

MASTER'S THESIS

Chen Shaokuan's Futile Naval Reform, 1928-1937

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HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

Master of Philosophy

THESIS ACCEPTANCE

DATE: March 22, 2019

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THESIS TITLE: Chen Shaokuan's Futile Naval Reform, 1928-1937

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Chen Shaokuan's Futile Naval Reform, 1928-1937

HON Shing Yin

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements

For the degree of

Master of Philosophy

Principal Supervisor:

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March 2019

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work which has been done after registration for the degree of MPhil at Hong Kong Baptist University, and has not been previously included in a thesis or dissertation submitted to this or any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualifications.

I have read the University's current research ethics guidelines, and accept responsibility for the conduct of the procedures in accordance with the University's Research Ethics Committees (REC). I have attempted to identify all the risks related to this research that may arise in conducting this research, obtained the relevant ethical and/ or safety approval (where applicable), and acknowledged my obligations and the rights of the participants.

Signature: 
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Abstract

As a reputed naval general in modern China, Chen Shaokuan expressed interest in navy at a young age: he began his study of naval matters in Fuzhou Naval College in 1903, and continued his study at Jiangnan Naval College in 1905. Graduating from Jiangnan Naval Academy in 1908, he became a sub- lieutenant in 1909 and was promoted as lieutenant in 1911. After successfully recapturing the Zhaohe cruiser, Chen was promoted as the captain and the commander of the vessel Zhaohe in 1915, marking a remarkable advancement in his naval career. Moreover, Chen had been since his early years in the Chinese navy, interested in and preparing for a visit to Western countries to observe their naval development, which eventually he did from 1916 to 1921 when he visited the United States and supervised naval student groups in France and Italy.

Upon returning to China, Chen's naval career continued to advance. He was initially appointed commander of the training cruiser Yingrui and quickly became the leader of Navy Department after his achievements during the Northern Expedition (1926-1928). Appointed as vice-admiral and nominated as head of the newly established Navy Board, Chen gained power as a policymaker of China's naval development in 1929, stimulating not only his strong desire to initiate reforms in hopes of strengthening China's naval power, but further opening a new breakthrough in China's naval development.

Existing studies of Chen Shaokuan and China's naval development under the Nationalist government, though not rare, carry profound limitations. While there are a number of publications that discuss naval development during the Republican era, few have specifically touched on the issue of naval development under the Nationalist Government. In addition, the establishment of the Ministry of Navy requires more than attention that existing works cover: the financial difficulties, for instance, was a crucial hinderance in China's naval development yet remains neglected in academic discussion. There is no doubt that Chen Shaokuan naval ideology is highly praised and my thesis aims to fill in the gaps by constructing a more complete picture that traces the origins of Chen's naval development. In further understanding his ideas and China's naval development as a whole, this proposed thesis further puts weight on crucial and less discussed names as Du Xigui, Lin Jianzhang and Yang Shuzhuang, all of whom have considerable standing in propelling China's naval progress.

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Declaration..... | i |
| Abstract..... | ii |
| Acknowledgement..... | iv |
| Chapter One Introduction..... | 1 |
| Chapter Two Limited Naval Development From Late Qing to Early Republican Era..... | 15 |
| Chapter Three Chen Shaokuan’s Naval Ideas..... | 25 |
| Chapter Four Chen Shaokuan’s Naval Unification Attempt,1932-37..... | 45 |
| Chapter Five Evaluation of Chen Shaokuan: The Man in the Middle..... | 72 |
| Glossary..... | 86 |
| Bibliography..... | 90 |
| Curriculum Vitae..... | 97 |

Chapter One

Introduction

Literature Review

Chen Shaokuan 陳紹寬 (1889-1969) was a renowned naval Admiral in Republican China (1912-1937). After being appointed as the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Navy, he served in China's navy for more than a decade, playing prominent roles in different positions. Despite this, his contribution and role have not attracted sufficient attention in post-1949 studies due to political reasons. In 1950, Gui Yongqing's *The Chinese Navy and the Nationalist Revolution* made no mention to Chen despite his achievements under the Nanking government.¹ Lü Ye's 1995 paper, on the other hand, highlighted Chen Shaokuan's life as a Minister of the Chinese navy, but failed to provide details regarding his thoughts and vision for China's naval development.² In a similar vein, Pan Liang's essay in 2003 covered a number of important events on Chen's time as Minister, particularly on his character, but there was no mention of his naval reforms.³

In general, research on Chen Shaokuan gained momentum only after the turn of the century, when historians began to publish about Chen during his time as Minister. These works tended to focus on evaluating the measures he launched and the conflicts he encountered when he was in office. Zhang Chun and Ouyang Jiping, for instance, pointed out that Chiang Kai-shek ousted Chen after a fierce struggle for power and dominance of the navy.⁴ In 2002, Ma Junjie traced the events leading to the dissolution of Chen and Chiang's relationship. Ma argued that this relationship started with a sense of empathy when the two shared similar objectives, but evolved to enmity as

¹ Yongqing Gui 桂永清, *Zhongguo haijun yu guomin geming* 中國海軍與國民革命 (The Chinese Navy and the Nationalist Revolution) (Taipei: Haijun chubanshe, 1950), p. 33.

² Ye Lü 綠葉, 'Zhuiyi haijunbuzhang Chen Shaokuan 追憶海軍部長陳紹寬 (Remembering Chen Shaokuan, Minister of Chinese Navy),' *Hang Hai* 航海, no. 2 (1995), 18-22.

³ Liang Pan 潘亮, 'Tianfeng Haitao yi xianxian-- Chen Shaokuan ersanshi 天風海濤憶先賢-- 陳紹寬二三事' (Memoirs of Chen Shaokuan), *Zhengxie Tiandi* 政協天地 no. 2 (2003), pp. 24-25.

⁴ Chun Zhang and Jiping Ouyang 張春、歐陽吉平, "Chen Shaokuan he Jiang Jieshi de fendao yangbiao" 陳紹寬與蔣介石的分道揚鑣 (Chen Shaokuan and Jiang Jieshi's Separate Ways), *Fujian dangshi yuekan* 福建黨史月刊, no. 4 (2000), pp. 22-25

Chen began to doubt Chiang's sincerity in rebuilding China's navy.⁵ Jin Hao, on the other hand, took a brief look, albeit slightly biased, at Chen Shaokuan's command of the Jiangnan shipyard.⁶ Putting forth an uncommon argument, Jin claimed that Chen might have sided with the Japanese, as seen through his ambivalence towards Japan until the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War. In a 2016 publication, Meng Fengmin tackled a number of prominent events in Chen's career: the inspection of European navies, his attendance in the Paris Peace Conference, and the battles against Sun Chuanfang of Jiangyin.⁷ All in all, these works contributed to a better understanding of Chen Shaokuan, but failed to touch on his thoughts and vision for China's naval reform. This thesis will thus integrate a factual examination of Chen's personal networks and his thoughts, and will conclude with an evaluation of the effectiveness of his naval reforms.

Research on Chen Shaokuan's naval contribution is not uncommon, but these works have yet to shed light on his thoughts and the difficulties he faced during execution. Most works have chosen to emphasize the reality of factional conflicts. On the relationship between the Northeast Navy and Central Fleet, Zeng Jinlan pointed out in her work 'Shen Honglie and the Northeast Navy' (1992), that this relationship was noted by prejudice, unwillingness to reconcile and mutual criticism.⁸ Although Chen's Ministry was initially ordered to restore discipline in the Northeast Navy, this was faced with opposition; the Northeast Navy eventually retained its independence from the Ministry under the title 'Third Fleet.' Another research focus that existing studies have explored has to do with the School of Submarines and Motor Torpedo Boats, two initiatives that were strongly supported by Chiang Kai-shek. Historians have mostly shared the view that Chiang intended to replace the Central Fleet with a new force cultivated by the School with a general observation that Chiang poured funding

⁵ Junjie Ma 馬駿杰, "Chen Shaokuan he Jiang Jieshi de enen yuanyuan" 陳紹寬和蔣介石的恩恩怨怨 (Friendship and Enmity between Chen Shaokuan and Jiang Jieshi), *Wenshi chunqiu* 文史春秋, no. 11 (2002), pp. 53-57.

⁶ Hao Jin 金昊, "Haijun mingsu Chen Shaokuan" 海軍名宿陳紹寬 (Famous Naval General Chen Shaokuan), *Wencui lingdao* 領導文萃, no. 22 (2012), pp. 62-64.

⁷ Fengmin Meng 孟豐敏, "Chunfang Chen Shaokuan guju" 春訪陳紹寬故居 (Visitation of Chen Shaokuan's Old Residence in Spring), *Mindu wenhua* 閩都文化, no. 3 (2016), pp. 35-38.

⁸ Jinlan Zeng 曾金蘭, *Shen Honglie yu dongbei haijun* 沈鴻烈與東北海軍 (Shen Honglie and the Northeast Navy) (Taipei: Sili donghai daxue lishi yanjiusuo, 1992), pp. 160-165.

into the school and convinced Ouyang Ge, the principal of the School, to support his naval project. Sha Qingqing saw otherwise in a 2014 work that suggested Chiang, despite his collaboration with Ouyang Ge, was deeply dissatisfied with the latter's character.⁹ This gives a new perspective to the belief that Chiang wholeheartedly trusted the officer, placing him instead in a position for mustering Chiang's own naval ambitions. Apart from the Northeast Navy, it should be noted that the Ministry also failed to control the Guangdong Navy. Yang Zhiben, for instance, wrote that Chen's detailed unification scheme could not be put into practice due to the lack of cooperation from other branches.¹⁰ Given the elaborate research in this area, this thesis will not concentrate on the sectarian issues that plagued Chen Shaokuan throughout his career.

Historians have shown further interest in the prolonged formulation of the Ministry. In a 2002 publication, Han Zhen pointed out that the establishment of the Ministry could hardly be mentioned without the persistence of the naval leaders and the formidable strength of the Fukienese navy, which Chiang thought could be utilized to serve his own purposes.¹¹ Behind such cooperation, however, lay Chiang's entrenched suspicion of the Minister, resulting in his support for the School of Submarines and Motor Torpedo Boats instead of Chen's schemes. Chiang's decisions certainly played a prominent role in the slowing down of China's naval development as proposed by Chen Shaokuan. The Ministry itself was plagued with difficulties right from the start. On this matter, Zhang Li has argued that the Nanking government was hesitant towards the establishment of the Ministry, which was eventually formed due to Chen's insistence and the weighty contribution the navy made in the battle against the Guangxi clique.¹² Scholars have generally agreed upon this view, but they have yet

⁹ Qingqing Sha 沙青青, "Yongqi zhijian: Ou Yangge an yu Jiang Jieshi de haijun renshi chuzhi" 用棄之間：歐陽格案與蔣介石的海軍人事處置, (The case of Ou Yangge and Jiang Jieshi Personnel Disposal on Chinese Navy) *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu* 抗日戰爭研究 (2014). pp. 54-66.

¹⁰ Zhiben Yang 楊志本, *Zhonghua minguo haijun shiliao* 中華民國海軍史料 (Historical Sources of Republican Chinese Navy; Beijing: Haiyang chubanshe, 1987), pp. 231-234.

¹¹ Zhen Han 韓真, "Chen Shaokuan yu Guominzhengfu haijunbu" 陳紹寬與國民政府海軍部 (Chen Shaokuan and Nationalist Government Ministry of Navy) *Minnan shifandaxue xuebao zhexue shehuikexue ban* 閩南師範大學學報哲學社會科學版, no. 4 (2002), pp. 68-72, 88.

¹² Li Zhang 張力, "Zhongguo haijun de zhenghe yu waiyuan, 1928-1938" 中國海軍的整合與外援, 1928-1938 (Unification of China's Naval Strength and Foreign Aids, 1928-1938), in *Guofu jiangdang yibai*

to clearly associate this reluctance as an inborn shortcoming of the Ministry. Li Shijia's work was able to point out that the ministry was born with an institutional flaw, especially with regards to its lack of financial independence.¹³ It was this very flaw that would later hinder Chen's plans for naval modernization and my thesis aims to highlight the close connection between institutional problems and the difficulties Chen encountered in office.

Weaponry, a pivotal feature of naval strength, ironically remained untouched in academic research until the twenty-first century. In 2015, Chen Yue introduced the warships built during the Republican period and mentioned Chen in a commendable light.¹⁴ Chen Yue wrote that Chen Shaokuan was highly persistent of the nation's naval reconstruction, even after realizing the realities of financial difficulty. His use of magazines like the *Decday Talk*(十日談) and *Periodical of Navy*(海軍雜誌) also offered an alternative to understanding the views of Chen Shaokuan's critics, who were largely skeptical about his purchase of warships and bluntly criticized his navy for being weak and his achievements as useless in terms of national defense.

Funding is a crucial factor in the realization of naval projects. This, however, has also been neglected by academic research. It is clear that the lack of financial resources was a blow to the reconstruction of the Republican navy, but so far this claim lags in detail. Gao Xiaoxing's 1992 publication helped identify the hardships the Ministry had to endure due to financial difficulty, as well as the graveness of the situation by comparing China's situation with other naval powers.¹⁵ Highlighting only the efforts of Ministry officers to overcome financial troubles, his work failed to

zhounian xueshu taolunji weiyuanhui 國父建黨革命一百週年學術討論集委員會 (ed.), *Guofu jiangang geming yibai zhounian xueshu taolunji* 國父建黨革命一百週年學術討論集(Centennial Symposium on Sun Yixian's Founding of the Kuo Mintang For Revolution) (Taipei: Jindai Zhongguo, 1995), p. 458.

¹³ Shijia Li 李世甲, "Wo zai jiu haijun qinli ji 我在舊海軍親歷記," in Fujiansheng wenshiziliao weiyuanhui 福建省文史資料委員會 (ed.), *Fujian wenshi ziliao* 福建文史資料 (Historical Sources of Fujian Province) (Fujian: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1984), pp.1-48.

¹⁴ Yue Chen 陳悅, *Minguo haijun jianchuanzhi* 民國海軍艦船志 (Annals of Naval Vessels in Republican Era) (Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe, 2013), pp. 157-397.

¹⁵ Xiaoxing Gao 高曉星, "Kangzhan qian Nanjing Guomin zhengfu haijun de jingfei wenti" 抗戰前南京國民政府海軍的經費問題 (The Nanking Government's Naval Financial Issues during the Second Sino-Japanese War), *Junshi lishi yanjiu* 軍事歷史研究, no. 1 (1992), pp. 69-72.

associate the problem with Chen Shaokuan's scheme. This thesis will thus create a clearer overview of how financial difficulty led to the failure of Chen's reform plans.

Chen Shaokuan's financial situation will be further put into picture through the use of primary and secondary sources, some of which have already been tackled in existing studies. Gao Xiaoxing, in his work entitled *Chen Shaokuan Wenji*(陳紹寬文集) (1994), compiled formal letters Chen wrote to the Ministry of Finance for assistance. The letters revealed deteriorated financial circumstances, particularly after the January 28 incident in 1932.¹⁶ Su Xiaodong also contributed by revealing the repeated requests for funds to the Ministry of Finance and the Executive Yuan, and the passiveness of the government to such.¹⁷ By making use of these existing studies and the *Naval Communique*(海軍公報), which was recently published, my thesis will attempt to highlight the various struggles Chen faced for funds and how far the lack of such hindered his reform scheme.¹⁸

As a naval leader, Chen's naval ideology has not received sufficient academic attention but is certainly worthy of further examination. In 2000, Zhang Li offered a brief overview of Chen's naval background, including his naval education, experience of inspecting European naval development during the First World War, and finally the several reports he wrote to the Chinese authority during this time.¹⁹ These reports were remarked upon by then Navy Minister as solid and organized, but Cao Minhua pinpointed that two major highlights of Chen's naval thoughts are particularly worth noticing.²⁰ One was the sea power theory, which dates to his experience in Europe; the other was his emphasis on the naval role in national defense. Both of these guided Chen's bid for the reconstruction and strengthening of facilities and talents on land and in sea. While this paper offered a general recount of the origins of Chen's naval

¹⁶ Xiaoxing Gao 高曉星(ed.), *Chen Shaokuan wenji* 陳紹寬文集 (Chen Shaokuan's Writings) (Beijing: Haichao chubanshe, 1994), pp.24-181.

¹⁷ Xiaodong Su 蘇小東, *Zhonghua minguo haijun shishi rizhi* 中華民國海軍史事日誌 (Daily Records of Republican China's Navy) (Beijing: Jiuzhou tushu chubanshe, 1999), pp. 300-360.

¹⁸ Qiang Li 李強 and Yin Mengxia 殷夢霞, *Haijun gongbao* 海軍公報(Naval Communique) (Beijing: Haijunbu mishushi, 2015), pp. 1-2.

¹⁹ .

²⁰ Minhua Cao 曹敏華, "Chen Shaokuan haifang sixiang jianlun" 陳紹寬海防思想簡論 (A Brief Discussion of Chen Shaokuan's Naval Ideas), *Fujian luntan* 福建論壇, no. 5 (2003), pp. 95-97.

thoughts and his efforts to put them into practice, it neglected Chen's education in China. Pan Qianzhi's 2007 work took a step forward in this field. He argued that Chen's naval ideology was made up of three main components: the sea power theory, naval construction, and naval tactics.²¹ According to Pan, Chen reckoned that the navy was indispensable to China's national power, sovereignty, and international dignity. On top of that, he insisted that an appropriate scheme of tactics was essential to ensure the maximization of naval strength. Jiang Sheng echoed these two works, but went further to evaluate the adoptability of Chen's naval plan in the contemporary world.²² Altogether, these works acknowledged the connection between Chen's naval ideas and his reforms. Simultaneously, they failed to acknowledge the influence of other thinkers like Yan Fu and Du Xigui on Chen. There will thus be a chapter in this thesis that focuses on the influence of Chinese thinkers on Chen's naval ideas.

Numerous works have cited Chen's travelling experience and his exposure to Western training in retelling his story. These works, however, have not given attention to the Western background of the thinkers that inspired Chen's thoughts. Yan Fu, for instance, translated several Western naval classics into Chinese, all of which inspired Chen during his time as Minister. The report of Du Xigui, which was sent to Japan and Europe for naval inspection after Chen's appointment as deputy chief, carried a specific chapter of advice on how to resurge the Chinese navy. This chapter, in particular, enlightened Chen. He thereafter adopted ideas like the unification of naval command, construction of military ports, establishment of a commission for future naval developments in his own proposal, using Du's report as a basic blueprint for his reform ideas.²³ My thesis will take a closer look at how his naval doctrines were formed, with particular emphasis on the thoughts and writings of Yan Fu and Du Xigui.

²¹ Qianzhi Pan 潘前之, "Chen Shaokuan haifang sixiang lunxi" 陳紹寬海防思想論析 (An Analysis of Chen Shaokuan's Naval Ideas), *Junshi lishi yanjiu* 軍事歷史研究, no. 4 (2007), pp. 155-158.

²² Sheng Jiang 江聖, "Shilun Chen Shaokuan haijun jianshe sixiang ji dui wo renmin haijun jianshe de qishi" 試論陳紹寬海軍建設思想及對我人民海軍建設的啟示 (Discussing Chen Shao Kuan's Naval Construction Ideas and Its Implications on Our People), *Fujian sheng shehuizhuyi xueyuan xuebao* 福建省社會主義學院學報, no. 4 (2013), pp. 117-121.

²³ Xigui Du 杜錫珪, *Kaocha lieqiang haijun baogaoshu* 考察列強海軍報告書 (Report of Foreign Naval Inspection); (n.p., 1930), pp.183-235.

Methodology

Chinese naval officers were influenced by Chen's naval reform in the formulation of their new thoughts. In 1926, the *Naval Periodical* (海軍期刊) (renamed as *Naval Magazine* in 1930s) was founded to introduce and translate Western naval credos. This publication served as a window for the Chinese navy to Western naval knowledge and developments.²⁴ More importantly, several of Chen's reform proposals, especially those on public fee, government fund for the navy and military discipline, were inspired by advice from articles and letters published in the magazine. I believe that this magazine, which will be used in this thesis as a crucial source, was a cradle for Chen's eventual reform ideas.

Another area that existing works have failed to tackle is the reaction to Chen's reforms. Scholars have pointed out the impact of the Naval University Incident of 1934 on the Ministry and on Chen's resignation. Certainly, this was a vent of aggravating grievances within the Ministry towards Chen's policies. Having centralized command and power to the Ministry, Chen was simultaneously curbing the power of other leading officers; in addition, he brought changes to the public fee system(公費制) and this further aroused the hostility of the captains. Such hostility is recorded in various memoirs written by naval officers, as seen compiled in *History of Admiral Chen Shaokuan* (1994) and *Military Archives of Republican Navy* (2006).²⁵ In these memoirs were accounts of Chen Shaokuan as a just person of strict self-discipline, but of high expectations of others. This caused conflict between Chen and his subordinates, which eventually became one of the hindrances to the execution of his reforms. In light of these occurrences, my thesis will assess the impact of Chen's reforms on his subordinates and the events leading to their opposition of the reform movement.

Factions and naval cliques, though not often discussed in existing studies, in fact played a prominent role in destabilizing the navy and hindering Chen Shaokuan's

²⁴ *Haijun qikan* 海軍期刊 *Naval Periodical*, no. 1 (1928), 1.

²⁵ Zhou Fang 方舟 and Hongbing Zhou 周宏冰, *Haijun shangjiang zhilian* 海軍上將之戀 (The Romance of the Admiral) (Tianjin: Haijun chubanshe, 1986), pp. 209-213; Wen wen 文聞, *Jiu zhongguo haijun midang* 舊中國海軍密檔 (Top Secret Files of Old China's Navy) (Beijing: Zhongguo wenhua chubanshe, 2005), pp.216-226

proposed reforms. In his 1992 work, Han Zhen traced the Republican naval cliques from the late Qing era, when it became a trend for Fukienese figures to fill up high-ranking naval positions. To restrict the clout of the Fukienese clique, Chiang Kai-shek sacrificed Chen's attempts of centralizing the navy. This, however, did not work; the Fukien clique was already too powerful to be controlled by neither Chiang nor Chen.²⁶ Ke Yun also provided a detailed study of institutional changes in China's naval center, pointing out that it toggled back and forth between the General Headquarter of Navy and the Ministry of Navy.²⁷ Ke, however, did not mention the existence of naval cliques. In 2006, Huang Shansong explored the presence of naval cliques during the Second Sino-Japanese War.²⁸ He argued that the government did not dare to interfere with the segregation of the navy due to their strength. This changed after the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War. By then, the government began to witness the weakening of the naval fleets and finally carried forward with their plan to unite the regional navies.

