

Article

The Reasons and Roles of the Establishment of National Political Assembly (Guo Min Can Zheng Hui)

Li Xiang*, Suffian Mansor & Azlizan Mat Enh

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi,
Selangor, Malaysia

*Corresponding Author: p118467@siswa.ukm.edu.my

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Abstract: For nearly 80 years, the study of National Political Assembly (Guo Min Can Zheng Hui) has been a hot topic among scholars in mainland China. However there's a scarcity of deep research regarding the reasons and roles of National Political Assembly. This study aims to identify the reasons behind the establishment of National Political Assembly and to explore National Political Assembly's role in uniting the Chinese. A qualitative research approach was employed, involving collecting primary and secondary historical materials in archives and libraries of China for literature analysis and case studies of representative events or proposals. The findings show that its establishment was related to Japan's aggression, the foreign policies of the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union and other countries, as well as the domestic anti-Japanese parties represented by the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of China, and the people of all walks of life across the country. This paper concludes that in the early days of its establishment, it played a positive role in China's unity against Japan, democratic politics, and economic stability. This research is extremely valuable for studying the history of China's Second Sino-Japanese War and the Second KMT-CPC Collaboration, as well as the economic policies, political proposals, and military strategies of the Kuomintang, the Communist Party of China, and other parties involved in the Second Sino-Japanese War, as well as the history of the Communist Party of China, the Republic of China, and modern Chinese history.

Keywords: National Political Assembly; The Second KMT-CPC Collaboration; Second Sino-Japanese War; Kuomintang; Communist Party of China

Introduction

National Political Assembly was the highest national advisory body organized by the National Government during Second Sino-Japanese War. It was a major event in the democratization of Chinese politics during the war, as it embraced all political forces in the country, including Kuomintang of China (KMT), the Communist Party of China (CPC), the middle parties and independents. It was a major event in the process of political democratization in wartime China. It not only had a bearing on the success or failure of the war effort but was also closely related to the process of political democratization in modern China. For this reason, the study of National Political Assembly has long been a hot topic of interest in academic circles.

The academic community has a relatively unified view on the reasons for the establishment of National Political Assembly. Most scholars believe that the outbreak of Second Sino-Japanese War and the realization of cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of China were the prerequisites for the establishment of National Political Assembly (Xin, 2006). The mainstream view is that in order to adapt to the overall situation of the national war of resistance and promote the process of political democracy, the two parties put aside their past grudges, tolerated each other for the sake of the country, and achieved a second

cooperation. On the basis of the cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of China, the most extensive anti-Japanese national united front was established, which led to the emergence of National Political Assembly (Tang & Fu, 2019). However, through the organization of historical documents, this research found that the above reasons are only apart of it. In fact, there are more complex reasons that forced the establishment of National Political Assembly, including complex international and domestic environments. Regarding the historical role of National Political Assembly, academic circles have reached a basic consensus, that is, it is both progressive and limited.

Therefore, this research aims to re-interpret historical archives, analyze the reasons for the establishment of National Political Assembly from multiple perspectives, and explore the roles of this institution on the political, economic, and military aspects of China. It aims to provide a comprehensive and in-depth perspective for understanding China's policies in wartime and to provide a new historical perspective and theoretical support for academic research on The Second KMT-CPC Collaboration in China.

Methodology

This study is the qualitative study that includes literature analysis and case studies. Literature analysis involve collecting primary and secondary resources. The primary resources have been collected at archives. This study has visited several of archives mainly in Nanjing, Chongqing, Wuhan, Shanghai of China, involving files like letters, reports, diaries, meeting records, telegram, address, memoirs, proposals of senators and so on. The Second Historical Archives of China, Chongqing Archives in China and so on are the main institutions that collects historical materials of National Political Assembly, moreover, there are a lot of relevant historical materials in National Library of China, Nanjing Library in China, Chongqing Library in China, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Library, Shanghai Library in China, Jilin Library in China and so on (Tan, 2018). Among them, relevant reports and editorials in various newspapers at that time are an important part of our historical materials, such as National Government Gazette, Ta Kung Pao, Xinhua Daily, Xinmin Daily, Central Daily and so on.

