

Beyond Glory: Civilians, Combatants, and Society During the Battle of Shanghai

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The 1932 Sino-Japanese conflict in Shanghai was the first example of a modern war waged in a large city between two heavily equipped armies. It was also the first urban conflict during which massive destruction, especially aerial bombing, ensued with utmost disregard for the consequences to civilians. This paper looks at the damage and losses the two contending armies suffered. The group of Chinese armies involved in the conflict was not prepared either to handle the consequences of using highly lethal weapons or to provide the appropriate level of medical assistance to their soldiers involved. The result was a catastrophic level of casualties. The battle for Shanghai announced the frightening massive waves of destruction that World War II would unleash on European and Japanese cities.

KEYWORDS China, Shanghai, war, weaponry, casualties, civilian, medical care, aerial bombing

The 1932 Sino-Japanese conflict in Shanghai was the first example of a modern war waged in a large city between two heavily equipped armies ready to employ all the weaponry at their disposal to defeat their opponent. It was also the first urban conflict during which arms of massive destruction, especially aerial bombing, were used with utmost disregard for the consequences to civilians.¹ It came on the heels of the take-over of Manchuria by the Guandong Army in September 1931, but while there were connections, the Shanghai battle was foremost the result of a combination of local factors and the Japanese navy's misplaced ambitions to assert its status in China as well as in Japan. This military confrontation between two modern but unequally

¹ 'The Japanese Navy thus with the continuous bombing of Zhabei introduced the world to aerial bombardment of a civilian city'. Donald A. Jordan, *The Northern Expedition: China's National Revolution of 1926–1928* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1974), p. 47.

prepared armies occurred not in the Western world where the majority of the most modern weaponry originated, but in Asia between two Asian countries pitted against each other under a lingering sequel of Western colonialism.

War started ‘unexpectedly’. Although tensions had been building up with a potential threat of military action looming over the city — the Manchurian precedent showed that it was a real possibility — most residents must have thought that Shanghai was too important a city for Japan to risk a military confrontation. The existence of the foreign settlements and the presence of reinforced contingents of foreign troops conveyed the not too unrealistic idea that the foreign powers had too much at stake in Shanghai to let a military conflict happen in its midst. Whatever the local perception of the situation, nothing prepared the residents for the brutal and sudden military outbreak that started on the night of 28 January 1932, a week before the Chinese New Year (6 February 1932). While fighting caused an immediate panic exodus from Zhabei, most failed to escape, either hoping for a short issue, hesitating for fear of losing their goods, or simply being trapped in battle zones. The decision made by the Chinese army to entrench itself in the vibrant district of Zhabei and to resist at all costs met an equal determination on the part of its adversary, the Japanese navy and army, to ‘break’ their resistance and to ‘teach’ the Chinese a thorough lesson. This equation guaranteed the wanton destruction of large tracks of this area, as well as that of the neighbouring villages and towns when the conflict expanded in an attempt to gain the upper hand through large-scale and conventional warfare around the city.

A very high number of civilian lives as well as extensive properties were lost in the crossfire and deluge of shells dropped on the city during the military confrontation. In this paper, however, I focus on the damage and losses the two contending armies suffered. I shall argue that the group of Chinese armies involved in the conflict — the nineteenth and fifth armies — were not prepared either to handle the consequences of using highly lethal weapons or to provide the appropriate level of medical assistance to their soldiers involved. The result was a catastrophic level of casualties. While the Japanese army also lost a great number of men, especially in the ‘urban phase’ of the conflict, it was far better equipped to evacuate and treat its wounded soldiers. The second aspect I wish to emphasize is the role played by Chinese civilians. Most of the rescue work was done by civilian volunteers who put their lives at risk out of patriotism, while actual medical treatment was performed mostly in the civilian hospitals of the foreign settlements and the temporary medical facilities established by civic associations and individuals under the general umbrella of the Red Cross. While Shanghai society had long been structured by a wide array of civic groups, community associations, and professional organizations, this battle generated an unprecedented level of social and political awareness and mobilization in the city.

The Shanghai battle therefore offered a unique configuration of modern warfare fought in the heart of the city, even if it was the most recent urban development since 1900. The fighting centred on Chinese-administered territory, while people living in the foreign-protected enclaves could almost attend to their business as usual. Journalists and photographers could observe the ongoing fighting across the Soochow Creek from the safety of the roofs of the high-rise buildings located along the Bund. The neo-colonial political setup in Shanghai both hampered and helped the contending

parties — the Chinese and Japanese armies involved — while it offered an unparalleled opportunity to civilians and civic institutions to become part of a quasi ‘total war’. As I examine this battle from the angle of the considerable damage inflicted upon military and, to a lesser extent, civilian bodies by modern warfare, it will become clear that this event prefigures the catastrophic levels of human and material destruction throughout most of Europe during World War II (WWII) and thereafter in East Asia.²

The battle: Zhabei, Jiangwan, and Miaohang

The conflict started right in the city, at the border between the Hongkou district of the International Settlement and Zhabei, the most populous district of the Chinese municipality (see Figure 1). Whereas the Japanese navy had planned its move into Zhabei to expel the stationed Chinese troops almost like a police operation, it faced stiff resistance and was soon bogged down in fierce urban guerrilla tactics and an intense war of position centred on the north railway station. The first phase of the battle took place in this very densely populated urban district on the northern bank of the Soochow Creek.



FIGURE 1 The Shanghai battle area
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² Despite its centrality and prominence, the 1932 Shanghai battle is overshadowed by the historiography on the war of resistance (1937–45) that followed. Rana Mitter, ‘Changed by War: The Changing Historiography of Wartime China and New Interpretations of Modern Chinese History’, *Chinese Historical Review*, 17.1 (2010), 85–95.

The great paradox of the Shanghai battle was the unequal rules under which it unfolded. The city was divided into three largely independent territories with the core areas placed under foreign rule, a legacy of the colonial system of treaty ports laid out under political and military pressure by Western powers. By virtue of the treaties signed in the mid-nineteenth century, the territory of the International Settlement (and French Concession) was *terra prohibentur* for the Chinese army. It could not set foot, even less conduct military operations, in the areas under the protection of foreign powers. Conversely, the 1927 ‘scare’ — the takeover of the lower Yangzi area by the National Revolutionary Army (NRA) — had led the local foreign authorities, with the support of the diplomatic body, to adopt a defence plan that distributed the responsibility for the defence of specific sectors to foreign troops. As a result, the Japanese had been entrusted with ‘Sector A’ (Hongkou and Yangshupu), which was a major advantage as it actually provided the navy with a rock-solid rear base connected to the Huangpu River.

This advantage notwithstanding, in 1932 the Japanese marines proved unable to dislodge the well-entrenched Chinese battalions. To cut off the lines of human and material supplies on the Chinese side, the Japanese chose to disembark troops to the north of Shanghai, with ferocious fighting for control of the Wusong Fort and Baoshan. Having gained a tactical advantage with their attack on the flank of Chinese forces, and with increasing reinforcements, the Japanese army made a few decisive moves that repulsed their opponents further inland to the west. The encircling manoeuvre of the Japanese combined naval and army forces broadly expanded the geographical scope of the battle and placed the various towns and villages north of the city at the heart of the conflict. Several vicious battles took place over places (Wusong, Miaohang, Liuhe, Jiading, Luodian, etc.) turned into strongholds by the Chinese armies (see Figure 2). By the end of the conflict, on 3 March, the Japanese navy controlled the entire area from the banks of the Huangpu River to a north-south line 30 km inland.

The conflict erupted close to midnight on 28 January 1932 when the first detachments of Japanese marines marched into Zhabei, officially to secure the area and to protect the Japanese residents from harassment or attack by Chinese nationalist radicals or by Chinese soldiers. Despite the assurances given by the mayor, Wu Tiecheng, and his full compliance with Japanese demands — a move considered as a capitulation by the most vocal and active student organizations — the Japanese commander opted for the use of force to expel the Chinese troops. This was a decision taken with the deliberate intention of imposing a military solution on a dispute that had been brewing for months since the conquest of Manchuria by the Guandong army in September 1931. Throughout this period, students and merchant organizations launched a boycott movement that included refusing many services to the local Japanese community. Various instances of assault on Japanese residents fuelled the fear and resentment of the Japanese community whose civilian leaders explicitly demanded a military intervention.³

³ Christian Henriot, *Shanghai, 1927–1937: Municipal Power, Locality, and Modernization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), Chapter 4.

