

# REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

*Form Approved*  
**OMB No. 0704-0188**

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

<b>1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)</b> 19-04-2013		<b>2. REPORT TYPE</b> Master of Military Studies Research Paper		<b>3. DATES COVERED (From - To)</b> August 2012 - April 2013	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> Western Influence on the Chinese National Revolutionary Army from 1925 to 1937				<b>6a. CONTRACT NUMBER</b> N/A	
				<b>6b. GRANT NUMBER</b> N/A	
				<b>6c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER</b> N/A	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Nasca, David S., Major, USMC				<b>5d. PROJECT NUMBER</b> N/A	
				<b>5e. TASK NUMBER</b> N/A	
				<b>5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER</b> N/A	
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> USMC Command and Staff College Marine Corps University 2076 South Street Quantico, VA 22134-5068				<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b> N/A	
<b>9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A				<b>10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)</b> N/A	
				<b>11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)</b> N/A	
<b>12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.					
<b>13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b>  N/A					
<b>14. ABSTRACT</b> The Chinese National Revolutionary Army allowed the Republic of China to unify the country by destroying the power of the warlords during the Northern Expedition from 1926 to 1928 and was later instrumental in resisting the Japanese during the Second Sino-Japanese War from 1937 to 1945. The success of the Chinese National Revolutionary Army was because of the influence of first Soviet and later German military assistance from 1925 to 1937. Through the help of the Soviet Union and Germany, the Chinese National Revolutionary Army was able to transform itself into a modern military force and propel the Republic of China into a major power in the international system during the first half of the 20th century. This paper examines the level of assistance provided by both the Soviet Union and Germany in terms of training, supplies, and industrial development as well as the impact they had in influencing the Chinese National Revolutionary Army's capabilities.					
<b>15. SUBJECT TERMS</b>  China, Military History, Germany, Soviet Union, Japan, Advisors, KMT					
<b>16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:</b>			<b>17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UU	<b>18. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 70	<b>19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON</b> Marine Corps University/Command and
<b>a. REPORT</b> Unclass	<b>b. ABSTRACT</b> Unclass	<b>c. THIS PAGE</b> Unclass			<b>19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)</b> (703) 784-3330 (Admin Office)

*United States Marine Corps  
Command and Staff College  
Marine Corps University  
2076 South Street  
Marine Corps Combat Development Command  
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068*

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

---

---

**TITLE:**

Western Influence on the Chinese National Revolutionary Army from 1925 to 1937

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES


**AUTHOR:** Major David Nasca, USMC

AY 12-13

---

---

Mentor and Oral Defense Committee Member: Dr. Paul Gelpi, Professor of History

Approved:  \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 19 April 2013 \_\_\_\_\_

Oral Defense Committee Member: Dr. Doug Streusand, Professor of International Relations

Approved:  \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 19 April 2013 \_\_\_\_\_

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: Western Influence on the Chinese National Revolutionary Army from 1925 to 1937.

Author: Major David Nasca, United States Marine Corps

Thesis: The success of the Chinese National Revolutionary Army in unifying China and resisting Japanese aggression was the result of efforts from Soviet and German military assistance provided from 1925 to 1937.

Discussion: The Chinese National Revolutionary Army was the first modern force created by the Republic of China that was responsible for the unification of the country by destroying the power of the warlords following the collapse of the Qing Dynasty. This success was based on the military modernization policies implemented through the guidance and support of first Soviet and later German advisors during the 1920's and 1930's.

Conclusion: An examination of the Chinese National Revolutionary Army's development was based on improvements in training, weapons and equipment, and military industrial development. The benefits for military assistance from the Germans would end with the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War when the Chinese National Revolutionary Army proved successful in resisting powerful Japanese ground forces until the conclusion of hostilities in 1945.

## DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

QUOTATION FROM, ABSTRACTION FROM, OR REPRODUCTION OF ALL OR ANY PART OF THIS DOCUMENT IS PERMITTED PROVIDED PROPER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IS MADE.

## Table of Contents

	Page
INTRODUCTION.....	5
TRAINING.....	8
WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT.....	12
INDUSTRIAL AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION.....	19
CONCLUSION.....	25
ENDNOTES.....	28
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	30
APPENDIX: MAP OF NORTHERN EXPEDITION.....	32

## Introduction

On August 13, 1937, the Imperial Japanese Army invaded Shanghai, the Republic of China's largest city, in order to seize its ports and industries for the Japanese Empire. For almost 50 years, Japan was engaged in a series of conflicts with China in pursuit of its territorial and economic interests. On each occasion, the Japanese military easily defeated China at minimal cost and slowly carved away large chunks of Chinese territory. Donald Jordan, a scholar of Chinese military history, observed that the Japanese expected another easy victory. However, during the attack on Shanghai, the Japanese were shocked to discover that the Chinese were a well-equipped and disciplined military force.<sup>1</sup>

Instead of pushing aside the Chinese National Revolutionary Army in Shanghai, the Japanese Imperial Army found itself fighting for its survival as additional Chinese forces arrived in the city supported by modern tanks and artillery. Destruction of the Japanese Imperial Army was prevented when Japan sent reinforcements to salvage the situation. The military operation ended up as one of the largest and bloodiest battles of the Second Sino-Japanese War resulting in over 90,000 Japanese casualties.

