

Recruitment Tactics of Chinese Communist Party Army In Chinese Civil War

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Abstract

The Chinese Civil War was the first civil war in the world after World War II. The eventual winner of the war, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was just a small political party, which had only a few hundred members and no more than 30,000 soldiers when they began their armed struggle in 1927. However, two decades later in 1947, its army had grown to more than 3,000,000 soldiers, which represents an increase of 100 times. Why did the number of CCP soldiers rise so rapidly in such a short time? Recent literature examining the conscription activities of the CCP army mostly focuses on recruitment tactics in certain periods and regions. The goals of this paper are to present an overview of the CCP's recruitment action in a consecutive historical trajectory and figures out specific tactics that CCP used between 1927 and 1949 as the situation changed. These tactics can be summarized as (1) putting forward social incentives like ideological attraction, (2) offering economic endowments like distributing lands from landlords to peasants, (3) forcing people to join army, (4) using social endowments like patriotism and nationalism as incentives and (5) using captives as soldiers.

Key Words: Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Kuomintang (KMT), recruitment, economic endowments, social endowments

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The Chinese Civil War is the first civil war in the world after World War II. The eventual winner of the war, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was just a small political party, which had only a few hundred members and no more than 30,000 soldiers when they began their armed struggle in 1927. However, two decades later in 1947, its army had grown to more than 3,000,000 soldiers, which means an increase of 100 times. Why did the number of CCP soldiers rise so rapidly in such a short time? This article mainly focuses on CCP recruitment approaches in different periods, analyzing people's motivation to join the army, explaining why CCP can build army in such a huge number.

There are several traditional narratives about the recruitment of the army of the CCP. Official propaganda says that people joined the army for ideological reasons. The party line is that many Chinese people were enthusiastic about communism and eager to fight against the KMT which represented idea of bourgeoisie, feudalism and imperialism--the KMT. This kind of point obviously serves for politics which lacks objective judgment. Other scholars concentrate on recruitment issue of CCP army in certain separate period. Research on the recruitment of the Red Army (the army of CCP) in the period of the first Chinese Civil War (1927-1937) was prohibited until recent years since it is allowed and several scholars are now studying the topic. Among recent scholars to have taken advantage of this new opportunity to study is

Wang Lianhua (2011). She analyzes the process of the Red Army enlargement between 1931 and 1934, concentrating especially on recruitment activities. She argues that although the army of the CCP successfully recruited large amount of soldiers initially, the later misuse of conscription measures of land reform led to the military failure. However, by only focusing on the recruitment tactics, Wang does not shed light on the motives of soldiers to join or quit the army. Wang Jipeng (2011) focuses on the recruitment policy of the CCP during the second Sino-Japanese war, selecting Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region as a case study. Shi Jinping (2005) chooses the case of a town in Shanxi Province to examine recruitment activity. Both authors mention the positive effect of both guerilla warfare and establishing CCP branches in towns and villages. These two tactics contributed to the recruitment of CCP army a lot.

While most researchers of this period focus on certain regions rather than national situation as a whole, Chen Zhouwang (2010) discusses the important link between land reform and soldier recruitment during the latter years of the Chinese Civil War (1946-1949) by arguing that it was land reform that gave CCP firm control of rural society, empowering the party to easily conscript soldiers. Jiang Linping (2012) discusses the captive issue, pointing out that captives were the major source of replenishment for the CCP army during 1946 to 1949. To make distinction compared with others, my article aims to present a chronological overview of the recruitment action of the CCP and to generally discuss specific tactics that the CCP used during different phases of the war, tactics that often responded to a new certain situation,

explaining the surprising increase of number of army of CCP.

In terms of the general issue of rebel recruitment, Jeremy Weinstein mentions in his *Resource and Information Problem in Rebel Recruitment* (2005) the influences on rebel recruitment of economic and social endowments. Economic endowments can be a supply of material resources that is mobilized to meet the logistical requirements of organizing insurgency. This makes it possible for leaders to recruit people who are incentivized by short-term rewards. Recruitment of this sort attracts many opportunists and few people with long time commitment to the organization. Economic endowments also include promised economic interests or privileges by rebel leaders. However, when rebel groups operate in a resource-poor environment, most opportunistic joiners will stay away from these movements. In the absence of economic endowments, rebel leaders may use social endowments, such as shared beliefs, common expectations and norms of behavior, to recruit soldiers. The quantity of soldiers recruited with the help of social incentives may not compare that of under economic endowments, but such soldiers are highly committed and have long-term loyalty to the organization. Social endowments also include guarantees of rewarding status to newly recruited people, the affirmation of identity and empowerment or agency. Based on theoretical literature above, this article will discuss the recruitment tactics and selective incentives to attract people in different period used by CCP.

