, the Act did not apply to the case of the Sino-Japanese conflict. Chongqing saw potential disasters brought by Pittman’s proposal if it was finally approved. The Republican Chinese government negotiated with Pittman and President Roosevelt, noting that there was still a high possibility for China and Japan to declare war officially. It seemed too risky to China if the United States adopted Pittman’s idea. While maintaining the argument of differentiation between “aggressor” and “victim”, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent other officials like Zhang Pengchun to directly meet Senator Pittman.<sup>185</sup> Such meetings effectively provoked Pittman’s sympathy toward China, and gradually prompted him to promise that the “cash and carry” principle would be invalid in April 30 without any proposed sustention.<sup>186</sup>

Hu Shi and his ambassadorial group, also discussed with their American counterparts the idea of “determining neutrality by the U.S. President.” Both sides came to the conclusion that if the President discovered possible threats from any country to the signatories of Nine Power Treaty, he had the authority to sanction economic restrictions against this particular country.<sup>187</sup> When the President found that state of war truly existed in East Asia, he could exercise “the discretion vested in him by the Act, the primary purpose of which is to safeguard the interests of this country and those of its nationals.”<sup>188</sup> Chongqing eagerly pushed Washington to tailor the Act to fit the case of the Sino-Japanese War, which had *de facto* long term impacts. Most importantly, through its efforts for the amendment, President Roosevelt came to have more space to direct the U.S. foreign policy worldwide. The increasing authority of Roosevelt on foreign policy helped to effectively weaken the isolationists’ voices at home.

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<sup>184</sup> “Gongzuo baogao yu jihua: Zhongli fa (Working report and plan: Neutrality Act),” May, date unknown, 1939. *Academia Sinica*, Institute of Modern History, *Department of North American Affairs*, Box.2, 92.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-11.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> “Statement Prepared by the Division of Controls,” included in the document “Memorandum by the Adviser on Political Relations (Hornbeck) to the Secretary of State,” October 9, 1939. In *FRUS*, 1939, vol.3, The Far East, 548.

Why did the United States accept the ROC's amendment of the Neutrality Act? The change of timing in the international environment was the primary reason. In August 1939, Chiang Kai-shek talked to the U.S. ambassador in China, Johnson that Britain and France started to pay their attentions back to East Asia. However, they had growing suspicion of the Soviet Union who they believed was a greater threat than Japan in East Asia.<sup>189</sup> President Roosevelt and Secretary Hull worried that the British and French appeasement of Japan would bring no benefits but harm to the Anglo-American cooperation. They were particularly anxious about the revival of the Anglo-Japanese alliance which might partially encourage Japan to increase its threat to security in Asia.<sup>190</sup> Chiang warned Ambassador Johnson of the danger of Japanese-Soviet collaboration catalyzed by the possible Anglo-Japanese alliance, which posited a geopolitical encroachment against China.<sup>191</sup> Chiang's notification made the Americans begin to reevaluate their interests in East Asia. They started to think whether their interests were more relevant to the Chinese than the Japanese. If the United States continued its disengagement, it would ultimately suffer from a series of crises in international relations starting in China but culminating in the conceived dominion of German National Socialism in Europe. Washington became aware that there was no way to avoid itself being dragged into the vortex of the coming global warfare.

To wave the U.S. foreign policy from passive involvement to active participation, the first step Washington had to do was overcome the biggest limit of its diplomacy, the Neutrality Act. At the same time, the amendment of the Act should target Asia as well as Europe. Thus the United States was able to prevent a chain of negative reactions. On June 30, the House of Representation in the U.S. Congress passed the new Neutrality Act but still emphasized the validity of military embargo.<sup>192</sup> The approval of the new Act in the House of Representation gave pressure to the House of Senate to make some changes. In November 1939, the House of Senate finally passed

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<sup>189</sup> The Ambassador in China (Johnson) to the Secretary of State, August 30, 1939. In *FRUS*, 1939, vol.3, The Far East, pp.217-220.

<sup>190</sup> The original Anglo-Japanese alliance was signed by Tokyo and London in 1902. The alliance was formed to contain the rising hegemonic power of Russia. The alliance demised in the 1920s after the establishment of Nine Power Treaty.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> "Gongzuo baogao yu jihua: Zhongli fa (Working report and plan: Neutrality Act)," June, date unknown, 1939. *Academia Sinica*, Institute of Modern History, *Department of North American Affairs*, Box.1, 12-3.



the new Act with rectification by President Roosevelt. The military embargo toward China was abolished. The U.S. Congress advocated not to apply the Neutrality Act to East Asia.<sup>193</sup>

## Chapter Conclusion

The years from 1937 to 1939 were critical moments for China to progressively narrow down its foreign relations from generally engaging with the West to specifically approaching the United States. The ROC did not intend to bind itself to the United States in the early stage of the Sino-Japanese War. It looked for multiple solutions for its survival through the League of Nations as well as the Nine Power Treaty Conference in Brussels. Chongqing hoped to apply instrumentally the principle of “collective security” in international affairs to bring foreign interventions to its warfare. It desperately searched for any possible external help regardless of nationality through international organizations. It gradually developed a mature, discipline and systematic policy to approach specific potential allies. Certainly the ROC already recognized the importance of the United States in stabilizing East Asia, but it *de facto* weighed the strategic significance of the United States less than what it did later. However, during the Conference, China began to realize the potential strength of the United States as a leader among other western powers, majorly Britain and France. London and Paris did not want to lead the Conference unless Washington was willing to stand behind their backs. The ROC worried that the other western powers might lean on Japan after the failure of the Conference. The reason it started to come to the United States specifically after late 1937 was because the Americans seemed to be the most effective power to prevent the Sino-Japanese conflict from getting worse. In Chiang Kai-shek’s eyes, China could use the United States as the leverage to motivate Britain, France and even the Soviet Union to collaborate to contain Japan.

From 1937 to 1939, the United States had experienced a domestic debate about two foreign affairs ideologies: isolationism versus internationalism. Until early 1939, isolationism still overshadowed the Washington Circle. For a fairly long time, the United States appeared as an observer rather than a key participant in the mediation of the Sino-Japanese conflict. But there were progressive changes made by the White House and American public who eventually came

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<sup>193</sup> “Junhuo jinyun tiaokuan mei zhongyuan tongguo feizhi: Can zhong yuan lianxi huiyi niding tiaowen, ge yiyuan xianzhu zhonglifa buyong yuandong (U.S. Houses of Senate and Representations abolished the military embargo and proposed not to apply the Neutrality Act to the Far Eastern Crisis),” November, 4, 1939, *Academia Sinica*, Institute of Modern History, *Department of North American Affairs*, Box.5, 243.

to believe internationalism, not idealism, could better correspond with the American realistic geopolitical and economic interests. China fully seized this opportunity to cater to the American changes. Chiang Kai-shek appointed Hu Shi as the Chinese ambassador to the United States. As a leading Chinese intellectual who embraced American liberalism in the 1920s and 1930s, Chiang Kai-shek selected Hu Shi as an ideal person to reach the Washington Circle because his political philosophy perfectly matched the current ideological moment in U.S. foreign policy: the awakening of internationalism. Through Hu Shi's ambassadorship, the ROC legitimized itself as being on the side of "justice" in the American fantasy of "democracy" versus "dictatorship".

The American sympathy toward China led to the amendment of the Neutrality Act in 1939. Chongqing persistently approached Washington for the discussion of Neutrality Act, which eventually shifted the American attention back to Asia. China firstly pushed the United States to differentiate "aggressor" and "non-aggressor" in the new Neutrality Act in order to claim the "true neutrality." It successfully motivated the U.S. Congress to pass the new Act and decided not to apply it to China. Through the amendment, the Republican Chinese government helped to enlarge the power of President Roosevelt on U.S. foreign policy, especially his power of legal rectification in the future American economic and military support to China. Overall, the most important outcome of this amendment was that the United States began to step outside its comfort zone of "neutrality" in order to correspond with Chinese interests. This change initiated a new chapter in Sino-U.S. relations. The following abolitions of U.S.-Japan Navigation Treaty as well as U.S.-Japan Commercial Treaty were the byproducts of this change.

### **CHAPTER THREE—The Road to A New Alliance: Sino-U.S. Relations, 1939-1941**

Sino-U.S. relations from late 1939 to 1941 revealed a more complex picture than the period of 1937-1939, as the domestic politics and foreign relations of both China and the United States became highly interrelated. The Republic of China (ROC) fundamentally needed good Sino-U.S. relations to resolve (or at least relieve) both external and internal crisis. Although China was still pursuing the idea of “collective security,” its foreign policy in these two and a half years was aimed very specifically at the United States. Apart from its own concern for survival, Chongqing continuously approached Washington with a variety of other goals in mind. For example, it used its relationship with Washington to increase collaboration with London. The ROC simultaneously worked for the deterioration of U.S.-Japan relations to ensure the United States would be firmly on its side only. Chinese efforts hoped to eliminate any remaining chance the Americans could have to restore their relationship with the Japanese. As the result, China and Japan both played important roles in dragging the United States into the Pacific War despite the fact that they had divergent intentions. The outbreak of the Pacific War eventually helped the ROC to establish an official alliance with the United States which it had been making efforts to achieve since the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937.