The concept of the Fujian Sect, which refers to Fujianese naval talents that emerged due to historical and geographical factors was first proposed by Wang Jiajian in 2004.²⁹ In reality, naval regionalism sowed the seeds for Fukienese predominance of high-ranking positions. Li Hongying centered his Master's thesis on the various naval cliques, analyzing the lives of naval officers, their naval discipline and the formation of the cliques.³⁰ For instance, Fukienese officers favoured their fellow Fukien colleagues. This added up to the formation of different cliques in the Republican era, including the Huangpu Clique, the Northeast Clique, and the Fukienese Clique, all of which struggled

²⁶ Zhen Han 韓真, "Minguo haijun de paixi yu xingcheng" 民國海軍的派系及形成(The Formation of Republican's Naval Clique) *Junshi lishi yanjiu* 軍事歷史研究, no. 1 (1992), pp. 63-68.

²⁷ Yun Ke 柯雲, "Guomindang zhengfu haijun zuzhi jigou shulue" 國民黨政府海軍組織機構述略 (A Narrative of the Naval Structure under the Guomindang), *Junshi lishi* 軍事歷史, no. 6 (1992), pp. 50-51.

²⁸ Shansong Huang 黃山松, "Kangzhan qijian Minguo haijun de zhenghe" 抗戰期間民國海軍的整合 (The Reorganization of the Republican Navy during the Second Sino-Japanese War), *Zhonggong Zhejiang shengwei dangxiao xuebao* 中共浙江省委黨校學報, no. 6 (2006), pp. 111-114.

²⁹ Jiajian Wang 王家儉, "Minxi haijun lishi diwei de chongxin pingjia" 閩系海軍歷史地位的重新評價 (Re-evaluation of the Min Naval Clique's Position in History), in Li Jinqiang 李金強等, et. al. (eds.), *Wowu Weiyang: jindai zhongguo haijunshi xinlun* 我武維揚:近代中國海軍史新論 (Modern Chinese Naval History: New Perspectives)(Hong Kong: Modern Chinese History society of Hong Kong, 2004), pp. 1-16.

³⁰ Hongying Li 李鴻英, *Jindai haijun qunti yanjiu* 近代海軍群體研究 (Study on Naval Groups in Modern China) (Jilin: Jilin daxue, 2009), pp. 25-34.

for their self-interests. Sub-cliques existed within these three main cliques, complicating the situation further. My thesis will investigate further by focusing on the control that the Fukienese clique had over the central navy.

Although most of the Chief Naval Officers and Naval Commanders in the Ministry between 1916 and 1928 were from Fujian, it was only after the publication of 'Catalogue of Naval Officers' (2015) that a clearer picture of this phenomenon came into light.³¹ Around seventy percent of officers with a ranking of Lieutenant Commander or higher were Fukienese. In the Department of Navigation at the Naval Academy, 128 out of 129 graduates during the decade of the Nanking government were from Fujian. The situation was similar in the brasses. It should be noted that such a monopoly discouraged other factions from cooperating with the central fleet. The role of factional differences will be tackled in my thesis and understood as a hindrance to China's naval modernization.

My thesis will also strengthen existing research focus on naval education. Chronicling Chen's efforts to send students overseas for naval education, Zhang Li took the case of students who traveled to Britain as his focus. He examined their curricula, study models, and the effectiveness of their experience.³² These works undoubtedly helped depict Chen's attempts to cultivate talents, but more can be done in revealing the importance of promoting naval education, especially the contribution of these students upon their return. In 2011, He Jing, Zhou Dehua and Leng Yu published an analysis that associated Chen's policy as related to his experience in Europe.³³ Soon after Chen took up his position, he launched the initiative of sending students abroad,

³¹ Hai junbu 海軍部, "Haijunbu zhiyuanlu" 海軍部職員錄 1934 (Catalogue of Naval Officers, 1934) in Mengxia Yin 殷夢霞 and Qiang Li 李強 (eds.), *Guojia tushuguan cang minguo junshi dang'an chubian dibace* 國家圖書館藏民國軍事檔案初編第八冊 (Compilation of Military Documents in the Republican Era from the National Library vol. 8) (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe, 2009), pp. 132-133.

³² Li Zhang 張力, "Nanjing guomin zhengfu shiqi de liuying haijun yuansheng 南京國民政府時期的留英海軍員生" (Chinese Naval Students in Britain under the Nanjing Government), in Ding Xinbao 丁新豹, Zhou Jiarong 周佳榮 and Huang Yanli 黃嫣梨 (eds.), *Jindai zhongguo liuxuesheng lunwen ji* (Collected Essays on Foreign-educated Students of Modern China; Hong Kong: Hong Kong Museum of History, 2006), pp. 224-238.

³³ Jing He 何靜, Dehua Zhou 周得華 and Xu Leng 冷旭, "Chen Shaokuan haijun rencai jianshe sixiang qianxi" 陳紹寬海軍人才建設思想淺析 (An Introductory Study to Chen Shaokuan's Ideas on Naval Talent Training), *Heilongjiang shizhi* 黑龍江史志, no. 12 (2011), pp. 63-64.

even in face of funding shortage. Zhan Feng supported this argument by pointing out that western education was crucial for the navy to live up to Chen's ambitious plans.³⁴ Tracing the prospects of the exchange students upon their return, he remarked that most of these students worked as instructors in naval schools, clerks in the naval executive offices, and officers in the fleets. Some held high offices in the Ministry. The paper, however, did not reveal the constraints the students faced upon return. I will touch on this issue later in the thesis.

Published in 2015, the Naval Communique provides a detailed narration of Chen's initiatives, including his arrangements for overseas studies and upon the officers' return, their positions in the Ministry. It will also provide more insights into local views concerning the foreign education of naval officers, as well as other modernization plans under the Ministry. This will therefore be utilised in the thesis to construct a more complete picture of how far the government supported and carried out Chen Shaokuan's reform plans.

Organization of Thesis

This thesis investigates Chen Shaokuan's role and performance in the reconstruction of the Chinese navy by first asking a number of important questions: how was the Chinese navy before Chen's term? In what ways did it transform under his rule? What obstacles did Chen face in the process of reconstruction? What kept him motivated to push for a more powerful navy despite the difficulties?

My thesis begins with an examination of the Qing Court's struggling efforts to rebuild its navy after a devastating war between 1894-1895. It was such a disorganized, backward and undisciplined naval force that Chen Shaokuan had had to deal with upon taking office. Thereafter, the thesis will tackle the roots of Chen's naval thoughts, which were strongly influenced and shaped by Yan Fu, Du Xigui and other contemporary naval officers. This will be followed by a discussion of the backlash and

³⁴ Feng Zhan 湛峰, *Nanjing Guomin zhengfu shiqi de haijun liuxuesheng* 南京國民政府時期的海軍留學生 (Naval Students Abroad under the Reorganized National Government of the Republic of China) (Nanjing: Nanjing Daxue, 2011), pp. 10-30.

the difficulties he faced in promoting and executing his reform plan, and ends by an evaluation of his achievements during his tenure.

Chapter 1 will provide a general literature review, which clarifies the research focus of the paper by identifying the achievements and weaknesses of existing research. Chapter 2 will focus on the reconstruction of the Chinese army by the late Qing government after the First Sino-Japanese War (1895). In this chapter, I attempt to analyse the significance and defects of China's naval rebuilding, and its influence on naval development in the Republican era. Since 1896, political realities and economic conditions had restricted naval development, as seen from the grave difficulties in the construction of naval ports.³⁵ As for warships, the attempts of combining foreign-purchased warships and locally manufactured ones were hindered by a lack of funds and technical backwardness. The regional leaders' reluctance to rebuild the navy, in general, further deteriorated the challenges of practical obstacles. This chapter will focus on Zhang Zhidong's efforts to develop a navy regardless of these problems.³⁶ In difficult times of internal chaos and external humiliation, leaders ideally joined their hands to strengthen their nation, yet the incapability of some officials and the dissent of the others marked an impossible situation for reform.³⁷ In view of this, the Qing Court appointed Zaixun as the Minister of Naval Affairs in a bid for centralization, but the decision backfired. The officers saw him as an unable royal figure, and many low-ranking officers favoured revolution as a means to oust their leader. All of these challenges meant that the reform movement was bound to fail.

Chapter 3 will focus on Chen's naval ideas around 1928. This chapter will mainly deal with two explorations: the first looks at how his naval thoughts were shaped by his own experiences and influenced by other prominent thinkers. These include Chen's naval education, his experience of surveying European naval developments and the

³⁵ Ming Jiang 姜鳴, *Longqi piaoyang de jiandui : zhongguo jindai haijun xingshuaishi* 龍旗飄揚的艦隊：中國近代海軍興衰史 (The Fleet with a Dragon Flag: The Rise and Fall of the Navy in Modern China) (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaotong daxue chubanshe, 1991), p. 322.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 355.

³⁷ Wenyu Zhu 朱文瑜, "Zhang Zhidong yu qingmo haijun chongjian" 張之洞與清末海軍重建 (Zhang Zhidong and Naval Re-construction during the Late Qing), *Kexue wenhua* 科學文化評論 (2010), pp. 234-243.

role of thinkers like Yan Fu, who believed that only maritime power-oriented ideology could nourish a navy. Second, I will fuse Chen's naval thoughts with his proposed naval reforms to work out the connections. For instance, Chen, as acting Beiyang official, would later take the opportunity to organize the naval memorials so as to realize his proposal. His ideas were:

(1) maritime power matters to the prosperity and international status of a country;

(2) without maritime power, a country will lose its land power;

(3) China should build up its control over the Sea of Japan, Bo Hai, Yellow Sea, East China Sea, and South China Sea, and command the navy to exercise control over marine transportation to turn away enemies thousands of miles away from the land.

Chen's thoughts, if realized, would have transformed China's traditional reactive naval defence to an active operation of maritime power, unprecedentedly raising maritime policy to the level of national strategy. Through his proposals, Chen had hoped China to build a strong navy to secure and fight for its maritime position. His wish for reforms also included the training of more capable and reliable naval officers. In 1926, the *Naval Magazine* was established for circulation in the Ministry. It introduced a broad range of content, including Western naval knowledge, introduction of innovative theories and weaponry, together with criticism towards problems in the Ministry and further proposals for reform.³⁸ Historians have so far not been highly aware of the magazine's importance, particularly on how they reflected Chen's thoughts and ideas for reform. This chapter will thus analyse Chen's ideologies through the use of the *Naval Magazine*.

Chapter 4 will centre on how Chen launched China's naval reforms and further evaluate his achievements. Though he was Admiral and Minister, Chen did not have control over various naval affairs. When Chen proposed, in 1934, the unification of the Guangdong and Northeast fleets, Chiang shelved the idea and established instead the School of Submarines and Motor Torpedo Boats. This was a typical example of Chen's failure to centralize the command of all navies under the Ministry. Chiang's

³⁸ *Haijun qikan* 海軍期刊 (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju yinshua suo), no. 1 (1928), pp. 1-2.

postponement of funding further painted a difficult situation for Chen in the purchase of warships. Under such strained circumstances, Chen had little chance to properly execute his reform plans. Other practical constraints also played a role: the students Chen had sent abroad for education came back only to occupy minor positions in the Ministry. His other measures, which conflicted with the interests of other officers, aroused dissatisfaction. These officers, initially neutral towards Chen's reform proposal, showed strong opposition after they realized their share of benefits would be affected. Eventually, a petition was sent to Lin Sen, the President of the Nationalist Government, to force Chen out of office.

Chapter 5 will provide a just evaluation of Chen Shaokuan. I argue that he was determined to contribute, but was greatly constrained by the lack of support from his subordinates and the competitive Chiang Kai-shek. Chen was stuck between two different worlds: on the top was Chiang and his empty promises; at the bottom were the rampant captains who revolted against measures that would breach their interests. Chiang, in particular, played an important role in Chen's failure. He not only provided limited support to Chen's modernization plans, but also leniently treated uncooperative officers. Instead of lowering their ranks, Chiang merely transferred them to other departments. Chen, on the other hand, also had his own personal flaws. His blind trust of Chiang's promises, for instance, led to his eventual downfall. Although he was an undeniably just person with good morals, his arrogance worsened his relationship with other military leaders and made it impossible for cooperation between military branches to take place. Some of Chen's decisions also resulted in general doubt and suspicion towards his character. During the January 28 incident, he insisted that the navy remained neutral, particularly due to his own desire to proceed with the construction of the light cruiser *Ninghai* and to preserve his own naval fleet. His decision made Chiang uneasy. Chiang would later use 'fending off the Japanese' as his excuse to build the School of Submarines and Motor Torpedo Boats. Chen was therefore doomed to fail. He could neither gain Chiang's approval, nor control the Ministry or his own fleet to support his initiatives. By considering both practical developments and Chen's character, this thesis concludes with a broader

understanding of why China's naval reforms, as per Chen's vision, never came into being during this period.

Chapter Two
Limited Naval Development
From the Late Qing to the Early Republican Era

Foreword

The First Sino-Japanese War in 1895 fully exposed China's military defects. China's defeat to Japan compelled the Qing court to continue with its reforms in order to resolve internal unrest and to resist Western invasion. Although naval construction was a core component of China's reform initiatives since the 1860s, it saw little progress under both the Hundred Days' Reform and the Late Qing Reform. Chen Shaokuan would change this after taking office as China's Naval Minister. Upon entering office, Chen first had to deal with poorly financed and under-equipped fleets that needed immense efforts to centralize and modernize.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Chen Shaokuan, who made unprecedented efforts to establish China as a new naval power in the interwar years, has not received the scholarly attention he deserves. His attempts to unify China's naval forces, reorganize its command structure and construct modern naval vessels are seldom discussed by existing studies. Drawing on a range of primary sources, including *Haijun gongbao* 海軍公報, *Minguo junshi dangan chubian* 民國軍事檔案初編 and other compiled historical materials and secondary sources in different languages, this thesis strives to reassess Chen's contribution to China's naval development in the interwar years.

In order to understand the gravity of the naval situation that Chen had to face in office, this chapter starts with a survey of China's naval development from 1895 to 1927, in an effort to highlight the problems that Chen encountered during Chen's early years in office.

Qing court's attempts on naval reconstruction after the First Sino- Japanese War

China's naval development entered a dark age after the First Sino-Japanese War. Disheartened by the destruction of the Beiyang Fleet, which the Chinese people had

been proud of, and the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki that drained the treasury of the Qing Court, most of the remaining naval officials lost the determination to pursue further naval reconstruction.³⁹ The Naval Yamen 海軍衙門 was dissolved and most surviving naval officers were dismissed.⁴⁰ The Beiyang Fleet was left with only five vessels, namely cruisers 'Fei Ying' 飛鷹 and 'Fei Ting,' 飛霆 which were recently bought from Britain and Germany respectively, training ships 'Jing Yuan' (renamed 'Tongji' 通濟) and 'Kang Ji,' 康濟 and troopship 'Mei Yun.' 湄雲⁴¹ With the addition of torpedo boats 'Kai Ji,' 'Jing Qing' 鏡清 and 'Nan Shen,' all of which were made in Germany, the Nanyang Navy was, for a bit, strengthened. However, Liu Kunyi 劉坤一 (1830-1902), viceroy of Guangdong and Guangxi who proposed as early as in 1894 to downsize the Nanyang Fleet, insisted on sparing all available resources for the overseas naval education of young cadets, forts construction at seaports and procurement of light vessels such as cruisers and torpedo boats, delaying the task of creating a powerful fleet for the time being.⁴² For quite a while, the Nanyang Navy could only carry out basic duties.⁴³

With the Beiyang Fleet obliterate and the Nanyang Navy brought to its knees, the empire was left powerless to fend off foreign invasion. At that stage, the Qing Court had lost hope in rebuilding its navy. It fired all the remaining officers of the fleet, and shelved the Naval Office and the Naval Academy.⁴⁴ In 1896, in order to protect the capital, the government, which once again changed its mind, ordered the Naval Office to be in charge of the reconstruction, mainly on the development of the Fleet, together with aid from the Naval Office which had been cancelled in previous years.

³⁹ Qizhang Qi 戚其章, "Jiawu zhanzheng peikuan wenti kaoshi" 甲午戰爭賠款問題考實(Research on the Question of Indemnity During the First Sino-Japanese War), *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究 3 (1998), pp. 64-77.

⁴⁰ Jiang, *Longqi piaoyang de jiandui*, p. 419.

⁴¹ Ibid., p.452; Yue Chen 陳悅, *Beiyang haijun Jianchuanzhi* 北洋海軍艦船志 (Naval Vessels of the Beiyang Fleet) (Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe, 2009), pp. 245-248.

⁴² Kunyi Liu 劉坤一, "Zunyi tingchen tiaoyi shiwuzhe 遵議廷臣條議時務折 (Memoirs on Discussing Current Affairs)," in Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Institute of History 中國社會科學院歷史研究所 (ed.), *Liu Kunyi yiji* 劉坤一遺集 (Liu's Works) (Beijing: Chung Hwa Book Co., 1959), pp.895-896.

⁴³ Kunyi Liu 劉坤一, "Nanyang binglun zhuojian renshupian 南洋兵輪酌減人數片 (Memoirs on Reducing Manpower in the Nanyang Fleet)," in *Liu Kunyi yiji*, p. 987.

⁴⁴ Jiajian Wang 王家儉, *Li Hongzhang yu beiyangjiandui* 李鴻章與北洋艦隊 (Li Hongzhang and the Beiyang Fleet) (Beijing: Shenghuo dushu xinzhizhi, 2006), p. 466.

The eagerness of reforms gave birth to a series of serious attempts, but many factors had weakened their effectiveness. The prominent ones, which will be tackled later in this chapter, were shortage of funding, dissonance among regional governors, lack of centralization, and shortsightedness.

Political realities played a major role in hindering China's naval modernization. The Scramble of Concession stripped China of its best seaports for naval development. In 1897, Germany used the murder of two missionaries in Shandong as an excuse to force the Chinese government to lease Jiaozhou for ninety-nine years and grant her railway construction rights in Shandong. The Russians followed suit. They proposed to occupy Port Arthur, also known as Dalian, eventually taking over the territory in 1897 in the pretext of protecting China from German threat. Russia then acquired the right to construct the Southern Manchurian Railway, which extended from the two ports to connect with the Chinese Eastern Railway. The Liaodong Peninsula, which China had bought back from Japan three years ago for thirty million taels, fell into the hands of Russia. The British, on the other hand, lost no time to lease Weihaiwei for twenty-five years, together with a major part of Kowloon and the New Territories, for ninety-nine years. Britain further secured the government's word that China would not allow other powers to meddle with the Yangzi Valley. This turned the Yangzi Valley into a British sphere of influence. France consolidated its leading position in Southern China by leasing Guangzhou Bay for ninety-nine years and by establishing a sphere of influence in Guangdong, Guangxi and Yunnan.⁴⁵ Apart from Western powers, Japan played a part in the Scramble for Concessions when China made a similar commitment of non-intervention in the Fujian province to Japan.

In the following years, China's naval development proceeded without any clear direction, merely switching between plans and leaders. After the First Sino-Japanese War, the Beiyang Fleet relied principally on cruisers '*Hai Tian*' and '*Hai Chi*.' The arrival of '*Hai Rong*' 海容 and '*Hai Chou*' 海周 in July and August 1898 respectively, and of the German-made cruiser '*Hai Shen*' in September 1898 at Daku port hinted on the Fleet's

⁴⁵ Immanuel C.Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 348-349.

potential revival.⁴⁶ One year later, more additions were made, including the British-made cruisers 'Hai Tian' and 'Hai Chi' and four German-made torpedo boats.⁴⁷ Moreover, the Qing court reinstated the naval officers of Beiyang Fleet for the purpose of redeveloping the Chinese navy. On recommendation of the Zongli Yamen, Emperor Guangxu granted in 1899 ex-Beiyang Fleet naval officers Sa Zhenbing 薩鎮冰 and Ye Zugui 葉祖貴 commandership of the newly purchased naval vessels and torpedo boats. Starting from 1902, numerous ex-Beiyang Fleet naval officers were rehabilitated, thanks to the support of Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859-1916).⁴⁸ The Nanyang Navy also experienced, since 1903, remarkable changes under the leadership of Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 (1837-1909). As Acting Viceroy of Liangjiang, Zhang submitted a proposal to the Qing Court to dispose most of the old naval vessels of the Nanyang Fleet. After he was appointed Viceroy of Huguang in 1904, he subscribed from Japan four torpedo boats and six gunboats, all of which reached China in 1909 to form the bulk of the Changjiang Fleet.⁴⁹

The Qing court's last attempts at naval modernization, 1905-1911

The Qing court prepared for China's to-be constitution, a crucial part of the late Qing Reform, in 1905 by sending five officials abroad to study foreign constitutions. Interestingly, the reports they returned to the court contained a plan suggesting the up-scaling of China's naval redevelopment.⁵⁰ Steps were subsequently taken: initially, the Board of War was renamed in November 1905 as the Ministry of Army with a Marine Division. Major changes, however, only began to take place after the demise of Empress Dowager Cixi in November 1908. Under the new leadership of the Regent

⁴⁶ Yue Chen 陳悅, *1855-1911 Zhongguo junjian tuzhi* 1855-1911 中國軍艦圖誌 (Pictorial of 1855-1911 Chinese Naval Vessels) (Xianggang: Shangwu chubanshe, 2013), pp.162-165.

⁴⁷ Yue Chen 陳悅, *Qingmo haijun jianchuanzhi* 清末海軍艦船志 (Annals of Naval Vessels in Late Qing; Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe, 2012), pp.82-139; Chen, *1855-1911 Zhongguo junjian tuzhi*, pp. 209-211.

⁴⁸ Shikai Yuan 袁世凱, "Yuan Shikai zou Sa Zhenbing qing poge zhuoyong zhe" 袁世凱奏薩鎮冰請破格擢用折 (Memoirs on Yuan Shikai's Suggested Promotion of Sa Zhenbing), in Yang Zhiben 楊志本 and Zhang Xia 張俠 (eds.), *Qingmo haijun shiliao* 清末海軍史料 (Historical Sources of the Late Qing Navy) (Beijing: Haiyang chubanshe, 1982), pp. 585-586.

⁴⁹ Zhu, "Zhang Zhidong yu qingmo haijun," pp. 33-43.

⁵⁰ Fang Duan 端方, "Junzheng zhongyao qing qufa geguo yitu jinbuzhe" 軍政重要請取法各國以圖進步折 (Memoirs on Suggesting the Qing Court to Follow Foreign Systems to Empower Military Strength), in Taipei wenhai chubanshe 台北文海出版社 (ed.), *Duan Zhongmingong zougao* 端忠敏公奏稿 (Duan Zhongmin's Memoirs) (Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1967), p. 44, 88.

Prince Zai Feng 載灃 and his brother Zai Chun 載淳, China embarked on a range of reforms to reorganize the Chinese navy. In February 1909, the Qing court ordered Prince Su, Minister of the Army Tie Liang and Admiral Sa Zhenbing to scheme a plan for China's naval modernization. Five months following this, the emperor was made the Grand Marshal of China. In the name of the emperor, the Regent Prince issued a decree to appoint his sixth brother Zai Xun 載勛 as the Minister of Marine. The Qing court thus integrated the Nanyang Navy and the Beiyang Navy and referred to them respectively as the Xunyang and Changjiang Navy. Sa Zhenbing became Admiral, and Cheng Biguang 程璧光 and Shen Shoukun 沈壽堃 became commanders of the Xun Yang fleet and the Changjiang fleet respectively.

