

**Appeasement in Historical Perspective:
A Study of Examples of Appeasement in Chinese History from
Han Wu-ti to Chiang Kai-shek**

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Abstract

Throughout history, the decision of war or peace has been difficult for any given country and for any given national leader. For example, in the 1930s, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek found himself in a dilemma. As head of the Republic of China, Chiang was obligated to resist foreign aggression when the Japanese invaded the Chinese Northeast. Yet Chiang could not afford a full-scale resistance because the country was not militarily prepared for war. To strengthen China's national defense would require a considerable amount of time. Therefore, Chiang decided to make compromises with the Japanese, a strategy known as appeasement. Owing to the "Shame of Munich" of 1938, many people in the West regard appeasement as inappropriate under every conceivable set of circumstances despite the fact that there are historical precedents in which wars have been averted as a result of an appeasement policy.

This article examines the historical background of and the rationale behind appeasement in ancient China, modern China, and modern Europe. The argument put forward in this article demonstrates that when Chiang Kai-shek pursued appeasement, he did it in the full conviction that appeasement was the lesser of two evils. War, he thought, was the greater evil.

Keywords: appeasement, Chiang Kai-shek, Munich Conference

According to *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu, the best warfare is the one that repels enemy forces without resorting to arms. This remark is most invaluable to Chinese military thinking, for winning is neither the purpose of being a soldier, nor the best achievement of any soldier. Even if a war is won, the toll of human life and property is beyond estimation. For this reason, it is not as easy as it seems to judge what truly a victory is and what a defeat is.¹

Chiang Kai-shek, July 1929

On September 18, 1931, Japan attacked the Republic of China by invading the latter's Northeastern provinces (東三省), a region better known to the West as Manchuria (滿州). The Republic was in agreement on the need to resist, but it was bitterly divided on the opportune moment to do so. Many, the Chinese Communists and university students in particular, demanded an outright declaration of war on Japan. Others, including Chiang Kai-shek and independent scholars such as Hu Shih (胡適) and Tsiang Ting-fu (蔣廷黻), cautioned against reckless courage, stressing that a hasty declaration of war would devastate the country whose national defense had yet to be strengthened. With both parties claiming to be in the right, when to resist the Japanese invasion became a vexed question in China of the 1930s.

Historically known as the Mukden Incident (瀋陽事變), or the September Eighteenth Incident (九一八事變), Japan's invasion of the Chinese Northeast was a prelude to a long and bitter war on the Asian continent and in the Pacific. It marked the beginning of a series of aggressive Japanese acts that culminated in the Second Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945.² Prior to the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, both the Nanking-based National Government (國民政府) and the Chinese people agonized over the same difficult question: Should the country go to war with Japan for the second time in less than fifty years? There was no easy answer. The First Sino-Japanese War, 1894-1895,³ had ended with Chinese defeat as a consequence of military unpreparedness, resulting in the cession of Taiwan province as well as the

¹ *Hsien tsung-tung Chiang-kung ssu-hsiang yen-lun tsung-chi* 先總統蔣公思想言論總集, Vol. 10 (The General Collection of the late President Chiang Kai-shek's Thought and Speeches), (Taipei: Kuomintang Historical Commission, 1985), p. 417.

² To the Chinese, the Second Sino-Japanese War is more commonly known as the Eight-Year Resistance War against Japan (八年對日抗戰), or, for short, the Resistance War (抗戰).

³ The First Sino-Japanese War is also known as the War of 1894 (甲午戰爭).

Pescadores (澎湖群島) to Japan, and the imposition on China of a crippling indemnity. Decades later, another war was looming between China, still militarily unprepared, and Japan. For China, lightning had struck twice.

Nanking's (南京) predicament was best depicted by Tsiang Ting-fu: "Intellectually, the Chinese people knew their country was not combat ready; yet emotionally, most of them demanded repelling the Japanese as early as possible."⁴ Tsiang's assertion cogently presents the central issue for the Republic of China: war with Japan in the 1930s was not a simple matter of right or wrong, but a complicated one of reason versus emotion.

In May 1965, Tsiang was invited by Columbia University, his *alma mater*, for interviews as part of the university's Chinese Oral History Project. During the interviews, Tsiang spoke with fervor of the difficult decision of war or peace that the country had to make. Commenting on contemporary Sino-Japanese relations, he lamented that:

In Japan, as each day went by, the liberals were losing ground and influence; those who had blind faith in military action were gaining the ascendancy. In China, anti-government figures were taking advantage of the people's innocent nationalistic upsurge, calling for war. And the government did not know what to do to quiet down popular sentiment.⁵

Tsiang Ting-fu conceded that he was disheartened to see that after the Mukden Incident college students across the country demanded an immediate declaration of war on Japan, rejecting pleas for gaining time in order to strengthen national defense,⁶ a fact that has been well established in the American historian John Israel's book on Chinese student nationalism.⁷ While Tsiang believed that the majority of the Chinese people really cared about their country, he doubted very much the sincerity of some anti-Nanking politicians and militarists who called on the National Government to declare war on Japan. "Patriotic slogans were being shouted out with unpatriotic

⁴ Tsiang Ting-fu 蔣廷黻, *Chiang Ting-fu hui-i-lu* 蔣廷黻回憶錄 (Memoirs of Tsiang Ting-fu), (Taipei: Biographic Literature Press, 1984), p. 143.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁷ John Israel, *Student Nationalism in China, 1927-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966).

motives. Although most students and common people were genuinely patriotic, I knew only too well that some of them had been manipulated by the politicians. . . . Under the circumstances, I had to try harder to prevent a full-scale war.”⁸

Tsiang had never been a member of the Kuomintang; he remained politically independent throughout his career. He, along with Hu Shih and Ting Wen-chiang (丁文江), co-founded the popular *The Independent Critic* (獨立評論) in 1932. The periodical was intended not as a mouthpiece of Nanking or of any political party, but as a way to provide the country with forthright advice on current affairs. According to the American historian William Kirby, *The Independent Critic* “maintained in an independent fashion aspects of the traditional intellectual elite’s concern for national affairs and a belief that nonpartisan intellectuals could serve as a central force in formulating—and criticizing—national policy.”⁹ With this in mind, Tsiang’s comment on war and peace must not be considered a pro-Nanking announcement. Rather, it was a statement that he thought would meet the exigency of the times.

“Putting the House in Order before Resisting Foreign Invasion”

In response to domestic turmoil and foreign aggression (內憂外患), Chiang Kai-shek adopted a policy known as “jang-wai pi-hsien an-nei” (攘外必先安內) as early as July 1931. Meaning literally “domestic stability must take precedence over resisting foreign invasion,” it was one of the most controversial decisions Chiang made during his tenure of power on the Mainland, controversial in a sense that this policy has been misinterpreted by many as an indication of Chiang’s unwillingness to protect China from Japan.

According to Chiang, aside from Japan’s consistent hostility towards China, the latter’s military weakness and domestic disunity had made it more susceptible to foreign aggression. By the early 1930s, China’s strength had been reduced by foreign encroachment and internal upheavals to such an alarming degree that its survival seemed doubtful should a full-scale war with Japan break out. China was simply too disunited and too weak to engage in war with Japan in the 1930s. Nonetheless, there were two things that China had to do in order to avoid being destroyed in a looming

⁸ Tsiang, p. 138.

⁹ William Kirby, *Germany and Republican China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), p. 86.

war. First, national defense would have to be strengthened in the shortest time possible. Second, domestic stability and unity would have to be restored by chastising those, the regional militarists and the Communists in particular, who were hampering the National Government's war effort. Before the two objectives could be accomplished, stressed Chiang Kai-shek, the Republic should act with extreme caution in order to avoid giving Japan excuses to pick a fight. In a speech given two months after the Mukden Incident, Chiang said:

In order to resist foreign invasion, domestic stability will have to be restored first; national unity is the prerequisite for resisting foreign invasion. I do not know of any country that has won a victory over foreign invaders when it is in disruption. It does not matter if current complications between China and Japan are to be settled by military means or by diplomatic means, for either approach would be without avail if domestic unity is not restored in the first place. Although war-making requires that domestic unity be restored, peace-making also requires the same....Without national unity, peace-making and war-making are just idle talks.¹⁰

The kind of national disunity that China was experiencing is best described by the American historian Parks Coble: "When Japan first struck in 1931, China was not a united nation-state but only a collection of regional entities nominally pledged to the Kuomintang. The politics of the early Nanking era, 1928-1931, had borne a striking resemblance to that of the warlord era, with Chiang merely the first among equals."¹¹ National unity, or the lack of it, weighed heavily on Chiang Kai-shek. William Kirby notes that the unification of Germany under Prince Otto von Bismarck, the Prussian chief minister, in the late nineteenth century convinced Chiang of the importance of national unity, and that there was a strong desire among the Chinese Nationalists to learn from the German experience.

To Chiang Kai-shek, the lessons of the Bismarckian period were more sobering,

¹⁰ *Hsien tsung-tung Chiang-kung ssu-hsiang yen-lun tsung-chi*, Vol. 10, p. 482.