Why was the ROC so determined to build an alliance with the US? Why Washington did eventually decided to further estrange itself from Tokyo to get closer for Chongqing? How did China influence U.S.-Japan relations? How did Japan influence Sino-U.S. relations? This chapter aims to answer all of these questions. I will first analyze the abrogation of the Commercial and Navigation Treaty between the United States and Japan, and especially focus on how the end of this Treaty reshaped U.S. foreign policy vis-à-vis both China and Japan. Then, I will go on to elaborate on the ways the ROC used its relations with the United States to cooperate with another American ally, Britain, at war, which simultaneously strengthened the ties between Chongqing and Washington. This chapter will also explain the way China and Japan competed for the U.S. attention and how eventually China successfully turned the last attempts of U.S.-Japan negotiations from secret tension to an open clash. Thus, the ROC was able to form the alliance with the United States when the Americans declared war on the Japanese.

## The End of the U.S.-Japan Treaty of 1911

Despite the fact that the amendment of the Neutrality Act by the U.S. Congress did not fundamentally stop the escalation of the Sino-Japanese War, this new Neutrality Act pushed the Americans to shift their attention from Europe to East Asia. On the one hand, although the United States had abolished the military embargo on China and proposed not to apply the new Act to East Asia in general, it seemed that the impacts of the new Act on Tokyo remained less apparent. American private businesses as well as individuals in China were still dangerously exposed to the continuous Japanese aggression. On the other hand, the Chinese military, which was composed primarily of Chiang's army and a small proportion of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) forces, continued to retreat in the face of Japanese advances. Unless Washington decided on a new step to contain Tokyo, Chongqing could not resolve the ongoing conflict in East Asia on its own. When American officials in Washington heard rumors about China's collapse in late 1939, they started to think whether it was necessary to impose new sanctions on Japan. In doing so, the United States realized that it needed to critically reassess the nature of the U.S.-Japan relations. An essential component that had established and maintained these relations over the previous quarter century was the U.S.-Japan Treaty of 1911.

The U.S.-Japan Treaty of 1911, officially named the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between the United States and Japan, was initially designed to "govern the commercial intercourse" between two countries and aimed to "strengthen the relations of amity and good understanding" across the Pacific Ocean. The Treaty allowed reciprocal freedom for American and Japanese citizens as well as ships or cargoes to enter each other's territories for commercial and other manufactory purposes. It developed an interrelated business and production network between the two, but technically speaking, it made Japan rely more on the United States, since it had limitations of natural resources in its homeland. Under the special circumstances of the Sino-Japanese War, the United States decided to reexamine this Treaty to see whether it was still worthwhile to continue.<sup>194</sup>

The voices calling for a change to the U.S.-Japan Treaty of 1911 from inside the U.S. Congress had already been heard even before the final approval of the new Neutrality Act.

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<sup>194</sup> "Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between the United States and Japan," *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 5, 02(April, 2011): 100-106.

Senator Key Pittman, whom previously Hu Shi's ambassadorial team frequently approached, initiated a draft resolution to proclaim new measurements on the U.S.-Japan Treaty on July 13, 1939.<sup>195</sup> In his resolution proposal, Pittman emphasized that the U.S. President should be given authorized power over the U.S. commercial relations with Japan. According to him, if Japan, as one of the signatory members, violated the Nine Power Treaty and further endangered the lives and rights of American citizens in East Asia, the U.S. president could and should conduct retaliatory commercial restrictions against Japan.<sup>196</sup> This authority would be granted by the U.S. Congress in order to provide necessary protection of the lives of American citizens and their guaranteed privileges.<sup>197</sup> Another voice in favour of change came from Republican Senator Arthur Hendrick Vandenberg, who appealed to terminate the Treaty on July 26.<sup>198</sup> Vandenberg questioned the validity of the Treaty. He advocated that the Americans should abolish this Treaty.<sup>199</sup> He quickly sent his proposal to the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations for further review. Later on July 26, 1939, even Secretary Hull informed the Japanese ambassador to the United States Kensuke Horinouchi in the bilateral meeting that the Treaty needed "new considerations."<sup>200</sup> Secretary Hull intentionally left his words ambiguous. He transmitted a signal to the Japanese ambassador that Washington was apparently not satisfied with the original Treaty, as it did not fit the new wartime circumstance. However, he deliberately did not specify what those "new considerations" were because he wished to preserve the US's flexibility to compromise if the Japanese changed. It was simply a warning message the United States wished to send to Japan. Those "new considerations" would be developed accordingly based on possible Japanese reactions.

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<sup>195</sup> "Bidemen yanzheng yian: shouquan zongtong xianzhi duiri maoyi (Pittman's resolution: authorizing the U.S. President to restrict American trade on Japan), July 13, 1939, *Academia Sinica*, Institute of Modern History, *Meiguohui duiri jinyun tian yu feizhi mei ri shangyue* (Embargo resolution against Japan by the U.S. Congress and the abrogation of Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between the United States and Japan), Box.1, 10.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> "Mei canyiyuan fandengbao tiyi yaoqiu feizhi rimei shangyue bing zhu zhaokai jiu guo gongyue huiyi (The U.S. Senator Vandenberg proposed termination of Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between the United States and Japan as well as reopening the Nine Power Treaty Conference)," July 26, 1939, *Academia Sinica*, Institute of Modern History, *Meiguohui duiri jinyun tian yu feizhi mei ri shangyue* (Embargo resolution against Japan by the U.S. Congress and the abrogation of Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between the United States and Japan), Box. 1, 35.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> "Department of State (for the Press), Secretary Cordell Hull to Japanese Ambassador in the United States Kensuke Horinouchi," July 26, 1939, attached in "Document 84: Papers of Samuel I. Rosenman." See George T. McJimsey, *Documentary History of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidency: U.S.-Japan Relations, Trade Relations and the Sino-Japanese War, 1930-1940* (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 2001), vol.7, 350.

The ROC soon responded to Secretary Hull's statement. Chiang Kai-shek told Hull that China would fully rely on the United States to "offset Japan in case of European War."<sup>201</sup> The Chinese thus signaled that they actually looked for more retaliatory actions from the Americans against the Japanese. The United States primarily regarded the "new considerations" of the U.S.-Japan Treaty of 1911 as a "warning" or "deterrence". China's concern for its own survival made it feel that a simple "warning" or "deterrence" was far from enough to contain Japan's aggression. The Chinese hoped that the Americans could use these 'new considerations' to punish and contain the Japanese. For example, they hoped the United States would increase the import tariff against Japan and use legal articles to prevent American raw materials or cargo from selling to Japan.<sup>202</sup> However, Secretary Hull did not want to press Japan to the extreme at that point. He replied to Chiang that "until Japan's military leadership became convinced of the necessity of modifying its objectives and altering its methods, action by our Government toward bringing about an adjustment of the Sino-Japanese conflict through diplomatic process would be inopportune."<sup>203</sup> To answer Senator Vandenberg's previous idea about reorganizing the Nine Power Treaty Conference in order to discuss commercial sanctions against Japan, Hull believed that "a conference called as a preliminary to economic measures against Japan would serve little or no useful purpose, especially in view of the preoccupation of other Powers with military operations in Europe and prevailing uncertainties over current diplomatic moves and developments."<sup>204</sup> The United States was still not determined to end the Treaty. It mostly aimed to use threatened renegotiations of the Treaty to pressure Japan to resort more peaceful actions in East Asia. Until Japan had made concrete changes, the United States was more willing to have a "wait-and-see" attitude for a few months.<sup>205</sup>

The White House and the Capitol Hill certainly had legitimate reasons to hesitate. On the one hand, the Americans were pessimistic about the future of China's resistance against Japan. The

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<sup>201</sup> Cordell Hull and Andrew H.T. Berding, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (New York: Macmillan Co, 1948), vol.1, 350.

<sup>202</sup> "Hu Shi dashi shi er yue si ri huashengdun lai dian (Telegram of Hu Shi from Washington on December 4)," December 4, 1939, *Academia Sinica*, Institute of Modern History, *Meiguohui dui ri jinyun tian yu feizhi mei ri shangyue (Embargo resolution against Japan by the U.S. Congress and the abrogation of Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between the United States and Japan)*, Box.2, 75-8.

