

**FROM NATIONAL CRISIS TO WARTIME: THE
CHINESE HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY
DURING THE ANTI-JAPANESE WAR PERIOD,
1931-1945**

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by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CEC	Central Executive Committee
KMT	Kuomintang
NSA	National Student Association
PSNSU	Peiping Student National Salvation Union
RJNSA	Resist Japan National Salvation Association
SHAC	The Second History Archives of China

LIST OF GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Anti-Japanese National Salvation Association	An organization founded in 1935 by intellectuals, educators, and activists aiming to mobilize cultural and political resources for resistance against Japanese aggression.
Ba Jin (1904–2005)	A prominent writer and public intellectual whose wartime essays and speeches reflected anti-Japanese sentiments and influenced student activism.
Beiping (Peking)	The name used for the city of Beijing between 1928 and 1949 when it was under the control of the Nationalist Government. During the Republican period, it was a major educational and intellectual center, home to prestigious institutions such as Peking University and Tsinghua University. The city's student movements and educational reforms played a significant role in the discourse of national salvation and anti-Japanese resistance.
Chen Lifu (1900–2001)	Minister of Education (1938–1944) under the Nationalist Government, known for centralizing educational governance and implementing wartime education reforms with strong ideological content.
Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975)	Leader of the Nationalist Government; he played a decisive role in educational planning, viewing universities as tools for political indoctrination and national unity.
Chinese Communist Party (CCP)	The ruling party in Communist base areas during the war. It developed a pragmatic, cadre-oriented education system designed to serve revolutionary goals and wartime mobilization.
Guomin Dang (Kuomintang, KMT)	The ruling party of the Nationalist Government during the war, responsible for mainstream education policies in China's rear areas.
Guomin Zhengfu (Nationalist Government)	The central government under the Kuomintang during the war, based in Nanjing and later Chongqing. Played a dominant role in directing wartime education.
Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region	Communist base area covering Hebei, Chahar, and Rehe provinces. Known for experimenting with mass education and literacy campaigns.
Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu Border Region	Another major Communist-controlled base, spanning parts of Shanxi, Hebei, Shandong, and Henan. Hosted revolutionary universities and cadre schools.
Jin-Sui Border Region	A CCP base area in Shanxi and Suiyuan that implemented rural-focused educational models.

Jiu Yi Ba Shibian (Mukden Incident)	The 1931 Japanese invasion of Manchuria, widely seen as the start of China's 14-year War of Resistance and a turning point in educational mobilization.
Kangri Zhanzheng (War of Resistance Against Japan)	The Chinese name for the Anti-Japanese War (1931–1945), which reshaped national education policies and university development.
Lianda (National Southwestern Associated University)	A wartime university formed by the merger of Peking, Tsinghua, and Nankai universities in Kunming. A symbol of intellectual resilience.
Mao Zedong	Chairman of the CCP, his thoughts on education shaped the ideological framework of CCP-controlled base area universities.
May Fourth Movement	An anti-imperialist, cultural, and political movement growing out of student protests in Beijing in 1919, which influenced the rise of modern education and political consciousness in Republican China.
Mei Yiqi	Renowned educator and president of Tsinghua University, known for balancing academic excellence and national service during wartime.
Minzu Jiaoyu (National Education / Ethnic Education)	An approach used in both KMT and CCP areas to integrate ethnic minorities into the national education system.
Ministry of Education (MOE)	The highest state education authority under the KMT, which oversaw all public universities and education policies during wartime.
National Crisis Education	A transitional educational movement (1931–1937) that emerged in response to the Mukden Incident, emphasizing civic duty, technical learning, and national survival.
National Salvation Association (Jiuwang Xiehui)	Civic groups composed of intellectuals and students advocating for resistance through education and reform.
New Life Movement (Xin Shenghuo Yundong)	A political movement led by Chiang Kai-shek, emphasizing moral education, discipline, and Confucian values in public life, including in schools.
North China Incident (1935)	A Japanese political and military intervention in North China that intensified calls for “national salvation education” and exposed governmental passivity.
People's Republic of China (PRC)	The state established by the Chinese Communist Party in 1949, inheriting many wartime educational practices developed in base areas.
University Relocation	The large-scale movement of Chinese universities to western and southwestern China during the war to escape Japanese occupation and continue operations.
Wang Shijie	A prominent Chinese educator, politician, and liberal intellectual who served as Minister of Education in the Nationalist Government during the 1930s.

Yan'an University	A key CCP institution founded during the war, combining ideological, military, and practical education in base areas.
Zhu Jiahua	Minister of Education (1931–1933, 1944–1945), known for promoting educational reform and quality improvement during turbulent times.

**DARI KRISIS KEBANGSAAN KE ZAMAN PERANG: DASAR
PENGAJIAN TINGGI CHINA SEMASA PERANG ANTI-JEPUN, 1931-1945**

ABSTRAK

Tesis ini menghuraikan bagaimana dasar pendidikan tinggi China berkembang semasa tempoh Perang China-Jepun Kedua dari 1931 hingga 1945. Walaupun kajian lepas sering menganggap pendidikan masa perang sebagai tindak balas pasif terhadap gangguan luar, kajian ini berpendapat bahawa dasar pendidikan menjadi tapak rundingan politik, pertarungan ideologi, dan konfigurasi semula institusi. Penyelidikan ini menggunakan pendekatan analisis dokumen, menggunakan arkib dokumen kerajaan dan universiti, wacana awam, akhbar dan diari oleh tokoh penting. Analisis berpusat pada dua dimensi: (1) bagaimana keadaan krisis mentakrifkan semula matlamat dan fungsi pendidikan tinggi; (2) bagaimana negara, komuniti pendidikan, kumpulan pelajar dan kuasa politik — termasuk kedua-dua kerajaan Nasionalis dan Parti Komunis China — membentuk keputusan dasar secara bersama. Penemuan utama mendedahkan bahawa dasar pendidikan tinggi semasa perang tidak ditentukan oleh negara sahaja, tetapi muncul daripada interaksi dinamik antara arahan pentadbiran, perdebatan intelektual, dan pertimbangan strategik di bawah krisis. Peperangan bukan sekadar latar belakang tetapi pemangkin aktif yang membentuk semula tujuan pendidikan tinggi. Penemuan ini mencabar naratif linear pemodenan dan memfokus kepada kesan jangka panjang terhadap institusi pendidikan daripada reformasi daripada reformasi yang didorong oleh krisis. Kajian ini menyumbang kepada pemahaman tentang fungsi pendidikan dalam pembinaan negara dan pentadbiran dalam era krisis.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates how Chinese higher education policy evolved during the period of the Second Sino-Japanese War from 1931 to 1945. While previous studies often treat wartime education as a passive response to external disruption, this study argues that education policy became a site of political negotiation, ideological contestation, and institutional reconfiguration. The research employs a document analysis approach, drawing on government archives and university documents, public discourse, newspaper and diaries by key figures. The analysis centers on two dimensions: (1) how crisis conditions redefined the goals and functions of higher education; (2) how state, educational community, student group and political forces — including both the Nationalist government and the Chinese Communist Party — jointly shaped policy decisions. Key findings reveal that wartime higher education policy was not dictated by the state alone, but emerged from dynamic interactions between administrative directives, intellectual debates, and strategic considerations under crisis. War was not merely a background but an active catalyst that reshaped the very purpose of higher education. These findings challenge linear narratives of modernization and highlight the long-term institutional consequences of crisis-driven reforms. The study contributes to the understanding of education's function in state-building and crisis governance.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

In 1840, Britain's deployment of formidable warships forcefully opened China's doors. The twilight years of the late Qing Empire could no longer afford a peaceful slumber, compelling the empire's elites to actively seek ways to save the nation. The earliest initiatives were undertaken by enlightened individuals within the ruling class, who, under the slogan of "self-strengthening and seeking wealth," established several modern arsenals. This period of reform is known as the "Self-Strengthening Movement." To foster technical and translation expertise, the proponents of this movement founded numerous educational institutions, marking the inception of modern higher education in China.

