

Chiang Kai-shek and the Outbreak of War Between Japan and the United States: Intelligence and Strategy

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This paper examines China's situational assessments of Japan during the period from the Second Sino-Japanese War to the outbreak of war between Japan and the United States. First, the paper presents an overview of China's supreme command and intelligence organizations during the war, followed by a discussion of China's intelligence activities during the period leading up to the outbreak of war between Japan and the United States, as well as China's situational assessments on the basis of these activities.

Supreme command

On August 11, 1937, following the outbreak of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, the Kuomintang (KMT) government proposed the establishment of the General Headquarter as the supreme command during wartime, which was approved by the Central Standing Committee the following day.¹ The KMT government had concealed the existence of the General Headquarter until its declaration of war on Japan, and the bureaus under its command, including the first department (military operations) and second department (political strategy), for example, were eventually merged and absorbed into the Military Affairs Commission.² The National Defense Supreme Commission was formed on the same day, August 11 (and officially established on August 14), 1937, to determine (i) national defense policy, (ii) national defense expenditures, (iii) national mobilization-related matters, and (iv) other important matters pertaining to national defense.³ This commission, chaired by Chairman of the Military Affairs Committee (Chiang Kai-shek) and vice-chaired by Chairman of the Central Political Committee of the KMT (Wang Jingwei), was the highest organization on making important decisions concerning

¹ 中国国民党中央执行委员会第五十一次政治会议速记录 [“Stenographic Record of the 51st Political Meeting of the KMT Central Executive Committee”] (August 11, 1937), *Hui* 00.1-234, 中国国民党中央文化傳播委员会党史館 [Kuomintang Party Archives], Taipei.

² 軍事委员会呈国民政府該会重加改組情形祈鑑核備案 [Junshiweiyuanhui cheng Guominzhengfu Gaihui Chongjia Gaizu Qingxing qi Jianhe Beian] [“Military Affairs Commission's Submission to the Nationalist Government for Approval of Reorganization of the Commission”] (October 8, 1937), 周美華 [Zhou Meihua], ed., 国民政府軍政組織史料 [Guominzhengfu Junzheng Zuzhi Shiliao] [*Historical Documents on the Military and Political Organization of the Nationalist Government*], Vol. 1, 軍事委员会(一) [Junshiweiyuanhui (yi)] [Military Affairs Commission (1)], Taipei: 国史館 [Academia Historica], 1996, p. 77.

³ 中国国民党第五届第五十次中央执行委员会常务會議速记录 [“Stenographic Record of the 50th Standing Committee Meeting of the 5th KMT Central Executive Committee”] (August 12, 1937), *Hui* 5.3-297, 中国国民党中央文化傳播委员会党史館 [Kuomintang Party Archives].

the war against Japan until 1939.⁴ However, the Military Affairs Commission was in charge of issuing specific war-related guidance, with the Chief of the General Staff under the Chairman's chain of command. Military operations, including war operations, were under the purview of the Military Operations Department (First Department), while military administration, including mobilization and the procurement of military supplies, was carried out by the Military Administration Department.⁵

The functions of the National Defense Supreme Commission were subsequently placed under the control of the National Defense Committee in February 1939 to achieve unified command of the Party, government, and military as well as close coordination between party administration and military operations, and along with that, the National Defense Supreme Commission was abolished.⁶ The National Defense Committee was composed of leaders of the Party, government, and military, with standing members of the Central Executive Committee and the Central Supervisory Committee of the Party, presidents and vice presidents of the five branches of the Nationalist Government, and members of the Military Affairs Commission appointed as members of the National Defense Committee. Working-level officials from the Party, government, and military were tasked with the Committee's work as executive members.⁷

The National Defense Committee had the authority to issue orders for the Party, government, and the military, and carry them out without going through peacetime procedures in order to promote rapid wartime decision-making.⁸ In reality, however, the National Defense Committee was not as effective as expected, as it turned into a forum for budget reviews and coordinating opinions between the Party, government, and military due to its defects in institutional arrangement.⁹ Accordingly, matters pertaining to war-related guidance were decided not by the National Defense Committee but by at residential meetings (military

⁴ 国防最高會議第一次會議紀錄[“Minutes of the 1st Meeting of the National Defense Supreme Commission”] (August 14, 1937), *Hui* 00.9/1, 中国国民党中央文化傳播委員會党史館 [Kuomintang Party Archives].

⁵ 周美華 [Zhou Meihua], ed., 國民政府軍政組織史料-軍事委員會 [Historical Documents on the Military and Political Organization of the Nationalist Government: The Military Affairs Commission], Vol. 1, 軍事委員會(一) [Military Affairs Commission (1)], Taipei: 國史館 [Academia Historica], 1996, pp. 78-82.

⁶ 規定國防最高委員會職權並廢止國防最高會議組織條例 [“Provision for the Power of Office of the National Defense Committee and Repeal of the Organizational Regulations for the National Defense Supreme Commission”], *Fang* 003/0017, 中国国民党中央文化傳播委員會党史館 [Kuomintang Party Archives]; 中国国民党第五届中央執行委員會第五次全体會議通過重要決議案 (1939年1月26—29日) [“Important Resolutions Adopted by the Fifth Plenary Session of the 5th KMT Central Executive Committee (January 26-29, 1939)”], 中国第二歷史檔案館 [Second Historical Archives of China], ed., 中華民國史檔案資料彙編 [Compilation of Archival Materials on the History of the Republic of China], Vol. 5, No. 2, 政治 (1) [Politics (1)], Nanjing: 江蘇古籍出版社 [Jiangsu Ancient Books Publishing House], 1998, pp. 448-449.

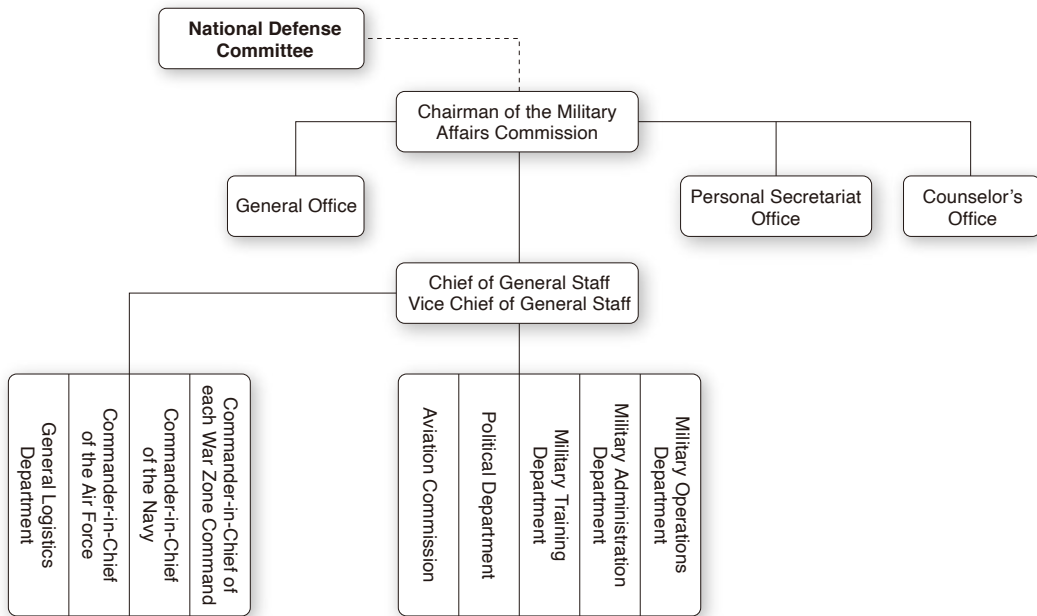
⁷ 國防最高委員會第一次常務會議紀錄 [“Minutes of the 1st Standing Committee Meeting of the National Defense Committee”], 中国国民党中央委員會党史委員會 [Party History Committee, KMT Central Committee], 國防最高委員會常務會議紀錄 [Minutes of the Standing Committee Meetings of the National Defense Committee], Vol. 1, Taipei: 近代中国出版社 [Modern China Publishing House], 1995, p. 3.

⁸ 國防最高委員會組織大綱 [“Outline of the Organization of the National Defense Committee”], *Hui* 5.2/32.2, 中国国民党中央文化傳播委員會党史館 [Kuomintang Party Archives].

⁹ 劉維開 [Liu Weikai], 國防再考委員會の組織とその活動 [“Organization and Activities of the National Defense Review Committee”], 石島紀之 [Ishijima Noriyuki] & 久保亨 [Kubo Toru], eds., 重慶國民政府史の研究 [Research on the History of the Chongqing Nationalist Government], Tokyo: 東大出版會 [University of Tokyo Press], 2004, pp. 25-48.

conference reports) held at Chiang Kai-shek's official residence.¹⁰ The Military Affairs Commission chaired by Chiang Kai-shek played a substantive role in actual war-related guidance, and in particular, the secretariat office of the Military Affairs Commissioner, Chiang Kai-shek's personal staff organization, played an important role in intelligence affairs.¹¹

China's supreme command in 1941



What kinds of intelligence influenced Chiang Kai-shek's decision-making? In that period, China had both the military's and the Party's intelligence agencies, broadly speaking. The military's intelligence agencies included the 2nd Bureau of the Military Operations Department, which was tasked with tactical intelligence; the Bureau of Investigation and Statistics of the Military Affairs Commission, which conducted humint and special operations; the Institute of International Relations, which specialized in open-source intelligence and human intelligence with a particular interest in Japan; and the Technical Research Office, which integrated the work of departments at various organizations that carried out radio interception and codebreaking operations. On the Party's side, the Central Bureau of Investigation and Statistics of the Central Executive Committee was established to conduct investigations concerning the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and various factions within the KMT. In addition, the Information

¹⁰ 官邸会報紀錄 [“Minutes of the Meetings at Chiang Kai-shek's Official Residence”], 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080103-00053-001, 國史館 [Academia Historica], Taipei.

¹¹ 張瑞德 [Zhang Ruide], 無聲的要角—侍從室的幕僚人員 (1936-1945) [“The Silent But Significant Player: The Staff of the Personal Secretariat Office (1936-1945)”], 近代中國 [Modern China], No. 156, 2004, pp. 141-166.

Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was in charge of monitoring foreign countries, especially the political and economic situations of Western powers and their movement toward China.¹² Since there was some overlap in the information gathered by the military's and the Party's agencies, the Supreme National Intelligence Committee was established to oversee and coordinate the two organizations, but in reality, they carried out their respective activities separately with little mutual coordination.¹³

Intelligence agencies

It is first necessary to explain in greater detail the role of each organization that featured prominently during the Second Sino-Japanese War. The intelligence agency of the KMT government with the longest history is the Central Bureau of Investigation and Statistics of the Central Executive Committee of the KMT party. This organization was first established in February 1928 as the Investigation section of the Organization Department for the purpose of conducting investigations into the CCP.¹⁴ It subsequently underwent several name changes and organizational transitions, including as the General Department of Special Operations and the Bureau of Investigation and Statistics of the Military Affairs Commission,¹⁵ before the Central Bureau of Investigation and Statistics (“CBIS”) of the Central Executive Committee was established in 1938.¹⁶ The CBIS, typically referred to as *Zhongtong*, mainly engaged in investigations into the CCP, intra-party surveillance, and ideological control,¹⁷ but following the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War, the CBIS also drew on its domestic intelligence network to report on Japanese military activities. Chiang Kai-shek had selected high-value intelligence

¹² 中央各情報機關常務分配表 [“The Table of Division of Responsibilities Among Intelligence Agencies of the Central Government”], 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080103-00054-007.

¹³ 戴笠 [Dai Li], 戴先生遺訓 [*Lessons from Mr. Dai*], Vol. 3, n.p.: 1952, p. 97. However, the Supreme National Intelligence Committee stopped convening after around 1940. 戴笠呈蔣中正 [“Dai Li’s Submission to Chiang Kai-shek”], 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080102-00035-001; Interview 14, Chen Lifu Papers, Chinese Oral History Office Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York.

¹⁴ 中央執行委員會組織部組織條例 [“Organizational Regulations for the Organization Department of the Central Executive Committee”] (Adopted at the 121st Standing Committee Meeting of the 2nd Central Executive Committee on March 8, 1928; Amended at the 7th Standing Committee Meeting of the 3rd Central Executive Committee on May 2, 1929), 中國國民黨中央執行委員會黨史史料編纂委員會 [Party Historical Documents Compilation Board, KMT Central Executive Committee], 中國國民黨年鑑十八年 [*Chinese Kuomintang Yearbook Year of 18th*], Nanjing: n.d., pp. 495-498.

¹⁵ 徐恩曾致蔣中正報告 [“Report from Xu Enzeng to Chiang Kai-shek”] (February 1936), 國民政府檔案 [Archives of the Nationalist Government], 001-023330-00011-009, 國史館 [Academia Historica]; 周美華 [Zhou Meihua], ed., 國民政府軍政組織史料 [*Historical Documents on the Military and Political Organization of the Nationalist Government*], Vol. 1, Xindian: 國史館 [Academia Historica], 1996, pp. 59-62.

¹⁶ 中央執行委員會調查統計局組織條例 [“Organizational Regulations for the Central Bureau of Investigation and Statistics of the Central Executive Committee”], 中央執行委員會秘書處 [Secretariat of the Central Executive Committee], ed., 中國國民黨第五屆中央執行委員會常務委員會會議紀錄彙編 [*Compilation of Minutes of the Standing Committee Meetings of the 5th KMT Central Executive Committee*], Taipei: n.d., p. 275.

¹⁷ 中央各情報機關常務分配表 [“The Table of Division of Responsibilities Among Intelligence Agencies of the Central Government”], 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080103-00054-007.

and forwarded it to the Military Operations Department to be taken into consideration for war operations.¹⁸

Next, the Bureau of Investigation and Statistics of the Military Affairs Commission (“BIS”), the military’s intelligence agency that expanded after the Manchurian Incident, had its origins in a special operations subgroup composed of liaison staff officers that was organized when Chiang Kai-shek reassumed the appointment of Commander-in-Chief of the National Revolutionary Army (NRA) in January 1928.¹⁹ This liaison group recruited students who had lost their jobs due to military reorganization.²⁰ Effectively, it was a private staff organization founded on the personal ties between Chiang Kai-shek and students of the Whampoa Military Academy, where Chiang had served as president. However, following the Manchurian Incident in 1931, young officers who were worried about internal and external threats launched a national revival movement and organized secret societies such as the *Sanminzhuyi Lixing She* (Society of Practice of the Three Principles of the People). Under the order of Chiang Kai-shek, a special operations division for carrying out intelligence activities was established and led by Dai Li, who had played an active role in the earlier liaison group, which later developed into the BIS.²¹ This organization referred to as *Juntong* (lit. “Military Statistics Bureau”) was tasked with the supervision of military discipline, surveillance, punishment of *hanjian* (traitors), and counter-intelligence operations. Against Japan, the BIS was mainly engaged in humint operations.²²

The Institute of International Relations (“IIR”) was organized in 1936 by Wang

¹⁸ 天津探息 (3月10日發) [“Intelligence from Tianjin (sent on March 10)”], 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080200-00506-014. However, the CBIS was primarily concerned with political and party-related intelligence, and Chiang Kai-shek also kept a close eye on intelligence sent to him from the First Division.

¹⁹ 康沢 [Kang Ze], 獄中自白 [“Confessions from the Prison”], 中国人民政治協商會議全國委員會文史資料委員會 [Literary and Historical Materials Committee, Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee], ed., 文史資料存稿選編 [Selected Manuscripts of Literary and Historical Materials], Vol.14, Beijing: 中国文史出版社 [Chinese Literature and History Press], 2002, p. 654.

²⁰ 康沢 [Kang Ze], 康沢自述—我的再精算— [“Kang Ze in His Own Words: My Reckoning”], 潘嘉釗 [Pan Jiazhao], et al., eds., 康沢与蔣介石父子 [Kang Ze, Chiang Kai-shek, and His Son], Beijing: 群衆出版社 [Mass Publishing House], 1994, p. 20; 康沢 [Kang Ze], 康沢目中的戴笠 [“Dai Li in the Eyes of Kang Ze”], *ibid.*, p. 257.

²¹ 戴笠 [Dai Li], 团体即是革命家庭—30年4月1日出席献剑礼講— [“The League is a Revolutionary Family: Speech at Sword Presentation Ceremony on April 1, 1930”], 戴笠 [Dai Li], 戴先生遺訓 [Lessons from Mr. Dai], Vol. 1, n.p.: 1948, p. 97. See also Interview 14, Chen Lifu Papers, 陳立夫 [Chen Lifu], 陳立夫英文回憶錄 [Memoirs of Chen Lifu (English)], Taipei: 近代中国出版社 [Modern China Publishing House], 2005, p. 135.

²² According to research conducted by Su Sheng-hsiung, Assistant Researcher at the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, there were 3,945 items of intelligence provided to Chiang Kai-shek by the BIS in 1939, of which 521 items (13%) were related to military affairs, 1,700 items (43%) related to matters pertaining to Japanese forces, and 360 items (9%) related to the international situation (蘇聖雄 [Su Sheng-hsiung], 1939年軍統局与抗日戰爭 [“The BIS and Anti-Japanese War of Resistance in 1939”], 中国抗日战争史学会 [Chinese Society of Anti-Japanese War History], et al., eds., 抗戰史料研究 [Research on Historical Materials Related to the War of Resistance], Vol. 1, Beijing: 團結出版社 [Unity Press], 2014, p. 114. The original source is 軍事委員會調查統計局民國二十八年工作總報告 [“General Report on the Work of the Bureau of Investigation and Statistics of the Military Affairs Commission for the Year 1939”], 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080200-00612-001, 國史館 [Academia Historica].)

Pengsheng, who was known as an expert on Japan, and launched intelligence activities targeted at Japan. However, it was initially a small-scale unofficial organization run by Wang.²³ After the significance of its activities was recognized by Chiang Kai-shek, the IIR came under the direct command of the Military Affairs Commission and gradually expanded in scale.²⁴ In its early years, the IIR was engaged in intelligence activities aimed at Japan primarily through human intelligence and open-source intelligence, but it later expanded the scope of its activities to Southeast Asia.²⁵ Following the outbreak of war between Japan and the United States, the IIR cooperated with the CCP, the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and Office of War Information (OWI), as well as the British Special Operations Executive (SOE).²⁶ A report by the SOE described Wang as China's Kenji Doihara. For Chiang Kai-shek Wang is his brain and Dai Li is his limbs.²⁷

Also under the Military Affairs Commission, the Counselor's Office primarily reviewed and reported on diplomatic issues and world affairs,²⁸ in addition to hosting round-table discussions on world affairs on an ad hoc basis at the request of Chiang Kai-shek.²⁹ The Special Commission for Foreign Affairs, an organization with a similar structure to that of the Counselor's Office, was also established under the National Defense Committee to review diplomatic issues on a routine basis.³⁰

Chiang Kai-shek placed the utmost importance on signals intelligence. His appreciation

²³ 王芃生(王大楨) [“Wang Pengsheng (Wang Dazhen)”], 軍事委員會委員長侍從室檔案 [Archives of the Personal Secretariat Office of the Chairman of the Military Affairs Commission], Series 1, 129-010000-1718, 國史館 [Academia Historica]. The name “Institute of International Relations” had already been used in a May 1937 report (國際問題研究所呈蔣介石報告 [“Report Submitted by the Institute of International Relations to Chiang Kai-shek”]), 國民政府檔案 [Archives of the Nationalist Government], 001-066201-00006-003).

²⁴ Although the IIR was under the direct command of the Personal Secretariat Office at the end of July 1938, it was subsequently placed under the control of the BIS (戴笠呈蔣介石報告 [“Report Submitted by Dai Li to Chiang Kai-shek”]) (June 6, 1938), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080102-00034-003; 委座手令 機秘(甲)第1840號 [“Commission Chairman's Order, Secret (A), No. 1840”] (July 25, 1938), 中央機構組織法規案(三) [Act on the Organization of Central Agencies, Statute III], 國防部情報局檔案 [Archives of the Intelligence Bureau of the Ministry of National Defense], A305050000C/0029/0111/5000, 國家發展委員會檔案管理局 [National Archives Administration, National Development Council], Taipei).

²⁵ The 機密情報摘錄 [“Summary of Confidential Intelligence”] and 特種機密情報 [“Special Confidential Intelligence”] published by the IIR provided intelligence on Southeast Asian countries. See 軍事委員會國際問題研究所 [Institute of International Relations, Military Affairs Commission], 機密情報摘錄 [“Summary of Confidential Intelligence”] and 特種機密情報 [“Special Confidential Intelligence”] (H. H. Kung Papers, Box 11, Folders 8-11, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University).

²⁶ Maochun Yu, *OSS in China: Prelude to Cold War*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996, pp. 136-137.

²⁷ “R. I. I. -ORIGIN-SCOPE-OBJECTIVES,” HS1/140 Special Operations Executive, Far East: China 91, The National Archives, Kew.

²⁸ For instance, 國民政府軍事委員會參事室 [Counselor's Office, Military Affairs Commission], 外交報告 [“Diplomatic Report”] (February 4, 1939), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080103-00045-012, etc.

²⁹ For instance, see 參事室座談會記錄 [“Record of Round-Table Discussion at the Counselor's Office”], 朱家驊檔案 [Zhu Jiahua Archives], 301-01-03-001, 中央研究院近代史研究所檔案館 [The Institute of Modern History Archives, Academia Sinica], Taipei.

