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The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original may be apparent

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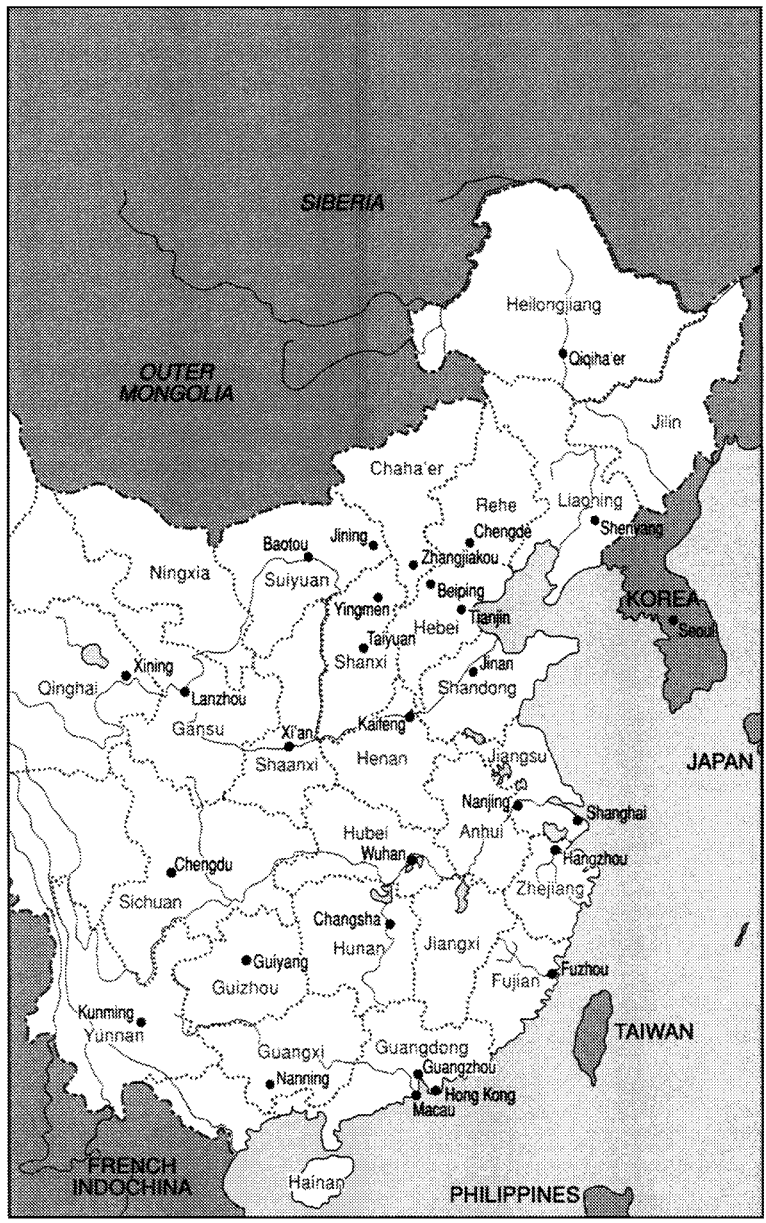