This research paper will study the extent western influence had in the development of the Chinese National Revolutionary Army from 1925 to 1937. This event was significant because it explained how the Soviet Union and Germany helped China become a modern military power. This ultimately enabled China to destroy the various warlord factions that controlled much of the country during that time period as well as prepared the nation to defend itself against Japanese aggression during the Second

Sino-Japanese War. Without Soviet and German assistance to the Chinese National Revolutionary Army, China could not have survived the 20th century as a free nation.

The Chinese National Revolutionary Army became a modern military force through Soviet and German assistance. In addition to the weapons, equipment, and military advisors, economic assistance was also provided to establish the Republic of China's military industries. In essence the 1920's and 1930's were a revolutionary leap in Chinese history because of China's transformation into a modern economic and military power. Max Boot, a military historian, observed in his studies of the rise and fall of great military powers that the successful modernization of an armed force requires a paradigm shift in military thinking in order to overcome the bureaucratic and cultural obstacles that would attempt to resist transformation within a country.<sup>2</sup>

China embraced modernization in order to survive according to Arthur Waldron, a scholar and professor of both international relations and Chinese history. He pointed out that essentially the Chinese recognized that modernization was forced on them in the pragmatic sense of national survival through the creation of a modern military that provided protection against Japan and other potential aggressors.<sup>3</sup> The westernization of the Chinese military was done through the extraordinary efforts of first the Soviet Union until 1927 and afterwards Germany until 1937. These relationships were established not only because of the changing strategic and diplomatic landscape of the international system during the interwar years, but also due to Chinese national security policies and objectives as well.

The decision to modernize the Republic of China's military in the 1920's and 1930's was nothing extraordinary for Chinese political and military leadership. Their

modernization policy was merely reflective of their country's military thought and culture. Until the 18th century, China was considered one of the greatest military and economic powers in the world with a national history extending back over 2000 years. In its rise to greatness, China developed a way of looking at the world through a lens influenced by a combination of Confucianism, Taoism, and centuries of experience in war. According to William H. Mott and Jae Chang Kim, both experts in Chinese military philosophy and culture, the Chinese always focused on an enemy's intent and plan rather than the composition of the enemy's forces. This led to China's tendency in military strategy to avoid attacking the enemy's forces and instead adapt an indirect approach to military victory.<sup>4</sup> In essence, the Chinese will attack the enemy's plans and intentions while minimizing kinetic confrontation with the enemy itself.

In understanding Chinese military culture and philosophy, the westernization of the Chinese National Revolutionary Army was merely part of a long reoccurring pattern. The Chinese always made deliberate attempts to reflect and rebuild its military after suffering a series of major defeats against an opponent. From its wars with various nomadic tribes north of the Great Wall to its many internal rebellions, China pragmatically adopted the military skills and technologies of their enemies in order to defend itself. While a glance through China's military history reveals wars that were long in duration, most were won through an indirect strategic and operational approach that ultimately gave the Chinese political and military leadership what they wanted. In the case of the Chinese National Revolutionary Army, Chang Jui-te, a Chinese military historian, argued that the introduction of western advisors, technology, and training by Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek were merely a means to an end.<sup>5</sup> In the modernization



of the Chinese National Revolutionary Army, both Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek foresaw a deliberate and gradual approach in unifying China and eventually driving the Japanese and other foreign powers out of the country.

### Training

The formation of the Chinese National Revolutionary Army came about in 1925 when the Republic of China began to suffer internal unrest and division among the various political and military factions of the former Qing Dynasty. Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek played an instrumental role in the coordination of agreements and programs in the westernization of the Republic of China's military forces. While intrastate warfare tore the Republic of China apart, Nanking served as the base for the Chinese National Revolutionary Army because of its strategic and economic value. The city was a cosmopolitan center with a large population, rich agricultural lands, modern industries, and access to foreign trade.

Unfortunately, in 1925, the Chinese National Revolutionary Army was nothing more than a collection of a few thousand untrained and unequipped soldiers whose operational experience was built from either serving the warlords or suppressing civil disorder. Hsi-Sheng Ch'i, author of various studies on the history of China's military during the 20th century, observed that in traditional Chinese society, Confucianism discouraged people from joining the armed forces since the military profession was considered the worst and most unproductive sector of civil society. However, the irony of this was that these views changed in China during times of unrest or invasion when the military was seen as a convenient and noble profession for survival and mobility in Chinese society.<sup>6</sup>

With the establishment of the Chinese National Revolutionary Army, Sun Yat-sen invited the Soviet Union to provide advisors, experts, and instructors to assess and reorganize the Republic of China's military. In their studies of Soviet advisors in the Republic of China, C. Martin Wilbur and Julie Lien-ying How remarked that the Soviets sent to China came from a variety of backgrounds such as the military, diplomacy, politics, administration, science, and economics. In addition, a few received education as Sinologists or translators from living abroad in Manchuria or in one of China's open ports.<sup>7</sup> Although the Soviets were certainly prepared to interact and instruct the Chinese in modern warfare, they also had ulterior motives as well including gathering intelligence, improving diplomatic relations, and spreading communist ideology.

During the Soviet Union's presence in the Republic of China, Soviet advisors began to remake the Chinese National Revolutionary Army. They first assisted in the establishment of the Whampoa Military Academy in Nanking to screen and train potential officers for the Republic of China's armed forces. Besides the materials and supplies in the establishment of the military school, the Soviet Union also brought in professors and instructors to begin the education of China's future military leaders such as Lin Biao, Chen Cheng, Xue Yue, Liu Zhidan, and Ma Zhongying.<sup>8</sup> Arthur Waldron pointed out the new political and military leaders that came out of the Whampoa Military Academy were different in the sense that they embraced western ideas and technology.<sup>9</sup> In other words, they were largely men who wanted to seize new opportunities and ideas to transform and develop Chinese society through industrial and military means.