³⁰ 外交專門委員會第一次會議紀錄 [“Minutes of the 1st Meeting of the Special Commission for Foreign Affairs”] (June 9, 1938), *Zheng* 4/83.4, 中國國民黨中央文化傳播委員會黨史館 [Kuomintang Party Archives].

of the utility of communications intelligence dates back to the *Zhongyuan Dazhan* (Central Plains War) in 1930. During this series of anti-Chiang battles, Chiang Kai-shek was able to prevail by deciphering the coded telegrams sent by military leaders of various regions opposed to him and gathering intelligence, which resulted in Chiang placing great importance on the ability to decipher coded telegrams since then.³¹ Chiang Kai-shek later ordered Y. C. Wen to decipher Japanese coded telegrams and secretly established the Telegram Decryption Bureau in Nanjing as a subordinate organization of the Telecommunications Department of the Ministry of Communications. The primary targets of this Bureau were the telegrams of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which were provided to Chiang Kai-shek through the Department of Confidential Affairs, and copies of which were forwarded only to T. V. Soong and H. H. Kung.³²

Interception of communications and codebreaking were also carried out under the military's intelligence agencies. The Confidential Telegram (Research) Section was set up in the Fourth Division of the BIS, with Herbert O. Yardley invited from the United States to conduct training in codebreaking.³³

There were also agencies other than the BIS carrying out radio interception and cipher research. For example, a "research group" headed by Mao Qingxiang was established in 1938 under the Department of Confidential Affairs of the General Office of the Military Affairs Commission, with personnel from the BIS, the CBIS, and the Telecommunications Department assigned to the group.³⁴ Furthermore, the Military Administration Department also had a Translated Telegram Section of the Communications Department that was engaged in deciphering the telegrams of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs despite its small number of staff.³⁵ In addition, the 2nd Bureau of the Military Operations Department carried out not only

³¹ 魏大銘 [Wei Daming], 評述戴雨農先生的事功 [“On the Work of Mr. Dai Yunong”], 傳記文學 [Biographical Literature], Vol. 38, No. 3 (March 1981), p. 49; 蔡孟堅 [Cai Mengjian], 八十談『奇』 [“On the 80s: Qi”], 傳記文學 [Biographical Literature], Vol. 48, No. 1 (January 1986), p. 60.

³² 葉鐘驊 [Ye Zhonghua], 密碼電報研究機構內幕 [“The Inside of the Coded Telegrams Research Organization”], 中國人民政治協商會議全國委員會文史資料委員會 [Literary and Historical Materials Committee, Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee], ed., 文史資料存稿選編 [Selected Manuscripts of Literary and Historical Materials], Vol. 14, p. 819. This was due to the fact that Y. C. Wen was a very close associate of T. V. Soong and that H. H. Kung had provided funding for the program.

³³ 國防部情報局 [Intelligence Bureau, Ministry of National Defense], 國防部情報局史要彙編 [Compendium on the History of the Intelligence Bureau of the Ministry of National Defense], Vol. I, Taipei: 國防部情報局 [Intelligence Bureau, Ministry of National Defense], 1962, p. 312; 軍統特務電訊機構內幕 [“Inside the BIS Special Operations Telecommunications Organization”], 文聞 [Wen Wen], 我所知道的軍統 [The BIS That I Know], Beijing: 中國文史出版社 [Chinese Literature and History Press], 2004, p. 212; Herbert O. Yardley, *The Chinese Black Chamber: An Adventure in Espionage*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983, p. 3.

³⁴ In reality, the Department of Confidential Affairs was under the purview of the Personal Secretariat Office (毛慶祥 [“Mao Qingxiang”], 軍事委員會委員長侍從室檔案 [Archives of the Personal Secretariat Office of the Chairman of the Military Affairs Commission], Series 1, 129-010000-2690, 國史館 [Academia Historica]; 葉鐘驊 [Ye Zhonghua], 密碼電報研究機構內幕 [“The Inside of the Coded Telegrams Research Organization”], p. 827).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 827.

espionage but also radio interception primarily for news agencies of allies.³⁶ The Third and Fourth Divisions of the 2nd Bureau of the Military Operations Department handled domestic and foreign intelligence. Both of these divisions were commanded by Zheng Jiemin of the BIS based on the close relations between the BIS and the 2nd Bureau. Following the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, the 2nd Bureau of the Military Operations Department sought cooperation with the Soviet Union and established the Sino-Soviet Special Intelligence Bureau and the Sino-Soviet Special Intelligence Broadcasting Corporation under the Military Affairs Commission in 1939.³⁷ The General Office of the Military Affairs Commission also had an organization called the Special Inspection Division, which engaged in postal censorship.³⁸

These military organizations were integrated in 1940 at Chiang Kai-shek's behest to promote more efficient interception and codebreaking. The Telegram Decryption Bureau, the Confidential Telegram (Research) Section, and the research group in the Department of Confidential Affairs were merged to form the Technical Research Office of the Military Affairs Commission on April 1.³⁹ The Technical Research Office comprised the first section, which conducted research on deciphering telegrams of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the second section, which conducted research on the telegrams of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as the Japanese Army and Army Air Service; the third section, which performed the statistical processing of telegrams; the fourth section, which was tasked with the interception of various telegrams; the fifth section, which handled general affairs; and the sixth section, which conducted research on deciphering telegrams of the Eighth Route Army and military units led by commanders who were not under Chiang Kai-shek's direct command.⁴⁰ Mao Qingxiang later appealed to Chiang Kai-shek to withdraw the BIS due to internal strife,⁴¹ which led to BIS-affiliated organs withdrawing from the Technical Research Office and setting

³⁶ 周樹嘉 [Zhou Shujia], 我在軍令部的所見所聞 [“What I Saw and Heard at the Military Operations Department”], 中国人民政治協商會議全國委員會文史資料委員會 [Literary and Historical Materials Committee, Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee], ed., 文史資料選輯 [Selected Literary and Historical Materials], Vol. 145, Beijing: 中國文史出版社 [Chinese Literature and History Press], 2001, p. 101.

³⁷ 本會特種情報所二十七年工作報告書 [“Report on the Work of the Commission's Special Intelligence Bureau for the Year 1938”], 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080102-00039-001; 邱沈鈞 [Qiu Shenjun], 國防部第二厅的前身—軍令部第二厅 [“The Predecessor of the 2nd Bureau of the Ministry of National Defense: The 2nd Bureau of the Military Operations Department”], 中国人民政治協商會議全國委員會文史資料委員會 [Literary and Historical Materials Committee, Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee], ed., 文史資料選輯 [Selected Literary and Historical Materials], Vol. 141, pp. 41, 59-60.

³⁸ Interview 14, Chen Lifu Papers, 陳立夫 [Chen Lifu], 陳立夫英文回憶錄 [Memoirs of Chen Lifu (English)], Taipei: 近代中國出版社 [Modern China Publishing House], 2005, p. 136; 國防部情報局 [Intelligence Bureau, Ministry of National Defense], 國防部情報局史要彙編 [Compendium on the History of the Intelligence Bureau of the Ministry of National Defense], Vol. I, p. 67.

³⁹ 葉鐘驊 [Ye Zhonghua], 密碼電報研究機構內幕 [“The Inside of the Coded Telegrams Research Organization”], pp. 824-828; 丁緒曾 [Ding Xuzeng], 蔣介石掌握的密碼情報機構 [“The Cryptographic Intelligence Agencies Under Chiang Kai-shek's Control”], Part II, 縱橫 [Across Time and Space], No. 14, 1986, p. 63.

⁴⁰ 葉鐘驊 [Ye Zhonghua], 密碼電報研究機構內幕 [“The Inside of the Coded Telegrams Research Organization”], p. 829.

⁴¹ 毛慶祥呈蔣中正簽報 [“Signed Report Submitted by Mao Qingxiang to Chiang Kai-shek”] (January 28, 1942), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080102-00039-022.

up a new Special Technical Research Office to resume their activities.⁴²

China's major intelligence organizations

2nd Bureau of the Military Operations Department	Gathered tactical intelligence (mainly reports from each military region)
Central Bureau of Investigation and Statistics of the Central Executive Committee (CBIS)	The Party's intelligence agency, ostensibly targeting the CCP but also targeting Japan
Bureau of Investigation and Statistics of the Military Affairs Commission (BIS)	The military's intelligence agency tasked with espionage, counter-intelligence, punishment for traitors, etc.
Information Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Gathered political and economic information on other countries (through overseas diplomatic missions, public information, etc.)
Institute of International Relations (IIR)	Run by Wang Pengsheng, an expert on Japan, and cooperated with the OSS and SOE
Telegram Decryption Bureau	Intercepted and deciphered telegraphic communications of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Technical Research Office	An organization engaged in the interception and deciphering of telegraphic communications established through a merger in 1940

Staff organizations

One question was how the diverse types of information sent from the intelligence organizations were organized and provided to Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang was briefed immediately only on important intelligence that had been selected through screening, while less important information was consolidated and reviewed over the weekend. This led to the establishment of a system of division and integration of responsibilities through the Personal Secretariat Office. The Personal Secretariat Office was a staff organization that supported Chiang Kai-shek, who served as Chairman of the Military Affairs Commission. It was established in 1933 to address military needs and later reorganized in the era of the Nanchang Headquarter to engage in the First Chinese Civil War. The Personal Secretariat Office was composed of two organizations: the First Division was in charge of general affairs, general staff, and security (Security guards), while the Second Division was in charge of secretarial work and research.⁴³ Following the reorganization of the Personal Secretariat Office in January 1936, intelligence from the CBIS and the BIS was sent to either the First Division or the Second Division depending on its content. Intelligence from the CBIS was sent directly to the fourth section (secretarial work)

⁴² 国防部情報局 [Intelligence Bureau, Ministry of National Defense], 国防部情報局史要彙編 [*Compendium on the History of the Intelligence Bureau of the Ministry of National Defense*], Vol. I, p. 314.

