



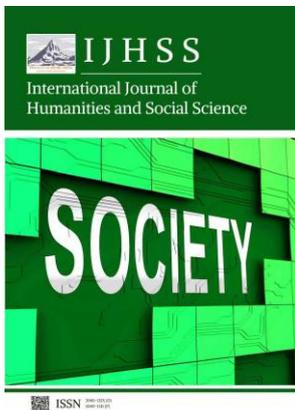
Article

Sino-US Strategic Cooperation in Northwest China During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression

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Abstract: During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, the continuous escalation of Japan's blockade of China led to the successive disruption of the southwest international transportation routes. Relying on its unique geographical location, existing transportation and industrial foundation, as well as the Sino-US strategic consensus on anti-fascism, Northwest China gradually became an important choice for Sino-US strategic cooperation. By sorting out the historical logic and practical paths of Sino-US strategic cooperation in the Northwest, and analyzing its wartime strategic value and long-term historical influence, we can learn the international cooperation experience contained therein, understand the international significance of anti-fascism, and provide historical reference for contemporary international cooperation and regional development.

Keywords: The War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression; China and the United States; Northwest China; strategic cooperation

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1. Introduction

The War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-1945) was an integral part of the global anti-fascist war, with international strategic coordination and the supply of foreign aid being pivotal to China's perseverance in the protracted war against Japanese aggression. As the Japanese army escalated its blockade of China and successively cut off the southeast coastal ports and southwest international transportation routes—the primary channels for foreign aid—Northwest China, by virtue of its unique geographical location, rudimentary transportation and industrial foundations, as well as the anti-fascist strategic consensus reached by China and the United States, transformed from a marginal area in the rear of the war of resistance into a core hub for Sino-US strategic cooperation.

Existing academic research on Sino-US cooperation during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression has mostly focused on the southwest battlefield, the Hump Route and the China-Burma-India Theater, leaving the strategic cooperation in Northwest China in a marginal position in scholarly studies for a long time. In fact, this cooperation was not only an important supplement to the overall Sino-US anti-fascist collaboration, but also played an irreplaceable role in breaking the Japanese blockade, supporting frontline combat operations and boosting the anti-fascist war effort on the Eurasian battlefield. Therefore, this paper takes Sino-US strategic cooperation in Northwest China during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression as its research subject, sorts out its historical background and practical paths, systematically analyzes its core content and wartime strategic value, further explores its long-term historical influence and the

enlightenment it offers for contemporary international cooperation and regional development. It also seeks to fill the research gap in this field by sorting out this historical practice, and provide a more comprehensive historical perspective for understanding the operational logic of the World Anti-Fascist Alliance and the historical evolution of Sino-US relations.

2. Historical Background of Northwest China Becoming a Choice for Sino-US Strategic Cooperation

During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, with the continuous escalation of Japan's strategic blockade of China, the original southeast coastal ports and southwest international transportation routes were gradually paralyzed, putting China's import of war materials in a crisis. However, relying on its unique geographical location, transportation and industrial foundation, and the formation of the strategic consensus on international anti-fascist cooperation, Northwest China began to transform from a marginal area of the rear base of the war of resistance into an important choice for strategic cooperation.

After the full-scale outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression in 1937, coastal ports fell rapidly, and the Yunnan-Vietnam Railway and the Burma Road became the core international corridors, undertaking more than 90% of the transshipment of foreign aid. US aid materials to China were transported to Kunming and Chongqing via the port of Rangoon and the Burma Road, supporting the combat on the frontal battlefield. Yet Japan's blockade completely destroyed the southwest corridors: the Yunnan-Vietnam Railway was closed in 1940, and the Burma Road was cut off in 1942; the total transportation volume of the Hump Route during its operation reached 740,000 tons [1]. Faced with the severe situation, Northwest China became a realistic choice for China to open up new international cooperation.

Meanwhile, Northwest China also had unique geographical advantages and realistic foundations for carrying out strategic cooperation. Geographically, Northwest China was a relatively safe land passage connecting China with the Soviet Union and India at that time, with the northern line reaching Almaty of the Soviet Union and the southern line leading to Leh of India. For China, the Northwest was a lifeline to break the blockade; for the United States, it was an outpost to monitor Japanese military movements; and for the Soviet Union, it was a barrier to avoid being attacked from both the east and the west. In terms of transportation, the National Government renovated the Xi'an-Lanzhou and Gansu-Xinjiang Highways in the 1930s, and extended the Longhai Railway and its branch lines, greatly facilitating material transportation and personnel exchanges. In the industrial field, after the September 18th Incident, coastal factories moved inland, and the modern industry of all provinces in the Northwest made certain progress, with basic military production capacity, laying a foundation for industrial cooperation.