Besides the establishment of the Whampoa Military Academy, the Soviet Union also invited the Republic of China to send military officers and students to Moscow to

undergo further military instruction to prepare them for high-level command and staff positions. In its establishment of the foundations of professional military education and training for the Chinese National Revolutionary Army's officer corps, these future leaders soon utilized their school house experiences to raise and train enlisted personnel in the use of modern military weapons, tactics, and techniques that proved successful in its Northern Campaign against the warlords. Ultimately, it was Sun Yat-sen and later Chiang Kai-shek's creation of a self-sufficient military training and education program that provided the Chinese National Revolutionary Army with a steady supply of gifted military officers and soldiers for future wars and campaigns.

Unfortunately, the military partnership between the Republic of China and the Soviet Union came to an end in 1927 when Chiang Kai-shek kicked out its Soviet advisors and began to target the eradication of the Chinese Communists. In its determination to remove the communists from the Republic of China, the Chinese National Revolutionary Army turned to Germany for most of its military needs for the next decade. F. F. Liu, whose works covered Chinese Nationalist military policies, stated that German military assistance brought great success to the Chinese National Revolutionary Army first against the Chinese Communists and afterwards the Japanese when they invaded Shanghai. It was through the help of the Germans that Chiang Kai-shek had great plans for using the Germans to make the Republic of China a great power once again.<sup>10</sup>

German military advisors such as Max Bauer, Hans von Seeckt, and Alexander von Falkenhausen<sup>11</sup> played a vital role in their mentorship in the modernization of the Republic of China's military from 1927 to 1937. German military advisors and

instructors continued where their Soviet predecessors left off by increasing military training and support to the Chinese National Revolutionary Army. In addition, they also worked closely with the Republic of China to reorganize its military forces along German lines through the creation of combined arms forces that attempted to integrate infantry, artillery, tanks, and aircraft to work together as a team.

In the modernization of China's military, the Germans recommended that the Chinese National Revolutionary Army discharge its large number of illiterate and unskilled peasant conscripts. Even though the Northern Expedition from 1926 to 1928 was a complete success, Chiang Kai-shek's forces recruited thousands of peasant conscripts from the defeated warlord armies. This ultimately became a liability to the Republic of China because these newly incorporated forces lacked the military training and discipline on the battlefield. Edward Dreyer, who studied German military contributions in the Republic of China, argued that the German advisers brought military thought and doctrine that could not be transferred to the Republic of China and struggled valiantly to change the Chinese military model of large conscript armies.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, German reservations against the use of peasant conscripts were largely ignored and instead forced the German military delegation to adapt and work within the Republic of China's military organization.

Although the Chinese National Revolutionary Army made significant progress in military training and education over the past ten years under Soviet and German advisors, the Republic of China also tried to obtain modern weapons and equipment as well as establish a powerful industrial base to support its military. Arthur Waldron's examination of Chinese ambitions for modern weapons, equipment, and industries

discovered that the Chinese military revolution during the interwar years had a number of manifestations. Besides the rapid improvement in the table of equipment for the Republic of China's armed forces there was also dramatic changes in the tactical deployment of Chinese military forces. In addition, Chinese political and military leaders had grown in skill and confidence in the realization that they might be able to fight and win against a modern military power."<sup>13</sup>

### Weapons and Equipment

One of the main problems faced by the Chinese National Revolutionary Army was its lack of modern weapons and equipment. Although this was not a problem when fighting against China's various warlords and factions, it posed a serious obstacle against Japanese imperial forces. Although some argued that the Republic of China had more than enough soldiers to possibly swarm and overwhelm the Japanese invaders, the industrialization of war allowed Japan's military to counter large manpower concentrations with better fire and maneuver. F.F. Liu argued that as a result of Japan's economic and technological advantage, "China settled down to a long war, resigned to the cost and relying upon the willing sacrifice of her people. Her only hope, in the face of Japan's superior preparation, was in a prolonged war of attrition."<sup>14</sup>

With the collapse of the Qing Dynasty, Sun Yat-sen realized that China was vulnerable to attack. This was not only apparent from China's string of defeats since the mid-19th century, but also because of the territorial encroachment of various foreign powers. Unfortunately, while other nations focused on industrialization, trade, and modernization, China maintained an isolationist policy that greatly restricted political, social, and economic interaction with the rest of the world. It wasn't until China was

finally forced to open itself to the international community that Chinese such as Sun Yat-sen began to realize that the country would have to fundamentally transform itself in order to survive.

As war and chaos spread throughout China, Sun Yat-sen used the National Revolutionary Army to rally support for Chinese unification. He understood that the National Revolutionary Army was essential in ending the division in China and driving the Japanese military out of the country. According to Arthur Waldron, “The sheer scale of the firepower and fighting was troublesome. Chinese soldiers were not yet strictly comparable to [the] European [soldiers], but they were unmistakably modern.”<sup>15</sup> Although the establishment of the Whampoa Military Academy provided the training and education for a modern military force, the equipment and weapons required for China to fight on equal terms with a modern military power was not available.