⁴³ 高明芳 [Gao Mingfang], ed., 蔣中正總統檔案 事略稿本 [*Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek: A Biographical Sketch*], Vol. 29 (January-February 1935), Taipei: 國史館 [Academia Historica], pp. 381-382, entry for February 14, 1935; 陳布雷 [Chen Bulei], 陳布雷回憶錄 [*Memoirs of Chen Bulei*], Taipei: 傳記文學出版社 [Biographical Literature Publishing House], 1967, p. 98. In addition, a Third Division primarily in charge of personnel affairs was added in 1940.

of the Second Division, while intelligence from the BIS was sent to the second section (general staff) of the First Division in the case of intelligence on military-related activities. Other political and economic intelligence was first sent to the Second Division before being reviewed by both the First and Second Divisions and then reported to Chiang Kai-shek.⁴⁴

However, this approach was not very efficient, and it soon became impossible to keep up with the dramatic increase in the volume of intelligence that accompanied the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War. In response to this, Chiang Kai-shek ordered the Personal Secretariat Office to provide the intelligence to him to be limited only to military, diplomatic, and enemy-related intelligence, and that general intelligence could be dispensed with.⁴⁵ Furthermore, he issued an order in January 1939 that no more than 10 items of intelligence should be reported each day.⁴⁶ In order to resolve the confusion of complicated operations, the Sixth Section was established within the personal secretariat office to handle intelligence operations.⁴⁷ The sixth section was headed by Tang Zong and was under the chain of command of both the First and Second Divisions.⁴⁸ In addition, in order to gather intelligence on the front lines to be consolidated at the Military Operations Department, arrangements were made for the First Division (Operations) and Second Division (Intelligence) of the Military Operations Department to submit reports at any time, while cooperation between the various departments was strengthened by exchanging intelligence from the Party and the government as well as diplomatic intelligence with the fourth section (secretarial work).⁴⁹

As outlined above, all intelligence was filtered through the Personal Secretariat Office, with human intelligence, open-source intelligence, and signals intelligence from the CBIS and the BIS forwarded to Chiang Kai-shek through the sixth section, and all other signals intelligence provided to Chiang Kai-shek through the Department of Confidential Affairs.

⁴⁴ 張瑞德 [Zhang Ruide], 侍從室与国民政府的情報工作 [“The Intelligence Work of the Personal Secretariat Office and Nationalist Government”], 南京大学中華民國國史研究中心 [Center for the History of the Republic of China, Nanjing University], 民国研究 [Studies on the Republic of China], No. 27, Beijing: 社会科学文献出版社 [Social Sciences Academic Press (China)], 2015, p. 2; 秋宗鼎 [Qiu Zongding], 蔣介石的侍從室紀實 [“A Documentary of Chiang Kai-shek’s Personal Secretariat Office”], 中国人民政治協商會全國委員會文史資料委員會 [Literary and Historical Materials Committee, Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee], ed., 文史資料選輯 [Selected Literary and Historical Materials], Vol. 81, pp. 128-129.

⁴⁵ 蔣中正致林蔚電 [“Telegram from Chiang Kai-shek to Lin Wei”] (August 22, 1938), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-010300-00015-072.

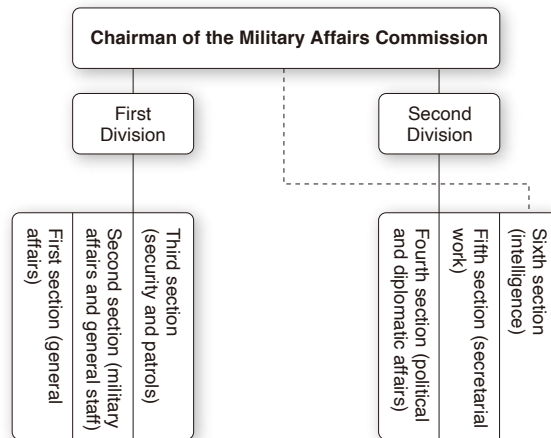
⁴⁶ 蔣中正致賀耀組等電 [“Telegram from Chiang Kai-shek to He Yaozu, et al.”] (January 26, 1939), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-010300-00019-041.

⁴⁷ 唐縱 [Tang Zong], 在蔣介石身邊八年—侍從室高級幕僚唐縱日記 [Eight Years Beside Chiang Kai-shek: The Diaries of Tang Zong, Senior Staff of the Personal Secretariat Office], Beijing: 群衆出版社 [Mass Publishing House], 1992, p. 84, entries for February 8 and February 21, 1939. The Personal Secretariat Office at this time was made up of the First Division, which comprised the first section (general affairs), second section (military affairs and general staff), and third section (security); and the Second Division, which comprised the fourth section (party administration and secretarial work), fifth section (foreign affairs), and sixth section (intelligence and comprehensive reviews) (秋宗鼎 [Qiu Zongding], 蔣介石的侍從室紀實 [“A Documentary of Chiang Kai-shek’s Personal Secretariat Office”], p. 108).

⁴⁸ 唐縱 [Tang Zong], 在蔣介石身邊八年—侍從室高級幕僚唐縱日記 [Eight Years Beside Chiang Kai-shek: The Diaries of Tang Zong, Senior Staff of the Personal Secretariat Office], pp. 90-91, entries for May 17 and May 20, 1939.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 91-92, entries for June 16, June 24, and July 14, 1939.

The Personal Secretariat Office of the Military Affairs Commission in 1941

**What did Chiang Kai-shek refer to when making judgments?**

Intelligence provided to Chiang Kai-shek could be broadly classified into the following categories: intelligence on the activities of Japanese forces in various regions provided through intelligence agents and reports from the BIS, the CBIS, and the IIR; telegraphic intelligence on Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the New Guangxi clique gathered through postal censorship, radio interception, and deciphering such materials; and intelligence on international affairs provided by the Counselor's Office of the Military Affairs Commission, the Special Diplomatic Committee, and embassies in various countries. Taking into consideration the volume and frequency of intelligence provided, a substantial portion of the intelligence read by Chiang Kai-shek pertained to the activities of embassies and the movement of Japanese forces within China, and there was very little intelligence on Japanese strategy and foreign policy beyond China or world affairs in general. The majority of this intelligence was provided by the BIS, but its accuracy and quality varied considerably. In fact, most of the intelligence provided to Chiang was meaningless or contained inaccuracies that could be easily discovered. For example, there was a report following the outbreak of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident alleging that "Brigade Commander Kawabe had committed suicide after residents condemned him for failing in his attacks on Wanping Fortress three times."⁵⁰

In other words, the information provided to Chiang Kai-shek had not been sifted in advance, except for information that was obviously meaningless or already obsolete, so Chiang had to evaluate the value of the intelligence by himself. It was only from 1939 onward that this intelligence was finally evaluated and screened by the Personal Secretariat Office before being provided to Chiang Kai-shek at a frequency of 10 items per day.

Therefore, until Chiang Kai-shek was able to review the intelligence carefully, he placed

⁵⁰ 戴笠呈蒋介石情报 ["Intelligence Reported by Dai Li to Chiang Kai-shek"] (July 18, 1937), 蒋中正总统档案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-020300-00001-050.

great emphasis on intelligence that was intercepted and deciphered from coded telegrams, which was highly reliable. Until 1939, from which all information was subject to evaluation and screening, Chiang Kai-shek had ordered that only intercepted decrypted information was to be handled by Mao Qingxiang, a fellow countryman and close associate, who reported it to Chiang.⁵¹ Chiang Kai-shek did not share this intelligence with the other leaders and instructed abstracts to be sent to the relevant authorities only when necessary. Thus, intelligence sharing within the leadership level was highly limited.

From this telegraphic intelligence, Chiang Kai-shek learned that the Japanese believed that the Chinese had decided to engage in war and that the Japanese were actually attempting to enforce a non-expansion policy and seek local solutions to the dispute.⁵² He also learned that the Japanese would not launch a landing operation in Shandong, which he had feared.⁵³ Chiang Kai-shek knew that the Japanese did not want to fight in the Yangtze River basin.⁵⁴ Moreover, Chiang had grasped the positions and battle plans of Japanese forces through the cables of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as telegraphic intelligence from naval vessels from the beginning of the Battle of Shanghai.⁵⁵ This intelligence also proved useful for the identification of traitors.⁵⁶ The Telegram Decryption Bureau (Technical Research Office from April 1940) classified all telegrams between Japan and China as either character-indexed or unindexed (among these, those to and from Consul-General Nakamura in Hong Kong were indexed with “H”), with telegrams between Japan and Europe indexed with *guo* (國) and naval telegraphic communications indexed with *hai* (海).⁵⁷ Of these, indexed telegrams between Japan and their diplomatic missions in Europe that began with *guo* were provided to Chiang Kai-shek from

⁵¹ The intelligence that Chiang Kai-shek had finished reading was stored separately from other intelligence in a monthly booklet entitled “Confidential Intelligence Read by the Commission Chairman.” The last booklet was dated February 1939 (委員長已閱機要情報 中華民國廿八年二月份 [“Confidential Intelligence Read by the Commission Chairman: February 1939”], 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080200-00513-030).

⁵² Intercepted telegrams from Hankou to Beiping, Tianjin, Qingdao, Jinan, Changchun, Tokyo, Nanjing, Shamian, Xiamen, and Fuzhou (July 20, 1937), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080200-00488-015; from Nanjing to Beiping, Tianjin, Shanghai, Changchun, and Tokyo (July 22, 1937), *ibid.*, 002-080200-00488-017; and from Tokyo to Beiping, Changchun, Tianjin, Jinan, Qingdao, Xiamen, Fuzhou, Hankou, Shamian, Shanghai, and Nanjing (July 25, 1937), *ibid.*, 002-080200-00488-019.

⁵³ Intercepted telegrams from Tokyo to Qingdao (August 22, 1937), *ibid.*, 002-080200-00488-055; and from Tokyo to Qingdao, Shanghai, Beiping, and Tianjin (August 25, 1937), *ibid.*, 002-080200-00488-057.

⁵⁴ Intercepted telegram from Tokyo to Hankou, Shanghai, and Nanjing (August 6, 1937), *ibid.*, 002-080200-00488-039.

⁵⁵ Intercepted telegrams from Shanghai to Beiping, Tianjin, and Tokyo (August 23, 1937), *ibid.*, 002-080200-00488-055; from Shanghai to Tianjin, Tokyo, and Beiping (September 9, 1937), *ibid.*, 002-080200-00489-010; from Izumo to warships such as ラホ零 [Ra-Ho-0], ヲリ四 [Wo-Ri-4], etc. (October 16, 1937), *ibid.*, 002-080200-00490-016; and from Izumo to the warship ホイ一 [Ho-I-1] (November 11, 1937), *ibid.*, 002-080200-00491-012.

⁵⁶ Intercepted telegram from Tokyo to Beiping, Shanghai, and Tianjin (September 6, 1937), *ibid.*, 002-080200-00489-007.