In the late Qing Dynasty, external threats not only persisted but intensified, accelerating the transformation of the educational system. Schools began to proliferate in China, gradually encroaching upon the traditional domain of the imperial examination system. In 1903, Yuan Shikai and others petitioned for the abolition of the imperial examinations. By 1906, this millennia-old examination system was officially terminated. The late Qing reforms introduced a new educational system, leading to the establishment of numerous higher schools and universities, thereby forming the initial framework of modern higher education in China.

In 1912, the establishment of the Republic of China marked the advent of a golden era for modern higher education. Initially, under the governance of the Beiyang Government, the weakening of central authority allowed for greater

autonomy in education. This period saw numerous educators eager to implement their educational philosophies, driven by the conviction that education could save the nation. New educational systems, along with the ideas brought back by students who had studied in Japan and the United States, gradually took center stage, leading to significant reforms in the educational sector.

In 1927, the Nanjing Nationalist Government assumed power, achieving nominal unification of the nation. In its early years, the government was preoccupied with the Northern Expedition and internal conflicts, leaving little attention for education, and thus no clear higher education policy was formulated during this period. It was not until Japan's initiation of the Mukden Incident on September 18, 1931, that the situation began to change. Student movements intensified, and the education sector actively sought solutions, with discussions on "national crisis education" becoming increasingly prominent. However, the government's response remained sluggish, and the then-Minister of Education, Wang Shijie, did not implement effective measures to address the situation. As Japan's aggression expanded, culminating in the "July 7th Incident" in 1937, discussions on "national crisis education" evolved into debates on "wartime education" and "education in extraordinary times." Under these internal and external pressures, the future trajectory of Chinese higher education became a subject of critical importance.

Tracing the origins of modern Chinese universities reveals their emergence alongside the invasions by Western powers and the concurrent processes of China's struggle for survival and political democratization. This context elucidates why, during the period from 1931 to 1945, Chinese higher education did not

stagnate but rather continued to thrive despite the tumultuous times. When the nation's survival was at stake, Chinese universities naturally stood at the forefront of the struggle, fulfilling their inherent mission. This paper aims to study the trajectory of Chinese higher education from 1931 to 1945, examining its development, the influence of warfare on its formation, the reasons behind its particular evolution, and the transformations it underwent during this critical period.

1.2 Literature Review

Research on higher education in China during the War of Resistance against Japan is a popular focus among scholars. Using the keywords “War of Resistance” and “higher education” in the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), there are a total of 907 articles. Modern Chinese history and higher education each account for a significant portion, with 513 and 546 articles respectively. This trend has been steadily increasing since 2012. In this context, previous studies are categorized and reviewed by topic.

1.2.1 Research on the Massive Migration of Higher Education

Research on the internal migration of higher education institutions has been a significant focus for scholars, resulting in a relatively complete and comprehensive body of work. This research can be broadly categorized into two main areas: the migration of higher education institutions and their interaction with local regions post-migration.

1.2.1(a) Research on the Internal Migration of Higher Education Institutions

Early studies mostly conducted macro-level examinations of internal migration. Yu Zixia investigated various circumstances where changes in the war situation during the War of Resistance led to the migration of higher education institutions. This included movements to various provinces in the “rear area,” other remote and safe areas within the provinces, as well as relocating to nearby areas under the protection of British and American forces, revealing the role and significance of internal migration of universities.¹ Xu Guoli’s study “Several Issues Regarding the Internal Migration of Higher Education Institutions During the War of Resistance” supplements aspects not covered by Yu’s work, focusing on the timing, quantity, stages, and directions of internal migration routes of higher education institutions during that period.²

The internal migration of universities during the War of Resistance was undoubtedly a response to wartime conditions, but the arrangements made by the Nationalist government for these relocations were not uniform. This inconsistency reflects the government's intentions to adjust the national educational layout, develop the western regions, and redefine the roles of various universities. Zhang Yongchun uses the example of Jinan University to illustrate the complex aspects of the Nationalist government’s Ministry of Education in formulating plans for the internal migration of universities during the War of Resistance.³ Wang Li and

¹ Zixia Yu 余子侠, “Kangzhan shiqi gaoxiao neiqian ji qi lishi yiyi 抗战时期高校内迁及其历史意义” [University Relocation during the Anti-Japanese War Period and Its Historical Significance], *Jindai shi yanjiu 近代史研究* [Modern History Research], no. 6 (1995).

² Guoli Xu 徐国立, “Guanyu ‘Kangzhan shiqi gaoxiao neiqian’ de jige wenti 关于“抗战时期高校内迁”的几个问题” [Several Issues Regarding ‘University Relocation during the Anti-Japanese War Period’], *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu 抗日战争研究* [Research on the Anti-Japanese War], no. 2 (1998).

³ Yongchun Zhang 张永春, “Kangzhan shiqi Jinan daxue ‘neiqian’ wenti 抗战时期暨南大学 ‘内迁’ 问题” [The Issue of ‘Internal Migration’ of Jinan University During the War of Resistance Against Japan],

colleagues examines the issue of internal migration of universities from the perspective of spatial adjustment in Chinese higher education. They argue that during the War of Resistance, the internal migration of universities was both a responsive measure to wartime needs by the Nationalist government and a requirement of its strategy for developing the western regions. The study also provides an initial assessment of its effectiveness.⁴

Recent studies increasingly focus on the more complex aspects and implications within the planning and decision-making of university internal migration. These studies often delve into individual cases at a micro-level to explore the intricacies involved. Guo Shuang and Liang Chen⁵, Zhao Feifei⁶ explores the different aspects of internal migration between church-run universities and national universities. The key factor for church-run universities in deciding whether to migrate internally lies in their own institutional decisions. Additionally, consideration must be given to the attitudes of the church and the Chinese government. Han Shu examines the operation of Shanghai's educational institutions during the war. The study argues that during the "island" period, the Nationalist government attempted to supervise and manage the stay-behind universities in Shanghai through various channels. However, the implementation of Ministry of Education policies often faced challenges, resulting in fragile

Jinan daxue xuebao 暨南大学学报 (Zhaxue shehui kexue ban 哲学社会科学版) [Journal of Jinan University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)], no. 6 (2006).