China in 1930

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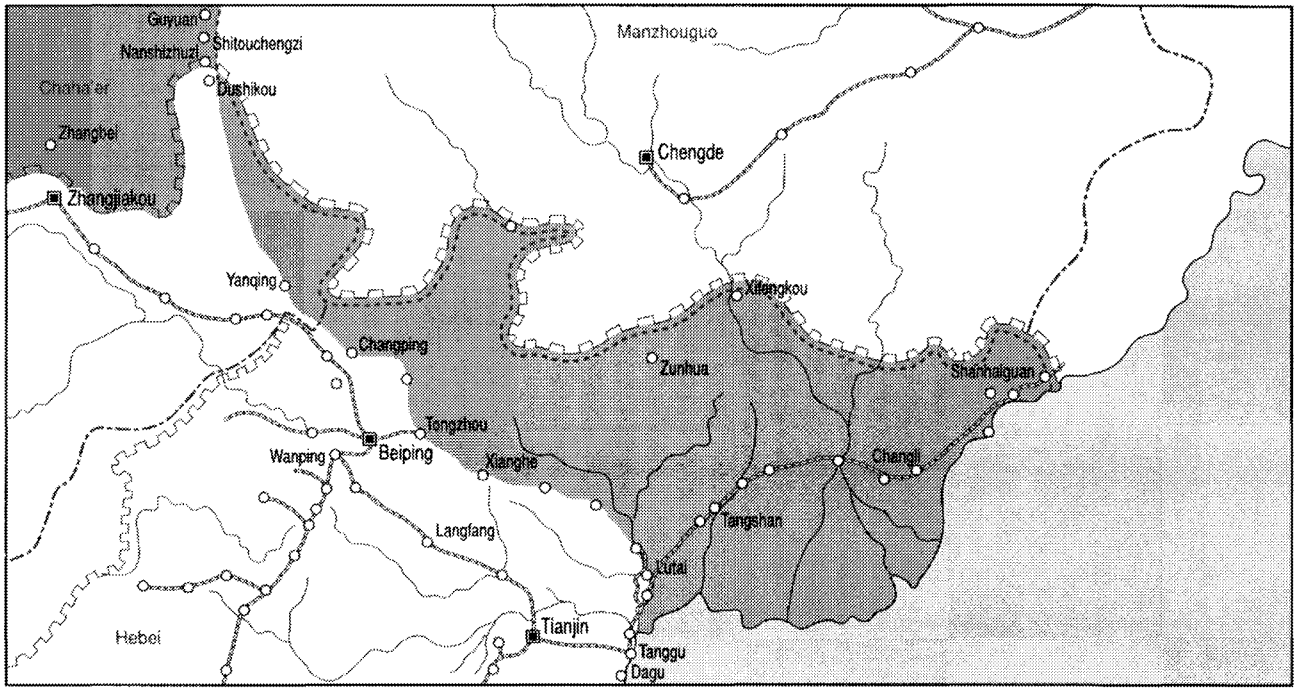

Beiping-Tianjin and demilitarised areas 1933–37

Adapted from 'Significance of the north China problem' *Tokyo Gazette*, 2, August 1937. We have been unable to locate a copyright holder for this map.

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INTRODUCTION

In the China of the 1930s, the quest for national unity and integration dominated domestic politics, and relations with Japan dominated China's foreign affairs. These two challenges combined to shape the predicament of north China, a region alienated from the centre and threatened by further Japanese expansion. Here, domestic and foreign affairs were not discrete spheres of activity and concern: the relationship between regional officials and the central authorities largely governed regional responses to Japanese activity, and political and military pressure from the Japanese armies on regional officials strained their relations with the centre. It is a truism that the Chinese nation was forged under the pressure of Japanese aggression, and that external pressure forced the Chinese to unite against a common foe or face destruction. Yet external pressure can divide as well as unite, and nowhere was this divisive tendency more practically damaging than in the north.

Foreign affairs are generally a national concern, and the Sino-Japanese conflict is conventionally conceived in national terms. The loss of Manchuria in 1931–1933, and the subsequent threat to north China cast doubt on the ability and commitment of the Nanjing government in defending the national interest. The sense of national humiliation generated by these defeats among Chinese elites sparked off a 'national salvation' movement, advocating policies of national resistance that were finally adopted by Nanjing in 1936–37. However, a closer examination of the developing conflict reveals that a powerful regional dynamic was at work. Japanese encroachment in north China was not a simple matter of

geographical proximity. In tightening their grasp over north China, the Japanese armies took advantage of regional conditions, exploited tensions between the regional and central authorities, and sought to reframe regional priorities, aspirations and loyalties to Japanese advantage.

In practice therefore, Sino-Japanese interaction was driven by competition for effective control over the north China region and, increasingly, for the loyalties of the region's officials. Although the principal actors on the Japanese side were officers of the Guandong and North China Garrison armies (*Kantō gun* – GDA; *Kahoku chūton gun* – NCGA), this was not wholly a military process, and the acutely political nature of the Sino-Japanese confrontation is revealed in the periods of relative calm between military eruptions. Throughout this time, the Japanese armies sought to extend their political influence in north China, most notably in the provinces of Hebei and Chaha'er. They justified this objective by a denial of Chinese unity and the legitimacy of the Nanjing government, and pursued it through direct pressure on the north China regional authorities.