My argument is that, the dependent variable—the increase in numbers of the CCP's army was caused by (1) social incentives like ideological attraction, (2) offering economic endowments like distributing lands from landlords to all peasants,

(3) forcing people to join army, (4) using social endowments like patriotism and nationalism as incentives and (5) supplementing the army by using captives. In different periods of time, adapting to changing internal and external situations, the CCP used different tactics to recruit soldiers. The first variable, ideological persuasion was not able to attract enough people. Thus other approaches emerged and gradually replaced the ideological incentive. Besides, in different period, there were different indirect factors that provided an advantageous environment that enabled the CCP to grow its army. Among them were the invasion of the Japanese and improper policies of KMT government. In order to articulate different recruitment tactics and characteristics in different periods, this article will be organized chronologically to demonstrate different approaches used by CCP, as well as indirect factors in respective period used by CCP, explaining the reason for the spectacular expansion of CCP's army. The following section will be historical analysis of tactics and indirect factors used by CCP in separated period of time. Implications and limitations of this article will be drawn in the last section.

Recruitment tactics of CCP army over time in Chinese Civil war

Armed conflict between CCP and KMT began in 1927 with a small-scale rebellion in Nanchang. In period 1927-1937, called the first Chinese civil war, the Red Army (CCP's army) mainly used guerrilla warfare to fight against KMT. The years 1937-1945 marked the second Sino-Japanese war and the two parties were in armistice, but this period provided a chance for CCP to develop itself. 1946-1949 is

called the second Chinese civil war. In this final period, the number of CCP soldiers ultimately surpassed KMT's, which helped CCP win a final decisive victory. These broad historical time periods may be subdivide into sub-periods that distinguished by different recruitment tactics used by CCP. The following section will be separated in time periods characterized by the typical tactics used by CCP.

1927: Ideological Incentive

Influenced by the October Revolution of Russia and the following the success of Marxism-Leninism in May 4th movement of 1919¹, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was founded in 1921. Initially, its party members, whose identities were kept secret, were no more than sixty. In the 1920s, the industry of China was still underdeveloped so that the proletariat, which was to provide the power of the CCP, was weak. Although it was supported by Soviet Russia, the CCP had neither the broad base of establishment, nor enough room to conduct its activity. Opportunity came to the CCP when Sun Yat-sen, the leader of Kuomintang (KMT), the biggest political party in China, decided to cooperate with Soviet Russia and assimilate CCP members into his party. The Kuomintang's successful military action in 1926 helped the combined parties to control the majority of China. The CCP used the broad base of

¹ The May Fourth Movement was an anti-imperialist, cultural, and political movement growing out of student demonstrations in Beijing on May 4, 1919, protesting the Chinese government's weak response to the Treaty of Versailles, especially the Shandong Problem. In the late stage of the movement, Marxism-Leninism was spread by Chinese intellectuals, which led to the birth of Chinese Communism and communist party.

KMT to develop itself, leading strikes in many big cities. Chiang Kai-shek, who was the successor of Sun Yet-sen and an opponent of Communism, found that strikes and other social movements led by CCP undermined the financial supply from big companies and plutocrats in big cities. Therefore, he made up his mind to eliminate CCP members from KMT. On April 12th 1927, he began a purge, committed to stamping out the Communists.

This dangerous situation led the CCP to realize that an armed force was needed in order to fight for its survival. On August 1st 1927, the CCP mobilized a small part of KMT's army of 30000 soldiers to launch a revolt in Nanchang. Although the insurrection was planned mainly by Communists such as Zhou Enlai, the later premier of China, and Zhu De, the later general commander of CCP army, the main body of the insurrectionist army was an actually part of the KMT. Even the commander-in-chief of the revolt, He Long, was not yet a CCP member at the time of revolt. The reason why these soldiers and commanders dared to risk their lives to join the revolt is that they were following the claim of CCP who advocated for a radical land reform and worker movement. They did not ask for economic rewards but fought for their beliefs. Few of them truly believed in communism, but many joined the revolt because they were sympathetic toward the situation of CCP, on a purely moral level. In addition, a number of soldiers fought for the CCP out of loyalty to their commander who was a CCP member. The lukewarm allegiance of the common soldiers was in contrast to the strong commitment of the central commanders to the

CCP and to communism as an ideology. These men dedicated their lives to CCP and eventually five of them became marshals of state.

Although the revolt troops successfully took over the city of Nanchang, the distinction in commitment between commanders and soldiers ultimately would lead to tragedy. After the initial victory, the KMT assembled massive numbers of troops to attack the revolt. With no other choice, the rebel army decided to retreat from the city and moved south to rural area. Because most of soldiers did not have enough conviction to continue fighting, and because the commander failed to provide effective incentives and policies to retain the soldiers' loyalty and enforce discipline, the army suffered huge casualties and under the military pressure of KMT, two thirds of soldiers fled. The CCP failed to attract new people to fight for it because their ideology was not sufficiently attractive. In the end only 800 soldiers remained in the CCP army.