⁴ Li Wang 王莉, Yi Hu 胡毅, and Jiqing Liu 刘继清, "Kangzhan shiqi de gaoxiao qianyi yu gaodeng jiaoyu de tiaozheng 抗战时期的高校迁移与高等教育的调整" [Internal Relocation of Universities and the Adjustment of Higher Education during the War of Resistance Against Japan], *Yunnan shifan daxue xuebao* 云南师范大学学报 (Zhaxue shehui kexue ban 哲学社会科学版) [Journal of Yunnan Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)], vol. 42, no. 4 (July 2010).

⁵ Shuang Guo and Chen Liang. "Liushou haishi xiqian: Kangzhan shiqi Jinling Daxue de qianyi jueze" [留守还是西迁: 抗战时期金陵大学的迁移抉择; To Stay or to Relocate: Nanjing University's Migration Decision during the War of Resistance]. *Minguo Yanjiu* (Republican China Studies), Spring 2019.

⁶ Feifei Zhao 赵飞飞, "Quanmian Kangzhan chuqi Jinling daxue neiqian juece yanjiu 全面抗战初期金陵大学内迁决策研究" [A Study of the Relocation Decision of Jinling University in the Early Stage of the Comprehensive Anti-Japanese War], *Shixue yuekan* 史学月刊 [Historical Monthly], no. 2 (2021).

relationships between the Ministry of Education and these universities. After the outbreak of the Pacific War, the “island” period ceased to exist, leading to almost severed ties between the Ministry of Education and these universities, each of which made different political choices. This study offers a novel perspective and reveals some realities faced by the stay-behind universities during wartime.⁷

1.2.1(b) Research on the Interaction between Wartime Universities and Various Sectors of Society

After the extensive internal migration of universities during wartime, their interactions with local governments and the Ministry of Education became increasingly close. In recent years, more scholars have focused on universities as integral parts of the broader social fabric and how they interact with various sectors of society.

The earliest attempt at this was Wang Dongjie’s doctoral dissertation, “Nationalization of Universities from Political, Social, and Cultural Perspectives: A Case Study of Sichuan University (1925-1939).” Wang examined the process of university nationalization within the broader context of historical development, exploring the interaction between academia and politics.⁸ Mao Lihong examines the political, economic, and cultural interaction between numerous universities that relocated to Yunnan during wartime and the local region, serving as a national higher education force.⁹ He Fangyu explores the rise and fall of the mentorship

⁷ Shu Han 韩戍, “Kangzhan shiqi de Guomin zhengfu jiaoyubu yu liushou Shanghai gaoxiao 抗战时期的国民政府教育部与留守上海高校” [The Nationalist Government’s Ministry of Education and Universities in Occupied Shanghai during the War of Resistance Against Japan], *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu 抗日战争研究* [Research on the Anti-Japanese War], no. 2 (2018).

⁸ Dongjie Wang 王东杰, “Zhengzhi, shehui yu wenhua shiye xia de daxue ‘guolihua’: Yi Sichuan daxue weili (1925 – 1939) 政治、社会与文化视野下的大学 ‘国立化’: 以四川大学为例(1925 – 1939)” [University ‘Nationalization’ from the Perspective of Politics, Society, and Culture: A Case Study of Sichuan University (1925 – 1939)], PhD diss., Sichuan University, 2002.

⁹ Lihong Mao 毛立红, “Kangzhan shiqi guojia gaodeng jiaoyu yu Yunnan difang hudong yanjiu 抗战时期国家高等教育与云南地方互动研究” [A Study of the Interaction between National Higher Education and Local Society in Yunnan during the War of Resistance Against Japan], PhD diss., Yunnan University, 2011.

system at Zhejiang University. It provides insight into the political challenges faced by universities when national authorities intervened in higher education during wartime.¹⁰ Jiang Baolin examines the changing of university presidents, shedding light on one aspect of the political culture of universities in the rear during the wartime.¹¹ In his article *The Wartime Relocation and Reconstruction of Central University*, Jiang Baolin argues that Central University's relocation to Chongqing was "the most thorough and successful among all universities that relocated during the war" He highlights the complex relationships that emerged during the relocation process between the university and various political entities, including the Ministry of Education, Chiang Kai-shek, the Kuomintang Central Committee, and local governments.¹² Han Shu's "The Struggle Between Military and Academic Institutions and the Relationship with Politics During the Anti-Japanese War: A Study of the Transition from Private Dahsia University to National Dahsia University" examines the power struggle between Dahsia University and the Ministry of Education during the wartime, where the university reluctantly conceded in fear of losing access to important resources controlled by the board of directors.¹³ The fate of Zhejiang University, which also relocated to Guizhou during the war, was quite different. According to He Fangyu's "Resource Allocation and Power Struggles: A Focus on the Relocation of Zhejiang University

¹⁰ Fangyu He 何方昱, "Guojia quanli de qinru yu daxue zizhi de nanju 国家权力的侵入与大学自治的难局" [The Infiltration of State Power and the Predicament of University Autonomy], *Shilin 史林 [Historical Review]*, no. 6 (2009).

¹¹ Baolin Jiang 蒋宝麟, "Kangzhan shiqi de guojia yu daxue zhengzhi wenhua: Zhongyang daxue 'yichang' yanjiu 抗战时期的国家与大学政治文化:中央大学'易长'研究" [The State and University Political Culture during the War of Resistance: A Study of Presidential Turnover at Central University], *Shilin 史林 [Historical Review]*, no. 3 (2009).

¹² Baolin Jiang 蒋宝麟, "Kangzhan shiqi Zhongyang daxue de neiqian yu chongjian 抗战时期中央大学的内迁与重建" [The Wartime Relocation and Reconstruction of Central University], *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu 抗日战争研究 [Research on the Anti-Japanese War]*, no. 3 (2012).

¹³ Shu Han 韩戌, "Kangzhan shiqi de buxiao zhi zheng yu zhengxue guanxi: Yi sili Daxia daxue gai guoli fengbo wei zhongxin de yanjiu 抗战时期的部校之争与政学关系——以私立大夏大学改国立风波为中心的研究" [The Conflict between Ministries and Universities and the Relationship between Politics and Education during the War of Resistance: A Case Study on the Controversy over the Nationalization of Private Daxia University], *Jindai shi yanjiu 近代史研究 [Modern History Research]*, no. 1 (2016).

to Guizhou During the War,” Zhejiang University lacked influential connections and faced continuous conflicts with the local party authorities due to limited resources.¹⁴ Han Shu’s “Localization of Relocated Higher Education Institutions During the Anti-Japanese War: A Case Study of the Chengdu Branch of Guanghua University” demonstrates that weaker private universities, when relocated to the rear areas during the war, had to collaborate with local forces to sustain their operations, leading to a “localization” outcome.¹⁵

1.2.2 Research on the Operation and Development of Higher Education

1.2.2(a) Research on the overall development of Higher Education from a certain perspective

Hu Guotai’s research starts with an examination of education funding. It analyzes the overall quality of higher education during the wartime Nationalist Government and concludes that it was generally low.¹⁶ Fang Lieshu’s work provides a comprehensive assessment of the growth in the number of higher education institutions in the Nationalist-controlled areas during the war and the improvement in teaching quality. It attributes these developments to the government's attention, increased investment in education, and the patriotic

¹⁴ Fangyu He 何方昱, “Ziyuan peizhi yu quanli zhi zheng: Yi zhanshi Zhejiang daxue neiqian Guizhou wei zhongxin 资源配置与权力之争:以战时浙江大学内迁贵州为中心” [Resource Allocation and Power Struggles: Centering on the Wartime Relocation of Zhejiang University to Guizhou], *Jindai shi yanjiu 近代史研究* [Modern History Research], no. 1 (2016).