In the last years before the war, therefore, the Sino-Japanese conflict became 'regionalised'. The two key aspects of this process of regionalisation were first, that matters directly affecting the north China region became central to the Sino-Japanese political relationship; and second, that direct control over Sino-Japanese interaction in the north passed from the Chinese central authorities first through the hands of central officials in the region, and thence to provincial officials of the region. Of the provincial governors and military commanders who formed the northern regional leadership, the most influential was Song Zheyuan, commander of the 29th Army and, successively, provincial governor of Chaha'er and chairman of the Hebei-Chaha'er Political Council (*Ji-Cha zhengwu weiyuanhui*, HCPC). The involvement of Song Zheyuan in contacts with the Japanese armies illustrates the conflicts and uncertainties that emerged as regional officials were drawn into the defence of the national interest, and this study is therefore built around the shifting narratives of his experience.

Regionalisation was initially the product of a distinct shift in the political strategies adopted by the Japanese military in dealing with China as a whole and north China as a region. At the same time, it was greatly facilitated by China's internal political conditions, particularly by weaknesses in institutional and personal relations

between the central and regional authorities. It therefore presented the Chinese central government with two challenges. First, it was necessary to establish in north China administrative structures that would contain the regional threat; and second, it was essential that the centre be able to command the obedience and the loyalty of all officials in the region. In practice, as bureaucratic structures came under increasing pressure, the personal abilities and loyalties of regional officials such as Song Zheyuan attracted far more attention in Nanjing than the structures within which they worked. Consequently, an appreciation of the role of the north China authorities in interactions with Japan and of their relationship with the government in Nanjing would appear central to an analysis of the Sino-Japanese relationship.

The administrative changes implemented by Nanjing in north China were intended to address both structural and personal challenges. These measures represented a systematic effort to consolidate central power in the north, to accelerate the political and administrative integration of the region and thereby minimise the disruptive potential of further Japanese initiatives. This was not a straightforward task. Relations between north China and the centre had remained uncomfortable after 1928, as the centralising ambitions of the Nanjing government clashed with established northern interests, and the need for stability in this troublesome region prompted the central government to establish an additional tier of administration above the provincial authorities. This was formalised after the Manchurian incident in 1931 to confirm the positions in north China of Huang Fu and He Yingqin, senior central officials closely associated with Chiang Kai-shek. The two key organisations here were the Political Affairs Commission (*Beiping zhengwu zhengli weiyuanhui*; PAC) which was established in May, 1933 in Beiping and the Beiping Branch Military Council (*Junshi weiyuanhui Beiping fenhui*; BMC). The PAC was chaired by Huang Fu, and was directly subordinate to the Executive Yuan. The BMC, chaired by He Yingqin, was established in August, 1932, and was a sub-branch of the Military Affairs Commission.[1]

The BMC and the PAC acted as a vehicle for the extension of central control over the region. The councils managed military and administrative reform and supervised political education work with the provincial governments and armies, with the aim of focusing regional loyalties on Nanjing. The PAC and the BMC drew in most senior northern political and military leaders, including provincial

governors, the mayors of Beiping and Tianjin and a minority of figures from outside government circles such as Beiping University principal Jiang Menglin. However, the councils served principally to discuss and disseminate the orders of the centre and provided few opportunities for northern leaders to influence the affairs of the region. The difficulties of relations between centre and region were reflected in the personal tensions between the provincial administrations and the centrally-appointed officials who led the councils: Huang Fu claimed to find it easier to deal with the Japanese than with Chinese officials in Beiping, and this dislike was apparently reciprocated.[2] As will be seen below, the political education programmes supervised by the BMC were only slightly more successful.