The Nanchang revolt taught CCP that although ideological belief gave it highly committed generals to command the army, ideology incentive could not help it attract enough soldiers to fight for them. Social endowments like common ideological goal can only provide long-term committed elites in small numbers. To retain and increase the recruitment, other tactics must be employed.

1928-1937: Economic Incentives

The failure of the initial revolt compelled the CCP to find other effective means with which to recruit fighters. In this period, the CCP established its revolutionary base and began to employ economic incentives such as land reform to attract soldiers within its territory. In the first phase of 1928-1932, land reform was advocated by most people on the base, giving people economic interests, so in order to protect their interests from the invasion of KMT force, large number of people automatically joined the Red Army. But from 1933, the downside of using economic incentives began to emerge. Together with the increasing military pressure from KMT, the excessive using of economic incentives made it invalid and the CCP chose to force people to fight. Unable to resist the heavy siege from KMT after suffering huge casualties, CCP reluctantly abandoned its revolutionary base and began the Long March. In the following the initial success and the ultimate failure of economic incentives is explained in more detail by looking at the two phases of this project, the initial success phase from 1928-1933 and the second failure phase, from 1933 to 1937.

Phase 1: 1928-1933, the Success of Economic Incentives in Recruitment:

Shortly after the Nanchang revolt, in September 1927, another revolt led by Mao Zedong broke out in Hunan province called the Autumn Harvest Uprising. Like the Nanchang revolt troops, the initial army was made up of former members of the KMT police force under communist leadership. This army called itself the Workers' and

Peasants' Revolutionary Army. Even the process of the insurrection was the same: initially they successfully took over some small town, but under the heavy attack from KMT troops, the total number of revolutionary soldier decreased to about 800. However, Mao Zedong, a military genius, had learned lessons from the Nanchang revolt. Remembering the lack of order among the retreating Nanchang revolt troops, Mao Zedong did not retreat even though he had only some 800 people left. Instead he introduced a new discipline of "putting the party branch into the company", which established the absolute leadership of CCP over its military force. By setting branches in the army, this discipline enabled the CCP to spread its ideology as well as enforce orders from the top. Secondly, he set a clear goal for the army, namely to marching into rural areas where KMT forces were weak, specifically Jinggang Mountain, as a way to preserve their strength, rather than moving without a destination as occurred with the Nanchang revolt troop.

However, an army of 800 soldiers was powerless against the KMT army. Mao Zedong needed to recruit more soldiers. The first step was to attract local bandits to join the army. Throughout the history of China, rural areas such as mountains were ruled by local bandit chiefs, and among those who ruled Jinggang Mountain were Wang Zuo and Yuan Wencai, who had more than 7000 soldiers. In order to get a military foothold in this mountain, CCP had to win the support of these bandits. At this point, Mao used social incentives, promising that both bandit leaders would be leaders in CCP army. He then assimilated the bandits into his army and eventually took control of Jinggang Mountain. Additionally, in 1928, the remaining soldiers of

the Nanchang revolt led by Zhu De joined the revolutionary base of Mao, growing his military force to nearly 10,000 soldiers.

The CCP base was continually under attack from KMT military force from the day it was established. Using social incentives to attract local bandits cannot provide an abundant resource of potential soldiers because few farmers wanted to be bandits. Facing daily casualties, it was necessary the Red Army² to recruit ever more men. The subsequent recruitment was achieved by offering economic incentives including land redistribution and other incentives offered by CCP to people who joined the army. The *Land Law of Chinese Soviet Republic*³ of 1928 stated “all land, movable and immovable property belonging to feudal landlords, the gentry, warlords, bureaucrats and others will be confiscated and distributed to the toiling masses; Red Army and their families should share the land, and will be helped to farm the land by the Soviet government.”⁴ According to an economic research survey called Xunwu, conducted by Mao himself, the portion of poor peasants in the revolutionary base was more than 90%. After this campaign of land redistribution, these poor peasants, the majority of people in revolutionary base, owned their lands and thus completely supported CCP and its policy, as well as its army.

² The name of Workers’ and Peasants’ Revolutionary Army was changed to the Red Army in May 25th, 1928.

³ Chinese Soviet Republic was a local separatist regime established by CCP in November 1931.

⁴ Edited by Modern Economic History Group of the Institute of Economics of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, *Selected Historical Data of Land Reform in the First and second Agrarian Revolutionary War*, (Beijing: People’s Press, 1981), p616-618

A second economic incentive consisted of preferential economic policies toward people who were willing to join the Red Army. In November 1931, the soviet government enforced *Chinese workers' and peasants' Red Army Preferential Treatment Regulations* which stated: “Red Army and their families and other poor farmers are entitled to share the land and their cultivation of land should get help from the government; families of soldiers who are in service of the Red Army are exempt from all taxes; children from soldiers families are exempt from fee; protect for marriage of soldiers who serve for the army.”⁵ Subsequent policies, such as *Decision to give preferential treatment to families of Red Army soldiers*, *Ways to execute Red Army Preferential Treatment Regulations*, *The plowing teams Ordinance favoring the Red Army family members* were all aimed at improving the level of privileges for soldiers of the Red Army.