Zai Chun and Sa Zhenbing made some achievements in the following years. Leading a Naval Commission to Europe in October 1909, they inspected naval facilities in Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Austria Hungary and France. A year later, they visited the United States for similar purposes. Three small training cruisers, three destroyers and two large gunboats were bought from different countries during these trips. They moved the naval base from Sanmen Bay to Zhejiang and created the Ministry of Marine in 1910. Unfortunately, the new Marine Minister Zai Chun found his ambitious plans impossible as China was experiencing a difficult time, politically and financially. Due to shortage in funds, the vessel purchases made were either delayed during delivery or had to be cancelled. Finally, only the Trainer cruisers 'Zhao He' and 'Ying Rui' arrived in China.

The 1911 Revolution brought an end not only to the Qing Dynasty, but also to its last attempt to modernize China's navy. Realizing that his subordinate naval officers had revolutionary tendencies, Admiral Sa left his post and fled to Shanghai.⁵¹ Yuan Shikai, who had been given full power to suppress the revolution, made a secret deal with the revolutionaries. The Emperor Xuan Tong (1906-1908) was forced to abdicate and Sun Yat-sen gave up the post of provisional president in favor of Yuan Shikai. Yuan, once the commander of China's first new army, emerged as China's most powerful

⁵¹ Richard N.J. Wright, *The Chinese Steam Navy* (London: Chatham, 2000), pp.127-130.

man. Under his rule, naval development was not given much attention, marking an abrupt end to China's naval modernization.

Generalizing the development of China's navy after the end of the Sino-Japanese War, the following obstacles to success can be concluded:

1. Shortage of Funding

The resurgence for naval development came a year after the war, and reached its climax between 1905 and 1911. As most of the coastal regions were occupied as spheres of influence by foreign powers in the hype of carving up China, the Qing Court could hardly find geographically-advantageous naval ports for development. It finally initiated to transform Xiangshan Port and Sanmen Harbour as a naval base in 1909, but there were not many achievements until the eve of the 1911 Revolution.⁵²

The lack of funds was evident when we take a look at the various initiatives proposed during this time. In 1907, Yao Xiguang, for instance, came up with three ideas under two proposals: the first one required fifty million taels to execute a ten-year plan and another 120 million taels for a twelve-year plan. The Qing court rejected both proposals; they were simply financially impractical.⁵³ The Qing government later formulated its own proposal. Through a one-time eighteen million taels and thereafter an annual funding of two million taels, the Qing court suggested the purchase of new vessels, establishment of naval schools, inspection of other naval ports and construction of China's own, as well as the restructuring of all fleets and the formulation of naval budgets. This proposal, too, faced the same fate due to the lack of funds.

After China's defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War, the empire was in serious financial debt and on the verge of bankruptcy. To repay the colossal sums, the government thrice acquired a loan of 300 million taels from Russia, Britain, Germany and France. The repayment term of the loans varied from thirty-six to forty-five years.

⁵² Jiang, *Longqi piaoyang de jiandui*, p. 326.

⁵³ Xilong Shu 舒習龍, "Yao Xiguang shulun" 姚錫光述論 (Elaboration on Yao Xiguang), *Shilin* 史林 5 (2005), p. 59, 114.

The third loan from Britain and Germany ended with the two Western powers' seizing economic rights in China.⁵⁴ Under such circumstance, naval development in China was doomed to fail.

Within sixteen years until its demise, the Qing court bought thirty-nine warships from overseas, and manufactured locally twenty-four. Despite this, it remained that the practical conditions for China's naval development was gloomy, especially in the absence of a plan regarding national defense. Having signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki and in face of Western invasion, together with a rise in fevering revolutionary forces, China was left turbulent and impoverished. Even if the Qing Court intended to build a powerful navy, it could only offer limited financial and moral support.

2. Lack of Centralization

For a long time, the government had struggled to fight against the regionalism of China's navy. The duel between the Nanyang and Beiyang fleets resurfaced years after the war, after both fleets gradually regained their strength. Advised by Yuan Shikai, then Governor-General of Zhili, and Zhou Fu 周馥, Yuan's counterpart in the province of Jiangnan and Jiangxi in 1907, the government commanded Ye Zugui in Shanghai to form the Provisional Naval Office, which was later transformed into the Ministry of Nanyang and Beiyang Navies. This act changed their mutual independence and set the primary base for naval unification. This was, however, intruded by the distrust of the government in the naval officers. In 1908, right after Emperor Xuantong succeeded the throne, Zaixun was appointed as the Minister of Naval Affairs.⁵⁵ Zaixun carried no knowledge of naval affairs and left his elder brother, Regent Zaifeng to deal with the matter. This shows the plot of the government— to seize back power by placing an unsuitable candidate as leader of the navy. Such an arrangement disheartened other officers from making further initiatives at naval modernization.

3. Dissonance of Local Leaders

⁵⁴ Qi, *Jiawu zhanzhengshi*, p.504.

⁵⁵ Xia Zhang 張俠, *Qingmo haijun shiliao* 清末海軍史料 (Historical Source of Late Qing Navy) (Beijing: Haiyang chubanshe, 1982), p. 96.

Among the regional governors who participated in China's naval construction, Zhang Zhidong was most zealous. Acting as the Governor-General of Jiangnan and Jiangxi in 1902, he ordered warships from the Kawasaki Shipyard of Japan and the Foochow Arsenal. Zhang wrote that the warships from Japan were as qualified as the others, but with a fairer price and invited the boss of the Kawasaki Shipyard to China for a business negotiation. He repeatedly appealed to the government to learn from Japan through his memorials, writing: "the cost can be reduced by two-thirds and the time for studying be shortened by half."⁵⁶ In his writings, Zhang appeared to be an advocate of Japanese culture:

...though Japan has imitated everything from the West, in most of the cases, they referred back to the conditions of their own country, and made changes to suit themselves. Discerning the latest progress, they also dropped and added some features for flexibility. This is most appropriate for China to adopt.

Zhang strenuously advocated to learn from Japan, and sent students to Japan. During the formation of the Hubei Navy, he set up naval classes, and hired Japanese naval officers as instructors.

Other than Zhang Zhidong and Yuan Shikai, other governors were uninterested, if not pessimistic, about naval reconstruction. Liu Kunyi 劉坤一, who once commanded navies northward, rendered that 'the reasons for the collapse of our navies were nothing more than the inability to raise huge funding, and the particular lack of naval talents.'⁵⁷ To make things worst, the support from the new Governor-General was lukewarm, quoting:

We can do nothing more than work on the existing scale within our financial capability, gradually waiting for the time. No camouflage. No expediency. It doesn't matter if it's one inch or one feet that we get. It matters for us to be practical, and just practical.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Wenyu Zhu 朱文瑜, "Zhang Zhidong yu qingmo haijun chongjian 張之洞與清末海軍重建"(Zhang Zhidong and Naval Revival in Late Qing), *Kexue wenhua pinglun* 科學文化評論, no.6 2010, p.33-43.

⁵⁷ Liu, "Zunyi tingchen tiaoyi shiwuzhe," pp. 895-896.

⁵⁸ Ming Jiang 姜鳴, *Longqi piaoyang de jiandui* 龍旗飄揚的艦隊 (History of Beiyang Fleet) (Beijing: Shenghuo DushuXinzhishi, 2002), p.592.

Despite the few who were determined to resurge the navy, the dissonance of regional leaders curbed whatever possibilities were left for progress.⁵⁹

4. Short-sightedness

The Qing court was quite enthusiastic in developing naval education and nurturing new talents. The Foochow Arsenal resumed enrolment in 1897 and soon thereafter naval schools were established in Tianjin, Jiangnan and Huangpu. In the wake of the Late Qing reform, the Qing Court built the Yantai Naval School, Hubei Naval School and Zhili Beiyang Naval Hospital, one after another.⁶⁰ Meanwhile, the government sent batches of students abroad for naval education, mostly to Britain in the early years of the twentieth century. Later for reasons of culture and cost, the Qing court encouraged the Chinese to study in Japan, thus Japan overtook Britain as the most famous destination in the later years. However, the Qing government failed to see that Japan was still in its heydays with regards to naval development. Upon return to China, those who received British training excelled and overshadowed officers trained in Japan.

In addition, the quality of locally made warships during this period was unsatisfactory, dating back to a problem that began decades before the outbreak of the First Sino-Japanese War: the absence of a central plan. With warships being built in different places, it was difficult to keep track of what the government was spending its money on. Except for '*Tongji*' and '*Fu'an*,' all other vessels that were made in China during this time were less than 1,000 tonnes in displacement. Notably, the Foochow Arsenal had already built as many as twenty-five warships with displacements of over 1,000 before the Sino-Japanese War. However, the government failed to monitor the Foochow Arsenal, leading to its financial difficulty and weak organization. The Qing government employed foreign workers in the Foochow Arsenal, a move that pushed the Arsenal into chaos, thanks to the doings of an immoral engineer-in-chief, Düsseldorf.⁶¹ Without control and discipline, China's naval development simply relied

⁵⁹ Zhang, *Qingmo haijun shiliao*, p.89.

⁶⁰ Zhi Jin 金智, *Qingtian bairi qixia Minguo haijun de botao qifu* 青天白日旗下民國海軍的波濤起伏 (History of Republican Navy in the Republican Era) (Taipei: Duli zuojia, 2015), pp. 68-70, 81.

⁶¹ Qingyuan Lin 林慶元, *Fujian chuanzhengju shigao* 福州船政局史稿 (History of the Foochow

on the purchase of foreign warships to modernize. This problem would continue through to the Republican era, and Chen Shaokuan stepped up the game to restore the arsenal's discipline soon after taking office.

Some may argue that the Chinese navy lagged far behind the West. Even when Japan was already on the move towards Westernization, China remained weak and backward. It should however not be forgotten that the Qing court did attempt to strengthen China's navy. Before the war, schemes for warship-purchase were distinct--two to four cruisers, complemented with gunboats operating offshore and in inner rivers, destroyers and torpedo boats. They were equipped with clear inclination of mutual-assistance, and almost all the foreign warships were purchased in a group simultaneously. After the war, the Qing court had to become more practical due to political and financial realities. The government focused, instead, on the complementation of types of warships. Different from ordering warships from only Britain and Germany before the war, the government expanded its range to the USA, Austria-Hungary, Italy and Japan in searching for appropriate ones. If the Qing government persisted with its efforts, the Chinese navy would not have remained stagnant as it did.

Conclusion

As we can see, the Late Qing naval reforms achieved little. Some commentators lashed at the Qing Court for its incompetency, but given the factual circumstances, China was in fact without a choice. In face of political instability and financial difficulties, the Qing government had neither time nor money to support naval reforms. Even after the Qing regime collapsed, China's navy saw limited development during the early Republican era. By the time Chen took up his position, the Chinese navy was still nowhere near modernized.

Arsenal) (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1996), pp. 267-325.

Chapter Three

Chen Shaokuan's Naval Ideas

Chen Shaokuan's efforts in modernizing China's navy began when Naval Commander Liu Guanxiong 劉冠雄 dispatched him to Europe for the inspection of Western navies. Liu asked Chen to write a report based on his observations to the government for the purpose of justifying the need for additional resources. Yet given the political instability and the financial strain, his proposal was in no position to be enacted. Devoted to reform the navy, other naval officers also published articles on *Naval Periodical*. Some of these articles inspired Chen and later served as part of his reform blueprint. Later on as Minister, he kept an eye on the naval development of other powers. The report written by Du Xigui, the admiral who was sent by the Nationalist government to inspect foreign navies, was an important source for Chen's naval reforms. This chapter will analyse how the above experiences helped shaped Chen's naval thoughts.

Early Naval Career

Chen joined the Jiangnan Naval Academy under his father's recommendation to study the navigation of warships. His father brought him under the care of Sa Zhenbing, a renowned naval brass whom I briefly mentioned in the first chapter. Thereafter, his naval career would gradually develop. After the Republic of China established the Naval Ministry in 1912, Chen became the Lieutenant of warship 'Jingqing'. He was later promoted to major adjutant of a training fleet under the Naval Headquarter in 1914.⁶² After successfully recapturing the 'Zhaohu' cruiser in 1915, Chen was promoted as captain and commander of 'Zhaohu'.⁶³

⁶² Haijun silingbu 海軍司令部 (eds.), *Jindai zhongguo haijun 近代中國海軍* (Modern Navy of China) (Beijing: Haichao chubanshe, 1994), pp. 177-179, 198-206.

⁶³ Chuanhui Huang 黃傳會 and Zhou Yuxing 舟欲行 (eds.), *Nihai: zhonghua minguo haijun jishi 逆海：中華民國海軍紀實* (Notes on the Republican Chinese Navy) (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2007), p. 89.

During his early years serving the Chinese navy, he already began preparing for a visit to foreign countries to observe their naval development.⁶⁴ The visit eventually took place in 1916; Chen visited the United States and also paid a visit to the Chinese naval students studying in France and Italy. Upon his return to China, he was appointed the commander of the training cruiser ‘*Ying Rui*.’ This experience of naval inspection outside of China inspired him to promote further naval reforms, particularly after he became the leader of the Navy Board.⁶⁵

His early naval career proceeded rather smoothly. His origin probably helped the most— he was born in Fujian and his Fukienese roots eased his entrance into the navy. Upon entry, he received Sa Zhenbing’s commendation. This further helped his advancement. His experience in navy and various posts in the front line, and his experience of European inspection gained him better qualifications to lead China’s naval development.

Yan Fu

The naval ideas of Chen Shaokuan were not only based on his early naval education and experience abroad, but also on the writings of local figures of western mind-sets. Yan Fu was one of them. After China’s defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War, Yan Fu looked into western writings and was inspired by American captain Alfred Thayer Mahan’s *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History: 1660-1793*. It was from Mahan that Yan learned the connection between maritime power and national strength and prosperity.⁶⁶ This led Yan to write that the neglect of China’s navy resulted in the country’s decline, quoting ‘China gave up its own advantages, and people showed no interest in knowledge of the sea power, leading to the situation of this century.’⁶⁷ His publication, *Memorial to the Throne on Naval Construction (in Representative of Yang Ni)* illustrated six points with regards to reconstruction:

⁶⁴ Chen Shaokuan, “Hai zhan” (海戰, Naval Battles), edited by Gao Xiaoxing 高曉星 (ed.), *Chen Shaokuan wenji* 陳紹寬文集 (Chen Shaokuan’s Writings) (Beijing: Haichao chubanshe, 1994), pp. 146-157.

⁶⁵ Chen, “Hai zhan,” p.1-2, 409.

⁶⁶ Xianming Wang 王憲明 and Chunliang Geng 耿春亮, “Yan Fu haijun guomeng ji qi dangdai yiyi” 嚴復海軍強國夢及其當代意義 (Yan Fu’s Dream of Strengthening China by Navy and Its Contemporary Significance), *Hebei xuekan* 河北學刊, no. 6 2013, pp. 54-61.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

- (1) only with the control of sea power could a country secure its stability;
- (2) in consolidation of the sea defence, the navy should foster that of the inland rivers;
- (3) the solidification of sea defense worked as the basis of equal diplomacy;
- (4) sea patrol should be strengthened to root out invasions both from inside and outside of China;
- (5) the navy should purchase warships to keep linkage with and provide protection to overseas Chinese;
- (6) there is a need to build a reputed Chinese navy, then seek cooperation with other naval powers.

Yan's theory of sea power did not only refer to the country's control of its neighbouring seas, but also to that of sea traffic and sea trade:

With high aims and far-sighted schemes, the early construction of sea power can well serve as the key for the country to boost its reputation, and for our folks to collect the benefits of navigation. The order of sea traffic will thus be restored and intelligence be promoted.⁶⁸

Though persuasive, Yan Fu's naval construction scheme was asking too much from the Qing court, particularly after its recent war defeat. As a response, he presented four pieces of advice. First was the nurture of talents. Yan claimed that this required time and proposed using more than a decade to complete. Seeing the sharp loss of talents in the war, Yan remarked that '...when talking about naval construction, the fact remain[ed] that China [was] in lack of personnel.'⁶⁹In order to make up for China's lack, he suggested for the authority to establish naval schools in Fujian, Guangdong, Nanjing, etc. and to gradually rebuild its own naval forces. Second, Yan suggested the construction of naval ports. Of this, he wrote: 'Between Zhejiang and Fujian, Sandu, Nanbeiguan, Xiangshan, up to Zhaobao, Danshan, almost any land can be utilised.'⁷⁰ If military ports were built in Southeast China, it would shake Europe and the US, giving the government a grasp of Taiwan as the fortress of Asia.

⁶⁸ Fu Yan 嚴復, *Chouban haijun zougao* 籌辦海軍奏稿 (Memorial of Naval Construction), in Wang Shi 王 棊 (ed.), *Yan Fu ji* 嚴復集 (Collection of Yan Fu's Works) (Beijing: Zhonghua Publication, 1908), p. 258-261.

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ Ibid

Third, Yan wished for the coordination of China's navy. This required great effort as the navy was highly disorganized. Aware that there was a long way to go, Yan wrote: 'If a big move demand[ed] too much, then we shall first move a step forward. If a rapid change is not possible, then we shall go for gradual change.'⁷¹ Yan's final piece of advice was targeted at resolving financial shortage. He knew that enormous funding was no doubt necessary for the training of talents and acquisition of advanced weapons.⁷² However, given the strategic importance of the navy, Yan trusted that the government could not and should not give up on naval construction simply because of financial difficulties. He suggested for naval expenditure to be included in the annual expenditure shared between provinces. Yan also asked the government to consider raising funds by acquiring foreign loans.⁷³ Just when the government was beginning to execute Yan's reform ideas by sending Sa Zhenbing and Zai Xun to inspect Chinese naval ports and European navies, the Qing Court was overthrown. This marked an end to all attempts at naval modernization that were by that time taking place.

After taking office, Chen implemented measures that echoed Yan Fu's earlier proposal. As the Minister of Navy, Chen promoted the navy's importance to national defence in close accordance with Yan Fu's ideas. In the area of naval education, batches of naval officials were sent abroad, and local naval schools were built for talent cultivation. This will be tackled in greater detail in chapter four of the thesis. He also fought for the naval use of the Xiangshan Port, albeit in an unsuccessful bet. Sharing Yan Fu's advocacy of reconstructing China as a sea power, Chen also struggled to gain the support of the Ministry of Finance and Central Military Commission. The existing naval funding was barely enough to sustain the basic operation of the ministry. This, too, will be tackled in chapter four.

European Naval Inspection

⁷¹Ibid, pp.261

⁷² Ibid., pp. 261-264.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 264.

Chen's inspection of European navies lasted for three years. During his stay in Britain, he observed its aviation armaments and naval agenda. After his inspection of British air forces in August 1917, he remarked on Britain's advanced aviation armament, thereafter advising that 'the weight the navy bore for aviation safety cannot be neglected; that cannot be overlooked in the sense of weaponry and national defence.'⁷⁴ It was not hard, in his opinion, to purchase weapons for the air force. Rather, it was hard to nurture talents. China should thus develop its aviation force through bringing up more talents. Investigating into the British naval war-scheme, he emphasized that China should be pre-emptive amid the fierce competition of Chinese aviation commercial rights between Britain and the U.S., quoting: 'If China does not take the lead to construct aviation manufacturing factories, the British people, I am afraid, would seek to grasp this economic right. And if missed, China will be mired.'⁷⁵ His report not only gave an introduction of the British naval facilities, but also compared China's naval conditions with those of Japan's and the United States'.

Chen's report highlighted the opinions of students who had returned from overseas. The report led the Ministry to approve the motion of setting up a Naval School of Airplanes and Submarines in Mawei of Fuzhou.⁷⁶ The engineering school formally opened its doors in February 1918 and training started in April. It was the first school in China to cultivate talents on both areas, and the instructors were mainly students who had studied in Europe and the U.S. After the First World War, Chen launched talks with Britain in hopes of getting some German submarines, but the plan did not push through.⁷⁷ This, however, did not put him off. As the Minister, he kept a close eye on submarines, and finally managed to dispatch naval students to Germany to study submarine technology.

⁷⁴ Li Zhang 張力, "Chen Shaokuan yu Minguo haijun" 陳紹寬與民國海軍 (Chen Shaokuan and Republican China's Navy), in Shixue de chuancheng 史學的傳承 (ed.), *Shixue de chuancheng: Jiang Yongjing jiaoshou bazhi rongqiqing lunwenji* 史學的傳承: 蔣永敬教授八秩榮慶論文集 (The Legacy of Historical Studies: A Collection of Essays for Prof. Jiang Yongjing's Eightieth Anniversary Celebration) (Taipei: Jindai Zhongguo, 2001), p. 221.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Libo Zhang 張立波, "Chen Shaokuan fuying liuxue de zhongyao baogao" 陳紹寬赴英留學期間的重要報告 (Chen Shaokuan's Important Report during his British Inspection), *Yanhuang zhongheng*, no. 3 (2010), pp. 9-10.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Chen also took time to study submarines. In January 1918, he analysed the types and uses of submarines, their structure and equipment, torpedoes and their arsenals, and examined specialized training regarding warships. After visiting the British shipyard, he observed it as: 'the shipyard which collected all the essential warships for the British navy.'⁷⁸ The powers had no plan to shrink their naval scale, and Chen remarked '...the dangers could not be forgotten in peaceful times, and national defence allows no relaxation.'⁷⁹ His report to Sa Zhenbing in December laid out the fact that China was very backward in naval development, and conveyed a strong wish for Sa to reform the Chinese navy. During his time as a Chinese naval officer in Britain, Chen also wrote *Wartime Anecdotes*, which recorded, bimonthly, the progress of the First World War. After the war, Chen attended the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. There, he witnessed the powers' support for Japan over the Shandong issue; this further led him to believe that China needed a strong navy to stand on equal footing with other powers. These events certainly pushed Chen to strive harder for China's naval reforms.

As one of the few naval officers who witnessed first-hand the naval progress of the powers, Chen had a stronger awareness of the influence of planes and submarines on sea wars. Yet, China's instability meant that none of his proposals could be adopted under the Beiyang government.

Magazines

In 1926, the *Naval Magazine* (later renamed as *Naval Periodical* in 1928), was established with the goal of 'collecting the loyal opinions both internal and external under the editing of organized fellows with specialised scientific knowledge for practical uses.'⁸⁰ It emerged as a platform of informative exchange between naval officers, filled with translations of articles of foreign periodicals and proposals to

⁷⁸ Ibid

⁷⁹ Zhang, "Chen Shaokuan yu Minguo Haijun," p. 223.

