

Japan and “Two China Question” Legacy of World War II

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ABSTRACT

The origin of “Two China Question” is often described as the outcome of Chinese Civil War in 1949 between Kuomintang (KMT) and Communist Party of China (CPC). It ideologically divided China into two countries which still claimed to be the righteous government of Chinese people. It remains salient until now. This paper will discuss the origin of this significant phenomenon by pointing out that the Empire of Japan by that time had importantly involved in the partition of China. Since 1895, the first Sino-Japanese war, it marked the first separation of Chinese-speaking people, Taiwan, from Chinese administration. Taiwan underwent industrial and agricultural development by Imperial Japan which lately supported defeated KMT government to lay its establishment in Taiwan. In the mid of Chinese Civil War in 1931, Manchuria incident halted the annihilation of CPC by KMT who inevitably had to turn their attention to Japanese invasion. CPC survived from the abyss of extinction and launched the famous long march. In 1937, Marco Polo incident ignited the second Sino-Japanese war and abided KMT to form its alliance with CPC against Imperial Japan. The war consumed KMT’s resources and manpower on the one hand. On the other hand, it provided CPC the precious time to recover and reconstruct its army. Already in 1945, CPC’s army became more advantage than KMT’s on battlefield when Civil War resumed and eventually became the victor in 1949. This paper suggests that with or without intention the Empire of Japan played an important role in the emergence of “Two China question”.

Keywords: “Two China Question”, Kuomintang (KMT), Communist Party of China (CPC), the Empire of Japan

Asal usul “Two China Question” sering dideskripsikan sebagai hasil dari Perang Sipil China pada 1949 antara Kuomintang (KMT) dan Communist Party of China (CPC). Secara ideologis memisahkan China menjadi dua negara yang masih mengklaim sebagai pemerintahan China yang paling benar dan hingga saat ini masih menonjol. Artikel ini akan mendiskusikan tentang asal mula fenomena dengan mengacu pada Kerajaan Jepang yang kala itu terlibat dalam pemisahan China. Sejak 1895, Perang Sino-Jepang pertama, hal itu menandakan pemisahan pertama penduduk yang berbahasa China, Taiwan, dari pemerintahan China. Taiwan mengalami perkembangan industri dan pertanian dibawah Kekaisaran Jepang yang pada akhirnya membantu mengalahkan pemerintahan KMT untuk mendirikan pemerintahannya di Taiwan. Pada pertengahan Perang Sipil China tahun 1931, insiden Manchuria menghentikan penghancuran CPC oleh KMT yang mengalihkan perhatiannya pada invasi Jepang. CPC selamat dari ambang kepunahan dan meluncurkan pasukannya yang terkenal. Pada 1937, insiden Marco Polo menyebabkan Perang Sino-Jepang kedua dan menundukkan KMT untuk membentuk aliansi dengan CPC melawan Kekaisaran Jepang. Perang tersebut menghabiskan sumberdaya alam dan manusia KMT di satu sisi. Sedangkan di sisi lain, memberikan CPC waktu untuk pulih dan merekonstruksi pasukannya. Pada 1945, pasukan CPC menjadi lebih unggul daripada KMT di medan perang dan pada akhirnya menjadi pemenang pada 1949. Artikel ini mengusulkan bahwa dengan atau tanpa kehadiran Kekaisaran Jepang memainkan peran penting dalam kemunculan “Two China Question”.

Kata Kunci: “Two China Question”, Kuomintang (KMT), Partai Komunis China (CPC), Kerajaan Jepang

The existence of Republic of China at Taiwan Island and People's Republic of China at mainland China triggers a bunch of international disputes especially in East Asian region so called "Two China question" which remains salient till this day i.e. series of Cross-Strait relations, One China policy question, and the like. Generally, its origin is usually attributed to the end of Chinese Civil War in 1949 with the defeat of KMT who retreated to Taiwan Island and established its governmental apparatuses in Taipei while CPC proclaimed its sovereign over mainland China centered in Beijing.

However, it is to be argued that this traditional explanation is not given the whole course of origin. At a deeper level of meaning, its origin can be traced back a century ago in the late ninetieth century at the end of the First Sino-Japanese war which split Taiwan Island from China's sovereignty for the first time. Given this background, this paper attempts to illustrate how Japan with or without intention involved in the creation of "Two China question".

