

THREE MONTHS OF BLOODSHED:
STRATEGY AND COMBAT DURING THE BATTLE OF SHANGHAI

BY
JAMES PAULOSE

James Paulose is a junior studying Government and History at Georgetown University. He wrote this paper for a course on conflict in Asia to analyze military strategy during the Second Sino-Japanese War. James chose to write about the Battle of Shanghai after studying with Dr. Phillip A. Karber, an Asian military history and national security expert, in the Fall 2012.

INTRODUCTION

“It was no longer a war between armies, but between races.”¹

The Battle of Shanghai was fought from 13 August to 26 November 1937 between the National Revolutionary Army of the Republic of China and the Imperial Japanese Army of the Empire of Japan. The battle was the first major engagement between both sides during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Chinese forces initiated combat in Shanghai to stall the rapid Japanese advance in the mainland, and the conflict extended to outlying towns and the beaches of the Jiangsu coast before the Chinese forces retreated and Japan took control of the city. One of the largest and bloodiest battles of the war, the Battle of Shanghai marked the beginning of full-scale warfare following years of political tension resulting from the Japanese occupation of much of mainland China. Political and military records reveal that Chinese strategic errors and inadequate weaponry ultimately negated its numerical superiority as the gamble to hold out for international support failed. Initiating the battle should not be considered a mistake, however, since it prevented the loss of Central China and symbolized the Chinese will to resist invasion at all costs.

CONTEXT

A de facto state of war had existed between China and Japan since the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931.² General Zhang Zhizhong, a veteran of the First Battle of Shanghai in 1932, had been training men for

¹ Dick Wilson, *When Tigers Fight: The Story of the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945* (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1982), 37.

² Hsu Long-hsuen and Chang Ming-kai, *History of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945)*. 3rd ed. (Taipei, Taiwan: Chung Wu Publishing Co, 1985), 9.

the defense of the city since the battle under the disguise of police training. Zhizhong and other Chinese leaders gained confidence from this past experience and believed that the Chinese army should use its numerical superiority to take the initiative and push the Japanese to the sea before they had a chance to reinforce the coastline.³ Chinese air defense and coastal reconnaissance patrols were strengthened between July and August 1937 in the Nanjing-Shanghai-Hangchow area.⁴ Several defensive lines were also constructed under German guidance between Shanghai and Nanjing in anticipation of a future battle. The Marco Polo Bridge Incident on July 7 signified the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War, but construction of the defensive lines had just barely been completed by August, and the Chinese troops were not yet experienced in holding the fortifications.⁵

In addition to these developments, the Oyama Incident immediately before the battle indicated that conflict in Shanghai was imminent. On August 9, First Lieutenant Isao Oyama of the Japanese Naval Special Landing Forces attempted to enter the grounds of the Hungchiao Airport in Shanghai, violating the terms of the ceasefire after the 1932 battle.⁶ Oyama was subsequently killed by Chinese policemen, which drew an objection from Japanese officials. With Japanese troops already underway for Shanghai, the Chinese regarded the Japanese pursuit of this issue as a deliberate attempt to create a pretext for an already-planned invasion.⁷ Chiang Kai-Shek broke the Chinese end of the peace agreement by moving his troops into Shanghai on August 11. Western powers convened on August 12 in an attempt to restore the peace to protect their industrial and commercial interests in Shanghai. At the following meeting of the International Committee for the Enforcement of the Peace Agreement of 1932, both sides charged each other with violations of the agreement, and the Japanese demanded that all Chinese troops and the Chinese police force, the Peace Preservation Corps, disarm.⁸ These events created the hostile and uncertain atmosphere that led to the ensuing battle.

³ Peter C. Chen, "Second Battle of Shanghai," World War II Database, http://ww2db.com/battle_spec.php?battle_id=85 (accessed September 30, 2012).

⁴ Hu Pu-yu, *A Brief History of Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945)* (Taipei, Taiwan: Chung Wu Publishing Co, 1974), 145.

⁵ Chen, "Second Battle of Shanghai."