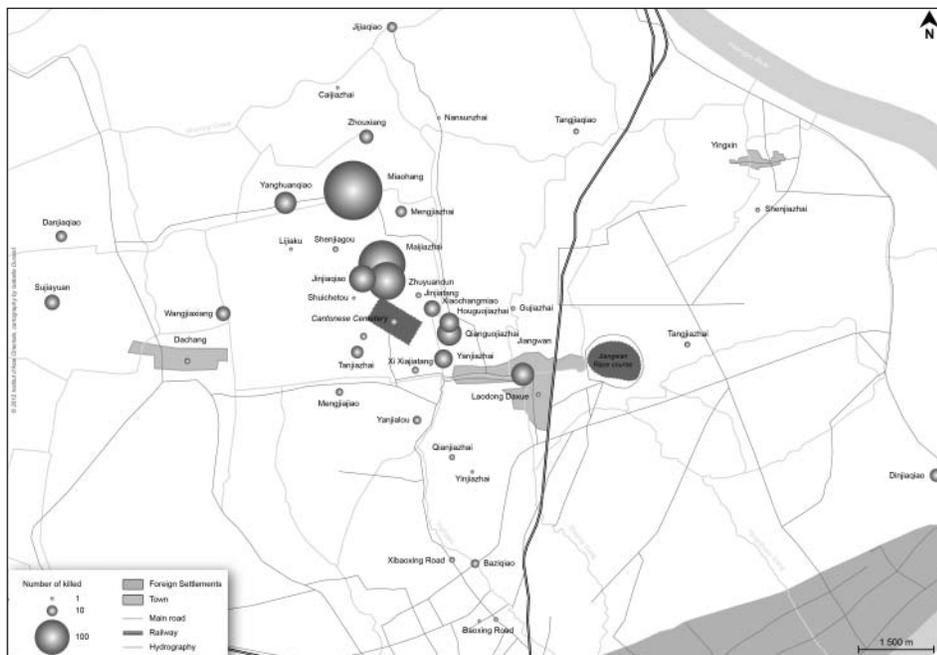


FIGURE 2 The distribution of casualties in the core fighting area
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If the plan was to teach a lesson to the Chinese army, the first salvo turned into a nightmare for the Japanese marines as lack of familiarity with the terrain as well as their unpreparedness for combat in an urban setting soon led to a stalemate. After two days of heavy skirmishes, representatives of the Western powers — British and US consuls — managed to negotiate a ceasefire. This allowed groups of civilians caught in the battle to seek refuge elsewhere, mostly in the foreign settlements located south of the Soochow Creek. This short respite soon gave way to renewed military engagement at a higher level of weaponry. By 4 February, the failure of the Japanese navy to dislodge the Chinese troops was patent. The supreme naval command decided to send the third fleet and army reinforcements. Fighting resumed in earnest on 10 February. Yet the Chinese troops had taken advantage of the lull to dig in even deeper and to fortify their defences in Zhabei and outside Shanghai.

Under pressure by the Western powers, a new ceasefire was declared on 12 February, but in Zhabei alone. Military operations continued and even expanded in the rural districts north of Shanghai with the landing of army troops (the ninth division) the following day. In fact, the Japanese navy maintained its pressure on the Chinese troops with continuous bombardment from its vessels on the shore and its bombers. This served to protect the army regiments until they were ready for a full-scale attack that started again on 20 February. The Japanese army brought in more heavy equipment, including sixteen large tanks, six whippet armoured vehicles, and trucks.⁴

⁴ Donald A. Jordan, *China's Trial by Fire. The Shanghai War in 1932* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001), p. 128. See pictures in *The Sino-Japanese War in Shanghai* (Shanghai: North China Daily News & Herald, 1932).

Eventually the Japanese managed to break through the supply lines of the Chinese army and, from then on, made a steady advance into the Chinese defence lines. By 20 February, the Japanese forces presented a full frontline between Shanghai and Wusong, hardly 4 km from the riverbanks. Within a week they gained another 7 km (near Miaohang). After 26 February, the nineteenth army withdrew from Jiangwan, officially to prepare a counter-offensive, but in fact to avoid further destruction. By 1 March, under renewed attack the Chinese defence lines just crumbled and orders were given to withdraw to the second line of defence. Two days later a new ceasefire terminated the conflict for good. Altogether, fighting had lasted for thirty-four days.⁵

Military actors

On both sides, fighting was borne by modern armies. The Chinese troops involved in the conflict included divisions newly formed or recently incorporated under the national flag. Despite the uneven level between the two groups, the Japanese army did not face bands of guerrillas, like France in Morocco in 1921–26 or even Indochina in 1945–49, but a well-organized and highly nationalistic corps of combatants.

The nineteenth army had the longest existence as it predated the formation of the NRA in 1925.⁶ It was stationed in Zhejiang in 1927 when its commanding officer decided to defect to the side of the Nationalists. The troops were incorporated into the NRA as the nineteenth army.⁷ Little is known of its previous experience in actual fighting. Its men were probably engaged in different battles in the early 1920s against neighbouring warlords in Guangxi. Its latest military engagement, however, dated back to the 1930–31 period against the communist guerrillas in the Jiangxi-Hunan border area. The nineteenth army (sixtieth and sixty-first divisions) fought in the second encirclement campaign in April 1931. It managed to conquer an entrenched position well into the Jiangxi Soviet Republic during the third campaign. The communist guerrillas suffered a costly defeat in trying to dislodge them.⁸ This level of military conflict, however, could hardly count as modern warfare as the communist guerrillas constituted a much less trained and organized group than the Japanese army. In other words, the nineteenth army had never been exposed to fighting involving large-scale operations, complex logistics, and a high toll of casualties.

The second army that moved into the fray was the fifth army (eighty-seventh and eighty-eighth divisions), a newly formed group directly under Jiang Jieshi's orders and trained by German advisors. This was the result of the eviction of Soviet military

⁵ After the signing of an agreement between China and Japan, Japanese troops withdrew from the Shanghai area between 17–25 May. By 31 May, they had all been shipped back home. Source: Motosada Zumoto, *Die Chinesisch-Japanischen Schwierigkeiten 1931–1932* (Tokyo, 1932), p. 199.

⁶ For a brief history of the nineteenth army and its main officer, General Cai Tingkai, see respectively, Bokang Zhu and Zhenzhong Hua, *Shijiu lujun kang Ri xuezhuan shiliao* (Historical materials on the bloody war against Japan by the Nineteenth Army), Di 1 ban., Minguo congshu (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1991), Chapter 1; and Zhu Xiao, 'Kangzhan jiangjun Cai Tingkai', *Dang shi zongheng*, 9 (2010), pp. 24–28. On Chinese military development, see Hans van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China, 1925–1945* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); Frederick Fu Liu, *A Military History of Modern China, 1924–1949* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981).

⁷ Jordan, *China's Trial by Fire*, pp. 102 and 282.

⁸ Edward Dreyer, *China at War, 1901–1949* (New York: Longman, 1995), pp. 162, 165, 167–68.

advisors after 1927.⁹ Jiang Jieshi placed his confidence in the rigor and military successes of the German army. Max Bauer was the first envoy to start to reform the training system of the Chinese central armies, with a certain degree of success, but also many frustrations, especially the lack of proper discipline and physical training among soldiers and officers. For all their training, the two divisions (eighty-seventh and eighty-eighth) that formed the fifth army had never been engaged in warfare before fighting the Japanese in Shanghai. The young age (average of twenty-two) of most soldiers precluded any solid experience in combat. Even among officers, young men represented the vast majority (see Table 1).¹⁰

The nineteenth army was the backbone of the military machine that resisted the Japanese attack in Shanghai. At the time of the Shanghai battle, it was composed of three divisions — the sixtieth, sixty-first, and seventy-eighth — all of which were engaged in fighting. The fifth army was sent in as reinforcement to relieve the pressure and exhaustion borne by the soldiers of the nineteenth army. Eventually, as the casualty toll shows, both experienced a high level of combat. Altogether, the Chinese engaged between 40,000 and 63,000 men in the Shanghai battle in 1932,¹¹ although a Japanese publication placed the number of Chinese soldiers for the nineteenth army at a lower level.

On the Japanese side, the Japanese navy had about 12,000 marines in Shanghai. Realizing its misjudgement of the fighting capability of their opponents, the Japanese command sent in more troops from Japan, both naval forces (third fleet) and a full army division (the ninth), as well as a mixed brigade from the twelfth division. Further reinforcements came from the eleventh division.¹² The Japanese troops, mostly from the navy, were definitely combat ready. While it is difficult to assess whether

TABLE 1
AGE OF OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS OF THE FIFTH AND NINETEENTH ARMIES

Age	Fifth army - Eighty-eighth division				Nineteenth army	
	Soldiers		Officers		Officers	
< 20	218	23%	1	1%	1	1%
21-25	460	48%	38	45%	25	24%
26-30	258	27%	41	49%	49	47%
31-35	32	3%	4	5%	17	16%
> 35					13	12%
Total	968	100%	84	100%	105	100%

⁹ Bernd Martin, *Die Deutsche Beraterschaft in China 1927-1938: Militär, Wirtschaft, Aussenpolitik = The German Advisory Group in China: Military, Economic, and Political Issues in Sino-German Relations, 1927-1938* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1981).

¹⁰ This table is based on data collected on all the officers of both the nineteenth and fifth route armies killed in the 1932 conflict, as well as the soldiers of the eighty-eighth division of the fifth army killed in action. While this does not reflect the whole combat population, I believe this is a fairly representative sample. This is based on data collected from two sources: Lujun di wu jun di bashiba shi, *Lujun di bashiba shi Song Hu kang Ri zhandou jingguo* (China: s.n., 1932); Liang Xueqing and Xu Boxiong, *Song Hu yu Ri xuezhuan da huashi — Pictorial Review of the Sino-Japanese Conflict in Shanghai* (Shanghai: Wenhua meishu tushu gongsi, 1933).

¹¹ Jordan, *China's Trial by Fire*, p. 186.

¹² Zumoto, *Die Chinesisch-Japanischen Schwierigkeiten*, pp. 154 and 178.

the individual divisions or regiments involved in Shanghai had previously seen combat, they were part of a well-trained and disciplined military organization under the command of higher officers who had fought in Manchuria as far back as the Russo-Japanese War. It would not prevent an undeniable pattern of wanton violence against Chinese civilians, but in terms of military efficacy and preparedness, including the crucial issue of medical assistance, the Japanese presented a much better integrated military apparatus.