¹¹ Parks Coble, *Facing Japan: Chinese Politics and Japanese Imperialism, 1931-1937* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 377.

and more in line with his own policies. The forceful policies of a Bismarck could indeed unite a nation, but one had to build a strong foundation. The economic unity of the *Zollverein* (tariff union, 關稅同盟), the growth of Prussian military and economic strength, and the political unity attained in the Northern German Confederation had all been prerequisites for victory over France [in the Franco-Prussian War, 1870].¹²

Although many historians in the Republic of China have praised the wisdom of putting the house in order before resisting Japanese invasion on the ground that it allowed Nanking time to prepare for war, “jang-wai pi-hsien an-nei” has been a tough sell elsewhere primarily because it seemed to have compromised Chinese nationalism. Nanking’s steadfast refusal to declare war on Tokyo throughout the Mukden crisis gave rise to the impression that it was unable to defend the country. Historians in Mainland China charge that in the name of “jang-wai pi-hsien an-nei,” Nanking gave away chunks of territory to Tokyo and brought shame to the nation.

Nanking, observes Diana Lary, professor of history at the University of British Columbia and one of the leading experts on modern Chinese militarism, “failed in the most crucial task of nationalism, that of defending the nation from external aggression.... By failing to mobilize the nation against the invaders, by failing to relate nationalism to specific programs of internal rebirth, the Kuomintang forfeited the leadership of nationalism.”¹³ Parks Coble considers “jang-wai pi-hsien an-nei” to have been an exponent of appeasement:

Chiang therefore sought to avoid or delay war with Japan, adopting a policy of appeasement and conciliation with Tokyo. He proclaimed a formula of “first internal pacification, then external resistance.” Domestic enemies, most notably the Communists, had to be eliminated, he argued, before China would be sufficiently united to resist the Japanese.... By 1937, in the minds of many in China, the phrases “anti-communism” (反共) and “bandit-suppression campaigns” (剿匪), slogans dear to Chiang Kai-shek, were identified with

¹² Kirby, p. 149.

¹³ Diana Lary, *Region and Nation: The Kwangsi Clique in Chinese Politics, 1925-1937* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), P. 18.

appeasement and subservience to Japan.¹⁴

Nanking's appeasement, claims John Israel, can be traced back to the late imperial period.

After September 18, 1931, while youth clamored for the immediate expulsion of the invaders, Chiang undertook a long-term program of building a modern army to fight the foe after his enemies at home had been eliminated. Young China's inheritance of ninety years of appeasement and two decades of uninterrupted civil war made Chiang's sense of urgency seemed inexcusably misdirected.¹⁵

Historical Roots of Chinese Appeasement

It is an established fact that Chiang Kai-shek made concessions to Japan, hoping to delay war. But what is not known to many is the historical background of Chiang's policy of appeasement. Israel's remarks quoted above underscores the fact that appeasement was not new in modern Chinese history. But to suggest, as Israel does, that Chinese appeasement can only be traced back to the late Ching (清) period is, on a small scale, an example of Israel's unfamiliarity with pre-modern Chinese history, and on a large scale, to miss the bigger picture. The fact is that the Chinese were already appeasing foreign enemies as early as the second century BCE.¹⁶

Appeasement in classical European diplomacy is defined by the renowned military historian Gordon Craig and international relations authority Alexander George as an undertaking to reduce tensions between two countries "by the methodical removal of the principal causes of conflict and disagreement between them."¹⁷ An exact Chinese equivalent of the English word "appeasement" does not

¹⁴ Coble, pp. 1, 380.

¹⁵ Israel, p. 190.

¹⁶ Standing for "before common era," BCE is adopted by historians in recent years to replace "BC" (before Christ), which has a religious connotation. Likewise, "CE" is used in lieu of "AD" (*Anno Domini*), meaning, in Latin, "in the year of our Lord."

¹⁷ Gordon Craig and Alexander George, *Force and Statecraft: Diplomatic Problems of Our Time* (2nd ed., New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 250.

exist, though appeasement can be translated into Chinese as “ku-hsi” (姑息), a poor rendition which actually means “turning one’s blind eye to evil,” hence the saying “to tolerate evil is to abet it”(姑息養奸). There is a difference between turning a blind eye to evil and making concessions to a potential enemy, and the two are not to be mentioned in the same breath. For some occasions, appeasement is translated as “sui-ching” (綏靖), a better rendition that means “to pacify,” referring to the effort to placate potential enemies.

The lack of a Chinese equivalent, however, did not prevent the Chinese from making concessions in order to eliminate “causes of conflict and disagreement” between China and its hostile neighbors. Historically, the Chinese appeased foreign enemies in the name of “ho-chin” (和親), which literally means attempting to cement cordial relations with rulers of non-Han peoples along China’s border regions by marrying daughters of the Chinese imperial family to their chiefs, or, for short, peace through intermarriage. Although “ho-chin” and “jang-wai pi-hsien an-nei” differed in wording, they both aimed at making compromises with foreign invaders in order to delay the hostilities. For a militarily vulnerable China, “ho-chin” and “jang-wai pi-hsien an-nei” meant buying time to prepare for war against a powerful foreign enemy.

“Ho-chin” was first adopted during the Han dynasty (漢) to appease the Hsiung-nu (匈奴), nomadic hordes of Mongolian stock living along China’s northern borders. Plundering Chinese properties on a regular basis, the Hsiung-nu had been a major enemy of China since the late Warring States period (戰國時代), 402-221 BCE. This is best seen in the construction of the Great Wall (長城) as a barrier between China and the nomads.

In 201 BCE, the Hsiung-nu mounted a large-scale offensive against Han China. Liu Pang (劉邦), the founding father of the Han dynasty, and a large number of troops, mostly foot soldiers, were pinned down by Hsiung-nu cavalymen at Ping-cheng (平城), east of modern day Ta-tung, Shansi (山西大同), and suffered a crushing defeat. Realizing that foot soldiers were no match for mounted troops, Liu Pang sued for peace and adopted his adviser Liu Ching’s (劉敬) suggestion of marrying daughters of the imperial family to Hsiung-nu chiefs in an attempt to foster cordial relations (通好) with the invaders.

The Ping-cheng campaign made it clear to Han China that the primary reason for its defeat was the insufficiency of mounted troops as a result of horse shortage. In fact,

during the early years of the Han, the shortage of horses was so acute that the four horses used to haul the imperial carriage could not be of the same color. Horses were such costly commodities that virtually all government officials rode in ox-drawn carriages.

“Ho-chin,” according to the late, distinguished scholar Chien Mu (錢穆), was not just about establishing in-laws relations with the nomads. It was also about trade and bribery. Chien stressed that as nomads the Hsiung-nu had no political or territorial designs on China. They only coveted China’s economic wealth. In the name of intermarriage, “ho-chin” allowed Hsiung-nu commoners to trade with the Chinese at local border markets (邊市), and Hsiung-nu noblemen to receive lavish gifts from the Chinese court, thus satisfying the materials needs of the invaders and temporarily cooling off their desire for invading and looting China.¹⁸

Although “ho-chin” had reduced tensions between the Han and Hsiung-nu, it did not altogether prevent the latter from intruding into China. After Liu Pang passed away in 195 BCE, as a defiant gesture one Hsiung-nu chief even asked for the hand of Liu Pang’s widow, Empress Lu (呂后). During the reign of Emperors Wen and Ching (文、景帝), 179-141 BCE, ministers such as Chia I (賈誼) and Chao Tso (晁錯) considered “ho-chin” too demeaning, and recommended discarding it and resuming military action. It was argued that it had been a disgrace for Han China to put up with the Hsiung-nu whose entire population, estimated at one and half million, was less than that of a major Han county. But the court turned down their pleas on the ground that national strength had not been consolidated.

It was not until the reign of Wu-ti (武帝), 140-87 BCE, the famous Martial Emperor, that China had raised enough horses, approximately four hundred thousand heads. In 133 BCE, Wu-ti scrapped “ho-chin” and in the next fifteen years launched against the Hsiung-nu nine major expeditions, four of which were under the command of the dynamic uncle-nephew duo Wei Ching (衛青) and Huo Chu-ping (霍去病).

Judging by the Han experience, appeasement had served its purpose well. It gave China a breathing space of sixty-eight years, and the Hsiung-nu were reduced from a border menace to a nuisance for decades to come. Although the Hsiung-nu ceased to pose any major threat to China’s northern frontier after Wu-ti’s repeated punitive

¹⁸ Chien Mu 錢穆, *Kuo-shih ta-kang* 國史大綱, Vol. 1 (An Outline of National History), (17th ed., Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 1990), p. 152.

expeditions, during the reign of Emperor Yuan (元帝), 48-33 BCE, for fear of Hsiung-nu resurgence, the Han court resorted to “ho-chin” again. But in this case, a maid in the imperial palace, not a princess, was betrothed to a Hsiung-nu chief. China’s choice of person speaks volumes for the diminished Hsiung-nu military strength.

Chinese Women as Peace Envoys

In a nation such as China whose leaders cherished historical precedents, the Han experience was not lost on later generations. As a matter of fact, “ho-chin” became a standard practice of the Chinese government’s handling of aggressive invaders. For example, Yang Chien (楊堅), the founding emperor of the Sui dynasty (隋), 581-617 CE, married two Chinese princesses to the chief of the Eastern Turks (東突厥), also living along China’s northern border. Later in the Tang dynasty (唐), the Chinese court married a princess to the chief of Tibet (土蕃，今西藏) in the seventh century and another one to the chief of the Muslim Uighurs (回纥) in the eighth century.

Of all the Chinese women who were betrothed to the nomads as peace envoys, two became legendary. The first one was Wang Chiang (王嬙), better known as Wang Chao-chun (王昭君), the maid who served in Emperor Yuan’s court as mentioned. Volunteering to marry Hsiung-nu chief Huhanye (呼韓邪), Wang Chao-chun became a folk heroine, and her deeds became the theme of Chinese folksongs and films, in which she was depicted as a delicate but resourceful woman who sacrificed her personal well-being for the sake of the country.