The secondary resources have been collected from books, academic journals, dissertation, internet and so on. Case studies involve special events that affected the role of National Political Assembly or proposals related to unity Chinese in the war and people's livelihood, such as The Second KMT-CPC Collaboration, Southern Anhui Incident, *"Proposal to consolidate the people's hearts in order to achieve victory in the war of resistance and success in nation building"* and so on. At present, relevant historical documents on National Political Assembly are relatively abundant. However, this study has its own standards for document selection, that is, primary historical materials are mainly selected, and secondary historical materials are selected as much as possible from authoritative or well-known document producers, closely related to the research topic, with rigorous logic and proper organization of historical materials. Finally, the collected historical materials has been organized into an analyzable format. Then, qualitative analysis methods, includes literature analysis and case studies, have employed to delve deeply into these materials.

More than 300 first-hand historical materials have been obtained from the Second Historical Archives of China. Three compilations of materials on National Political Assembly have been obtained from the library, as well as a large number of books related to the Second KMT-CPC Cooperation and Second Sino-Japanese War. In addition, old newspapers from that time were also purchased. Through the analysis of these historical materials, it is easy for us to clarify the reasons and roles of the establishment of National Political Assembly. In short, these historical materials support the findings of this article.

Findings and Discussion

Through the analysis of historical documents, this research contends that the establishment of National Political Assembly had complex international and domestic environments. Involving Japan, the Soviet Union, Britain and the United States and other Western countries as well as various classes in China. The research asserts that this institution united the military and civilians across the country, provided a political stage for discussing national issues for the victory of Second Sino-Japanese War, promoted the development of China's democratic politics, and played an active role in assisting the government in promoting economic construction.

1. Reasons for the Establishment of National Political Assembly

According to the findings of this study, the crazy attack of the Japanese imperialists in China pushed Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang, CPC, the Middle Party and other classes of the people to the brink of extinction. This environment was objectively conducive to the unity of all domestic political forces in China (except the pro-Japanese) to resist Japan. This finding endorses the notion by Li Baiqi (2000), he stated that in the face of Japan's all-out attack and the danger of national subjugation, the Kuomintang eventually made certain political concessions to the Communist Party of China, demonstrating its due spirit of pragmatism. Chiang Kai-shek put national justice first, resisted the political inducement of the Japanese invaders and maintained the overall situation of cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of CPC. In the article "National Political Assembly and the Anti-Japanese National United Front"(He & Jiang, 2015), the authors also believed that the formation of National Political Assembly was the result of the joint efforts of various anti-Japanese forces in the country during the War of Resistance.

The findings also indicate that America, Britain and France continued to be "neutral" and acquiesced in the cooperation between KMT and CPC against Japan. In the face of Japan's comprehensive war of aggression against China, Britain, the United States, France and other countries in China interests by further threat, so the conflict between Japan began to intensify, but unwilling to direct conflict with Japan, had to continue to take appeasement policy, but on the other hand, see China's territory by Japan, they have to secretly to moderate support to China. These findings are consistent with this of Yin Shaoyun (2008), China's Second Sino-Japanese War won the sympathy and support of people all over the world.

Furthermore, this study reveals that the Soviet Union's anti-Japanese policy of aid to China was conducive to the cooperation between KMT and CPC. The findings reflect that in order to avoid the east and west attack of German and Japanese fascism and concentrate on the defense of Western Germany, the Soviet Union must rely on China, which had been independently fighting with the Japanese army for several years and had fully fought against Japan, to strongly contain the Japanese invading forces from moving north, so as to ease its crisis in the east and avoid fighting with Japan. The use of China's resistance against Japan was the core of the Soviet Union's diplomacy in the Far East during this period. So for quite a period after the outbreak of The Second Sino-Japanese War, the Soviet Union gave China great help. This finding is completely consistent with Professor Qi's view in 1995, in his article "The International Environment and World Significance of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression", he explained that after the July 7 Incident, only the Soviet Union provided practical assistance to the Chinese government, and "*the Non-Aggression*" Treaty signed on July 21, 1937 was the Soviet Union's political support for China's War of Resistance (Qi, 1995). Of course, the Soviet Union also provided economic and military assistance, which was a mutually beneficial thing.