First Sino-Japanese war and Taiwan under Japanese rule

In August 1894 the First Sino-Japanese war broke out due to Tonghak rebellion; it is a war between Meiji Japan and China under Qing dynasty. The war was mainly fought over Korean peninsula and Yellow sea (Jowett 2013; 29). Less than a year, the war was the Japanese decisive and rapid victory in April 1895 with the defeat of Chinese land army at Pyongyang and Weihaiwei (Ibid; 32-36). The following month, May 1895, Japanese army successfully landed on Taiwan Island. With this unexpected decisive and fast victory, it triggered Japanese government under administration of Hirobumi Ito to come up with the idea of territory gain by focusing on south Manchuria as well as Taiwan Island. He proposed the idea in the peace settlement at Shimonoseki (Beasley 1991; 55). Finally Japan acquired Taiwan as her first colony including war indemnity, most-favored-nation treatment from China, and the opening of Shanghai, Chungking, Soochow and Hangchow port to Japan etc.

Taiwan, occupied by Japan, underwent many industrial, agricultural, and economic developments by Japanese administrators and colonists. One of the imminent developments was sugarcane cultivation which yielded Japanese revenue at an annual average of 22 million Yen (Myers et al.; 348). Japan also initiated infrastructure development by heavily investing in harbors, roads, railroads, warehousing, transportation, communication projects etc. These projects and developments were vastly initiated during Kodama Gentaro the fourth governor-general of Taiwan (1898-1906) with his head of civilian affairs Goto Shinpei. In addition, Taiwan experienced opium control, forestry, healthcare and education development, etc. mostly under Goto's administration. These developments lately supported the creation "Two China question" especially after China's civil war in 1949 which will be discussed later in this paper.

First Sino-Japanese war aftermath in China and the outbreak of Second Sino-Japanese war

After the defeat in 1895, Qing dynasty made an attempt of reformation including military, government pattern. However, many Chinese were burden of these unfulfilled promises and began to move against Imperial government which came to outburst in September 1911. It was the Revolution, a fight between Revolutionary forces led by Dr. Sun Yat-Sen against Imperial Army of Qing dynasty, which ended up with the compromise of two sides and the formation of a new Republic governed by

Republican government having Sun Yat-Sen as provisional president and Yuan Shi-Kai Imperial general as prime minister. Lately Sun pragmatically decided that vast and un-unified China need to be governed by a strong man like Yuan. As a result, he step down from presidency for Yuan by propose of moving Chinese from Beijing (Yuan's influential base) to Nanking (Jowett 2013; 82-83). However Yuan refused to leave Beijing and prepared to coronate himself as the new emperor of China. It prompted resistance from Revolutionary forces as well as commanders across China which held modernized weapons due to Qing dynasty military reformation. In the meantime, many commanders view the opportunity to form their own personal region. These critical events led to Warlord era in China since 1916 after the death of Yuan and China was divided into many autonomy which mostly governed by local warlords. Revolutionary forces or Kuomintang (KMT) was in attempt to unify China under Republican government which later formed the First United Front with Communist Party of China (CPC) in 1923 for the sake of Comintern's instruction and Soviet Union's aid for war. The Revolutionary army succeeded to unite north and south China. After the successful of Northern Expedition (1926-1928) led by Chiang Kai-Shek, KMT leadership, after the late Dr. Sun Yat-sen deceased in 1925. This brought the end of warlord era and establishment of Nanking government. However, the end of Warlord era did not brought the expected peace to newly unified China as Chiang suddenly turned against CPC and launched an attack on CPC's base cities (Ibid; 171). Eventually CPC army was imposed to commit "The Long March" (1934-1935) in order to survive from annihilation by KMT and flee up north to Jinggang Mountains of Jiangxi but still be pursued by KMT army.

As KMT was annihilating CPC in 1927, Japan had long been aiming to acquire Manchuria since the First Sino-Japanese war and continually expanding her territory including Liaodong peninsula, Korean peninsula. Japan launched an attack from Korea peninsula to Zhang warlord's Manchuria by Kwantung army which acted independently in 1931. Japanese government did nothing to deter this action and formed the independent country of Manchukuo after the victory of Kwantung army which actually Japanese puppet state. Similar to Taiwan and Korea, Manchukuo also experienced Japanese economic and industrial developments under Japanese administrators and colonists. As a consequence, Japan's sphere of influence fledged to reach China's border as well as her army was considered as one of the strongest armies in the world (Ibid; 227). Eventually in 1937 Marco Polo bridge incident broke out near Beijing and triggered a confrontation between KMT army and Imperial Japanese Army which marked the beginning of Second Sino-Japanese war (even the war was officially declared in 1941). This war lasted long for 8 years and caused a heavy loss of life from both sides as well as delayed the annihilation of CPC by KMT. Reversely, in the same year Chiang was imposed by kidnapping (Xi'an incident) to reestablish the Second United Front between KMT and CPC once again to repel Japanese army from China.