⁸⁰ Rentang Wang 王仁棠, "Yuan Qi" 緣起(Reason of Starting the Naval Magazine), *Haijun qikan* 海軍期刊, no. 1 (1928), pp.34-36.

reorganise and strengthen naval power. This magazine would act as another driving force behind Chen Shaokuan's naval ideas.

Xia Sunpeng 夏孫鵬(Rear Admiral,1887-1933), for instance, penned an article in the *Naval Periodical*. In it, he argued that the powers had long set eyes on China with ambition, making collaboration between China and foreign powers impractical. According to Xia, cooperation could only be short-term. Under such a circumstance, China had to take the lead in developing its own navy. In a retrospection of the past generation, Xia wrote, the Chinese navy had seen little improvement, because 'since the Republican era, years of civil wars had left the navy untrained.'⁸¹ He further criticised that China did not have enough naval talents, and the navy's weaponry was outdated, quoting 'for seventeen years, no warships was built ... in several years, the navy will die out with no doubts.'⁸² After the founding of the Nanjing government, Xia Sunpeng advised the government to train new talents and manufacture new warships to rejuvenate the navy in four or five years.

In addition, Xia wrote 'Report to the Honourable Friends of Navy.' The piece reviewed the history of the Chinese navy in a negative light, quoting, '[the navy was] used by several warlords, as hounds and falcons, and the navies in the South and in the North were like opponents.'⁸³ Xia proposed for the government to unify the navies and bring an end to factional differences. Comparing the percentage of naval expenses spent within total national military expenses, he found that China 'had no accurate statistics on governmental expenses. From what is known, almost all are drained by the army, and not even one percent goes to the navy.'⁸⁴ In his view, China's naval weapons were those disposed or unwanted products from foreign naval powers; soldiers were undisciplined, talents were idle and naval vessels were left in disrepair. He urged the Chinese government to carry out immediate reforms.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Sunpeng Xia 夏孫鵬, "Zhengdun haijun chuyi" 海軍整頓芻議 (Suggestions on Rectifying the Chinese Navy), *Haijun qikan* 海軍期刊, no. 1 (1928), pp. 41-44.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Sunpeng Xia 夏孫鵬, "Jinggao haijun tongzhi yijianshu" 海軍同志意見書 (A Kind Warning to Friends in the Navy), *Haijun qikan* 海軍期刊, no. 2 (1928), pp. 1-11.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Xia, "Zhengdun haijun chuyi," pp. 41-44.

This was, in fact, the first time for a high-ranking naval officer in active service to openly call for naval reforms. The paper encouraged all officials to work hard, and to devote themselves to the navy; there was much work to be done in rethinking covering how the naval departments should be rehabilitated for an efficient administration. He suggested giving priority to problems of delayed wages and the public fee system.⁸⁶ With this, he penned:

The delayed payment of wages in the navy has been a vexing problem. Some are delayed for months, some for years, and some are overpaid. Soldiers and officials are not paid on time, and in turn the captains have more than they deserved.⁸⁷

In June 1928, Xia proposed to carry out reforms to fight against corruption prevailing among captains. In an article, he mentioned that the monopolizing system initiated in Late Qing was outrageous:

Navy was well disciplined and soldiers were well trained in the late Qing, in which the system was designed for simplicity. At that time, the state was peaceful and there was not much need for mobilization. Even when there were marine inspections or training in the sea, the budget stayed balanced as a whole... But now, this inherited system has become very problematic. When the navy is busy with tasks, the captains have inadequate capital. When the navy is idle, the captains have capital more than they deserve. That is, with no doubt, unreasonable. In these twenty years, amid the fast-changing world, the living standard has been elevating and the price of everything has increased multi-fold. If there is any mobilization, the cost will already exceed the budget; if the navy is ordered to go to further places, the captain will have to pay from his own pocket. Yet a captain cannot empty his abdomen for public service. Therefore they can't help thinking about the methods to fill in one's capital by dipping from another, and to save the fees for paints on the midships and the engineering spaces and all other stuff... the Engine Office and the Dock are responsible for the maintenance,

⁸⁶ Xia wrote a separate article devoted to this.

⁸⁷ Sunpeng Xia 夏孫鵬, "Zhengdun gebu tongjibiao yijianshu" 整頓各部統計表意見書 (Suggestions on Rectifying the Accounts of Different Departments), *Haijun qikan* 海軍期刊, no. 2 (1928), p. 16.

but the captain should be the one reporting this, rather than fixing it, not to say covering the repairing cost... The allowance for social contact, which accounts for the thirty or forty percent of a captain's income, should be retained.'⁸⁸

Though his suggestion did not gain much response, his idea of reorganising the public expense system became another blueprint for Chen's internal reforms in the 1930s.

As Xia had shown, old practices needed to go before China could rebuild its navy. If the existing problems remained unsolved, the navy would stay demoralised. The public expense system, for instance, had to be abandoned. It had already evolved as the breeding ground for greed and corruption. Money that was initially allocated for ship maintenance eventually went into the captains' pockets, with a sharp rise of living expenses and existing problems of wage delay. Xia recorded: 'All goods [had] inflated for a couple of times, and the captains [would] run out of public fees even in cases of slight mobilization, and have to pay at the expense of their salaries when there are more navigations.'⁸⁹ For the sake of their own better living, the captains did not welcome the idea of naval training in fear of losing their own positions. Xia thus proposed to set up a Commission of Naval Materials' Purchase and Department of Naval Materials that would centralise naval expenses. In consideration of the captains' need of salary, he suggested that in addition to wage raise, they should receive independent allowances to lubricate operations.⁹⁰ These ideas would later re-emerge in Chen Shaokuan's reform ideas.

During the same period of late 1920s, other essays emerged on the *Navy Periodical* that elaborated on the supposed missions and responsibilities of the navy. Lü Deyuan 呂德元 Rear Admiral projected that a navy 'should be well equipped and always ready. When an incident breaks out, the Chinese navy should be able to fight.'

⁹¹With Britain as an example, the officer pointed out that naval strength and industrial

⁸⁸ Sunpeng Xia 夏孫鵬, "Feichu gongfei zhi bing choushe haijun cailiao chu" 廢除公費制並籌設海軍材料處 (Abolishing the Public Fee System and Reframing the Resource Allocation of the Navy), *Haijun qikan* 海軍期刊, no. 2 (1928), pp. 32-35.

⁸⁹ Xia, "Feichu gongfeizhi bing yichou haijun cailiaochu," p. 18.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁹¹ Lv Deyuan 呂德元, "Haijun pingshi zhi renwu" 海軍平時之任務 (The Navy's Basic Duties), *Haijun qikan* 海軍期刊, no. 2 (1928), pp. 51-56.

prosperity were interdependent. If China did not develop its own navy, he added: 'the existing sovereignty of maritime territory will no doubt be violated, and the gifted rights of fishing and salt will all be gobbled by other powers.'⁹² Therefore, he wished China would catch up with foreign developments. In his *Naval Training*,⁹³ he set the prioritised condition for this development as 'forging the good nature.'⁹³ Unfortunately, China's unprofessional naval training had become a major loophole of the navy because of the brief training period and the festered atmosphere. Lü advised to boost the training of naval officers and sailors, so as to foster smoother cooperation.

As for the officers who commanded warships and were responsible for all lives on board, Lü believed that they needed to undergo more intensified practical training. Listing a number of courses for naval officers, he advised the government to set up schools of submarine and air forces to cultivate technical talents. He critically pointed out that while adequate military practice was essential to a strong navy, the training methods— put in practice, were flawed: '... Naval officers were in shortage, thus they pushed responsibility of practice onto sergeants or even veterans soldiers... Sergeant and veterans soldiers [had gotten] used to actual combat, but they [did] not have much experience on enlightening soldiers, nor [did] they have the authority to put the outstanding ones in appropriate positions.'

In order to combat the lack of discipline, Lü suggested that any soldier who misbehaved should be expelled from the navy. For naval officers, he urged that '... naval officers must be well-trained since they [were] the ones who ensured the safety of naval vessels and soldiers... Field exercise [was] the only way to nurture a mature naval officer. The practice regulation [was] detailed, but it showed nothing more than orientation. The key [was] to put regulations into real practice.'⁹⁴ He further developed his education plan on soldiers and officers with discussion on establishing different naval schools and related curricula.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³ Lv Deyuan 呂德元, "Haijun xunlian pian" 海軍訓練篇 (On Naval Training), *Haijun qikan* 海軍期刊, no. 2 (1928), p. 21.

⁹⁴ Ibid, pp.22-25.

Li Daozhang 李道彰, in another example, translated an American article entitled 'The Duties of Navy' for the periodical. The article highlighted the significance of the British navy as having, '...over the century, avoided a couple of gigantic wars for the country, and its superiority had always acted as the staunch backbone of trade. Such trading protectionism is indeed the best tactic.'⁹⁵ Though it did not reveal how China should develop its navy, the author had alluded to the idea that China should learn from Britain to push its trade by strengthening the Chinese navy for strategic purposes.

Other naval officers also noticed the world was in a rush to naval development, and came up with the same conclusion that China needed to hasten in this sense. Zhang Zeshan 張澤善 Commander , for instance, stated that with so many advantageous seaports, it should not be hard for China to build its navy. The U.S., according to Zhang, which was already allocating a good amount of resources to develop naval weaponry and warships, was still determined to advance and compete for naval superiority with Britain, the world's top naval power.⁹⁶ The essay shed light on the future naval construction of China, with a comparison of strengths among naval powers including France, Italy and Germany.

Zhang further revealed that China had only spent as little as one per cent of its military budget on its navy. He asked China to review its allocation of resources and invest more into the navy. The writer further pointed out that battleships were fading out, while airplanes and chemical weapons were becoming prominent. The low cost of the latter two might allow China to participate into the naval-building race. Amid the fast-changing aviation technology, Zhang suggested that China should pay attention on the coordination of the navy and the air force. During his inspection, he noticed that chemical weapons were progressing rapidly, and thus he suggested the government to consider the defence of such chemical weapons before the construction of warships. The retrospection of the navy's weight in history also provided thoughts for future direction.

⁹⁵ Daozhang Li 李道彰, "Haijun zhi zhize 海軍之職責" (Responsibilities of the Navy), *Haijun qikan* 海軍期刊, no. 5 (1929), pp. 25-30.

⁹⁶ Zeshan Zhang 張澤善, "Jinri shijie haijun zhi zhenjianshe" 今日世界海軍之真建設 (Construction of Navies in Today's World), *Haijun qikan* 海軍期刊, no. 3 (1928), pp. 41-59.

Zhang argued that the military port was a core element of naval power. Exemplifying Britain, the U.S., and Japan, the paper illustrated that military ports were the cornerstones of a navy, he concluded: ‘the defence of overseas territory and protection of main trading routes were the only jobs of the navy. A navy with capacity to carry out such duties is deemed as a sufficient navy. At the very least, it should be deterring to other countries, so that they dare not to brave the dangers of invading.’⁹⁷ His analysis duly explained the uses of capital ships and all other kinds of warships, and clarified the relationship between warships and naval strength.

Another contribution that Zhang made to the periodical was ‘Training Talents is the Top Urgency of the Navy.’ Zhang pointed out the urgency of renewing national defence through naval development:

Observed from the past, we are moving faster and closer than ever to wars, and in this occasion where the whole nation rushes for survival, we have no time for naval talents training... That is all very clear: to prepare for national disaster, one cannot leave it to the last minute. For those who bear the responsibility of maritime defence, it is obliged to prepare for the worst yet to come.⁹⁸

Comparing the naval training mode among Britain, Japan and the U.S., the article argued that though the three were different in methods, the emphasis on navy was basically the same, and China should not ease up on its naval training programme.

They also noticed that the root of navy lies in naval education, and thus talents should be the priority. For example, Zheng Yingfu’s 鄭穎孚 Lieutenant Commander, ‘Brief Notes On Naval Progression’ offered insights on the development of flying submarines, and stressed on the importance of naval spiritual education and the expansion of enrolment as ways to attract talents, ‘... First, the naval education should go beyond academic theories to spiritual field. Second, naval students should be

⁹⁷ Zeshan Zhang 張澤善, “Ying Mei Ri sanguo junjian shili zhi bijiao” 英美日三國軍艦實力之比較 (Comparison of Naval Strength between the U.S., Britain and Japan), *Haijun qikan* 海軍期刊, no. 7 (1928), pp. 19-30.

⁹⁸ Zeshan Zhang 張澤善, “Xunlian rencai wei haijun yaowu” 訓練人才為海軍要務 (The Importance of Training for the Navy), *Haijun qikan* 海軍期刊, no. 8 (1929), pp. 47-56.

enrolled from nationwide secondary schools. The remarkable improvement in foreign education was the result of daily scientific research, which could be adapted to wartime needs, and also from past experiences, which means they could be refined for the better.⁹⁹ It was stated that China had to dig out talents for emergency purposes.

Zhuang Yunzhong 莊允中 also translated American articles to Chinese and published in the *Navy Periodical*. In his translation, Zhuang revealed that the navy was an essential tool for keeping a consistent foreign policy because international laws were not respected by the powers. Military strength was only a bargaining chip in diplomacy, as shown by Germany, who threatened to rearm itself if the others were not to reduce their armaments after its admission into the League of Nations. For Zhuang, strength was equated by military power, quoting: 'It [was] clear that no conferences will have a good outcome without solid strength.'¹⁰⁰ Although the article did not indicate how China should develop its navy, the author was apparently passionate about naval development and the training of naval talents. He also pointed out that given China's air force development was still far from mature, the navy appeared as the only option in fighting distant wars.

Chen himself also published in the *Naval Periodical* to stress the necessity of setting up a Ministry of Navy. Despite the international disarming conferences held after the First World War, the total tonnage of naval power continued to rise all over the world. Half of China was exposed to the sea and it was argued that there was an urgent need for a competent navy in order to solidify its defence line and safeguard itself from foreign threat.¹⁰¹ He suggested that 'if China [were] to build up its navy without an independent organ, it would cause the internal inconvenience of command, externally, [China] will lose its dignity, and thus the room for actions [would] be very

⁹⁹ Yingfu Zheng 鄭穎孚, "Duiyu haijun jinxing zhi guanjian" 對於海軍進行之管見 (Notes on Naval Progression), *Haijun qikan* 海軍期刊, no. 5 (1928), pp. 81-84.

¹⁰⁰ Yunzhong Zhuang 莊允中, "Haijun wei guanche waijiao zhengce zhi biyao zhuli" 海軍為貫徹外交政策之必要助力 (The Role of Navy in Asserting Diplomacy), *Haijun qikan* 海軍期刊, no. 10 (1928), pp. 31-36.

¹⁰¹ Shaokuan Chen 陳紹寬, *Tan haijun you shebu de biyao* 談海軍有設部的必要 (Necessity of Establishing the Ministry of Navy), in Gao, *Chen Shaokuan wenji*, pp. 2-3.

limited.¹⁰² This was the first passage Chen wrote to press the Nationalist government for the establishment of a Ministry. After a series of twists and turns, the government finally formed the Ministry in April 1929. Institutionally, the Ministry had a relatively independent status.

Chen highlighted the urgent need to build up the essence of China's navy in national defence. According to Chen, it was rare to find a country that did not emphasize its sea power, or did not devote to developing its own navy. He pointed out, that in some cases, the navy was allocated more weight than the army. This was because 'a country without a navy [was] just as if to place no guards in a home'.¹⁰³ As such, other countries could invade and rob it with ease. For national defence, China must control firmly its sea power, which relied on the capability of the navy. With proper control of sea power, industrial and commercial prosperity was bound to follow. Citing Britain and Japan as examples, Chen wrote: 'why these countries prospered was because of their strong navies. The classification of first-ranked country, second-ranked country and third-ranked country is not a matter of the vastness of its territory, but a matter of the quality and quantity of its naval armaments.'¹⁰⁴

In the article, Chen dismissed existing arguments that disparaged the navy by listing the total tonnage of Britain's and Japan's naval forces. In contrary to the powers' determination to develop their navies, China's mistake at neglecting naval development would inevitably lead to gradual loss of territory. Chen concluded that a modernized navy must be built as soon as possible to regain China's power, politically, economically and diplomatically, on land and at sea.¹⁰⁵ Since taking office, he ceaselessly promoted the importance of the navy to national defence. Chen's two essays laid out his thoughts of associating naval defence with national defence. More than that, they declared the foundation of his naval theory.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Shaokuan Chen 陳紹寬, "Shijie shang you buyao haijun de guojia m" a 世界上有不要海軍的國家嗎 (There Are No Countries that Do Not Need a Navy,' Gao, *Chen Shaokuan wenji*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 4, 7.

As shown above, there were voices within China's navy that called for reforms. They supported a boost of naval capacity and overall image through changing internal practices and strengthening talents and equipment. The officials compared China to other naval powers in terms of naval structure and uses of warships, hoping that China could learn from those examples, particularly through foreign education. Initially, Chen Shaokuan had no power to realize the various suggestions and launch a proper reform; he waited until he was promoted as the Minister when he finally incorporated the above proposals of reforming the public fee system, sending students abroad, and restoring naval discipline.

Du Xigui's Naval Inspection, 1929

After the establishment of the Ministry of Navy, the Ministry hired four experienced senior naval officers who began their naval careers in the Late Qing, namely Sa Zhenbing, Li Dingxin, Lin Jianzhang and Du Xigui.¹⁰⁶ They, however, did not work as a team: Li Dingxin died shortly after his appointment, Sa and Lin had limited participation and Du Xigui was left as the only one to inspect foreign navies in 1929 and thereafter, propose reform plans.

In October 1929, the Ministry pointed out that China's naval development was constrained by political chaos and was unable to catch up with foreign naval developments, which started to speed up in the last few years. A proposal was sent from the Ministry to the government, suggesting for Du Xigui to travel abroad.¹⁰⁷ The government soon permitted the request. Du and five colleagues went on to inspect the navies of foreign powers, including Japan, Britain, the United States and Germany. Upon their return, they compiled an inspection report. With twelve chapters and three hundred thousand words, the report outlined conversations with brasses in different countries and further pinpointed how their ideas can be adopted for China's naval resurgence. It was this very report that would later become Chen's blueprint for China's naval modernization in the 1930s.

¹⁰⁶ Chuanbiao Liu 劉傳標, *Zhongguo jindai haijun zhiguanbiao* 中國近代海軍職官表 (Official Table of Modern Chinese Naval Staff)(Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2004), p. 172.

¹⁰⁷ Haijun bu gongbao shi 海軍部公報室 (ed.), *Haijun gongbao diwuqi* 海軍公報第五期 (Naval Gazette, vol. 5) (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe, 2015), pp. 119-120.

The following section focuses on Du Xigui's report. Chapters one to four summarised the importance of the navy and identified recent trends in naval development. According to Du, Japan and Britain were well equipped and strategically accurate: Japan realized its goal of defeating China and formed an alliance with Britain to boost its diplomatic status. As for Britain, its superior navy crushed the invasive French united fleets and secured its advantages in the seizure of its Asian colonies later on.¹⁰⁸ Chapter two offered a contrast between China and other naval powers; it was concluded that the power of the Chinese navy was only equivalent to that of a weak country.¹⁰⁹

Chapters six to eleven consisted of a detailed record of Du's foreign inspections, citing Japan, the US, Britain, and Germany as examples. Japan, in Du's view, carried a strong naval spirit, as seen from his conversation with Tōgō Heihachirō, a renowned Japanese admiral.¹¹⁰ Impressed by the spirit of loyalty and patriotism to the Tenno (天皇; Japanese Emperor) within the naval organs and universities, Du was convinced that such a practice should be implanted in China. He wrote in detail about education in Japan's naval universities, and suggested that China should build naval schools to cultivate talents. In the final part of chapter six, Du associated Japan's increased naval spending during the Meiji Restoration was a response to invasion.¹¹¹ This was a reminder that China needed to prepare for the worst and promote naval modernization as soon as possible.

After Japan, Du travelled to the U.S. for further inspection. This time, the focus shifted to the development of airplanes and chemical weapons. The American Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Navy pinpointed the US emphasis on the collaboration between airplanes and the navy. In fact, the function of the Deputy Minister was to monitor naval airplanes and foster the cooperation between the navy and other

¹⁰⁸ Xigui Du 杜錫珪, *Kaocha liqiang haijun baogao shu* 考察列強海軍報告書 (Report of Foreign Naval Inspection) (n.p., 1929), pp. 34-35.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

departments. The Bureau of Aeronautics was established under the navy in 1921 to administer airplanes that collaborated with the navy. From the US' stress on chemical weapons unrestricted by international treaties, Du was convinced China should also apply chemical weapons to strengthen the navy and send students to the U.S. to learn about chemical weapons and aviation technology.¹¹² During his stay, he inspected the American military ports, battleships, submarines, seaplane tenders and Marine Corps and was impressed by the American technological advancement.

Du then headed for Britain. He discovered that as a spearheading naval power, Britain was renowned for its well-disciplined navy. Du suggested for the conscription system and the promotion system of naval officers to be brought into China. He believed that this would be effective in eradicating the malpractice of China's nepotism.¹¹³ During his visit, British high-ranking naval officials questioned how China could resolve the prevailing problem of pirates. Du answered that he would ask the government to send its navy and wipe out the pirates as a foundation for naval modernization. The British also expressed their willingness to host Chinese naval students in Britain, so as to strengthen China against the pirates. From this, Du realized that it was beneficial to clear the pirates not only for China, but it would also help with British commerce.¹¹⁴ This was because the British government had been spending large sums of money in fighting pirates in the China seas to ensure its own commercial interests. Britain thus hoped China to take on its own pirates to free Britain of the financial burden.

After visiting Britain, Du arrived in Germany. The inspection was aimed at tracing the development of German submarines and chemical weapons. Despite the severe restrictions on German armament laid down by the Treaty of Versailles, Germany still saw great improvement in military technology.¹¹⁵ Although the Treaty restricted Germany from developing its own air force, the civilian aviation was functioning beyond its boundary. The Treaty further made sure that Germany could not set up an

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 319.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 408-414.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 470-474.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 555.

aeronautics schools and test sites. German flyers, however, were secretly ordered by the government to carry out diving, bombing and inspection practices. Even though the country was defeated in the First World War, Germany remained prominent in the nurturing of naval talents and development of chemical weapons. The coordination between the German air force and the navy was formidable.¹¹⁶ These convinced Du that China needed to purchase submarines from Germany and train their talents there. Nonetheless, such suggestions were overlooked, and the purchase took place only in 1936.

Seizing the opportunity of being overseas, Du managed to foster cooperation with naval powers in a bid to strengthen the Chinese navy. In chapter five of his writing, entitled 'Strategies to China's Naval Resurgence,' Du argued that the first step was to set up a unified government. He understood that it was only under a unified government that unification of the navy could be made possible.¹¹⁷ The Japanese militants suggested for China to unify its naval forces, build military ports and then purchase and construct submarines.¹¹⁸ On the other hand, the British militants offered suggestions to develop military ports. With convenient traffic and military ports built by skilled Germans, Du pointed out that a restoration for China's naval power was not far off.