⁶ Wilson, *When Tigers Fight*, 30.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁸ *Critical Readings on Japan, 1906-1948: Countering Japan's Agenda and the Communist Menace in East Asia*, Series 2: Pamphlets and Press. A Collection in Ten Volumes, Volume 5, *We Speak for China, 1938-1948*, Peter O'Connor, ed. (Tokyo, Japan: Global Oriental, 2011), 265.

OBJECTIVES

CHINESE OBJECTIVES

Chiang Kai-Shek decided to lead China into total war with Japan for financial, strategic, and political reasons. The Chinese initiated intense resistance at Shanghai to stall the rapid Japanese advance to allow the Chinese government to move vital industries to the interior while bringing sympathetic western powers to China's side: "Chiang's decision to commit the bulk of his modern forces in the battle of Shanghai in 1937 was influenced by the realization that Anglo-American interests were centered in Shanghai."⁹ As Shanghai's trade fell from \$31 million in June to eventually just \$6.7 million in October, the desire to involve Britain and the United States, though not the sole reason, became a significant factor in the decision to attack at Shanghai.¹⁰

The opening of a second front in Shanghai followed a strategy of trading space for time, the goal of which was to keep Japanese troops close to the coast to ensure that, should they continue to advance on Chinese troops, they would be forced to advance in a westward direction which would allow the Chinese to retreat to Nanjing.¹¹ The Japanese north-to-south advancement prior to the battle had forced the Chinese to defend along a horizontal axis which they were incapable of doing. Japanese qualitative and quantitative troop superiority in North China, the reinforcement of Japanese troops from Korea and Manchukuo, limited Chinese capability to transport troops to North China, and possible entrapment if Japan pushed Chinese forces east toward the seas made such a defense by the Chinese impractical.¹² Furthermore, Japan would have been able to use the Peking-Pukow railway to divide China into two halves longitudinally and easily wipe out isolated Chinese forces to the east and the west.¹³ The Chinese wanted to draw the Japanese away from the north and into the lower Yangtze. Shanghai was the best place to launch an attack for this strategy since concentrating Chinese troops in Nanjing or other surrounding cities instead could have allowed the Japanese to concentrate between Nanjing and Shanghai and overtake one more

⁹ John W. Garver, "China's Wartime Diplomacy" in *China's Bitter Victory: The War with Japan 1937-1945*, James C. Hsiung and Steven I. Levine, eds. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc, 1992), 124.

¹⁰ Long-hsuen and Ming-kai, *History of the Sino-Japanese War*, 83.

¹¹ Hsi-Sheng Ch'i, *Nationalist China at War: Military Defeats and Political Collapse, 1937-45* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1982), 41.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

easily.¹⁴

Though Chiang Kai-Shek gained unprecedented popularity leading up to the war and was viewed as the only leader who could conduct the war effort, the Nationalist government suffered a major credibility gap by 1937 for not resisting Japanese aggression.¹⁵ Thus, for reasons of political legitimacy, Chiang could not back down and was compelled to take a political gamble by initiating a direct battle against Japan. Since Shanghai was at the core of the Nationalists' administration and the West had political and economic ties to the city, Chiang decided it would be the ideal place to make a stand against the Japanese given his political goals. The government had a vested interest in protecting Kiangsu and Chekiang because they were the Nationalists' base of political and economic power and the provinces that the government could most realistically prepare for a war.¹⁶

JAPANESE OBJECTIVES

Japan had been focused on North China since the start of the war, but there were disagreements among the military on strategy regarding Shanghai. The navy wanted to increase troop presence in Shanghai to protect Japanese factories and citizens, but the army refused to do so until early August, and the army also believed that there was no need to enter Central China.¹⁷ Still, the Japanese military as a whole was well prepared to meet the numerically superior but under-equipped and poorly trained Chinese army. Initial Japanese actions in Shanghai during this period suggested that they wanted to avoid a conflict in the city given their evacuation of nationals and maintenance of only 3,500 to 4,000 troops, a relatively small force.¹⁸ However, Japan's ruling groups eventually became convinced that war was necessary both to consolidate their home front and to break China's growing unity and strength. A campaign restricted to the north might have been prolonged indefinitely without seriously affecting the military strength or economic resources of the Chinese government.¹⁹ Thus, to significantly weaken China, Japan would have to undertake operations in its vital city of Shanghai.²⁰ The Japanese engaged in military exercises around Shanghai prior to the battle to irritate

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 45.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Wilson, *When Tigers Fight*, 38-39.