Prior to the Qing Dynasty’s collapse, its political and military leadership made several attempts to modernize its armed forces. The Chinese historian, Hsi-Sheng Ch’i pointed out that military modernization was a priority for the Qing Dynasty in response to the dangers presented by other foreign powers. The imperial court spent an extraordinary amount of money and resources for assistance in the creation of a modern military that could defend itself against aggressive foreign powers.<sup>16</sup> However, the Opium Wars, the Taiping Rebellion, and the First Sino-Japanese War made it apparent that China’s efforts toward military modernization was simply not good enough to ensure the country’s national security. In addition, China struggled to stay current with the speed and transformation of military technology such as bolt-action rifles, the machine gun, indirect artillery fire, tanks, airplanes, motorized vehicles, armored warships, and the use of

wireless radio thus making it clear that China was increasingly vulnerable to future threats.

Although the Republic of China inherited some of the military units, fortresses, and arsenals of the Qing Dynasty, the Chinese found them sorely inadequate and of little use against a modern military force. In fact, although the Chinese National Revolutionary Army started off with flintlock muskets and muzzle-loading cannons in 1927, its ground forces also had to make due with spears, swords, and makeshift weapons. C. Martin Wilbur and Julie Lien-ying How observed how the combat power and logistical capabilities of the National Revolutionary Army was virtually nonexistent. The situation was so bad for the Republic of China's ground forces that each unit was loosely organized under various independent warlords and generals who often had to rely on themselves for the collection of supplies and the maintenance of their respective forces.<sup>17</sup> Despite the humble origins of the Chinese National Revolutionary Army, Sun Yat-sen and later Chiang Kai-shek implemented agreements and policies over the next ten years that revolutionized how the Republic of China's military conducted business.

As the Chinese National Revolutionary Army modernized from 1927 to 1937, the weapons and equipment it purchased, collected, or manufactured over the years consisted of different styles and designs based on the militaries of several different countries throughout the world. The Chinese National Revolutionary Army wore a variety of British, French, German, Soviet, and American style uniforms and equipment while on campaign against the warlords, the communists, and the Japanese. Despite the poor equipment provided to the Chinese National Revolutionary Army there were programs

implemented by the Republic of China that brought a better level of standardization in its weapon systems.

The Chinese National Revolutionary Army was a military force in transition in both practice and appearance. Since its inception in 1925, the Republic of China's military was fighting for its survival against the warlords, the communists, and the Japanese. Sun Yat-sen realized that he had to utilize his unique connections with the western powers in order to secure the weapons and equipment needed to supply the Chinese National Revolutionary Army. Although this initially brought in influxes of support through injections of British and French weapons, equipment, and uniforms, they were essentially the result of Western nations who wanted to dump their military surpluses from the First World War for a quick profit. In fact, China's dissatisfaction with British and French military supplies convinced the Republic of China to consider relations with the Soviet Union, Germany, and the United States as potential suppliers.

Prior to Sun Yat-sen's death in 1925, the Republic of China first turned to the Soviet Union for military assistance. The Soviets provided advisors and other support personnel to help modernize the Republic of China's armed forces as well as military equipment and supplies. Soviet manufactured weapons, ammunition, uniforms, and vehicles were soon transported from Vladivostok to various ports controlled by the Republic of China. According to Hsi-Sheng Ch'i, his research indicated that the Soviet Union played a critical role in initially providing logistical support to the Chinese National Revolutionary Army.<sup>18</sup> However, in exchange for Soviet assistance, Sun Yat-sen quickly found himself engaged in an uncomfortable deal. While the Soviet Union supported the Republic of China to serve as a counterweight to stop Japanese aggression



in the Asia-Pacific region, the Soviets also managed to secure agreements from the Chinese for railway access and economic concessions in Manchuria as well. In fact, what made matters worse for how the Republic of China felt toward the Soviet Union was the fact that the Soviets were also involved in Chinese politics through its continued interaction and assistance with Chinese Communists.

It wasn't until the massacre of Chinese Communists in Shanghai in April 1927, that the Republic of China broke relations with the Soviet Union and began to systematically eradicate other Chinese Communists throughout the country. This was a move made by Sun Yat-sen's successor, Chiang Kai-shek, in a calculated move to destroy the last possible internal threat to China before its war with the Japanese. With the power of the warlords destroyed, Chiang Kai-shek wanted to launch a preemptive strike against the Chinese Communists before Soviet assistance made them too powerful. John King Fairbank, a scholar and author of Chinese history, observed Chiang Kai-shek's move to wipe out the Chinese Communists as an attempt to achieve national unity, secure the recognition of the international community, and centralize efforts toward economic and military modernization. Upon internal security finally established, the Republic of China foresaw systematically removing of the Europeans and the Japanese from the Chinese mainland as the next step in its grand strategy.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, with Soviet assistance and equipment suddenly cut off because of its actions, the Republic of China saw Germany as the next potential partner for a long-term political, economic, and military relationship.