After the loss of Rehe province and the conclusion of the Tanggu cease-fire agreement in 1933, Nanjing found itself facing far more complex problems, and the roles of the BMC and the PAC were expanded accordingly. The Japanese armies now insisted that all issues of contention in north China be dealt with locally, and the council chairmen He and Huang assumed substantial responsibility for the management of contacts with the Japanese authorities in north China. While this delegation of responsibility to the BMC and the PAC allowed, in principle, the local resolution of Sino-Japanese disputes with a degree of control by the central government, in practice the system was cumbersome. Non-urgent matters, such as the restoration of transport and communications between Hebei-Chaha'er and Manchuria were dealt with relatively easily; the resolution of military conflicts and other urgent problems was less straightforward. Between 1933 and 1935, Japanese definitions of a 'local settlement' gradually shifted to exclude BMC personnel from the later stages of conflict resolution; the division of responsibility between central, quasi-local and local organs of government for discussions on any one issue was decided *ad hoc*; and poor communication between Chinese government organisations impeded the co-ordination of responses. As Japanese demands escalated, provincial officials in north China found themselves increasingly involved in the discussion and management of matters of national importance with little support from the centre.

Thus there were important internal weaknesses in the administrative order headed by the BMC and the PAC. The management of contacts with the Japanese authorities after 1933 was further complicated by the Japanese armies' manipulation of the treaty

framework within which these were conducted. The Tanggu cease-fire agreement – which concluded the conflict in Rehe province – granted significant privileges to Japanese forces in the region; and it was subsequently exploited by elements within the Japanese armies to consolidate their own position in Hebei-Chaha'er, undermining the authority of the Chinese central government, and exacerbating tensions between Chinese regional and central officials. The cease-fire agreement itself was a contentious enough document.[3] It created a 'demilitarised' war zone (*zhanqu*) in east Hebei, from which Chinese army units were excluded, and established rights for Japanese forces to supervise and verify the maintenance of the cease-fire. The agreement also included stipulations that the Chinese police forces – the Peace Preservation Corps (*bao'andui*, PPC) – responsible for order in the demilitarised zone should not include units hostile to the Japanese, and that in the event of any disturbance which the PPC could not manage independently, the Japanese armies should be involved in its resolution. The revelation of these last conditions, some time after the conclusion of the agreement, was damaging to Nanjing; yet it was less the letter of the cease-fire agreement than its creative reinterpretation by the Japanese armies, that later undermined the centre's control over the north.

While Nanjing insisted that the truce was a purely military agreement and that its terms applied only until hostilities were ended, the Japanese armies' expansion of the terms of the agreement, and their insistence that the agreement remained effective indefinitely, had serious political implications. The powers granted to Japanese forces were later reinterpreted to legitimise broad intervention in public order and political matters in Hebei-Chaha'er. In 1935, Chinese undertakings in the original agreement to refrain from 'provocative or disruptive action' were invoked by the NCGA in the designation of all actions deemed hostile to Japan as contraventions of the Tanggu truce. The stipulation that the police force responsible for the maintenance of order in the demilitarised War Zone in east Hebei was not to include units hostile to Japan became a blanket rejection of all officials and organisations in Hebei and Chaha'er seen as unfriendly to Japan, and this was used to justify demands that provincial governors be dismissed and that central army units and GMD organisations be removed from the provinces. And the boundary of the War Zone itself was extended from Hebei province into Chaha'er to create a

new demilitarised zone on the Chaha'er-Rehe border after Sino-Japanese clashes in the area. The administrative order headed by the BMC and the PAC began to crumble as the Japanese armies increasingly sought to bypass the councils and to undermine the authority of the centre in the north, and the withdrawal of GMD branches and of central army units based in Hebei and Chaha'er deprived the councils of their political and military infrastructure. He Yingqin and Huang Fu retreated south in despair, and their responsibilities in handling contacts with the Japanese passed effectively into the hands of regional officials.

The closer involvement of regional officials in contacts with Japan created a number of serious problems. The pressures exerted by Japan in north China were as complex as they were intense; while provincial officials in north China were possibly better aware than their central counterparts of the regional threat posed by Japanese encroachment, few of them had had any experience of dealing with foreign affairs or with matters of national, rather than regional, interest. Moreover, in the highly unequal relationship that obtained between the Chinese and the Japanese in north China, they were further handicapped by having no formal power to act without authorisation from the central government. It is clear that the central authorities often doubted the competence of regional officials in confronting the challenges created by the Japanese presence in north China; yet it is equally clear that the competence of individuals, and the efficacy of policies was not the limit of Nanjing's concerns.