The German militants suggested that China needed to pay more attention to submarines if it were to fend off foreign threats. That was, if China could not afford to build her own, purchase of small submarines could still be made.¹¹⁹ Du also concluded from his visits that although Qingdao was a good port, it required great effort to rebuild. Instead, Xiangshan Port stood in an even better geographical position, and thus was selected as China's military port.¹²⁰ He also called for the promotion of naval education, not just to dispatch students to study overseas, but also to set up naval schools in China to educate captains regarding strategy. More importantly, lower-

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 555-559.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

ranking and middle-ranking officers needed further training to better comprehend orders and act with obedience and discipline.¹²¹ On weaponry, Du suggested a ten-year plan for China to build cruisers, destroyers, mines and submarines, divided into two periods of five years. As for funding, he suggested for the government to negotiate with foreign banking groups.¹²² The minister accepted most of Du's suggestions, but the realities of financial hardship and resistance from the government withheld further measures from being taken.

Through the report, the Minister acquired a more thorough understanding of the latest foreign naval development. He was inspired to strengthen the navy by a series of reforms. However, without the government's support, he could not at all realize the unification of Chinese navies, nor the construction of warships in the scale that Du had envisioned. But the report was useful for pointing out China's weaknesses. It revealed that while Britain, the United States and Japan allocated thirty per cent of its military expenses to naval development, China only invested a meagre one per cent. Even Germany, whose military development was restricted by the Treaty of Versailles, was allocating far more resources on naval modernization than China.¹²³ Therefore, China's naval strength was not comparable with other powers,' and China needed to invest heavily on her navy if progress was to be expected. Du also suggested that China needed to reform her naval command structure; the unification of provincial navies was, for him, the prerequisite for China's naval revival. He suggested that the position of a naval general staff, responsible for the planning and execution of national defence strategy, should be established following Japan's model. China's coastal areas also had to be divided into three regions, each with its own military command organization as according to the Japanese naval model.¹²⁴

Du's report was, as we saw, a meticulous observation of the latest naval developments of foreign countries. Without sufficient knowledge about China's financial difficulties, he offered unrealistic suggestions. The Nationalist government then was not a unified government, for warlords still had a tight grasp over regional

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 218-219.

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. 214, 218.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-68.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 185-187.

military and economy. Under such a divided circumstance, the central government relied heavily on bonds, which further disrupted its financial stability in the long run. Throughout the years, the government's total income could only cover eighty per cent of its total expenses. The warlords and the expansion of Communism forced the government to put most of its capital on the army, then the air force, and lastly, the navy in targeting internal unrest. The proposal to purchase seaplane tenders costing nine million US dollars, five times the budget of the navy, could only be a nonsensical proposal.

Although Du's report carried impractical advice, it remained useful for his predecessors and was an ambitious step to reconstructing China as a stronger maritime power. After he became aware that his ideas were impractical in view of China's financial difficulties, Du urged for the establishment of the Commission of Naval Development, inviting officials from the Ministry of Finance to sit down and discuss possible solutions to the problem.

Conclusion

Before he was appointed Minister, Chen already had had much experience with naval issues. His experience outside of China exposed him to the latest in naval development, leading him to believe that China needed to construct its own warships and develop its own naval industry. He further advocated the enhancement of naval training for new talents. On building China's own warships, he specifically upheld the proposal of developing submarines and naval aeroplanes, in reference to Du Xigui's report. Many of his thoughts can be rooted back to foreign naval ideas. I will associate this with the reforms Chen proposed and struggled to execute after he became Minister in 1932.

Chapter Four

Chen Shaokuan's Naval Modernization Attempts, 1932-1937

After Chen was appointed as the Minister of Navy in 1932, a series of naval reforms were carried out. These included a number of ideas that were tackled in his naval ideology, including the construction of warships, restoration of naval discipline, unification of navies, and overseas training. However, the result was disappointing. Chen's reforms failed to turn China into a powerful naval country. This chapter will be devoted to discussing Chen's naval reforms and their effectiveness.

Chen's Efforts

Unification of the Navies

In 1929, the Nationalist government delegated Du Xigui to inspect overseas navies. Upon his return he wrote with his delegates, the 'Report of Inspecting Foreign Naval Strength' 考察列強海軍報告書, in which there was a specific chapter on ways to revive the Chinese navy. In one of his suggestions, Du pointed out that the Ministry of Navy needed to first prioritize the unification of the national naval power before planning other developments.¹²⁵ Influenced by this report, Chen, upon taking office, immediately worked on the unification of the national navy as the premise of constructing a stronger fleet.

The Regional Navies

Although the Central Fleet was willing to cooperate with the Northeast Fleet, the latter expressed little interest in the idea of collaboration. Chen wanted the Northeast Fleet to nominate a high-ranking naval officer as the permanent secretary of the Ministry, to be officially appointed by the Central government.¹²⁶ Unfortunately,

¹²⁵ Du, *Kaocha lieqiang haijun baogaoshu*, p. 185.

¹²⁶ "Chen Shaokuan zhi tanhua: Haijunbu jiang zao gengda junjian, Changwu cizhang qing dongbei baojian" 陳紹寬之談話：海軍部將造更大軍艦 常務次長請東北保薦 (Dialogue with Chen Shaokuan: The Ministry of Navy Would Construct Bigger Naval Vessels, Permanent Secretary Should Be Nominated by the Northeast Squadron, *Shen Bao* 申報, 10th June 1929, p.4.

neither the Northeast Fleet nor the Guangdong Fleet had any intentions to cooperate with the Central Fleets. Consequently, about twenty per cent of the positions in the Ministry were left vacant. This left Fukienese officials to fill up the majority of the positions in the Ministry of Navy.¹²⁷ According to the 'Service List of the Ministry of Navy,' seventy-six per cent of naval officers in the Ministry were from Fujian.¹²⁸ Apart from this, the Fukienese continued to dominate other sectors of China's navy; they occupied most of the Fuzhou Naval College, where 150 out of the 170 graduates from 1928 to 1937 were Fukienese. In addition, most of the naval students sent to study aboard were also Fukienese.¹²⁹ The Central Fleet, supposedly neutral, became tainted with strong provincial characteristics. Dominated by a clique of Fukienese, critics blasted the Central Fleet for degenerating as a Fukienese navy.¹³⁰

a. Northeast Navy

In the same year, the Northeast Navy accepted the title of 'Third Fleet' in order to stay independent from the Ministry of Navy. Relying on the support of Zhang Xueliang 張學良, the Northeast warlord, the Northeast Navy was placed under the Commander of the Northeast Border Defence Office 東北邊防司令長官公署 and was stationed at Qingdao. After the 918 Incident in 1931, the Northeast fell into the hand of Japan, and the navy retreated to Qingdao, where it waned under financial difficulty. Ling Xiao 凌霄, a high-ranking general of the Northeast Navy, thus suggested Shen Honglie to seize Qingdao as a solid source of income. Shen rejected but Ling was not ready to accept this. Together with other generals, Ling Xiao sent an invitation to Shen Honglie to deliver a speech to the navy, but upon his arrival, Ling's entourage arrested him and compelled him to cooperate. Shen rejected and Ling Xiao kept him arrested in Taiqing Hall; soon after, Zhang Xueliang would receive a telegraph, signed by Shen and asking

¹²⁷ Gazette Room of Ministry of Navy 海軍部公報室 (ed.), *Haijun gongbao diyiqi* 海軍公報第一期 (Naval Gazette, vol.1) (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe, 2015), 84.

¹²⁸ Hai junbu 海軍部, "Haijunbu ji suoshu jiguan guanbing jiguan biao" 海軍部暨所屬機關官兵籍貫表 (Graph of Original Place of Soldiers and Officials in the Ministry of Navy), in Yin and Li, *Guojia tushuguan minguo junshi dangan chubian dibace*, p. 487.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 616.

¹³⁰ "Haijun bu: Qing jiuban Gao Youtang" 海軍部: 請究辦高友唐 (Ministry of Navy: Investigating Gao Youtang), *Shen Bao* 申報, 14 July 1932, p.4

for resignation. Ling Xiao replaced him but other generals had already launched a mission to rescue Shen. Shen was freed and appointed as the Mayor of Qingdao. He dismissed Ling Xiao and his team, returning peace and harmony.¹³¹ This, however, would not last long.

Shen's rescue served as a ground for the birth of another crisis. Under China's long-corrupt system, the admirals who had contributed to his rescue expected great rewards. After he took office as Qingdao's Mayor, Shen refused to appoint them as municipal officer; he maintained that military and political affairs should be independent from each other. This annoyed the admirals. In the meantime, two opposing blocs within the Northeast Navy emerged—the former Bohai Fleet and the graduates from the School of Coastal Guard (航警海校). Shen assigned higher positions to members of the Bohai Fleet, igniting dissatisfaction from the latter. This made Shen even more unpopular than he already was.¹³² In June 1933, Feng Zhichong 馮志冲, the captain of the Zhenhai ship, attempted to assassinate Shen under Guan Jizhou 關繼周's instruction. Shi Fusheng 史復生, the adjutant, knocked Guan down into the sea. Shen executed Shi and declared him liable for attempted murder.¹³³

Worried they might get caught in the factional conflict, the mid and low-ranking generals of three ships, 'Haiqi,' 'Haichen,' and 'Zhaohu,' denied their captains from boarding, and steered southward from Qingdao to seek refuge from the Guangdong Navy. In August 1933, Shen sent a telegraph to Chiang Kai-Shek, and to Wang Jingwei, asking for resignation. The government permitted him to resign as the Commander of the Northeast Squadron, but kept him as the Mayor of Qingdao. As for all other ships in Qingdao, they were placed under the command of the Ministry of Navy.¹³⁴ The Ministry sent Zeng Yiding 曾以鼎, the Commander of the Second Fleet, to Beijing after the departure of the three ships for reception of the Northeast Navy. Nonetheless, even with such an opportunity at hand, the Ministry could not incorporate the Northeast Navy.

¹³¹ Jinlan Zeng 曾金蘭, "Shen Honglie yu Dongbei haijun" 沈鴻烈與東北海軍 (Shen Honglie and Northeast Squadron) Master's diss. (Taipei: Sili donghai daxue lishi yanjiusuo, 1992), pp. 168-171.

¹³² Su, *Zhonghua minguo haijun shishi rizhi*, p. 519.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Zeng, "Shen honglie yu dongbei haijun," p. 175.

Right after receiving permission to resign, Shen began handling the aftermath of his resignation as the Northeast Naval Commander. He delivered a farewell speech to all naval officers, encouraging them to be loyal to the country and to be sincere and solid. All captains of the navy sent telegraphs to Chiang and Wang, reporting with details the three ships' betrayal, and stating that their misbehaviours did not represent that of the Northeast Navy. After that, the government issued an order for the integration of the Northeast Navy into the Ministry of Navy. In response, Xie Gangzhe, the Chief of Staff of the Northeast Navy, led other officers to send another telegraph to the two leaders with a vow to unite with Shen Honglie. Their solidarity prompted Chiang Kai-shek to reconsider whether the Northeast Navy should have been placed under the command of the Ministry. The government finally reorganized it into the Third Fleet, and appointed Xie Gangzhe as the Northeast Naval Commander. As such, the Ministry of Navy could not control the Northeast Navy as it was governed by the Beiping branch of the Military Affairs Commission, and was parallel to the Ministry.¹³⁵

b. Cantonese Navy

The Ministry also did not have any control over the Cantonese Navy. In May 1931, Chen Jitang 陳濟棠, a Cantonese warlord, attempted to bring the Cantonese Navy under the command of the First Army. This was contested by Cantonese Naval Commander Chen Ce 陳策. He imposed martial law within his navy, and later escaped to Hong Kong. Regardless of Chen Ce's opposition, Chen Jitang dissolved the Cantonese Naval Headquarter and put Chen Ce in the position of senior consultant.¹³⁶ The gradual heightening of their conflicts finally evolved into an in-house military fight, which lasted for three weeks.

During their time, some captains of the Cantonese Navy travelled to Hong Kong for temporary refuge. However, the Hong Kong government ordered the twelve captains to demilitarize themselves and handed them back to the Chinese government. In July 1932, the Military Affairs Commission ordered the Ministry of Navy to take over the ships, and thus the Ministry sent Wang Shouyan 王壽延, the commander of

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 522.

¹³⁶ Su, *Zhonghua minguo haijun shishi*, p. 490.

torpedo guerrillas at Xiamen to complete the task. Just when he arrived at Hong Kong and began the dialogue for assumption of control of the vessels, Chen Jitang repeatedly telegraphed the central government and the Ministry, requesting for the warships to be commanded by the Cantonese government for coastal defence. The government approved his request and the Cantonese Navy since then was in command of the ships. Even though the Cantonese Navy was weak and feeble, the Ministry had no control of the fleet.

In July 1933, the three ships from the Northeast Navy, '*Haizhen*,' '*Haiqi*,' and '*Zhaohe*,' requested the Cantonese authority to incorporate them under three conditions: first, to pay the unpaid three-month salaries of its personnel; second, to pay the officers' monthly wages on the standards of the Ministry, and thirdly, to maintain the status quo of all officers' positions. Chen Jitang accepted all their demands and permitted them to stay at Guangdong. To appease the incomers, he promoted Northeast naval officers: Jiang Xiyuan 姜西園 was appointed as Major General, and other officers received awards. However, their relationship deteriorated in just two years. In April 1935, Chen Jitang, self-appointed as Commander-in-Chief, cancelled the Headquarter of the Cantonese Navy and put it under the control of the Headquarter of the First Army. Chen appointed Jiang Xiyuan as the deputy Commander. Unsatisfied with such arrangements, the members of the three ships took the lead to leave Guangdong. The '*Zhaohe*' warship could not follow as its turbine became dysfunctional; '*Haiqi*' and '*Haizhen*' entered the waters of Hong Kong after breaking through the warlords' line of defense. In August 1935, the Nationalist government ordered the two ships to be administered under the Third Fleet.¹³⁷ Between 1932 and 1935, the Ministry had no control of the Cantonese Navy.

c. Ministry's Proposal

As the Minister of Navy, Chen Shaokuan proposed for the unification of the navy. In 1934, the Ministry submitted the National Defensive Scheme to the Military Affairs Commission, in which he pointed out that 'the separation of navies is not only

¹³⁷ Ibid., 562.

inconsistent with the unification of the country, but is also disastrous for fighting in the sea.’ To resolve this, he formulated the following plan:

1. All military orders should be unified under the highest military commission. That was, to relocate the Cantonese Navy from the warlord, the Qingdao Navy from the Beiping Military Affairs Commission, and the Yangtze Navy from the Ministry of Navy under the Commissioner of the Military Affairs Commission.
2. All of the rankings of the naval officers should be unified under the highest military commission, which would oversee personnel changes of the naval officers of the Cantonese Navy, Qingdao Navy and the Ministry of Navy to the Ministry of Civil Service (銓敘廳) of the Military Affairs Commission.
3. All naval supplies should be unified under the highest military administration. That was, the chief accountant should be elected by the Military Affairs Commission, and appointed by the Directorate General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, and should permanently stay in the Ministry of Navy to manage the military supplies of the three navies.¹³⁸

This proposal was inspired by Du Xigui’s inspection report. In a part of his report, entitled ‘The Way to Resurgence of the Chinese Navy,’ Du advised that all Chinese fleets should be under unified command, quoting:

A meeting was held this year over the unification of navies, and though fleets from the First to the Fourth were reorganized in nominal terms... the unification in practical is still far from realization. As the prime of Chinese naval strengthening lies on absolute unification, both in nominal and practical terms, one should fight for this with all possible means.¹³⁹

However, this report never came to fruition.

Construction of Warships

¹³⁸ Yang, *Zhonghua minguo haijun shiliao*, pp. 268-269.

¹³⁹ Xigui Du 杜錫珪, *Kaocha liqiang haijun baogao shu* 考察列強海軍報告書 [Report of Foreign Naval Inspection], p.185.

Chen was committed to the construction of naval vessels. This can be traced back long before he was nominated as Minister. In December 1928, he pointed out in his proposal of naval expansion that China was inferior to other naval powers, writing,

... the Qing court did not bestir and thus the navy was not consolidated for a long time. After 1911 Revolution, warlords became rulers of the country, but again they did not care for national defence. Now that not only the naval strength is weak and equals to only one-tenth of that Britain and United States, but most of the naval vessels are also aged and weapons are outdated. [I am] anxious about the situation... We have a stretched coastline with many harbours, which brings China under serious threats of foreign invasion and pirates. If we do not construct new vessels, the existing fleets would be too weak and too few for sailing. We hereby request for constructing four destroyers, two torpedo boats, three cruisers and a seaplane tender.¹⁴⁰

In his proposal, Chen intended to get rid of pirates in the China seas before constructing a navy for defence against Japanese naval invasion. Unfortunately the government did not give any response to his proposal.

In the launching ceremony of the '*Min Quan*' gunboat in 1930, Chen openly reiterated his vision:

... Anyone with objective judgement should understand China's crisis. China would not be able to fend off foreign invasion and survive in crises unless the government prioritizes naval construction. Thus, we, naval officers composed a proposal on the purchase of destroyers, cruisers and torpedo boats to the government last year, but due to serious financial difficulties, the Nationalist government, with thorough understanding of naval importance for coastal defence, did little for naval modernization.¹⁴¹

Chen stressed on the grim progress of naval modernization as only three gunboats had been constructed since the establishment of the Nationalist Government, namely '*Xian*

¹⁴⁰ Shaokuan Chen 陳紹寬, "Tiaochen kuochong haijun chengwe" 條陳擴充海軍呈文 (Petition for Naval Expansion), in Gao, *Chen Shaokuan wenji*, pp. 7-8.

¹⁴¹ Shaokuan Chen 陳紹寬, 'Zai "Minquan" hao paojian xiashui dianlishang de kaihuici he daci' 在「民權」號炮艦下水典禮上的開會辭和答辭 (Meeting Speech and Reply during the Launching Ceremony of Gunboat '*Min Quan*') in Gao, *Chen Shaokuan wenji*, pp. 20-21.

Ning, *'Yong Nü'* and *'Min Quan.'* Still he was optimistic about the future; he rooted especially in Chiang's speech, saying that 'Our navy would act in accordance with Chiang Kai-shek's speech, to construct 600,000 placement of navy within fifteen years. At the end we will have our coastal defence strengthened and unequal treaties abolished...'¹⁴²

Chiang delivered a two-part speech on naval modernization plan in 1931. The first part proposed the purchase of cruisers, chasers, torpedo boats and destroyers from foreign powers and to bring them to one of the three naval ports, Jiaozhou Bay, Xiangshan port and Dapeng Bay. In the second part, Chiang suggested the immediate launch of naval reconstruction through China's military industry, so as to build a powerful navy that could free China from invasion. The full load displacement of the Chinese navy should 600,000 tonnes (that was seventy per cent of that of foreign powers), comprising of three aircraft carriers, ten big cruisers, twenty small and practicing cruisers, fifty destroyers and fifty torpedo boats.¹⁴³

Chiang's speech of developing 600,000 tonnes of navy ignited the interest of foreign shipyards, and attracted them to tender for the construction of enormous ships for China. British and Japanese shipyards fiercely competed for this opportunity. Chen remarked:

After the inspection of foreign naval construction, the authority found out that if there was to be any significance, the nation had to put the expansion of navy at top urgency. Therefore, Chiang Kai-shek, then Chairman of the Nationalist government and Commander-in-Chief of the army, the navy and the air force, admonished that a 600,000-ton navy should be in place within fifteen years. This was widespread in foreign countries; thus the foreign shipyards came all at once to bid for fleet

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Shaokuan Chen 陳紹寬, "Hai zheng guanxi guofang" 海政關係國防 (Naval Administration Related to National Defence), quoted in Gao, *Chen Shaokuan wenji*, p. 64.

construction projects. The navy also has a relevant, concrete proposal for the central government to implement...¹⁴⁴

When the Ministry wanted to build a small-scaled cruiser with 3,000 tonnes, many shipyards bid to handle the project. The Japanese Harima Shipyard, aware that the Ministry intended to order new ships, immediately tendered and submitted relevant reports and designs, and started lobbying in the Chinese official circles in diplomatic ways through the Embassy of Japan in China. Meanwhile, Britain also expressed a keen interest in bidding for the Ministry's initiatives. Colonel H. T. Baillie Grohman, British consultant in the Ministry, fiercely struggled to seize the project for the British shipyards, not only for the sake of bringing income to the shipyards facing financial difficulties, but also for strengthening Anglo-Chinese military cooperation.

Who received the job all depended on manufacturing cost. Vickers, a British shipyard, offered two light cruisers which displacement of 6,000 tons at 1.5 million pounds. As the Chinese Republican government was already struggling to pay the balance of many purchased vessels, Britain was doubtful about the economic sufficiency of the Chinese government, and thus set rigorous conditions of payment. They required China to deposit all the expected costs in advance. China could not comply with such demands and finally relinquished the deal. In comparison, the cost proposed by the Japanese Harima Shipyard was lower, amounting to 4.32 million yen (it went up to 4.5 million yen for the construction of seaplanes, nearly 4.24 million Chinese dollars). The Japanese proposal not only provided an expected cost lower than the British one by about thirty per cent, but also allowed China to pay instalments without deposits. The Chinese Ministry of Finance guaranteed that they would bear the construction fee of '*Ninghai*,' saying

...since the government was strained in capital, all European shipyards insisted that they would not bid without cash payment and deposits. Only this Japanese Harima Shipyard, through the friendly assistance from both sides, shared a similar view with us on the terms of payment. In the meantime, Minister Song of Finance even

¹⁴⁴ Shaokuan Chen 陳紹寬, "Ninghai junjian jianzao wancheng zhi jingguo qingxing" 寧海軍艦建造完成之經過情形 (Completion and Construction of Naval Vessel '*Ning Hai*') in Haijun bu, *Geming de haijun* 革命的海軍 (The Revolutionary Navy) (Nanjing: Haijunbu, 1932), p.1-4

promised to shoulder the responsibility of funding with great generosity, and the shipyard was willing to accept unconditioned instalment and construct the ships with spending tracked at a low price.¹⁴⁵

At last, the Harima Shipyard undertook the Ministry's order for new ships.

The construction of the ship, named '*Ninghai*,' lasted for seventeen months from February 1931 to August 1932, with technical assistance from Japan's Ministry of Navy. The standard displacement of the ship was 2,526 tonnes, and the ship was made of mild steel. Its length was 109.8 metres, width 11.89 metres, depth 6.71 metres, draft 4.04 metres. At such a scale, '*Ninghai*' emerged as the biggest combat ship the Republican navy purchased before the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War. All weapons on the warship were made in Japan. It reached 10,579 horsepower in trial steering at full speed, and the highest speed per hour was 23.206 knots. When in full speed, all mechanics operated within a great vibration. It was equipped with three sets of 140 millimetre two-gun turrets, six single 76 millimetre anti-aircraft guns, two 53 centimetre torpedo mounts, ten machine guns, two depth charge projectors, one set of demining tools, and two minelayers.¹⁴⁶ While it could carry two Navy Reconnaissance Seaplane, the Ministry only ordered one seaplane for it, which was named as '*Ninghai No.1*.' The second one was manufactured by the Department of Naval Aircraft in Shanghai 上海海軍飛機處 and named '*Ninghai No. 2*.' This was incorporated into the First Fleet after completion.