In 2005, in a study on The Second KMT-CPC Collaboration in the early days of Second Sino-Japanese War, Lin Xianggeng (2005) stated in the article that there was also a good relationship of unity, cooperation and joint external confrontation in politics, which was mainly reflected in the establishment of National Political Assembly and the two parties' joint discussions on the Anti-Japanese and national salvation plans at National Political Assembly. In line with the literature, this study's findings indicate that a political environment of national unity to promote cooperation and development between KMT and CPC. After the outbreak of Second Sino-Japanese War, in the face of the change of the international environment, under the banner of the Chinese communist party of the Anti-Japanese national united front, on the basis of The Second KMT-CPC Collaboration, all parties, factions, military, all walks of life, nationalities, classes, and overseas Chinese united to resist aggression. Firstly, all sectors of the country held Chiang against Japan. Secondly, KMT united with CPC to resist Japan. Thirdly, CPC supported Chiang against Japan. Fourthly, Middle parties support KMT and CPC to cooperate. Therefore, China appeared the most spectacular unity of the political environment, it is very conducive to the second KMT cooperation.

This finding is the mainstream view in the academic community. For example, Zhu Xinyi and He Jian's article also mentioned that, the political basis of the second cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party was to resist Japan and save the nation, on this basis, the relationship between the two parties was relatively good in the early days of Second Sino-Japanese War, so the political cooperation was also effective (Zhu & He, 1994). Similar views also appear in "The Political Attitude of the National Government

in the Early Stage of Second Sino-Japanese War from the Establishment of National Political Assembly" (Shen, 2002) and "Study on National Political Assembly and the Political Trend of China during Second Sino-Japanese War" (Chen, 1999), and they both mentioned the establishment of National Political Assembly in this background.

The study shows that ensuring the economic environment of the war of resistance is conducive to the promotion of cooperation between KMT and CPC. War is not only a contest of military power, but also a contest of economic power. The maintenance and development of the economy is the basis of the war. The same view also appeared in the research of Meng Qingchun and Zhang Yongli (2007). Their research showed that the common economic interests were the reason why the KMT-CPC cooperation lasted for a long time and could not be ignored. They also used specific data to illustrate this point. For the Communist Party of China, the implementation of new economic policies helped consolidate the economic foundation of KMT. KMT also gave corresponding rewards, taking out a part of the fiscal revenue of the National Government and giving it to the Communist Party of China and its Eighth Route Army and New Fourth Army on time and in quantity, so that it could devote itself to the national Anti-Japanese war for a long time.

A domestic military environment of common resolve to promote cooperation between KMT and CPC. This view is stated in articles such as "Study on the Two Battlefields during China's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression" (Li, 2005) and "Study on the Status and Role of the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of China in Second Sino-Japanese War" (Jiang & Cao, 2015) that the troops in the enemy's rear battlefield and the Kuomintang's frontal battlefield cooperated with each other and relied on each other to jointly resist the Japanese invaders and dealt a heavy blow to the Japanese fascists. This finding affirms the study that after the outbreak of Second Sino-Japanese War, the whole country was filled with enthusiasm for the war and shared a common hatred of the enemy. This period was the time when China's military was most united and the time when China's military environment was the best.