⁵⁷ See H. H. Kung Papers, Box 10, Folders 1-10. In some cases, unindexed and character-indexed telegrams are further classified as 丙 (*bing*), 辛 (*xin*), etc., with *bing* believed to refer to the *OITE* code and *xin* to a Director-level code.

the end of 1937.⁵⁸

Although the above was only a few examples from the early days of the Second Sino-Japanese War, this intelligence offered tremendous reference value when Chiang Kai-shek was making situational assessments. To what extent were the Chinese able to break Japan's codes? The Telegram Decryption Bureau first succeeded in deciphering the communications of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1935. The code that was used in this communication is typically referred to as the LA code, the most basic system where each message was preceded by the letters "LA." The LA code was used to communicate administrative content and public information in a minimally secure way. The *OITE* code, which was frequently used for telegrams involving Japanese embassies and consulates in mainland China at the time, was broken in the following year.⁵⁹ Approximately five items of such intelligence gathered through codebreaking were provided to Chiang Kai-shek every week. However, with the Chinese moving around different regions after withdrawing from Wuhan in October 1938 and attempting to relocate to Chongqing, coupled with the growing utilization of mechanical ciphers by major Japanese diplomatic missions in mainland China from 1939, it became difficult to intercept and decipher cables with high intelligence value. The approach of separately providing only records of intercepted and deciphered diplomatic telegrams was abandoned in February 1939, and these records were subsequently provided alongside other intelligence.⁶⁰

Besides mechanical ciphers, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs also used a stronger cipher known as the *TSU* (津) code (called the J series by the United States). For this code, codebooks were replaced every four to six months, the encryption pattern changed three times a month, and the cipher key changed on a daily basis. The *TSU* code was used for relatively important matters such as the content of bilateral diplomatic negotiations and foreign policy.

⁵⁸ 国字48 [*Guo* 48], intercepted telegram from Tokyo (Hirota) to the Japanese envoy in Rome (December 23, 1937), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080200-00491-033. As discussed below, China seemed to have been able to decipher the code of the telegrams sent between Japan and Europe until this period. Considering the short time it took to intercept, decipher, and provide the information, it should be assumed that the information began to be provided at Chiang Kai-shek's request. However, the intercepted telegrams indexed with *guo* provided to Chiang Kai-shek during this period used either the LA code or the *OITE* code. In addition, it is said that the Chinese were able to intercept telegrams sent to and from Europe only after the establishment of improved facilities (葉鐘驊 [Ye Zhonghua], 密碼電報研究機構內幕 ["The Inside of the Coded Telegrams Research Organization"], p. 822).

⁵⁹ 魏大銘 [Wei Daming], 珍珠港事變之研究(1) ["Study on the Attack on Pearl Harbor (1)"], 傳記文學 [*Biographical Literature*], Vol. 39, No. 6 (December 1981), pp. 66-67; David Kahn, *The Codebreakers: The Story of Secret Writing*, New York: Macmillan, 1968, pp. 14-18; 霍奕子 [Huo Shizi] & 丁緒曾 [Ding Xuzeng], 國民政府軍事委員會密電檢譯所 ["The Telegram Decryption Bureau of the Military Affairs Commission"], 中國人民政治協商會議全國委員會文史資料委員會 [Literary and Historical Materials Committee, Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee], ed., 文史資料存稿選編 [*Selected Manuscripts of Literary and Historical Materials*], Vol. 14, pp. 805-808. For instance, the papers of H. H. Kung contain the original deciphered text of telegrams intercepted during the Xi'an Incident (e.g., 十二月十八日上海川越致北平領事密電原文 ["Original Text of the Coded Telegram from Kawagoe in Shanghai to the Consul of Beijing on December 18"], etc. (H. H. Kung Papers, Box 10, Folder 1)).

⁶⁰ 委員長已閱機要情報 中華民國廿八年二月份 ["Confidential Intelligence Read by the Commission Chairman: February 1939"], 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080200-00513-030.

China broke the *TSU* code in the summer of 1940.⁶¹ Incidentally, they were unable to break the mechanical ciphers.⁶²

The Technical Research Office, which reported on the status of the deciphering of telegrams from Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated that "materials [telegrams] obtained after August 1940 were of very low value." It suggested that this was related to changes to the codebooks.⁶³ This could also be gleaned from the annual report of the sixth section of the Personal Secretariat Office, which carried out the consolidation of intelligence. The report contained the assessment that "although the Technical Research Office had gathered the largest volume [of reports], the majority of these were minutiae such as consular affairs."⁶⁴ Even if the method to break the code were to be discovered, the cipher key was changed on a daily basis, so the code needed to be broken all over again each time the encryption pattern was changed to a new one. Therefore, although China had already discovered the structure of the *TSU* code, they had not reached a stage where they could immediately respond to changes to the cipher and provide timely intelligence.⁶⁵

Could China have expected the outbreak of war between Japan and the United States?

For Chiang Kai-shek, it was necessary to draw either the Soviet Union or the United States into a war with Japan in order for China to prevail in their war against Japan. It is widely believed that China had deciphered telegrams related to Japan's plan to attack Pearl Harbor and warned

⁶¹ 魏大銘 [Wei Daming], 珍珠港事變之研究(1) ["Study on the Attack on Pearl Harbor (1)"], pp. 66-67; 魏大銘遺稿 [The Posthumous Papers of Wei Daming], 魏大銘自序 ["Preface to Wei Daming's Autobiography"], 伝記文学 [Biographical Literature], Vol. 71, No. 2 (August 1997), p. 87. Wei Daming described the third code from Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs that he had deciphered as a blank transposition cipher, suggesting that it was the *TSU* code. Moreover, he mentioned that he had deciphered it when he was serving as Deputy Director of the Technical Research Office, which corresponds to the period around August 1940 based on historical documents that have been preserved. However, it should be noted that even if the Chinese had discovered the method to break the code, they did not always succeed due to updates to the codebooks and changes to the transposition pattern. Judging from the existing material, it is highly likely that any intelligence deciphered by the Chinese was not immediately available to be reported (毛慶祥呈蔣介石情報 ["Intelligence Reported by Mao Qingxiang to Chiang Kai-shek"] (July 11, 1941), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080102-00039-017).

⁶² 魏大銘 [Wei Daming], 珍珠港事變之研究(1) ["Study on the Attack on Pearl Harbor (1)"], pp. 66-67. The Chinese deciphered another new, non-mechanical cipher around July 1941, which they classified as 技二甲 [Ji-2A], but it remains unclear which cipher this was (毛慶祥呈蔣介石情報 ["Intelligence Reported by Mao Qingxiang to Chiang Kai-shek"] (July 11, 1941), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080102-00039-017; 張令澳 [Zhang Ling'ao], 侍從室回夢錄 [Reflections on My Time in the Personal Secretariat Office], Shanghai: 上海書店出版社 [Shanghai Bookstore Publishing House], p. 109).

⁶³ 技術研究室工作報告審查意見 ["Review Opinion on the Report on the Work of the Technical Research Office"], 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080200-0550-086.

⁶⁴ 第六組三十年度工作總報告 ["General Report on the Work of the Sixth Section for the Year 1941"], 國民政府檔案 [Archives of the Nationalist Government], 001-016142-00013-005.

⁶⁵ This cipher was classified variously as 技外VII字 [Jiwai-VII] and 技外XII字 [Jiwai-XII] (using different Roman numerals as the pattern changed), but only several dozen items had been cracked as of July 1941 (毛慶祥呈蔣介石情報 ["Intelligence Reported by Mao Qingxiang to Chiang Kai-shek"] (July 11, 1941), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080102-00039-017).

the United States.⁶⁶ The codebreaking story that has been circulated can be summarized as follows. China had detected an increase in telegraphic communications between Tokyo and Honolulu from May to September 1941 and deciphered some of the telegrams that reported the movement of vessels, etc. From August to October, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs ordered its embassies in Southeast Asia, the Pacific, and South America to burn the codebooks at a time when telegrams using codes and ciphers such as "*Higashi no kaze, ame*" ("East wind, rain") increased in frequency. Five days before the attack on Pearl Harbor, a telegram was sent to Ambassador Nomura informing him to burn the codebooks and classified documents, transfer deposits to a neutral country, and that the Imperial government would act in accordance with the decision of the Imperial Conference. Based on the results of deciphering these telegrams, it has been claimed that China had warned the United States through their envoy to the United States but was unable to prevent the attack because the United States did not believe in China's codebreaking capabilities.

In retrospect, it is true that China had discovered how to break the *TSU* code. However, the encryption pattern was changed in March, August, and November 1941, and even if the telegrams had been intercepted and deciphered, it would have taken considerable time to do so. Moreover, given that the Technical Research Office's facilities were located in Chongqing, there would have been significant radio interference between Tokyo, Washington, D.C., and Honolulu. Thus, there would have been massive loss of information, and only a portion of the communications could have been intercepted.⁶⁷ Indeed, telegraphic communications between Honolulu and Tokyo that reported the movement of vessels up to December 2,⁶⁸ as well as Circulars #2445 and #2447 from Tokyo ordering diplomatic missions to burn all codes other than the "O" code (*OITE*) and the abbreviating code L (LA) and Circular #2353 from Tokyo containing the winds message "*Higashi no kaze, ame*," were sent using the *TSU* code.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ This theory is based on 池步洲 [Chi Buzhou], 我破譯了日本將偷襲真珠港的密電碼 ["I Broke the Coded Telegrams for Japan's Planned Attack on Pearl Harbor"], 政協上海市長寧區委員會文化和文史資料委員會 [Cultural, Literary, and Historical Materials Committee, Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) Shanghai Changning District Committee], ed., 長寧文史資料 [*Changning's Literary and Historical Materials*], Vol. 3, Shanghai: 政協上海市長寧區委員會文化和文史資料委員會 [Cultural, Literary, and Historical Materials Committee, Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) Shanghai Changning District Committee], 1987, pp. 88-91; as well as on 池步洲 [Chi Buzhou], 我在抗日戰爭中偵破日本密電回憶 ["Memoir on Breaking Japan's Cipher Telegrams During the War Against Japan"], 中国人民政治協商會議全國委員會文史資料委員會 [Literary and Historical Materials Committee, Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee], ed., 文史資料選輯 [*Selected Literary and Historical Materials*], Vol. 35 (Vol. 135 overall), pp. 38-77.

⁶⁷ 霍實子 [Huo Shizi] & 丁緒曾 [Ding Xuzeng], 國民政府軍事委員會密電檢譯所 ["The Telegram Decryption Bureau of the Military Affairs Commission"], p. 812.

⁶⁸ Communications from Honolulu were sent using the *OITE* code from December 3 onward.

⁶⁹ "From Tokyo to Washington (Nomura), November 19, 1941 (J19), Circular #2353," "From Tokyo (Togo) to Havana, December 2, 1941 (J19-K9), Circular #2445," "From Bern (Mitani) to Ankara, December 2, 1941 (J19-K9), Circular #2447," "From Honolulu (Kita) to Tokyo, November 18, 1941 (J19), #222," etc. (United States Congress, Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack, *Pearl Harbor attack: Hearings before the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack, Congress of the United States, Seventy-ninth Congress, first session, pursuant to S. Con. Res. 27, 79th Congress, a concurrent resolution authorizing an investigation of the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and events and circumstances relating thereto*, Part 12, United States Government Printing Office, 1946, pp. 154, 215-216, 262-270).