The above policies were very attractive to poor peasants and helped CCP win the support of people in the revolutionary base. In order to coordinate these privilege policies, CCP launched a campaign to enlarge the Red Army, spreading propaganda to encourage people to join the army. These approaches were effective: huge numbers of people (as in table 1⁶) joined the army in order to gain land and economic privileges for their families, even though they did not know what communism was, or what the soviet was (some people even thought that soviet was a person they never

⁵ Red China, 5 no. 5, Jan 13th, 1932

⁶ Wang Lianhua, “Mobilization and Counter-mobilization: Movement of Enlarging the Red Army in Central Soviet base”, *Journal Of Hubei Administration Institute*, 2011(3)

met). They fought for CCP only to improve their living standard. One soldier wrote in his journal, “Why did I automatically join the Red Army? In the past our family had no farmland and no food. The Red Army came and I was given land; they even helped me look for a wife. With such benefits given by the Communist Party and the Red Army, I’m willing to join automatically.”⁷ As for those who did not want to fight, they may have been forced into service by their families who were lured by so many privileges. For example⁸, a wife wanted her husband to be a soldier in the Red Army but he did not obey. The woman then threatened her husband that if he did not go, she would divorce him.

Table 1

Time	The number of recruitment
Dec 1931-Feb 1933	87600
May 1933-Aug 1933	50000
Sept 1933-Jul 1934	112105
Sept 1934	18204

Obviously, recruitment tactics in this period brought positive outcome for the CCP. Poor peasants who were the majority in the base were easily mobilized by

⁷ Compiled by Ningdu Revolutionary History Museum, *Compilation of Data in the History of Huangpi Revolution*, (Jiangxi, 1978), p236

⁸ Huang Daoxuan, *Revolution in Central Soviet Revolutionary Base (1933-1934)*, (Beijing, Social Sciences Academic Press, 2011), p172

economic incentives. The number of the Red Army increased and it successfully defeated three sieges from KMT military forces. Meanwhile, by confiscating properties from landlords, the fiscal condition of CCP government improved. However, the good time did not last long. The failure to change its approach to adapt to a changing situation would lead to a failure of CCP in its base.

Phase 2: 1934-1936, the Struggle of Economic Incentives

Although the CCP army became stronger, problems resulting from economic incentives began to emerge and eventually undermined recruitment efforts. The first problem was one of finance. It mainly had two causes. First, because the revolutionary base obtained its financial resources mainly from the confiscated properties of formal landlords, this financial resource disappeared once the landlords had been eliminated. In order to raise more money to feed and arm the troops, the government had no choice but to mobilize another campaign to punish the new “landlords” appointed by CCP. In the first phase of the land confiscation campaign, the landlords who were punished were real landlords who had large scale of land and farmworkers. But in later campaign, some farmers who had been rewarded with redistributed land in earlier campaigns were in turn treated as landlords and their properties were confiscated by the government. After several rounds of redistribution campaigns, enthusiasm to join the army was undermined. Meanwhile the government also found there was nothing left to be confiscated. Second, in the early phase of

enlarging the Red Army, almost all young able-bodied men on the base were recruited into the army, leaving only women, old people and children in the farmland, which largely decreased its productivity. Table 1 show that nearly 300,000 people were recruited to be soldiers while the total population of revolutionary base was 3,000,000. So there were little adult labors left in the land to farming. These situations, beginning at the end of 1933, undermined the economic condition of the revolutionary base and pushed the CCP government to the edge of bankruptcy.

As the CCP was weakened by these its own policies, the KMT exerted intensifying military pressure. From 1930 to 1934, the KMT army orgnized five sieges against the revolutionary base. Although the Red Army was victorious the first four times, casualties were considerable. Facing a large number of deaths, people in revolutionary base began to avoid joining in the Red Army. Some women did not want to marry potential soldiers for high odds of being widowed.