Wang Chao-chun’s story was made immortal by the great Tang poet Tu Fu (杜甫), who in his “A Praise of Yearning for the Historical Sites, Part Three” (詠懷古跡，五首其三) depicted the loneliness and homesickness of a woman who spent the rest of her life in a remote place beyond the Great Wall and was eventually buried there and never to return home. Wang’s final resting place, dubbed by Tu Fu as the “Green Grave” (青塚) in the aforementioned poem, is located on the southern outskirts of Hohhot (呼和浩特，原綏遠省歸綏市), capital of the so-called Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (內蒙古自治區). Measuring thirty-three meters in height, Wang’s burial site, which is a catacomb, has become a major tourist attraction in the region known as the “Green Grave that Embraces the Beauty” (青塚擁黛).

Local legend has it that the grass on top of the mound stays green all year around,

hence the “Green Grave.” Wang Chao-chun has been popular with local people who consider her some sort of goddess of fertility. According to one local legend, infertile women would become pregnant if they pray to Wang for children and bring home a handful of soil from her grave.

The second legendary Chinese heroine was Princess Wen-cheng (文成公主), a devout Buddhist. Wen-cheng’s matrimony with Songtsan Gampo (弄贊贊普), the Tibetan chief, in 641 marked the introduction of Buddhism and Chinese culture into Tibet, resulting in the Sinicization (漢化) of the Tibetan people. Under Wen-cheng’s influence, Songtsan Gampo built Buddhist temples, sent students to the Imperial Academy (國學) in Chang-an (長安), and hired Chinese nationals as officials in his government.

In order to welcome Princess Wen-cheng to Tibet, Songtsan Gampo constructed a palace on the Red Hill (紅山) to the northwest of Lhasa (拉薩) for her. He named the palace Potala (布達拉), which means, in Sanskrit, residence of Avalokitesvara (觀音). Much of the Potala Palace was later destroyed in the ninth century. The Potala that towers over Lhasa today is the one that had been rebuilt by the Fifth Daila Lama (第五代達賴喇嘛) in the late seventeenth century.

Rationalizing Chinese Appeasement

On why a weak China should appease foreign invaders in order to preserve itself, the Northern Sung (北宋) scholar-official Fan Chung-yen’s (范仲淹) advice is most illuminating. The Sung dynasty (宋) had been plagued with repeated invasions from the Western Hsia (西夏) and Liao (遼), both were founded by Inner Asian nomadic hordes, since its founding in 960.

The Sung court was initially in favor of military retaliation against the invaders, but defeats soon befell the poorly trained and ill-equipped Chinese army. Then the court turned to Fan Chung-yen, one of the leading moderates in the government. Having been in charge of border affairs for years, Fan was experienced in dealing with the Western Hsia and Liao. He averred that China’s weakness provided foreign enemies an opportunity that could be exploited to their advantage. So long as China remained weak foreign invasion would continue, and the most effective way to repel the enemies was to make the country powerful. In 1044, Fan entreated Sung Emperor Jen-tsung (仁宗) to model himself on Tang Emperor Tai-tsung Li Shih-min (唐太宗

李世民):

Peace-making or war-making, either approach can brew major disasters. However, for the sake of current situation, there is no task more urgent than selecting and training soldiers as well as managing frontier affairs perseveringly day and night for future military operations. Fostering cordial relations with the enemies is an expedient, while preparing for war is a pressing matter of the moment (以和好為權宜，以戰守為實事). When the enemies realize that we have worked out a strategy and are militarily prepared, they would not dare take reckless action against us. Peace then shall last longer.¹⁹

Until such time when national defense could be reinforced, Fan Chung-yen insisted that China must not provoke the enemies. Fan believed that compromising with the enemies was not a choice, but a necessary evil in light of the country's weakness. He stated that the top priority of Chinese foreign policy was to prevent the Western Hsia and Liao from joining together their forces in an alliance which would spell an even greater threat. In a memorial submitted to court in 1041, he advised the emperor to endure the reality of submissiveness to the enemies by citing the Han example.

According to my observation, in the heyday of Han Emperor Kao-ti's (漢高帝 劉邦) reign, there were able ministers such as Hsiao Ho (蕭何) and Han Hsin (韓信) assisting the emperor to score victory in battles with an experienced, veteran army. When four hundred thousand men under the emperor's command were surrounded at Ping-cheng, he agreed with the Hsiung-nu on "ho-chin." "Ho-chin" was continued by Empress Lu as well as Emperors Wen and Ching for generations, and they would not sever the relations. But the Hsiung-nu were unpredictable and still intruded into China quite often, killing Chinese officials and civilians at will. Local people were fed up with their brutality. The Hsiung-nu were arrogant and looked down on China. Yet the Han emperors

¹⁹ *Fan Chung-yen yen-chiu tzu-liao hui-pien* 范仲淹研究資料彙編, Vol. 1 (A Compilation of Research Materials on Fan Chung-yen), (Taipei: ROC Executive Yuan, 1988), p. 554.

were not swayed by the behavior of the Hsiung-nu and put up with the insults for they were more concerned about the well-being of the entire nation.²⁰

Previous military setbacks had made it painfully clear to Fan Chung-yen that, when facing two foreign menaces at once, a weak China had no choice but to try to maintain a fragile peace even if this meant continuing to send tributes to foreign enemies and disregarding the recovery of lost territories. It should be recalled that the Sung and Liao reached a peace settlement in 1005 known as the Tan-yuan Accord (澶淵之盟), which specified that each year China would give the Liao two hundred thousand bolts of thin silk and one hundred thousand taels (兩) of silver, and the Sung emperor would address his Liao counterpart as elder brother. As a result, an uneasy truce lasted for one hundred and seventeen years between the two countries.

The lost territories that Fan had in mind were the strategically important Sixteen Yen-yun Counties (燕雲十六州), which correspond to parts of today's Hopeh (河北), Chahar (察哈爾), and Shansi (山西), all located in the northwest. Shih Ching-tang (石敬瑭), first emperor of the Chin (晉), ceded the Sixteen Yen-yun Counties to the Liao under duress in 936. The loss of the Yen-yun region as a natural barrier between China and the nomads jeopardized the country's defenses north of the Yellow River and rendered the Northern Sung's subsequent effort to defend itself much more difficult.

Fan Chung-yen got the opportunity to put his ideas to work when the court appointed him deputy prime minister (參知政事) in 1043. In the same year he announced his Ten-Project Reform (十事疏), which was well received by the emperor and put into action immediately. The ten projects included: careful selection of government officials; toughening the civil service examination system; introducing strict promotion and demotion rules; strict law enforcement; equal distribution of public lands; revamping agricultural production; reaffirming the state's authority; rooting out favoritism in official appointments; tax reduction; and reinforcement of border defenses.

Confucius once admonished that "impatience with little things spoils great plans" (小不忍則亂大謀). Extraordinary patience is the key to a successful appeasement, which is best seen in Han China's putting up with "ho-chin" for almost seventy years

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 185-186.

before retaliating against the Hsiung-nu. This Chinese position is further vindicated by the American scholar Stephen Rock who confirms that “appeasement is often a slow process. Sometimes a series of inducements may be necessary before the desired change in an adversary’s behavior is achieved.”²¹ Seven years before Fan Chung-yen became deputy prime minister, he had already begun preaching patience, speaking out against some military commanders’ calling for action against the Western Hsia and Liao. “We must admonish our generals to exercise self-restraint.”²²

Knowing that the reforms needed time to prove themselves, Fan Chung-yen stressed the importance of a non-provocative foreign policy, and opposed calls for resorting to arms with the enemies before the reforms were completed. Fan’s policy was not without its critics. Officials who stood for war claimed the policy was a sure sign of China’s weakness. However, those who stood for peace asserted that further military action would only cause more suffering among the civilians and hasten the arrival of disasters.²³

With the fear of war on two fronts looming large, Fan emphasized the importance of keeping cordial relations with both foreign enemies. In another memorial, he pled with the emperor for patience and self-restraint, again, citing the Han example.

History books tell us that the earlier emperors fostered cordial relations with the barbarians not because they had no high aspirations; the country’s weakness had compelled them to do so. They were concerned that ongoing border confrontations might exhaust the people. Protracted military operations would definitely spell trouble and disturb the nation. This is precisely why Han Emperor Kao-ti and Tang Emperor Tai-tsung, after having been through hundreds of battles, would not dare pursue military ventures, and had to yield to the barbarians’ pressure [by marrying Chinese princesses to their chiefs]. They waited such time when the country was powerful enough and capable generals were available, then they drove deep into enemy territory, delivering crushing

²¹ Stephen Rock, *Appeasement in International Politics* (Lexington: Kentucky University Press, 2000), p. 171.

²² *Fan Chung-yen yen-chiu tzu-liao hui-pien*, Vol. 1, p. 422.