The choice of Northwest China for strategic cooperation was a practice of the world anti-fascist front in uniting to fight the enemy. Securing US aid was the key to sustaining the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. After the signing of the Sino-US Lend-Lease Agreement in 1941, China proposed designating the Northwest as a transit zone for Lend-Lease materials and opening the airports in Lanzhou and Xi'an. At the same time, China hoped to strengthen the construction of the Northwest and consolidate the anti-Japanese forces with US aid. However, it was difficult for US aid to China entering through the Northwest to bypass Soviet territory. At this time, the strategic demands of China, the United States and the Soviet Union also reached a certain strategic balance in Northwest China. Both the United States and the Soviet Union needed China to contain the Japanese army, and China needed foreign aid; meanwhile, to safeguard the security of Central Asia, the Soviet Union in principle allowed the transshipment of US aid through the Northwest [2].

In summary, the successive disruption of the original aid corridors, the relative advantages of Northwest China, and the strategic consensus of the anti-fascist camp jointly promoted Northwest China to become a realistic choice for Sino-US strategic cooperation, which had a profound impact on China's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the world anti-fascist war.

3. Main Content of Sino-US Strategic Cooperation in Northwest China

Based on the favorable conditions formed, Sino-US strategic cooperation in Northwest China focused on the construction of material transportation corridors, wartime industrial cooperation, and military intelligence sharing, building a multi-level cooperation system led by the government, participated in by the civil society, and dominated by land transportation with air transportation as a supplement. Compared with the model of the southwest battlefield focusing on large-scale military operations and the support of main forces, the cooperation in the Northwest highlighted a complementary positioning based on supply, self-sufficiency in production, and intelligence early warning.

After the outbreak of the Pacific War, the complete interruption of the Burma Road directly required China and the United States to accelerate the opening of an emergency material corridor in the Northwest, which eventually formed a land transportation network with the northern line transiting via the Sino-Soviet Highway and the southern line relying on alpine pack transportation between China and India. On the northern line, relying on the existing highway trunk line from Almaty of the Soviet Union to Dihua (now Urumqi) of Xinjiang and then to Lanzhou, through arduous negotiations between China, the United States and the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union agreed to transit 2,000 tons of combat materials per month in May 1943, and could accept 1,300 tons of Chinese goods on the return trip. By entrusting part of the Lend-Lease materials to the Soviet Union for transshipment, and then the Northwest Courier Transportation Administration of the National Government organizing motorcades and camel caravans for relay transportation, the material shortage of the garrisons in the Northwest was alleviated [3]. The southern line was an initiative of China and the United States in response to the emergency war situation. In May 1942, the United States cooperated with China to start planning the alpine pack route from Leh of India to Yecheng of Xinjiang via the Karakoram Mountains. With an average altitude of 4,500 meters and covered with ice crevasses and snowstorms, this route was known as the "Road of Death". In September 1944, more than 180 Chinese camel drivers led over 1,200 camels and horses, carrying materials and traveling by day and resting by night. They traveled from Leh of India to Yecheng of Xinjiang for more than 20 days, and then the materials were transshipped to Lanzhou, thus forming the international courier transportation route of "Leh-Yecheng-Lanzhou". By the victory of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, this route transported 4,444 sets of automobile tires, 782 bales of military fabrics and more than 300 cases of communication equipment to the inland, and these materials were immediately allocated to the front lines in Shaanxi and Gansu for repairing chariots and strengthening defensive fortifications [4]. In terms of air transportation, part of the US aid materials to China was diverted to the airports in Lanzhou and Xi'an, and China National Aviation Corporation provided local meteorological observation data and ground navigation support, forming a coordinated model with the southwest as the main route and the northwest as the transit. As an organic part of the strategic transportation in the rear base, the air transportation in the Northwest strongly supported the front-line combat against the Japanese army, and together with the air transportation in the southwest, formed a "Great Wall of Transportation".