The introduction of German advisors also brought with them a proliferation of German military weapons, equipment, and supplies. With the arrival of Max Bauer and

other military advisors between 1927 and 1937, Germany supplied vast amounts of sorely needed weapons and equipment that were instrumental in the modernization of the Republic of China's military. Although its air force and navy continued to suffer neglect, the Republic of China's ground forces experienced an exponential growth in arms and equipment. In a short number of years, Chinese military strength slowly grew under the direction of German assistance despite the legal restrictions imposed by the Treaty of Versailles. Edward L. Dreyer noted that despite the linguistic, cultural, and legal obstacles the Germans had to overcome, they were able to achieve a lot from a bad situation in the creation of a Chinese army that was organized, trained, and equipped according to German prescriptions thus bringing markets for its industries and experience for its military.<sup>20</sup> In other words, Germany's punishment under the Treaty of Versailles by the Allied Powers at the end of the First World War made military and economic relations with the Republic of China very welcomed since it allowed the Germans to skirt the treaty's restrictions by employing top German military personnel and equipment overseas. This not only provided cash to an ailing German economy that was forced to pay reparations to the Allied Powers, but also gave an opportunity for the German military to experiment and hone its military skills that the Treaty of Versailles made impossible to do back home.

The Sino-German relationship was mutually beneficial to both countries; it created a market for Germany's large war industries and secured a vast source of raw materials from China. The big push to arm and equip the Republic of China's military, according to F.F. Liu, was based on standardizing its military inventory. The Chinese received first class military weapons, equipment, and uniforms that transformed the

Chinese National Revolutionary Army into a real professional force.<sup>21</sup> Besides wearing uniforms tailored along the lines of Germany's Reichswehr, it also introduced the Maxim machine gun and the German Karabiner 98k rifle as part of the Chinese weapons inventory. In terms of equipment, military service members in the Chinese National Revolutionary Army were now wearing German M35 helmets as well as carrying gas masks, packs, and other accouterments based on German design. Finally, Chiang Kai-shek saw to it that his military forces used the 82 mm trench mortar as well as the 37 mm and 75 mm artillery pieces based on the German Pak 36 anti-tank gun and the FK 97(f) respectively.

With the introduction of modern weapons and equipment into the Chinese National Revolutionary Army, this not only enabled Chiang Kai-shek to bring the last vestiges of China's warlords under the Republic of China's banner, but also proved instrumental in combating the Chinese Communists and standing up to the Japanese. Unfortunately, the major disadvantage was the lack of armor and air support to complement the Chinese Nationalist infantry. Despite having three tank battalions armed with German Panzer I light tanks and CV-33 tankettes as well as possessing a few American manufactured Curtiss Hawk IIs and Boeing P-26Cs as observation and fighter aircraft, they were not enough to play a major role in combat operations during the Second Sino-Japanese War. However, according to F. F. Liu, the overall success of the Republic of China was the result of German training, equipment, and weapons. In addition, the future of the Chinese National Revolutionary Army was ensured when Chiang Kai-shek also began to establish a whole new military industrial program that was

German-inspired. If the Republic of China was given more time before the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out, the Japanese might had met a far different foe.<sup>22</sup>

### Industrial and Resource Mobilization

The attraction of military aggression against China and involvement in its internal affairs derived from its massive population and the abundance of natural resources. Its manpower and materials were very lucrative for the industrialized powers of the 19th and early 20th century by virtue of the opportunities it presented in catapulting these nations to further heights of political, economic, and military power. While the First World War robbed the European powers of the opportunity to divide and conquer China, the West's continued dominant influence on Chinese society unleashed powerful social, economic, and cultural forces that contributed to its collapse. According to Arthur Waldron, "Although the foundations of European power had been ruined by war, the structures of European primacy survived in much of Asia, and the hazy afternoon sun of European privilege and influence still shone on China."<sup>23</sup>

As the country fractured into various warring factions, Japan and the West remained a significant presence along the Chinese coastal towns and cities. The promise of cheap labor and large markets convinced the industrialized world to shift some of its industries and excess products to China. In addition, the introduction of industrialization and foreign products to Chinese society also brought Western culture, education, and technology at an unprecedented rate. John Fairbanks pointed out, "In a cultural focus, [China] saw an unprecedented influx of foreign goods, ideas, and ways, more comprehensive than at any earlier time. Everything was changing."<sup>24</sup> Therefore, these

factors created a window of opportunity for the Republic of China to embrace unification and modernization to create a better and stronger Chinese state.

Although the Chinese National Revolutionary Army was utilized for stability and security in the Republic of China, it also served as the focal point for intense industrial and resource development. With a standing force of about 250,000 troops, both Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek understood that in addition to the preparation of its forces for modern warfare, it also needed to introduce and nurture the development of an industrial sector that included factories, offices, railroads, paved roads, and communication systems. In addition, schools, workshops, and other support facilities were also needed for China's industries to create the foundations of a modern industrialized society. Hsi-Sheng Ch'i noted, that Chiang Kai-shek's overall goal in the creation of an industrialized China was self-sufficiency. Through the development of infrastructural improvements, foreign investments, and sound fiscal policy, the Republic of China would finally be able to support its military and no longer rely on foreign assistance.<sup>25</sup> In the establishment of a foundational economic base to support its armed forces, the Republic of China would be able to continue the development of its nascent industries and over time meet its full potential as an economic and military power.

In his study of China's wartime politics, Lawrence Rosinger reported that, "World War I encouraged the rise of modern industry and of Chinese industrialists and financiers, thus strengthening the [sic] basis for a nationalist movement."<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, China's industrialization to support the Chinese National Revolutionary Army faced several problems. The long years of restricted access, internal unrest, and xenophobic aggression against non-Chinese people had discouraged the possibility of inviting foreign investors

into the country. In addition, the majority of the industrial base already in China was owned by various foreign companies and was concentrated along the Yangtze River. The possibility of taking over these industries and converting them to support the Republic of China's military was out of the question. Finally, most of the foreign investors did not want to get involved in China's conflicts and instead counted on the powerful land and naval presence of the Western Powers to protect their interests.