In 1934, Admiral Togo Heihachirou 東郷平八郎 () passed away. A state funeral ceremony was held in Tokyo on the 5th of June. European countries including Britain, the US, France and Italy dispatched their fleets in the Far East for participation, and China also joined the ceremony by sending '*Ninghai*' as their representative. After the ceremony, the Ship went to Harima Shipyard for construction. It was in 1933 that the Jiangnan Shipyard found out that parts of the propellers were cracked on the surface, and that the 140-millimetre gun had corroded from exposure to water. Thus the

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

officers grasped this opportunity to have it repaired in Japan, and the ship returned to Shanghai in July 1934.¹⁴⁷

After the signing of the construction treaty of *'Ninghai'* between the Nanjing government and the Japanese Harima Shipyard, Chen Shaokuan commissioned the shipyard to design another light cruiser with specific focus on battle and command based on the model of *'Ninghai.'* To lower the cost, this ship, named *'Pinghai'* was designed in Japan but manufactured by the Naval Jiangnan Shipyard with technical support from the Harima Shipyard. The entire construction process took place in Pinghai, thus its name, and was borne by the Ministry.

The design of *'Pinghai'* was basically similar to that of *'Ninghai'* in its primary stage. They were different in function and thus came to be equipped with unidentical weapons. The weapons installed in *'Ninghai'* carried the objective of training officers to learn the use and control of various weapons. As for *'Pinghai,'* it was meant to be the flagship of the fleet and to undertake battling tasks. The weapons installed were thus not as diversified as *'Ninghai's.'* The kinds of guns equipped on the two ships were the same, with three sets of 140 millimetre two-gun turrets, three separate 76 millimetre anti-aircraft guns, two torpedo mounts, four 57 millimetre machine cannons, four machine guns, and two 75 millimetre searchlights. *'Pinghai'* did not carry the two depth charge projectors and demining tools that *'Ninghai'* had. Moreover, *'Pinghai'* was not complemented with its own seaplanes.¹⁴⁸ Its horsepower was 7,488, and speed 21.256 knots.

Although the two ships were on of equivalent grade, the manufacturing of *'Pinghai'* was faced with difficulties, afflicted with temporal delays. The building process started in June 1931 and was soon met by the occurrence of the 918 Incident and the 128 Incident. As the manufacturing relied on Japanese technology, the realities of Japanese aggression became an inconvenient coincidence. In addition, the tightening of budget after the incidents also restrained the Ministry's spending, halting the construction until until October 1932.

¹⁴⁷ Yue Chen 陳悅, *Minguo haijun jianchuanzhi* 民國海軍艦船志 (Annals of Naval Vessels in the Republican Era) Shandong: Shandong huabao chubanshe, 2013), pp. 318-319.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 326-328.

After manufacturing continued, the government offered subsidies to continue the project. In 1933, the central government called the Central Political Conference of the Nationalist Government, where it passed the building budget of '*Pinghai*.' The primary estimation of the necessary spending applied into the government's budget was \$8,553,038. After reviewing, the Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, found out that '*Pinghai*' was very much the same with '*Ninghai*' in terms of design, but without any seaplane. The budget thus was expected to be lower than that of '*Ninghai*,' which cost \$7,642,620. It was decided that the Ministry would be required to ask for funding from the Ministry of Finance on a monthly basis.¹⁴⁹ '*Pinghai*' was initially scheduled completion on the 10th of October 1933, and was to be launched in 1934. However, factors such as the worsening of Sino-Japanese relations and indecisiveness regarding construction costs all setback the due date. The '*Pinghai*' finally laid its foundation on the 18th of September 1935, but its power plants such as the boilers and the main engines still hadn't been fully installed by then. It would be completed in spring 1937 and incorporated into the First Fleet.

Between 1932 and 1937, the Ministry of Navy also built gunboats for defence. The frequent civil wars in the 1920s among warlords left a vacuum in marine and riverine security. This was also a time of rampant piracy. To guard their own navigation and commercial rights, powers including Britain, the U.S., France and Japan carried out frequent united operations of cruisers in the Yangtze River and in the coastal regions to exterminate pirates. Although Chinese intellectuals opposed to foreign intervention in dealing with piracy, the early Republican government was indifferent; China, after all, was still too weak to wipe out the pirates.

After the establishment of the Nanjing Nationalist government, China was nominally unified, and politically became more stable. With growing outcries from the population and the government to regain maritime sovereignty, foreign navigation in Chinese rivers was further denounced at a larger scale. The powers tried to justify their actions by pointing out that China could not secure its waters, not to mention the property and safety of their subjects in China. Since the founding

¹⁴⁹ Gazette Room of Ministry of Navy 海軍部公報室(ed.), *Haijun gongbao wushierqi* 海軍公報, 第五十二期 (Naval Gazette, vol. 52) (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe, 2015), pp. 29-30.

of the navy under the Nationalist Government, one of its top priorities was to drive foreign powers out of the China seas. To attain this, the Ministry proposed to design and build a specific fleet to strengthen China's riverine defence according to the characteristics of riverine cruisers: 'In regard to the issue of insufficient cruisers to respond to the haunting of riverine pirates, the Ministry has decided to build ten monitors.'¹⁵⁰ Chen Shaokuan hoped that the strengthening of China's riverine coastal power would work in the expulsion of pirate forces, not only to regain cruising sovereignty from the powers, but also to lay a sound foundation for the future Chinese naval development.

To prove that China was strong enough to maintain riverine security, the Ministry ordered the Jiangnan Shipyard to build two riverine patrol vessels. In January 1932, the two vessels had their keels settled in the shipyard, and were named '*Jiangning*' and '*Haining*.' Made from mild steel, their respective displacement was 300 tonnes. They were 39 metres long, had a 3.2 metre depth and a draft of 2.13 metres. Its guns were one 57 millimetre anti-aircraft guns and three Chinese-made M1917 Browning machine guns. Their horsepower was around 400, and the highest speed reached 11 nautical miles. In the bow and stern were two fresh water tanks, whose capacity reached 30.5 tonnes. With the objective of maintaining riverine security, the two vessels were equipped with radio stations for communication.¹⁵¹ However, two weeks after the building began, the 128 Incident broke out and forced a halt on the construction for six months. At last they were built and incorporated into the Second Fleet by December 1932.

As '*Jiangning*,' and '*Haining*' neared completion, the Ministry ordered the Jiangnan Shipyard to manufacture two more gunboats of the same grade. The manufacturing began in October 1932. The two new warships, named '*Funing*' and '*Leining*,' shared the same design with '*Jiangning*,' and '*Haining*.' Fortunately, there were no external disruptions during their manufacture and these two warships were

¹⁵⁰ Haijun bu 海軍部, "Haijun dashi ji" 海軍大事記 (Chronicles of Republican Naval History; in Yin and Li, *Guojia tushuguan cang minguo junshi dangan chubian, di shier ce*, p. 122.

¹⁵¹ Chen, *Minguo haijun jianchuanzhi*, pp. 369-370.

completed in May 1933. They were formally placed under the Coast Guard Administration.

Following the completion of the four gunboats, the Ministry continued to construct gunboats in the same series. In May 1933, the Ministry of Navy ordered the construction of the fifth and sixth gunboat, namely '*Weining*' and '*Suning*.' While their designs and weapons were generally similar to the previous four, the hulls and the power plants were different. Also made of mild steel, they were lengthened to 42.9 metres; the width was remained at 6.09 metres, and its depth was 3.12 metres, with a lower draft of only 1.82 metres. The displacement was increased from 300 tonnes to 350 tonnes. As a result of the enlargement of interior space, the two ships outperformed the four in cruising endurance. Their horsepower was 600, and the highest speed was 11 knots. Besides, the two ships were equipped with one more machine gun than the other four. They were launched in October 10, 1933, and added to the Coast Guard Administration.

In the two years that followed, the Jiangnan Shipyard built four more gunboats of the same grade to strengthen the Coast Guard Administration that modelled on the designs of '*Weining*' and '*Suning*.' After more than three years, Chan finally achieved his ideal of constructing ten cruising gunboats as he had proposed in 1932. In commemoration, he wrote: 'after the four ships of Ning-series, came the six Nings, and some other battleships. Penny and penny laid up equals to many; the forward progression of the strength of the fleet would finally lead us to the day when our national fleet could be competitive with its foreign counterparts.'¹⁵²

Chen was right. China was moving forward but there was still some way to go. Notably, the distance between Chen's achievements and Chiang's proposal of 600,000 tonnes was still vast.

Drawing of Wartime Plans

¹⁵² Shaokuan Chen 陳紹寬, "Wei, su, cong, yi, zheng, chang liuning paoting xucheng zhi ganxiang" 威、肅、崇、義、正、長六寧炮艇續成之感想 (Might, Seriousness, Esteem, Righteousness, Principle, Length: Feelings Towards the Construction of Six Gunboats) in Gao, *Chen Shaokuan wenji*, p. 161.

In face of feeble support from the government, Chen came up with naval organization proposals to defend China against Japan. The government enacted the Nationalist Defence Plan 國防計畫 in December 1934. With regards to the navy, the government wrote:

Japan, as one of the countries with the strongest naval power, can sharply destroy our navy even if we create one with certain strength. Nevertheless, should we build such a navy and strenuously organize our naval power, we would definitely be able to destroy the Japanese secondary preparatory navy at the second rank, such as the preparatory warships in our lakes and sea, while its first-ranked navy dealt with the British and American navies in the Pacific Ocean. As such, all the main routes and channels would be under our grasp, and the coastal area and the mainland would stay peaceful.¹⁵³

His efforts of promoting the consolidation of national defence and the reorganization of the current navies, however, were not realized until 1935.

In 1936, Chen Shaokuan once again wrote about the role of the navy in national defence and mentioned the problem of financial shortage in the essay 'Review on National Defence,' published in *Oriental Magazine*. It cited Britain as an example that a strong navy can protect its industry and commerce, from which the huge reward can in turn be used to subsidize naval development. He expressed dissatisfaction towards China's progress, quoting 'Though unrestricted by navy-restrictive treaties, the navy has made no progress. Though controlling most of the good harbours, the navy has made no good use of them. Though having the longest coastal line in the world, the navy has provided no protection for it.'¹⁵⁴ He called upon all countrymen to be aware of the importance of sea power. Taking naval powers such as Britain, the U.S., and Japan as examples, he encouraged China to follow suit and draft long-term plans for regaining its sea power.

¹⁵³ Su, *Zhonghua minguo haijun shishi*, 553.

¹⁵⁴ Shaokuan Chen 陳紹寬, "Duiyu guofangshang zhi ganxiang" 對於國防上之感想 (Feelings Towards Today's National Defence) in Gao, *Chen Shaokuan wenji*, p.169.

Taking Japan as the opposing force, the Nationalist government co-enacted the Draft of Military Construction for National Defence, Naval Part 國防軍事建設計畫草案·海軍 with the Ministry of Navy in March 1937. The conclusion was that China could secure herself from Japanese invasion only when she had seventy per cent of Japanese naval strength. Given that the Japanese navy had 760,000 tonnes, China needed at least a 540,000-ton navy for national defence. Without such a large fleet and insufficient time for constructing naval fortresses, China could only shift her strategy from competing for sea power to building up defensive power of ports, so as to prevent the Japanese navy from landing. In the same month the General Staff Headquarter passed the amended National Defence and Operational Plan in 1937 民國二十六年年度國防作戰計畫. Divided into two parts, its first plan ordered the navy to concentrate on the Yangtze River soon after war broke out as assistance to the army to sweep the opposing warships. The First and the Second Fleets would also coordinate with the air force and the fortresses to eliminate the opposing warships in the Yangtze River, and then turn to the downstream to back up the army. The Third Fleet would guard all ports in Shandong Peninsula to support the fighting of the air force and the army. Its second plan did not differ much from the first one in terms of content, but had different specified naval tasks. It suggested for all fleets to concentrate at the Yangtze River in the premier of the war to help sweep the opposing fleets under coordination with the army, the air force, and the fortresses. The navy would block all ports of the Yangtze River and Hangzhou Bay, Jiaozhou Bay, and Wenzhou Bay to hamper Japanese regional fleets from landing.¹⁵⁵ Based on its own potency against the Japanese counterpart, the naval preparatory scheme for the war was an adaptation of defensive strategy of near sea and Inner Rivers. This indicated that the Chinese navy in the decade could not achieve Chiang's goal of six hundred thousand tonnes.

Naval Education

Naval education only became a key issue after Chen became the Deputy-Minister in 1929. Chen tried to advance naval education by sending naval officers and students

¹⁵⁵ Su, *Zhonghua minguo haijun shishi rizhi*, 580.

to Britain, Japan, Italy, the U.S, Germany, etc. to learn their cutting-edge technology. No sooner than the end of Northern Expedition did The Nationalist government sought assistance from Britain. They then signed the Agreement of British Assistance to Chinese Navy, enabling the Chinese naval men to study in Britain. A total of 7 groups were sent to the U.K. between 1929 and 1937. More than that, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs succeeded in signing new military cooperation agreements with other foreign powers, chiefly the United States.¹⁵⁶ From then on, China was allowed to send naval students overseas to Britain, Italy, Japan, Germany and the United States. Two groups of naval students visited Britain in 1929 and 1931 for military training and sent back reports of their learning experience to the Ministry. Most of them appreciated the experience, but some complained about British secrecy over the latest military technologies.¹⁵⁷ Until the eve of the Second Sino-Japanese War, China was still sending naval students to Britain for advanced studies.

Japan's warm welcome to Chinese naval students began under the efforts of Du Xigui. Experienced in naval affairs and having served in the navy for more than twenty years, he led a study tour in 1929 to investigate the naval development of powers, including Japan, United States, Britain and Germany. In his six-week tour to Japan, the Japanese Tenno Showa personally received Du and encouraged him to undertake a thorough inspection of the Japanese navy.¹⁵⁸ When he returned, he immediately suggested that the government should strengthen Sino-Japanese connection, in order to receive assistance from the Japanese government. The two Ministries of Foreign Affairs agreed to send eight Chinese naval students to Japan to study military supply and manufacturing of torpedoes in 1930. The eight students, seven of whom were Fukienese, were led by Li Shijia 李世甲 (General Secretary of Naval General Affairs

¹⁵⁶ Li Zhang 張力, "Zhongguo haijun de zhenghe yu waiyuan, 1928-1938" 中國海軍的整合與外援 1928-1938 (Unification of China's Naval Strength and Foreign Aids, 1928-1938), in Guofu jiangang yibai zhounian xueshu taolunji weiyuanhui 國父建黨革命一百週年學術討論集委員會 (ed.), *Guofu jiangang geming yibai zhounian xueshu taolunji* 國父建黨革命一百週年學術討論集 (Centennial Symposium on Sun Yat-sen's Founding of the Kuo Mintang For Revolution) (Taipei: Jindai Zhongguo, 1995), pp. 455.

¹⁵⁷ Gazette Room of Ministry of Navy 海軍部公報室 (ed.), *Haijun gongbao diwuqi* 海軍公報第五期 (Naval Gazette, vol. 5) (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe, 2015), p. 127; Li Zhang 張力, "Nanjing guomin zhengfu shiqi de liuying haijun yuansheng" 南京國民政府時期的留英海軍員生, in Ding, Zhou and Huang, *Jindai zhongguo liuxuesheng lunwenji*, pp. 224-238.

¹⁵⁸ Du, *Kaocha lieqiang haijun*, pp. 238.

Office 海軍總務司司長), a high ranking Chinese naval officer. However, these students soon returned in 1932 after Japan's distressing invasion of Northeast China on September 18, 1931 and of Shanghai on January 28, 1932.¹⁵⁹ Since then, China stopped the practice of sending students to Japan.

Apart from Japan and Britain, the United States was another destination for Chinese naval students. The Ministry sent three naval officers to the United States' Hydrographic Bureau for training. The Ministry of Navy permitted Ding Jie 丁傑, originally adjutant of the '*Gong Sheng*' gunboat, to go to Drexel Institute for the study of radio in the form by self-funding in November 1929.¹⁶⁰ More naval officers were sent to the United States for further studies in the 1930s. In general, they did well in learning new naval knowledge, and some even suggested in their reports to improve the existing curriculum and military strategy in China.

These students advocated that China should develop its air force in assistance of the navy: 'the agile and nimble feature [of the air force] can disable the firearm of the opposing warships, and ward off the planes from attacking from the above.'¹⁶¹ They were convinced that the Ministry of Navy should manufacture torpedoes as '...torpedoes can hardly be purchased abroad, not to say mines, the essential weapon for naval defence.'¹⁶² Students also suggested that army officers should study in Britain to solidify national defence, quoting: 'We think that our navy is in need of a Marine Corps to maintain the coastal defence in safe condition. With reference to past practice, none of the training for the army has involved the navy.'¹⁶³ With scarce funding, however, such advice could only go down the drain. The program lasted until 1937 when Britain became too preoccupied preparing for the upcoming war.

¹⁵⁹ Li Zhang 張力, "Yi di wei shi: Riben yu zhongguo haijun jianshe, 1928-1937" 以敵為師：日本與中國海軍建設, 1928-1937 (Learning from the rival: Japan and China's naval construction, 1928-1937), in *Jiang zhongzheng yu jindai zhongri guanxi* 蔣中正與近代中日關係 (Jiang Jieshi and Contemporary Sino-Japanese Relationship) (Taipei: Daoxiang chubanshe, 2006), pp. 106-109.

¹⁶⁰ Gazette Room of Ministry of Navy, *Haijun gongbao diwuqi*, p. 408.

¹⁶¹ Zhaoxiang Deng 鄧兆祥 & Ruichang Chen 陳瑞昌 etc., "Haijun liuying xuesheng baogaoshu 海軍留英學生報告書," *Haijun zazhi* 海軍雜誌, no.8 (1933), pp.214-225.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

After the 128 Incident, China no longer sent naval officers to Japan for advanced studies. The Naval University under the Ministry of Navy continued to employ Japanese military men. The university located at Mawei District of Fuzhou, was established as a result of the advocacy of Chen Shaokuan, to teach naval tactics and International Naval Law. Chen's suggestion of employing two Japanese coaches was supported by the government due to the lack of naval talents in China. They were Teraoka Kinpee (1891-1984), a Japanese captain, and Shinobu Junpee (1871-1962), a Juris Doctor. Chen ordered twenty-three captains of Commander ranking or higher to enrol into the university, but resulted in opposition. Led by Gao Xianshen 高憲申, they accused Chen of siding with Japan and reported this to Lin Sen 林森, Chairman of the Nationalist Government. They not only defied Chen's order, but also required the dismissal of the two Japanese instructors. Chen was so irritated that he tendered resignation again. He stayed after the consolation of Wang Jingwei and Chiang Kai-shek. This incident blocked the opening of the university for a short period, and forced Chen to reposition the two Japanese as consultants of the Ministry. It was not until April 1935 that the Ministry made another announcement for the establishment of the university, focused at teaching naval strategies. The two Japanese thus renewed their appointment, and returned at the eve of the Sino-Japanese war.

Other than sending students abroad, the Ministry also set up its own naval school. In 1930, the Ministry schemed to regain the *jus aquaeductus* and the government soon permitted the Ministry's request of setting up the Training Institute of Naval Pilotage in Yangzi River 海軍揚子江引港傳習所 to teach piloting navigation. It was established in February with Wu Guangzong 吳廣宗, the head of the Wasteland Survey Headquarter and Land Administrative Bureau, as the chair. In 1933, the Ministry and the general staff headquarter jointly enacted the Monitoring Pilotage Regulation 要港引水監督條例, which stipulated the school's operation during the imposition of the martial law and the wartime period, and submitted it to the government for approval. Meanwhile, they arranged pilot tests and gave licenses to those who passed the tests. In July 1934, the Ministry sent Wang Tingyu, the deputy coach, to examine the pilots in

the district of Han River and Xiang Water (漢宜湘); 160 people passed the tests, and received certificates from the Ministry.¹⁶⁴

After the 918 Incident, the Japanese ambition became more evident. For the sake of meeting future military necessities, the Ministry decided to open the School of Marine Corps 海軍陸戰隊講武堂. In April 1934, it was founded in the original site where the School of Marine Corps was located, at the mouth of Min River, with Li Shijia as the brigadier of the First Independent Brigade of Marines, and Sang Juyu as the chief educator. In June 1934, the Ministry renamed the school as the Officers' Studying Class, mainly for the training of militants of mid-and-low ranks in the Marines. For the expansion of the Marines, the school enrolled 100 students for enlistment in October. They also transferred the low-ranking officers in the Marines camps for training in class.¹⁶⁵

While taking note of Chen's efforts of sending student abroad for naval education, one must not neglect the prospects of the students upon return. Though they were not promoted to ranks higher than that of Commander, and made only modest contributions in the pre-war period, many grew into important figures after the war. For instance, Lin Zun, who had studied in Britain and Germany, was promoted as rear-admiral after the war. In comparison with Chen's other proposals, naval education was relatively more successful as it required lesser funds.

Handling the Fame of the Navy

Chen was committed to reviving the navy by building a powerful fleet. This proved to be a challenge as previous naval construction attempts all ended in dismay; China's navy was certainly lagging far behind the status of the most advanced fleets. In addition to this, the navy's feeble performance in the January 28 incident was a setback, and this became the first challenge that Chen encountered after becoming Minister.

¹⁶⁴ Ministry of Navy, "Haijun dashi ji," p. 138.

¹⁶⁵ Jin, *Qingtian bairi qixia minguo haijun de botao qifu*, p.162.

On the 1st of January 1932, Chen took office as Minister of Navy. During his inauguration speech, Chen expressed:

I hope that the whole navy will be united and keep up their efforts, so that we may accomplish the mission of our Party, and avoid bad reputation during my tenure. This will not only be a blessing to the navy, but also a blessing to the Party and to the country.¹⁶⁶

Within one month, the January 28 Incident erupted, and the general population was irritated by the navy's absence in assisting the army to jointly fight against Japanese troops. Negative emotions towards the navy continued to soar and finally reached a climax when Ding Mocun from the Military Affairs Commission and Gao Yutang from the Control Yuan submitted their impeachment.

In January 1932, the Nationalist government moved the capital to Luoyang, where the government convened the National Calamity Conference, to discuss and plan for future policies of the nation. In the conference, the members from the Military Affairs Commission, led by Ding Mocun, proposed 'Reform on the Navy in order to Defend the Japanese Invasion 徹底改造海軍並整飭海軍以抗暴日案,' aimed at tackling the paralysing malpractices of the navy, including the antiquity of warships, the domination of the navy by the Fukienese, the naval officers' lack of discipline, and the absence of an effective central navy.¹⁶⁷ His reform proposal, in reality, was a criticism of the existing navy. It was published on the press the next day, placing the navy in the hot seat. The navy was subsequently blasted by endless criticism, with some going as far as suggesting its abolition.