In discussing the issue of casualties among soldiers and civilians, the question of technology and weaponry needs to be considered first. As discussed elsewhere, I argue that the Shanghai battle was the very first instance of large-scale modern warfare in an urban setting, especially the indiscriminate aerial bombing of non-combatant populations.¹³ Of course, there were precedents in the use of aircraft in warfare against civilians or cities, but the level of technology limited their impact and destructiveness, as in Paris during World War I (WWI).¹⁴ It was used again, for example, in the later part of the Rif war in Morocco, yet against more scattered settlements in the countryside.¹⁵ It provided a ‘preview’ of what would come in the European theatre a few years later with the infamous destruction of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War.¹⁶ The powerful painting by Picasso has left a deep imprint on our historical *imaginaire*, yet have we not missed something here in terms of history and memory? Only a modern war of the scale fought in Shanghai, pitting two modern divisional and armed, but uneven, armies against each other, could produce such high levels of casualties for civilians and especially soldiers.

In the early 1930s, both the Japanese and Chinese armies had the same standards of basic armament for their soldiers, namely handguns and rifles (Table 2). Individual automatic weapons were not yet very widespread as the photographic record shows, but both had heavy machine guns for combat and aerial defence. The Chinese troops were also equipped with light mountain and field gun cannons, mortars, and

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF SOLDIERS AND WEAPONS OF THE NINETEENTH ARMY

Soldiers & weapons	Sixtieth division	Sixty-first division	Seventy-eighth division	Total
Soldiers	11,000	12,500	10,000	33,500
Rifles	9,000	10,500	8,000	27,500
Machine guns	24	28	20	72
Mountain batteries	8	10	6	24
Field-gun batteries	10	20	10	40

SOURCE: *Die chinesisch-japanischen Schwierigkeiten, 1931–1932*, p. 162.

¹³ Christian Henriot, ‘A Neighborhood under the Storm: Zhabei and Shanghai Wars’, *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, 9.2 (2010), 304–13.

¹⁴ Jean Luc Pinol and Maurice Garden, *Atlas des Parisiens, de la Révolution à nos Jours* (Paris: Parigramme, 2009), pp. 36–37.

¹⁵ Vincent Courcelle-Labrousse, *La Guerre du Rif: Maroc, 1921–1926* (Paris: Tallandier, 2008).

¹⁶ Ian Patterson places the toll for civilians who were killed during the bombing at 127 and at 121 for those who died later of their injuries. Ian Patterson, *Guernica and Total War* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 22.

grenade launchers.¹⁷ Above this level, however, the Chinese fell seriously behind. They had few proper anti-aircraft defence weapons, even if Chinese soldiers managed to shoot down a couple of Japanese planes. They completely lacked heavy equipment like armoured cars or tanks.¹⁸ On the side of their adversaries, conversely, there was a larger array of lethal weaponry. During the Shanghai battle, the Japanese brought in a large number of tanks, even if their weight and clumsiness reduced their efficacy in streets cut by trenches and debris or on the soft water-filled soil of the Chinese countryside.¹⁹ At the time of the 20 February full-scale offensive, the Japanese lined up 160 heavy cannons and ninety tanks.²⁰ They also brought in hundreds of pack-horses to pull their heavy cannons through mud and waterways.²¹ Another advantage of the Japanese navy, especially in the first phase of the conflict, was the use of its cruiser and twelve destroyers conveniently moored along the bank of the Huangpu River. From these remote and mobile locations, the Japanese could safely and repeatedly send a deluge of bombs and projectiles onto the Chinese troops in Zhabei and the Wusong Fort.

Yet the major difference in the level of technological sophistication and lethality was the use of aeroplanes and aerial bombs. The Chinese army had only started to build up a small air force, in part as a result of the repeated demands of the German advisor. In 1932, the central squadron consisted of eighteen planes flown in from Nanjing. In Canton, the military authorities also had a small force, but they failed to send them to assist the nineteenth army despite repeated pleas from its commander.²² Unfortunately, their small number as well as the lack of training of their pilots limited their use to a couple of engagements. Moreover, a combined military and naval flying corps launched two bombing raids against the airstrips (Hongqiao, Suzhou, and Hangzhou) on 24 February that practically destroyed the three centres.²³ There was no further attempt by the small Chinese air force to engage their adversaries. Jiang Jieshi chose to save them from inevitable destruction. As a result, the Japanese had a free rein in aerial combat. The sky was theirs throughout the conflict and they took full advantage of this tactical supremacy.

The Japanese had a major element of superiority as they maintained a rolling thunder of aerial bombing that in its effects on the population could not have been much different from the experience of Londoners during the *blitz*.²⁴ Aware that the Chinese did not possess the required weaponry for aerial defence, the Japanese aviators made frequent rounds of reconnaissance before attacking. They took the chance to fly low — waving occasionally in the direction of the observing foreign soldiers in the International Settlement — to show their relative lack of anxiety in conducting

¹⁷ See pictures in *The Sino-Japanese War in Shanghai*.

¹⁸ This inequality remained a persisting and debilitating factor in the next military confrontation in 1937. Chang Jui-te, 'The Nationalist Army on the Eve of the War', in *The Battle for China: Essays on the Military History of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937–1945* ed. by Mark Peattie (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), pp. 88–91.

¹⁹ See pictures in *The Sino-Japanese War in Shanghai*.

²⁰ Jordan, *China's Trial by Fire*, p. 141.

²¹ Jordan, *China's Trial by Fire*, p. 128.

²² Jordan, *China's Trial by Fire*, pp. 108, 117.

²³ *North China Herald*, 1 March 1932.

²⁴ Amy Bell, 'Landscapes of Fear: Wartime London, 1939–1945', *Journal of British Studies*, 48.1 (2009), 153–75.

their missions.²⁵ The Japanese navy had the *Notoro* seaplane carrier from which it launched navy bombers for reconnaissance flights over Chinese positions and of course actual bombing.²⁶ An improvised airfield was also built near the Huangpu River north of Shanghai. By the end of the battle, around 200 planes, half of the total Japanese air force, were present in the theatre of operations. Total dominance in the air and on the water gave the Japanese military a considerable advantage. It could decide when and where to concentrate its strikes and to launch decisive operations.²⁷ The Chinese army fought against impossible odds.²⁸

The use of very heavy weapons, especially after 20 February when the Japanese decided to break Chinese resistance, can explain the high level of casualties both among soldiers — the highest number — and civilians. Throughout the battlefield, from Zhabei to Wusong, Chinese soldiers were exposed to a ‘massive blow’. While the soldiers could protect themselves in the rare concrete buildings and in their dugouts — yet in a limited way — the civilian population had no shelter in which to take refuge — there was no cellar in Shanghai houses due to the water-filled soil — and the wooden construction offered little protection against blasts and of course fires. There is no record of the quantity of shells and bombs dropped on Zhabei and the surrounding villages and towns. Visual testimonies such as can be gathered from the press or the visual record support the argument of a deluge of various kinds of explosives which, combined with the nature of housing — mostly wood — hardly left any building untouched. Many places turned into a suffocating and burning inferno. Those who were caught in such zones could barely survive.

For one Chinese unit — the sixtieth division — we have the following assessment of used weapons and ammunition:

- 30,790 hand grenades
- 50,085 pistol bullets
- 552,617 machine gun bullets
- 910,786 rifle bullets
- 44,902 automatic rifle bullets
- 7,464 mountain gun shells, and
- 1,800 field gun shells.²⁹

These figures look impressive, but they need to be compared with the number of men involved. Based on the count of 11,000 men in the sixtieth division, each man fired only 137 bullets during the thirty-four days of the conflict, or four bullets per day. Cannon fire was far more consistent, with an average of 272 shells per day for an inventory of thirty-four pieces, or eight shells per cannon. Finally, soldiers threw less

²⁵ *North China Herald*, ‘The Bombing of Chapei’ (30 January 1932), 2 February 1932.

²⁶ Jordan, *China’s Trial by Fire*, p. 46.

²⁷ This was one of the major lessons drawn from this conflict by a military officer. Zhang Xuewu, *Song Hu kangzhan suo de zhi jingyan yu jiaoxun* (A record of the war against Japan of the Sixtieth Division of the Nineteenth Army) (Nanjing: Shoudu zhongyang lujunguan xuexiao tushuguan, 1933), p. 31.

²⁸ This was also a major complaint by wounded soldiers near Beijing that they fought hopelessly against an enemy with superior weapons and badly needed air support by Chinese forces. ‘Weiwen shangbing ji’, *Kangri funü*, 2 (20 April 1933), 2–3.