The question of loyalty was also central to central and regional considerations of the north China problem. Observers and actors alike insisted on unquestioning loyalty to the national interest on the part of all engaged in dealings with Japan; yet understandings of precisely what that loyalty entailed, and how it should be enacted, differed. The central authorities saw the very existence of a regional dimension to the relationship with Japan as an aberration. Nanjing therefore argued that the national interest was best served by restoring normal relations between Japanese and Chinese central governments, and 'renationalising' the Sino-Japanese relationship. Loyal regional officials were expected to act in service of this greater aim. They were expected to confront Japanese pressure without flinching, and at all times to recognise that interests more important than their own personal or regional concerns were at stake. At times this forced national and personal interests into conflict: as

concessions were imposed in the north by the Japanese armies the burden of these fell disproportionately on regional officials. Yet obedience to the central government also required at times that officials disregard or sacrifice interests which they understood to be national. Such sacrifices might perceived as problematic even by close associates of the centre. For regional officials – whose loyalties to Nanjing and to the GMD might be only recently established, tenuous, or conditional – concessions to Japan in north China created an apparent tension, not between personal and national interest, but between national interests and the decisions taken at the centre. In its dealings with regional officials such as Song Zheyuan, Nanjing argued that loyalty to the national interest could be effectively enacted only through obedience to the commands of the central government; yet it is clear that Nanjing was able neither to override alternative understandings of the national interest, nor to win out against alternative foci of loyalty.

SONG ZHEYUAN: REGIONAL POWER AND NATIONAL LOYALTIES

The career of Song Zheyuan illustrates the shifting alliances and loyalties that characterised politics and military service in early Republican China. While Song was regarded by the mid-1930s both by the central government and by the Japanese authorities as a figure of essentially regional importance and attachments, the evidence of his early life is more ambiguous. Song Zheyuan was born in 1885 in Leling in north-western Shandong into a family of some education but uncertain income. Song was educated from the age of seven by his father – who worked in a series of short-term posts as a teacher and secretary – and his grandfather, and was therefore exposed from an early age to the orthodox values of loyalty to the state and public service. Instead of following his father into the civil service examination system, however, Song had to abandon his studies in 1901, and he worked to support the family in teaching and farming.[4]

In his autobiography, Song does not generally refer to national affairs before 1911, but other biographers have noted that he might well have been aware of the disasters afflicting China directly and indirectly from the 1890s, from China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese war of 1895 and the German occupation of Jiaozhou bay, through the Boxer rebellion, to the Russo-Japanese war in 1905.[5] In 1906,

Song took a further step towards formal public service, when his father used family connections to get him admitted to military school in Beijing. Song graduated in 1910, and served first the imperial government and then the central regimes that succeeded it, first under the command of Lu Jianzhang, for whom his father had worked, and then under Lu's relative Feng Yuxiang.[6] Song recorded that, during this time, he was involved in the suppression of the Bai Lang rising in Henan of 1914, the 'National Protection' movement in Sichuan in 1916, and the embryonic federalist movement in Hunan in 1920.[7] There was little in Song Zheyuan's own account of his early career to suggest attachment to any concept of China other than a unified and centralist one.

From the mid-1920s, Song's intentions became less clear. He joined forces – under the leadership of Feng Yuxiang – with the GMD in 1927; but his declared adherence to the principle of a unified China did not translate easily into a close relationship with the Nanjing government or the GMD. In the north-south war of 1929–30, he was initially loyal to Feng and Yan Xishan and opposed to the Nanjing government. However, in 1930, he switched his allegiance to the national government, and thereby contributed to the collapse of the northern revolt which he had been instrumental in starting. This last move secured his political and military status in north China. He was rewarded in 1932 with the post of provincial governor of Chaha'er and the command of the new 29th Army. This incorporated most of Feng Yuxiang's North-Western Army (*Xibei jun*) and, as the largest, best-trained and best-equipped force in north China, assured his military position in the region.