<sup>203</sup> Cordell Hull and Andrew H.T. Berding, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, vol.1, 723-4.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> "The Ambassador in Japan (Grew) to the Secretary of State," November 21, 1939, in *FRUS*, 1939, the Far East, vol.3, 597-9; The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Japan (Grew), November 22, 1939, in *FRUS*, 1939, The Far East, vol.3, 599.

U.S. ambassador in Tokyo Joseph Grew worried that Japan was unlikely to be defeated by China. The Tokyo government seemed to be fully capable of realizing its scheme of a “New Order in East Asia.”<sup>206</sup> Hence, the United States would be better to look forward to reconciliation with Japan by all reasonable means.<sup>207</sup> Washington neither wanted to sacrifice any principles nor infuriate Tokyo. Thus, not surprisingly, Washington politicians once again were split on what to do. There were still a large number of American domestic politicians both for and against economic sanctions against Japan. The Southern states were reluctant to abandon their cotton trade with Japan. Also, the new Neutrality Act had already forbidden the American ships from entering the European war zone. Many American companies had been suffering from related financial and unemployment losses caused by this new Act, and they were anxious about losing another commercial opportunity. The coming U.S. Elections mattered as well. The House of Representatives in the U.S. Congress would be soon re-organized up for the presidential election in 1940. While campaigning for the election, both the Democrats and Republican Parties were very cautious to avoid showing a too straightforward attitude toward the Treaty because they feared to lose any internal or external political support if they made inappropriate comments.<sup>208</sup> But most importantly, from the American perspective, although Washington was concerned by Tokyo’s expansionist policies, the protection of American individuals and private interests was still not mutually incompatible with the promotion of U.S.-Japan relations based on this Treaty until the last month of 1939.

When changing events caused the Treaty to become more antagonistic to the American interests, the United States decided to terminate it while simultaneously appeasing Japan in its official statement. Ambassador Grew firstly noticed that the protection of American interests and the maintenance of current U.S.-Japan relations were now in conflict.<sup>209</sup> However, in his telegram to Secretary Hull, he supplemented that this conflict was not “relieved of either

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<sup>206</sup> “Joseph C. Grew, From Joseph C. Grew to Cordell Hull,” December 1, 1939, attached in “Document 107: Papers as President-President’s Secretary’s Files”. See George T. McJimsey, *Documentary History of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidency: U.S.-Japan Relations, Trade Relations and the Sino-Japanese War, 1930-1940*, vol.7, 459.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> “Hu Shi dashi shi er yue si ri huashengdun lai dian (Telegram of Hu Shi from Washington on December 4),” December 4, 1939, *Academia Sinica*, Institute of Modern History, *Meiguohui dui ri jinyun tian yu feizhi mei ri shangyue (Embargo esolution against Japan by the U.S. Congress and the abrogation of Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between the United States and Japan)*, Box.2, 75-8.

<sup>209</sup> “The Ambassador in Japan (Grew) to the Secretary of State,” December 1, 1939, in *FRUS*, vol.3, The Far East, 604-13.

responsibility,” which means he did not solely attribute the conflict to the Japanese side.<sup>210</sup> He suggested Washington firmly stick with the American provisions and principles originating from the Nine Power Treaty, but at the same time leave flexibility for changes by Tokyo. The United States was more than willing to set up negotiations with Japan to work out a new agreement.<sup>211</sup> Secretary Hull later admitted that the “new considerations” or even “termination” of the Treaty would likely produce “more potentialities of misunderstanding and of disadvantage than would a treaty-less condition.”<sup>212</sup> However, he added that this termination would bring a full-scale interruption to the commercial relations between the United States and Japan, stating that “the termination of the treaty will produce of itself any marked changes in the general customs duties or treatment applicable in Japan to imports from the United States.”<sup>213</sup> This statement appeared to be self-contradictory and ambiguous, which reflected Hull’s struggle. Hull foresaw that the termination of the Treaty would profoundly damage U.S.-Japan relations, but he still hoped not to irritate Japan directly. However, many other people, including President Roosevelt, actually wished to develop a more severe policy toward Japan. President Roosevelt made up his mind on December 20 that the United States needed to apply embargos on numerous Japanese military and technological exports including plans, plants, manufacturing rights, and technological information required to produce high-quality aviation gasoline.<sup>214</sup>

Despite the fact that Secretary Hull was careful with his statement announcing the termination, Tokyo still responded with both anger and anxiety. The Japanese ambassador Kensuke Horinouchi protested the embargo, which Hull defended repeatedly by criticizing the damages the Japanese brought to the Americans.<sup>215</sup> With regard to the Treaty, Tokyo submitted three questions to Washington in an attempt to see whether a new agreement could be reached: First, since the abrogation of the Treaty was “the greatest cause of uneasiness in the relations” between two countries, “could not at least a commercial *modus vivendi* be concluded as a temporary measure? Second, could the United States “not find it possible to cease aiding Chiang Kai-shek

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<sup>210</sup> “The Ambassador in Japan (Grew) to the Secretary of State,” December 1, 1939, in *FRUS*, vol.3, The Far East, 604-13.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> “The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Japan (Grew),” December 20, 1939, in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan: 1931-1941* (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), vol.2, 193-4.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> Cordell Hull and Andrew H.T. Berding, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, vol.1, 729.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 729-30.



and cooperate with Japan in the ‘reconstruction of China’?” Third, Could not the United States and Japan “each preserving its sphere of influence in the Pacific Ocean, contribute to the peace of the world by acting in concert?”<sup>216</sup>

Secretary Hull thought the basis for any new agreement on these terms would be “unpropitious” because Japan would conquer China entirely if the United States agreed with the Japanese proposal.<sup>217</sup> The Japanese dominance in the Eastern hemisphere would discourage the other Western powers to return to Asia, which in the long term made the United States the only Western power involved in the region. Washington eventually decided to use the proposal as leverage to make a last attempt to push Tokyo to adjust and to acknowledge the widely practiced principles of sovereignty, justice, law and order in international relations.<sup>218</sup> Faced with this response, Japan quickly realized there was no way to stop the United States from the abrogation of the Treaty. On January 18, Tokyo requested an “appropriate transition” from the Treaty to a new agreement (but the conditions of the new agreement would be offered by Tokyo itself). Not surprisingly, Washington was reluctant to accept this request.<sup>219</sup>

The Treaty was abolished on January 26, 1940. The Japanese Foreign Minister Kichisaburo Nomura met Secretary Hull again and suggested that “the negotiation of a new treaty or the signing of a *modus vivendi* to take the place of the old treaty until a new one could be negotiated.”<sup>220</sup> Hull said this would not be possible unless “Japan completely changed her attitude and practice toward our rights and interests in China.”<sup>221</sup> In his memoir, he further argued that as long as the Treaty was expired, “discriminatory tonnage duties on Japanese ships and discriminatory import duties on goods brought to the United States in Japanese ships could be levied. The President however, had authority to suspend such duties by proclamation as to a country that did not impose similar discriminatory duties on our vessels or their cargoes.”<sup>222</sup> Thus, Hull dashed Japan’s last hope of preserving the previous form of commercial relations

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<sup>216</sup> Cordell Hull and Andrew H.T. Berding, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, vol.1, 894.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> “Mei ri shangyue feizhi shi (The abrogation of U.S.-Japan Treaty),” January 1940, Academia Sinica, Institute of Modern History, *Gongzuo baogao ji jihua (Working report and plan)*, 1.

<sup>220</sup> Cordell Hull and Andrew H.T. Berding, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, vol.1, 725-6.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

between two countries. But he emphasized to President Roosevelt that no changes of other aspects of U.S.-Japan would be made. The President approved his recommendation.<sup>223</sup>

Compared to the new Neutrality Act, the abrogation of the U.S.-Japan Treaty of 1911 was a significant development of the U.S. Asian policy. The Treaty inevitably provoked Japanese resentment. This resentment planted the seed for fundamental disagreement between Washington and Tokyo in the following two years and eventually led to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. To China, the end of this Treaty mattered even more. Although Chongqing was eager for more U.S. containments on Tokyo, it benefitted even more from the abrogation of this Treaty than the new Neutrality Act. The deterioration of US-Japan relations resulted in a series of American financial assistance to the ROC. First, the Roosevelt administration gave the GMD government the 100 million U.S. dollar Tung Oil Loan. Secretary Cordell defined the Tung Oil Loan as a “symbolic and political action rather than a step that would change the military equation.”<sup>224</sup> The subsequent Yunnan Tin Loan of 20 million U.S. dollars in 1940 was another byproduct of the progress of Sino-U.S. relations facilitated by the abrogation of the Treaty.<sup>225</sup> The United States also assisted China in preventing the Chinese economy from collapsing. For example, Chongqing received a direct loan of 10 million U.S. dollars from Washington. Half of the loan was a delivery from the U.S. Department of Treasury in order to stabilize the Chinese currency. Another half was put into the Central Bank of China by the Export-Import Bank guaranteed by the GMD government.<sup>226</sup> This financial aid helped lessen China’s war crisis, but simultaneously stimulated Japan to act more aggressively in its invasion in China. Tokyo now became fully aware that it might have to prolong its war with Chongqing because Chongqing was receiving increasing external support via multiple channels. While Japan previously asserted that it would be able to end its war with China in three months, now it seemed that China had enlarged the scale of resistance, supported by the foreign military and financial aid. To destruct the Chinese efforts of resistance, Japan thought it was necessary to block the Chinese from accessing that aid, and one of the most important channels of the aid was the Burma Road.