¹⁵ Shu Han 韩戍, “Kangzhan shiqi neiqian gaoxiao de difanghua: Yi Guanghua daxue Chengdu fenbu wei li 抗战时期内迁高校的地方化——以光华大学成都分部为例” [Localization of Wartime Relocated Universities: A Case Study of the Chengdu Branch of Guanghua University], *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu 抗日战争研究* [Research on the Anti-Japanese War], no. 3 (2014).

¹⁶ Guotai Hu 胡国台, “Kangzhan shiqi de jiaoyu jingfei yu gaodeng jiaoyu pinzhi 抗战时期的教育经费与高等教育品质” [Educational Funding and the Quality of Higher Education during the War of Resistance Against Japan], *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Jindai shi yanjiusuo jikan 中央研究院近代史研究所集刊* [Bulletin of the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica], no. 19 (1991).

enthusiasm of intellectuals.¹⁷ Kong Fanling's study offers a comprehensive discussion of the situation of overseas students in universities in the Nationalist-controlled areas, occupied territories, and the special dispatch of students to the Soviet Union during the war. It covers topics such as the post-war return of students, educational policies, countries and numbers of students studying abroad, and student life.¹⁸ Recognizing that existing research mostly focused on public universities, Chen Kang's work summarizes the characteristics of private universities during wartime, highlighting their institutional flexibility and the inheritance of teaching models from ancient academies.¹⁹ Scholars have also paid attention to the development of church universities. Yu Zixia's study investigates the transformation and evolution of church universities towards localization and secularization during the war.²⁰

Many scholars have approached higher education from different institutional perspectives. Wang Yanqiang's research provides a comprehensive overview of student management systems in wartime universities.²¹ Yu Ningning's work discusses the flexible admission and examination systems adopted by church

¹⁷ Lieshu Fang 房列曙, "Lun Kangzhan shiqi Zhongguo de gaodeng jiaoyu 论抗战时期中国的高等教育" [On Higher Education in China during the War of Resistance Against Japan], in *1945 – 1995 Kangri zhanzheng shengli wushi zhounian jinian ji 1945—1995 抗日战争胜利五十周年纪念集 [Commemorative Volume for the 50th Anniversary of the Victory in the War of Resistance Against Japan]* (1995).

¹⁸ Fanling Kong 孔繁岭, "Kangzhan shiqi de Zhongguo liuxue jiaoyu 抗战时期的中国留学教育" [Chinese Overseas Education during the War of Resistance Against Japan], *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu 抗日战争研究 [Research on the Anti-Japanese War]*, no. 3 (2005).

¹⁹ Kang Chen 陈康, "Kangzhan neiqian shiqi sili daxue banxue de tedian he dongyin 抗战内迁时期私立大学办学的特点和动因" [Characteristics and Motivations of Private Universities during the Wartime Relocation Period], *Henan shifan daxue xuebao (Zhexue shehui kexue ban) 河南师范大学学报 (哲学社会科学版) [Journal of Henan Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)]*, vol. 41, no. 6 (November 2014).

²⁰ Zixia Yu 余子侠, "Kangzhan shiqi jiaohui gaoxiao de qianbian 抗战时期教会高校的迁变" [The Relocation and Transformation of Christian Colleges during the War of Resistance Against Japan], *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu 抗日战争研究 [Research on the Anti-Japanese War]*, no. 2 (1998).

²¹ Yanqiang Wang 王延强, "Kangzhan shiqi gaoxiao xuesheng guanli yanjiu: Yi guoli daxue wei zhongxin 抗战时期高校学生管理研究——以国立大学为中心" [Research on Student Administration in Chinese Universities during the War of Resistance Against Japan: Focusing on National Universities], PhD diss., Southwest University, 2013.

universities to support the war effort.²² The war led to a large number of students being displaced or unable to continue their education. The Nationalist Government implemented a series of measures to assist students, which to some extent ensured the continuation of higher education in China. Chen Dong's study explores this historical phenomenon.²³ Huang Wei's research includes "A Historical Investigation of the Comprehensive Anti-Japanese War Period's Higher Education Loan System"²⁴ and "The Scholarship System in the Comprehensive Anti-Japanese War Period's Higher Education"²⁵, examine the relief systems implemented by the Nationalist Government during wartime to support students. The paper by Tian Zhengping and Jin Yijia, titled "Changing Identities: A Trend in the Development of Chinese Higher Education in the 1930s and 1940s," observes a new trend in higher education during this period. In the face of war destruction and external factors such as student movements, schools and the Nationalist government were seen to be "dualistically engaged." This trend, while having positive effects, often triggered multiple contradictions.²⁶

²² Ningning Yu 虞宁宁, "Zizhu, biantong, fazhan: Kangzhan shiqi jiaohui daxue de zhaokao tedian ji qi xianshi qishi 自主·变通·发展——抗战时期教会大学的招考特点及其现实启示" [Autonomy, Flexibility, and Development: The Characteristics of Student Recruitment in Christian Universities during the War of Resistance and Its Contemporary Implications], *Jinan daxue xuebao (Shehui kexue ban) 济南大学学报 (社会科学版)* [Journal of Jinan University (Social Sciences Edition)], vol. 23, no. 5 (2013).

²³ Dong Chen 陈东, "Kangzhan shiqi guonei daxue jiedu xianxiang lunxi: Yi zhanshi daxue baokan wei zhongxin de kaocha 抗战时期国内大学借读现象论析——以战时大学报刊为中心的考察" [An Analysis of Inter-University Cross-Enrollment during the War of Resistance: A Study Based on Wartime University Publications], *Anhui shixue 安徽史学* [Anhui Historical Journal], no. 3 (2016).

²⁴ Wei Huang 黄伟, "Quanmian Kangzhan shiqi gaodeng jiaoyu daijin zhidu de lishi kaocha 全面抗战时期高等教育贷金制度的历史考察" [A Historical Study of the Higher Education Loan System during the Full-Scale War of Resistance], *Jindai Zhongguo 近代中国*, no. 36.