The deteriorating economic condition of the CCP revolutionary base and the large number of casualties undermined the initially positive effect of land reform on recruitment. Facing the poor financial condition and huge casualties, it was hard to execute formal policies to ensure privileges for families of soldiers, which further undermined the attraction of these policies and decreased recruitment. Not only could new soldiers not be recruited, active duty soldiers began to flee from the Red Army as well. According to the official document of Jiangxi Soviet government, “three quarters of soldiers newly mobilized to support the battle field fled within a few days. What is more, people who escaped included not only common soldiers, but also

government leaders.”⁹ In order not to be mobilized into the army, some people even committed self-mutilation or suicide.¹⁰

Under military and economic pressure, the CCP government had no choice but to force people to join the army. Some CCP local governments asked all officials to be soldiers to support the battlefield. Name lists were posted and if someone on the list did not show up, a mark of shame would be hung in front of their home doors, considering labeling this person as counterrevolutionary¹¹. In order to keep up morale, the government censored letters from the soldiers in the battle field, blocking letters which showed pessimistic inclinations.¹²

Under this kind of terror, soldiers fled the army and non-soldiers escaped from revolutionary base in order to avoid being mobilized. Revolts broke out against Soviet government. On the military side, new conscripts lacked military practice, which exacerbated the difficult military condition. Lacking economic incentives to attract people, having few people who wanted to fight and even fewer who knew how to fight, CCP was pushed to the brink of failure.

⁹ Compiled by Jiangxi Provincial Archives, *Document collection of Revolution in Jiangxi (1933-1934)*, (Beijing, Central Archive, 1992), p107

¹⁰ Wang Lianhua, “Mobilization and Counter-mobilization: Movement of Enlarging the Red Army in Central Soviet base”, *Journal Of Hubei Administration Institute*, 2011(3)

¹¹ “The Summary of Mobilization and Mobilization Plan of Next Four Months in Workers Division and Youth Communism International Division”, *Struggle* issue 238, March 28th, 1933

¹² *Historical Data collection of Xiang-Gan Revolutionary Base: Volume*, (Jiangxi, People’s Press of Jiangxi, 1984),p157

After continually losing support from people in the revolutionary base, the CCP ultimately decided to abandon this central revolutionary base and began the Long March. Although the tactic of using economic incentives did not work when staying in a certain place for a long time, in the long march, the Red Army was in constant movement, which made economic incentives effective again. The route of the march was through rural areas where people could not even obtain basic food and clothing¹³. Thus, besides enforcing land reform, the CCP also spread propaganda promising those who joined the Red Army food confiscated from landlords. Although still suffering losses from relentless attacks by the KMT, newly recruited soldiers kept the number of soldiers in the Red Army to a more or less constant level. Once the army arrived at its destination in north Shaanxi province, an extreme poor place like others along the road of Long March, the CCP continued to use such economic tactics to attract poor peasants to join the army, until the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War in 1937.

The period from 1928-1937 witnessed the success and failure of economic incentives to recruitment troops to the CCP army. As shown, people who joined the army to gain economic incentives did contribute to enlarging the total military force of the CCP. But the downside was that these people were not investors who had firm belief to sacrifice themselves to the revolution, but opportunists who only looked for economic interests. This made them unable to be loyal when the organization faced serious predicaments. The land reform tactic could be effective to allow the CCP to

¹³ Xiao Feng, *The Long March Dairies*, (Shanghai, People's Press of Shanghai, 1979), p35

attract new soldiers. But round after round of land reform would dampen the enthusiasm of peasants to join the army. In the long run, it would be invalid. As the CCP settled in its new base, the continuation of land reform year after year would cause the same problems. Therefore, solely relying on economic incentives could not provide CCP a solid army. In the following period, social incentives would again play central role in helping the CCP to assemble its troops.

Period 3: 1937-1945, Mass Mobilization by using the Social Incentives of Patriotism and Military Strategy

The change of the CCP's revolutionary base from Jiangxi to Shaanxi did not end the KMT's military siege. However, after the peaceful resolution of Xi'an Incident¹⁴ in December 1936, KMT entered into an accord with the CCP establishing the Anti-Japanese United Front to fight against the Japanese and ending its siege of the CCP's revolutionary base. In return, the CCP agreed to end its radical land reform practices. Rather, it would practice a moderate method of land reform, reducing rent and interest in order to not to harm all classes. This approach did not provide the CCP

¹⁴ The Xi'an Incident of December 1936 was an important turning point in Chinese modern history, took place in the city of Xi'an during the Chinese Civil War between KMT and CCP and just before the Second Sino-Japanese War. On 12 December 1936, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the Kuomintang was arrested by Marshal Zhang Xueliang, a former warlord of Manchuria, and Commander of the North Eastern Army who had fought against the Japanese occupation of Manchuria and subsequent expansion into Inner Mongolia by the Japanese and troops of the puppet state of Manchukuo that had been created in Manchuria. The incident led to a truce between the Nationalists and the Communists so as to form a united front against the threat posed by Japan.

with enough land to offer potential soldiers with economic incentives as it was able to do at the previous revolutionary base. Thus economic incentive could no longer serve as an impetus for people to join the Red Army.