²³ Tang Cheng-yeh 湯承業, *Fan Chung-yen yen-chiu* 范仲淹研究 (A Study of Fan Chung-yen), (Taipei: National Editing and Translating Bureau, 1977), p. 186.

blows and seeking revenge.... Improving the people's livelihood, developing agriculture, and selecting generals as well as training soldiers help to enrich the country and strengthen the people. This is political finesse of competent rulers and the key to national wealth. If we could not wait to square accounts with the enemies and would like to settle the differences on the battlefield now, it would exhaust the people and jeopardize the nation.²⁴

Given Fan Chung-yen's position on making concessions to foreign invaders, it is apparent that he was willing to sacrifice some Chinese interests in order to preserve the fragile peace between China and her enemies. So he advised the emperor to endure the reality and temporarily disregard recovering lost territory. Fan's position seems to parallel Chiang Kai-shek's policy of refraining from military confrontation with Japan when the latter occupied the Chinese Northeast. Commenting on the loss of the Northeast, Chiang in 1934 said: "It is not uncommon that a country's frontier is either under enemy occupation or encroachment. This is particularly so when the great powers take advantage of a country that is undergoing a revolution by occupying its territory."²⁵

The circumstances in Fan's time were not the same as those in Chiang's time. For example, national disunity was not an issue for the Northern Sung as there were no civil wars or restive regional militarists in the country. What was the same, however, was that Sung China and Nationalist China were militarily weak and both of them had to buy time to prepare for war. Fan and Chiang shared a view that sacrifices China had to undergo were worth the price if it could become strong enough to get its revenge. Sacrifices on the part of China were the lesser of two evils. When facing a greater evil, a war in which China's survival seemed doubtful, both men accepted the lesser one.

Fan Chung-yen did not use the term "jang-wai pi-hsien an-nei" in his memorials. Likewise, any direct reference to Fan is nowhere to be found in Chiang Kai-shek's pre-war speeches. Though I am only able to prove a contextual connection between the two, given the fact that Fan is a household name in China it would be inconceivable that Chiang, or Chen Pu-lei (陳布雷), Chiang's chief secretary who

²⁴ *Fan Chung-yen yen-chiu tzu-liao hui-pien*, Vol. 1, pp. 562-563.

²⁵ *Hsien tsung-tung Chiang-kung ssu-hsiang yen-lun tsung-chi*, Vol. 12, p. 98.

was immersed in Chinese classics and wrote many of Chiang's speeches, did not know of Fan's thinking. The similarities between the two men, therefore, cannot be dismissed as purely coincidental. Whether or not Chiang in his pre-war speeches mentioned Fan is not the point. The point is that by bringing in Fan, "jang-wai pi-hsien an-nei" can be examined in a broader historical context by demonstrating the parallels between Chiang and earlier figures.

Lessons of the Munich Conference

Any discussion of appeasement would be incomplete without mentioning the Munich Conference. Just as "ho-chin" and "jang-wai pi-hsien an-nei" are subjects of dispute among the Chinese, the Munich Conference has given rise to much controversy in the West. Much has been written on Munich in the last half-century, but a final verdict on the wisdom of appeasement has yet to be reached. Although no one claims to have the last word on appeasement for now, it is hoped that the inclusion of the Munich Conference in this article will establish the fact that appeasement has been a thorny subject for the British just as it has been for the Chinese, and for our forefathers and for moderns as well.

In late September 1938, German *Fuehrer* Adolf Hitler, Italian *Duce* Benito Mussolini, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, and French Premier Edouard Daladier met at the Bavarian city of Munich in southern Germany to discuss the future of Europe. In the name of national self-determination (民族自決), Hitler demanded that the Sudetenland, a borderland in northwestern Czechoslovakia where the majority of the three-million-plus population was German, be handed over to Germany. An ally of France, Czechoslovakia was not invited to the conference that was to decide its fate. At Munich, Chamberlain and Daladier accepted Hitler's demands lest war would break out over Czechoslovakia.

Under tremendous pressure from London and Paris, Prague had no choice but to sign its own death warrant by ceding the Sudetenland to Berlin. The following is one example of how the Czechs had been treated by their British allies. In the late evening of September 29, 1938, the first day of talks at Munich among the four powers, two Czech diplomats, Vojtech Mastny²⁶ and Hubert Masarik, met with Frank

²⁶ Mastny later immigrated to the United States. Currently he is senior research scholar at the

Ashton-Gwatkin, one of Chamberlain's aides. Ashton-Gwatkin told them bluntly that "if you do not accept [the cession of the Sudetenland to Germany], you will have to settle your affairs with the Germans absolutely alone. Perhaps the French may tell you this more gently, but you can believe me that they share our views. They are disinterested."²⁷

The betrayal of Czechoslovakia by the two Western democracies later became known as the "Shame of Munich," shameful in that Britain and France had repudiated treaty obligation to protect Czechoslovakia. For this reason, "the word 'appeasement,' once a wholly honorable diplomatic alternative designed to minimize the risk of armed conflict, became a term of opprobrium and conjured up a hateful and despicable policy."²⁸ Writes Stephen Rock:

Chamberlain's failure etched itself indelibly on the minds of post-war scholars and policymakers. Heeding Santayana's famous dictum that "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," many in the West embraced the so-called "Munich analogy," the chief lesson of which was that making concessions to a hostile state could not succeed in pacifying it and thus preventing war.²⁹

It has been said that "past experience, if not forgotten, can be a guide to the future" (前事不忘，後事之師). Today, more than fifty years after the Munich Conference, several lessons have been derived from the Munich experience. One such lesson, as quoted above, is that appeasement cannot possibly prevent war in the long run. However, the validity of this particular lesson is still open to question.

Winston Churchill, a historian and a career politician who succeeded Chamberlain as prime minister in May 1940, was an outspoken critic of the appeasement policy and had written extensively on matters related to World War II.

Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and senior fellow at the National Security Archive, both in Washington D.C.

²⁷ William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), p. 417.

²⁸ Leslie Derfler, *An Age of Conflict: Readings in Twentieth Century European History* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1990), p. 164.

²⁹ Rock, p. 2.

To Churchill, the lessons of Munich vary with his capacity as a historian or a politician. For Churchill the historian, the lesson is that military confrontation with foreign enemies is not always a good idea, and that patience and good will have prevented wars in the past.

Those who are prone by temperament and character to seek sharp and clear-cut solutions of difficult and obscure problems, who are ready to fight whenever some challenge comes from a foreign Power, have not always been right. On the other hand, those whose inclination is to bow their heads, to seek patiently and faithfully for peaceful compromise, are not always wrong. On the contrary, in the majority of instances they may be right, not only morally but from a practical standpoint. How many wars have been averted by patience and persisting good will! Religion and virtue alike lend their sanctions to meekness and humility, not only between men but between nations. How many wars have been precipitated by firebrands! How many misunderstandings which led to wars could have been removed by temporizing.³⁰

For Churchill the politician, the lesson of Munich is that Britain and France should have behaved honorably and have kept their “words and to act in accordance with [their] treaty obligations to allies.”³¹ When Britain and France failed to fulfill their promise to protect Czechoslovakia from Germany at the Munich Conference, Churchill announced to the House of Commons:

We have sustained a total and unmitigated defeat.... We are in the midst of a disaster of the first magnitude. The road down the Danube,...the road to the Black Sea has been opened.... All the countries of Mittel Europa (Central Europe) and the Danube valley, one after another, will be drawn in the vast system of Nazi politics ... radiating from Berlin.... And do not suppose that this is the end. It is only the beginning.³²

³⁰ Winston Churchill, *The Gathering Storm* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1948), in *An Age of Conflict: Readings in Twentieth Century European History*, pp. 166-167.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

³² Shirer, p. 423.

It is interesting to see how Churchill changed tack from praising the policy of appeasement to condemning it. Churchill's criticism of appeasement, however, should be discounted given what Gerhard Weinberg, professor of German and diplomatic history at the University of North Carolina, has written in light of wartime British archival materials that became available after World War II:

We now know that Chamberlain was correctly reported as willing to contemplate the territorial cession of the German-inhabited portions (the Sudetenland) of Czechoslovakia in early May 1938, and that the British knew that there was no serious French military plan to assist Czechoslovakia—the only offensive operation planned by the French if war broke out was into Libya from Tunisia. It is now also known that in June 1938 Winston Churchill explained to a Czechoslovak official that it was essential for Czechoslovakia to work out an agreement with Konrad Henlein, the leader of the Sudeten Germans, and that although he, Churchill, was criticizing Chamberlain, he might have followed the same policy if he had held the responsibilities of power. It is also clear that there were serious doubts within the British government—which may or may have not been justified—about the ability of Britain and France to defeat Germany.³³

To Sir John Wheeler-Bennett, a prominent British military historian, the lesson of Munich is the inevitability of the appeasement policy.

Let us say of the Munich Settlement that it was inescapable; that, faced with the lack of preparedness in Britain's armaments and defenses, with the lack of unity at home and in the Commonwealth, with the collapse of French morale, and with the uncertainty of Russia to fight, Mr. Chamberlain had no alternative to do other than he did; let us pay tribute to his persistence in carrying out a policy which he honestly believed to be right. Let us accept and admit all these things, but in so doing let us not omit the shame and humiliation that were ours; let us

³³ Gerhard Weinberg, "Munich after 50 Years," *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1988, in *An Age of Conflict: Readings in Twentieth Century European History*, p. 190.

not forget that, in order to save our own skins—that because we were too weak to protect ourselves—we were forced to sacrifice a small Power (Czechoslovakia) to slavery.³⁴

Wheeler-Bennett's view that Britain at the time of the Munich Conference was too weak to defend itself, let alone Czechoslovakia, is shared by Richard Austen Butler, the British undersecretary for foreign affairs, 1938-1941. Butler, who was involved in the appeasement policy practiced during the pre-World War II period, observed:

[In spring 1938] there was general agreement and apprehension [in the British government] that the next stage [of German territorial expansion] would involve Czechoslovakia. Accordingly the Prime Minister (Neville Chamberlain) asked the Chiefs of Staff for a report on the new military situation following the *Anschluss* (the union of Germany and Austria in March 1938). They specified that the Czechoslovak frontier of 2,500 miles could not be protected from a German attack, thus confirming Austen Chamberlain's (elder brother of Neville Chamberlain) warning in 1936 that "If Austria goes, Czechoslovakia is indefensible." They also advised that Britain was not in a position to wage war, particularly in view of our unreadiness in the air. Later in the summer they reported to the Committee of Imperial Defense that it was of vital importance for us to gain time for the completion of the defense program. The government was therefore faced with a categorical warning that the country was not ready for war, especially if this involved not only a German front, but conflict in the Mediterranean with Italy and trouble in the Far East with Japan.³⁵

According to one account, "the best defense that can be made for Munich and appeasement is that the West was either genuinely trying to avoid war or that it was buying time to prepare for a war that it knew to be inevitable but for which it was not yet ready."³⁶ The latter point of trading space, that is, Czechoslovakia, for time is

³⁴ Quoted in R. A. Butler, *The Art of the Possible* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1971), in *An Age of Conflict: Readings in Twentieth Century European History*, p. 171.