²⁹ [19 lujun di 60 shi], *Shijiu lujun di liushi shi kang Ri zhan zhengji* (Zhangzhou: Gai bu, 1933), fubiao 3.

than three hand grenades per man. The fighting capability of the Chinese army was also diminished by the loss of weapons in the course of fighting or abandoning positions. A post-conflict assessment revealed that the eighty-seventh division lost 789 rifles, thirty-seven cannons, forty-three heavy machine guns, eight automatic rifles, sixty-six machine guns, and sixteen pistols.³⁰ The sixtieth division lost six canons, 258 rifles, thirteen pistols, and 639 bayonets.³¹

In terms of the impact of war on both soldiers and civilians, two elements played a significant role. The decision by the Chinese commander to take a stand and fight back against the Japanese entry into Zhabei had dreadful consequences. It turned Zhabei, a vibrant neighbourhood of some 800,000 residents, into a battlefield for a whole month. Despite the short ceasefire negotiated on two occasions, there was no interruption in the firing and bombing of the Chinese district. The Chinese officers had decided to make the progression of the Japanese marines as slow and costly as possible. The specific nature of the urban environment in which the Japanese marines had to fight explains their initial difficulty in carrying out their planned *Blitzkrieg*. Chinese soldiers dug trenches and built fortified dugouts that made the movement of the Japanese marines far more difficult than expected. Large numbers of civilians, especially unemployed workers from shut-down factories, volunteered to help carry supplies and dig trenches. Yet the visual record also shows images of Japanese dugouts with armoured car backing and trenches filled with dead Chinese soldiers.³²

Casualties

There is no clear figure for the number of Chinese troops engaged in the Shanghai battle in 1932. Official figures vary between 40,000 and 63,000. On the basis of the number of casualties shown in Table 3, Jordan calculated a rate of 18.8 per cent to nearly 30 per cent among the Chinese troops.³³ The Japanese engaged 47,000 troops in the battle, with a number of casualties estimated at — to use the most reasonable set of figures — 769 dead and 8,622 wounded.³⁴ If fighting in Shanghai was a blessing from the perspective of medical facilities — the city had the highest number of hospitals and trained physicians — the sheer number of casualties made it impossible to cope with adequate equipment, installations, and even medical supplies. Civilian doctors trained in peacetime were badly trained to treat these battles wounds in their regular practice. Between the lack of adequate and timely rescue and evacuation and the improvised nature of the medical facilities that treated the wounded soldiers, the cost of the conflict in terms of human lives was staggering.

The Chinese troops conducted the war under less than ideal conditions. Even if, as Jordan argues, the central government backed the Cantonese nineteenth army and shipped supplies to sustain its fighting capacity, the poor state of national finances limited the capacity of Nanking to fund the war. The nineteenth army had to rely on

³⁰ Zhang Xuewu, *Song Hu kangzhan*, p. 223.

³¹ [19 lujun di 60 shi], *Shijiu lujun di liushi shi kang Ri zhan zhengji*, fubiao 3–4.

³² See pictures in *The Sino-Japanese War in Shanghai*: ‘One of the perfect networks of trenches encircling Kiangwan’ or ‘Trench defended by the 19th Army’.

³³ Jordan, *China’s Trial by Fire*, pp. 188–89.

³⁴ Jordan, *China’s Trial by Fire*, p. 190.

TABLE 3
CHINESE CASUALTIES: AN ASSESSMENT

Nineteenth army			
<i>Sixtieth division</i>			
Officers killed	29	Soldiers killed	350
Officers wounded	92	Soldiers wounded	275
<i>Sixty-first division</i>			
Officers killed	44	Soldiers killed	764
Officers wounded	195	Soldiers wounded	2,802
<i>Seventy-eighth division</i>			
Officers killed	46	Soldiers killed	1,170
Officers wounded	114	Soldiers wounded	1,965
Fifth army			
<i>Eighty-seventh division</i>			
Officers killed	23	Soldiers killed	452
Officers wounded	99	Soldiers wounded	358
<i>Eighty-eighth division</i>			
Officers killed	57	Soldiers killed	1,034
Officers wounded	141	Soldiers wounded	1,657
Sub-total			
Officers killed	199	Soldiers killed	3,770
Officers wounded	641	Soldiers wounded	7,057
Total killed			3,969
Total wounded			7,698
Total casualties			11,667

SOURCE: Donald A. Jordan, *China's Trial by Fire. The Shanghai War in 1932* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001), p. 187–88.

fund-raising in Shanghai, in Guangdong, and among the Chinese Diaspora. Shanghai residents raised 1,830,000 yuan to support the war effort — the nineteenth army needed 6,000,000 yuan — and provided vehicles, communications devices, drugs, etc. to the army.³⁵ From the capacity of the Chinese troops to fight back against Japanese attacks, one can deduce that they received enough ammunition for combat. The strong nationalistic rhetoric with which they were imbued, as can be seen in their personal diaries, played a role in morale and combativity.³⁶ Yet there is also evidence that there was an insufficient supply of food to soldiers despite pleas by field commanders and efforts by the national government. Here again, civilian support made up for the logistical weaknesses of the army.

One of the commanders of the fifth army, Zhang Zhizhong, acknowledged in post-1949 memoirs a high rate of casualties from the beginning. The worst, however, came with the frontal assault by the Japanese after 20 February. In the battle around Liuhe, all companies and units were subjected to constant firing and bombing and whole

³⁵ Liang and Xu, *Song Hu yu Ri xuezhuan da huashu*; 'Shanghai kang Ri jiuwang yundong de diwei he zuoyong, *Shanghai difang zhi*, 6 (2001), available at: <<http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node70393/node70403/node72455/node72457/index.html>> [accessed 3 December 2011].

³⁶ Aaron William Moore, 'Talk about Heroes: Expressions of Self-Mobilization and Despair in Chinese War Diaries, 1911–1938', *Twentieth Century China*, 34.2 (2009), 30–54.

companies were exterminated.³⁷ On 1 March, the 521st battalion lost a full squadron and suffered heavy casualties. By that time, the fifth army was no longer capable of lining up new soldiers, having used up all its reserves. Those on the frontline were encircled with no hope of getting out.³⁸ Eventually, whole battalions were lost (e.g. the 518th) or lost more than half of their soldiers (e.g. the 517th).³⁹

My own analysis of the casualties suffered by the eighty-eighth division of the fifth army confirms the pattern of a major setback after 20 February. Losses were so huge that the army could not continue to bear the unrelenting pounding by Japanese troops. In four days, the nineteenth and fifth armies lost seventy-four officers (36 per cent of total casualties). In the first days of March, a second onslaught left no choice but to stop fighting and come to an accommodation with the Japanese army. In just three days, fifty-eight officers (28 per cent of total casualties) died on the front. Among soldiers, the rate of casualty was even higher. In the eighty-eighth division, 73 per cent and 19 per cent of all officers and soldiers, respectively, were lost during the same short periods. While the data are incomplete — we do not have any precise tally for the nineteenth army or the other divisions of the fifth army — there is hardly any doubt that the firing and bombing power of the Japanese army had a devastating impact on ill-equipped Chinese troops. While cases of desertion were rare — two soldiers were executed on account of desertion⁴⁰ — the fighting spirit of young and inexperienced soldiers must have been shaken by the extent of devastation around them.

As observed by Jordan, there are inconsistencies among the casualty figures published at the time and by present-day historians.⁴¹ It sometimes has to do with an intention to magnify the sacrifice made by the Chinese army or its individual components. On the other hand, lower figures are one way in which to obviate what could be seen as the poor performance of the Chinese armies. Soon after the end of the conflict, the Suzhou headquarters of the nineteenth army published the following record of casualties:

- 3,281 deaths
- 9,722 wounded, and
- 625 missing, of which the nineteenth itself had suffered 1,825 deaths and 3,487 wounded.⁴²

The sixtieth division of the fifth army had 1,653 casualties (of which 1,172 were wounded soldiers and ninety-four were wounded officers) according to a history of this army group.⁴³ A list of names for 392 soldiers and thirty-one officers who died on the battlefield was provided with these figures.⁴⁴ According to Zhang Zhizhong,

³⁷ Zhang Zhizhong, 'Di wu jun canjia Song Hu kang Ri zhanyi de jingguo', in *Kang Ri fengyun lu: Jinian kang Ri zhanzheng shengli sishi zhounian Nanjing wenshi ziliao zhuanji* (Nanjing: Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Nanjing shi weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui, 1985), p. 134.

³⁸ Zhang Zhizhong, 'Di wu jun canjia Song Hu kang Ri', p. 136.

³⁹ Zhang Zhizhong, 'Di wu jun canjia Song Hu kang Ri', p. 137–38.

⁴⁰ Chen Linggu and Qiu Dongping, *Xue chao hui kan* (Canton: Nanxing baoshe, 1932), p. 94.

⁴¹ Jordan, *China's Trial by Fire*, p. 186.

⁴² *North China Herald*, 31 May 1932.

⁴³ [19 lujun di 60 shi], *Shijiu lujun di liushi shi kang Ri zhan zhengji*, 54 and fubiao 2.

⁴⁴ [19 lujun di 60 shi], *Shijiu lujun di liushi shi kang Ri zhan zhengji*, fubiao 19–50.

commander of the fifth army, eighty-three officers lost their lives, 242 were wounded, and twenty-six went missing in action (MIA). Among ordinary soldiers, the toll was much higher with 1,533 dead, 2,897 wounded, and 599 MIA. The total number of casualties reached 5,380.⁴⁵ Finally, in a book published to glorify the Shanghai battle, the names of all the fallen soldiers and officers were listed individually.⁴⁶ With the addition of soldiers from other regiments (transmission and ministry of finance), the total toll comes to 3,955.⁴⁷ At any rate, the figures are quite similar in the various accounts. The total loss of lives among Chinese combatants came close to 4,000.

Japanese casualties did not reach the same level, even if in this case also there was a propensity to underestimate the number of casualties for domestic and international consumption (see Table 4). The conflict had cost much more than the high command had planned, which was not a good argument to sell to the political leaders in charge of the country. Table 4 provides details of records found in a Japanese assessment of the conflict published later in Germany.