In fact, it was not necessary for the CCP to use its former radical approach to conduct land reform in order to attract people to the army. After the establishment of the Anti-Japanese United Front, the Red Army was reorganized as the Eighth Route Army lead by the KMT military force¹⁵, which also provided it with provision and weapons. CCP also received significant financial and military assistance from the third international and the Soviet Union totaling 221, 2970 USD¹⁶. Even after 1941 when KMT stopped providing provision and weapons to the Eighth Route Army, the CCP found a new way to earn money by planting opium¹⁷. Various sources of income helped CCP overcome the obstacle of being unable to use land reform to obtain financial income and an incentive for recruitment. Moreover, the particular environment of Anti-Japanese War provided the CCP with both a convenient circumstance in which to develop its military force and a new social incentive of nationalism/patriotism to attract more people to join its army.

The invasion of Japanese aroused the patriotic fervor of Chinese, while their brutality exacerbated it. The Japanese army arbitrarily raped women, killed innocent

¹⁵ Actually the CCP army was still in autonomy.

¹⁶ The financial assistance to CCP from the Soviet Union and the Third International, Zhang Zeyu, *Dangshi Yanjiu Yu Jiaoxue*, 2011(5)

¹⁷ Peter Vladimirov , *The Vladimirov Diaries: Yenan, China, 1942-1945*, (Beijing, Oriental Press, 2004), p304

civilians and captured soldiers. During the Rape of Nanking, more than 30,000 civilians were slaughtered by Japanese army. The Japanese did same in other areas they occupied, implementing “three all” policy which meant “burn them all, grab them all, and kill them all”. For example, in a raid on a small town in Shanxi province, Japanese troops conducted three massacres in three months, killing more than 400 civilians¹⁸. All of these atrocities inspired patriotic fervor among Chinese people, who wanted to expel the Japanese from their country.

Unable to use economic incentives to recruit soldiers, the CCP developed recruitment strategy based up on using people’s patriotic fervor to encourage them to join its army. At a politburo meeting in late 1937, Mao laid out recruitment guidelines as follow:” our Eighth Route Army should adhere to guerrilla warfare, avoiding face-to-face collision with the Japanese army and penetrating deep into the rear of the Japanese occupied lands to conduct guerilla warfare. The critical task is to preserve and develop the strength of the Eighth Route Army by establishing anti-Japanese guerrilla bases in the enemy's rear under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party.” “Our guideline is 10% of fighting against the Japanese, 20% of pretending to fight, 30% of preserving our strength, and 40% of publicizing our ideology.”¹⁹

This guideline provided two main recruitment strategies. First, by distributing soldiers into every village and establishing anti-Japanese guerrilla bases, it made sure

¹⁸ Shi Jinping, “Reasons of Joining Army Waves in Pingshan during Anti-Japanese War” , Journal Of The Party University Of Shijiazhuang City Committee Of CCP, 2005, 7(10)

¹⁹ Zhang Guotao, *My Memories*, (Beijing, Oriental Press, 2004), p587

that people in these areas had direct access to join the army and defend their homeland. In contrast, KMT troops were not present on Japanese occupied land. Therefore, it was more convenient for patriotic people to join CCP army because it was nearer and had had anti-Japanese bases in their backyard. After laying down roots in the villages, the CCP spread propagandas about atrocities committed by Japanese troops, inciting patriotic fervor and nationalism, encouraging local citizens to join the anti-Japanese army led by the CCP. A peasant who took part in local guerilla army led by CCP stated that:” My only aim in joining the army is to drive away all of the Japanese devils!”²⁰ As a result, large number of patriotic people joined the CCP army. In Shanxi province alone, more than 600000 people joined the Eight Route Army.²¹ Commitment to protect the nation ran deep and deserters were rare.

A second strategy is to preserve the army’s strength. Mao instructed CCP troops to avoid face-to-face combat with the Japanese army in order to lower casualties. By putting armies behind enemy lines and letting KMT forces bear the brunt of the invader was used as a screen by CCP to both prevent attacks by the KMT and to develop its own strength. In 1964 Mao conceded a Japanese friend that “Japanese militarism brought great benefits to China, making the Chinese people seize power. Without your imperial army, we could not have defeated Chiang Kai-shek.”²² With the indirect protection of the Japanese troops, the CCP army not only avoided large

²⁰ Anonymous, “An interview of an Anti-Japanese War veteran”, PLA Daily, Aug 15th, 2005

²¹ Yuan Chunqing, “The Speech on the Shanxi Commemoration of 90th Anniversary of CCP Establishment”, Shanxi Daily, Jul 1st, 2011

²² Mao Zedong, “Dialogue with Japanese Socialist Party Member (Jul 10th, 1964)”, (Beijing, Masses Press, 1964)

numbers of casualties but also developed its military force. At the battle front, the KMT suffered from huge losses. A comparison of casualties is showed in table 2

Table 2

	CCP ²³	KMT ²⁴
Killed	160603	1319958
Wounded	290467	1761135
Missing	87208	130126
Rate of Loss	12.4%	26.4%

It is obvious that during this period, although radical land reform was not permitted, the CCP produced fruitful policy to adapt the external situation of Japanese invasion, to successfully utilize patriotic fervor of the Chinese people to recruit them into its military force. By the end of the war, the total number of CCP troops had increased to more than 130,0000, nearly 100 times larger than it before the war, which made the CCP well prepared for the following phase of the civil war against the KMT.