²⁵ Wei Huang 黄伟, "Quanmian Kangzhan shiqi de gaodeng jiaoyu jiangxuejin zhidu 全面抗战时期的高等教育奖学金制度" [The Scholarship System in Higher Education during the Full-Scale War of Resistance], *Gaodeng jiaoyu yanjiu 高等教育研究* [Journal of Higher Education Research], July 2020.

²⁶ Zhengping Tian 田正平 and Yijia Jin 金漪佳, "Zhuanbian shenfen: 20 shiji san sishinian dai Zhongguo gaodeng jiaoyu fazhan de yizhong qushi 转变身份: 20 世纪三四十年代中国高等教育发展的一种趋势" [Changing Identities: A Developmental Trend in Chinese Higher Education in the 1930s – 1940s], *Shehui kexue zhanxian 社会科学战线* [Social Science Front], no. 7 (2022).

1.2.2(b) Research on the development of higher education from a regional perspective

The change in the geographical landscape brought about by the internal relocation of universities has attracted significant attention, particularly in the Central and Western regions where higher education development was initially weaker. Scholars have shown considerable interest in these notable transformations. Ji Aimin's "Analysis of Educational Development in Hunan During the Anti-Japanese War Period" argues that there was an uneven pace in the development of education across various levels and types of schools in Hunan. In comparison, secondary and elementary education experienced rapid growth, while higher education and social education progressed at a slower pace.²⁷ In his work "The Impact of the War of Resistance Against Japan on the Development of Higher Education in Western China," Fan Mingcheng argues that the Anti-Japanese War altered the highly unreasonable regional layout of higher education in pre-war China. This change subsequently facilitated the rapid development of higher education in western China.²⁸ Tian Zhengping and Zhang Jianzhong, titled "Analysis of Modern Higher Education Development in Northwestern China: 1927 to 1949 as the Central Period." They argue that the wartime period was a critical phase in the modern higher education development of Northwestern China.²⁹ Hu Jun's work, "The Development of Higher Education in Northwest China during the Nanjing National Government Period," similarly argues that during the War of

²⁷ Aimin Ji 暨爱民, "Kangzhan shiqi Hunan jiaoyu fazhan shulun 抗战时期湖南教育发展述论" [A Historical Overview of Educational Development in Hunan during the War of Resistance Against Japan], *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu 抗日战争研究 [Research on the Anti-Japanese War]*, no. 1 (2005).

²⁸ Mingcheng Fan 樊明成, "Kangri zhanzheng dui woguo xibu gaodeng jiaoyu fazhan de yingxiang 抗日战争对我国西部高等教育发展的影响" [The Impact of the War of Resistance Against Japan on the Development of Higher Education in Western China], *Gaodeng jiaoyu fazhan yu pinggu 高教发展与评估 [Higher Education Development and Evaluation]*, vol. 21, no. 1 (January 2005).

²⁹ Zhengping Tian 田正平 and Jianzhong Zhang 张建中, "Jindai Xibei diqu gaodeng jiaoyu fazhan tanxi: Yi 1927 zhi 1949 nian wei zhongxin 近代西北地区高等教育发展探析——以 1927 年至 1949 年为中心" [An Analysis of the Development of Higher Education in Northwestern China in Modern Times: Focusing on the Years 1927 to 1949], *Gaodeng jiaoyu yanjiu 高等教育研究 [Journal of Higher Education Research]*, no. 1 (2007).

Resistance, higher education in the northwest region demonstrated a trend of rapid development.³⁰ In her work “Self-Adjustment and Integration of Higher Education in Gansu During the Anti-Japanese War Period,” Mai discusses the ongoing challenges faced by higher education in Gansu during the war. She highlights how the opportunities presented by the Western Development Wave during the wartime and the relocation of universities played a crucial role in the significant improvement of higher education in Gansu. The “nationalization” of Gansu College and the transplantation of Northwest Normal University to Lanzhou converged to provide essential elements for the integration of higher education in Gansu. In a relatively short period, this integration brought a fresh social atmosphere to the Gansu region.³¹ A Case Study of Jiangxi Province, Zhang Jiànzhong examines the rapid growth of higher education in Jiangxi Province during the wartime. He argues that this development was facilitated by the Nationalist Government's control over Jiangxi and the relocation of scholars during the war. Additionally, it received widespread support from various sectors within and outside the province.³²

Otherwise, the occupied territories endured the heaviest devastation by the Japanese invaders during the war, and scholars have conducted research on the resilience of education in these regions. Yu Zixia's work, “Higher Education in North China Under Japanese Puppet Rule,” provides an overview of the Japanese

³⁰ Jun Hu 胡君, “Nanjing Guomin zhengfu shiqi Xibei diqu gaodeng jiaoyu de fazhan 南京国民政府时期西北地区高等教育的发展” [The Development of Higher Education in Northwestern China during the Nanjing National Government Period], *Gansu shehui kexue 甘肃社会科学* [*Gansu Social Sciences*], no. 3 (2019).

³¹ Xueyan Mai 买雪燕, “Kangzhan shiqi Gansu gaodeng jiaoyu de ziwo tiaoshi yu zhenghe 抗战时期甘肃高等教育的自我调适与整合” [Self-Adaptation and Integration of Higher Education in Gansu during the War of Resistance Against Japan], *Qinghai minzu yanjiu 青海民族研究* [*Qinghai Nationalities Research*], no. 2 (2016).

³² Jianzhong Zhang 张建中, “Kangzhan shiqi Zhongbu gaodeng jiaoyu de kuaisu fazhan: Yi Jiangxi sheng wei li 抗战时期中部高等教育快速发展——以江西省为例” [The Rapid Development of Higher Education in Central China during the War of Resistance: A Case Study of Jiangxi Province], *Xiandai daxue jiaoyu 现代大学教育* [*Modern University Education*], no. 2 (2018).

invaders' destruction and exploitation of higher education in North China. It highlights their efforts to establish the region as a strategic base for cultivating a pro-Japanese cultural influence.³³ Huang Ningning's work, "Cultural Conflict in Eastern China's Occupied Territories during the Comprehensive Anti-Japanese War Period," approaches the topic from a cultural conflict perspective. It analyzes the infiltration of Japanese "discourse" and its influence on controlling higher education in the occupied regions of China. Additionally, it examines how Chinese universities in these areas held steadfast to their cultural identity and engaged in resistance efforts.³⁴

1.2.2(c) Research on the operation of higher education institutions through individual case studies

Zhao Guozhuang and Zhou Huihui's research, titled "The Living Conditions and Survival Logic of Private Wuhan Zhonghua University in the Rear Area During Wartime (1938-1946): A Case Study," examines the challenging journey of Wuhan Zhonghua University, a private institution, as it relocated westward and faced adversity. After reopening in Chongqing, the university sustained its daily operations by resorting to various methods such as selling "affordable goods," borrowing from banks, and fundraising through public performances. It adhered to the regulations and guidance of the Ministry of Education in terms of its management system and curriculum design, actively seeking to become part of the "national team." This study reveals the coexistence of disorder and order, the transition from "private" to "national," and provides

³³ Zixia Yu 余子侠, "Riwei tongzhi xia Huabei lunxianqu de gaodeng jiaoyu 日伪统治下华北沦陷区的高等教育" [Higher Education in the Japanese-Occupied Areas of North China], *Jindai shi yanjiu 近代史研究* [Modern History Research], no. 6 (2006).