¹⁸ Ibid., 33.

¹⁹ T.A. Bisson, *Japan in China* (New York, NY: Octagon Books, 1973), 276.

²⁰ Frank Dorn, *The Sino-Japanese War, 1937-41: From Marco Polo Bridge to Pearl Harbor* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1974), 190.

the Chinese.²¹ Even so, Japan sent an army of only 200,000 into China which was known to have an army of at least 3,000,000. The best explanation for this is that Japan concluded that China's political, economic, and social structure was so weak that national solidarity was not possible.²² The bloody three-month campaign that followed demonstrated that this was a major miscalculation of Chinese morale.

INITIAL PERIOD OF CAMPAIGN: STAGE ONE

Stage one of the Battle of Shanghai lasted from August 13 to August 22 as the Chinese army attempted to eradicate Japanese troops in downtown Shanghai. It was characterized by urban fighting and resulted in an early stalemate with heavy losses and minimal changes to the front line. Despite extensive Chinese air operations, they were mostly unsuccessful because the Chinese air force was inferior to the Japanese air force.²³ The total number of Chinese forces involved in the entire battle was comprised of 600,000 troops, 250 airplanes, and 16 tanks. Japanese forces were comprised of 300,000 troops, 3,000 airplanes, 300 tanks, and 130 naval ships.²⁴ The immense casualties during this stage signaled the destruction that would come with the goal of controlling Shanghai at all costs. "More than two thirds of my 15,000 soldiers died within the initial stages of the battle for Shanghai," said Commander Sun Yuanliang of the Chinese 36th Division.²⁵

On August 13, over 10,000 Japanese troops entered the suburbs of Shanghai, and fighting broke out in Zhabei, Wusong, and Jiangwan districts. On August 14, the Nationalist government issued the Proclamation of Self-Defense and War of Resistance, and Chinese aircraft initiated bombing of Japanese positions while Japanese aircraft from Taiwan simultaneously bombed the city.²⁶ The Chinese 4th Flying Group, led by Captain Gao Zhihang, countered the Japanese bombings by shooting down six Japanese aircraft without suffering any casualties. Nevertheless, Chinese aircraft were few in number and lacked proper replacement parts for repairs. Despite Chinese aircraft shooting down eighty-five Japanese aircraft and sinking fifty-one ships by the end of the battle, the ninety-one losses represented nearly half of China's total

²¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

²² Evans Fordyce Carlson, "Strategy of the Sino-Japanese War," *Far Eastern Survey*, vol. 10, no. 9 (19 May 1941): 100.

²³ Wilson, *When Tigers Fight*, 31.

²⁴ Chen, "Second Battle of Shanghai."

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

available combat aircraft.²⁷ Furthermore, the civilians who had not left the city prior to the battle began fleeing in waves, creating chaos on the ground. By the end of the battle, over tens of thousands of civilians died as a direct result of the bombings.²⁸ Chinese troops launched a counterattack on the ground while the air battle was taking place, but they were too lightly-armed to overtake the heavily fortified Japanese troops in the international zone, and the counterattack failed.²⁹

Japan declared general mobilization on August 15 and dispatched two corps to Peiping-Tientsin. Two divisions were also moved to Shanghai in an attempt to destroy Chinese forces in Hopei, take Shanghai, and threaten Nanjing, thereby forcing China to surrender.³⁰ The next day, Zhang ordered his troops to burn down Japanese-held buildings and then gun down fleeing troops with strategically-located machine guns. The Japanese, however, deployed light tanks that halted this strategy.³¹ Chiang criticized Zhang for the heavy casualties and inability to penetrate Japanese lines early during the battle despite Chinese numerical superiority, and Chiang would eventually assume the role of overall commander in the battle.³² On August 18, the Chinese 36th Division arrived as reinforcement and attacked the docks at Hueishan. The 87th Division simultaneously coordinated a counterattack at Yangshupu to increase the pressure on Japanese troops. Supported by tanks, the 36th Division drove off the Japanese defenders at Hueishan, but the lack of tank-infantry coordination quickly led to the loss of the docks once again. The attack eventually failed with the Chinese losing ninety officers and over 1,000 men.³³