²³ Zhang Tinggui, Yuan Wei, Chen Haoliang, *The Development History of CCP Anti-Japanese Army*, (Beijing, PLA Press, 1990), p487

²⁴ Meng Guoxiang, Zhang Qingjun, "About the Casualty Figure of Chinese Army and Civilians in Anti-Japanese War", *Anti-Japanese War Research*, 1995(03)

Period 4: 1945-1949, A Mixed Use of Tactics

Victory against the Japanese as well as wartime united front between the CCP and the KMT did not bring long-term peace to China. With mediation by the United States, both sides sat around the table and signed an armistice, but secretly, war preparation was taking place on both sides. With the help of the US Air Force, the KMT transported its soldiers from southwestern China to the east in order to control big cities. On the other side, the CCP successfully occupied mainly rural area of northern China with assistance from Soviet Union. Finally in 1946, KMT unilaterally ended the armistice and launched an attack on the CCP occupied area.

At the outset there were 1,300,000 of CCP troops versus 4,600,000 of KMT soldiers who were considered to have an advantage in both quantity and quality (they had weapon assistance from the US). However, by winning the support of the majority of the Chinese people, the CCP was effective at recruiting new soldiers. One of reasons the CCP gained support from the people was due to their opposition to the inappropriate policies of the KMT government. People were against the KMT's economic policies. After nearly a decade of war, the KMT government was on the edge of bankruptcy. The KMT government should have focused on economic recovery rather than pushing the country back into war again. In order to sustain huge military expenditures, the KMT government spent beyond their means. To make up the deficit, large amount of paper money were printed, which led to dramatic inflation. During this crisis, ordinary people were not able to make a living and grievance

against the KMT rose. Another reason that the Chinese people opposed the KMT was because of its brutal conscription methods which even led to mutinies during war.

Nationwide grievances against the KMT created a favorable situation for CCP to gain support and recruit new soldiers. Economic incentives such as land reform returned to play a crucial role during this period. Having learned its lesson with former land reform movements, the CCP replaced its previous radical approach of eliminating landlords, rich and middle peasants across the regions, with new policy of differentiating the situation of each region and conducting different policies of land reform. In regions firmly under the control of the CCP, radical land reform was implemented. In newly occupied areas, CCP protected rich and middle peasants in order to win their support. All of these policies aimed to protect the interests of the majority in exchange for their support in the civil war as potential army recruits. Additionally, the CCP avoided problems related to multiple rounds of land reform in the 1930s because it CCP received financial and weapon assistance²⁵ from the Soviet Union and thus had no need to confiscate property to gain income.

In addition to new strategies of land reform, the CCP also launched new propaganda to encourage peasants to join its army. The most common slogan was “Beat KMT and protect our land!” as a way to appeal to peasants who were afraid of having to give land back to landlords should the KMT return. A farmer sent his 17-year-old son to fight and said to him:” No CCP, no land! Only when the KMT is

²⁵ Xue Xiantian, *Sino-USSR Relations in Period of Republic of China (1917-1949), Volume 2*, (Beijing, Communist Party History Press, 2009), P72

overthrown can you come home!”²⁶ Among 3,498 newly recruited soldiers from this peasant’s town, 91% were peasants who received land as a result of land reform.²⁷ In addition to providing a source of recruitment for the CCP’s army, peasants also played a critical role in its logistics. In decisive Huaihai Campaign, about 5 million peasants automatically went to support frontline, helping transport food, ammunition and care for the wounded²⁸.

Another major source of recruitment for the CCP army were captives whose number may have exceeded the number of peasant soldiers. In of the early 1930s, the policy of the CCP was to give captives the freedom to go home or to join its army. During this period, however, in order to prevent captives from returning to the KMT, the CCP produced a new policy of “once captured, replenish and fight at once”²⁹. According to a statement from Zhou Enlai, after implementing this policy, “A large portion of our soldiers are captives. In some troops, captives comprise about 80% of the total. On average, 70% of our soldiers are captives.”³⁰ “The total number of captive soldiers may be 2,800,000.”³¹ Mao dubbed Chiang Kai-shek as “captain of transportation” for sending so many soldiers to CCP army. NEED A FOOTNOTE

²⁶ Zhuo Ru, “Support Frontline Movement of Bohai Peasants in Chinese Civil War”, *Select Work of History*, 2011(2)