However, Messages #867 (December 2) and #910 (December 7) addressed to Ambassador Nomura regarding the cipher machine and the burning of codebooks (but which did not mention the transfer of deposits or the decision of the Imperial Conference) were sent using mechanical ciphers (Purple), which China could not decipher.⁷⁰

Therefore, although it is theoretically possible that China could have advance knowledge of Japan's attack on the United States, the probability of this is extremely low. If China had deciphered even a part of the reports from Honolulu, these materials would have been provided to Chiang Kai-shek and preserved, but there are no records of such reports as far as we know. In the diaries of Tang Zong, who headed the sixth section (intelligence) of the Personal Secretariat Office, he mentioned that a telegram sent to various British territories ordering the burning of codes similar to the abovementioned Circular #2447 from Tokyo had been intercepted and deciphered on December 3.⁷¹ However, at the time, most personnel did not understand the significance of the content of this telegram.⁷² This intelligence was initially deemed unimportant and treated as something that was to be burned, but it was discovered by Tang Zong, who reported it to Chiang Kai-shek.⁷³ This intelligence was said to have been later reported to U.S. Ambassador Gauss through China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and then to the U.S. military through Guo Dequan, a Chinese military attaché in the United States.⁷⁴ However, the telegram ordering the burning of codes had already been deciphered by the United States to begin with. Moreover, it was difficult to foresee the outbreak of war between Japan and the United States from this telegram sent to the British territories; in fact, a more natural interpretation would be to predict Japan's southward advance into British territory.

Even if historical records had not been preserved, Chiang Kai-shek would not have written in his diary as late as November 27 that "there is at most a 30% chance that the Japanese would advance southward" if he had been provided with even a part of the communications

⁷⁰ "From Tokyo (Togo) to Washington, December 2, 1941 (Purple), #867," "From Tokyo to Washington, December 7, 1941 (Purple) Extremely Urgent, #910," *ibid.*, pp. 215, 249.

⁷¹ 唐縱 [Tang Zong], 在蔣介石身邊八年—侍從室高級幕僚唐縱日記 [*Eight Years Beside Chiang Kai-shek: The Diaries of Tang Zong, Senior Staff of the Personal Secretariat Office*], p. 241, entry for December 5, 1941. However, the difference between this telegram and Circular #2445 is that Circular #2445 was addressed to various parts of North America and ordered the burning of all codes, confidential documents, and telegrams, whereas Circular #2447 was addressed to diplomatic missions abroad, including those in British territories, and ordered the burning of codes only.

⁷² Wei Daming, then Deputy Director of the Technical Research Office, recalled that he did not consider this information to be important due to his lack of expertise and experience (魏大銘 [Wei Daming], 珍珠港事變之研究(1) ["Study on the Attack on Pearl Harbor (1)"], p. 66).

⁷³ 唐縱 [Tang Zong], 在蔣介石身邊八年—侍從室高級幕僚唐縱日記 [*Eight Years Beside Chiang Kai-shek: The Diaries of Tang Zong, Senior Staff of the Personal Secretariat Office*], p. 397, entry for December 16, 1943.

⁷⁴ 張令澳 [Zhang Ling'ao], 侍從室回夢錄 [*Reflections on My Time in the Personal Secretariat Office*], p. 102. However, Guo Dequan was no longer a military attaché at this time, and no such description can be found in his memoirs (郭德權 [Guo Dequan], 抗戰時期駐美武官回憶實錄 [*Memoirs of a Military Attaché During the War of Resistance*], Taipei: 國防部史政編譯局 [Bureau of Compilation and Translation of History and Politics, Ministry of National Defense], 1985). There is also no record of this in the documents of the American Embassy in Chongqing based on my knowledge (RG84 Foreign Service Posts, Nanking Embassy, Box 2297, Strictly Confidential Correspondence American Embassy Chungking, 1941, National Archives, College Park).

between Honolulu and Tokyo, such as telegrams and wind messages.⁷⁵ Moreover, he wrote in his diary on December 7, the day before the attack on Pearl Harbor, that Japan had closed their consulates across the American continent, the African continent, and the Pacific, suspended the movement of mail steamships, and adopted emergency measures. In spite of this, Chiang Kai-shek wrote in his diary on the same day, “Although we will eventually have to engage in a final battle, a war between Japan and the United States may be averted for now.”⁷⁶ If Chiang Kai-shek had received any intelligence regarding Japan’s plan to attack the United States, he would not have believed that war between the two countries could have been averted even at that late moment, nor would he have sent a flurry of telegrams to the United States in an attempt to avoid the adoption of the “modus vivendi” proposal.

In any case, setting aside the relative chronology vis-à-vis a Soviet-Japanese war, the outbreak of war between Japan and the United States was the most desirable outcome for Chiang Kai-shek, and if he had been informed of Japan’s plan to attack the United States, he would have either been very cautious in his communications or simply kept silent without notifying the United States. In this sense, it is of little significance whether China had advance knowledge of intelligence regarding the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Chiang Kai-shek’s situational assessments

What kinds of intelligence did Chiang Kai-shek base his judgments on in 1941, a critical year for China, and how did he make these judgments?⁷⁷ As outlined above, China was hardly able to gather any intelligence from the cables of Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs due to the Ministry’s increasingly widespread adoption of mechanical ciphers during this period and frequent changes to code patterns. Therefore, Chiang Kai-shek primarily relied on reviews conducted by the Counselor’s Office of the Military Affairs Commission based on intelligence gathered by the Commission’s organizations such as the IIR through commanders and intelligence agents in various military regions, as well as cables and public information sent to China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs from diplomatic missions abroad. Besides providing

⁷⁵ 蔣介石日記 [“The Chiang Kai-shek Diaries”], Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, entry for November 29, 1941.

⁷⁶ Ibid., entry for December 7, 1941.

⁷⁷ The following literature is relevant for discussions on the state of Chiang Kai-shek’s understanding with regard to the timeline leading up to the outbreak of war between Japan and the United States. This paper also owes much to these studies. 鹿錫俊 [Lu Xijun], 蔣介石の「国際的解決」構想：1937-1941「蔣介石日記」から見る日中戦争の深層 [Chiang Kai-shek’s Concept of “International Resolution”: 1937-1941, *The Depths of the Second Sino-Japanese War as Seen from “The Chiang Kai-shek Diaries”*], Tokyo: 東方書店 [Toho Shoten], 2016; 段瑞聡 [Duan Ruicong], 蔣介石の戦時外交と戦後構想：1941-1971年 [Chiang Kai-shek’s Wartime Diplomacy and Postwar Approaches: 1941-1971], Tokyo: 慶應義塾大学出版会 [Keio University Press], 2021; 麻田雅文 [Asada Masafumi], 蔣介石の書簡外交：日中戦争、もう一つの戦場 [Chiang Kai-shek’s Diplomatic Correspondence: Another Front of the Second Sino-Japanese War], Vol. I & II, Kyoto: 人文書院 [Jimbun Shoin], 2021; 藤井元博 [Fujii Motohiro], 中国から見た日米開戦—蔣介石と幕僚たちの戦争 [“The Outbreak of War Between Japan and the United States from China’s Perspective: The War of Chiang Kai-shek and His Staff”], NIDS Commentary, No. 201, 2021.

reports on important matters,⁷⁸ the Counselor's Office held meetings with Chiang Kai-shek approximately once every two weeks, on Thursdays or Fridays in the first half of the year and at noon on Mondays in the second half.⁷⁹

The intelligence provided by the Military Affairs Commission, which was sourced directly from various military regions in China and from intelligence agents, was relatively accurate. However, information was less credible when it comes to the international situation, except for Southeast Asia, to which intelligence agents had been dispatched. One example of this was intelligence obtained by the Military Affairs Commission on July 5 claiming that an Imperial Conference had reached a decision to sign a secret protocol of the Tripartite Pact between Germany, Italy, and Japan that included a provision that the Japanese would advance southward and take on the war against the United States.⁸⁰ As can be seen, Chiang Kai-shek had relatively accurate intelligence on the movement of Japanese forces in China and Southeast Asia, but he had less accurate intelligence on the international situation in Europe, the United States, etc. Under these circumstances, he made his own judgments after reviewing developments in the international situation and taking into consideration the opinions of sources that were familiar with such developments, such as the Counselor's Office and Zhang Jiluan, Chief Writer of *Da Gong Bao*.⁸¹

The German-Soviet War

As noted in his diary that “if the Soviet Union and the United States enter the war, [China's] chances of prevailing will be even more assured,” Chiang Kai-shek believed that drawing the United States and Soviet Union into a war with Japan would culminate in a Chinese victory.⁸² Moreover, he believed that in the long run, it would be advantageous for East Asia as a whole if Japan and the United States did not engage in war before war broke out between Japan and the Soviet Union, and he did not want the United States to be part of the war in Europe.⁸³ This was because Chiang Kai-shek believed that the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact signed

⁷⁸ For instance, 王世杰呈蒋介石簽報 [“Signed Report Submitted by Wang Shijie to Chiang Kai-shek”] (July 10, 1941), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080107-00004-010. This report also discusses the credibility of the intelligence provided by the Military Affairs Commission regarding the secret provision of the Tripartite Pact between Germany, Italy, and Japan that is mentioned below.

⁷⁹ 蔣介石日記 [“The Chiang Kai-shek Diaries”], entries for January 9, January 24, February 7, February 20, April 11, April 24, June 1, June 3, June 23, July 14, August 4, August 25, September 8, November 5, and November 9, 1941.

⁸⁰ Ibid., entry for July 5, 1941; 林美莉 [Lin Meili], ed., 王世杰日記 [The Diaries of Wang Shijie], Vol. I, Taipei: 中央研究院近代史研究所 [Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica], 2012, p. 359, entry for July 5, 1941. Incidentally, this piece of intelligence was relayed to Roosevelt through T. V. Soong as an item obtained from Japanese telegraphic intelligence (蔣介石致宋子文電 [“Telegram from Chiang Kai-shek to T. V. Soong”] (July 5, 1941), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-010300-00045-007; “Telegram from General Chiang Kai-shek Dated July 8th, 1941” (Franklin D. Roosevelt, Papers as President: The President's Secretary's File (PSF), 1933-1945, Box 27, China, 1941, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum, Hyde Park).

⁸¹ For Zhang Jiluan's analyses, see 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080103-00050-015 to 002-080103-00050-018, etc.

⁸² 蔣介石日記 [“The Chiang Kai-shek Diaries”], entry for March 24, 1941.