The high level of casualties among Chinese soldiers can be attributed to the superior technological advantage of the Japanese, especially the heavy shelling from its cruisers and destroyers. The second factor causing the high level of casualties was definitely the use of aerial bombing. A Chinese officer noted after the war that the level of casualties was related to the lack of solidity of the shelters and defence built up by the Chinese army, as well as the high number of soldiers sent to the frontlines. Yet the lack of appropriate rescue organization was also pointed out as one of the major weaknesses of the Chinese troops in 1932.⁴⁸ It is true that a short summary of the wounds suffered by the Chinese soldiers tends to highlight the fact that direct fighting with individual weapons was the cause of a large number of wounds. The prosaic record shown in Table 5 illustrates that 85 per cent of the wounds had been inflicted by a bullet received from the front, namely in a direct exchange of fire with the enemy (compared to only 10 per cent from firing from the side or 5 per cent received in the back). Such figures establish the valour of the Chinese combatants.

TABLE 4
JAPANESE CASUALTIES

Units	Dead	Wounded	Total
Ninth division	503	1,274	1,777
Twenty-fourth mixed brigade	151	17	568
Eleventh division	64	96	160
Other		1	1
Total	718	1,788	2,506

SOURCE: *Die chinesisich-japanischen Schwierigkeiten, 1931–1932*, p. 187.

⁴⁵ Zhang Zhizhong, 'Di wu jun canjia Song Hu kang Ri', p. 140.

⁴⁶ Liang and Xu, *Song Hu yu Ri xuezhuan da huashi*.

⁴⁷ Liang and Xu, *Song Hu yu Ri xuezhuan da huashi*, name lists, pp. 9–17.

⁴⁸ Zhang Xuewu, *Songhu kangzhan suo de*, p. 198.

TABLE 5
NATURE OF WOUNDS AMONG CHINESE SOLDIERS

Wounds		Origin	
1	41%	Bullet from front	85%
2	30%	Bullet from side	10%
3	17%	Bullet from back	5%
>4	12%		
Body parts		Deaths	
Head	20%	Killed by Dum Dum bullets	63%
Hand	30%	Killed by bombs	11%
Foot	20%	Killed by cannon shells	17%
Body	30%	Killed by regular shells	9%

If bullets were the direct cause of 63 per cent of deaths — especially the infamous dum dum bullets — again a sign of the importance of direct engagements between the two sides, bombs and shells took their toll on the Chinese troops.⁴⁹ Altogether, this heavy weaponry accounted for 37 per cent of the dead, with bombs — aerial bombs — taking 11 per cent of the toll.⁵⁰ Fifty per cent of the soldiers were wounded in parts where their life could hardly be jeopardized, but another 50 per cent received wounds in the head and body, with a possibility of vital organs being affected. These post-conflict statistics, however, may not convey the whole story. In examining in detail the date and location of death of the officers and soldiers of the eighty-eighth division, one can see that very few died in hospital. Only thirty-three out of a total of 1,070 died while receiving medical care. This could be interpreted as being due to the high degree of violence and lethality of fighting. Yet Red Cross hospitals (RCHs) received most of the 7,698 wounded soldiers throughout the conflict. Another interpretation could be that, due to the massive number of soldiers wounded on only a few days, the distance from the city in the absence of frontline medical stations and the lack of proper rescue organization beyond volunteers meant that many seriously wounded soldiers just did not make it and did not even leave the field.

The level of casualties among the civilian population was not as extensive in view of the location, suddenness, and brutality of the conflict (see Table 6). As mentioned above, people waited until the last minute before leaving.⁵¹ People living in the neighbouring districts of the International Settlement were also affected. In the period between 28 January and 1 March, two aerial bombs and 312 projectiles fell on the International Settlement. These projectiles were responsible for damage to about 262 buildings and caused 277 casualties, of which sixty-one proved fatal.⁵² Liu Dajun,

⁴⁹ On the use of dum dum bullets: *A Month of Reign of Terror in Shanghai: What the Foreigners See, Say and Think from January 28 to February 27, 1932* (Shanghai: China Weekly Herald, 1932), pp. 20–21.

⁵⁰ Liang and Xu, *Song Hu yu Ri xuezhuan da huashi*, p. 17.

⁵¹ *North China Herald*, 1 March 1932.

⁵² *North China Herald*, 12 April 1932.

TABLE 6
CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

Location	Families	Killed	Wounded
Zhabei	19795	876	469
Wusong	2903	346	119
Jiangwan	1435	331	59
Zhenru	121	7	5
Hunan	156	1	3
Yinxiang	163	18	5
Pengpu	23	1	3
Pusong	10		
Yinhang	105	8	7
Yangjing	6		1
IS	889	37	23
FC	39		
Yanghang	42	7	2
Dachang	301	61	9
Nanxiang	109	34	7
Baoshan	56	9	2
Anxiang	17		1
Jiading	56	3	6
Gov't agencies	25		
Total	26251	1739	721

chief of the Department of Statistics, produced a report stating that war directly affected 180,816 families and placed the number of individuals directly affected by war at 814,084, or the entire population of Zhabei and the towns and villages north of Shanghai. The extent of damage was more clearly expressed in the number of people killed (8,080), wounded (2,000), and missing 10,400.⁵³ Yet this report was contradicted by later assessments, including one published by the military. In this later report, the number of dead amounted to 1,739 — with the highest numbers in Zhabei (876), Wusong (346), and Jiangwan (331). This included the volunteers who worked on the front and in the rear. Quite evidently, the ratio between dead and wounded confirmed the extreme violence of the conflict which made it unlikely to survive.⁵⁴

A better approximation of the number of civilian victims perhaps can be found in the statistics of the charity organizations which organized the collection and burial of dead bodies after the fighting was over. The Pushan shanzhuang, an organization devoted to the burial of indigent people, recorded 7,031 burials in the entire battle

⁵³ *North China Herald*, 22 March 1932.

⁵⁴ Jordan, *China's Trial by Fire*, p. 68.

zone. It included the bodies of 3,024 Chinese soldiers.⁵⁵ This places the number of civilian casualties at a minimum of 4,000 individuals, which would be more consistent with a reasonable assessment of the impact of the conflict on a civilian population caught in the raging crossfire between Chinese and Japanese troops. Yet, as should be pointed out, many bodies were removed before the Pushan shanzhuang was able to intervene. Japanese civilian casualties were far more limited with twenty-one killed and forty-two wounded (of which two had been killed and six wounded prior to the hostilities).⁵⁶ The families had been encouraged to leave Zhabei and settle in temporary refuges in Hongkou before fighting started. After the outbreak of hostilities many went back to Japan.

Chinese military medical assistance

The general view in the few works that have addressed the issue of medical services in the Chinese army is one of mediocre value. Throughout the republican period, the persisting weakness of the Chinese army's medical services remained a critical issue. By 1936, the army had only 4,000 doctors, with 30 per cent chiefly being graduates from the Army Medical College, a school that many considered below standard in China. To address the number of enlisted men properly, the army would have required twice this number. On the eve of the long war of resistance against Japan, only 7 per cent of the medical corps (about 2,000 officers) were qualified physicians, or one medical officer for every 1,700–3,400 men (by comparison, the US army had 45,000 in its service during WWII, with an equal number of nurses and half a million trained first-aid men; one medical officer for every 210 men in the British army and one for every 150 men in the US army).⁵⁷ In his landmark study of nationalist failure, Lloyd Eastman pointed out the many defects of the army system in treating and training its soldier conscripts. He quoted a report by Tang Enbo, the Nationalist commander in Henan, who enumerated seven major ingredients in the defeat against the Japanese. He specifically singled out the inattention to battlefield evacuation of the wounded as a common attitude by unit commanders.⁵⁸ During the war of resistance against Japan, the Chinese armies could hardly match the high rate of desertion due to low morale and fear of being left behind when wounded, not to mention harsh conditions in everyday life.

Addressing the issue of medical assistance on the battlefield during the Shanghai battle is a real challenge. The first limitation is the lack of proper archival records. In his otherwise solid study of this conflict, Jordan did not tackle this problem at all. He referred a couple of times to soldiers being brought into the foreign settlement for medical treatment, but he overlooked the whole issue of both logistics and organization of medical support on the battlefield. A systematic search in the

⁵⁵ Shanghai zhanqu nanmin linshi jiujiuhui, *Shanghai zhanqu nanmin linshi jiujiuhui gongzuo baogao shu* (Shanghai: Shanghai zhanqu nanmin linshi jiujiuhui, 1933), p. 54.

⁵⁶ *North China Herald*, 15 March 1932.

⁵⁷ Frederic Liu, *A Military History of Modern China, 1924–1949* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1956), pp. 139–40; Lloyd E. Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction: Nationalist China in War and Revolution, 1937–1949* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), p. 155.

⁵⁸ Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction*, pp. 141–42.

