

# **Presentations**



# The Sino-Japanese War's Expansion and the Japanese Army, July 1937–October 1938

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## Introduction

From the viewpoint of the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA), the Sino-Japanese War (also known in Japanese as “*Shina Jihen*” meaning China Incident) may be divided more or less into five stages. They are: (1) the period from the Marco Polo Bridge Incident to the dispatch of troops to Shanghai (July-August 1937); (2) the local conflict's escalation into a full-scale war and the seeking of the “non-expansion” policy (September 1937-March 1938); (3) the search for a conflict resolution by military means (April-October 1938); (4) the prosecution of a protracted war (November 1938-November 1941); and (5) the period of the Pacific War (December 1941-August 1945). This paper examines the stages of war expansion from (1) to (3) above.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. From the Marco Polo Bridge Incident to the Dispatch of Troops to Shanghai

The Marco Polo Bridge Incident on the evening of July 7, 1937 triggered the Sino-Japanese War. Following this incident, the IJA adopted a basic policy of local solution and “non-expansion” of the conflict. Nevertheless, the IJA requested the Japanese Government to send reinforcements, and on July 11, the government decided to dispatch reinforcements from Manchuria, Korea, and the Japanese home islands. The dispatches from Manchuria and Korea were carried out, whereas the dispatch from the mainland was suspended on July 13. A tense local situation was then reported, and on July 20, the Japanese Government once again decided to send an expeditionary force. However, due to the situation calming down, the dispatch was put on hold again on July 22. Afterwards, armed clashes occurred again; the Japanese Government decided to dispatch the force to China for the third time, and on the following day, July 28, the IJA commenced a full-fledged operation. Approximately three weeks had passed since the Marco Polo Bridge Incident.

The dispatch of troops from the home islands was deferred twice and carried through after the third decision, partly in response to the changes in the local situation and partly as an outcome of an intense debate within the IJA over the troop dispatch. The debate was

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<sup>1</sup> Regarding Japan's measures for resolving the Sino-Japanese War during this period, see Tobe Ryoichi, *Piisu Fiiraa Shina Jihen Wahei Kosaku no Gunzo* [Peace Feeler: Peace Overture in the China Incident], Ronsosha, 1991. Regarding the responses of the Japanese Government during this period, see Tobe Ryoichi, “Shina Jihen Shoki (1937 nen 7 gatsu 7 ka 9 gatsu 2 ka) ni okeru Konoe Naikaku no Taio” [The Konoe Cabinet's Response in the Initial Period of the China Incident (July 7-September 2, 1937)], *Seiji Keizai Shigaku* [The Journal of Historical Studies: The Politico-Economic History], No. 620, August 2018 and Tobe Ryoichi, “Dai 1 ji Konoe Naikaku to Nicchu Senso” [The First Konoe Cabinet and the Sino-Japanese War] in Hosoya Yuichi, ed., *Gunji to Seiji Nihon no Sentaku* [Military and Politics: Japan's Choices], Bunshun Shinsho, 2019.

generally a contest between the expansionist and non-expansionist factions. The expansionist group advocated a troop dispatch from the home islands. Based on China's responses since the Manchurian Incident, expansionists judged that China would easily succumb to military intimidation. They contended that if China were to resist, the Japanese military could drive her to surrender with a single blow.

On the other hand, the anti-expansionist group criticized that a troop dispatch carried the risk of escalating the situation. This group known as the non-expansionist faction believed China's resistance capabilities were not to be underestimated. They were concerned that the armed conflict with China could be drawn into a quagmire and lead to the Soviet Union's military intervention. The expansionist faction downplayed China's resistance capabilities and asserted that the incident would be resolved swiftly by driving China to surrender with a single blow. That said, the expansionist faction did not envision waging a full-scale war against China. They believed that the battle area could be limited to North China and were optimistic that inflicting a blow there would force China to surrender.