The study findings also highlight the importance of the united, harmonious, healthy and upward cultural environment, which has promoted the cooperation between KMT and CPC. After the outbreak of the all-out War of Resistance against Japanese aggression, the war witnessed unprecedented unity in the educational and cultural circles. In "article enlistment, articles to the countryside" under the influence of the slogan, the education workers, cultural workers out of the campus, out of the pavilion, bravely into the battlefield and rural, with their special way, shoulder comprehensive propaganda, expose the invaders, morale morale, propaganda heroic deeds, meet the demand of the people across the great mission of cultural, academic, education, news, religion, and all kinds of Anti-Japanese groups, growth, embodies the second KMT cooperation good cultural environment.

As Jia Wei's "Study on the National Anti-Japanese High Tide in the Early Stage of Second Sino-Japanese War" (Jia, 1985) states, the Third Department of the Political Department, headed by Guo Moruo, implemented the policy of the Anti-Japanese National United Front under the leadership of Zhou Enlai, the Deputy Minister of the Political Department, and brought together many representatives of the cultural circles to do a good job in propaganda and organization of the masses, thus promoting the upsurge of the Japanese national salvation movement. Moreover, the Anti-Japanese national salvation movement in the literary and art circles also developed rapidly. Countless literary and art workers responded to this call and actively joined the anti-Japanese torrent. A large number of poems, dramas, reportage, cartoons, and movies depicting the anti-Japanese war emerged like mushrooms after rain.

2. Roles of the Establishment of National Political Assembly

As Zhou Yong (2005), an authoritative expert in mainland China stated, National Political Assembly can be generally divided into three periods: In the early days of National Political Assembly (during the first session from July 1938 to April 1940), most of the Kuomintang, the Communist Party of China, other political parties and non-party political participants actively and enthusiastically offered suggestions for The Second Sino-Japanese War. In the middle period of National Political Assembly (during the second and third sessions from March 1941 to September 1944), the Kuomintang used the National Political Assembly to deceive public opinion, create anti-communist friction, and split the cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of China. In the later period of National Political Assembly (from July 1945 to the fourth session and

the end of March 1948), in order to continue to maintain one-party dictatorship and boycott the coalition government, the Kuomintang further increased reactionary elements in National Political Assembly on the eve of the victory of Second Sino-Japanese War and squeezed out progress.

During the War of Liberation, National Political Assembly became a tool used by the Kuomintang to instigate civil war and create division, and was eventually despised by the Chinese people. But it is undeniable that during Second Sino-Japanese War, National Political Assembly played a positive role. That is, the second year after the National Political Consultative Conference ended, the new China was founded and has since slowly risen. As Hisham Kamal Othman Kamal, Nor Azizan Idris and Zarina Othman (2016) affirmed in their research that China's rise began after World War II and the beginning of the Cold War era, starting with Mao Zedong's reconstruction of the Chinese nation in 1949 and continuing with Deng Xiaoping ensuring various changes and restructuring to push China further into opening up.

The finding also aligns with Meng Guanghan (1985), who affirms that National Political Assembly united the military and civilians across the country and provided a political stage for discussing national issues for the victory of Second Sino-Japanese War. These finding also supports the view of this study that during that period, the Anti-Japanese National United Front had neither a common program nor an organizational form, but the early National Political Assembly became a direct link between anti-Japanese parties and anti-Japanese patriots during Second Sino-Japanese War. Therefore, National Political Assembly played a role in maintaining and consolidating the Anti-Japanese National United Front in its early stages.

The study found that National Political Assembly promoted the development of China's democratic politics. The Anti-Japanese War period was a turning point in China's political and democratic process. The establishment of National Political Assembly provided an opportunity for the implementation of democratic politics in China. Although judging from the number of members and the method of election, such an organization can only be an "advisory body" controlled by the Kuomintang, which is far from the "public opinion body" desired by the Communist Party of China and other anti-Japanese parties, let alone a model of democratic politics. However, compared with China's feudal autocratic system and the so-called "democratic politics" since the Republic of China, National Political Assembly during Second Sino-Japanese War period made some progress in form and content. (Zhou, 2005)

Cai (1998) conducted a study that aimed to establish the relationship between the demand for political reform to facilitate the war of resistance to implement democratic constitutionalism and the establishment of National Political Assembly. His research showed with data that, the first session of National Political Assembly held five meetings and put forward 158 proposals related to internal affairs. Among them, there were more than 90 proposals calling for the implementation of democratic politics, accounting for 60%. This showed that the demand for political reform to facilitate the war of resistance was the aspiration of the people, and the Kuomintang government was forced to make a commitment to implement democratic constitutionalism during the war. This political situation was an initial impact on the one-party dictatorship of the Kuomintang.