³⁵ R. A. Butler in *An Age of Conflict: Readings in Twentieth Century European History*, p. 170.

³⁶ Robin Winks, et al., *A History of Civilization: Prehistory to the Present* (7th ed., Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1988), pp. 780-781.

elaborated by Butler.

In September 1938 the R.A.F. (Royal Air Force) had only one operational fighter squadron equipped with Spitfires and five in process of being equipped with Hurricanes; by the summer of 1939, thanks to Lord Swinton's earlier tenure of the Air Ministry, it had twenty-six squadrons of modern eight-gun fighters, and a year later forty-seven. Our ground defenses against air attack were also substantially strengthened in this period. The provision of anti-aircraft guns was increased fourfold to 1,653, of which more than half were the newer 3.7- and 4.5-inch guns, and barrage balloon defense was completed in London and extended outside. More important was the fact that, by the time war broke out [in September 1939], the chain of radar stations, which during the Munich crisis had been in operation only in the Thames estuary, guarded the whole of Britain from the Orkneys to the Isle of Wight.... These preparations extended to the pace and scope of British rearmament generally.... They undoubtedly constituted the most important defense achievement between Munich and the outbreak of war.... They did provide the indispensable means by which we won the Battle of Britain [in 1940]. On this reckoning Munich was not, in Wheeler-Bennett's phrase, a "prologue to tragedy," but the pause, however inglorious, which enabled Churchill when his time came to lead the nation through the valley of the shadow to victory.³⁷

The argument that appeasement at Munich gave Britain a "military breathing space" has been challenged by some historians including, hardly surprisingly, Churchill, who claimed that "the year's breathing space said to be 'gained' by Munich left Britain and France in a much worse position compared to Hitler's Germany than they had been at the Munich crisis."³⁸ Gerhard Weinberg is more cautious about making a sweeping judgment on the "breathing space" issue.

The question of whether or not Britain and France would have been militarily better off had they gone to war in 1938 will remain a subject for debate for

³⁷ R. A. Butler in *An Age of Conflict: Readings in Twentieth Century European History*, pp. 173-174.

³⁸ Shirer, p. 426.

historians. Most would agree that the defenses of Czechoslovakia would have been more formidable in 1938 than those of Poland in 1939, but then the question remains whether, since there was to be no attack by the French in the west in 1938, a somewhat longer Czechoslovak resistance would have made any significant difference. It can be argued that the Germans used the last year of peace more effectively than the British and the French, but it must also be recalled that new British fighter planes and radar defenses would not in any case have been available to meet a German onslaught in 1939 as they were for the Battle of Britain in 1940.³⁹

The British historian Alfred Leslie Rowse criticized Chamberlain and company as “middle-class men with pacifist backgrounds and had no knowledge of Europe, its history or its languages, or of diplomacy, let alone of strategy of war.... They did not know what they were dealing with.”⁴⁰ Judging by what Butler, Weinberg, and Wheeler-Bennett have to say on appeasement as a policy, a case can be made that Chamberlain knew but too well.

Appeasement: When Heroes Swallowed Insults

Despite the notoriety that the Munich Conference has incurred, the Yale historian Paul Kennedy points out that prior to Munich, the policy of appeasement was regarded as being “constructive, positive [and] honorable” because it made possible the settlement of “international quarrels by admitting and satisfying grievances through rational negotiation and compromise, thereby avoiding the resort to an armed conflict which would be expensive, bloody, and possibly very dangerous.”⁴¹ The view that appeasement was honorable was shared by Chamberlain, the architect of British appeasement. Upon returning to London from Munich, Chamberlain

³⁹ Gerhard Weinberg in *An Age of Conflict: Readings in Twentieth Century European History*, pp. 190-191.

⁴⁰ A. L. Rowse, *Appeasement: A Study in Political Decline, 1933-1939* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1961), in *An Age of Conflict: Readings in Twentieth Century European History*, pp. 175, 176.

⁴¹ Paul Kennedy, “The Tradition of Appeasement in British Foreign Policy, 1865-1939” in Paul Kennedy, *Strategy and Diplomacy, 1870-1945: Eight Studies* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), pp. 16, 39.

announced to a cheering crowd who believed that a war in Europe had been averted as a result of giving up the Sudetenland to Germany at the Munich Conference: "My good friends, this is the second time in our history that there has come back from Germany to Downing Street peace with honor."⁴² I believe it is peace in our time."⁴³

So far as the Chinese are concerned, the appeasement policy has never been honorable. Being subservient to the invaders is by all means a humiliation, but they are prepared for it. A popular Chinese saying has it that "one has to endure humiliation when shouldering an important mission" (忍辱負重). This proverb exhorts those who are committed to carrying out an important mission to put up with shame that might come with the task. Put differently, one should not be troubled by having to suffer humiliation while pursuing a noble cause, for the ultimate reward would make it bearable.

The fact that Fan Chung-yen advised his emperor to put up with "ho-chin" speaks volumes for Chinese disgust at appeasement. Liu Pang, Fan Chung-yen, and Chiang Kai-shek pursued appeasement because that was their last resort, something that the Chinese would describe as "an option when no other options are available" (沒有辦法的辦法). With an imminent war that they could not hope to win as the other "option," Fan and Chiang, or Chamberlain and Butler, thought that they had to appease. But Chiang was so perturbed by the idea of making concessions to the invaders that he admonished the nation to endure the shame of being meek to Japan before national salvation was accomplished by citing the story of Kou Chien (勾踐).

Kou Chien's revenge became so popular among the Chinese that virtually everyone of them knows it by heart. The story enriches the Chinese language by giving it two proverbs. The first one is "wo-hsin chang-tan" (卧薪嚐膽). Meaning literally "sleeping on brushwood and tasting gall," it has a connotation of enduring humiliation in order to take one's revenge on a sworn enemy. The other one, "shih-nien sheng-chu, shih-nien chiao-hsun" (十年生聚，十年教訓), can be given a modern reading of ten years of education and ten years of economic development for the purpose of wiping out national humiliation. In one of the pre-war speeches,

⁴² The first time was British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli's return from the Congress of Berlin in 1878. A congress was convened in Berlin, Germany, to settle issues that arose from the Russo-Turkish War, 1877-1878. Disraeli boasted that he brought home "peace with honor" from Germany as a result of the cession of the island of Cyprus by Turkey to Britain.

⁴³ Shirer, p. 420.

Chiang Kai-shek reminded the nation that it should not rush into war with Japan when it was not fully prepared, and that it would take a long-term commitment to wipe out national humiliation. “*Shih-nien sheng-chu, shih-nien chiao-hsun* was a slogan that Kou Chien devised as a guide to saving his country when it was at the brink of destruction. We should not forget these words.... As long as we work hard to live up to the teaching of *shih-nien sheng-chu, shih-nien chiao-hsun*, we will certainly be able to revive our country.”⁴⁴

The necessity of enduring shame was further rationalized by Prince Kung (恭親王奕訢), an instrumental figure in Ching China's resisting foreign encroachment. After the withdrawal of British and French troops from Peking following the conclusion of the Convention of Peking (北京條約) in October 1860, Prince Kung, who signed the treaty in behalf of China, wrote a treatise on Sino-Western relations which was later included in “The Complete Account of Making Arrangements for the Barbarian Affairs during the Reign of Hsien-feng” (籌辦夷務始末〈咸豐朝〉). When facing the reality of military exhaustion and domestic strife, Prince Kung averred that it would be unrealistic for China to seek revenge on foreign powers, a view that puts appeasement in a favorable light.