The IJA's foremost hypothetical enemy was the Soviet Union. At the time, Japan increasingly became inferior in the Japan-Soviet military balance due to the Soviet's military buildup. To improve the balance, Major General Ishiwara Kanji, Chief Director of Operations Section of the Army General Staff, sought to promote his military buildup plan through transforming the industrial structure of Japan and Manchukuo. Accordingly, Ishiwara and others in the non-expansionist faction advocated avoiding a war with the Soviet Union and focusing on industry growth in Manchukuo for the time being. For these reasons, they called for evading the conflict with China that could turn into a quagmire.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the expansionist faction's counter-argument was that, if a Japan-Soviet war were to occur in the future, the Chinese Nationalist Government led by Chiang Kai-shek may support or cooperate with the Soviet Union, and therefore, in order to eliminate such worries about the future, North China should not be placed under Nationalist control. The expansionist faction considered the Marco Polo Bridge Incident as an opportunity to remove the Chinese Nationalist Government forces from North China through intimidation by force.<sup>3</sup>

The IJA (China Garrison Army, two independent mixed brigades dispatched from the Kwantung Army, and one division dispatched from Korea) launched a maneuver on July 28 and seized Peiping (Beijing), Tianjin, and their vicinity by the end of the month. Troops

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<sup>2</sup> Horiba Kazuo, *Shina Jihen Senso Shidoshi* [War Conduct History of the China Incident], Hara Shobo, 1973, p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> Office of War History, National Defense College, *Senshi Sosho Daihonei Rikugunbu 1* [War History Series: Imperial General Headquarters 1], Asagumo Shimbunsha, 1967, p. 426. When the Marco Polo Bridge Incident occurred, Colonel Shibayama Kenshiro, Chief of Military Affairs Section, Army Ministry, who was in the non-expansionist faction, stated to Colonel Kawabe Torashiro, Chief of War Conduct Section, Army General Staff, who was close to Ishiwara, "We are in trouble." On the contrary, Colonel Muto Akira, Chief of Operations Section of the Army General Staff, who was in the expansionist faction, noted, "What a pleasant situation." "Kawabe Torashiro Shosho Kaiso Otoroku" [Oral History of Major General Kawabe Torashiro], *Gendaishi Shiryo 12 Nicchu Senso 4* [Modern History Reference 12 Sino-Japanese War 4], Misuzu Shobo, 1965, p. 414. Kawabe Torashiro, *Kawabe Torashiro Kaisoroku Ichigayadai kara Ichigayadai e* [Memoir of Kawabe Torashiro: From Ichigayadai to Ichigayadai], Mainichi Shimbunsha, 1979, p. 79.

were initially deployed to eliminate threats against the Japanese military force stationed in North China and civilians. However, with the Japanese Government's decision to use force, its purpose changed to occupying critical locations in North China and resolving outstanding issues between Japan and China.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the calming of the situation in North China, in mid-August, the battlefield expanded to Shanghai. The Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) requested the IJA to dispatch troops to protect Japanese residents to which the IJA showed reluctance. Operations Section Chief Director Ishiwara contended that Japanese residents should be withdrawn rather than dispatching troops.<sup>5</sup> However, the IJA was unable to reject the IJN's request. The reason was that the two had entered into an agreement stating that IJA units would be deployed to protect Japanese residents in Shanghai and Qingdao if they were in harm's way.<sup>6</sup>

On August 13, the government decided to dispatch troops to Shanghai, and on August 17, abandon its policy of "non-expansion."<sup>7</sup> The military conflict between Japan and China had taken on an aspect of full-fledged war, and it was clear China had commenced an all-out resistance against Japan. While the IJN stressed that the troop dispatch could lead to a full-scale war,<sup>8</sup> it was still not in the IJA's purview. Even at this stage, the IJA sought to uphold the policy of "non-expansion," which limited the battle area as much as possible. This was because they had to maintain readiness against Soviet threats in the north.