Industrial cooperation was mainly carried out with China's Industrial Cooperative Movement as the core carrier, through fundraising and material assistance from the international community, especially the United States, local production in China, and targeted supply to the front lines. After the establishment of the Northwest Office of the

Chinese Industrial Cooperatives in Baoji in August 1938, in June 1939, Rewi Alley, a New Zealand friend, Edgar Snow, an American friend, and others promoted the establishment of the International Committee for the Promotion of Chinese Industrial Cooperatives in Hong Kong, raising donations through international channels. In July 1940, Snow and his wife wrote a sincere letter to US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, requesting the United States to provide loans to the Chinese Industrial Cooperatives. The letter was also signed by more than 20 American celebrities including General Claire Lee Chennault, General Evans Carlson, the famous writer Pearl S. Buck and renowned philosophers [5]. In 1939, the Northwest Office of the Chinese Industrial Cooperatives established 80 small factories in just three months, and successively set up cooperatives in alcohol production, spinning, weaving, wool spinning, mining, transportation and other fields. In October 1940, the industrial cooperatives in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region had iron mines, coal mines, ironworks, small machinery manufacturing workshops, pharmaceutical factories, transportation stations and two small oil wells, among others. By 1942, "the industrial cooperative organization in Yan'an had become the largest regional general branch in the country, with the number of workers equivalent to the total number of industrial cooperative workers in other parts of China" [6]. According to incomplete statistics, by June 1942, the Chinese Industrial Cooperatives had established 325 cooperatives in Northwest China with 4,019 members, strongly supporting the needs of the garrisons in the northwest theater. In Baoji, the machinery cooperatives mastered key technologies such as the maintenance of military truck engines and the grinding of rifle barrels under the guidance of American technicians, solving the problem of equipment maintenance for the northwest garrisons. Particularly valuable is that this industrial cooperation was not a simple material aid, but activated the local industrial potential of the Northwest through technology transfer of "teaching people to fish", building a self-sufficient wartime economic and national defense line where the rear production supported the front-line consumption. In addition, the Industrial Cooperative Movement solved the living and employment problems of unemployed workers and refugees who fled to the rear to a certain extent, achieving "integrating relief into production" and contributing to the stability of people's lives [7]. The workers participating in industrial cooperation in Northwest China were basically refugees, so the industrial cooperatives became a platform that "accommodates the poor unemployed masses, utilizes their production capacity, and enables refugees to have work to do so that they will not make meaningless sacrifices" [8].

Although military and intelligence cooperation was limited in scale, it had strategic value that could affect the overall situation. The core demand of the United States was to monitor Japanese military movements through the Northwest, prevent the Japanese army from occupying the Northwest and its westward advance to Central Asia to join forces with the German army, which would lead to the collapse of the entire Eurasian anti-fascist defense line. To this end, the US military set up meteorological training courses and established meteorological observation stations and radio monitoring points in Lanzhou and Shanba. The Northwest Pacification Headquarters of the National Government opened airports and shared communication frequencies to assist the US side in collecting intelligence on the troop deployment, material transportation and fighter take-off and landing of the Japanese army stationed in North China. By the end of 1944, the Sino-US Special Technical Cooperation Organization had four first-class stations in Xi'an, Lanzhou, Shanba and Jiayuguan in Northwest China, which speaks volumes for the importance of meteorological reconnaissance in the region [9]. To cultivate professional and technical personnel and train students in special skills, the Sino-US Special Technical Cooperation Organization set up 13 training classes. Among them, the Third Training Class was held in Shang County and Niudong of Shaanxi, teaching the use of various American weapons such as carbines, various submachine guns and revolvers, as well as soft explosive blasting and live-fire drills. It ran for five sessions and trained 3,205 people. The Fourth Training Class was held in Shanba of Suiyuan Province, covering meteorological training,

small unit reconnaissance, communication and liaison, assassination, grappling, tracking and other skills. It ran for four sessions and trained more than 900 people. In addition, the US side donated portable radio communication equipment to the northwest garrisons and trained them in communication skills, which greatly improved the command and communication efficiency of the northwest theater and reduced intelligence delays caused by Japanese radio interference.

4. Significance and Enlightenment of Sino-US Strategic Cooperation in the Northwest

The multi-level Sino-US strategic cooperation in the Northwest, though not as large in scale as the military linkage on the southwest battlefield, featured distinct complementarity and diversification. In particular, the patriotic acts of ethnic minority compatriots in opening up lifeline transportation routes and enthusiastically supporting the front lines in Northwest China left a unique mark in the history of the Chinese people's resistance against Japanese fascist aggression. Its value is reflected not only in the direct contributions to wartime material supply, industrial support and intelligence guarantee, but also in the cross-border cooperation wisdom and historical experience it contains, which has important reference significance for understanding the operation logic of the anti-fascist alliance, the historical context of Sino-US relations, and even contemporary international cooperation.