Currently our resisting the barbarians is analogous to how the Shu (蜀) dealt with the Wu (吳) [during the Three Kingdoms period, 220-280]. The Shu and Wu were enemies. But [Shu Prime Minister] Chu-ke Liang (諸葛亮) kept both countries on good terms, sending envoys to the Wu to work out an alliance against the Wei (魏). He had nevertheless not forgotten that the Wu was still an enemy. It is a fact that situations can sometimes be favorable or unfavorable, and that matters are of greater or lesser urgency. Those who cannot control their anger and are anxious to test the water will create an even greater disaster. Today the relations between us and the barbarians are not the same as those between the Wu and Shu. But what is the same is the fact that we and the barbarians are enemies. Recently the barbarian situation has become rampant. Chinese of courage and uprightness without exception are indignant. As government officials, we know a little about righteousness and propriety. We do not dare forget vital national matters. But our resources are depleted and our

⁴⁴ *Hsien tsung-tung Chiang-kung ssu-hsiang yen-lun tsung-chi*, Vol. 10, pp. 658-659.

soldiers exhausted as a result of the Niens (捻) ravaging the north and the Taipings (太平) storming the south. Taking advantage of our weakness, the barbarians are able to subdue us. If we cannot control our indignation and declare war on the barbarians, it will put the country in immediate danger.⁴⁵

Historically, the decision to compromise with the invaders has been a difficult one. Hsueh Fu-cheng (薛福成), one of the leading advocates of modernization in the late Ching period, regretted that after the Opium War (鴉片戰爭), 1839-1842, many peace advocates in China were condemned by hard-liners as worthless people simply because they stood for peace with foreign powers. Why, Hsueh asked, did these people want to defy national opinion and risk universal condemnation by advocating peace and compromise?⁴⁶

According to Yuan Wei-shih (袁偉時), professor of philosophy at Chungshan University (中山大學), Canton (廣州), Kwangtung (廣東), the late Ching peace advocates knew China was in an inferior position. In order to save the nation from foreign subjugation, they believed that the country had to endure humiliation that came in various forms including paying indemnity and ceding territory, in order to gain time to strengthen itself. But hard-liners considered themselves champions of China's interests and regarded those who held different opinions as traitors.⁴⁷ Yuan asserts that someone's stand on war or peace should not be used as a criterion to determine if that person was patriotic or not. That being said, Yuan regrets that many Mainland Chinese historians working on the late Ching period still regard those who stood for war with foreign imperialists as patriots, and label those who compromised with foreigners as sellouts.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Liu Wei-kai 劉維開, *Issue of Expediency for National Survival: From Mukden to Marco Polo Bridge in China* 國難期間應變圖存問題之研究：從九一八到七七 (Taipei: Academia Historica, 1995), p. 2.

⁴⁶ Yuan Wei-shih 袁偉時, *Wan Ching ta pien-chu chung te ssu-chao yu jen-wu* 晚清大變局中的思潮與人物 (Ideological Trends and Figures in a Changing Society during the Late Ching Period), (Shen-chen, Kwangtung: Hai-tien Books, 1992), p. 137.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 137-138.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 294.

Limits to Chiang Kai-shek's Appeasement

Appeasement was not a permanent solution to China's problem in the 1930s, only a stop-gap arrangement. Although it was demeaning, it was a strategy of retreat in order to advance, a plan of making concessions to gain advantage in the long run (以退為進). The rationale of Chinese appeasement is imbedded in the culture. For example, one of the three Confucian precepts is abstaining from conflict. As men of traditional upbringing, Fan Chung-yen, Prince Kung, and Chiang Kai-shek all cautioned against giving free rein to impulsive behavior when it comes to resisting foreign invasion. Just as a Chinese proverb warns that "a wise man does not fight when the odds are against him" (好漢不吃眼前虧), Western sayings such as "discretion is the better part of valor" and "he who fights and runs away lives to fight another day" underscore the rationale behind appeasement.

If the writings of Fan Chung-yen and Prince Kung are any indication, appeasement was about not being carried away by reckless courage, emotional impulse, and irresponsible rhetoric. While unrelenting Japanese aggression meant that war would not be easily averted by Nanking's unilateral effort to preserve peace, Chiang thought the next best thing he could do was to trade space for time in order to strengthen national defense. So, like Fan Chung-yen, he preached patience and did not talk lightly about declaring war on Japan. If war could be put off for, say, one year, fewer Chinese would have become casualties of war because China, in theory, would have been better prepared for war than it was a year before.

When Chiang Kai-shek emerged in the mid-1920s as a national leader in the face of Japanese aggression, a historical pattern of appeasing foreign enemies was long since cast. If this is what Chinese history taught later generations, then Chiang had learned his lesson well for he honestly believed that he was pursuing a time-honored policy. For Chiang, the limits of appeasement were best described by a resolution on Sino-Japanese relations passed by the Fifth Kuomintang National Congress in 1935: "As long as our effort to preserve peace does not reach the stage of total hopelessness, we will not give up on peace-making."⁴⁹

Nanking's extent of accommodation to Tokyo was flexible; the resolution did not spell out what precisely constituted "the stage of total hopelessness." This

⁴⁹ *Hsien tsung-tung Chiang-kung ssu-hsiang yen-lun tsung-chi*, Vol. 14, p. 351.

so-called stage of hopelessness is such a loose term that its definition could vary from one person to the next. This helps to explain why Nanking, the Chinese Communists, and some of the regional militarists all had different ideas with regard to determining when enough was enough. Notes Parks Coble, “we cannot really be certain that Chiang himself knew [what was the stage of total hopelessness.]”⁵⁰

Chiang Kai-shek stopped making concessions to the Japanese as soon as he decided on a full-scale resistance in July 1937. Appeasement was about making concessions to the enemy in order to delay the inevitable. Once the all-out fighting started, appeasement would come to an end for the very incentive for concession-making no longer existed. Using July 1937 as a demarcation, the distinction between appeasement and treason becomes clear. Making concessions to the Japanese as he had been prior to the Resistance War, Chiang had a sense of propriety and did not stoop to collaboration when the going got tough during the war. Wang Ching-wei (汪精衛), in contrast, allowed himself and others like Chen Kung-po (陳公博) and Chou Fo-hai (周佛海) to be used by the enemy as puppets during war. Concession-making before the start of hostilities is appeasement; during war it is treason.

Wang Ching-wei's collaboration with the Japanese during the Resistance War has been a well-known fact. According to the American historian Gerald Bunker, “the basic question of whether Wang was a traitor or a patriot, the historians cannot resolve, except in one sense: Wang was no Petain or Quisling;⁵¹ he did not love the Japanese; he was not hostile to the institutions of his country; he sought nothing for himself but the honor of saving his country.”⁵² In the West, opinions differ as to whether Wang Ching-wei was a traitor or not. But so far as the Chinese are concerned, Wang's name was sullied for good as a result of collaboration.

By adopting appeasement, Chiang Kai-shek was basically pursuing an age-old

⁵⁰ Coble, p. 260.

⁵¹ Marshal Philippe Petain of France and Major Vidkun Quisling of Norway were two admirers of Nazi institutions, and had collaborated with the Germans in World War II. The former, the hero of the Battle of Verdun in World War I, headed the Vichy government. The latter, one-time Norwegian defense minister, was prime minister of Norway, 1942-1945. The name Quisling is now a synonym of collaborator or traitor.

⁵² Gerald Bunker, *The Peace Conspiracy: Wang Ching-wei and the China War, 1937-1941* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 285.

policy in a modern time. Though the policy's spirit has remained the same throughout the centuries, the nature of China's foreign enemies certainly has not. Because economic and material needs drove Inner Asian nomads to invade China, the Chinese could easily buy them off through "ho-chin." Modern Japan, however, would not give up until the objective of reducing China to dependency was achieved. Comparing Inner Asian nomads to modern Japan, the nature of China's foreign enemies has changed from material motives to territorial and political domination. Unlike previous enemies such as the Hsiung-nu or Tibet, twentieth-century Japan was a far more sophisticated and determined enemy, a fact that Nanking was keenly aware of.

For Nanking, there were two kinds of imperialism: white and red. White imperialism applied to foreign powers who took advantage of China by means of unequal treaties. Red imperialism referred only to Soviet Russia, a country that did not have unequal treaties with China but nevertheless harbored aims of subverting it by other means. Unequal treaties were not the sole criteria that Nanking used to determine whether a foreign country was its enemy. Physical aggression on a regular and escalating basis was the other one. Japanese invasion of the Northeast and Jehol (熱河) in 1931 and 1933 respectively, plus the attack on Shanghai (上海) in 1932, made clear to Nanking that Tokyo was the worst of all imperialists. When compared with white imperialism, Japan appeared insatiable in its greed to annex Chinese territory through military action. In contrast to red imperialism, Japan had at its disposal unequal treaties to facilitate its aggression, an edge Moscow did not have.

Stephen Rock maintains that "some states are more difficult to appease than others.... States that have truly hegemonic ambitions ... are incapable of being fully appeased."⁵³ Chiang Kai-shek understood the nature of his enemy too well to entertain the wishful thought that concession-making would prevent war with Japan in the long run. In fact, almost four years before the Mukden Incident, Chiang had concluded that a full-scale war between the two countries was only a matter of time. After conferring in Tokyo with Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka Giichi (田中義一) on the prospect of Sino-Japanese relations in November 1927, Chiang wrote in his diary the following:

Judging by the conversation with Tanaka today, I can say with certainty that he

⁵³ Rock, pp. 156, 158.

is not sincere in the least, and that there is absolutely no possibility of cooperation between China and Japan.... Japan has in the past negotiated with the Pei-yang warlords (北洋軍閥). After the First Sino-Japanese War, all those who negotiated with the Japanese were rotten, selfish people. As a result, the Japanese look upon us as easy prey, and this has inevitably become an established attitude on the part of the Japanese. My visit to Tokyo shows that Japan will meet with failure because of such attitude. Tanaka still treats me like an old-fashioned warlord and bureaucrat, acting willfully to win me over by hook or crook. Although he has received me, he is nonetheless insincere. I am not able to alter Japan's long-standing policy of aggression against China, but I have nothing to lose for I did catch a glimpse of this policy by meeting with Tanaka.⁵⁴

Chinese Appeasement, Success or Failure?