Although the orders included instructions to destroy the enemy, they contained no tactical plan for doing so.³⁴ Chiang Kai-shek issued his first set of operational orders on August 20 which contained hedging expressions, such as “attack gradually” and rhetoric such as “assault regardless of sacrifices.”³⁵ The Japanese reinforced the city on August 22, landing General Iwane Matsui's 3rd, 8th, and 11th Divisions at Chuanshakou, Shizilin, and Baoshan just northeast of Shanghai under the cover of naval guns. The landing drew out some Chinese troops from the

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ O'Connor, *Critical Readings on Japan*, 266-67.

²⁹ Long-hsuen and Ming-kai, *History of the Sino-Japanese War*, 206.

³⁰ Ibid., 176; and O'Connor, *Critical Readings on Japan*, 207-08.

³¹ Chen, “Second Battle of Shanghai.”

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Dorn, *The Sino-Japanese War*, 72.

³⁵ Ibid.

city, but naval bombardment prevented them from disrupting the landing.³⁶ The Chinese forces instead set up a line of defense at the Lotien- Shuangtsaoten section of a major railroad network by September 11.³⁷ Though General Li Zongren advised Chiang to only make limited engagements and preserve the army's strength for a future confrontation further inland where the Chinese could fight on more favorable terms, Chiang refused and ordered the outmatched Chinese troops to prevent the assault from the approaching Japanese forces.³⁸

STAGE TWO

Stage two lasted from August 23 to October 26 as the Japanese launched amphibious landings on the Jiangsu coast. This stage of the battle included house-to-house street battles with the Japanese attempting to gain control of the city and the surrounding regions. This was the bloodiest and most intense period of fighting as demonstrated by the loss of entire Chinese units defending against Japanese landings at Baoshan. Fighting during this period extended beyond Shanghai into the surrounding suburbs of Jiangyin, Luodian, and Dachang. The Chinese fought a battle of attrition in these regions, sustaining massive casualties in the face of superior firepower and poorly coordinated counteroffensives until they could no longer hold their defensive positions. The loss of these surrounding towns as well as continued losses in Shanghai itself forced Chinese forces to begin retreating from the city as they became fully surrounded by Japanese forces.

On August 23, Matsui made another large-scale landing at Liuhe, Wusung, and Chuanshakou. The Chinese 18th Division under the command of Chen Cheng attempted to counter the new wave of Japanese landings, but the counterattack failed again under the firepower of Japanese naval gun support.³⁹ Cheng turned to night attacks which were successful in overtaking several villages, but the Chinese continuously lost these captured villages again during the day.⁴⁰ By the end of August, the Chinese 98th Division was practically wiped out in its defense of Baoshan. Chiang Kai-shek's second set of orders were given on September 6, and they directed the cessation of the general offensive, a movement that had not yet been initiated by the Chinese, and ordered a campaign of harassment and containment.⁴¹ These orders still contained no plan of

³⁶ Ibid., 72-74.

³⁷ Ibid., 73.

³⁸ Chen, "Second Battle of Shanghai."

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Dorn, *The Sino-Japanese War*, 72.

battle other than to make a stand to the last man. On September 12, Chinese representatives requested intervention from the League of Nations, but there was no significant intervention. The Chinese then sought American aid and hoped that this would in turn garner further international support.⁴² Thus, Chiang continued to order his field commanders to hold Shanghai for as long as possible at all costs, hopeful for a diplomatic resolution.

The Chinese strategic directive called for the encirclement of the Japanese settlement and for the blockade of the coast against Japanese reinforcements in order to drive them into the sea. However, the Japanese gained control of Wusung by September 1, and so the Chinese were forced to switch to positional warfare and hold their positions for as long as possible.⁴³ Chiang Kai-shek issued his third set of orders on September 21 which made command adjustments and new unit designations.⁴⁴ As a result, the Chinese had deployed about seventy-one divisions, five artillery regiments, and garrison units totaling 500,000 troops by October; the Japanese Shanghai Expeditionary Force under the command of General Matsui consisted of six divisions and five to six independent brigades, complete with air and naval support, totaling 200,000 troops.⁴⁵ The superior air and naval forces proved to be the difference in Shanghai and the surrounding towns despite China's numerical advantage.