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<sup>223</sup> Cordell Hull and Andrew H.T. Berding, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, vol.1, 725-6.

<sup>224</sup> David F. Schmitz, *The Triumph of Internationalism: Franklin D. Roosevelt and a World in Crisis, 1933-1941* (Washington, D.C: Potomac Books, 2007), 58.

<sup>225</sup> Lin Yumei, “Meiguo yuanhua daikuan yu zhongguo kangzhan (American financial loan and China’s war against Japan),” *Minguo dangan (Journal of Republican Archives)*, 04(2003): 78.

<sup>226</sup> “The Chinese Ambassador (Hu Shih) to the Secretary of State,” January 6, 1941, in *FRUS*, 1941, vol.5, The Far East, 593.

### **The Burma Road and the Prospect of Sino-Anglo-American Cooperation**

Japan viewed the Burma Road as a key obstacle to its military operation in China since it provided the ROC a vital channel to obtain military supplies from its potential allies in Europe and North America. Built up by the British while Burma was its colony (Burma was still a British colony in 1940 – you need a more specific date), the Burma Road linked Burma with Southwest China. It started at Lashio in Burma and ended at Kunming, Yunnan Province of China. The Road stood out as one of China's most important military transportation routes after most Eastern and Southeastern Chinese territories were occupied by Japanese troops in 1940. The Road was significant because it had been not only strategically used for wartime purpose but also for maintaining stable political relationships between the Chinese and the British as well as the Americans, and possibly even the Soviets as well.

Japan intended to frustrate China's ability to get military support through the Burma Road. The first step in this effort was attempting to eliminate China's ability to get military supplies through railways between North Indochina and the Southwest China. In the early 1940, France fell into the hands of German National Socialism under Hitler's Blitzkrieg attack. However, the new Vichy collaborationist government still owned its recognized colonial possession in Indochina. As German ally, Tokyo messaged Paris and pressured the Vichy administration to shut down most of the railways between China and Indochina. Then, ignoring French objections, Japan invaded Indochina by intensive bombardments and eventually occupied these railways so that China could no longer use them as transportation lines.<sup>227</sup>

In July 1940, Japan asked Britain to close down the Burma Road entirely in order to directly block all possible wartime supplies (mostly military equipment and weaponries) shipping to the ROC through Rangoon in Burma. Winston Churchill's administration feared that if Britain did not accept the Japanese demand, it would antagonize Japan and result in the Japanese revenge on the British colonies in East and Southeast Asia. Britain had already been fighting National Socialist Germany since September 1939. The British were afraid of irritating Japan as Germany's ally, which would increase their burden to defend the crumbling empire. London did not wish to see itself facing the same destiny as Paris, it thus agreed to suspend the transportation of the Burma Road. China immediately condemned the British compromise. Hu Shi mentioned

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<sup>227</sup> Rana Mitter, *Forgotten Ally: China's World War II, 1937-1945*, 222-3.

to U.S. ambassador Johnson that the Chinese had indicated to the British “the paramount importance of keeping open the Burma route” and “urged them to reject the Japanese demand which is absolutely devoid of any legal foundation.”<sup>228</sup> On the next day, July 16, the Central Press of China (*Zhongyang she*) announced the lodging of an official protest from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Chongqing. On the one hand, Chongqing complained that Tokyo had no authority to demand a “neutral state” to cut the regular commercial and logistic passage (it claimed) between Chongqing and London even if Chongqing was its enemy. It implied that London would lose its “neutrality” as long as it compromised.<sup>229</sup> Informed by the Chinese, the Americans also responded to this event by accusing the British behavior of being “a thwart to international commercial custom.”<sup>230</sup> Although Britain reopened the Burma Road later in October, this temporary closure made China realize that it should move to strengthen ties with Britain with the help of the United States.

Stimulated by the closure of the Burma Road, the ROC felt necessary to cultivate a strong partnership with Britain at war, so that Britain might not easily abandon China when it faced pressure from Japan again. On July 18, Chiang Kai-shek telegraphed the Chinese ambassador in Washington Hu Shi to indicate his expectation of a detailed plan of Sino-Anglo-American collaboration. In this collaboration, the United States played a role as the major coordinator to strengthen Sino-British ties because it had the trust of both sides.<sup>231</sup> In his reply on July 19, Hu Shi agreed with Chiang’s intention for improved Sino-British cooperation. However, he was at the same time aware of the difficulties faced by the United States in facilitating this triangle cooperation. Due to the geopolitical estrangement (North America is remote from the European continent), Hu Shi believed the Americans were hesitant to step out their comfort zone in the Pacific Ocean and join the British. Domestically, the Republican Party had been contending with their Democrat competitors in the midst of the 1940 U.S. Election. The Republicans blamed the Democrats (the governing Party in the Roosevelt administration and in Congress) for their pro-

<sup>228</sup> “Telegram of Hu Shih to Johnson (U.S. Ambassador to China),” July 15, 1940, *Academia Historica*, Institute of Modern History, *Annan Miandian jinyu (Blockade of Burma road transit)*, Box.1, 30-1.

<sup>229</sup> “Statement of Spokesman from Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” Republic of China, July 16, 1940, *Academia Historica*, Institute of Modern History, *Annan Miandian jinyu (Blockade of Burma road transit)*, Box.1, 32-5; “China’s Foreign Office Protests against British Act,” Chungking, July 16, 1940, *Academia Historica*, Institute of Modern History, *Annan Miandian jinyu (Blockade of Burma road transit)*, Box.1, 44-5.

<sup>230</sup> “U.S. Opposes British Closure of Burma Route,” July 16, 1940, *Academia Historica*, Institute of Modern History, *Annan Miandian jinyu (Blockade of Burma road transit)*, Box.1, 39.

<sup>231</sup> “Jiang Jieshi zhi Hu Shi dian (Chiang Kai-shek’s Telegram to Hu Shi),” July 19, 1940, see *Hu Shi ren zhumei dashi qijian wanglai diangao (Telegram of Hu Shi during his ambassadorship in the United States)*, 55-6.

China policy. They argued that this policy would provoke massive conflict in the Pacific Ocean and get the United States into trouble. To avoid more criticism, the Democrats were reluctant to take initiative to address China's request for this triangle partnership.<sup>232</sup>

Hu Shi's worry was reasonable but Capitol Hill and the White House had actually different concerns. Nelson T. Johnson, the U.S. Ambassador in Chongqing observed that some of the Chinese officials were inclined to try to revitalize the declining Sino-German alliance because they believed "Hitler's policy will be to urge Japanese expansion in the South Seas at the expense of the democratic powers while he sees to it that China is encouraged to follow fascist lines as an independent state."<sup>233</sup> The American strategic priority was to contain National Socialism in Europe; any attempt of Chongqing to align with Berlin would be unacceptable in the eyes of Washington. The American assistance to China was necessary to keep China ideologically "democratic" even though the country was majorly ruled by the dictatorial GMD government.<sup>234</sup> Another concern was the possibility of the ROC getting closer to the Soviet Union. Although the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact signed in 1939 made China skeptical about its northern neighbour, the ROC always kept the door open to an alliance with the Soviets. The United States did not want to see China coming to the arms of Soviet Communism either.

Chongqing also directly informed London about the triangle partnership. Britain answered that it would not take any actions unless China worked through the details of the collaboration plan with the United States.<sup>235</sup> Despite the fact that the Americans increased its financial loans and military aid, especially aircraft (up to 500), to Chinese,<sup>236</sup> they simultaneously made a clear argument that they did not want to have any form of military alliance.<sup>237</sup> Nevertheless, the United States still promulgated a joint declaration together with the ROC and Britain on November 9. This declaration recognized the continuance of the Open Door policy for Anglo-Americans in China as well as the Nine Power Treaty. It advocated for "China and Great Britain to conclude an alliance and to secure the adherence of the United States; and, in the absence of such

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<sup>232</sup> "Jiang Jieshi zhi Hu Shi dian (Chiang Kai-shek's Telegram to Hu Shi)," July 19, 1940, see *Hu Shi ren zhumei dashi qijian wanglai diangao (Telegram of Hu Shi during his ambassadorship in the United States)*, 55-6.