Shanghai archival collections failed to bring up relevant and significant materials. The military archives in Taiwan have equally failed to produce significant results. Whether this reflects a loss of materials or the actual irrelevance of medical assistance itself, most of the ‘Hygiene and medical care’ category in the catalogue was simply blank.⁵⁹

A search in the republican published materials, mostly journals, also failed to uncover an abundant number of articles. Keyword searches in the National Index to Chinese Newspapers & Periodicals produced a small set of references, including two regulations by the Shanghai Municipal Government (Shizhengfu) about organizing the assistance to refugees and wounded soldiers, then an instruction to the Bureau of Public Health to raise money for wounded soldiers and civilians.⁶⁰ Moreover, many references pointed to the 1937 Shanghai battle.⁶¹ Current historiography does not offer much help. Whether on warfare in China in general or in Shanghai in particular, Chinese historians have paid no attention to the issue of the ‘body’ during military conflicts. The Shanghai Battle remains a much-heroicized moment recounted in conventional terms. It is about heroicism, soldiers’ resilience and bravery, popular support, and Japanese brutality. Soldiers fought valiantly. Civilians cheered up. End of story. Yet both suffered in their flesh, many died or lost someone. The Shanghai Battle was unique in that it was the first instance of intense participation by large groups in society — from offering a few pennies to braving fire on the front line to rescue wounded soldiers or stranded civilians — who rallied around embattled and severely exposed common soldiers. It left scars beyond the genuine mobilization of Shanghai residents, though political considerations eventually robbed both people and soldiers the recognition they deserved.⁶²

Making war in the Shanghai area was a ‘blessing’ as, in view of the lack of medical facilities and services within the army itself, wounded soldiers could avail themselves — although involuntarily — of the most advanced and largest medical facilities in the whole country. Shanghai had the largest population of doctors and the highest number of medical schools — seven out of thirteen for the whole country in 1935. While the Shanghai battle took place three years earlier, the situation could not be very different. Of the 5,390 doctors surveyed in 1935, 1,182 were established in Shanghai, most of them in private practice.⁶³ The medical schools turned out a fairly small number of medical graduates each year. The three main medical schools, St John’s, Aurora, and Women’s Union Medical College respectively had an enrolment of 37, 85, and 70 in 1930. On average, St John’s produced eight physicians in the 1922–30 period.⁶⁴ The Army Medical Services were appallingly absent, but since the

⁵⁹ Guofangbu, *Guojun dang’an mulu huibian* (Taipei: Guofangbu shizheng bianyiju, 1993); Guofangbu, *Guojun dang’an mulu* (Taipei: Guofangbu shizheng bianyiju, 1970).

⁶⁰ *Shanghai shi zhengfu gongbao*, 1932, 116, pp. 21–22; 1932, 117, pp. 38–39.

⁶¹ I have found a single book that addressed both the issue of wounded soldiers and refugees in the 1937 war. Ye, Suzhong, *Shangbing wenti yu nanmin wenti* (Chongqing: Duli chubanshe, 1938).

⁶² Diana Lary and Stephen MacKinnon, *Scars of War: The Impact of Warfare on Modern China* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001).

⁶³ Ka-che Yip, *Health and National Reconstruction in Nationalist China: The Development of Modern Health Services, 1928–1937* (Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, 1995), pp. 158–59.

⁶⁴ Kaiyi Chen, *Seeds from the West: St John’s Medical School, Shanghai, 1880–1952* (Chicago: Imprint Publications, 2001), pp. 145, 170.

battle occurred in the most advanced city it meant that civilian and Western medical services took over. I cannot think of another battle in the world or at least the colonial world where this occurred.

The relative abundance of medical facilities in the city, however, did not mean that they could all be placed in the service of the fighting soldiers as, even in times of conflict, people got sick or had accidents and required medical treatment. A study showed that there was at all times more demand than could be met in Shanghai's hospitals. Between 1928 and 1936, the occupancy rate at St Luke's Hospital averaged 98 per cent.⁶⁵ While room could be made for wounded soldiers, it could only be done by overstressing the existing facilities and probably giving less care to civilians. Yet the existence of hospitals with well-trained doctors was definitely a significant factor, even if the total staff available at the various establishments was not extensive. Aurora University had nineteen permanent doctors and two part-time. St John's had about the same number of permanent doctors, but twelve part-time teachers. The Women's Union Christian Medical College had the same staff as St John's. Nevertheless, not all doctors could actually be of real help to the wounded. Soldiers came with wounds of various levels of severity, which in many cases, if not most, involved surgery.

There is little on which to rely to get a clear idea of how assistance was organized on the front. For the most part, we have unmistakable indications that it was based mostly on voluntary associations. The visual record shows orderlies carrying wounded soldiers or an officer, all smiles, being treated *in situ*, by uniformed first-aid men. There is too little of such material to support the idea of an organized system of medical assistance on the battlefield. Our visual record comes from publications that were published after the conflict was over.⁶⁶ Their propagandistic nature makes it difficult to take such records at face value. Yet, whatever the actual level of involvement by the various groups that came forward to help in rescuing wounded soldiers, there is little doubt that most of the work was done by civilian volunteers. The Red Cross was the major factor in establishing medical stations (前统医疗所) near the frontline to take care of wounded soldiers and, of course, hospitals in the rear.⁶⁷

Several organizations made runs to the frontline to pick up wounded soldiers and bring them back to the city.⁶⁸ In Jiangwan, Cai Xiangsun (蔡香荪) organized people from various walks of life in Shanghai to establish several rescue brigades to collect wounded soldiers and send them to hospitals for treatment. The officers and soldiers of the seventy-eighth division were very impressed and thankful for the work done by this physician and his associates. After the conflict was over they dedicated a banner to him and the rescue brigades.⁶⁹ Several volunteers perished or were wounded in the course of the rescue operations.⁷⁰ A post-conflict publication refers

⁶⁵ Chen, *Seeds from the West*, p. 181.

⁶⁶ Liang and Xu, *Song Hu yu Ri xuezhuan da huashi*, p. 2.

⁶⁷ 'Renmin zhihuan kangzhan', *Baoshan xianzhi*, Chapter 2, Section 2, available at: <<http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node4/node2250/node2673/node13709/node15250/node61284/userobject1ai4853.html>> [accessed 3 December 2011]. On the Red Cross in China, see Caroline Reeves, 'The Power of Mercy. The Chinese Red Cross Society, 1900–1937', doctoral dissertation (Harvard University, 1998).

⁶⁸ Chen Lifan, 'Shanghai kang Ri jiuwang'.

⁶⁹ Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi, *Baoshan shi hua* ([Shanghai]: s.n., 1989), 68.

⁷⁰ *A Month of Reign of Terror in Shanghai*, 10 (from *North China Daily News*, 4 February 1932).

to a 'voluntary army' (Yiyongjun) of ninety-one members, sixteen of whom were killed as they provided rescue to soldiers.⁷¹ One can see unfold in a magnified way here the dense social networks that structured Shanghai urban society. As most of the city escaped actual fighting, war contributed to generate an all-encompassing civic consciousness and activism.

The Boy Scouts of China in Shanghai figured prominently in the post-conflict pictorial publications. They were said to have organized six teams of ten members each to rescue wounded soldiers and civilians and to have pulled out 2,000 people from the fighting areas out of a total of 75,000 rescued civilians.⁷² They can be seen providing first aid to slightly wounded soldiers, although the photographs were obviously posed. This was not the way first aid should be provided. One can also find classic pictures of boy scouts carrying stretchers, although here again the picture shows a whole troop of boy scouts for one stretcher. And, of course, there is a group portrait. To highlight their courage, the book included the photograph of a boy scout 'wounded while carrying his duties'. Several other similar groups appear like the student volunteers of the Cantonese school in Shanghai and girl scouts (nütongjun).⁷³

Another group of visual materials focuses on the volunteers, mostly women, receiving training in the city to provide care to wounded soldiers. Since this was organized after the beginning of the hostilities, one can doubt the level of skills acquired over a few days or a few weeks of training. Many of these images were produced with propagandistic purposes, to show the enthusiasm with which women rallied around the brave soldiers sacrificing their lives against the Japanese attack. These images are probably the most solid evidence that there was hardly a built-in system of medical assistance in the armies. Women were also very present in the line of duty for the care of soldiers. Mostly, they were expected to produce medical supplies and deliver medical care as assistants to physicians.

By and large, however, the largest contingents of rescuers came from the numerous civic associations in the city: the Red Cross, the Blue Cross (four teams), and a wide range of secular and religious charities.⁷⁴ The Student Federation, once a major factor in anti-Japanese rhetoric and propaganda, organized a group of 600 members to help in the fighting areas.⁷⁵ The General Federation of Trade Unions had the largest corps of rescuers with 3,000 members. Altogether, some 10,000 volunteers were involved in logistics, propaganda, and support, especially medical support.⁷⁶ Very few engaged in more military action like spying or combat. As one author noted, goodwill with large swords — a reference to the big sword detachment of volunteers — was no match for the powerfully equipped Japanese troops.⁷⁷ In fact, there were serious issues with volunteers sent individually to different units, not too sure about what they should

⁷¹ Liang and Xu, *Song Hu yu Ri xuezhuan da huashi*, 9.

⁷² Sun, Yuqin and Luhong Zhang, 'Shanghai tongzijun yu yi'erba kangzhan', *Lantai shijie*, 4 (2010), 43; Shanghai zhanqu nanmin, *Shanghai zhanqu nanmin*, p. 15.

⁷³ Liang and Xu, *Song Hu yu Ri xuezhuan da huashi*, p. 9.

⁷⁴ On Buddhist associations, see James Brooks Jessup, 'The Householder Elite: Buddhist Activism in Shanghai, 1920–1956', doctoral dissertation (Berkeley: University of California, 2010), especially Chapter 2 for Zhabei.

⁷⁵ Zhu and Hua, *Shijiu lujun kang Ri xuezhuan shiliao*, pp. 441–42.

⁷⁶ Zhu and Hua, *Shi jiu lu jun*, p. 388.