THE BATTLE OF JIANGYIN

The Battle of Jiangyin occurred from August 16 to October 30, one-hundred kilometers northwest of Shanghai. Chinese Secretary of the Navy Chen Shaokuan ordered a blockade on August 7 at Jiangyin with a force of five light cruisers and one training cruiser along with several mines to prevent Japanese warships from entering the Yangtze River.⁴⁶ This force sunk forty-three military and 185 civilian Japanese ships between August 11 and August 25. Liu Xing was the commanding officer of all Chinese defenses at Jiangyin with direct command over the First Fleet. The Second Fleet, under the command of Ouyang Ge, was dispatched further up the river toward Nanjing. Admiral Kiyoshi Hasegawa of the Japanese 3rd Fleet ordered aerial bombings of the forces at Jiangyin with carrier and ground-based aircraft, which led to the sinking of ten Chinese ships by October 23.⁴⁷ Despite these losses, the Chinese

⁴² Chen, "Second Battle of Shanghai."

⁴³ Ch'i, *Nationalist China at War*, 42.

⁴⁴ Dorn, *The Sino-Japanese War*, 73.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*; and *Nationalist China at War*, 42.

⁴⁶ Chen, "Second Battle of Shanghai."

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Three Months of Bloodshed: 17

navy recovered some of the naval guns from the sunken ships and deployed them on land as coastal batteries, thus maintaining a defensive position at Jiangyin.⁴⁸

THE BATTLE OF LUODIAN

The Battle of Luodian occurred from September 11 to 15 in the suburban transportation center. Under the advice of Chiang's German advisor, Alexander von Falkenhausen, 300,000 Chinese troops were ordered to defend the town from over 100,000 Japanese troops that attacked with artillery, tanks, naval support, and aerial support. The Chinese troops fought valiantly in the face of immense firepower. "Defending in depth, the frontlines were manned with a minimal number of men while the rest of the forces were held in reserve, charging forward only when the artillery fire and naval bombardment ceased and the Japanese ground troops charged forth."⁴⁹ However, the Chinese still suffered an immense casualty rate of 50 percent, and they were forced to retreat when Luodian could no longer be held.

THE BATTLE OF DACHANG

The Battle of Dachang occurred from October 1 to 25 in what was the Chinese Army's communications center. Crossing the Yunzaobin River south of Luodian, freshly reinforced with men from Japan and Taiwan, the Japanese troops aimed to take Dachang. If Dachang were to fall, the Chinese troops in eastern Shanghai would become exposed, magnifying the significance of the town. The ensuing battle of attrition depleted the Chinese forces that were forced to use suicide charges against machine gun nests and artillery placements to counter the superior Japanese firepower. The Guanxi Army under Li Zongren and Bai Chongxi arrived on October 17 and allowed the defending forces to orchestrate a counterattack, but it eventually failed.⁵⁰ Dachang fell under Japanese control on October 25, forcing Chinese troops to withdraw from parts of Shanghai.

END OF CAMPAIGN: STAGE THREE

The third and final stage of the Battle of Shanghai lasted from October 27 to November 26 as the Chinese army retreated in the face of Japanese flanking maneuvers with ensuing combat on the road to Nanjing. Chiang Kai-Shek defiantly held out hope that a skirmish near the

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

international settlement would elicit a Western response, and so a small token Chinese force was charged with defending Sihang Warehouse where they heroically held off the numerically superior Japanese forces. Japanese landings south of Shanghai, however, forced the Chinese to retreat while simultaneously fighting landings at Suzhou Creek. The Japanese air force destroyed most of the bridges and greatly impeded the speed of retreat, allowing mechanized Japanese units to massacre the retreating Chinese.⁵¹