<sup>233</sup> "The Ambassador in China (Johnson) to the Secretary of State, July 24, 1940, in *FRUS*, 1940, vol.4, The Far East, 406-8."

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>235</sup> "Jiang Zhongzheng dian Song Ziwen (Chiang Kai-shek's Telegram to T.V. Soong)," November 1940, date unknown, *Academia Historica, Shi lue gaoben (Draft text of events chronology)*, Box.1, 1.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*

adherence, to secure the approval and support of this alliance by the United States.”<sup>238</sup> The joint declaration remained an oral commitment than a promise of action because neither the United States nor Britain had made up their mind to finally establish an alliance with the ROC.

Chiang Kai-shek knew the American anxiety about the possible revival of the Sino-German alliance, hence he decided to use the German threat to stimulate the United States to dedicate more to the Sino-Anglo-American cooperation. The German Foreign Minister Joachim Von Ribbentrop met with Chinese ambassador in Berlin on November 20. Ribbentrop was confident that Germany was going to win the European war unify most of its continent. Under this circumstance, Berlin wished Chongqing to become an official member of the Axis and accept Tokyo’s peace offers. Otherwise, Japan would recognize the government formed by Chiang’s rival Wang Jingwei instead. Both the ROC and Japan had to conduct peaceful conditions without surpassing the limits of the terms they together agreed on during and after the negotiation. These agreements was formally guaranteed by Germany.<sup>239</sup> Chiang Kai-shek immediately forwarded the details of this agreement to U.S. ambassador Johnson.<sup>240</sup> What Chiang did here was to transmit a pressing signal to the Americans: Washington had to promote the Sino-Anglo-American cooperation and realize the triangle alliance before Chongqing came back to Berlin.

Chiang also played the “Chinese Communist card” to catch American attention. In the earlier meetings, Chiang informed Ambassador Johnson that the GMD government was losing its strength since the Burma Road was blocked. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was seizing this opportunity to provoke nationwide rebellion and encourage revolution.<sup>241</sup> He told Johnson about CCP oral propaganda attacks on the GMD government. Chiang was suspicious that the CCP plotted to prolong the Sino-Japanese War in order to weaken the GMD’s strength in its control of North China, where the CCP could expand their influence and consolidate their

<sup>238</sup> “The Ambassador in China (Johnson) to the Secretary of State,” November 9, 1940, attached “The Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs (Wang) to the American Ambassador in China (Johnson): Sino-Anglo-American Cooperation,” in *FRUS*, vol.4, The Far East, 688-90.

<sup>239</sup> “The Ambassador in China (Johnson) to the Secretary of State,” November 20, 1940, in *FRUS*, 1940, vol.4, The Far East, pp.436-437.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>241</sup> Jiang weiyuanzhang zai Chongqing jiejian Mei guo zhu hua dashi zhansen gao yi zhonggong yinmou zuai kangzhan pan mei jiyou kongjun yu jingji zhi yuanzhu yi gu minxin tanhua jilu (Generalissimo Chiang met U.S. Ambassador Johnson in Chongqing to inform about Chinese Communist Conspiracy to damage Nationalist resistance; Chiang hoped the United States to deliver aircraft and economic assistance to stable the mentality of Chinese public), October 18, 1940, in *Zhonghua minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian dui ri kangzhan shiqi di san bian: zhanshi waijiao (Preliminary edition of Republican China’s important historical sources of Sino-Japanese War, volume three: wartime diplomacy)*, 100-3.

power.<sup>242</sup> He exaggerated a little to Johnson, essentially stating “Russian policy in the Far East can be influenced by such actions and clearly inferring that if the United States does not adopt a policy of active aid to China there is a likely possibility that Russia will be led to support and lend large scale aid to Chinese Communists.”<sup>243</sup> The United States did not want the GMD-CCP antagonism dragging China into domestic political and social turmoil. If China suffered from domestic turbulence, it would have no chance of win, or even protracting its resistance against Japan. Under this circumstance, the United States would have to increase its efforts to maintain the existing order in East Asia. China had been already torn into difference pieces of territories governed by different political factions. The GMD government was the only legitimate authority in the American eyes which could exercise effective rule of the country. If United States could not have a unified China at the moment, at least it did not want a chaotic China. Chiang’s stimulation partially increased the American dedication to the Sino-U.S. relationship because the preservation of GMD’s strength and authority was essentially what the United States wanted for China. Therefore, Chongqing’s persuasion prompted Washington to deepen the negotiations for collaboration.

Although the United States still did not build up an official alliance with the ROC, China’s efforts vitally changed the American perception of international affairs in Europe and East Asia. There is no doubt that Washington continued to prioritize its concerns in Europe ahead of those in East Asia. However, its communications with Chongqing made it begin to view the conflicts in Europe and East Asia as a whole rather than separate. China’s resistance had wider significance in the international scale. In the past the United States thought it could always put aside the warfare in East Asia temporarily because the British and French crisis in Europe was more urgent. Now Washington came to believe it was unable to simply separate Chongqing from the overall picture of international conflict. President Roosevelt had become convinced that if the United States did not solve China’s problem, it would have no ways to bring effective support to its friends Britain and France either.<sup>244</sup> The approval of the Lend-Lease Act in March 1941 by the U.S. Congress was another proof of American awareness of China’s significance. The Lend-

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<sup>242</sup> “The Ambassador in China (Johnson) to the Secretary of State,” October 24, 1940, in *FRUS*, vol.4, The Far East, 429.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>244</sup> Joseph C. Grew, “The President sums up the Far Eastern Crisis,” January 21, 1941, *Ten Years in Japan: A Contemporary Record* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944), 361.

Lend-Lease Act covered a wide range of subjects regarding American aid to the ROC. It also elaborated on how much the United States could use the Burma Road and railways across Indochina and Southwest China to transport military and civilian supplies including oil, gasoline, vehicles, and even airfield resources.<sup>245</sup> Such support served China's needs continuously until the end of the Sino-Japanese War. The Lend-Lease Act increasingly antagonized Tokyo. In order to protest the Act, Japan increased its southward expansion in the Southeast Asia, threatening the American colonial interests in Philippines. To prevent the eventual war between the two, a formal U.S.-Japan negotiation as the final settlement seemed inevitable.

### **Calm Before the Storm: China and the Last U.S.-Japan Negotiations**

The Americans believed their readiness to seek U.S.-Japan negotiations should firmly depend on their observation of the level of the Japanese southward expansion in Asia. However, at the beginning, Washington was convinced that Tokyo would restrict its aggressive behaviour due to the internal split within the Japanese Government. The U.S. ambassador in Japan Joseph Grew told Secretary Hull that Japan had recently become cautious in dealing with French Indochina, the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) and Thailand. The official statement as well as national newspapers in Japan admitted that Tokyo's current southward advance was the biggest obstacle of its positive relations with Washington. Grew concluded that Japan preferred to avoid escalating tensions with the United States.<sup>246</sup> Despite the fact that Grew later found Japan remained internally unstable, it seemed there was no better alternative other than negotiations between the two nations.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> "Second Report under the Act of March 11, 1941 (Lend-Lease Act)," *Academia Sinica*, Institute of Modern History, *Mei guo jun, jing yuanyuanhua* (*The American military and financial assistance to China*), Box.1, 23-4.

<sup>246</sup> "The Ambassador in Japan (Grew) to the Secretary of State (Extracts)," March 13, 1941, in *FRUS*, 1941, vol.5, The Far East, 110.

<sup>247</sup> There were two major political factions representing different approaches of Japanese policy in the East and Southeast Asia. Both the radicals and moderates agreed the southward expansion in Asia should be Tokyo's long-term policy. The radicals who were pro-Axis simultaneously argued the timing was mature enough for Japan to expand their power to the Southeast Asia as much as possible. The moderates appealed to "peaceful infiltration" than open military action because they were afraid of direct confrontation with the Soviet Union and the United States. See "The Ambassador in Japan (Grew) to the Secretary of State," April 17, 1941, in *FRUS*, vol.5, The Far East, 131.