⁸³ Ibid., entry for February 22, 1941 (listed in 1940年第二冊重要雜記 [Important Miscellaneous Entries, Vol. 2, 1940]).

in March might allow Japan to avoid participating in World War II and focus on resolving its conflict with China instead,⁸⁴ and that if the United States were to join the war in Europe while Japan remained neutral, Japan might demand that the United States refrain from intervening in matters in the Far East and allow Japan to resolve its conflict with China.⁸⁵ He also believed that if the United States were to engage in war with Germany, the possibility of a war between Germany and the Soviet Union would be eliminated.⁸⁶ This effectively meant that there would be no possibility of a Soviet-Japanese war, a situation that Chiang Kai-shek was keen to avoid. Chiang Kai-shek repeatedly warned Johnson and his successor, U.S. Ambassador to China Gaus, as well as the President's Special Assistant Currie, that Germany would soon invade the Soviet Union.⁸⁷ The above was Chiang Kai-shek's assessment of the international situation prior to the outbreak of the German-Soviet War. May 1941 was a testing time for Chiang Kai-shek both domestically and abroad.⁸⁸

On June 22, 1941, Germany suddenly invaded the Soviet Union, and the German-Soviet War broke out. In response, Chiang Kai-shek predicted that Japan would attack the Soviet Union the following month.⁸⁹ Chiang Kai-shek had often predicted with confidence that war would soon break out between Germany and the Soviet Union, but the basis for this remains unclear.⁹⁰ However, it is certainly the case that this was not a result of deciphering telegraphic intelligence.⁹¹ Telegraphic communications intercepted subsequently through 1941 provided no intelligence on Japanese activities, especially with regard to Japan-U.S. negotiations. Therefore, Chiang Kai-shek mainly obtained intelligence and communicated his own views through Chinese Ambassador to the United States Hu Shih, Chiang's personal representative to the United States T. V. Soong, President Roosevelt's Special Assistant Currie, and Chiang's political advisor Lattimore. While intelligence on Europe and the United States was gathered through these channels, developments in mainland China and Southeast Asia were ascertained

⁸⁴ Ibid., entry for April 17, 1941.

⁸⁵ Ibid., entry for April 24, 1941.

⁸⁶ Ibid., entry for May 10, 1941.

⁸⁷ "Memorandum of Conversation with Generalissimo" (January 29, 1941), "Memorandum of Conversation" (Chungking, June 24, 1941), RG84 Foreign Service Posts, Nanking Embassy, Box 2297; 宋美齡致居里電 ["Telegram from Soong Mei-ling to Currie"] (May 12, 1941), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-020300-00033-035.

⁸⁸ 蔣介石日記 ["The Chiang Kai-shek Diaries"], entry for May 31, 1941 (本月反省錄 [Reflections on the Month]).

⁸⁹ Ibid., entry for June 22, 1941.

⁹⁰ Ibid., entries for April 20, April 22 (listed in 1940年第二冊重要雜記 [Important Miscellaneous Entries, Vol. 2, 1940]), and May 10, 1941 (上星期反省錄 [Reflections on the Previous Week]).

⁹¹ Xu Yongchang believed that this intelligence was a result of Chiang Kai-shek having been influenced by incorrect intelligence from Gui Yongqing, a Chinese military attaché in Germany (中央研究院近代史研究所 [Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica], ed., 徐永昌日記 [The Diaries of Xu Yongchang], Vol. 6, Taipei: 中央研究院近代史研究所 [Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica], p. 113, entry for May 18, 1941). According to Zhang Ling'ao from the Second Division of the Personal Secretariat Office, this intelligence was provided by Wang Pengsheng (張令澳 [Zhang Ling'ao], 王芃生開展對日情報工作之實績 ["Wang Pengsheng's Intelligence Work and Achievements Against the Japanese"], 中国人民政治協商會議株洲市委員會文史資料研究委員會 [Literary and Historical Materials Research Committee, Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) Zhuzhou Prefectural Committee], ed., 王芃生與國際問題研究所(專輯) [Wang Pengsheng and the Institute of International Relations (Special Volume)] (《株州文史》第15輯 [Zhuzhou's Literature and History, Vol. 15]), Zhuzhou: 1990, pp. 96-97).

through reports from intelligence agents dispatched to these regions.

Upon learning of the outbreak of the German-Soviet War, Chiang Kai-shek believed that the Japanese would attack the Soviet Union by advancing northward under the guise of a southward advance.⁹² For a period of time, Chiang had considered the possibility that the Japanese might seize French Indochina and Thailand through a southward advance before advancing north to consolidate their position against British and American forces, but he basically believed until mid-September that the Japanese would advance northward if Kiev and Leningrad fell and that the outcome would be determined by the course of the war over the following month and a half.⁹³ Even after Japan's invasion of French Indochina in the south, Chiang Kai-shek remained firm in his belief until the end of November that the Japanese would mainly advance northward while adopting a defensive posture in the south in the face of growing pressure from the United States.⁹⁴

Japan-U.S. negotiations

Chiang Kai-shek likely learned about the Japan-U.S. negotiations at some point between the end of May to early June. Wang Shijie, head of the Counselor's Office tasked with foreign policy, came to know about the Japan-U.S. negotiations through the *Pravda* newspaper on May 19.⁹⁵ Immediately after that, U.S. Secretary of State Hull informed Chinese Ambassador to the United States Hu Shih on May 23 that Japan was proposing negotiations,⁹⁶ and on June 5, Chiang Kai-shek's personal representative in the United States T. V. Soong informed Chiang that Ambassador Nomura had presented a new set of peace terms to Hull, but these terms were rejected outright.⁹⁷ Chiang Kai-shek began alluding to the Japan-U.S. negotiations in his diary around the end of August.⁹⁸

When the Tojo Cabinet was formed on October 16, Chiang Kai-shek wrote, "This is without doubt a wartime military cabinet, and [Japan] will certainly engage in war with the United States and the Soviet Union imminently. We have achieved our policy," before further determining that "the enemy's disintegration will now be further accelerated, with resistance in East Asia and [China] having already reached its political climax."⁹⁹ At the same time, he recognized that Japan might not necessarily challenge the Soviet Union and the United States immediately and that China could not afford to be complacent given their military environment.¹⁰⁰ This was because he feared that the Japanese might attack Kunming through

⁹² 蒋介石日記 ["The Chiang Kai-shek Diaries"], entry for July 5, 1941.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, entry for September 20, 1941 (上星期反省錄 [Reflections on the Previous Week]).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, entries for October 19, November 15, and November 19, 1941.

⁹⁵ 林美莉 [Lin Meili], ed., 王世杰日記 [*The Diaries of Wang Shijie*], Vol. I, p. 348, entry for May 19, 1941.

⁹⁶ 曹伯言 [Cao Boyan], ed., 胡適日記全編 [*The Complete Diaries of Hu Shih*], Vol. 7 (1938-1949), Hefei: 安徽教育出版社 [Anhui Education Press], 2001, p. 452, entry for May 23, 1941.

⁹⁷ 宋子文致蒋介石電 ["Telegram from T. V. Soong to Chiang Kai-shek"] (June 5, 1941), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-020300-00002-115.

⁹⁸ 蒋介石日記 ["The Chiang Kai-shek Diaries"], entry for August 23, 1941.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, entries for October 17 and October 18, 1941 (上星期反省錄 [Reflections on the Previous Week]).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, entry for October 18, 1941 (上星期反省錄 [Reflections on the Previous Week]).

French Indochina, which he came to recognize as an actual crisis by the end of October.¹⁰¹

With regard to the dispatch of Saburo Kurusu as a Special Envoy on November 3, Chiang Kai-shek believed that Kurusu would certainly present a new set of compromised terms but that these terms would not be accepted by the United States as long as Japan did not give up on its attempt to take over China. Furthermore, he believed that on the basis of intelligence from the United States and Britain as well as their stance, the United States was determined to impose sanctions on Japan, which Chiang predicted would be implemented the following month, and if Chinese forces were able to hold out in Yunnan Province until the middle of the following month, the final goal of their resistance would be achieved.¹⁰²

Disagreement over the “modus vivendi” proposal

On November 20, Ambassador Nomura and Ambassador Kurusu presented Proposal B to U.S. Secretary of State Hull. On the morning of November 22, Hull held a meeting with the ambassadors of the United Kingdom, Australia, and the Netherlands, before giving an account of the United States’ position toward Japan after 1:00 p.m. in the presence of the Chinese ambassador. Hull then raised a “modus vivendi” proposal on the sidelines that would ease economic sanctions on Japan on the condition that Japan withdraws from French Indochina and does not invade other regions, since it was a challenge to respond to a full-scale war on both the Atlantic and Pacific fronts under those circumstances. Ambassador Hu Shih immediately reported this “modus vivendi” proposal raised at the meeting to China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Chongqing.¹⁰³ Perhaps not recognizing the gravity of the situation, Minister of Foreign Affairs Guo Taiqi did not report this to Chiang Kai-shek until 2:30 p.m. in the afternoon of November 24.¹⁰⁴

In the afternoon of November 24, Chiang Kai-shek instructed Ambassador Hu Shih to tell U.S. Secretary of State Hull that if the United States were to relax or revise their economic sanctions on Japan even slightly in the course of Japan-U.S. negotiations before the matter of the withdrawal of Japanese troops invading China was fundamentally resolved, Chinese resistance would certainly collapse and any subsequent U.S. aid for China would be futile, which would make it impossible for China to look to its friends for assistance ever again.¹⁰⁵ Chiang Kai-shek also ordered T. V. Soong, who was staying in Washington, D.C., as his personal representative, to notify the U.S. Secretary of War and Secretary of Navy of the same protest sent to Ambassador Hu Shih and verbally explain the gravity of the situation.¹⁰⁶ On

¹⁰¹ Ibid., entry for October 28, 1941.

¹⁰² Ibid., entry for November 8, 1941.

¹⁰³ 胡適致外交部第142号電 [“Telegram #142 from Hu Shih to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs”] (sent on November 22, 1941; received at 7:30 a.m. on November 24, 1941), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080103-00007-018.

¹⁰⁴ 郭泰祺呈蔣介石報告 [“Report Submitted by Guo Taiqi to Chiang Kai-shek”] (November 24, 1941), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-020300-00028-070.

¹⁰⁵ 蔣介石致胡適電 [“Telegram from Chiang Kai-shek to Hu Shih”] (November 24, 1941), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080103-00007-017.

¹⁰⁶ “Telegram from General Chiang Kai-shek to Dr. T. V. Soong” (Chungking, November 25, 1941), T. V. Soong Papers, Box 36, Folder 5, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University.