THE BATTLE OF SIHANG WAREHOUSE

The Battle of Sihang Warehouse occurred from October 27 to November 1. While troops began to retreat from the areas north of the international settlement, Chiang knew that Westerners were still observing from the international zone immediately across the Suzhou River. To make sure that China remained on the forefront of the world stage, he ordered the Chinese 88th Division to defend an area on the north bank of the Suzhou River which contained the Sihang Warehouse. Chiang hoped that Western observers from across the river would send news and photographs back to their home countries that would trigger international condemnation of Japanese aggression at the upcoming Brussels Conference scheduled to take place on November 6.⁵² However, Sun Yuanliang, the commander of the 88th Division strongly opposed this plan that would leave his men behind to sustain heavy losses. Instead, Sun decided to leave a single battalion behind as a token defense which would fulfill Chiang's wish for a demonstration for the Western observers. "It would achieve the same purpose no matter how many people we sacrifice," said Sun.⁵³

The 3rd Japanese Division under Matsui advanced to the warehouse after taking Shanghai North Railway Station, but the first assault was ineffective. To avoid provoking international incidents, the Japanese decided against aerial and mortar bombarding, fearful that stray shells might land in the international zone south of the warehouse.⁵⁴ For the next few days, the Japanese tried repeatedly to capture the warehouse to no avail. Chiang Kai-Shek got the community and international support he sought given that some of the intelligence that the Chinese defenders received was provided by local civilians across the river.⁵⁵ Chiang allowed the defenders to withdraw from the warehouse on October 31 after hearing

⁵¹ Ch'i, *Nationalist China at War*, 42.

⁵² Chen, "Second Battle of Shanghai."

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ O'Connor, *Critical Readings on Japan*, 273-75.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

petitions from western officials in the international zone who sought to prevent the eventual demise of the defenders despite their proven valor against the overwhelming Japanese forces.⁵⁶ Although the combat did not last until the start of the Brussels Conference, Chiang believed that the defense of the Sihang Warehouse had achieved the necessary level of publicity to put the Sino-Japanese conflict on the global stage as he had sought.⁵⁷ The defense of Sihang Warehouse provided a boost in morale and nationalism among the Chinese and would be used as propaganda in the years to come.⁵⁸

THE FALL OF SHANGHAI AND CONCLUSION OF THE BATTLE

On November 5, General Yanagawa's 19th Japanese Corps of 30,000 men successfully landed at Jinshanwei, thirty miles south of Shanghai while Chinese troops were tied up in the northern regions of the city. This massive influx that left Shanghai encircled by Japanese troops, combined with the lack of an adequate international response, forced Chiang to abandon his Shanghai strategy and to issue a general retreat order on November 8.⁵⁹ The Chinese retreated along the Nanjing-Shanghai railway and set up defenses around the capital. While Chinese forces were withdrawing from metropolitan Shanghai, there was simultaneous fighting around Suzhou Creek as the Japanese made further landings at Jinshanwei.⁶⁰ Japanese troops broke through the Chinese lines of defense at Kunshan on November 10, the Wufu Line on November 19, and the Xicheng Line on November 26, and they captured Jiangyin in early November as the Chinese Army continued to retreat to Nanjing.⁶¹

By the end of the three-month conflict, the casualties on both sides were severe. Japan suffered 92,640 casualties out of the 300,000 troops engaged, and China suffered over 333,500 casualties out of the 700,000 troops engaged, including casualties among many of the elite German-trained units of the Chinese Army.⁶² The loss of these experienced young officers severely set the Chinese resistance back in the following years during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Included among the casualties were eighty-five destroyed Japanese planes, fifty-one destroyed Japanese ships, and ninety-one destroyed Chinese planes.⁶³ China in particular

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Chen, "Second Battle of Shanghai."

⁵⁸ O'Conor, *Critical Readings on Japan*, 273-75.

⁵⁹ Bisson, *Japan in China*, 285.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 286.

⁶² Dorn, *The Sino-Japanese War*, 90.

⁶³ Ibid.

reeled from a loss of its central army military strength following the battle.⁶⁴

China failed to elicit sufficient international intervention on its behalf, nor did it inspire significant involvement from foreign residents of Shanghai.⁶⁵ Chiang did suffer politically as a result of the loss, but China's stubborn defense in the face of the heavily armed Japanese gave the international community some confidence in China's ability to resist occupation despite the heavy losses.⁶⁶ The three-month resistance also enabled China to relocate some of its industrial capability further inland. Though this was only a relatively small amount and China actually had many factories destroyed during the battle, China's persistence once again instilled confidence among foreigners and the Chinese themselves that Japanese occupation could be fought.⁶⁷ After the Japanese victory, the Japanese garrison in Shanghai was increased to 300,000 men while British, French, American, and Chinese troops in the International Settlement totaled less than 8,000.⁶⁸ Japan controlled the countryside in all directions, the northern and eastern areas of the International Settlement, and Potung which was the industrial center across the Whangpoo River.⁶⁹