³⁴ Ningning Huang 黄宁宁, "Quanmian Kangzhan shiqi Zhongguo Dongbu lunxianqu gaodeng jiaoyu de wenhua chongtu 全面抗战时期中国东部沦陷区高等教育的文化冲突" [Cultural Conflicts in Higher Education in the Occupied Eastern Regions of China during the Full-Scale War of Resistance], *Gaodeng tansuo 高教探索* [Exploration of Higher Education], no. 6 (2021).

insights into the living conditions of private universities during wartime. It highlights their resilience and unwavering commitment to their mission.³⁵ Shi Guoxian's "A Historical Study of Yunnan University's College of Engineering During the Anti-Japanese War Period" examines the educational history of Yunnan University's College of Engineering during the wartime period. The internal relocation during the war brought together high-quality teaching staff, leading to an improvement in the teaching standards.³⁶ Zhang Qiang's "Reshaping the Landscape: National Beiping Normal University and Higher Education in Northwest China During the Anti-Japanese War" discusses how National Beiping Normal University underwent changes during the wartime period, ultimately leading to the establishment of National Northwest Normal University and National Beiping Normal University as separate institutions. This transformation reflects the complex process of adjusting the regional distribution of higher education in China during that time.³⁷ Fang Xinliang's "Southeast United University: Higher Education During the War of Resistance" describes the relatively unknown and brief history of Southeast United University during the anti-Japanese War.³⁸ Liu Tao's "Ying Shi University During the Anti-Japanese War Period" examines the establishment background, migration process, and

³⁵ Guozhuang Zhao 赵国壮 and Huihui Zhou 周挥挥, "Zhanshi houfang sili daxue de shenghuo yangtai ji shengcun luoji: Yi sili Wuchang Zhonghua daxue wei li (1938 – 1946) 战时后方私立大学的生活样态及生存逻辑——以私立武昌中华大学为例(1938 – 1946)" [Living Conditions and Survival Logic of Wartime Rear-Area Private Universities: A Case Study of the Private Wuchang Zhonghua University (1938 – 1946)], *Hubei shehui kexue 湖北社会科学 [Hubei Social Sciences]*, no. 1 (2022).

³⁶ Guoxian Shi 石国贤, "Kangri zhanzheng shiqi Yunnan daxue gongxueyuan banxue lishi kaocha 抗日战争时期云南大学工学院办学历史考察" [A Historical Study of the College of Engineering at Yunnan University during the War of Resistance Against Japan], *Yunnan nongye daxue xuebao 云南农业大学学报 [Journal of Yunnan Agricultural University]*, no. 1 (2015).

³⁷ Qiang Zhang 张强, "Chongsu geju: Kangzhan shiqi de Beiping Shifan daxue yu Xibei gaodeng jiaoyu 重塑格局: 抗战时期的北平师范大学与西北高等教育" [Reshaping the Structure: Beijing Normal University and Northwestern Higher Education during the War of Resistance], *Shandong gaodeng jiaoyu 山东高等教育 [Shandong Higher Education]*, no. 8 (2016).

³⁸ Xinliang Fang 房鑫亮, "Dongnan Lianhe daxue: Kangzhan zhong de gaodeng jiaoyu 东南联合大学——抗战中的高等教育" [Southeast Associated University: Higher Education during the War of Resistance], *Tansuo yu zhengming 探索与争鸣 [Exploration and Free Views]*, no. 8 (2006).

educational situation of Ying Shi University. In just a short decade, it developed into one of the 36 national universities and played a crucial role in providing higher education in the southeastern region during the wartime.³⁹

1.2.3 Research on the Orientation and Responses of Higher Education

During the discussion on education in the face of national crisis during wartime, politicians, educators, and students offered suggestions and advice, with various forces converging to influence the decision-making of the government. In 1938, Chen Lifu was appointed as the Minister of Education, and the educational policy of “address wartime needs as if in peacetime” was officially introduced, marking a clearer direction for higher education.

Scholars have conducted research on the formulation of wartime education policies, the responses of the Nationalist government, and the measures taken. One of the most representative works is Dr. Zhuang Kunming’s “Higher Education During the Resistance War,” which early on focused on and examined the Nationalist government's responses to higher education from national crisis to wartime.⁴⁰ This laid the foundation for further research. Hu Guotai’s “Rebirth from the Ashes: Higher Education During the Resistance War” provides a comprehensive and systematic discussion of the policies and functions of higher education during wartime, covering the destruction, rescue, and mobilization efforts implemented.⁴¹

³⁹ Tao Liu 柳滔, “Kangri zhanzheng shiqi de Yingshi daxue 抗日战争时期的英士大学” [Yingshi University during the War of Resistance Against Japan], *Zhejiang dang'an* 浙江档案 [Zhejiang Archives], no. 8 (2018).

⁴⁰ Kunming Zhuang 庄焜明, “Kangri zhanzheng shiqi zhongguo gaodeng jiaohyu zhi yanjiu 抗日战争时期中国高等教育之研究” [Higher Education in China During the War of Resistance Against Japan], PhD diss., National Taiwan Normal University, 1979..

⁴¹ Guotai Hu 胡国台, *Kangzhan shiqi de gaodeng jiaoyu 抗战时期的高等教育: Rebirth from the Flames: Higher Education during the War of Resistance Against Japan*, Daoxiang chubanshe 稻香出版社 [Daoxiang Publishing House], 1st ed., November 1, 2004.

On the mainland, Shen Lan's "A Brief Discussion on the Nationalist Government's Higher Education Policy during the Anti-Japanese War" argues that the Nationalist Government's higher education policy achieved certain successes but also had fundamental limitations due to its class nature.⁴² Xiong Xianjun's study "On the War-time Ideological Trends and the Development of Wartime Education" delves into the discussions within the education community regarding wartime education policies. It highlights how the intellectual trends within the cultural and educational sectors directly influenced the decision-making of the Nationalist government in Nanjing.⁴³ Xu's study focuses on the essence and significance of wartime education policies. The study examines the role of these policies in driving societal development in China from the perspective of the relationship between education and social progress.⁴⁴ Liang Yanbing's study argues that despite the harsh wartime environment, Chinese higher education not only survived but also flourished, displaying remarkable vitality.⁴⁵ Su Linqin argues that the Nanjing Nationalist Government, by establishing a wartime education policy, set up a system to ensure the quality of higher education. This effectively maintained the quality of higher education during the wartime period.⁴⁶

Zhang Qiang further examines the factors leading to the adoption of the "Preparing

⁴² Lan Shen 沈岚, "Jianlun Kangzhan shiqi Guomin zhengfu de gaodeng jiaoyu zhengce 简论抗战时期国民政府的高等教育政策" [A Brief Discussion on the Higher Education Policy of the Nationalist Government during the War of Resistance], *Minguo dang'an* 民国档案 [Republican Archives], no. 2 (1998).