November 25, T. V. Soong transmitted Chiang Kai-shek's message to U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr.,¹⁰⁷ Coordinator of Intelligence William Donovan,¹⁰⁸ as well as to Secretary of the Navy Knox, with whom he held a meeting, and reported to Chiang that there was a difference of opinion between the positions of the military and the State Department.¹⁰⁹ Chiang Kai-shek also asked his political advisor Lattimore to convey his message to President Roosevelt through the President's Special Assistant Lauchlin Currie. In a telegram to Currie, Lattimore wrote, "After discussing with the Generalissimo about the Chinese Ambassador's conference with the Secretary of State, I feel you should urgently advise the President of the Generalissimo's very strong reaction. I have never seen him so agitated before [...] A relaxation of American pressure while Japan has its forces in China would dismay the Chinese."¹¹⁰

U.S. Secretary of State Hull summoned the ambassadors of the four countries again at 4:00 p.m. on November 24 and presented the details of the "modus vivendi" proposal with an effective period of three months. He explained that the reasons for this were that (i) the Navy's and Army's general staff still required two to three months for preparation, and (ii) since Japan had come to the talks in the pursuit of peace, it was necessary for the United States to at least adopt a conciliatory attitude at the outset.¹¹¹

When Chiang Kai-shek received a follow-up telegram from Ambassador Hu Shih and learned the details of the "modus vivendi" proposal drafted by the United States, his immediate reaction was, "I am inflamed with anger. Why is the United States so foolish and weak?"¹¹² In response, Chiang Kai-shek sent another telegram to Ambassador Hu Shih and T. V. Soong on November 25 to remind them to relay the following message to U.S. Secretary of State Hull as well as to President Roosevelt: "As the Japan-U.S. negotiations have been postponed and no conclusion has been reached, for the past three days, Japan has been spreading the propaganda that the U.S. and Japan had already reached a compromise and signed a secret agreement certifying that the U.S. will not interfere in the war between Japan and China and will lift the asset freeze as long as Japan abandons its southward advance. This has caused fear and consternation among the Chinese public, shaken our military and economy, and given rise to the prospect of an imminent collapse. If the U.S. government wants to keep China fighting for the entire Pacific and for democracy, Washington must never compromise with Japan and must not relax its ongoing policy of economic pressure and freezing of funds against Japan, even in the slightest, until all invading Japanese forces have withdrawn and the conflict fundamentally

¹⁰⁷ "To The Secretary of the Treasury" (November 25, 1941), T. V. Soong Papers, Box 64, Folder 2.

¹⁰⁸ "To Col. Donovan" (November 25, 1941), T. V. Soong Papers, Box 64, Folder 2.

¹⁰⁹ "To The Secretary of the Navy" (November 25, 1941), T. V. Soong Papers, Box 64, Folder 2; 宋子文致蒋介石電 ["Telegram from T. V. Soong to Chiang Kai-shek"] (November 26, 1941), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080103-00007-024.

¹¹⁰ "Telegram from Mr. Owen Lattimore to Mr. Lauchlin Currie" (Chunking, November 25, 1941), Owen Lattimore Papers, Box 27, Folder 13, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹¹¹ 胡適致重慶外交部第143号電 ["Telegram #143 from Hu Shih to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Chongqing"] (sent on November 24, 1941), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080103-00007-021.

¹¹² 蒋介石日記 ["The Chiang Kai-shek Diaries"], entry for November 26, 1941.

resolved.”¹¹³

T. V. Soong immediately requested Thomas Corcoran, one of President Roosevelt’s closest advisors, to relay Chiang Kai-shek’s message to the President. Roosevelt then invited T. V. Soong and Ambassador Hu Shih to the White House for a meeting at 2:30 p.m. in the afternoon of November 26.

President Roosevelt explained at the start of the meeting that Chiang Kai-shek’s protest was based on inaccurate intelligence. The description of the “modus vivendi” proposal in Ambassador Hu Shih’s telegram gave the impression that its implementation had already been finalized as U.S. policy and could not be reconsidered. However, according to Roosevelt’s explanation, the United States’ proposal had to be approved by friendly countries before being presented to Japan, and that the proposal had not been presented to Japan.

Roosevelt also said that the Secretary of State’s proposal could only relieve China’s pressure partially and temporarily. It certainly could not resolve the Sino-Japanese War in its entirety. Therefore, Roosevelt explained the proposal’s intention using the following analogy: There are two robbers broking from two sides, and if we pay five dollars to one of them for him to take a detour of ten miles, it will then be possible to defend against the other with full strength.

Although Hull had indicated that the Army and the Navy would need a three-month preparatory period, Roosevelt made no mention of this. However, Roosevelt also explained that based on intelligence gathered on the previous day, the Japanese had transported 20,000 to 30,000 soldiers southward from Shandong by sea, and that undertaking such actions amid negotiations was a sign of Japan’s bad faith, making it difficult to resume negotiations. He said that if Japan were to build up their forces in the south, negotiations would break down and war would be inevitable.

T. V. Soong reiterated that the “modus vivendi” proposal would not avert the threat and that he did not want China to collapse as a result of the Japan-U.S. negotiations. In response to this, Roosevelt avoided giving a direct answer and appeared uncomfortable in his response. Roosevelt then pointed out that the situation was changing quickly and unpredictably and that war could break out in the Pacific in a week or two. Roosevelt said he hoped that Generalissimo Chiang would not misunderstand in his haste.¹¹⁴

It is clear from the meeting described above that the “modus vivendi” proposal raised by U.S. Secretary of State Hull was an idea that he was strongly partial to and not a consensus reached by the U.S. government as a whole, and that he and President Roosevelt, in particular,

¹¹³ 蒋介石致胡適電 [“Telegram from Chiang Kai-shek to Hu Shih”] (November 26, 1941), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-010300-00046-033 (國史館藏 [The Academia Historica Collection]); 蒋介石致宋子文電 [“Telegram from Chiang Kai-shek to T. V. Soong”] (November 25, 1941), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-010300-00046-032 (國史館藏 [The Academia Historica Collection]).

¹¹⁴ 宋子文致蔣介石電 [“Telegram from T. V. Soong to Chiang Kai-shek”] (November 27, 1941), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080103-00007-027; 宋子文胡適致郭泰祺轉蔣介石報告與羅斯福會談情形電 [“Telegram from T. V. Soong and Hu Shih to Chiang Kai-shek via Guo Taiqi on the Meeting with Roosevelt”] (November 26, 1941), 吳景平 [Wu Jingping] & 郭岱君 [Kuo Tai-chun], eds., 宋子文駐美時期電報選 [Selected Telegrams of T. V. Soong During His Time in the United States], Shanghai: 復旦大學出版社 [Fudan University Press], 2008, pp. 136-137.

had a difference of opinion. According to Currie, Chiang Kai-shek's protest to the U.S. Secretary of War and Secretary of Navy on November 25 sent via T. V. Soong had a profound impact.¹¹⁵ Although Hull was extremely displeased with Chiang's protest, which had been lodged without going through proper diplomatic channels, other members of the U.S. Cabinet were sympathetic to the Chinese.¹¹⁶ Roosevelt might have initially believed that the "modus vivendi" proposal would be sufficient as a stopgap measure to address the crisis in Yunnan without causing too much damage to China, but China's protests through multiple channels, coupled with Churchill's telegram expressing his concern about the possible collapse of China, prompted Roosevelt to reconsider his position.¹¹⁷ In addition, intelligence regarding the Japanese force's southward advance received around the same time as China's protests played a significant role in influencing President Roosevelt's eventual decision to go to war against Japan.

Conclusion

Wartime China had a framework under which all intelligence was consolidated for the Chairman of the Military Affairs Commission, i.e., Chiang Kai-shek, before decisions were made. In reality, almost all decisions were made by Chiang Kai-shek, the Commission's Chairman, along with his private staff organization, the Personal Secretariat Office. Although decision-making under such a system was swift and efficient, Chiang Kai-shek often made incorrect judgments because his decisions were made arbitrarily based on limited information.

Two major problems may be highlighted in this regard. The first problem was the chaotic collection of intelligence agencies with overlapping responsibilities that reported on similar matters—often with different conclusions—and while they amassed a large volume of intelligence, the organization tasked with reviewing this intelligence was very poorly managed. There was a limit to the speed at which the dozens of people in the Personal Secretariat Office were able to process the intelligence forwarded to them by the thousands of people tasked to do so. It is clear that there was a major problem in terms of reviewing intelligence, and the emphasis Chiang Kai-shek placed on intercepted telegraphic intelligence was connected to this problem.

The other problem that may be pointed out is that of intelligence sharing. Originally, the KMT government had very limited sharing of intelligence because its leaders had relationships of latent rivalry with one another, even during wartime, due to factions within the Party, especially regional factions. Against this backdrop, the majority of the KMT government's intelligence agencies were established and developed as Chiang Kai-shek's private staff organizations. As a result, Chiang Kai-shek was the only person in the entire leadership who

¹¹⁵ 宋子文致蒋介石電 [“Telegram from T. V. Soong to Chiang Kai-shek”] (November 27, 1941), 蔣中正總統檔案 [Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek], 002-080103-00007-024.

¹¹⁶ 宋子文致蒋介石報告摩根索謂中國應取堅決之態度電 [“Telegram from T. V. Soong to Chiang Kai-shek on Morgenthau's Words That China Should Adopt a Firm Stance”] (November 27, 1941), 吳景平 [Wu Jingping] & 郭岱君 [Kuo Tai-chun], eds., 宋子文駐美時期電報選 [Selected Telegrams of T. V. Soong During His Time in the United States], p. 137.

¹¹⁷ “Churchill to Roosevelt” (November 26, 1941), PREM 3/156/5, The National Archives, Kew.

had access to all the intelligence in practice. Although intelligence was shared at meetings on various specific matters such as military and diplomatic affairs, such intelligence was basically presented only as a result of deliberations and not because it needed to be reviewed. Therefore, the reviews that took place at meetings were often not discussions but aimed at understanding the current situation and concurring with the conclusions that Chiang Kai-shek had reached. Although Chiang Kai-shek was relatively adept in his judgments on long-term strategy, he often erred in his short-term predictions and tactical assessments, which resulted in considerable confusion and failure.

Throughout 1941, a critical year for China during which the Japan-U.S. negotiations took place, Chiang Kai-shek had almost no access to Japan's diplomatic telegrams. Yet, the limited intelligence resulting from this made his strategic assessments more thoughtful and well-considered. Although war did not break out between Japan and the Soviet Union, the outbreak of war between Germany and the Soviet Union as well as between Japan and the United States were generally in line with Chiang Kai-shek's predictions. If he had had access to more reliable raw intelligence, such as intercepted and deciphered telegraphic intelligence, it is highly likely that he would have made different judgments based on more short-term predictions. It is said that Hull was displeased by Chiang Kai-shek's telegrams sent through multiple channels urging opposition to the "modus vivendi" proposal, but if Chiang Kai-shek had known the details of the Japan-U.S. negotiations from the outset through telegraphic intelligence, he might have attempted to intervene even more aggressively and risked turning the Americans' sympathy into exasperation, which could have inadvertently pushed the United States to reach a compromise with Japan instead.

Paradoxically, owing to the imperfect intelligence organizations and a system in which authority was concentrated in the hands of Chiang Kai-shek, he was ultimately able to protest at the most effective moment while avoiding unnecessary intervention, thereby achieving his most desired outcome: the outbreak of war between Japan and the United States.