From 1932, Song was subject to pressure both from Nanjing and from Japan. At first, he continued to benefit personally from following the central line on resistance to Japan. When Feng Yuxiang, still disillusioned with the Nanjing government and doubting their commitment to defending north China, raised the People's United Anti-Japanese Army (*Minzhong kang Ri tongmeng jun*) to fight Japanese forces in Chaha'er, Song disassociated himself from his former commander. When Feng's initiative collapsed, these forces, like the North-Western Army, were handed over to Song Zheyuan. Yet Song and his troops also made sacrifices. The 29th Army's heroic struggle against the Japanese in Rehe in 1933 – particularly at the battle of Xifengkou – secured Song's reputation as a hero of national resistance, and he was portrayed in popular works as a key figure in the defence of north China.[8]

While Song was perceived at this time as a 'patriot' for his resolution in resisting Japanese aggression, Nanjing recognised that patriotism on these terms did not guarantee unconditional loyalty and obedience to the centre on other matters and Song, like other northern leaders, was targeted by the GMD's political education programmes. Political education in the armies and local government organisations of north China was an attempt to shore up the centre's authority in the north, to improve personal relations with northern leaders, and thereby to strengthen the region from within against Japanese encroachment and residual regional attachments.[9] Political education in the 29th Army, as in other military and political organisations in north China, began in earnest in early 1933 under the guidance of Liu Jianqun. It survived in covert form from mid-1935 when the Japanese armies insisted that all GMD branches in Hebei-Chaha'er be closed down, and was wound up late autumn 1935, when the last GMD officer Xuan Jieqi was arrested by the Japanese authorities in Beiping and then expelled from the region. GMD officers recognised the tensions that persisted between, for example, northern armies and the BMC, and political work in the north was seen as a hardship posting, not only because of the lack of enthusiasm shown by Song for the GMD, but also because personal relations between GMD officers and northern officials were frequently strained. The 29th Army was seen as a particularly hard case: more than one officer recalled difficulties in securing meetings with Song on arrival in Chaha'er, and found northern military and civil officials suspicious of the centre.[10]

Although the officers selected for political work in the north were chosen mostly for their reliability and orthodoxy in thought, their personal qualities and their capacity to build personal relations with northern leaders were also taken into consideration. Liu Jianqun noted that, while he felt Xuan Jieqi might lack the subtlety needed for the delicate task of building bridges with northern leaders, his Shandong bluntness might appeal to Song.[11] Liu Jianqun and Xuan Jieqi presented the development of their own close relations with Song as a major achievement, but conceded that his loyalty to Chiang Kai-shek was not personal, but conditional on Chiang's status as *de facto* national leader; nor does Song seem to have moved closer to the GMD as an institution or to the Nanjing government. And there was no substantial, organised programme of mass education for the 29th Army beyond the personal cultivation of its senior officers.[12]

Nor did the GMD officers claim to have enhanced Song's appreciation of GMD ideology. 29th Army officers were issued with pictures of Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek, which they were expected to carry at all times, but they also carried *baihua* selections from the Four Books and Five Classics. Song himself is more often remembered for his attachment to Confucian principles than for any interest in the Three Principles of the People. His collected writings include prefaces to editions of the *Mencius*, and the *Doctrine of the Mean*, but no discussion of GMD precepts; and Liu Zhensan recalled that while Song accepted Sun Yat-sen's thinking as essential to national salvation (*jiu Zhongguo*), he also saw Confucian values as essential to a national revival (*xing Zhongguo*).[13]

While personal and political factors clearly affected his relationship with the centre, the influence on Song of practical circumstances should not be discounted. Having begun his career on the national stage, Song was confined after 1928 to the Hebei-Chaha'er-Rehe area. Song kept his distance, geographically as well as politically, from the central authorities. He did not displace himself to visit Nanjing – or the peripatetic Chiang Kai-shek – until after the fall of Beiping to Japanese forces in 1937. His personal political horizons, once national, were now regional in a peripheral and shrinking region: while his roots were not in principled or *de facto* regionalism, Song Zheyuan had had a regional role thrust upon him. Yet while Song's confinement to the endangered north might imply political as well as geographical marginalisation, with its accompanying loss of status and access, the threat facing north China meant that he remained a key figure in national affairs.