From the perspective of wartime strategy, Sino-US cooperation in the Northwest improved China's foreign aid system for the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, building a dual guarantee pattern with the southwest as the main corridor and the northwest as the auxiliary corridor, effectively resolving the crisis of foreign aid cutoff caused by Japan's blockade. Together, they constructed a "Great Wall of Material Transportation" for China's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, and the northwest land corridor, with its geographical advantages, became an important backup for the southwest corridor. From 1942 to 1945, the US aid materials transshipped through the northwest corridor, covering key materials such as military supplies, industrial equipment and medicines, not only supported the defensive operations in the northwest theater, but also were allocated to the front lines in North China and the Central Plains through the Xi'an-Lanzhou and Gansu-Xinjiang Highways, indirectly supporting the counteroffensive on the frontal battlefield. At the same time, the wartime industrial cooperation promoted by the Industrial Cooperative Movement broke away from the complete dependence on external materials and realized local production and local supply, which not only reduced the loss of materials in long-distance transportation, but also activated the local economic potential of the Northwest, laying a solid rear foundation for the protracted war of resistance. This collaborative model of foreign aid supply and local production demonstrated the adaptive strategic wisdom of Sino-US cooperation and became an important support for China to persist in the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression to the end.

From the perspective of international cooperation, Sino-US cooperation in the Northwest demonstrated the united strength of the anti-fascist alliance, broke the barriers of ideological differences and national interest disputes, and became a vivid example of different countries working together to cope with common crises. During World War II, although both sides had their own strategic demands in the cooperation in the Northwest, they were mostly able to take the overall interests of the anti-fascist war as the core and achieve seeking common ground while reserving differences and mutual benefit and win-win results. Different from the model of the southwest battlefield dominated by official military cooperation, the cooperation in the Northwest presented a diverse form led by the government and participated in by the civil society: the official coordination between the US Office of Strategic Services and the National Government guaranteed the smooth flow of corridors and intelligence sharing; the Industrial Cooperative Movement promoted by international friends such as Rewi Alley and Edgar Snow built a bridge for

civil cooperation; Chinese camel drivers, northwest people, American technicians and intelligence personnel fought side by side, interpreting the spirit of anti-fascism without national boundaries with their sweat and lives. This cross-class and cross-border cooperation not only accumulated valuable historical experience for Sino-US relations, but also became an important part of the cross-regional and multi-level cooperation of the anti-fascist alliance.

From the perspective of historical influence, Sino-US cooperation in the Northwest promoted the modernization process of Northwest China and laid an important groundwork for the development of the Northwest after the war. In the field of transportation, Sino-US cooperation promoted the renovation and upgrading of the Xi'an-Lanzhou and Gansu-Xinjiang Highways, improving the land transportation network in the Northwest. The expansion and use of airports in Lanzhou, Xi'an, Hami and other places also kicked off the modernization of the aviation industry in the Northwest. In the industrial field, the mechanical equipment donated by the United States and technical guidance promoted the transformation of northwest handicrafts to modern industry. The industrial clusters of military supplies, textile and machinery repair formed in Lanzhou, Baoji and other places became an important foundation for the industrial development of the Northwest after the war. In the field of talent training, the training of Chinese workers by American technicians and the cultivation of communication and technical personnel improved the local technical level and talent reserve in the Northwest, providing certain support for the subsequent development and construction of the region. More importantly, the advanced technologies and concepts brought by Sino-US cooperation broke the closed state of the Northwest, promoted the exchanges between Northwest China and the outside world, advanced the progress of local social concepts, and exerted a far-reaching influence on the long-term development of the Northwest.

5. Conclusion

In summary, Sino-US strategic cooperation in the Northwest is an indelible memory in the history of the anti-fascist war. It not only injected key strength into the victory of China's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, but also demonstrated the cooperation wisdom and responsibility of different countries in the face of common crises. History has proved that peace and development are the common pursuits of mankind, and only by working together, seeking common ground while reserving differences, can we cope with common challenges and achieve common development. Looking back on this cooperation journey across the Gobi and snow-capped mountains today, the historical value and contemporary enlightenment it contains still have important historical and practical significance for the healthy development of Sino-US relations and the advancement of contemporary international cooperation.

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