Robert Gilpin, lauded by Princeton University Press as dean of American students of international political economy, writes that "since the Munich Conference in 1938 'appeasement' as a policy has been in disrepute and has been regarded as inappropriate under every conceivable set of circumstances. This is unfortunate, because there are historical examples in which appeasement has succeeded."⁵⁵ Indeed, especially if we examine Chinese history.

One of the morals in Fan Chung-yen's memorials is that recovering lost territory cannot be accomplished by a single bold act. In a 1932 speech delivered to central government officials, Chiang Kai-shek asserted: "In order to reclaim lost territory, we must have the strength. Since we do not possess such strength, we must then have tactics."⁵⁶ The tactics Chiang had in mind was none other than "jang-wai pi-hsien an-nei."

Mainland Chinese historians and many Western historians concur in excoriating the policy of "jang-wai pi-hsien an-nei." They maintain that Chiang Kai-shek's policy

⁵⁴ Chang Chun 張羣, *Wo yu Jih-pen chi-shih nien* 我與日本七十年 (My Seventy Years with Japan), (5th ed., Taipei: Sino-Japanese Relations Research Society, 1981), p. 25.

⁵⁵ Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 193.

⁵⁶ *Hsien tsung-tung Chiang-kung ssu-hsiang yen-lun tsung-chi*, Vol. 12, p. 329.

inflated Japan's aggressiveness toward China. Between the 1931 Mukden Incident and the start of the Eight-Year Resistance War against Japan in 1937, the Japanese occupied the entire Chinese Northeast consisting of three strategic and richly endowed provinces, laid siege to the national financial capital Shanghai for three months, instigated the "independence" of the Northeast by setting up the puppet regime of Manchukuo (滿州國), put Peiping (北平)⁵⁷ and Tientsin (天津) in a precarious situation by taking control of Jehol, and manipulated the "self-rule" of the eastern portion of Hopeh province. Given the record of Japanese activities in China during this period, it seems impossible to defend Chiang Kai-shek or the wisdom of appeasement. It appears that when Mainland Chinese and Western historians condemn Chiang for not protecting Chinese territory as a result of his ill-fated policy, they are indeed making a valid point. However, their criticism may be misplaced.

Declaring "jang-wai pi-hsien an-nei" a failure based solely on how much Chinese territory was lost to Japan and how much Chinese sensibilities were hurt prior to the Resistance War is to miss an obvious point. Appeasement was not intended to be a quick fix or a comprehensive solution to Sino-Japanese conflict. It was devised to serve a long-term objective: the strengthening of China both militarily and socially for the purpose of war. Therefore, the wisdom of the policy must not be judged by what it was not designed to perform.

The wisdom of "jang-wai pi-hsien an-nei" should be judged by how much territory China still had left at its disposal before the Resistance War, not by how much it had lost to Japan. The contrast between the pace of Japanese aggression before and after the start of the Resistance War is one indication of what "jang-wai pi-hsien an-nei" has accomplished. The pace of Japanese aggression before 1937 was steady but nonetheless slow. From the Mukden Incident to the start of the Resistance War, Japan needed almost six years to take forcible possession of the Northeast and Jehol, totaling four provinces. Japanese attacks on Shanghai and Jehol before the war were limited to local fighting through diplomatic talks and did not engulf the entire nation. Though diplomacy did not stop Japanese aggression in the long run, it did

⁵⁷ After the completion of the Kuomintang's Northern Expedition (北伐) in late 1928, Peking (北京), which means "northern capital," as opposed to "southern capital," which is Nanking, was renamed Peiping, meaning "peace in the north." The name was used until late 1949 when the Communists revived the previous designation.

slow down the pace considerably. But as soon as war started, the Japanese military was no longer fettered by negotiations. And the consequences were devastating for China.

It is surprising how one significant aspect of “jang-wai pi-hsien an-nei” has often been overlooked: the fact that in spite of constant Japanese threat, before the start of war the National Government was able to retain financial centers such as Shanghai and Tientsin, the cultural capital Peiping, and the vast Chinese interior. The control of the interior, Szechwan (四川) in particular, was crucial for China’s cause because it provided the National Government with a wartime base for long-term resistance.

Japan’s aggression accelerated after the war began. Many of China’s major cities fell into enemy hands during the first few months of fighting. Peiping fell on July 28, 1937, to be followed by Tientsin the next day. On October 31, Chinese troops pulled out of Shanghai. Nanking, the nation’s capital, was abandoned on December 13. In addition to Heilungkiang (黑龍江), Kirin (吉林), Liaoning (遼寧), and Jehol, which were already occupied by the Japanese before the war, the greater parts of four more provinces—Shantung (山東), Kiangsu (江蘇), Hopeh, and Shansi (山西)—were lost during the war. Japan also took control of smaller parts of Honan (河南), Anhwei (安徽), Fukien (福建), Kiangsi (江西), Kwangsi (廣西), Kwangtung (廣東), Hunan (湖南), Yunnan (雲南), Kweichow (貴州), and Chiang Kai-shek’s home province Chekiang (浙江). Szechwan, Sinkiang (新疆), Shensi (陝西), and Tsinghai (青海) were the only provinces that had escaped large scale ground fighting. But Szechwan saw some of the worst wartime bombing in history.

In addition to considerable territorial losses, the war took a heavy toll on China’s human and financial resources. According to the official Kuomintang estimates, 3,227,926 soldiers and 9,136,569 civilians were either killed or wounded. The figures do not include Chinese casualties in Taiwan and the Northeast. Nor do they include overseas Chinese casualties under Japanese occupation of the Philippines, Indo-China, and Southeast Asia.⁵⁸ Chinese property losses reached catastrophic proportions: 51,770,877,000 *yuan*.⁵⁹ Chinese military expenses stood at 4,168,967,000 *yuan*. Had

⁵⁸ Li Yun-han 李雲漢, *Chung-kuo Kuo-min-tang shi-shu* 中國國民黨史述, Vol. 3 (A Historical Account of the Chinese Nationalist Party), (Taipei: Kuomintang Historical Commission, 1994), p. 618.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 618. *Yuan* (圓), or the Chinese dollar, was China’s currency during the Republican era, 1928-1949, and is still being used in Taiwan today. The then approximate exchange rate between

it not been for the war, Nationalist China's resources would have been put to better use continuing the nation building underway since 1928. Instead, they went up in the flames of war, which ended in a Pyrrhic victory for Nanking.

Then there is the issue that Chiang Kai-shek's appeasement policy had compromised Chinese nationalism. To determine if "jang-wai pi-hsien an-nei" had indeed undermined Chinese nationalism, a question needs to be asked first: what exactly did nationalism stand for in contemporary China? According to the American historian Arthur Waldron, the period between the late Ching and the early Republican years was one of "nationalism-laden historiography."⁶⁰ In Waldron's *From War to Nationalism: China's Turning Point, 1924-1925*, leading China historians such as Paul Cohen, Ernest Young, Immanuel Hsu, Mary Wright, Maurice Meisner, Chalmers Johnson, John Fairbank, and James Thomson are cited because they concur in the notion that nationalism has been a driving force of contemporary Chinese social, political, and intellectual changes.⁶¹ In spite of a concurrence of opinions on nationalism as a catalyst, the term is vague in meaning. Waldron maintains that nationalism "is now recognized as an elusive concept: It cannot be taken for granted as a self-sufficient explanatory tool but must itself be better understood."⁶² Lary also cautions that nationalism in China of the late 1920s and 1930s was not a well defined idea; it only represented a longing for a prosperous and powerful China.⁶³

While nationalism in contemporary China remains to be defined, its European counterpart has been clearly delineated. Waldron writes that nationalism "does not mean simply strong patriotic emotions, pride in country, willingness to die for it — although it is sometimes used in that way. Nationalism means specifically an intention, if necessary, to redraw the political map."⁶⁴ That said, Waldron admits that the nationalism of European definition is not applicable to Republican China for "there was no need to carve a 'China' out of some larger polity or to assemble it . . . out of small pieces. The map as already drawn would do: a republican regime could succeed

yuan and US dollar was 40 to 1.

⁶⁰ Arthur Waldron, *From War to Nationalism: China's Turning Point, 1924-1925* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 268

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 267-268.

⁶² Ibid., p. 8.

⁶³ Lary, pp. 17-20.

⁶⁴ Waldron, p. 269.

an imperial house relatively easily, in the same capital, and rule the same provinces, through many of the same people.”⁶⁵

Prior to the Resistance War, Chinese nationalism was precisely what Lary and Waldron describe: strong patriotic feelings and visions of a powerful China. So far as Chiang Kai-shek was concerned, giving consideration to both ends of Chinese nationalism was not easy. No one was able to make China powerful overnight; long-term planning was needed. Before China could become powerful, it had to avoid war with Japan in order to strengthen itself. And this usually meant making concessions to the invaders.

Diana Lary, Chalmers Johnson, and John Israel’s works on Chinese nationalism make the distinction between nationalism of the masses and that of Nanking. The two versions of Chinese nationalism share a belief that China had to resist Japan. But that is where the similarity ends.

Chiang Kai-shek believed that the interests of China would be best served if resisting Japanese invasion could be put off until such time when domestic stability was restored and when the military was strengthened. Hatred for the Japanese as a manifestation of patriotic feelings was not good enough for Chiang Kai-shek, who attached great importance to popular willingness to make whatever sacrifices the Resistance War might call for. To Chiang, the Chinese people might have possessed the hatred for Japan, but this did not mean that they were mentally or psychologically prepared for war. Their indignation and hatred were at best spontaneous nationalism and at worst emotional outbursts that might not last long enough to assure China’s final victory. Chiang thought that the Chinese people would not be ready for war until they fully realized the gravity and consequences of declaring war on Japan. For Chiang, it takes much more than impulsive emotions or reckless courage to repel the enemy.