The Japanese diplomats immediately approached their American counterparts looking for a resolution to which both sides would consent. Secretary Hull first advocated a proposal to help determine the respective bottom lines between Washington and Tokyo. He claimed that if Tokyo agreed, the U.S. President could persuade China to negotiate peace with Japan as soon as possible. His proposal, approved by Roosevelt, covered various subjects but focused extensively on China as in the following base demands:

- a. Independence of China;
- b. Withdrawal of Japanese troops from Chinese from Chinese territory, in accordance with an agreement to be reached between Japan and China;
- c. No acquisition of Chinese territory;
- d. No imposition of indemnities;
- e. Resumption of the “Open Door”; the interpretation and application of which shall be agreed upon at some future, convenient time between the United States and Japan;
- f. Coalescence between Chiang Kai-shek’s and Wang Ching-wei’s (Wang Jingwei) governments;
- g. No large-scale or concentrated immigration of Japanese into Chinese territory;
- h. Recognition of Manchukuo.<sup>248</sup>

This proposal, raised by the Americans, essentially asked the Japanese to terminate almost all of their existing China policy. Washington only made two concessions to Tokyo, which were the acquiescence of the legitimacy of the collaborationist government in Manchuria and the peaceful coalition between Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Jingwei. Secretary Hull knew it was unrealistic to demand Japan give up all its agencies in China, and he considered the articles “f” and “h” as a compromise designed to get the Japanese to negotiate. However, Tokyo avoided direct discussion on China in its later response to Washington. On May 13, 1941, Japanese Foreign Minister Yosuke Matsuoka notified Secretary Hill that unless Washington fulfilled two preconditions announced by Tokyo, there would not be any progress in the U.S.-Japan negotiations: first, the United States should commit not to participate in the European war. This precondition predictably deepened the American suspicion of Axis coordination between Berlin and Tokyo. Secondly, the United States should urge Chiang Kai-shek to negotiate peace with

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<sup>248</sup> “Proposal presented to the Department of State through the medium of private American and Japanese individuals on April 9, 1941,” in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan: 1931-1941*, vol.2, 400.

Japan.<sup>249</sup> Matsuoka concluded that both the United States and Japan wanted to see a truce between Japan and the ROC, and that this truce was impossible if the United States continued its support to the Chinese resistance.<sup>250</sup>

Although Japan might have argued that this proposal was too tailored to the Chinese interests, the ROC blamed the United States for its appeasement of Japan. The Chinese ambassador Hu Shi added strong criticism in his telegram to Secretary Hull. He denounced the American idea of “weaning Japan from Axis-partnership” and “render her more innocuous in the Pacific” as a pure illusion.<sup>251</sup> Hu Shi also pointed to several insurmountable difficulties of the negotiations between the two. First, Tokyo did not want any third party country to intervene in the mediation between itself and Chongqing because it saw the Sino-Japanese War as merely a two-party conflict that should be settled only by the two antagonists. Secondly, despite the fact that Japan appealed to end its war with China early, it only wished to conclude the war in its own terms. Hu Shi was once a pacifist before the Sino-Japanese War who preferred peaceful cooperation between the two to open conflict. Now he was very pessimistic about the “militarist caste of Japan” that “has not been sufficiently discredited to be willing to seek a just peace.”<sup>252</sup> Thirdly, the recent German military superiority in Europe through its continuing Blitzkrieg strategy made Japan’s actions more unreasonable than before. Hu Shi understood that the Anglo-Americans wanted to make a reasonable deal with the Japanese through negotiation, but in his eyes a soft approach from Washington and London would only be a sign of weakness and incompetence from the perspective of Tokyo. Hu Shi was particularly afraid of another “Peace of Munich” (the peaceful agreement that failed to contain the rise of National Socialist Germany in Europe through appeasement) in East Asia.<sup>253</sup> He tried his best to convey his anxiety to Hull and transform this anxiety into the strongest persuasion.

At the same time, the ROC started to leverage Sino-U.S. relations to obtain a higher international status and strengthen its geopolitical significance in East Asia. In his talks with the new U.S. ambassador in China, Clarence Edward Gauss, Chinese Foreign Minister Guo Taiqi

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<sup>249</sup> Han Xifu & Jiang Kefu ed., *Zhonghua minguo shi dashiji* (*Chronology of important events in Republican Chinese history*), vol.9, 6549.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> “The Chinese Ambassador (Hu Shih) to the Secretary of State,” May 26, 1941, in *FRUS*, 1941, vol.4, The Far East, 225-6.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

demanded equal partnership in the future relations between Washington and Chongqing. He firstly defended Chinese resistance to Japan by claiming that the American negotiation with the Japanese was “bargaining with a tiger for its skin”. The ROC was never reluctant to come to peace terms with Japan, but Japan “had no legs to stand on.”<sup>254</sup> Furthermore, he argued that the Chinese request for equal partnership was not merely a matter of “face”:

The Chinese sense a danger that China may be subordinated to Anglo-American war objectives and this accounts in large measure for their desire for recognition (word missing here?) as having full partnership in the fight against aggression and for sensitiveness to suggestions of Anglo-American overtures toward Japan.<sup>255</sup>

This statement was almost an open call for bilateral alliance but Chongqing wanted more than simply a new ally. Guo Taiqi revealed his deeply-rooted nationalistic consciousness based on nearly “a century of humiliation.” He, as well as Chiang Kai-shek, Hu Shi and the other Chinese leaders, felt particularly ashamed about China’s international status in the past decades as, in their eyes, “a state of semi-colony ravaged by foreign imperialism.” The Sino-Japanese War posited a crisis as well as an opportunity for the GMD government to smash out this “humiliation” because they finally had a chance to demonstrate how much weight they were able to carry in world affairs. Only a firm resistance against Japan with American help could make that happen. Eliminating “humiliation” mentally could also make the GMD’s ruling legitimacy stronger at home because it would manage to transform the domestic resentment of its dictatorship to a genuine support to its legality at war. Also, by aligning the ROC with the United States, Chiang Kai-shek could claim that it was him, and not his rivals Mao Zedong or Wang Jingwei, who secured foreign support from one of the world’s most prominent powers and achieved a highly-regarded international position for the nation through Sino-U.S. relations. Therefore, the Chinese pursuit of the Sino-U.S. alliance had multidimensional purposes. To the ROC, the United States was a reliable ally, a future investment, and more importantly, a solid platform from which China could exercise its own will and plan. Hence, Chongqing went to great efforts to spoil the U.S.-Japan negotiations and win Washington to its side only. On September 10, Guo Taiqi again told ambassador Gauss that “the proposed regional arrangement

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<sup>254</sup> “The Ambassador in China (Gauss) to the Secretary of State,” August 27, 1941, in *FRUS*, vol.4, The Far East, 395-6.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*

would permit Japan to gain breathing space and concentrate her whole strength against China.” He added that whatever the conversations between the American and Japanese officials would be, Washington should never reduce any form of economic pressure against Tokyo as long as Tokyo did not relax its aggression against Chongqing.<sup>256</sup> Secretary Hull even had to reassure Hu Shi later on September 4 that the U.S.-Japan integration was purely testing each other through occasional conversations, and that the negotiations had not brought any concrete result so far.<sup>257</sup>

The U.S.-Japan negotiations came to a series of impasses over several months, which gradually radicalized Japan’s domestic politics. On October 16, the Japanese cabinet led by Prince Fumimaro Konoe announced their resignation due to their failure to find consensus in foreign policy. The entire cabinet was dismissed and replaced by a new one formed by hardliner Hideki Tojo right at the next day. The Tojo cabinet offered new conditions for the negotiations. It required the United States to join Japan in their “exploration” of Chinese market. It promised to stop southward advance in Asia if the United States resumed the former commercial and navigation relationship. It agreed to retreat from Indochina (Vietnam particularly) if the United States did not encircle Japan.<sup>258</sup> However, Tokyo refused to change its current militaristic policy upon Washington’s request.<sup>259</sup> The Americans never expected that these Japanese new conditions would translate into actions. Henry Morgenthau Jr., the U.S. Secretary of Treasury who was personally close to President Roosevelt suggested the following:

“Minimum concessions to be obtained from Japan should be withdrawal of troops from the mainland of Asia and sale to us of the bulk of her current production of armaments. If we do not achieve this, we shall not obtain any significant relief of allied military forces in the East while we would be making it possible for Japan to strengthen herself for possible later aggression when

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<sup>256</sup> “The Ambassador in China (Gauss) to the Secretary of State,” September 10, 1941, in *FRUS*, vol.4, The Far East, 435.

<sup>257</sup> “Guowuqing jiejian zhongguo dashi (xun Hu Shi dashi zhi qing): Zhongguo dashi tanxun guanyu suo chuan mei ri liangguo juxing zhi tanhua (U.S. Secretary of State met Chinese ambassador Hu Shi according to Hu Shi’s invitation: the Chinese ambassador inquired about rumored U.S.-Japan conversations), September 4, 1941, *Academia Historica, Geming wenxian: dui mei waijiao (Revolutionary writings: relations with the United States)*, Box.1, 1.

<sup>258</sup> Han Xifu & Jiang Kefu ed., *Zhonghua minguo shi dashiji (Chronology of important events in Republican Chinese history)*, vol.9, 6640.