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<sup>4</sup> On July 11, Lieutenant General Katsuki Kiyoshi, who became Commander of the China Garrison Army by replacing Lieutenant General Tashiro Kanichiro who was in critical condition, was instructed as follows: "The Commander of the China Garrison Army is tasked with securing the route from the harbor of Bohai Bay to Peiping and protect Japanese people in key areas of North China." Office of War History, National Defense College, *Senshi Soshō Shina Jihen Rikugun Sakusen <I>* [War History Series: Army Operation in the China Incident <I>], Asagumo Shimbunsha, 1975, p. 173. At the time, the China Garrison Army had approximately 5,600 troops, and there were approximately 15,000 Japanese residents in the Beijing and Tianjin area. In contrast, a local military clique's force in Hebei Province (29th Army) had a total of approximately 75,000 troops, and the central army comprised of tens of thousands of troops were advancing northward from Nanjing. Subsequently, on July 27, Katsuki was assigned the following new duty according to launching maneuver (Rinsanmei Dai 64 Go [Imperial Army Order No. 64]): "In addition to his existing duties, the Commander of the China Garrison Army is tasked with punishing the Chinese military in the Peiping-Tianjin area and stabilizing its key areas." *Senshi Soshō Shina Jihen Rikugun Sakusen <I>*, p. 220.

<sup>5</sup> Sato Kenryo, *Daitō Senso Kaikoroku* [Recollection of the Greater East Asia War], Tokuma Shoten, 1966, p. 73; "Ishiwara Kanji Chujo Kaiso Otoroku" [Oral History of Lieutenant General Ishiwara Kanji], *Gendaishi Shiryo 9 Nicchu Senso 2* [Modern History Reference 9 Sino-Japanese War 2], Misuzu Shobo, 1964, p. 307.

<sup>6</sup> "Hokushi Sakusen ni kansuru Rikukaigun Kyotei" [Agreement between the Army and Navy concerning the North China Operation], July 11, *Senshi Soshō Shina Jihen Rikugun Sakusen <I>*, pp. 168-169.

<sup>7</sup> "Fukakudai Hoshin Hoki no Kakugi Kettei" [Cabinet Decision on Abandoning the Non-Expansionist Policy], *Gendaishi Shiryo 9 Nicchu Senso 2*, p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> Colonel Yokoi Tadao of the Naval General Staff stated in mid-August, "This incident has grown beyond the level of local conflict between the Japanese and Chinese militaries and is turning into an all-out war between the two countries." "Nisshi Jihen Shido Yoko no ken" [About the Guidance Guidelines for the Sino-Japanese War], *Showa Shakai Keizai Shiryo Shusei: Kaigunsho Shiryo* [Compilation of the Social and Economic History of the Showa Period: Navy Ministry Reference], Vol. 8, Institute for Oriental Studies of Daito Bunka University, 1984, p. 608.

## 2. The Local Conflict's Escalation into a Full-Scale War and Seeking of the "Non-expansion" Policy

In North China, the Japanese North China Army was formed at the end of August. Then, the IJA planned to fight a decisive battle against the Chinese military in late September or early October in central Hebei Province, located approximately 150 kilometers south of Beijing, after waiting for the arrival of three divisions mobilized in late July and three divisions mobilized in August.<sup>9</sup> The intention was to coerce China into a decisive battle, inflict a fatal blow, and cause China to surrender. In addition, although it was assumed that Soviet Russia's military intervention was unlikely, the IJA had to maintain readiness for such a possibility and refrain from sending its forces southward.<sup>10</sup> However a decisive battle did not take place due to the retreat of the Chinese military; just the combat area expanded. By the end of October, the war front expanded to southern Hebei Province.

In August, two brigades from the Kwantung Army intruded into Chahar Province in Inner Mongolia. They moved southward with the cooperation of units dispatched to North China, and by early November, Suiyuan Province and northern Shanxi Province were put under Japan's control.