Many have depicted Chiang Kai-shek as a weak character who was susceptible to Japan’s bullying. This view ignores the reality of Sino-Japanese relations in the 1930s: Japan was the stronger party in this relationship, not China. Militarily powerful, Japan was in a position to make demands. China, in contrast, carried little weight, if any. When Nanking dealt with Tokyo, it was a classic example of what the Chinese refer to as “asking a tiger for its fur” (與虎謀皮). Dating from the Chou dynasty (周),

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 271.

1111-256 BCE, this phrase metaphorically describes asking someone evil and powerful to act against his own interests for the sake of the underdog. It implies trying to accomplish the impossible or the ludicrous by demanding pity or charity from an evil character. Just as a tiger will never in its right mind surrender its fur voluntarily, Tokyo would not have heeded Nanking's pleas when it clearly enjoyed military superiority and had so much to gain from war with China.

Appeasement is a compromise made out of consideration for the general interest of the nation, and this point is best illustrated by Chiang Kai-shek's acceptance of the necessity of giving up some provinces in order to preserve the greater part of the Republic. During the late Ching period, Taiwan and the Pescadores were ceded to Japan so that the Mainland could be spared. In the Sung period, Fan Chung-yen spoke out against the temptation to reclaim lost territory in the north for fear that such a move would cost China more territory in the south. Even Czechoslovakia, the victim of Munich, was aware of, albeit painfully, the dire necessity of ceding territory in order to preserve peace. Jan Masaryk, the Czech minister to Britain, told Chamberlain and his foreign secretary Lord Halifax during the Munich crisis: "If you have sacrificed my nation to preserve the peace of the world, I will be the first to applaud you."⁶⁶ Although Masaryk spoke sarcastically, his remark does underscore the need for concession-making.

In historical perspective, appeasement was never about protecting each and every square inch of Chinese soil from foreign encroachment. It was essentially about sacrificing borderlands in order to preserve China proper, and about trading space for time so China could build up its national defense. The decision to give up some territories in order to preserve the better part of the country is painful, and is best described by a Chinese saying that "it takes heroic courage for one to sever his limb in order to save the rest of the body" (壯士斷腕).

"Jang-wai pi-hsien an-nei" was not a policy to hand over Chinese territory to Japan on a silver platter as conventional wisdom holds. It was a policy adopted to delay bloodshed. It was a stalling tactic, a stratagem to gain a respite by delaying military action. Considering the number of provinces under Japan's occupation, the human toll, and the financial losses in the Resistance War, the kind of argument put forward by the Chinese Communists that China could have at least saved face had

⁶⁶ John Wheeler-Bennett, *Munich: Prologue to Tragedy* (London: Macmillan, 1948), pp. 170-171.

Chiang Kai-shek declared war on Japan immediately after it invaded the Northeast in late 1931 or attacked Shanghai in early 1932 calls for more scrutiny. For Chiang Kai-shek, the lives of tens of millions were too high a cost for the preservation of China's national dignity and territorial integrity. In a speech delivered to the cadets of the Army University (陸軍大學) in Peiping, July 1929, Chiang made clear his position.

According to *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu, the best warfare is the one that repels enemy forces without resorting to arms. This remark is most invaluable to Chinese military thinking, for winning is neither the purpose of being a soldier, nor the best achievement of any soldier. Even if a war is won, the toll of human life and property is beyond estimation. For this reason, it is not as easy as it seems to judge what truly a victory is and what a defeat is.⁶⁷

In a 1995 interview, the late Colonel-General Chiang Wei-kuo (蔣緯國),⁶⁸ Chiang Kai-shek's younger son who was trained in Germany during the 1930s, elaborated his father's view. "Contrary to what most people think, the duty of a soldier is not to wage war, but to prevent it from happening in the first place." General Chiang pointed to "wu" (武), the Chinese equivalent of the English word "military," as proof. "Wu" is made of two characters, "chih" (止, to stop or to prevent) and "ke" (戈, dagger-ax, a traditional Chinese weapon), hence the expression "the prevention of war is the quintessence of the military" (止戈為武).⁶⁹ Although the Allies won the war against Japan, the victory did not change the fact that over twelve million Chinese were either killed or wounded in war. Chiang Kai-shek's view that there is no real winner when it comes to war is solemnly depicted by a Chinese proverb that "tens of thousands will have to die in order to make one general renowned" (一將功成萬骨枯). And it takes considerably more to win a war.

⁶⁷ *Hsien tsung-tung Chiang-kung ssu-hsiang yen-lun tsung-chi*, Vol. 10, p. 417.

⁶⁸ Known to the Westerners as Wego Chiang.

⁶⁹ Chiang Wei-kuo interview. Taipei, June 16, 1995.

Rethinking Appeasement

Appeasement aims at preserving peace for as long as possible at almost all costs, but a couple of differences exist between the Chinese and the Anglo-French practices of appeasement. First of all, there was no cheering for “ho-chin” or “jang-wai pi-hsien an-nei” in China as there was for Munich in Britain and France. In Britain, for example, in addition to having a jubilant crowd pouring into Downing Street to congratulate Chamberlain, a “National Fund of Thanksgiving” in Chamberlain’s honor was proposed, which the prime minister declined. One British newspaper wrote of Chamberlain as “no conqueror returning from a victory on the battlefield has come adorned with nobler laurels.”⁷⁰ In contrast, the Chinese swallowed the humiliation, waiting patiently for the tables to turn.

Furthermore, while at Munich Britain and France sacrificed the interests of a third party, China has always sacrificed its own. Given Churchill’s reaction to the Munich agreement as seen earlier, it appears that the criticism directed against Anglo-French appeasement results less from the Western democracies’ bowing to a stronger enemy, and more from Czechoslovakia’s being “sold out,” “betrayed”, or “abandoned” by its allies. Yet from the perspective of trading space for time, the cession of the Sudetenland by London and Paris, and the giving up of the Chinese Northeast by Nanking are distinctions without differences. Whether the decision on territorial cession was made by foreign governments as in the case of Munich or by its own government as in China’s case, it was an agonizing one.

Throughout Chinese history, appeasement was pursued in times of military weakness. The Han, Sui, Tang, and Sung examples are powerful evidence of how far the Chinese government was willing to go in terms of making concessions to the invaders when it was in no position to take the military initiative. They also show that when national survival is at stake, the Chinese have been flexible since antiquity in their dealings with foreign enemies. Appeasement did not come cheap. It carried a hefty price tag. It cost China its land, women, and national dignity. But if China was willing to pay, a temporary, albeit uneasy, peace might be worked out as a result. Given what appeasement had accomplished on behalf of a weak China or Britain, the fact that it is now categorically considered “inappropriate under every conceivable set

⁷⁰ Shirer, p. 420.

of circumstances” is indeed unfortunate. The dubious lesson of the so-called “Munich analogy” might be ridiculed by a Chinese proverb as “giving up eating for fear of choking” (因噎廢食).

The fact that both the Han and Tang dynasties resorted to appeasement is no small matter. The Han, which lasted for over four hundred years from 206 BCE to 220 CE, is considered by the Chinese to have been one of the greatest Chinese empires of all time. Ethnic Chinese are so proud of the Han that they call themselves Han people (漢人). The Chinese regard the Tang, which lasted for almost three hundred years, 618-909, as equally magnificent. It is no surprise that overseas Chinese communities are referred to as the “Streets of the Tang people” (唐人街). Both Han and Tang are now synonymous with China.

Emperors Liu Pang and Li Shih-min both earned the reputation of being men of great talent and bold vision. The twenty-three-year rule of Li Shih-min, 627-649, historically known as the Reign of Chen-kuan (貞觀之治), is universally hailed by Chinese historians as one of the most prosperous periods in the country’s history. Both Liu and Li had to appease foreign enemies at one time or another. But appeasement did not detract from their illustrious names. In fact, they are remembered as brilliant rulers, not as appeasers who had bowed to the invading enemies and betrothed women to them.

Yang Chien was crowned with glory as the grandiose ruler who unified China after two hundred and sixty years of disruption and laid the foundation on which the Tang Empire would later thrive. Fan Chung-yen passed into history as an upright official and a distinguished scholar. He was also fondly remembered for his inspirational words: “A ruler should plan and worry ahead of the people, and enjoy the fruits after the people” (先天下之憂而憂，後天下之樂而樂).

The idea of appeasing foreign invaders was shared by some of the most brilliant minds of China. Leaders such as Han Wu-ti and Chiang Kai-shek did not appease for the sake of appeasement or because of cowardice. They thought war was inevitable, but they believed it could be delayed. From the perspective of trading space for time, Chiang’s practice of appeasement in the name of “putting the house in order before resisting foreign invasion” was not without any merit as it did put off the Resistance War, something that might have happened in 1931, until 1937. However, judging by the accusation leveled against Chiang Kai-shek for pursuing appeasement, it appears that Chiang’s following in his forefathers’ footsteps has resulted in his being

subjected to a double standard by historians in Mainland China and the West. Before the Resistance War, whenever possible, Chiang Kai-shek had personally defended his position of “putting the house in order before resisting foreign invasion.” But from the end of war in 1945 to his death in 1975, he never openly did so in spite of the bad reputation that the controversial policy had earned him. Nevertheless, by pursuing the policy of appeasement, Chiang Kai-shek was going with the historical tide.

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