⁴³ Xianjun Xiong 熊贤君, "Lun zhanshi sichao yu zhanshi jiaoyu de fazhan 论战时思潮与战时教育的发展" [On Wartime Ideological Trends and the Development of Wartime Education], *Minguo dang'an* 民国档案 [Republican Archives], no. 3 (2007).

⁴⁴ Qingru Xu 许庆如, "Zhanshi xu zuo pingshi kan: Guojia dongdang zhong de jiaoyu zhihui 战时须作平时看——国家动荡中的教育智慧" [Wartime Must Be Treated as Peacetime: Educational Wisdom amid National Turmoil], *Hebei shifan daxue xuebao (jiaoyu kexue ban)* 河北师范大学学报 (教育科学版) [Journal of Hebei Normal University (Educational Science Edition)], vol. 13, no. 5 (May 2011).

⁴⁵ Yanbing Liang 梁严冰, "Kangri zhanzheng yu Zhongguo gaodeng jiaoyu 抗日战争与中国高等教育" [The War of Resistance Against Japan and Higher Education in China], *Gaodeng jiaoyu yanjiu* 高等教育研究 [Journal of Higher Education Research], no. 10 (2015).

⁴⁶ Linqin Su 苏林琴 and Jiabang Yang 杨家榜, "Kangri shiqi Nanjing Guomin zhengfu 'zhanshi xu zuo pingshi kan' de jiaoyu fangzhen 抗日时期南京国民政府 '战时需作平时看' 的教育方针" [The Nationalist Government's Educational Policy of 'Treating Wartime as Peacetime' during the War of Resistance], *Gaodeng tansuo* 高教探索 [Exploration of Higher Education], no. 9 (2016).

for War While Emphasizing Normal Education” policy by the Nationalist government in Nanjing and acknowledges its dual mission of “resisting the war and building the nation.” This policy allowed Chinese higher education to persist and thrive in extremely challenging circumstances.⁴⁷

Personnel adjustments are crucial factors in the transformation of systems, and the formation of the wartime education system is directly related to personnel changes. The individuals in charge of educational administration exert varying degrees of influence on the direction of education. However, there has been relatively limited scholarly exploration in this aspect. Wang Boxuan takes Chen Lifu, the architect of the “Preparing for War While Emphasizing Normal Education” policy, as a starting point for research. It explores the motivations, objectives, and implementation techniques behind his planning of wartime higher education policies, offering a comprehensive and vivid understanding of the planning, execution, and limitations of higher education during this period.⁴⁸ Zhang Kai suggests that nurturing and controlling were key aspects of Chiang’s educational philosophy. Chiang initiated reforms to “sinicize” higher education, emphasizing “philosophy as the foundation and science as the application.” However, the results did not meet expectations, and the idea of “education control” became a catalyst for factional struggles within the Nationalist Party. The ideal of “sinicization” was labeled as “conservative” and associated with control measures.⁴⁹ Zhang Huan reveals the personnel adjustments in the Ministry of

⁴⁷ Qiang Zhang 张强, “Kangzhan shiqi Zhongguo gaodeng jiaoyu quxiang de zhenglun yu jueze 抗战时期中国高等教育取向的论争与抉择” [Debates and Choices Regarding the Orientation of Higher Education during the War of Resistance], *Gaodeng tansuo 高教探索 [Exploration of Higher Education]*, no. 1 (2020).

⁴⁸ Boxuan Wang 汪伯轩, “Chen Lifu yu zhanshi Zhongguo gaodeng jiaoyu 陈立夫与战时中国高等教育” [Chen Lifu and Wartime Higher Education in China], MA thesis, Department of History, National Taiwan Normal University, 2013.

⁴⁹ Kai Zhang 张凯, “Jiang Jieshi yu guonan zhi ji gaodeng jiaoyu zhi zouxiang 蒋介石与国难之际高等教育之走向” [Chiang Kai-shek and the Trajectory of Higher Education in Times of National Crisis], *Guangdong shehui kexue 广东社会科学 [Guangdong Social Sciences]*, no. 1 (2015).

Education, where Wang Shijie stepped down and Chen Lifu took over. This change in the Minister of Education had a profound impact on the education sector.⁵⁰

At that time, the debate on wartime university education policies also extended to the Anti-Japanese base areas led by the Communist Party of China. The CCP adopted a different approach from the Nationalist Party and achieved remarkable results, accumulating initial experiences in higher education management. The master's and doctoral theses by Shen Suigai on "Features and Position of Higher Education in Anti-Japanese Democratic Base Areas"⁵¹ and Su Zhiming on "Research on Higher Education in Anti-Japanese Base Areas (1937-1945)"⁵² provide comprehensive reviews of higher education in the base areas. Wang Chunxie uses the concepts of "normalcy" and "abnormalcy" to encapsulate the educational philosophies of the KMT and CPC. It examines the achievements and problems under these two philosophies, highlighting criticism of the KMT's "party-controlled education" and questioning whether the "Yan'an Model" university system could have continuity.⁵³ Wu Fulai further summarizes the distinctive features of the CPC's establishment of new-type higher education.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Huan Zhang 张欢, "1938 nian Guomin zhengfu jiaoyubu renshi biandong yu zhengce zhuanxiang 1938 年国民政府教育部人事变动与政策转向" [Personnel Changes and Policy Shift in the Ministry of Education of the Nationalist Government in 1938], *Minguo dang'an 民国档案 [Republican Archives]*, no. 4 (2022): 105 – 17.

⁵¹ Suigai Shen 申绥改, "Lun Kangri minzhu genjudi gaodeng jiaoyu de tedian he diwei 论抗日民主根据地高等教育的特点和地位" [On the Characteristics and Status of Higher Education in the Anti-Japanese Democratic Base Areas], MA thesis, Central China Normal University, 2003.

⁵² Zhiming Su 苏志明, "Kangri genjudi de gaodeng jiaoyu yanjiu (1937 – 1945) 抗日根据地的高等教育研究 (1937 – 1945)" [A Study on Higher Education in the Anti-Japanese Base Areas (1937 – 1945)], PhD diss., Party School of the Central Committee of the CPC, 2017.

⁵³ Chunjie Wang 汪春颀, "Changtai yu feichangtai: Kangzhan shiqi Gong Guo liangdang gaodeng jiaoyu de chayi 常态与非常态——抗战时期国共两党高等教育的差异" [Normal and Exceptional: Differences in Higher Education between the CCP and the KMT during the War of Resistance], *Hefei xueyuan xuebao (shehui kexue ban) 合肥学院学报 (社会科学版) [Journal of Hefei University (Social Sciences Edition)]*, no. 6 (2015).