With the regionalisation of the Sino-Japanese confrontation, Song Zheyuan was powerful enough to attract the attention of the Japanese armies in their search for an alternative leader for the north and to count as a potentially independent actor in northern politics. As the Japanese armies used a combination of threats and promises to increase and formalise division between the region and the centre, Nanjing exhorted north China officials to remain loyal, to resist Japanese pressure and to defend the national interest at all costs. At first, regional officials such as Song Zheyuan had some opportunities to exploit these conflicting pressures to enhance their own positions within the region, but the centre's defence of its own conception of the national interest at times cut across regional interests, and latterly Song's freedom of action was increasingly limited by these competing demands.

At times, central officials were happy to exploit the appearance of distance between Song and Nanjing where this suited their purposes: Xuan Jieqi recalled complaining to Japanese officials of Song's waywardness, hoping that this might lead the Japanese authorities to be more kindly disposed to Song than they might have been to a provincial governor with a closer relationship to authorities in Nanjing.[14] However, once the burden of dealing with the Japanese fell increasingly on Song Zheyuan and his peers, it was vital to the credibility and indeed the survival of the Nanjing government that Song be seen by Chinese audiences to be following the central line. His actions had a direct and vital influence on the internal organisation and external defence of the Chinese state, and were seen as an indicator of the central government's ability to act or to secure action in the national interest.

Particularly after in 1935, Song's talks with the Japanese military alarmed the central government as his intransigence in those talks apparently infuriated the Japanese: he repeatedly – and at times apparently voluntarily – became involved in discussions with the NCGA which threatened the security of the north and the unity of China, yet always drew back from compromising agreements. The Nanjing government's recognition of the constraints under which Song Zheyuan worked appeared limited. While Nanjing could offer Song little support or protection in his dealings with the Japanese, his behaviour attracted the distrust of many central officials and was seen by the central government as a major constraint on its pursuit of national security.

It seems probable that Song himself was unable consistently to reconcile the demands made of him by the various audiences of his actions, central and regional, Chinese and Japanese, and unable to develop an approach to dealing with the Japanese authorities that combined practicability with a degree of honour. Song's aloofness, and the internal contradictions of the positions he adopted, were seen by contemporary observers as evidence that he was not wholly committed to the principle of a united and sovereign China; yet these were also necessary to his survival in the north, and to his continued defence of regional and national interests therein. Defence of the region against its most immediate enemy – Japan – required the support of the central authorities: Song could not stray too far from the path of 'national' salvation without fatally undermining his own position. At the same time, too obviously

close a relationship with the central government risked provoking action by the Japanese, and Song's need to preserve a visible distance between himself and Nanjing in order to escape the wrath of the Japanese created tensions with the centre. Thus the Japanese presence placed substantial constraints on Song's actions and effectively prohibited the adoption of an unequivocally 'nationalist' or 'regionalist' stance.

SONG ZHEYUAN IN PERSONAL RECORDS

The official record of Song's activities, as presented in the currently available government correspondence of the time, is incomplete and at times speculative. The most substantial supplementary source on Song is found in the genre of memoir literature: former associates of Song in the 29th Army, personal acquaintances, and GMD officers who worked with him in the mid-1930s have all written on their experiences. Much of this writing explains the apparent inconsistencies or contradictions in Song's behaviour in terms of the traditional dichotomies: on one hand 'unification' nationalism and regionalism; on the other 'resistance' nationalism and collaboration with Japan. None of the explanations offered in the memoirs wholly accounts for the actions of Song individually or of the north China authorities collectively between 1935 and 1937.

The explanations offered for Song's behaviour in these accounts tend to vary according to the author's relationship with Song, and their personal involvement with discussions with the Japanese armies or the centre. Writers who were personally and directly involved in these contacts predictably present them – and Song's motives – in a much more positive light than those who were not. The place and the political climate in which the memoirs were produced also affected interpretations of Song's behaviour: accounts produced in Taiwan are on the whole less sceptical of Song's actions and motives than those written on the mainland. Few areas of China's recent history have been as contested as relations with Japan, and these memoirs appear as a palimpsest on which memory, hearsay and orthodox postwar interpretations of prewar events are imposed.