In Shanghai, the Shanghai Expeditionary Army (SEA) was formed, comprised of two divisions mobilized in mid-August. In early September, it was reinforced by the mobilization of three divisions. In tandem with the decisive battle in North China, the SEA planned to inflict damage on the Chinese military in Shanghai. However, it faced continuous struggles due to larger-than-expected resistance from the Chinese military, and the plan failed to materialize. As of September 29, while the number of people killed in battle was approximately 8,600 in North China, the number at the Shanghai front was approximately 12,300 and reached approximately 40,700 by November 8.<sup>11</sup>

To salvage the crisis in Shanghai, one division was diverted from North China to Shanghai. Additionally, the IJA formed the 10th Army to carry out the Hangzhou Bay landing operation. The 10th Army was comprised of two divisions dispatched from mainland Japan and one division and other units diverted from North China. On November 5, the 10th Army made a successful surprise attack landing on Hangzhou Bay. The outflanked Chinese military at the Shanghai front suffered total defeat and retreated.

The Hangzhou Bay landing was conceptualized and planned under Major General Shimomura Sadamu, who at the end of September replaced Major General Ishiwara as Chief Director of Operations Section of the Army General Staff. Major General Shimomura sought not only to salvage the crisis in Shanghai but also to move the main battle area from North

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<sup>9</sup> The North China Area Army was assigned with the duties of maintaining stability in the Tianjin region and occupying key areas as well as the new duty of "Swiftly destroying the enemy in central Hebei Province with the objective of frustrating the enemy's intention to fight a war and finding cause to bring the war to a conclusion." "Rinsanmei Dai 88 Go" [Imperial Army Order No. 88], *Gendaishi Shiryo 9 Nicchu Senso* 2, p. 36.

<sup>10</sup> According to Lieutenant General Tada Hayao, Vice Chief of Staff, "At present, when the Soviet posture is still unclear, it requires second thought to use excessive force in the south so as to make it difficult to withdraw them." *Senshi Sosho Shina Jihen Rikugun Sakusen <I>*, p. 327.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 387.

China toward Shanghai. The enemy units in Shanghai were the main force of the Chinese military. Moreover, Shanghai was the center of the Chinese economy. Therefore, Shimomura conceived that defeating these Chinese forces in Shanghai would compel China to surrender. In addition, Shimomura wanted to drive China to surrender before winter came, due to Soviet military intervention possibly taking place then should there be one.<sup>12</sup> In early November, the Japanese Central China Army was formed by combining the SEA and the 10th Army. Its duty was no longer to protect Japanese civilians but to defeat enemy forces in Shanghai's vicinity in order to find cause to bring the war to a conclusion.<sup>13</sup>

The IJA's leadership had no scheme for capturing Nanjing.<sup>14</sup> But the 10th Army, having successfully landed at Hangzhou Bay, sought to launch an attack on Nanjing. The SEA, following a succession of hard battles, wished to rest to recuperate from fatigue.<sup>15</sup> However, propelled by the 10th Army, the SEA, too, became more inclined toward attacking Nanjing. The Imperial General Headquarters, which was established in late November, instructed a limit of advance to stop the advance of local forces. The effect was the opposite of what was intended: local forces aimed to reach the stop line, and upon arrival, crossed the stop line to go after the Chinese military.

On December 1, the Imperial General Headquarters finally ordered the capture of Nanjing, and on December 13, Nanjing, located approximately 300 kilometers west of Shanghai, fell to Japanese forces. In the Army General Staff, the former non-expansionist group headed by Lieutenant General Tada Hayao, Vice Chief of Staff, advocated peace under generous conditions. However, this was not the collective opinion of the IJA and was not adopted by the government. The attack on Nanjing resulted in expanding the combat area. Furthermore, capturing the enemy's capital did not bring about peace.

### 3. Search for a Conflict Resolution by Military Means

The standing force of the IJA consisted of 17 divisions before the Sino-Japanese War and seven more after July. The 24 divisions in total were assigned as follows: seven to North China (including Inner Mongolia); nine to Central China; five to Manchuria; one to Korea; and two to the home islands. Armament, ammunition, and other supplies temporarily ran short due to the permanent divisions' transition from peacetime to wartime footing as well as the mobilization of new divisions.<sup>16</sup>

In February 1938, the IJA reaffirmed the policy of not expanding the war front. The policy

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<sup>12</sup> "Shimomura Sadamu Taisho Kaiso Otoroku" [Oral History of General Shimomura Sadamu], *Gendaishi Shiryō 9 Nicchu Senso 2*, p. 378, p. 384.