The last finding of the study is that National Political Assembly played an active role in assisting the government in promoting economic construction. Since the second half of 1939, the economy has been in turmoil, and prices have followed the trend and tended to rise. Although the government took some measures to stabilize the market and stabilize prices, they had little effect, and by 1942 they were on the rise. The price issue has become a focus of national attention and concern to all people, and has also become the most important part of National Political Assembly's proposals. At the first meeting of the third session held in October 1942, the institution passed a resolution on Chiang Kai-shek's *"Report on the Implementation of the Plan to Strengthen Price Control"* after detailed discussion. National Political Assembly also carefully reviewed 16 proposals for stabilizing prices and passed the *"Resolution on Various Constructions for Stabilizing Prices"*. The resolution put forward 41 specific suggestions to the government from four directions: "principles", "regulatory institutions", "control measures", and "inspection, rewards and punishments". These have played a positive role in stabilizing prices, stabilizing the economy, and solving wartime financial and economic problems.

This is another mainstream viewpoint in the research of this topic. For example, in the article "A Study on the contribution of National Political Assembly to the war economy" (Chen, 2009), it is clearly mentioned

that the National Political Assembly is not only a stage for the political council members to express their political views, but it is also a wartime economic institution to a large extent. Under this economic institution, the political council members fully explored the economy of Second Sino-Japanese War at that time and put forward many economic proposals that were beneficial to Second Sino-Japanese War. These proposals influenced the government's economic policies and helped the government solve the economic difficulties at that time. Therefore, National Political Assembly made economic contributions to the victory of Second Sino-Japanese War.

Conclusion

National Political Assembly came into being due to the dual effects of the international environment and the domestic environment. It can be said that Second Sino-Japanese War was the most direct factor for its emergence. The attitude and covert assistance of other countries (America, Britain, France and the Soviet Union) was the external driving force for its emergence, while the fundamental reason for its emergence is the spiritual drive of people from all political parties and people from all walks of life in China to unite to demand a war of resistance. Although after ten years of hard struggle, along with the failure of the Kuomintang, National Political Assembly ended in defeat. But it is undeniable that, National Political Assembly played a positive role in uniting the people of the whole country to resist the war, promoting the process of China's democratic politics, and stabilizing the economy during Second Sino-Japanese War. This wartime product eventually lost its original meaning because of the victory of Second Sino-Japanese War war. In the end, National Political Assembly was abandoned by the people because it ran counter to the interests of the people.

The study on National Political Assembly is an important supplement to historical materials such as the history of the second cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of China, the history of China's Second Sino-Japanese War, and China's multi-party cooperation system. It has not only great academic value but also practical significance. At present, cross-strait political exchanges in Taiwan are becoming increasingly close, and the consultation mechanism is becoming more and more perfect. The Communist Party of China and the Kuomintang have established communication channels such as the KMT-CPC Forum, which have played an important role in curbing "Taiwan independence" and promoting the reunification of China, and have achieved certain results. The study of National Political Assembly and the artistry of the struggle between the Communist Party of China and the Kuomintang during that period are of great reference value to the present. However, based on the archival documents currently collected and used, most of them come from mainland collection institutions represented by the Second Historical Archives of China, but too few official archives collected by the National History Museum and Party History Museum in Taipei. There is even a lack of archives on wartime allies such as the U.S. Library of Congress. Scholars need to dig deeper into historical data to conduct more in-depth research on National Political Assembly.

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