CRITIQUE OF CAMPAIGN

As historian Dick Wilson observed, "The Battle of Shanghai was eight Chinese divisions, unprotected by planes or tanks, being chewed up piecemeal over three months of costly and heroic resistance within the sight of Japanese naval guns."⁷⁰

The Battle of Shanghai was the first large-scale confrontation between the armies of China and Japan, and it proved to be among the bloodiest. What was expected by Japan to be a mere three day battle turned into three of the most violent and grueling months of the entire war. The Chinese troops were hastily assembled against a smaller but much better equipped Japanese force. The Chinese had inferior weapons compared to the heavily mechanized invading Japanese who used naval gunfire and planes to coordinate the actions of their reinforcements.⁷¹ Chinese forces lacked powerful armor-piercing weapons and could not

⁶⁴ Ibid., 98.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 90.

⁶⁶ Chen, "Second Battle of Shanghai."

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ William W. Lockwood Jr, "Shanghai Faces Uncertainty," *Far Eastern Survey*, vol. 6, no. 24, (1 December 1937): 276.

⁷⁰ Wilson, *When Tigers Fight*, 46.

⁷¹ Pu-yu, *A Brief History*, 111.

effectively neutralize enemy ships or clear street obstacles. The only cover that Chinese forces had within the city and the suburbs were buildings that were inadequate to protect them. The Japanese, intent upon delivering a knock-out blow, also increased their military strength to 200,000 men to further reduce China's numerical advantage.⁷² As a result, sixty percent of China's modern army was lost at Shanghai with particularly high casualties among the junior officers.⁷³

Strategic errors combined with inadequate weaponry delivered a devastating blow to China. The Chinese defense could have held out longer if it had not been negligent and had not relaxed its control of the shores of Hangzhou Bay, to the south of Shanghai, where the Japanese landed their Tenth Army under General Yanagawa Heisuke on November 5.⁷⁴ Soviet advisers in China also criticized the way that Chinese infantry units attacked in close formation, leaving them more susceptible to the mechanized Japanese units. Finally, many have argued that Chiang Kai-shek's belief in foreign intervention led to the trap of the Battle of Shanghai and the further loss of Nanjing.⁷⁵

China's leaders realized that there was little historical precedent for foreign intervention, especially given the lack of response to earlier Japanese aggression during the first battle in Shanghai in 1932.⁷⁶ China recognized that Japan's policy toward north China was governed by geopolitical concerns that could be best taken care of by military means while policy toward central China was marked by willingness to accept the international framework to promote economic interests.⁷⁷ If China had deliberately created a new front in Shanghai to provoke foreign intervention, there would have been at best only a cease-fire in Shanghai with conflict in north China still occurring, and the Chinese government realized this.⁷⁸ Thus, Chiang Kai-shek's gamble for foreign intervention should not be viewed as the primary objective of the Chinese initiated battle, but rather as a strategy to attempt to obtain the maximum amount of balance against Japan through military and diplomatic means.

While these results reflected a resounding, albeit hard-fought, tactical victory for Japan, China did achieve minor operational success. Shifting the main battlefield from North China to Shanghai forced Japan to alter its favorable north-south axis of operations to an unfavorable east-

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 75.

⁷⁴ Wilson, *When Tigers Fight*, 42.

⁷⁵ Dorn, *The Sino-Japanese War*, 66.

⁷⁶ Ch'i, *Nationalist China at War*, 43.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 45.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

22 : Report

west inland and uphill fight. Thus, bringing the fight to Shanghai prevented Japan from cutting right into Central China as the Chinese traded space for time. Finally, Chinese resistance shocked and demoralized the Japanese who had been indoctrinated with notions of cultural and martial superiority. China's willingness to sacrifice its most modern city in order to resist invasion reflected a sense of pride and patriotism that the Japanese did not expect, and it provided a glimmer of hope during China's darkest hour.