<sup>13</sup> "Rinsanmei Dai 138 Go" [Imperial Army Order No. 138], *Gendaishi Shiryō 9 Nicchu Senso 2*, p. 215.

<sup>14</sup> "Shimomura Sadamu Taisho Kaiso Otoroku," pp. 388-393.

<sup>15</sup> *Senshi Soshō Shina Jihen Rikugun Sakusen <I>*, p. 418; Imaoka Yutaka, "Shina Jihen wo Chushin to suru Rikugun Chuobu no Ugoki" [Army Central Command's Moves Focusing on the China Incident], *Showa Gunji Hiwa Dodai Kurabu Kouenshu* [Showa Military Anecdotes: Compilation of Dodai Club Lectures], Vol. 1, Dodai Keizai Kondankai, 1987, pp. 158-159; "Kawabe Torashiro Shosho Kaiso Otoroku," pp. 435-436.

<sup>16</sup> Nishiura Susumu, *Showa Rikugun Hiroku* [Private Records of the Showa Army], Nihon Keizai Shimbun Shuppankai, 2014, pp. 186-187.

was based on a plan that it will not conduct new operations until July, when new divisions will be established with a new organization (the existing four-regiment division would be replaced by a three-regiment division), and will conduct a full-fledged protracted operation in the following year after making adequate preparations.<sup>17</sup>

The North China Army, on the other hand, asked for permission to advance to central Shandong Province by crossing the Yellow River after reaching southern Hebei Province in the previous year. However, the Imperial General Headquarters did not approve in order to focus on the Nanjing attack. In late December 1937, following Nanjing's capture, the North China Army crossed the Yellow River and captured Jinan with the approval of the Imperial General Headquarters. It continued advancing further south and asked the IJA's central command for permission to capture Xuzhou in northern Jiangsu Province, located approximately 600 kilometers south of Beijing. The Army General Staff rejected the request.<sup>18</sup>

Events unfolded such that the policy of not expanding the war front was abandoned once again due to the request of the China Expeditionary Army. As the North China Army, which pursued enemy forces, detected a large group of Chinese forces assembled near Xuzhou, the possibility of a great decisive battle had increased. In April 1938, the Imperial General Headquarters gave the go-ahead for the Xuzhou operation,<sup>19</sup> and five divisions from North China and three divisions from Central China attempted to surround and annihilate the enemy. In the Battle of Xuzhou fought in May 1938, the Japanese military captured Xuzhou, a strategic location. Although it succeeded in connecting railway service between Tianjin and Shanghai (Jinpu Line), it did not succeed in annihilating enemy forces.

The Battle of Xuzhou was followed by the operation to capture Hankou. Hankou, located approximately 500 kilometers west of Nanjing, was a strategically important spot where the Chinese General Headquarters was located after the Chinese Nationalist Government moved its capital from Nanjing to Chongqing. Accordingly, it was thought that capturing Hankou would lead China to surrender.

The Hankou operation was considered before the Xuzhou operation and had actually begun in June 1938. During the operation, the Battle of Lake Khasan took place from July to August along the border with the Soviet Union in northeast Korea. When it was clear that there was no need to be concerned about a Soviet military intervention in the Sino-Japanese War, the Hankou operation developed full-scale. Four divisions and other units advanced westward

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<sup>17</sup> *Senshi Soshō Shina Jihen Rikugun Sakusen <1>*, pp. 483-487; "Hashimoto Gun Chujo Kaiso Otoroku" [Oral History of Lieutenant General Hashimoto Gun], *Gendaishi Shiryo 9 Nicchu Senso 2*, pp. 342-343.