<sup>259</sup> “Mei ri tanpan jingguo (The development of U.S.-Japan negotiations),” *Academia Sinica, Institute of Modern History, Gongzuo baogao yu jihua (Working report and plan)*, Box.3, 147-8.

the situation is more propitious for aggressive acts on her part. The minimum objectives must be to free the American, British and Russian forces from the Pacific.”<sup>260</sup>

In order to convince Japan to make concessions, the United States attempted to make Japan realize the ironic and dangerous consequence of Japan’s Axis relationship with National Socialist Germany if Japanese aggression continued. On November 18, in his meeting with Japanese diplomats Saburo Kurusu and Kichisaburo Nomura, Secretary Hull indicated that Japan might risk being subordinated to Hitler’s ambition to rapidly conquer the whole Eurasian continent. Tokyo in the end would bear all the disastrous results brought by Berlin despite the fact that it was now benefitting from the Axis alliance.<sup>261</sup> Although the Tojo cabinet fully understood the importance of preserving a cordial relationship with the United States, its fundamental goal was to overturn the international system in East Asia based on the Nine Power Treaty and replace it with its own “new order.” Tokyo assumed that Washington, not itself, should make concessions.<sup>262</sup> From the Japanese perspective, the purpose of the negotiations was to keep the Americans out of East Asia (especially China). During the negotiations, it changed its perception of the American position in this diplomatic game in the past. Japan further worried that the United States would use its influence to bring Britain and France back into the Pacific. Until late 1941, Japan knew that it had to deal with the United States position in East Asia eventually but it insisted on the policy of “China first, then America.” But under the current circumstance, Tokyo felt it was impossible to resolve the “China Incident” if it did not figure out Washington first. It thus changed the policy to “American first, then China.”<sup>263</sup> This different order of prioritization played a key role in leading to the Pearl Harbour Attack several weeks later.

The ROC soon interpreted Hull’s message as the greatest challenge to China’s survival. On November 25, Japanese diplomats Kurusu and Nomura met Secretary Hull again for the consideration of a temporary suspension of the negotiations for 90 days so that both sides could come up with a permanent settlement. Hull agreed to partially suspend its economic sanctions if

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<sup>260</sup> “Memorandum by the Secretary of Treasury (Morgenthau), An Approach to the Problem of Eliminating Tension with Japan and Insuring Defeat of Germany,” November 17, 1941, in *FRUS*, vol.4, The Far East, 613.

<sup>261</sup> “Mei ri tanpan jingguo (The Development of U.S.-Japan Negotiations),” Academia Sinica, Institute of Modern History, *Gongzuo baogao yu jihua (Working report and plan)*, Box.4, 150-1.

<sup>262</sup> Li Xijun, “Changes in Japanese Strategy in 1939-1940 and the Internationalization of Sino-Japanese War,” *Journal of Modern Chinese History*, vol.2, 01(2008): 23-4.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid*, 33-5.

Japan immediately terminated all of its aggressions.<sup>264</sup> Chongqing became extremely nervous about Washington's new attitude. China could not afford any U.S. attempts to relax tensions with Japan. To the ROC, improved U.S.-Japan relations would seriously damage internal and external order in China. Domestically, China's economic inflation grew worse despite American help with stabilization of the currency. China's socio-political system seemed to be crumbling due to Japanese intrusion. The fighting morale of Chinese soldiers was decreasing to the extent that it looked like the American assistance became the only source of encouragement. If the United States compromised with Japan and weakened any form of support to China, the ROC would face great peril of internal turmoil. The GMD might not be able to sustain its rule in the case of such a crisis. Therefore, China saw itself at the limit of its ability to resist and it desperately clung to American arms for help. Furthermore, the GMD had already fallen into different factions due to different attitudes toward the resistance, not to mention the establishment of Wang Jingwei's government in Nanjing which in Chiang's eyes was one of the biggest threats. If the United States now chose not to backup China, Chongqing might have no choice but either surrender to Tokyo or keep fighting until its final collapse. Chiang's leadership over the resistance would be seriously questioned and challenged. Chiang's rival Wang Jingwei might get new legitimacy because he could argue that Chiang's decision to resist rather than negotiate had led the whole country to apocalypse. Wang, who persistently advocated collaboration rather than confrontation with Japan, could openly claim that only his government could save China, not Chiang's. The GMD government in Chongqing would tear into pieces under finger-pointing accusations and intense rivalry among factions. The Americans did not realize that in the Chinese eyes, their compromise with the Japanese would bring a chain of reactions that eventually would bury China.

Through keen observation, the Americans eventually read the Chinese minds. Certainly Chongqing repeatedly informed Washington about how serious the consequence would be if the U.S.-Japan compromise was realized. Chiang Kai-shek even pointed out that United States was risking its own reputation among western partners (majorly Britain and France) by this compromise.<sup>265</sup> But the growing American understanding of GMD internal factionalism was key

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<sup>264</sup> "Mei ri tanpan jingguo (The Development of U.S.-Japan Negotiations)," Academia Sinica, Institute of Modern History, *Gongzuo baogao yu jihua (Working report and plan)*, Box.4, 151-2.

<sup>265</sup> "Latiemoer guwen zi Chongqing zhidian Juli xiansheng gaoyi weiyuanzhang dui mei ri tanpan yijian ji meiguo ying chong yuyi baozheng zhongguo bu zhi you bei yiqi zhi weixian dian (Owen Latimore's telegram to Arthur

in driving Washington to change its previous soft-hand policy toward Tokyo. Stanley Hornbeck's report clearly reflected this understanding. In his memorandum on December 1, Hornbeck identified three political groups currently struggling for control in Chongqing: first, the "pro-Axis" group, who accepted U.S.-Japan negotiations and wanted to arrange peaceful coalition with Japan and Germany. They saw these negotiations as an opportunity to consolidate their own power and interests inside the GMD. Secondly, the "peace" group attempted to achieve peace by direct bargaining with Japan. Thirdly, the "anti-Axis" group saw no prospect of peace with Japan and was very determined to continue the war. They hoped to use American power to oust the Japanese at least from North China.<sup>266</sup> Since the ROC officially broke its political relationship with Germany in July 1941, Chiang Kai-shek naturally leaned on the "anti-Axis" group and advocated long-term resistance. The Americans believed they had to support the Chinese resistance as long as Chiang was in charge of the ROC leadership. They did not think other GMD groups, including Wang Jingwei's government, had the power to replace Chiang in order to pursue their alternative of diplomacy. Even though the Washington circle did not like Chiang's dictatorial personality, they were convinced that only Chiang could prevent China from falling apart. Compared to the Japanese offers, a stable China resisting Japanese aggression fit American interests better. Hence, from late November to early December, although Tokyo frequently contacted Washington for any last chances of agreement, Washington only had one answer: the United States would take no initiative in changes to its existing policy. It was the responsibility of Japan to make this change.<sup>267</sup>

The U.S.-Japan negotiations ultimately failed, followed by Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941. When the United States officially declared war on Japan, the ROC quickly seized this chance to declare itself an ally of the United States.<sup>268</sup> By tying itself to the United States, the ROC in turn was able to discuss a global joint operation against Japan with other

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Curry forwarding Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's opinion of the U.S.-Japan negotiations, Chiang emphasized the United States should promise not to abandon the ROC," November 26, 1941, in *Zhonghua minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian dui ri kangzhan shiqi di san bian: zhanshi waijiao* (Preliminary edition of Republican China's important historical sources of the Sino-Japanese War, volume three: wartime diplomacy), 734-5.

<sup>266</sup> "Memorandum by the Adviser on Political Relations (Hornbeck)," December 1, 1941, in *FRUS*, vol.4, The Far East, 708.

<sup>267</sup> "Mei ri tanpan jingguo (The Development of U.S.-Japan Negotiations)," Academia Sinica, Institute of Modern History, *Gongzuo baogao yu jihua* (Working report and plan), Box.4, 152.

<sup>268</sup> "The Ambassador in China (Gauss) to the Secretary of States," December 8, 1941, in *FRUS*, vol.4, The Far East, p.736.

Eurasian powers, including Britain and the Soviet Union.<sup>269</sup> On December 29, President Roosevelt accepted a proposal from General George Marshall for the establishment of the “China Theatre” and suggested Chiang Kai-shek to “undertake to exercise such command over all forces of the United powers of which are now, or in the future be operating the Chinese theatre.”<sup>270</sup> On January 1, 1942, the ROC signed the *Declaration by United Nations* during the Arcadia Conference in Washington for the anti-Axis league. This declaration made China one of the “Big Four” with the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union. China’s goal of collective action and an equal alliance (at least in name) with the United States had been finally realized.

## Chapter Conclusion

The period of Sino-U.S. relations from 1937 to 1941 was primarily influenced by the change of timing in international affairs (this sentence needs to be clarified). Without the transition of American diplomatic ideology from isolationism to internationalism, the GMD government would be far less able to turn the United States into its ally. However, China’s policy was not simply driven by the development of historical events. The Chinese government instrumentally managed the events to get itself as much favour as possible. Thus, China partially contributed to the changes in the international environment. Its relations with the United States developed in several critical stages. From 1937 to 1939 up to the amendment of Neutrality Act, China looked for internationalization of the Sino-Japanese War and the containment on Japan by western powers through the principle of “collective security.” This pursuit eventually made China notice the United States as standing out from the other western powers, not because it was most powerful, but because its interests were relatively closer to the ROC and it had stronger sympathy with Chinese interests. Chongqing then decided to approach Washington more and leveraged this closeness to obtain support from its friends Britain and France.