⁵⁴ Fulai Wu 吴付来 and Ziqiang Yang 杨子强, "Kangzhan shiqi Zhonggong chuanguan xinxing gaodeng jiaoyu de tedian tanxi 抗战时期中国共产党创办新型高等教育的特点探析" [An Analysis of the Characteristics of New Higher Education Initiatives by the CCP during the War of Resistance], *Zhongguo gaodeng jiaoyu 中国高等教育 [China Higher Education]*, no. 19 (2017).

In summary, existing studies have laid a strong foundation for understanding wartime higher education in China, particularly in terms of the spatial relocation of institutions and their survival and development under crisis. However, three key gaps remain insufficiently addressed:

(1) the longer historical arc of educational transformation beginning before 1937;

(2) the multi-actor dynamics that shaped policy, including non-state and oppositional influences; and

(3) the lasting institutional consequences of wartime reforms beyond mere survival.

To move beyond these limitations, there is a need for a more multi-dimensional examination that integrates the policy landscape with institutional behavior and actor agency. In doing so, the research aims to contribute an analytical framework that situates education as a central arena of state-building and political mobilization during times of national crisis.

1.3 Research Gap

With the continuous expansion of perspectives in the historical field and the ongoing discovery of historical materials, scholarly research on higher education during the Anti-Japanese War has flourished increasingly. The topic of the relocation of traditional universities has already been extensively studied. Recently, the new domain of the interaction between universities and society has been further developed, and research methodologies have become increasingly

diversified and scientific. However, through the above literature review, several shortcomings in current research have been identified, and several issues remain to be urgently addressed.

First, while considerable attention has been paid to how universities were physically relocated or institutionally sustained during wartime, much less is known about how higher education conceptually and politically responded to the outbreak of war. Existing studies in this area are often limited to descriptions of policies and institutions, resulting in rather flat narratives. The personnel changes behind policy evolution, or the reactions of different social groups, have not received sufficient attention. In particular, personnel transitions, interactions among state and non-state actors, and public discourse remain underexplored. Modern Chinese higher education emerged as a means of national salvation, and when faced with renewed national crises, how the government, civil society, and people from various social strata reacted and adapted, leading to the transformation and wartime trajectory of higher education, remains underexplored and insufficiently comprehensive in current research, leaving ample room for further investigation.

Second, the current literature tends to fall into two extremes: macro-level grand narratives or micro-level institutional case studies. There is a lack of meso-level analysis that synthesizes institutional change with actor agency and political context. A mid-level study that traces the evolving logics of policy formation, inter-institutional interactions, and the competing educational agendas of the Nationalist and Communist regimes can offer a more integrated understanding of wartime transformations. This study seeks to bridge that gap by examining how

policy trajectories were shaped not only by war pressures but also by intra-state dynamics and ideological contests.

Third, current research on the development of education during the War of Resistance Against Japan predominantly focuses on the period of the full-scale war, beginning in 1937 and ending in 1945. However, the notion of a 14-year War of Resistance has long existed in academic circles. With the recent implementation of the “14-year War of Resistance” concept by the government, the complete history of the war, starting from the “September 18 Incident” of 1931, has gained broader recognition and acceptance. It is widely known that the National Government only issued wartime education policies after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in 1937, establishing the principle of treating wartime as peacetime for higher education. Yet, in reality, the education sector and various social groups began advocating for “education for national survival” following the September 18 Incident, with continuous discussions emerging. In response, the National Government introduced measures such as the “Implementation Guidelines for Teachers During National Crisis.” The development from education for national survival to wartime education has not been fully studied. Therefore, to comprehensively investigate how higher education responded to the war throughout the complete period of the War of Resistance, the period from 1931 to 1937 should not be overlooked.

Therefore, how did Chinese higher education respond to and evolve under the influence of war during the period from 1931 to 1945? What was its original developmental trajectory, and what kinds of transformations and trends emerged? What role did the war play, and how did it alter the original course of higher education development? In this process, how did both the government and civil

society contribute to shaping the direction of higher education? How did the interactions between war, education, and politics shape the development of higher education during this period? This study seeks to explore these questions in an effort to enrich the current understanding of the development of higher education during the War of Resistance Against Japan.

1.4 Research Questions

How did the top leadership of the Nationalist Government in Nanjing view and design the policies and strategies for higher education?

What were the views of the academic and educational communities on the direction of higher education? Why do they hold these views?

What were university students' roles and obligations throughout the national crisis and war?

How do the Nationalist government's higher education programs differ from Communist base areas' practical utilitarian education policies?

1.5 Thesis Statement

This study examines how the war influenced the trajectory of higher education policy in China during the period from the national crisis following the September 18th Incident (1931) to the end of the full-scale War of Resistance Against Japan on September 2, 1945. It focuses on the interactive relationship between war, education, and politics in shaping the direction of higher education during this critical period.

1.6 Research Objectives

Based on the research questions, the four objectives for the research are as follows:

To explore the top-level policies and strategies of the top leadership of the Nanjing Nationalist Government for higher education after the September 18th Incident up until the full-scale War of Resistance Against Japan.

To analyze the views of the academic and educational communities on the tasks and future direction of higher education after the September 18th Incident up until the full-scale War of Resistance Against Japan.

To discover how university students positioned themselves in terms of their roles and responsibilities during the national crisis and wartime after the September 18th Incident up until the full-scale War of Resistance Against Japan.

To examine how the Chinese Communist Party developed a pragmatic higher education system in its revolutionary base areas during the War of Resistance, and how this system functioned to attract, reshape, and ideologically transform young students.

1.7 Research Significance

The study of higher education during the War of Resistance against Japan not only deepens our understanding of the evolution of Chinese higher education but also offers valuable insights into how the nation, in times of crisis, leveraged education to cultivate talent and preserve cultural heritage. Modern Chinese higher education, established in the early 20th century amid a backdrop of national peril, emerged not only as an adaptation of Western university models but also as a

conscious response from Chinese intellectuals to the call for national revival. The outbreak of the September 18th Incident and Japan's subsequent full-scale invasion placed China in a situation of existential threat once more. In this context, higher education played a crucial role, not only in training personnel for the war effort but also in preserving culture, fostering national consciousness, and preparing for post-war reconstruction.

In the development of wartime higher education, it is necessary to consider not only its academic functions but also its role in responding to social transformation and the reorganization of human resources during times of national crisis. From 1931 to 1937, the intellectual and practical responses of students and the academic community in the aftermath of the September 18th Incident demonstrated the adaptability of Chinese higher education to the threats posed by war. The ability of higher education to rapidly adjust during this transitional period, in terms of policies, academic orientation, and social functions, is essential for understanding the continuity of educational practices during the war and beyond.

Furthermore, studying this period allows us to better comprehend the positioning of education in the midst of political and military crises, as well as its pivotal role in national reconstruction and social reorganization. This paper seeks to provide a detailed analysis of higher education policies, the interactions between the government and various social sectors, and the proactive responses of the academic community during this era. In doing so, it aims to offer a more comprehensive perspective to academia while also addressing contemporary interest in the 14-year War of Resistance concept — thus providing historical reference points for modern educational reform.