⁷⁷ Wu Liusun (1938), no page number.

do. Students had a romantic view of confronting Japan, but actual numbers melted down at every stage and very few came close to the front.⁷⁸

An unlabeled picture also shows what seems to be a first-aid station in the rear. One can see a mast with a red cross flag meant to identify the place as a non-combatant location. Soldiers are seen carrying stretchers, while others seem to be providing medical treatment. A vice-brigadier general is seen lying (and smiling) while he receives medical attention on his left leg. Another image shows soldiers on stretchers on the ground with medical officers attending to their wounds, next to a table with (medicine) bottles and Red Cross flags around.⁷⁹ The only picture that seems 'real' is one taken close to the frontline, with soldiers on stretchers in an area without any distinctive features. The unorganized scene speaks of a genuine view of live assistance. An officer is seen taking notes near a wounded soldier.⁸⁰

Although one can find passing mentions of health services in the army — e.g. in the eighty-eighth division two members of the health section (*weishengdui*) were killed in action — in all memoirs or other records there are no discussions at all of this dimension of war. All indicators point to the lack of the most basic services. Within the army there was an almost complete lack of organization and vehicles for the evacuation of the wounded soldiers. The rescue and evacuation of soldiers relied entirely on civilian volunteers using all sorts of vehicles turned into *ad hoc* ambulances.⁸¹ This would remain a permanent feature of the Chinese army.⁸² Delays in the transportation of wounded soldiers could explain the high level of fatal casualties as it sometimes took days, skirting around the city to reach the foreign settlements, to bring in the soldiers.⁸³ Despite the tremendous mobilization and goodwill of volunteers, participants, and observers, there were serious issues of organization and coordination.

The wounded were conveyed to the RCHs by a fleet of lent-out motor trucks. The Red Cross, the Red Swastika Society, and the People's Relief Association undertook the task of bringing in the war victims.⁸⁴ The soldiers came from Zhabei, Jiangwan, or Dachang by way of Markham Road Bridge and Zhongshan Road.⁸⁵ Once they arrived, however, there were not enough beds to accommodate them all in the regular hospitals. To meet the staggering demand for beds, individuals — physicians and merchants — and mostly civic associations gathered and/or provided resources in the form of money, goods, and premises to set up temporary hospitals. By 5 February,

⁷⁸ Zhu and Hua, *Shi jiu lu jun*, pp. 429–31.

⁷⁹ Liang and Xu, *Song Hu yu Ri xue zhan da huashi*, p. 54.

⁸⁰ *Zhong ri zhanshi shiji* (Shanghai: Yingwen taimi wanbao, 1938), p. 54.

⁸¹ Hua Bai, *Yi er ba — Song Hu kang zhan* (Shanghai: Da cheng chuban gongsi, 1948), pp. 33–34.

⁸² Li Zhongyi, 'Shangbing yiyuan zhong de yi zhou', *Wenshi*, 1.3 (1934), 160.

⁸³ In a general assessment of the weaknesses of the treatment of wounded soldiers in 1937, an official publication pointed out the lack of stretchers to evacuate the soldiers, the lack of bandages and medical supplies on the frontline, and even the lack of staff to carry the wounded soldiers. All these factors meant a higher number of deaths. It also pointed out the insufficient number of hospitals and, therein, the lack of equipment to treat the soldiers, especially surgery. It also meant that large numbers of soldiers remained unattended. *Shangbing wenti yu nanmin wenti*, pp. 16–18, 28–32. On the system of support to wounded soldiers in the US army since the Civil War, see Walter B Gribben, 'United States Army Trauma Care from the Civil War to the Vietnam Era and Its Influence on Civilian Emergency Medical Services', *Journal of the Georgia Association of Historians*, vol. 36 (2005–06), pp. 39–80.

⁸⁴ *North China Herald*, 1 March 1932.

⁸⁵ *North China Herald*, 1 March 1932.

the Red Cross alone had established eleven hospitals, as well as first care stations around Zhenru, Jiangwan, and Zhabei.⁸⁶ Among the most active civic organizations, guilds had the greatest capacity to raise money and to mobilize their constituencies, as we shall see later. By the end of the conflict, there were sixty-eight hospitals to serve wounded soldiers and refugees.⁸⁷

The Ningbo Guild, a major merchant organization, collected money to help support the refugees from the battle zone. It also raised funds to provide medical support to wounded soldiers.⁸⁸ On 1 February, the *Shenbao* carried an advertisement by the Ningbo Guild to collect goods for the soldiers. Twice during the conflict it ran new advertisements to call for gifts.⁸⁹ Ningbo people responded with large amounts of cash, medicine, food, clothes, candles, straw shoes, etc. The guild itself made purchases on behalf of the soldiers using its own money.⁹⁰ It also set up various hospitals for soldiers. It funded RCH no. 34 on Connaught Road, as well as the RCH for Wounded Soldiers nos 4 and 10.⁹¹ It also made its own hospital, the Siming Hospital, available for the treatment of soldiers.⁹² The Huining Guild (Huining huiguan) raised 1,000 yuan for the nineteenth army and 3,000 yuan for the RCHs for soldiers.⁹³ The Coal Merchant Professional Association (Shanghai meiyetongyegonghui) launched a fund-raising drive on 15 February to establish a hospital, which eventually opened at its premises in Nanshi.⁹⁴

Catholic organizations were very active in providing assistance to refugees and soldiers. Local associations called on their parishioners to devote their time and resources to the unlucky victims of the war.⁹⁵ On 19 February two catholic primary schools, Leisi and Xiaoming, were turned into a hospital (RCH no. 22) under the responsibility of Zhuang De, a professional physician, who was joined by the school's teachers. Of the 211 admitted soldiers, only three lost their lives.⁹⁶ A hospital for wounded was organized by Mrs H.H. Kung with the support by Catholics, especially Lo Pah-hong, a well-known Catholic figure, in the premises of a school in Tatung Road, with Dr F.C. Yen, head of the Red Cross General Hospital, and Dr W.S. New, head of the orthopaedic hospital, as leaders.⁹⁷ Aurora University made its

⁸⁶ Zhu and Hua, *Shi jiu lu jun*, p. 447.

⁸⁷ Zhu and Hua, *Shi jiu lu jun*, pp. 448–55.

⁸⁸ *Ningbo lü Hu tongxianghui yuekan* (1932), 6.

⁸⁹ *Shen Bao*, 1 February 1932; 4 February 1932; 24 February 1932.

⁹⁰ Cao Jun, 'Shanghai Ningbo bang de kang Ri jiuguo huodong', *Shanghai difang zhi* (1995), 4, available at: <<http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node70393/node70403/node72530/node72614/userobject1ai81968.html>> [accessed 3 December 2011].

⁹¹ *Shen Bao*, 25 February 1932; Cao Jun, 'Shanghai Ningbo bang de kang Ri jiuguo huodong', 'Ben hui zushe Hongshizi di sanshisi shangbing yiyuan zhi jingguo baogao', *Ningbo lü Hu tongxianghui yuekan*, 107 (1932), 3–9.

⁹² *Shen Bao*, 2 March 1932.

⁹³ 'Huiguan (gongsuo)', *Shanghai tongzhi*, roll 46, Chapter 3, Section 1, available at: <<http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node2247/node4605/node79828/node79837/userobject1ai102001.html>> [accessed 3 December 2011].

⁹⁴ Yao quenian, 'Kangzhang shiqi de Shanghai meiyetongyegonghui', *Shanghai difang zhi* (1998), 5, available at: <<http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node70393/node70403/node72511/node72584/userobject1ai81304.html>> [accessed 3 December 2011].

⁹⁵ 'Huizhu jiaoquan shangbing zaimin', *Jingxinbao*, 46.4 (1932), 130–32.

⁹⁶ Li Fen, 'Zhongguo hongshizihui di ershier shangbing yiyuan zuzhi neiqing', *Shengjiao zazhi*, 21.6 (1932), 37.

⁹⁷ *North China Herald*, 23 February 1932.

contribution to the treatment of wounded soldiers. It turned its main hall, as well as one of its dormitories, into a hospital for wounded soldiers. It became RCH no. 28. It also established RCH no. 18 in an existing hospital.⁹⁸ The unfortunate events offered an opportunity for the training of students in unusual medical issues.

The arrival of Chinese wounded aroused considerable interest. Large crowds gathered daily at Markham Road Bridge where the trucks carrying the wounded passed. The Chinese Red Cross General Hospital in Kiukiang Road was thronged with spectators when soldiers were brought in from Zhabei.⁹⁹ Wounded soldiers were welcomed as heroes and received spontaneous gifts from the population. On one occasion, at the intersection of Edward VII and Thibet Road, pedestrians surrounded a motor truck carrying seven slightly wounded soldiers when it stopped for the purchase of cigarettes. Within seconds traffic was almost blocked. The motor truck eventually left with piles of cigarette tins and boxes contributed by onlookers.¹⁰⁰

Song Qingling, Sun Yat-sen's widow, was highly praised in official publications for her dedication to the nineteenth army and its soldiers (it is also a common trope in contemporary publications). She is said to have braved danger to meet with Cai Tingkai in his headquarters and to run three times to the frontline to support the soldiers. On their first visit to the front on 30 January, Song Qingling and He Xiangying realized that the soldiers still wore thin summer uniforms. They also observed that wounded soldiers did not receive adequate and timely treatment. They sent telegrams all over China calling for contributions and, within five days, had received 30,000 items with the character 'Victory' embroidered on each.¹⁰¹ He Xiangying also established a hospital for soldiers at Jiaotong University, which could accommodate up to 600 patients. She founded another one with one-hundred beds in a middle school (Gongshi zhongxue) on the Bourgeat route.¹⁰² He and Zhu Guangzhen organized an association for the support of disabled soldiers (Guonan zhanshi jiujiuhui) and established a hospital in the French Concession, later incorporated under the Red Cross as hospital no. 11.¹⁰³

Aside from these national celebrities, many ordinary people used their own wealth and skills to contribute to helping the wounded soldiers. Gu Fuqing, a physician from Jiangwan, had established China University Hospital no. 4. When the war started, he left his home in Wusong and came to Shanghai to organize what became the first RCH for Wounded Soldiers.¹⁰⁴ The two Niu brothers, both professional physicians,

⁹⁸ 'Shehui shiye', *Shanghai zongjiao zhi*, Part 4, Chapter 4, Section 3, available at: <<http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node2245/node75195/node75203/node75285/node75299/userobject1ai91990.html>> [accessed 3 December 2011].