At the beginning of the war, KMT army experienced crushing military defeats for example Battle of Shanghai which is an attempt of Chiang himself to pull Japanese garrison from Shanghai. However, it turned to be military blunder as Japanese army committed an amphibious operation to aid the garrison eventually Shanghai fall into Japanese control. Moreover, Japanese army pursued retreating KMT army to Nanking which also was under Japanese hand easily in December 1937 even KMT army fought tenaciously (Peattie et al.; 143-158). Chiang and his force shifted to Wuhan the capital city of Hubei province but Wuhan fall to Japanese control in October 1938, thus Chiang moved his capital once again to Chongqing. Even KMT army experience many defeats and heavy casualty blown, but Japanese army also never completely succeeded to destroy or envelop KMT army.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, United States (US) entered the war against Japan. This brought a chance for KMT to gain Western aid and turned the war to be a stalemate. The follow up event is the Cairo conference in 1943 discussing about the position of Allied (US, United Kingdom (UK), China) toward Japan in the ongoing war. The conclusion was the Allied consistently fight with Imperial Japan until her unconditional surrender as well as Chinese regions taken by Japanese will be return to Republic of China including Manchuria, Taiwan, etc. However, Chiang failed to persuade Roosevelt to prioritize on strategic bombing and Chinese army's modernization aid which caused very severe consequence to KMT army (experienced heavy lost from Operation Ichi-go) and lately the result of Chinese Civil War (Ibid; 444).

In 1944, situation of Japanese army was worse deteriorated in every frontline including the defeat of Japanese army at the battle of Imphal around Indian border in July 1944, the offensive attack by US navy in Pacific theatre reclaimed Marianas Islands in June 1944. For China theatre Japan launched the largest offensive in 1944 known as Operation Ichi-go consisting with four hundred thousand troops heading south through Henan, Hunan and Guangxi provinces. Operation's aims were to destroy American air bases in China providing a strategic bomb on Japanese soil, and the attempt to breakthrough central China to reach French Indochina (Ibid; 392). The overview of this operation was accomplished. Japanese army destroyed many American air bases in central China but Japanese defeat at Battle of Saipan which allowed American air range to reach Japanese mainland made this Operation accomplishment slightly significant. In addition, this Operation inflicted a heavy casualty on KMT army approximately 750,000 men (Ibid; 401) also the defeat of KMT army prompted the mistrust from US toward KMT as they have no strong will and too weak to fight with Japanese army. Moreover, to run the Operation Japanese army had to maneuver almost entire of her garrison troops from northern China to accomplish this Operation. Also, for KMT army KMT had to move her army assigned to seal-off CPC area to be a reinforcement according to this operation and faced heavy loss. These movement prompted vacuum of power in the northern China which CPC army took this chance to expand CPC's liberated zone and military strategic points (Ibid; 402). This operation caused an unexpected outcome for Japanese army that the operation strengthened CPC army without intention also it prompted a heavy loss and strategic points for both Japanese and KMT army. The latter had significantly effect on the result of Chinese Civil War.

By the end of the war, Japan unconditionally surrendered to Allied powers on 15th August 1945. It also marked the beginning of US occupation. For China theatre, most of Japanese army surrendered to KMT army which also prohibited Japanese army to surrender to CPC army or liberated zone. However, Manchuria was under occupied by Soviet army who launched an offensive operation over Kwantung army at Manchukuo at the very end of the war. During the occupation of Soviet, Soviet provided captured Japanese weapons including some tanks to CPC army which assisted CPC army when the Chinese Civil War resumed once again. Moreover, KMT army was recently weakened and lost trust by US according to Operation Ichi-go had no adequate forces to take control over Manchuria as a result Manchuria was under CPC army's control. Consequently, CPC took control the northern China as well as Manchuria due to weakness of KMT army both caused by Operation Ichi-go.

Consequently, when Chinese Civil War resumed in 1946, it turned to be favored for CPC army which finally defeated KMT in 1949 and established People's Republic of China. Chiang had to flee to Taiwan Island under the name Republic of China. Fortunately,

with the approach of Japan's foundation on economic and infrastructure developments, KMT has exercised these concepts and transformed Taiwan Island to become one of the strongest economic countries in Asia.

After the emergence of two Chinas, Japan gained her independence due to Treaty of San Francisco in 1951 however neither China was invited. In the following year, Japan signed a peace treaty with Republic of China at Taipei, Taiwan Island and officially approved Republic of China. Nonetheless, in 1972 under Kakuei Tanaka's administration he officially established diplomatic relation with People's Republic of China (He 2007; 5-6). However, Japan still remained her economic relation with Republic of China. Japan still keeps on this relation toward People's Republic of China and Republic of China.

Conclusion

In conclusion, since 1895 to Second World War Japan had unintentionally involved in the creation of "Two China question" including invasion on China in 1937 that deterred CPC from being annihilation, Operation Ichi-go which made a vacuum of power in northern China and CPC army took an advantage. After Civil War resumed CPC got the upper hand and finally defeat KMT who fled to Taiwan Island. It was the emergence of two Chinas. Its consequence still remains salient until this day.

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