²⁷ Zhuo Ru, “Support Frontline Movement of Bohai Peasants in Chinese Civil War”, *Select Work of History*, 2011(2)

²⁸ Anonymous, *Party Life in PLA*, 2010(4)

²⁹ “Guideline of Central Committee of CCP to Captive Issues”, 1946-11-14

³⁰ Compiled by Historical Document Editorial Committee of the CPC Central Committee, *Selected Works of Zhou Enlai, Volume 1*, (Beijing, People’s Press, 1980), p315

³¹ Compiled by Historical Document Editorial Committee of the CPC Central Committee, *Selected Works of Zhou Enlai, Volume 1*, (Beijing, People’s Press, 1980), p347

Throughout the civil war period, with the help of peasants and captives, the CCP expanded its army from 1,300,000 to more than 5,000,000. Use of the appropriate recruitment policies ultimately lead to an expansion of the CCP's military force which in turn lead to the defeat of the KMT and CCP control of mainland China.

Implications

The CCP army's growth during 1927 to 1949 from about 30,000 soldiers to more than 5,000,000 indicates that it was able to develop and implement effective recruitment tactics. At the beginning, (1) ideological incentive provided CCP with a core of members with whom to launch the conflict. Although small in number, this loyal core sacrificed their lives to the revolution. Later, in order to attract more fighters, (2) economic incentives in form of land reform were implemented. However, the inappropriate use of land reform ultimately undermined the CCP's ability to attract people, which resulted in (3) forcing people to fight for CCP. However, with the onset of the Anti-Japanese War, the CCP lost its ability to conduct land reform, forcing it to extend its branches deep into villages to (4) mobilize people in the name of patriotism/nationalism against Japanese. At the same time, the Anti-Japanese War provided the CCP with a protective screen behind which it could to preserve and develop its strength. After unprecedented growth during the Anti-Japanese war, the CCP was able to win the support of the Chinese people who also harbored many grievances against the KMT. In order to attract more soldiers, the CCP revived land

reform, allowing it to provide economic incentives to new soldiers. But the major source of recruitment during this period came from (5) captives. All of the above independent variable tactics contributed to the successful growth of the CCP army, leading to military victory against the KMT.

By examining the trajectory of CCP military development, we can also examine some of the implications of different recruitment approaches. Firstly, economic incentives can enable significant but low quality recruitment opportunities. As Weinstein points out, soldiers fighting under economic incentives are mostly opportunists who are seeking to address short-term interests. Such soldiers fight in most instances for the stronger side rather than the weaker. When people realize that joining the rebel group can provide them with economic reward, they may rush to join. However, once they find the insurgency in hazardous condition, there is a great possibility that they will desert the rebel group. Thus, the tactic of using economic incentives is favorable when the rebel side takes advantageous condition. Otherwise, once the rebel group faces disadvantages, the situation will be exacerbated by the desertion of opportunists. In the early days of the revolution, large numbers of peasants joined the Red Army because of economic incentives. Later when faced with adversity, their flight led to the military failure and retreat of CCP. But in the civil war of 1946-1949, the CCP was able to attract many peasants to its cause, who wanted to stand by the winning side when the CCP was in advantage.

Secondly, people fighting for social incentives are more likely to commit to the group, sacrificing their lives for a common ideology or nation. In the beginning of

conflict, the top generals were staunch communist fighters or who believed in the communist ideology. After experiencing the initial failure and arduous Long March, these people continued to fight and were ultimately victorious. Unlike their counterpart, peasants who joined the CCP army during seldom fled in the face of danger. Highly committed to their nation, these people dared to sacrifice for their country.

Finally, the ability of the CPP to effectively utilize multiple recruitment tactics ultimately contributed to the positive outcome of the insurgency. If the rebel group is not able to adapt to different situation with targeted recruitment policy, the cost may be considerable. In the 1930s, land reform should have ceased after all poor peasants were received land, but instead it was conducted again and again. This led to significant grievances which harmed army recruitment. But over time the CCP became better at adapting recruitment tactics to specific situations on the ground. During Anti-Japanese War, the CCP utilized the Japanese invasion as a protective screen behind which to implement its new recruitment tactics and develop its strength. In the civil war that followed, the CCP's policy was more flexible and targeted implementing different land reform policies to gain support and attract soldiers, depending on the situation on the ground. Generally, the recruitment tactics of CCP army changed over time and became adaptable to different situations, with a single goal to gain more support and recruit more soldiers.

In comparison to recent literature, this article aims to examine the CCP's recruitment policy and activity in a whole historical trajectory and to generalize

factors that led to the growth of the CCP army. The limited length of this paper and the dearth of history resources currently available do not allow for a full exploration of the historical settings and issues related to this topic. Over time, the additional declassification of primary source documents will enable additional scholarship and research on this important topic.

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