In order to realize its dream to become a major economic power to support a modern military, China first turned to the Soviet Union for assistance. Although the Soviet Union was initially interested in helping the Republic of China grow and train its military, the Soviets lacked the capacity to really assist in Chinese economic development other than including a few economic specialists among its advisory groups. Like China, the Soviet Union was mostly an agrarian society with the majority of its population concentrated in the rural areas. Although it did possess industrial centers of its own in the west, the Soviet Union was in no position to offer significant economic aid since the Russian Civil War that concluded in 1922 left much of the newly established communist state economically weak from the conflict.

Besides its industrial weakness, the Soviet Union faced both political and economic isolation in the 1920's and 1930's because it was not recognized as a legitimate state by the international system since it violently overthrew the tsarist government that was previously in power. Although the Soviet Union was receptive in establishing economic relations through trade concessions and future investment, the Soviets ultimately wanted to concentrate on its own internal development through the implementation of various economic programs geared toward transforming the country

into one of the world's leading industrialized powers. Both C. Martin Wilbur and Julie Lien-ying How observed that the Soviet Union's policies toward the Republic of China essentially followed two main paths. One was supporting Soviet interests in the Far East while the second was advancing the cause of world revolution in order to weaken the Soviet Union's enemies. Right now, the Soviets could do neither since it had to focus on domestic issues at home in order to safeguard its political power base from internal or external threats.<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, Germany was very interested in economic relations with China. While the two countries had previous economic ties in the past, the First World War disrupted these contacts as both Germany and China became embroiled in their own affairs. However, after surviving the civil unrest that plagued their respective nations, Germany and China found themselves isolated from an international market dominated by the victorious Allied Powers particularly Great Britain and France who blocked any attempt to establish trade and investment in their vast colonial holdings. This skewed international system convinced both the Germans and the Chinese to work together in an economic partnership that greatly benefited both countries. Just like their relationship with the Soviet Union, Germany's anti-imperialist views made the Republic of China receptive to establishing long term relations without fear of imperialism reintroducing itself to the country.

Although Max Bauer was initially recruited by Chiang Kai-shek to advise on training the Chinese National Revolutionary Army, he also served as an economic advisor and valuable political ally. Bauer was able to bridge cultural and economic barriers by convincing industrialists back in Germany to support ventures geared toward

the development of China's military forces. According to Edward Dreyer, "fighting the Japanese, [sic], required the creation of a truly modern army with air support and technical services, and artillery, mortars and machine guns in adequate numbers and with appropriate supplies of ammunition. Such military modernization was beyond China's reach."<sup>28</sup> Understanding the relationship between the economy and the military, Bauer was influential in both German and Chinese political circles to support various projects that would ultimately contribute to their mutual growth and development as major powers. Although Bauer died from smallpox during his residency in China, he lived long enough to realize the establishment of close economic and military relations between the Germans and the Chinese for many years.

In exchange for access to China's vast natural resources and markets, Germany implemented a comprehensive economic program to build China's infrastructure and industries. With modern manufacturing capabilities and skilled workers, China now had the capacity to create and support a modern military. German technical advisors and workers soon became part of China's military and industrial development in the 1920's and 1930's when the crushing economic conditions imposed by the Treaty of Versailles and the Great Depression made the opportunities presented abroad very lucrative. F. F. Liu observed in his studies of German-Sino economic relations during the interwar years that the Germans were aware that the Chinese were industrially backward and made every effort to correct and accelerate its development. While the Republic of China benefitted with the development of munitions industries, German industrialists and investors reaped the rewards of the huge Sino-German trade that Max Bauer originally fostered.<sup>29</sup> The impact of Germany's efforts in developing the Republic of China's



nascent military industries became apparent when the Chinese began to turn out weapons and ammunition for the growing Chinese National Revolutionary Army. According to F.F. Liu, the armories in Nanking, Hanyang, Kung-hsien, and Taiyuan were the largest arms producers for the Republic of China and were instrumental in keeping the Nationalist Chinese supplied during the Northern Expedition from 1926 to 1928 and later in the Second Sino-Japanese War from 1937 to 1945.<sup>30</sup>

Although the Republic of China and Germany were very close for almost a decade, the rise of the Nazis and its program of rearmament changed the dynamics of this relationship. As German manpower and resources were designated toward preparing their country for war, Germany's economic and military assistance to the Chinese slowly drained away. In addition, Nazi Germany's growing relationship with the Japanese also posed an additional strain on Sino-German relations that finally ended when Hitler supported the Japanese invasion of China in 1937. Although Germany enjoyed access to raw materials and open markets in China, Hitler did not believe that this relationship could last and ultimately thought that his country's economic interests would be at the mercy of an Asian power. Instead he became focused on European affairs and sought to base Germany's military, economic, and political growth in the West instead of the East. This was seen with Nazi Germany's increased rearmament program in the 1930's, its involvement in the Spanish Civil War, its growing relations with Fascist Italy, and its intent to absorb all German lands including Poland back to the Reich. In the end, Hitler wanted to become the regional hegemon for Europe while recognizing Japan's ambitions to dominate the Asia-Pacific region.