<sup>18</sup> The Imperial Army General Staff refused the request of the North China Army on the grounds that "The enemy lured us to induce an expansion of the war front and contain our force," and it will "interfere with our entire policy." Sanden Dai 751 Go [Army General Staff telegram No. 751] (February 4, From Chief of Second Section, Army General Staff to Chief of First Section, North China Area Army), *Gendaishi Shiryo 9 Nicchu Senso 2*, pp. 485-486.

<sup>19</sup> It is said that this policy shift also owed to Lieutenant Colonel Inada Masazumi's replacement of Colonel Kawabe Torashiro as Chief of Operations Section of the Army General Staff in March. Office of War History, National Defense College, *Senshi Soshō Shina Jihen Rikugun Sakusen <2>* [War History Series: Army Operation in the China Incident <2>], Asagumo Shimbunsha, 1976, p. 31; Inada Masazumi, "Senryakumen kara mita Shina Jihen no Senso Shido" [War Guidance for the China Incident from a Strategic Point of View], *Kokusai Seiji* [International Relations], Vol. 15, March 1961, p. 159.

along the south coast of Yangtze River and one division along the north coast. Hankou was also encircled by another three divisions that aimed for the area from the north. In late October, the Japanese military captured Hankou after a hard battle but was unable to annihilate the Chinese military forces, much less make China surrender.<sup>20</sup>

The Hankou operation was carried out in parallel with the operation to capture Guangdong. Its purpose was to cut off China's supply route. The fall of Guangdong was planned shortly after Nanjing's capture in order to force China to accept a peace settlement. At the time, the plan was suspended due to opposition from the IJN which was concerned that the operation might well be an irritant to Britain.<sup>21</sup> With the revival of the plan, the Imperial General Headquarters intended to capture Guangdong around the same time as Hankou to compel China to surrender. The Guangdong operation was carried out by three divisions. They succeeded in capturing Guangdong in mid-October, but like Hankou's capture, failed to translate military victory into peace.

After capturing Guangdong and Hankou, the IJA, which had reached its capacity limits, decided not to expand the combat area and to focus on maintaining order in its occupied areas. Along with the expansion of the front line, the occupied areas and amount of mobilized troops had far exceeded initial expectations. In 1938, the IJA increased the number of divisions by ten to a total of 34 divisions. As of the end of that year, two were assigned to the home islands, one to Korea, seven to Manchuria, eight to North China, 13 to Central China, and three to South China.

## Conclusion

To understand why the Sino-Japanese War expanded to unexpected proportions, it is necessary to also take account of China's responses as well as non-military factors, such as political, economic, social, and cultural aspects. This paper identifies the following five reasons, focusing on the IJA, which played a factor in the expansion of the conflict. The IJA (1) downplayed China's intention to resist; (2) had inadequate force; (3) had a strong inclination to fight a decisive battle; (4) had a strong inclination to capture critical locations; and (5) had a central command with a weak ability to control the China Expeditionary Army.

Firstly, the IJA underestimated China's capacity to resist against Japanese invasion. After the Manchurian Incident, the IJA coerced North China's local governments to resolve further such "incidents" whenever a military conflict arose, in response to which the Chinese side did not take military countermeasures. Accordingly, the IJA expected that China would show the same reaction as before when the Marco Polo Bridge Incident occurred. Such a perception by the IJA was typically held by the expansionist faction. The expansionist faction was optimistic

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<sup>20</sup> Regarding the Hankou operation, see Tobe Ryoichi, "Kachu no Nihongun 1938-1941: Dai 11 Gun no Sakusen wo Chushin to shite" [The Imperial Japanese Army in Central China 1938-1941: Focusing on the Operations of the 11th Army] in Hatano Sumio and Tobe Ryoichi, eds., *Nicchu Senso no Gunjiteki Tenkai* [Military Developments in the Sino-Japanese War], Keio University Press, 2006, pp. 158-166.

<sup>21</sup> "Kawabe Torashiro Shosho Kaiso Otoroku," pp. 437-440; "Nishimura Toshio Kaisoroku" [Memoir of Nishimura Toshio], *Gendaishi Shiryo 12 Nicchu Senso 4*, pp. 485-490; Imaoka, "Shina Jihen wo Chushin to suru Rikugun Chuobu no Ugoki," pp. 162-163.

that it could confine the battle area to North China, inflict a blow to China, and swiftly compel it to surrender.