In memoirs first published on the mainland, mostly by former subordinates of Song such as his secretary Wang Shijiu, 29th Army staff officer Zhang Yueting and liaison officer Li Shijun, the writers portray Song as a 'regionalist' at heart. These writers do not suggest

that Song deliberately sought to trade national interests for personal advantage. However, they do argue that personal status and the security of the 29th Army were more important to him than the fate of the nation, and that preoccupation with these sectional concerns blinded him to the national implications of his actions. For these writers, it appears, the defining elements in Song's relationships with the centre and with the Japanese authorities are his apparent disregard of central instructions in dealing with the Japanese armies, the alleged flirtations of Song and some of his subordinates with Japanese plans for an 'autonomous' north China, and his reluctant participation in certain national enterprises.

An alternative explanation is more commonly found in memoirs written in Taiwan; these include the memoirs of Qin Dechun, Song's second in command, and the recollections of GMD political education officers. In these accounts, Song is depicted as a patriotic nationalist, declaring his allegiance in 1930 to the national government in Nanjing, and resisting the threats and blandishments of the Japanese armies to remain ultimately loyal to the central authorities despite the personal and political risks involved. These writers suggest that, despite certain differences with Nanjing over policy, Song retained an allegiance to a nation and a state encompassing all China; and they emphasise Song's rejection of the most damaging concessions demanded of him and his ultimate choice in July 1937 of resistance over compromise.[15]

Most writers – whatever their final judgement on Song – assume that he generally acted with a high degree of autonomy in dealing with Nanjing and the Japanese. Although memoir accounts, and some contemporary sources, suggest that he was subject in his weaker moments to influence from 'unreliable' advisers such as Xiao Zhenying, the nature of their relationship with Song, and their influence on his dealings with the Japanese, are rarely explored. The only accounts to engage with these questions are the memoirs of Xiao Zhenying himself and the reminiscences of some of his own closest associates.[16] Xiao's own account, completed shortly before his death in 1947, offers a different perspective on the relationships involved. Xiao painted Song as a relatively weak and indecisive figure, vacillating between attachment to personal and national interests, and frequently straying towards traps set by the Japanese armies before being led back to safer ground by Xiao himself. Xiao's former subordinates emphasised Song's unquestioning trust of Xiao, and asserted that, while he certainly possessed the taste for

political dealing that awoke the suspicions of his critics, Xiao's willingness to take risks and to haggle over political arrangements with the Japanese armies was grounded in a naturally austere character and an unshakeable loyalty to the national interest.[17] Xiao claimed that he was the victim of self-interested slanders spread by central officials shamed by his higher regard for the national interest. Li Wentian echoed this assertion, and attributed suspicion of Xiao's motives either to ignorance or to malice,

> Some people do not understand the inside story of these events; others do not understand politics; still others have ulterior motives for spreading these slanders in disregard of actual historical circumstances.[18]

And Xiao asserted that his dealings with the Japanese throughout were governed by a series of overlapping loyalties:

> My method at all times is, first, to revere the pure virtue of our ancestors, and to do nothing but what is right; second; if Chiang Kai-shek treats us as valued servants of the nation, then we will serve him as such; third, as Chairman Yu [Youren] exhorted our revolutionary comrades, if we do not aspire to serve the nation by saving north China, and by restoring our native place to China, then how are we to be worthy sons and grandsons of our forbears?[19]

Thus the theme of loyalty or the absence of loyalty is constantly present in the memoir accounts. Some former participants or observers wrote condemning failures of loyalty on the part of actors such as Song Zheyuan and Xiao Zhenying; others have recorded that their loyalty to higher national interests remained unshaken despite the impossibility of effective defence against Japanese encroachment. Historical examples of loyalty and disloyalty also appear in the memoirs. Li Shijun recalled Song Zheyuan declaring that he would never follow the example of Shi Jingtang or Zhang Bangchang in abandoning Chinese interests in the face of pressure from the north, and the name of Pu Yi was invoked in exchanges with the centre.[20] Finally, the act of remembering and recording was at times conceived in itself as an act of loyalty to the memory of former comrades. Yet if we return to Xiao Zhenying's account above of the loyalties that informed his actions, we see that, while these loyalties were conceived as complementary rather than mutually conflicting, they were not all unconditional: service to the nation,