## Conclusion

The western influence of the Chinese National Revolutionary Army from 1925 to 1937 was driven primarily by Soviet and German advisors, instructors, and technicians. While the Republic of China enjoyed periods of cooperation with these two countries, political, strategic, and diplomatic policies ultimately shaped the extent and measure of these relations. Interaction with the Soviet Union was cut off quickly shortly after the death of Sun Yat-sen due to Chiang Kai-shek's suspicions of the Chinese Communist Party within the Republic of China. However, a decade of Sino-German cooperation would pay dividends for the Republic of China in the form of the modernization of its military and industrial capabilities. According to Trevor Dupuy, while Chiang Kai-shek focused on building China's economy and army, the Japanese watched these developments with concern. Although Japan was successful in its conquest of Chinese territory it became increasingly apparent that Chinese strength was growing daily.<sup>31</sup>

The Chinese National Revolutionary Army was certainly not strong enough yet to push Japan out of China; however, it destroyed the power of the warlords and successfully resisted Japan's Imperial Army from conquering the entire country. This was done through Soviet and German assistance in providing training, weapons, and equipment to the Republic of China. The Chinese National Revolutionary Army's string of victories against the various warlords in the Northern Expedition and later in its resistance against the Japanese in East and Central China reflected the legacy left behind by the Soviets and Germans. As F. F. Liu observed, the German influence on China's war should not be discounted. General von Falkenhausen, one of Chiang Kai-shek's German advisors, fundamentally transformed the Republic of China's military into a

force that did more than just operate modern military weapons and equipment, but also taught them how to fight against another modern military power. Regardless of the strength of the invader, the Chinese could still win through the lethal combination of defense in depth and maneuverability when the enemy was weak and overextended.<sup>32</sup>

Although the United States later participated and contributed to the Republic of China's military and economic development, the foundations of the Chinese National Revolutionary Army as a modern armed force was already in place.

The Republic of China's partnerships with both the Soviets and Germans would ultimately end. For the Soviets, the Republic of China simply did not trust them enough. This mistrust was not only based on historical roots of Russian economic and military ambitions in China's northern territories such as Manchuria, but also due to the communist zeal shown in covertly supporting the Chinese Communist Party behind the scenes. However, Germany would end its relationship with the Chinese due to the rise of the Nazi regime and its preparation for world war. The new regime not only viewed China as a weak state, but would also soon support Japanese aggression in the Asia-Pacific region.

With the modernization of the Chinese Nationalist Army because of Soviet and German assistance, the Republic of China stayed true to Chinese military philosophy and culture by essentially avoiding committing its forces in a decisive battle first against the warlords and later against the Japanese. According to William H. Mott and Jae Chang Kim, it goes back to seeking victory against an opponent without battle. Instead the Chinese utilized the indirect approach in conjunction with using stratagems to threaten, manipulate, or deter in order to force the enemy to accept compliant terms without

fighting.<sup>33</sup> This was essentially what the Chinese National Revolutionary Army was able to do during the Northern Expedition when it managed to incorporate many of China's warlords into the Republic of China without much bloodshed. Later the Chinese Nationalist leadership would use this against the Japanese by avoiding committing the bulk of its forces in decisive battle by giving up space for time. In forcing the Japanese to stretch itself out within China's interior, the enemy found itself declining in strength as it attempted to establish control over its conquests as well as secure supply lines within an unsupportive and hostile Chinese population.

In looking at the modernization and use of the Chinese National Revolutionary Army in the 1920's and 1930's with today's People's Liberation Army there is a similar parallel that will certainly determine how China might use its military in the future. Both armies underwent professional and technological modernization in order to provide security within its borders and eventually exert control over all lands belonging to China. In addition, both the Chinese National Revolutionary Army and the People's Liberation Army were not used for decisive, set piece battles, but only as a last resort when the indirect approach was not working or if victory was assured. For the Chinese Nationalists, they engaged the warlords and the Japanese in battle when either their national interests were at stake or if victory was possible, while the Chinese military today operates under similar circumstances such as the possibility of positioning the People's Republic of China in such a way that would force the Taiwanese to comply to its will. Finally, both the Chinese Nationalist Revolutionary Army and the People's Liberation Army were seen as military instruments to be used in a strictly defensive manner. This means that for both armies, they were utilized only to protect Chinese

sovereignty and its interests. While Tibet, Korea, and Vietnam could be argued to be examples of the People's Liberation Army being used for aggressive purposes, the Chinese Communist leadership would argue that they were defensive operations to secure China's territorial borders. Despite the growth and modernization of its military, the Chinese will continue using it for defensive purposes in its national security strategy and will resort to the indirect approach to protect its interests.

---

<sup>1</sup> Donald Jordan, *China's Trial by Fire*. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001), 235.

<sup>2</sup> Max Boot, *War Made New – Weapons, Warriors, and the Making of the Modern World*. (New York: Gotham Books, 2006), 10.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur Waldron, *From War to Nationalism – China's Turning Point, 1924 – 1925*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 58.

<sup>4</sup> William H. Mott IV and Jae Chang Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture – Shih vs. Li*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 12.

<sup>5</sup> David A. Graff and Robin Higham, ed. *A Military History of China*. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 193.

<sup>6</sup> Hsi-Sheng Ch'i, *Warlord Politics in China, 1916 – 1928*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 79.

<sup>7</sup> C. Martin Wilbur and Julie Lien-ying How, *Missionaries of Revolution – Soviet Advisers and Nationalist China*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 5.