Chen felt offended by Ding's proposal, and immediately rebuked the rumours. He said that Ding and his colleagues had agitated the whole navy, claiming,

the day I read in the papers the snatches of conversation of those in charge of the Legislative Yuan, who said that the naval incidental funding in the budget of

¹⁶⁶ Shaokuan Chen 陳紹寬, "Yuandan jiuzhi xunci" 元旦就職訓詞 (Speech Delivered in the Inauguration Ceremony), in Gao, *Chen Shaokuan wenji*, pp. 74-75.

¹⁶⁷ Shaokuan Chen 陳紹寬, "Zaibo dingmocun dengren tian" 再駁丁默村等人提案 (Refuting Again Ding Mocun's Motion), in Gao, *Chen Shaokuan wenji*, p. 82.

1932 should be allocated to Ministry of Military Affairs 軍政部 for expansion of the air force, every single one in the navy was puzzled and shocked.¹⁶⁸

He claimed that such a doing was tantamount to ‘destroying the navy and neglecting national defence.’ His retort surrounded only the words and acts of Ding Mocun, but Chen did not respond to fingers pointed at the abuses of naval officers and the need for restructuring.

In 23 April 1932, a letter to the editor of *Sheng Huo* (Life; 生活), a weekly magazine was published under the name He Huangji and entitled ‘Naval Authority during National Calamity.’ The article openly wrote that the authority had reached a mutual non-aggression pact with the Japanese naval commander, and listed out the wrongdoings of the navy, including Li Shijia’s accompaniment of Japanese naval general Nomura to examine trenches, the navy’s rejection to lend cannons and iron plates to the 19th Route Army in fighting against Japanese invasion, and Li Shijia’s pro-Japanese stance regarding the profits earned in the purchase of Japanese warships.¹⁶⁹

The neutral stance of the navy in the 128 Incident was partly due to the absence of central orders, which deterred them from acting in an imprudent manner. It was also related to the construction of ‘*Ninghai*’ in Japan; the Ministry simply did not wish to disrupt its manufacturing. The general public, however, did not understand the considerations behind, leaving Chen gloomily disheartened. He once again resigned and wrote of his frustrations:

...with no central order, the navy dared not mobilize on its own will. Still the public witnesses none of this and condemns us so badly. The intellectuals defame us out of pretension to be good through ignorance, and even recklessly slander the navy for their evil political plots. Now that the Shanghai Armistice Agreement is reached, and given the backwardness of the navy, the national defence can

¹⁶⁸ Shaokuan Chen 陳紹寬, “Bo dingmocun dengren tian” 駁丁默村等人提案(Refuting Ding Mocun’s Motion), in Gao, *Chen Shaokuan wenji*, pp. 79-80.

¹⁶⁹ Huangji He 何煌基, “Guonan qizhong de haijun dang ju” 國難期中的海軍當局 (Performance of the Ministry of Navy During National Crisis), *Shenghuo zazhi* 生活雜誌 16, no. 7 (1932), pp. 16-17.

hardly be consolidated. Since the Incident, I can hardly shield myself from insults. Rather than powerlessly insulted, I prefer resigning from the post from today, so that talents can fill the gap and block the attack.’¹⁷⁰

In the same day, the magazine published Li Shijia’s writing. Li meant to response to ‘The Naval Authority during the National Calamity,’ and refute all of He Huangji’s accusations.¹⁷¹ Chen once again wrote to Wang Jingwei in May to rebuke Ding Mocun’s ideas, quoting: ‘the proposal by such committee members does not serve the purpose for the country’s prospect. Instead it is an opportunist calumny, intended to exterminate the navy by manoeuvres of instigation and fulfil their political ambition.’¹⁷² Chen voiced that the government should investigate into this case, ‘if what the committee member says is true, I shall invite the government to impose punishment on the navy. If not, then, I shall entreat the government to chastise those members such as Ding Mocun, to pacify the public indignation by manifesting the forcefulness of the law.’ However, Chen did not win the recognition of the public in defending the navy by the reason that no central orders were imposed. He was soon confronted with another impeachment.

In May 1933, the four committee members of the Control Yuan, Gao Yutang 高友唐, Shao Hongji 邵鴻基, Zhou Lisheng 周立生 and Wang Pingzheng 王平政, jointly proposed an impeachment against the navy. Although the rule was that impeachment attempts could not be disclosed before submission to the Control Yuan, Gao Yutang leaked the news to the media in 6 July. The contents of the impeachment were printed on newspapers on 8 July and 9 July. A news report on Shen Bao 申報 (8 July) reported that Gao had told the reporters

...as the navy cannot fight against and protect the country from enemies, and as the Marines have been planting and selling opium to harm the country, the

¹⁷⁰ Shaokuan Chen, “Zai bo dingmocun dengren tian”(再駁丁默村等人提案) (the Chinese translated title?), edited by Gao Xiaoxing 高曉星 (ed.), *Chen Shaokuan wenji* 陳紹寬文集 (Chen’s Works; Beijing: Haichao chubanshe, 1994), pp. 82-85.

¹⁷¹ Shijia Li 李世甲, “Guanyu Guonan qizhong de haijun dang ju de lai han” 關於國難期中的海軍當局的來函 (Reply Towards the Letter ‘Performance of the Ministry of Navy During National Crisis’), *Shenghuo zazhi* 生活雜誌 17, no. 7 (1932), p. 17.

¹⁷² Shaokuan Chen, “Zai bo dingmocun dengren tian” p.85.

Control Yuan has proposed an impeachment against the navy, and suggested to have it closed down, instead to use the naval funding to buy submarines and to reconstruct the warships as commercial ships.¹⁷³

A commentator of the newspaper echoed his proposal, and pressed on by saying ‘this proposition, is one that really deserves our advocacy and worship... surely the navy should be ousted, but also what’s the point of the army?’ The commentator was so angry at the non-resistance orientation of the navy and army that he used this as a chance to question their value.

On the next day, Gao Youtang’s full discourse was published, It stated that:

...the navy looked at the Battle of Shanghai with folded arms, and set conditions with Shio Zawa— that no shells would drop on the naval ships if the navy did not participate; Even when the 19th Route Army asked for anti-aircraft guns, no, the navy did not even lend the army a single iron plate.’

He also proclaimed that the navy was undisciplined, quoting,

...it is intolerable. The corruption is too prevailing to be talked of. The Marines are not on warships, but on the land in Fujian, to plant opium, to bully the folk with their power. President Yu often says that the Fukienese just aren’t worth to the money of the populace to keep their jobs secure— that is because the navy nowadays, has become a Fukienese hereditary sphere of influence.¹⁷⁴

Gao proposed to remove the navy and in addition:

...to sell the warships to companies as business ships, and the naval funding that accounted for more than one million and the capital earned from the selling, could be used to buy more than 200 submarines. We just need to focus on the defence of all ports.

¹⁷³ “Jianwei Gaoyoutang zhi gankai Zai jinan fabiao zhi tanhua” 監委高友唐之感慨 在濟南發表之談話 (Speech Delivered by Gao Youtang in Jinan), *Shen Bao* 申報, 9 July 1932, p.10.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

In fairness, the navy became more disciplined after Chen took office as Minister. During the Beiyang period, the navy was too occupied with selling opium but Chen changed this situation. The Ministry of Navy, on the other hand, was bound to be filled with Fukienese due to factual circumstances; Chen could not have changed this in such a short period of time. Meanwhile, the impeachment did not consider Chen's endurance in warship-building, but simply focused on the navy's neutrality in the fight against Japanese aggression.¹⁷⁵

The report ignited a mix of opinion from other government offices. Yu Youren, the President of the Monitor Yuan, immediately inquired Gao of his impeachment plans, and clarified his claims about the Fukienese navy were distorted. Indeed, Gao simply inherited Ding Mocun's 'Reform on the Navy in order to Defend the Japanese Invasion' 徹底改造海軍並整飭海防以抗暴日案 and He Huangji's 'The Naval Authority during the National Calamity' 國難期中的海軍當局. In July 1933, Chen spoke on the anniversary ceremony of the Ministry of Navy and took the opportunity to respond to the impeachment. He declared:

regardless of whether there is any knowledge in their speech, regardless of whether they will make a fool of themselves, and regardless of whether they are sticking to the truth, they just keep talking nonsense. Once they have made an impeachment, they feel like they have already taken the responsibility as committee members of the Control Yuan.¹⁷⁶

Chen criticized some of the members for being unprofessional, quoting:

some members of the Legislative Yuan and Control Yuan had no knowledge or worldview. Stimulated by the Japanese air force, they then wanted to move the naval funding to the air force. What must be known is that Japan's planes simply can't come to China without its navy.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Shaokuan Chen 陳紹寬, 'Zai haijunbu jinianzhou de yanjiangci 在海軍部紀念週的演講詞' (Speech Delivered in the Anniversary Week of the Ministry of Navy), in Gao, *Chen Shaokuan wenji*, p. 98.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 99.

Later on, the Ministry submitted documents to the Executive Yuan. Chen wanted to sue Gao for defaming the navy and disobeying the charter of the Yuan. Yet, the Nationalist government simply turned a blind eye on the situation.

Ding Mocun and Gao Yutang's impeachment spoiled the reputation of the navy. However, their accusations were not entirely false, as the navy did communicate with the Japanese navy during wartime. As the Minister, Chen was due to shield the navy from castigations, but the public did not accept his clarification. Worse than that, these accusations caused subtle changes in the government's attitude towards the Minister and his navy. From February to June 1932, Chen had written to the Executive Yuan or the Ministry of Finance for funding at least nine times, but to no avail. The occurrences tainted the Ministry's reputation and Chen faced more hindrances in fund-raising.

In May 1932, Chen announced his resignation for 'rather than being powerlessly insulted, I prefer resigning from the post today, so that talents can fill the gap...' ¹⁷⁸ *Shidai Gonglun* 時代公論 (Fair Time) soon published a commentary that commended Chen as a reliably responsible. In 1933, *Shehui Xinwen* 社會新聞 (Social News) published a letter written under the pseudonym of Zhonggong, which pointed out that the main reason for China's weak navy was the lack of capital, quoting

...the critics never ponder that navy, army, and air force are all troops, and while there are national cries of "save the country by air force," "donate for the air force", "donate for fighting against Japan," we have never heard of "donate for the navy"! While other troops are willing to fight only when they have money, should the navy not need a penny, and fight for the country for nothing? Although the donations are said not to be spent on their own officers, they can more or less have some profits afterwards. How can that not make the navy envy?¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ "Chen Shaokuan chengci haijun buzhang" 陳紹寬呈辭海軍部長 (Chen Asked for Resignation as Minister of Navy), *Zhongyang ribao* 中央日報, 8 May 1932, p.10.

¹⁷⁹ Gazette Room of Ministry of Navy Compiled 海軍部公報室, *Haijun gongbao disanshiwuqi* 海軍公報

The author said that it was impractical for the navy to exert its utmost strength on sea battle without sufficient capital for development in peacetime and extra financial support in wartime. In 1934, magazine *Shiri Tan* 十日談 (Decday Talk) published an article entitled 'The Naval Triumph over Contempt.' The article praised the navy for suppressing the Fujian Incident: 'I still remember the days when people blasted the navy in the 128 Incident, leaving the navy in grievance and rejection. Now having the opportunity to reclaim themselves from humiliation, as I can imagine, they must be extremely jubilant.'¹⁸⁰ This showed that despite the general air of opposition and despise, some people sympathized with Chen and the Ministry.

Conclusion

During Chen Shaokuan's appointment, the force of the navy remained within the range of 16,000 to 19,000 tonnes, 2,000 tonnes behind pre-Ministry days. As opposed to Chen's vision, China's naval construction saw shrinkage of the navy. In the contrary, the central fleet under the Ministry had grown to be nearly 60,000 tonnes. Although the transformation was not as ambitious as Chen had hoped, mild progress was still made.

第三十五期 (Naval Gazette, vol .35) (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe, 2015), pp. 92-93.

¹⁸⁰ "Haijun zhengqi zhizhan 海軍爭氣之戰" (A Great Battle Fought by the Navy), *Shiri Tan* You used Decatalk in the first chapter)十日談, no. 17 (1934), p. 1.

Chapter Five

The Man in The Middle: Constraints on Chen's attempts

Chen Shaokuan never ceased to view Japan as China's enemy. Ironically, Chiang Kai-shek and his subordinate captains suspected that Chen had sided with the Japanese. This served as their reason to weaken his power in the navy. Distrusted by Chiang and his subordinates, Chen Shaokuan was left in the middle of the road. More than that, this awkward position, together with the tense atmosphere in the government, left little room for Chen to manoeuvre. In this chapter, I will try to explain the reasons behind Chen's failed naval reform as associated with the bigger picture of China's political instability and financial shortage.

Fierce competition with other military branches

Although Chen was determined to boost the Chinese navy, the Nationalist government saw otherwise. After the Pyrrhic victory in the Central Plains War (1929), Chiang discovered that it was not an easy task to resolve the conflicts between the central government and the warlords purely by political means; instead, a strong army had to be built for intimidation. Thus in 1933, Germany strengthened military cooperation with the Republic of China. Johannes Friedrich Leopold von Seeckt, the chief consultant of the German military's consultation team, submitted 'The Proposal of Army Reform.' The plan pointed out that existing Chinese weapons were awful, and suggested that China should establish sixty divisions out of its modernized army. The Nationalist government thus initiated for the adoption of this modernization plan. The plan finally dwindled due to financial difficulty, but it showed the government's renewed devotion to develop China's naval power. China's financial annual report during the late 1920s showed that ninety per cent of total military expense was allocated to development of the army; the navy and the air force continued to acquire scarce resources.

The wrestle between the navy and the air force for remaining resources further compounded the situation. The Central Air Force School was established in 1931. It started the purchase of planes and called for the enrolment of students with the aim

of training new air force talents. Branches of the school were later established in Guangzhou and Luoyang. The Central Air Force School employed Americans as consultants, and set up subjects in mechanics and aviation. It mainly admitted students between eighteen and twenty-four, each of whom received a basic half-year education. After passing the exams, they would formally enter professional training under the air force. This was divided into three levels of elementary, intermediate, and advanced for four months each.¹⁸¹ The short training duration and the little resources required to run the school were appealing for the government to invest more in the air force. Such a tendency became even more obvious after the January 28 Incident. As a result, most of the military capital was allotted to the army, then to the air force, and last to the navy.¹⁸² It was thus such a situation that Chen faced.

Distrust of Chiang Kai-shek

a. Setting up of the Central School of Submarines and Motor Torpedo Boat

The emergence of the Central School of Submarines and Motor Torpedo Boat could be traced back to the January 28 Incident. Though consistent with the non-resistant approach from the Central government, Chen's decision to preserve 'Ninghai' and remain neutral under Japanese aggression made Chiang Kai-shek uneasy. Chiang thus saw an urgent need to 'build up a force that can block the Yangtze River to counter the Japanese intrusion.'¹⁸³ In 1932, the School was established and placed under the direct control of the Commanding Headquarter. Schooling started from January 1933, with Ouyang Ge as its first principal. He was later reappointed as Superintendent, and Chiang became principal. In 1936, the School was relocated to Jiangyin to avoid Japanese destruction and was reorganized under the control of the Ministry of Military

¹⁸¹ Xiaoxing Gao 高曉星, *Minguo kongjun de hangji* 民國空軍的航跡 (History of Republican Air Force) (Beijing: Haichao chubanshe, 1992), pp. 135-140.

¹⁸² Shaokuan Chen 陳紹寬 (you use Chen Shaokuan in the previous chapters) 'Zai haijunbu chengli sizhounian jinianhuishang de kaihuici 在海軍部成立四周年紀念會上的開會詞' (Inauguration Speech Delivered in the Fourth Anniversary of the Establishment of the Ministry of Navy), in Gao, *Chen Shaokuan*, pp. 20-21.

¹⁸³ Li Zhang 張力, *Haijun renwu fangwen jilu* 海軍人物訪問紀錄 (Record of Interviewing Naval Figures; Taipei: Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1988), p.13.

Affairs. Its inauguration, however, immediately drew disgust from the central Ministry. Such competition further shook the future of naval development under Chen's leadership.

The School was built without a clear orientation. Li Yushai 黎玉璽, who later became Taiwan Naval Commander in Chief, recalled that

...when I went on board to the Central School of Submarines and Motor Torpedo Boats of Huiguan (Gilded Hall) of Five Northern Provinces outside of Zhenjiang's west gate, I merely felt that was a military school, without knowing what to learn inside. And I was brought out of the dark only after the classes started – it was a school training naval officers, and everything was about navies.' ¹⁸⁴

From this, one can see that very few had a clear idea of what the School had to offer. Chen Yuxiu (was appointed as Major General in 1948) 陳郁秀 said that the school was initially meant to be nominated as the Central Naval School, however, "As there was already an established Mawei Naval School, if the new school was to be named bluntly as that, that would be an announcement of the end of the Fukienese clique. To avoid further infighting within the navies, it was finally named as Central School of Submarines and Motor Torpedo Boats."

The name did not alter a bit the fact that it was a naval school established to compete against the Central navy. It didn't matter whether the school was under the Commander Headquarter in 1932-1936 or under the Ministry of Military Affairs since 1936, it should be noted that it was never placed under the Ministry of Navy.

The school served a severe blow to the Central navy and Chen tried his best at damage control. He denied their justification of adopting the naval system and teaching according to the naval curriculum, and requested for the suspension of the school. The demand for military rank of Vice Admiral by Ouyang Ge was declined by the personnel department under the grasp of the Minister, on the basis that it was not acceptable to '[put] him in line with those who graduated with him in the same year, he should be given no higher than the rank of captain; with no special credits, he

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, p.14.

cannot be promoted above that grade.’¹⁸⁵ As a compromise, Ouyang was given the rank of rear admiral.

The school prospered, despite Chen’s despire. This is clearly shown from the scale of enrolment. The enrolment quota was fifty in 1932, and it mushroomed to 400 in 1935; several soldiers went into service. Its expansion had squeezed the Central navy of whatever funding was left to fight for. The relocation of the school to Jiangyin in 1936 was a large-scale move, involving the construction of campus, cavern, the excavation of artificial harbours, the setup of factories, warehouses and many others. Three mosquito boats were brought from Germany and twelve from Britain for the school. With Chiang as the patronage, the school soon emerged as a formidable force in Chinese navy. Chen’s inabilities of inhibiting the School’s development did nothing more than deepen mutual hatred. Among the thirty students that Chen previously expelled from the Mawei Naval School, twelve were accepted into the new school. This further irritated Chen. His misunderstanding with Chiang Kai-shek could no longer be reversed and Chen’s hostility did not help in regaining Chiang’s trust.

Without Chiang’s support, Chen could not do much to carry out his proposed reforms. In his book entitled *My Real Experience in the Old Navy*, Li Shijia, then General Secretary of Naval General Affairs Office, revealed that the Ministry had been the target of Chiang’s suppression since its establishment. Deeply suspicious of the ministry, he hindered the unifying attempts by the ministry on the one hand, and set up his own faction on the other. In addition to the failure to bring the Northeast and Guangdong navies under control in the first place, the creation of yet another clique further alienated Chen from realizing his own goal. Independent from central governance, the regional navies were dragging each other’s feet, leaving naval development weak on its knees.

b. Delay and decrease in promised funding

¹⁸⁵ Zhen Han 韓真, ‘Minguo haijun de paixi jiqi xingcheng 民國海軍的派系及其形成(Formation of Republican China’s Naval Cliques), *Junshi lishi yanjiu*, no.1(1992), pp.63-68.

Naval construction is time-consuming and laborious. Whether the capital was adequate determined the scale of a navy. The sluggish growth in the Beiyang period was due to insufficient naval capital from the central government, which was allocated often on an irregular basis.

As Du pointed out in his inspection report, 'the [other] countries had allocated twenty per cent to fifty per cent of military spending to their navies; China's was US\$1.7 million, which accounted for only one per cent.'¹⁸⁶ To boost the navy, it first needed a stable and colossal funding. This had come to the attention of Chen before he took office, and yet remained as the biggest obstacle throughout his tenure as the Minister.

In the early Republican era, the responsibility the central government held for naval funding kept the funding relatively stable. However, the warlords, who were rather independent from central authority, evaded paying taxes to the government. This led to a slump in naval funding. In the era of Nationalist government, the source of naval capital appeared relatively stable from the surface. During the Northern Expedition, Chiang Kai-shek, promised that the central government would pay the navy, in the least, a regular funding (exclusive of warship-construction fee) of \$500,000.¹⁸⁷ The Ministry of Navy was able to claim the recurrent funding, and had the payments transferred from the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Military Affairs. Not inclusive of the warship-construction fee, the annual budget of the navy was a recurrent funding of \$600,000. Chiang, however, did not live up to his promise. The actual funding was unstable and inconsistent. Under such circumstances, Chen made great efforts to scramble for more funds but to no avail.¹⁸⁸

Naval funding could be categorized into regular expenses and incidental expenses. The former included capital for all organs of fleets and marines, special disbursements,

¹⁸⁶ Du, *Kaocha liqiang haijun baogao shu*, pp. 67-68.

¹⁸⁷ Zhiben Yang 楊志本, *Zhonghua minguo haijun shiliao* 中華民國海軍史料 (Historical Sources of the Republic of China's Navy; (Beijing: Haiyang chubanshe, 1986), p. 962.

¹⁸⁸ Hailong Dai 戴海龍, *Lun Chen Shaokuan yu Minguo haijun* 論陳紹寬與民國海軍 (A Discussion on Chen Shaokuan and the Republican Navy; Hubei: Huazhong Normal University, 2014), pp. 50-51.

salaries of substitutes and reservists, payment of maintenance to retired officers, education funding, medical expenses, and on-site supervision fees, and necessary expenses. The latter included ship maintenance fees, construction fees, weapons expenses, and other sundry charges. Chiang Kai-shek had promised a stable funding that would cover regular expenses but no fixed amount was promised for incidental expenses. The transfer of capital, regular or incidental, was also not an easy task. Sometimes, Chiang Kai-shek failed to transfer money; other times, it was not the amount he had promised.

Not long after the establishment of the Ministry, Chen already had to write to Chiang and ask for him to provide for the surplus personnel's livelihood. It was settled only after three letters to the Ministry of Finance.¹⁸⁹ The often-delayed payment eventually piled up and became the Ministry's shortage of funding. In October 1929, Chen again wrote to Song Ziwen for naval funding:

... the Ministry is drained in funding; now that it is already the middle of the month, still not a penny has been received, leaving the Ministry in a difficult state. Officials have been dispatched to the Ministry of Finance for reception of funding, but nothing came after days of waiting.¹⁹⁰

In July 1930, he once again wrote for payment: 'the Ministry has only \$60,000 as monthly funding, worse still the delay becomes more often, and seven orders of payment have not been followed.'¹⁹¹ This resulted in a snowballing amount, quoting 'the Ministry had been delayed payment of \$40,000, and \$170,000 if including those of the affiliated organs until November'.¹⁹² This worsened further after the 918 Incident.