Secondly, it should be noted that the IJA did not have sufficient force. As is well known, while the IJA's foremost hypothetical enemy was the Soviet Union, Japan increasingly became inferior in the Japan-Soviet force balance prior to the Sino-Japanese War. Following the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, the expansionist faction advocated dispatching troops in order to intimidate by force. This was because in preparation for a Japan-Soviet war, the IJA tried to eliminate Nationalist Government forces from North China as they were highly likely to cooperate with the Soviet Union.

Although it was deemed unlikely that the Soviet Union would intervene by force in the Sino-Japanese War, its possibility could not be ruled out. For this reason, the IJA could not send large troops to the battle against China. It was also due to the optimistic belief that the IJA might be able to defeat China without mobilizing large forces. On the other hand, the IJA had to fight China without weakening its strategic posture toward the Soviet Union as much as possible.<sup>22</sup> Because of these factors, the IJA employed piecemeal commitment of troops and unexpectedly escalated the conflict according to intensification of China's resistance.

The third reason was the IJA's inclination for a decisive battle, which is associated with its insufficiency of forces. Simply put, a long-drawn-out war with China would adversely affect the strategic posture against the Soviet Union, and therefore, the IJA sought to avoid a protracted war and seek a chance for fighting a decisive battle that could make China surrender. A representative example is the plan for a decisive battle in North China in October 1937. The Xuzhou operation in May 1938 and the capture of Nanjing are also examples. The IJA attempted to compel China's surrender through annihilating its forces by fighting a decisive battle.

However, China consistently evaded a decisive battle by conducting retrograde operations. If the enemy avoids a battle, there can be no decisive battle. By making advances in pursuit of a decisive battle, the IJA expanded the battle area to regions that were initially not anticipated.

Fourthly, the IJA's inclination to capture critical locations should be noted. The IJA tried to drive China to surrender through securing key cities which were important from political, economic and military points of view. The IJA's inclination was consistent through these campaigns such as Beijing and Tianjin in July 1937, Nanjing in December, Xuzhou in May 1938, and Wuhan and Guangdong in October. The purpose of capturing Shanghai initially was primarily to protect Japanese civilians, but in mid-course, it changed to capturing critical locations. In this way, the IJA brought key port cities under Japan's control—starting from the north, Tianjin, Qingdao, Shanghai, and Guangdong—and captured the political and military centers of Beijing, Xuzhou, Nanjing, and Wuhan. China, however, was not necessarily intent on defending its critical locations and retreated after resisting to some extent. As a consequence of the IJA's drive to capture critical locations, the combat area expanded beyond expectations.

Lastly, the IJA's weak control over the China Expeditionary Army is given as a reason.

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<sup>22</sup> "Kawabe Torashiro Shosho Kaiso Otoroku," p. 442.

A typical example is the attack on Nanjing. The Imperial General Headquarters sought to stop the China Expeditionary Army from continuing the offensive by ordering a limit of advance that the China Expeditionary Army first aimed to reach. However, upon reaching it, they went after the retreating Chinese forces, ignored this ordered stop line, and continued to advance with ease.

The Xuzhou operation is another example in which the Imperial General Headquarters was dragged into a battle by the China Expeditionary Army. In February 1938, the IJA central reaffirmed the policy of non-expansion. Nevertheless, the North China Area Army which advanced southward in pursuit of the enemy encountered a large Chinese military force, and once again asked for permission to launch the Xuzhou operation that had not been approved in February. In response to this, the Imperial General Headquarters approved it at last. Thus, because of the inclination to persist in fighting a decisive battle and controlling critical locations, and also because of the pressure by the China Expeditionary Army, the IJA central command approved the Xuzhou operation. Such weak control by the IJA over the China Expeditionary Army can be attributed not so much to institutional deficiencies but primarily to the weak leadership of the IJA's authorities.