<sup>8</sup> Lin Biao, Chen Cheng, Xue Yue, Liu Zhidan, and Ma Zhongying were all graduates of the Whampoa Military Academy when Chiang Kai-Shek was commandant of the school. However, following Sun Yat-sen's death, Chiang Kai-Shek's decision to violently suppress the Chinese Communist Party would lead to split among these graduates on whether or not to side with the Communists or Nationalists. Lin Biao and Liu Zhidan joined the Communists while Chen Cheng, Xue Yue, and Ma Zhongying joined the Nationalists. All these graduates mentioned would develop reputations as outstanding military commanders within their respective armies during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) and the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949).

<sup>9</sup> Arthur Waldron, *From War to Nationalism*, 209-210.

<sup>10</sup> F. F. Liu, *A Military History of Modern China 1924 – 1949*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), 92.

<sup>11</sup> Max Bauer, Hans von Seeckt, and Alexander von Falkenhausen were part of the German military advisor groups that traveled to China to assist in modernizing the Chinese National Revolutionary Army during the interwar years. Max Bauer was an artillery officer who served in the German General Staff during the First World War. Afterwards, he was recruited as a consultant by the Chiang Kai-shek where he later served as a military and industrial advisor until his death. Hans von Seeckt served as Chief of Staff in several commands during the First World War. After Germany's defeat,

---

he would be instrumental in the formation of the Reichswehr and set the foundations for German military power for the Second World War. Upon finishing his tour in the Reichswehr, Hans von Seeckt joined in the German military mission to China where he served as one of Chiang Kai-shek's military advisors and helped planned the encirclement campaign that forced the Chinese Communists to go on the Long March to avoid destruction. Alexander von Falkenhausen served as an advisor in the Ottoman Army during the First World War where he received the Pour le Merite for his leadership and performance. Afterwards, he continued serving under the Reichswehr until retirement where he then went into service for Chiang Kai-shek as a military advisor until he was recalled in 1934 to serve in the German military until 1944.

<sup>12</sup> Edward L. Dreyer, *China at War 1901 – 1949*. (Harlow: Longman Group Limited, 1995), 182.

<sup>13</sup> Arthur Waldron, *From War to Nationalism*, 58.

<sup>14</sup> F. F. Liu, *A Military History of Modern China*, 105.

<sup>15</sup> Arthur Waldron, *From War to Nationalism*, 50.

<sup>16</sup> Hsi-Sheng Ch'i, *Warlord Politics in China*, 116.

<sup>17</sup> C. Martin Wilbur and Julie Lien-ying How, *Missionaries of Revolution*, 95.

<sup>18</sup> Hsi-Sheng Ch'i, *Warlord Politics in China*, 124-125.

<sup>19</sup> John K. Fairbanks, *China: A New History*. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), 284.

<sup>20</sup> Edward L. Dreyer, *China at War*, 183.

<sup>21</sup> F. F. Liu, *A Military History of Modern China*, 154 – 155.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>23</sup> Arthur Waldron, *From War to Nationalism*, 12.

<sup>24</sup> John K. Fairbanks, *China: A New History*, 255.

<sup>25</sup> Hsi-Sheng Ch'i, *Warlord Politics in China*, 176.

<sup>26</sup> Lawrence Rosinger, *China's Wartime Politics, 1937 – 1944*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), 6-7.

<sup>27</sup> C. Martin Wilbur and Julie Lien-ying How, *Missionaries of Revolution*, 22.

<sup>28</sup> Edward L. Dreyer, *China at War*, 181.

<sup>29</sup> F. F. Liu, *A Military History of Modern China*, 101.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>31</sup> Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Military History of the Chinese Civil War*. (New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1969), 52.

<sup>32</sup> F. F. Liu, *A Military History of Modern China*, 105.

<sup>33</sup> William H. Mott IV and Jae Chang Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture – Shih vs. Li*, 15.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Boot, Max *War Made New – Weapons, Warriors, and the Making of the Modern World*. New York: Gotham Books, 2006.
- Ch'i, Hsi-Sheng. *Warlord Politics in China, 1916 – 1928*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976.
- Dreyer, Edward L. *China at War, 1901 – 1949*. Harlow: Longman Group Limited, 1995.
- Dupuy, Trevor N. *The Military History of the Chinese Civil War*. New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1969.
- Fairbanks, John K. *China: A New History*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Graff, David A. and Robin Higham, ed. *A Military History of China*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012.
- Jordon, D. A. *China's Trial by Fire – The Shanghai War of 1932*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001.
- Jowett, P. *Soldiers of the White Sun – The Chinese Army at War, 1931 – 1949*. Atglen: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2011.
- Liu, F. F. *A Military History of Modern China 1924 – 1949*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956.
- Lu, D. J. *From the Marco Polo Bridge to Pearl Harbor – Japan's Entry into World War II*. Washington, D. C.: Public Affairs Press, 1961.
- Mott IV, William H. and Jae Chang Kim *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture – Shih vs. Li*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Po-ta, Chen *Notes on Ten Years of Civil War (1927 – 1936)*. Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1954.
- Pu-yu, H. *A Brief History of Sino-Japanese War (1937 – 1945)*. Taipei: Chung Wu Publishing Co., 1974.
- Rosinger, L. K. *China's Wartime Politics, 1937 – 1944*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944.
- Waldron, Arthur *From War to Nationalism – China's Turning Point, 1924 – 1925*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Wilbur, C. M. and Julie Lien-Ying How *Missionaries of Revolution – Soviet Advisers and Nationalist China, 1920 – 1927*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.



Appendix

Map of Northern Expedition