With each letter, the capital deficit seemed to be growing for the Ministry. In 11 January 1932, Chen Shaokuan wrote to Huang Hanliang, the Minister of Finance, and pointed out the huge deficiency of the funding, saying 'not a penny had we received in the past two months, now the expenses were no fewer than a million and

¹⁸⁹ Shaokuan Chen 陳紹寬, 'Qingqiu jiejie bianyu renyuan weichi fei 請求解決編餘人員維持費' (Request on Allocating Capital for Naval Reorganization), in Gao, *Chen Shaokuan wenji*, pp. 14-15.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 61.

thousands dollars.¹⁹³ The neutral stance in the 128 Incident in 1932 brought the Ministry under criticism, and the dishonoured navy had greater difficulties to receive funding. In April 1932, Chen wrote another letter to Wang Jingwei, then head of the Executive Yuan, in which he stated that ‘up to March this year, the Ministry of Finance already owes us 1,356,675, and the Ministry of Munition owes us 1,638,202, in total we are owed 2,994,877.’¹⁹⁴ Such a great deficiency prompted him to write yet another letter to Song Ziwen, the Minister of Finance, to request for half of the regular expenses:

when my ministerial representative approached you for reception of funding, the officials said that they had received no orders to transfer half of the funding. I hereby conveyed my wish to your calling to the officials in charge of our funding that they should pay fifty per cent of the promised amount, so that we may receive some funding.’¹⁹⁵

As the amount unpaid to the navy was quite huge, Chen had to repeatedly appeal to the Ministry of Finance for immediate funding in emergency. Regular expenses were transferred as planned quite a number of times, but further capital for incidental funding was another problem.

Chen looked everywhere for resources. After the establishment of the Nanjing Nationalist government, China launched talks with foreign governments to ask for the refund of indemnities paid. When Italy, Japan and Britain announced the decision of partial reparation, the Minister saw a chance for extra funding to build warships. In January 1930, he wrote to Chiang Kai-shek: ‘the navy was in great need for funding for warship construction, I thereby present my hope for the allocation of the partial refund into the navy.’¹⁹⁶ He once again sent to the generalissimo, ‘as presented in the previous document, may I ask the government to provide

¹⁹³ Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 78-79.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁹⁶ Shaokuan Chen 陳紹寬, ‘Qingjiang Yidali tuihuan gengzi peikuan bochung zaojian jingfei 請將意大利退還庚子賠款撥充造艦經費’ (Request for Allocating Italy’s Refund for Naval Vessels Construction) in Gao, *Chen Shaokuan wenji*, pp. 22-23.

\$1,200,000 from the refund of the 1900 reparation for naval construction and send the bill for approval.¹⁹⁷ There was no response from the government.

In 1932, Chen wrote a naval report to *Shen Bao*. He pointed out that the annual naval construction budget after the establishment of the Ministry of Navy was 11,310,573 Chinese Dollar.¹⁹⁸ Yet this number was just an expectation, not an actual capital; without funding on incidental expenses, naval construction could not be carried out effectively. Incidental funding also came from the balance of the Ministry, the profits of the Jiangnan Shipyard, and donations from other provinces. In 1934, the decision of the Ministry of Navy to build four destroyers was approved by the Executive Yuan. This cost around 190 million. Though Chen had thrice written to the Ministry of Finance for budget, the construction fee never arrived as scheduled, and finally the scheme could only be dropped.¹⁹⁹ Despite of the hindrances to acquiring incidental funding, Chen gathered sufficient funding for ship construction and maintenance. For example, the satisfactory profit from the Jiangnan Shipyard was used to subsidize maintenance fees. The statistics from the Annual Report of Jiangnan Dockyard 海軍江南造船所工作報告書, published in 1933, revealed that the deposit for the maintenance of ships were mostly from the profits of the Jiangnan Shipyard.²⁰⁰ Chen also regulated that all concurrent monitoring officers received no extra salaries, so as to reduce expenses.

After the efforts of Chen and other high-ranking officers in the Ministry of Navy, the regular expenses funding received monthly was about \$400,000, the annual funding around \$4,800,000. Yet payments were often delayed after the 918 Incident and 128 Incident. In Chen's speech during 2 June 1942, he highlighted that funding continued to be very limited:

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p.26.

¹⁹⁸ Shen Bao 申報, 10th June 1932, p.4.

¹⁹⁹ Shaokuan Chen 陳紹寬, "Di sanci qingbo jianzao quju jian jingfei" 第三次請撥建造驅逐艦經費' (Third Request for Funding To Construct Destroyer), in Gao, *Chen Shaokuan wenji*, pp. 162-163.

²⁰⁰ Shaokuan Chen 陳紹寬, *Jiangnan haijun zaochuan suo baogao shu* 江南海軍造船所報告書(Report of Jiangnan Naval Shipyard) n.p., 1933), pp. 176-177.

With the monthly funding before the outbreak of war no more than \$720,000, including medical expenses, pensions, funeral expenses, construction cost, maintenance fee, training expense, expenses of oil, coal, soldiers' customs, and equipment, the budget was very tight.²⁰¹

This showed that the annual funding of the Ministry was in reality fewer than 8,640,000. Deducting the regular expenses of around \$ 4,800,000, the incidental funding per year was about \$ 3,840,000. It is no wonder that the construction of warships was stagnant under such a constrained budget.

The ratio of national expenses used in navy further illuminated the inadequacy of naval funding. It accounted for less than one per cent of the total military expenditure. In 1934, Chen pointed out that the Chinese naval expenditure was only equivalent to 1/260 of the British and 1/115 of the Japanese one.²⁰² In an annual report printed on Shen Bao 申報, the ratios of naval funding to army funding of foreign powers were about 1:1-4; Britain, the U.S., and Japan even invested more on their navies than on their armies.²⁰³ As an enemy of China, Japan not only had a naval funding much greater than China did, she had been devoted to naval development for decades.

The statistics showed that the annual income of the Ministry from 1930 to 1935 accounted for only three per cent of China's total military expenses. This was only one per cent of China's total financial expenses. In the Nationalist government's national defence budget for the year 1937, the construction fee of the navy was less than two per cent of that of the army, and less than four per cent of that of the air force. It was only enough to build a small gunboat. The funding from the government was barely enough for the salary of officers and the basic operation

²⁰¹ Shaokuan Chen 陳紹寬, 'Haijun jianghua' 海軍講話 (Speech to Naval Officers and Soldiers), in Gao, *Chen Shaokuan wenji*, p. 303.

²⁰² Chen, 'Hai Zhan', p. 157.

²⁰³ Hai junbu 海軍部, 'Haijun Nianbao, 1939 海軍年報, 1939' (Naval Report, 1939), in Yin Mengxia 殷夢霞 and Li Qiang 李強 (eds.), *Guojia tushuguan cang Minguo junshi dang'an chubian, di jiu ce* 國家圖書館藏民國軍事檔案初編·第九冊 (First Series of Republican Military Archive in the National Library, vol. 9) (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe, 2009), p. 187.

of the ministry, not to say the development of the navy. The Executive Yuan and Military Affairs Commission mostly rejected Chen's ideas on grounds of financial difficulty. Up to 1937, the navy was equipped with warships that barely exceeded 60,000 tonnes; these were mostly old ones inherited from the late Qing era. This difference in naval funding between China and other naval powers decided the fate of China's naval development.

The Ministry of Navy had undergone numerous hardships for fund-raising, but the utilization of these funds was another problem. While the regular expenses determined whether the Ministry of Navy could operate regularly, the incidental expenses decided the scale of the navy. To support naval expansion, Chen often diverted regular expenses to incidental expenses. Under such a scheme, the salaries of naval officers remained stagnant. Chen insisted to invest the limited capital into the construction of warships, leaving little capital for the construction of naval bases and for the improvement of weapons.²⁰⁴ Under such circumstances, his hope of constructing the Xiangshan Port as a military port could not come to reality. Still, the rise in the number of large-gun warships had a certain effect on strengthening their firepower.

Under Chen's leadership, the Ministry built more than 30 warships. Except for '*Ninghai*,' the Ministry built all other ships through their own funds. By selling obscene warships, artillery and barges, the Ministry operated within a tight budget. Chen gave up his ministerial allowance of \$20,000 monthly for the construction of warships. In addition, the two independent brigades of Marine Corps' monthly funding was cut from \$55,000 to \$15,000.²⁰⁵ Working within a strained budget, the Minister constrained the budget of the Jiangnan Shipyard. Other costs, including labour, were not covered. Wages were then drawn from the income gained from the maintenance of commercial ships. Adding to the already troubled waters, the inadequacy of naval funding often prompted illegal acts. As recalled by Li Shijia 李世甲, then General Secretary of Naval General Affairs Office, 'the New Xindi Gate was brought under control on my advice, and Mao Zhongcai was sent as the instructor to withhold the tax

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 126.

²⁰⁵ Wen, *Jiu Zhongguo haijun midang*, p. 113.

income and search the Chutong warship. \$500,000 was on hold, which was supposed to be funding for naval construction.’²⁰⁶

To conclude, the total funding of the naval construction in 1937 was \$80,000,000; organ operation accounted for \$30,000,000. The size of human resources was between 16,00 and 19,000. Compared to that of 1929 standards, it was behind by 2,000. The navy was weaker than the army in the first place; the reduction of personnel further intensified this vulnerability. About \$20,000,000 was spent for warship building; the Central Fleet under the Ministry of Navy grew from fifty ships of 36,000 tonnes in 1929 to fifty-three ships of 60,000 tonnes in 1937. This growth was of limited scale, but it was all Chen could manage during such a difficult time.

Subordinates’ backlash

Determined to uproot corruption in the Ministry, Chen launched a reform to transform the public fee system. This irritated the captains, who were then enrolled into the Naval University (established 1934) and were further taught by Japanese instructors. A rule was set that no more than one-fifth of the public fee could be brought into the university, and the remaining would go to the Ministry, who would be in charge of allocating general expenses. This would drain almost all the benefits the captains acquired from public fees. Unwilling to be placed under such strict measures, they accused Chen of leaning towards Japan in a jointly signed petition to Chiang. Rumours of an internal revolt spread across the Ministry, but nobody informed Chen. He eventually resigned but to no avail. Middle and low-ranking officials stood by Chen and Chiang could not find a replacement; Chen thus stayed in the position.

This not only exposed the conflict between the Minister and the captains, but also that between the captains and their subordinates. It was obvious that factions had further formed within the Ministry itself. The captains snatched the funds supposedly for reform purposes. The interests went to the captains, but the responsibility fell on the shoulders of the vice-captains and the chief engineers— this fuelled their

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

opposition against the system and tore the Ministry apart. By enfeebling the captains, Chen hoped to recapture funding for the maintenance of warships. This explains why some officers stood on Chen's side; they did not want to see the greedy captains dominate the Ministry. Therefore, vice-captains mostly supported Chen, as seen from his return to the Ministry and the temporary abandonment of his resignation.

Although this incident ended in Chen's favour, a paradox surfaced. Only the leading insurgents Lin Yuanquan and Gao Xianshen were transferred from warships 'Yingrui' and 'Ninghai'; other captains remained in tact. Gao Xianshen even returned to his old post as 'Ninghai's' captain in 1936. Such settlement, rather than talent-based placement, was the result of incapability to remove the rebels. As the admiral and the leader of the Ministry, Chen had no power to restore military discipline. Once the reforms intervened with the vested interests of the captains, they immediately rose in protest. Chen realized this upon returning to his position. He was powerless in face of malpractices that had already permeated the system as a whole.

The Minister's Personality

Staunch and forthright, Chen was a leader with good morality, but he was not easy to work with. He was blunt and not very cautious in speech. When he attended conferences convened by the Ministry of Military Affairs or Commission of Military Affairs, he found it hard to deal with situations that did not go as he had desired. Chen was also a man of pride and arrogance: when the Ministry needed enormous amounts of funding, he never fully revealed this problem to other officials.²⁰⁷ This meant that his hope of 600,000 tonnes of warships and military ports of Jiangzhou Bay, Dapeng Bay and Xiangshan Harbor could not be achieved by the end of the day.

Indeed, not many have highlighted how Chen's personality worked as a hindrance to his naval reforms. Scholars have acknowledged widely that he was just and fair, but he also had personal flaws. His conflict with Ouyang Ge, for instance, exemplified how

²⁰⁷ Zhi Jin 金智, *Qingtian bairi qixia minguo haijun de botao qifu* 青天白日旗下民國海軍的波濤起伏 (The Ups and Downs of the Navy under the Nationalist Government) (Taipei: Duli zuojia, 2015), p. 259.

Chen went against others without reservation. This, unfortunately, only led to Chen's repression and later paved the way for his downfall after the Second Sino-Japanese War. Under great financial pressure because of his strained relationship with Chiang's team, notably Chen Cheng and Song Ziwen 宋子文, Chen insisted on going his own way, instead of tailoring his measures in favour of Chiang. His straight-forwardness was on the one hand a cherished asset, but on the other, it left him stubborn and uncooperative.

Chen threatened to resign in numerous occasions, particularly when in face of adversities. As early as in December 1928, he tendered his first resignation when the government refused to set up the Ministry of Navy. Chiang persuaded him to stay; from thereon, Chen repeatedly vented his anger by threats to resign. Up to 1933, he already tendered resignation six different times. In 1935, he once again asked for resignation from the government, saying:

In the years of leading the Ministry, however hard I worked, I have borne no fruit. No doubt the scant funding is a problem, but my deficiency of knowledge should also bear a large share of responsibility. In this difficult time when national defence is carrying such a weight, when the navy still awaits more progress, the responsibility is so great – I am unworthy and not eligible for this post. I should only entreat the government to permit me to resign as the Minister of Navy.²⁰⁸

Even in the eve of the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, Chen also asked for resignation. He was, to a certain extent, using his resignation as a bargaining chip for more resources to the navy. This worked sometimes, but it was also a reflection of his flawed personality. He should have managed to persuade the government for more support, but instead, he distanced himself from the dissidents and destroyed relationships with other officials.

Conclusion

²⁰⁸ Xiaodong Su 蘇小東, *Zhonghua minguo haijun shishi rizhi* 中華民國海軍史事日誌 (Daily Records of Republican China's Navy; Beijing: Jiuzhou tushu chubanshe, 1999), p. 512.

There is no doubt that Chen was dedicated to promoting China's naval reform. After he was appointed as the Minister, he did not hesitate to introduce a series of measures to foster naval modernization. He worked on naval unification when the Northeast Navy and Guangdong Navy were troubled in internal disorder, but his plans failed at last. His suggestion of reorganizing the Ministry under the command of Central government was left unsettled. The birth of the School of Submarines and Motor Torpedo Boat frustrated him, but he could not change this reality. His attempt on naval unification under the Ministry ended in vain.

Chen was also keen on buying light-cruisers and produced gunboats to strengthen the power of the Central fleet. For the sake of fostering naval talents, he purchased '*Ninghai*' from Japan's Harima Shipyard and installed numerous weapons. Working within a tight budget, the Ministry constructed a warship based '*Ninghai*.' Under Chen, the Ministry constructed ten gunboats within three years. Despite these attempts, China's naval power continued to severely lag behind that of Japan's. Technological backwardness and limited resources barred him from building larger naval vessels.

Chen Shaokuan understood that the future of naval development depended on naval education. He thus sent students overseas. Most of the naval students were sent to Britain, perhaps because he believed that Britain was the leading force in naval development. Besides Britain, Chen also sought for assistance from Japan by purchasing '*Ninghai*' and hiring Japanese naval officers to teach in the Naval College. The occurrence of the Shanghai Incident, however, tainted Chen's reputation owing to his collaboration with Japan. This led to cries for his resignation, which left Chen disappointed and frustrated. This thesis concludes that Chen Shaokuan's role in strengthening China's navy should not be overlooked; he was a man with a great vision but in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Glossary

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| Admiral 海軍上將 | Department of Naval Aircraft in Shanghai 上海海軍飛機處 |
| Alfred Thayer Mahan 馬漢 | Destroyers 驅逐艦 |
| Annual Report of Jiangnan Dockyard 海軍江南造船所工作報告書 | Ding Jie 丁傑 |
| Beiping Military Affairs Commission 北平軍事委員會 | Ding Mocun 丁默村 |
| Beiyang Fleet 北洋艦隊 | Du Xigui 杜錫珪 |
| Board of War 兵部 | Emperor Xuantong 宣統皇帝 |
| Captain 海軍上校 | Empress Dowager Cixi 慈禧太后 |
| Captains 艦長 | Ensign 海軍少尉 |
| Central Fleet 中央艦隊 | Executive Yuan 行政院 |
| Changjiang Fleet 長江艦隊 | Fei Ting 飛霆 |
| Chen Ce 陳策 | Fei Ying 飛鷹 |
| Chen Jitang 陳濟棠 | Feng Zhichong 馮志沖 |
| Chen Shaokuan 陳紹寬 | First Sino Japanese War 甲午戰爭 |
| Cheng Biguang 程璧光 | Gao Xianshen 高憲申 |
| Chiang Kai-Shek 蔣介石 | Gao Yutang 高友唐 |
| Commander 海軍中校 | General Secretary of Naval General Affairs Office 海軍總務司司長 |
| Commander of the Northeast Border Defence Office 東北邊防司令長官公署 | Gong Sheng 公勝 |
| Commission of Naval Materials' Purchase 海軍材料處 | Guan Jizhou 關繼周 |
| Control Yuan 監察院 | Guangdong Navy 廣東艦隊 |
| Cruisers 巡洋艦 | Guangzhou Bay 廣州灣 |
| Decday Talk 十日談 | Hai Chi 海圻 |

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| Hai Rong 海容 | Lin Jianzhang 林建章 |
| Hai Tian 海天 | Lin Sen 林森 |
| Hai Zhou 海周 | Lin Yuanquan 林元銓 |
| Haining 海寧 | Lin Zun 林遵 |
| Huang Hanliang 黃漢樑 | Liu Kunyi 劉坤一 |
| Hundred Day's Reform 百日維新 | Lu Deyuan 呂德元 |
| Incidental Expenses 造艦費 | Mawei Naval School 馬尾海軍學校 |
| January 28 Incident 一二八事變 | Min Quan gunboat 民權炮艦 |
| Japanese Harima Shipyard 播磨造船廠 | Mines 水雷 |
| Jiang Xiyuan 姜西園 | Minister of Ministry of Navy 海軍部部長 |
| Jiangnan Naval Academy 江南水師學堂 | Ministry of Finance 財政部 |
| Jiangnan Shipyard 江南造船所 | Ministry of Foreign Affairs 外交部 |
| Jiangning 江寧 | Ministry of Munition 軍需處 |
| Jing Qing 鏡清 | Ministry of Navy 海軍部 |
| Kang Ji 康濟 | Monitoring Pilotage Regulation 要港引水監督條例 |
| Kawasaki Shipyard 三菱造船廠 | My Real Experience in the Old Navy 我在舊海軍親歷記 |
| Late Qing Reform 晚清改革 | Nanyang Fleet 南洋艦隊 |
| Li Daozhang 李道彰 | National Defence and Operational Plan in 1937 民國二十六年度國防作 戰計畫 |
| Li Dingxin 李鼎新 | Naval Communique 海軍公報 |
| Li Shijia 李世甲 | Naval Magazine 海軍雜誌 |
| Liaodong Peninsula 遼東半島 | Naval School of Airplanes and Submarines 海軍飛潛學校 |
| Lieutenant 海軍上尉 | Naval University 海軍大學 |
| Lieutenant Commander 海軍少校 | |

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| Naval Yamen 海軍衙門 | Shehui Xinwen 社會新聞 |
| Ning Hai 寧海 | Shen Bao 申報 |
| Northeast Navy 東北艦隊 | Shen Honglie 沈鴻烈 |
| Oriental Magazine 東方雜誌 | Shen Shoukun 沈壽堃 |
| Ouyang Ge 歐陽格 | Shi Fusheng 史復生 |
| Paris Peace Conference 巴黎和會 | Shidai Gonglun 時代公論 |
| Periodical of Navy 海軍期刊 | Shiri Tan 十日談 |
| Public Fee System 公費制 | Southern Manchurian Railway 南滿鐵路 |
| Qing Dao 青島 | Sub- Lieutenant 海軍中尉 |
| Rear Admiral 海軍少將 | Sun Yat-sen 孫逸仙 |
| Reform on the Navy in order to Defend the Japanese Invasion 徹底改造海軍並整飭海防以抗暴日案 | Suning 肅寧 |
| regular expenses 常務經費 | Tenno 天皇 |
| Report of Inspecting Foreign Naval Strength 考察列強海軍報告 書 | The Bureau of Aeronautics [美國] 航空局 |
| Sa Zhenbing 薩鎮冰 | The Central Air Force School 中央空軍學校 |
| Sanmen Bay 三門灣 | The Draft of Military Construction for National Defence, Naval Part 國防軍事建設計畫草案. 海軍 |
| School of Coastal Guard 航警海校 | The Nationalist Defense Plan 國防計畫 |
| School of Marine Corps 海軍陸戰隊講武堂 | The Naval Authority during the National Calamity 國難期中的海軍當局 |
| School of Submarines and Motor Torpedo Boats 電雷學校 | Third Fleet 第三艦隊 |
| Scramble of Concession 列強瓜分狂潮 | Tōgō Heihachirō 東鄉平八郎 |
| Second Sino- Japanese War 中日抗戰 | Tong Ji 通濟 |
| Shao Hongji 邵鴻基 | Torpedo Boats 魚雷艇 |
| | Torpedoes 魚雷 |

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| Training Institute of Naval Pilotage in Yangzi River 海軍揚子江引港傳習所 | 嚴復 Yao Xiguang 姚錫光 |
| Treaty of Versailles 凡爾賽條約 | Ying Rui 應瑞 |
| Vice- Admiral 海軍中將 | Yong Nü 永綏 |
| Vickers 維克斯造船廠 | Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 |
| Wang Jingwei 汪精衛 | Zai Chun 載淳 |
| Wang Pingzheng 王平政 | Zai Feng 載豐 |
| Wang Shouyan 王壽延 | Zai Xun 載洵 |
| Wei Haiwei 威海衛 | Zhang Xueliang 張學良 |
| Weining 威寧 | Zhang Zeshan 張澤善 |
| Xia Sunpeng 夏孫鵬 | Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 |
| Xian Ning Gunboat 咸寧炮艦 | Zhao He 肇和 |
| Xiangshan Port 象山港 | Zheng Yingfu 鄭穎孚 |
| Xie Gangzhe 謝剛哲 | Zhou Fu 周馥 |
| Xunyang Fleet 巡洋艦隊 | Zhou Lisheng 周立生 |
| Yan Fu | |

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