The approval of the new Neutrality Act in 1939 almost spontaneously led to the abrogation of the U.S.-Japan Treaty of Commerce and Navigation in 1940. This abrogation profoundly shifted the

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<sup>269</sup> Han Xifu & Jiang Kefu ed., *Zhonghua minguo shi dashiji* (Chronology of important events in Republican Chinese history), vol.9, 6674-75.

<sup>270</sup> “President Roosevelt to the President of Chinese Executive Yuan (Chiang),” December 29, 1941, in *FRUS*, vol.4, The Far East, 763.



course of U.S.-Japan relations toward a more confrontational direction. Benefitting from this abrogation, China targeted the United States more specifically for help in the last two years before the Pearl Harbour Attack. It managed its relationship with the United States to strengthen its ties with Britain so that Britain would not easily abandon China under Japanese pressure. It managed the Sino-U.S. relations to get military and financial aid and loans which helped sustain China's survival in the face of Japanese aggression. It managed these relations in such a way as to damage the possibilities of U.S.-Japan rapprochement because this rapprochement was seriously interrelated with the GMD's domestic rule. By all these means, Chongqing gradually pulled Washington into an open conflict with Tokyo across the Pacific Ocean. Certainly the United States had many other reasons to break off its relations with Japan, the China factor should not be exaggerated, but it cannot be underestimated either. The persistent Chinese efforts were eventually rewarded right after the Americans officially declared war on the Japanese in 1941. Chongqing and Washington came to view each other as natural allies in the end.

However, the fundamental motivation for the ROC and the United States to approach one another was different. Chongqing was more instrumental than ideological in cultivating this new political relationship, while Washington's motivations were rather the opposite. The American officials and public always intended to picture China's war against Japan as a heroic story about how a democratic and just nation struggled against a dictatorial aggressor, which was far from the reality. The GMD government used this American fantasy to receive wartime support from the United States consistently through diplomatic propaganda. This strategy later planted the seed of friction between these two allies, especially during the Pacific War from 1941 to 1945 when the Americans began to find that Chiang Kai-shek's government was far from the state of democracy and integrity they once dreamt of. Historian Hans van de Ven once proved that the Americans had their own prejudices in this mutual alliance.<sup>271</sup> But this U.S. disillusionment brought tensions in the areas of diplomacy and military co-operation between the two, and the nature of the Sino-U.S. relations later turned into what historian Chi Hsi-sheng defined as "allies with dragger drawn (*jianbanuzhang de mengyou*)."<sup>272</sup>

<sup>271</sup> Hans van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China, 1925-1945* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 392pp.

<sup>272</sup> Chi Hsi-sheng, *Jianbanuzhang de mengyou: taipingyang zhanzheng qijian de zhongmei junshi hezuo guanxi* (Allies with Dragger Drawn: Sino-American military cooperation during the Pacific War, 1941-1945) (Taipei: Lianjing, 2011), 724pp.

## Conclusion

Was the collapse of the Sino-German alliance inevitable? How would modern Chinese history, especially the history of the Sino-Japanese War, be different if National Socialist Germany had continued its cooperation with China and never broken the relationship between the two? This counterfactual question cannot be answered properly without a critical understanding of the National Socialist leadership in Berlin. Hitler and his National Socialist officials were essential figures directing German policy toward East Asia and leading Berlin to turn to Tokyo and away from Chongqing. Some major diplomats from the German Foreign Office had strong sympathy toward the GMD government and disagreed with the Führer. However, they failed to convince the National Socialist leadership. The National Socialist leadership integrated Germany's partnership with the ROC into the larger scheme, the pursuit of global hegemony in the Eurasian continent especially. They replaced China with Japan based on the one fundamental assumption that was China was not able to contribute to Germany's ambition of world dominance, but that Japan was. If the German Foreign Office had prevailed over the National Socialist leadership, the Sino-German alliance might not have gone down. However, this was unlikely to happen due to the totalitarian nature of the Berlin government. If the National Socialist leadership was never in central power, the Sino-German alliance could have been secured and preserved. However, in this case, there would be even no World War II and the Sino-Japanese War would have remained a regional conflict without much global significance in international relations. Hence, the decline of Sino-German relations was inseparable from a series of internal developments of National Socialist politics in Germany, particularly its plan and action to conquer the Eurasian continent accordingly.

The collapse of Sino-German relations was the precondition of the establishment of the Sino-U.S. alliance. On the one hand, the ROC might have still approached the United States for foreign aid even though its relationship with Germany had continued to go well. But Chongqing probably would have not perceived Washington as important as a future ally. On the other hand, the United States might not be that interested in helping China if the ROC still held its ties closely with Germany. Washington began to be concerned about Chongqing mostly because it experienced the ideological turn from isolationism to internationalism in foreign affairs. The National Socialist foreign policy for international ascendancy was a key factor driving this

change. Only after the Americans started to link the warfare in East Asia with the German conquest of Europe and look at the Sino-Japanese War as an integral part of the coming worldwide conflict, they would develop their relationship with the Chinese for their own interests. There was no doubt that China's war of resistance would have been more difficult with less help from the United States. The war of resistance might have lasted longer than eight years. The chance for the GMD government to survive under the Japanese would have been reduced to minimum unless Chiang had negotiated with the enemy, which would partially strengthen the claim even the power of the collaborationists to central authority. Thus, the development of Chinese domestic politics and society would have been hugely different in this aspect.

China's experience of negotiating for alliances with Germany and the United States also changed the dynamics of its domestic politics and foreign relations. It antagonized the Axis powers against the anti-fascist Eurasian counterparts. It transformed China's international status from a victim of regional imperial hegemony (Japan) to one of the contributors of the post-World War II new order. It helped the country survive throughout the war and become one of the five permanent members of the United Nations (UN) Security Council, together with the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and France. Ironically, although the ROC was never a liberal nation-state almost before the end of the Cold War, it successfully carried the title in the western world as "free China". This title was the legacy of China's alliance with the United States, but not with Germany. China's switch of alliance from 1937 to 1941 revealed that the GMD government was a rational actor in internal and foreign policy makings as well. Undoubtedly, Chiang's government behaved poor in internal management of its wartime social and economic policy. Undoubtedly it was not successful in the containment of factionalism and corruption inside the GMD Party, and separatism inside the country. Undoubtedly, it sometimes appeared to be hypocritical as it consciously decorated itself a progressive nation-state battling with dictatorship (Japan) while still trying to restore its relationship with another totalitarian regime (Germany). However, it effectively demonstrated its legitimacy and state control under this extremely harsh war environment. It followed the principle of pragmatism in international relations rather than being driven by ideology which is what Germany and the United States did. It gradually developed a disciplined and well-planned diplomatic strategy, which allowed the ROC to obtain multiple potential collaborators in a complex international environment under war. Apart from the Sino-Japanese War itself, the ROC's cooperation with Germany and the United

States revealed GMD's essential goal to find the answer with regard to how to achieve China's modernity. China was finding this answer during World War II. But China was not able to find it beforehand, and it not able to find afterwards, until today.

Ultimately, this thesis suggests that reassessment of modern Chinese history within the context of international history in the twentieth century is necessary. The ROC's alliance with Germany and the United States tells us that China's relationship with the West was intricate and paradoxical, with appreciation and resentment happening at the same time. The ROC positively looked towards Germany and the United States at different times. The GMD government genuinely believed both countries were central to the sustainability of its rule and the modernization of China. However, the Chinese always had a deeply rooted syndrome of "a century of humiliation" and a general distrust towards the West based on the colonial experience. These mentalities let the GMD government whole-heartedly hope to draw attention from western powers, but simultaneously manipulated its cooperation with them for goals other than survival. These mentalities were even inherited by the GMD's successor, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). They still play a significant role in China's foreign relations today. The ROC's alliance story reveals that the nature of World War II needs further investigation, and possibly re-examination as well. Was the Second World War in general a confrontation between liberalism and totalitarianism? Was the Second World War in general a resistance of the weak against powerful aggressors in the name of justice?

From 1937 to 1941, China mostly stayed in a "grey" area of diplomacy. In the last two years before Pearl Harbor, Chongqing managed its relationship with both Washington and Berlin at the same time. It actually wished to get into one without sacrificing the other. China's alliance story blurred the previous moral boundary of politics and diplomacy that has been identified in most of the traditional World War II historiography. This story suggested that our understanding of World War II should be revised from a more multidimensional and international perspective.

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