⁹⁹ *North China Herald*, 1 March 1932.

¹⁰⁰ *North China Herald*, 1 March 1932.

¹⁰¹ 'Toushen kang Ri jiuwang yundong', *Shanghai funü zhi*, Part 2, Chapter 2, Section 4, available at: <<http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node2245/node64804/node64810/node64853/node64861/userobject1ai59115.html>> [accessed 3 December 2011]; Zhang Jianji, 'Baoshan he kangzhan', *Shanghai difang zhi* (1997), p. 2, available at: <<http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node70393/node70403/node72520/node72592/userobject1ai81717.html>> [accessed 3 December 2011].

¹⁰² 'Toushen kang Ri jiuwang yundong'.

¹⁰³ 'Yongjun fuxue', *Luwan quzhi*, Part 25, Chapter 1, Section 1, available at: <<http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node4/node2249/luwan/node37121/node37123/node62721/userobject1ai22137.html>> [accessed 3 December 2011].

¹⁰⁴ *Baoshan shi hua*, p. 66.

stopped their practice to establish a hospital in both Shanghai and Suzhou. Niu Huilin became head of the Hospital for Wounded Soldiers. Shen Yunbing, a German-trained physician, established RCH for Wounded Soldiers no. 19.¹⁰⁵

An industrialist, Zhao Jingru, turned three storeys of his newly opened flour mill into a hospital for soldier care by women.¹⁰⁶ Another industrialist, Fang Yexian, funded RCH no. 26.¹⁰⁷ Zou Taofeng, a newspaper and magazine entrepreneur, established a hospital under the name of its journal in western Shanghai.¹⁰⁸ He was also active in raising funds for military supplies and comfort goods for soldiers.¹⁰⁹ Yang Xinfou, an old Sun Yat-sen associate and Guomindang leader in Shanghai, set up a committee to provide technical assistance to the nineteenth army. He also founded a hospital for wounded soldiers.¹¹⁰ The municipal council of the Chinese municipality itself established two hospitals — RCH nos 27 and 38 — in the Laborers' Hospital and the seat of section no. 3 of the Guomindang, respectively.¹¹¹

While there is no doubt about the enthusiasm with which various sectors of the population participated in the effort to assist wounded soldiers, one is led to wonder about the adequacy of the effort. Medical students, for instance, were among those who mobilized actively. Yet time was much too short to give them even a crash course such as the one organized for the students of Tongji University Medical College in 1933 to man the improvised medical hospitals established in North China. Even for this purpose, the physicians who trained the students could only offer a series of conferences on subjects related to war injuries, some barely above the level of first-aid techniques. They relied on a German textbook — *Handbuch der ärztlichen Erfahrungen im Weltkrieg 1914–1918* — first published in 1922.¹¹²

The effort of establishing hospitals for wounded soldiers continued after the end of the conflict. In part, it may have been an effort to rationalize post-war medical assistance and return the premises used for hospitals to their original usage. On 1 March, a new temporary hospital opened on the top floors of Continental Bank on Nanking Road with a capacity of 1,000 beds. Mrs Chiang Kai-shek served as the superintendant of the hospital that also came into the fold of the Red Cross as RCH no. 38. Yet this operation remained well below the proclaimed goal. It received a group of eighty-seven soldiers. The paper noted that 'should the need arise the building may house 300 beds', a far cry from the announced capacity of 1,000 beds.¹¹³

¹⁰⁵ 'Renwu zhuanji', *Chongming xianzhi*, roll 35, Chapter 2, p. 58, available at: <<http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node4/node2250/node4426/node16079/node17383/index.html>> [accessed 3 December 2011].

¹⁰⁶ 'Zhao Jingru', *Shanghai jianzhu shigong zhi*, Part 'renwu', Chapter 1, available at: <<http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node2245/node69543/node69552/node69640/node69644/userobject1ai67899.html>> [accessed 3 December 2011].

¹⁰⁷ 'Huiguan (gongsuo)', *Shanghai tongzhi*.

¹⁰⁸ 'Renwu zhuanlüe', *Shanghai zhonghua zhiye jiaoyushe zhi*, Chapter 6, Section 1, available at: <<http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node2245/node82329/node82339/node82352/userobject1ai11612.html>> [accessed 3 December 2011].

¹⁰⁹ 'Zou Taofen guju yu Wan Yifang', *Shanghai mingjianzhu zhi*, available at: <<http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node71994/node81772/node81776/node81788/userobject1ai109115.html>> [accessed 3 December 2011].

¹¹⁰ 'Yang Xingfou', *Shanghai tongzhi*, roll 44, 'zhunazhu', available at: <<http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node2247/node4603/node79844/node79846/userobject1ai102581.html>> [accessed 3 December 2011].

¹¹¹ 'Bokuan jieji Song Hu kang Ri shangbing yiyuan', *Zhongyang dangwu yuekan*, 45/46 (1932), 440–41.

¹¹² 'Shangbing jihuhudui zhi tongji yixueshe zhi jingguo', *Tongji yixue jikan*, 3,3 (1933), 91–92.

¹¹³ *North China Herald*, 8 March 1932.

All the hospitals established for the treatment of wounded soldiers were placed under the supervision of the Red Cross, although their funding and management depended fully on the organizations that had established them. This was meant to guarantee their protection from Japanese encroachment, even if most were located in the foreign settlements. A certain number were found in Pudong across the Huangpu River and in the rear in Chinese territory (Minhang). In Jiading County, the local branch of the Red Cross was turned into a hospital and provided large amounts of medicine to wounded soldiers.¹¹⁴ The activities of the general Chinese RCH covered the area of Zhabei and Jiangwan, while the other organizations also provided assistance in Dachang, Zhanghuabang, and Zhenru.¹¹⁵ RCHs accorded the same treatment to Chinese and Japanese soldiers, even if the latter could rely far more on their own medical resources. They were usually dispatched to different hospitals.¹¹⁶

There is no accurate and complete record of the number of hospitals that came under the Red Cross. Current publications offer higher figures: from sixty to eighty temporary hospitals in Shanghai for the treatment of wounded soldiers. In early March, the *North China Herald* reported that there were more than thirty hospitals in the International Settlement and French Concession, which furnished accommodation for the Chinese wounded.¹¹⁷ The most reliable record published in 1933 lists sixty-eight establishments with name, address, and supporting agency.¹¹⁸ The size of these hospitals varied greatly. My own record of mentions in the *North China Herald* and various sources provides the perspective shown in Table 7.¹¹⁹

With a total population of wounded soldiers and civilians exceeding 10,000 people, not to mention the medical attention required by the hundreds of thousands of refugees in the city — 88,099 were treated — a total number of some seventy hospitals could hardly have sufficed to treat the staggering number of casualties.¹²⁰ A Chinese source indicates that about 60 per cent of all wounded soldiers were treated in the hospitals set up by private initiatives.¹²¹ While the larger operations were able to treat up to 300 soldiers, most fell within the 100–150 patient range. This level of casualties also implied treating an average of almost 300 patients per day. Massive numbers of arriving wounded soldiers were not unheard of. On 23 February, the *North China Herald* reported that over 400 Chinese soldiers suffering from bayonet and gunshot injuries were admitted to hospitals in the International Settlement during the day.¹²² A few days later, it confirmed the large number of casualties being brought into the foreign settlements:

¹¹⁴ *North China Herald*, 31 May 1932.

¹¹⁵ *North China Herald*, 1 March 1932.

¹¹⁶ *North China Herald*, 1 March 1932.

¹¹⁷ *North China Herald*, 1 March 1932.

¹¹⁸ Zhu and Hua, *Shi jiu lu jun*, p. 448–55.

¹¹⁹ *North China Herald*, 1 March 1932; Cao Jun, 'Shanghai Ningbo bang de kang Ri jiuguo huodong'; 'Huiguan (gongsuo)', *Shanghai tongzhi*; Li Fen, 'Zhongguo shizihui', p. 378; 'Bokuan jieji Song Hu kang Ri shangbing yiyuan', pp. 440–41.

¹²⁰ Shanghai zhanqu nanmin, *Shanghai zhanqu nanmin*, p. 50.

¹²¹ Chen Lifen, 'Shanghai kang Ri jiuwang'.

¹²² *North China Herald*, 23 February 1932.

TABLE 7
RED CROSS HOSPITAL ACCOMMODATION

Hospital	Capacity
Red Cross General Hospital	Unknown
Red Cross Hospital no. 34	177 wounded soldiers
Red Cross Hospital no. 4	97 soldiers
Red Cross Hospital no. 26	103 wounded soldiers
Red Cross Hospital no. 11	Several hundred soldiers
Red Cross Hospital no. 28	300 soldiers
Red Cross Hospital no. 18	100 soldiers
Red Cross Hospital no. 22	211 soldiers
Red Cross Hospital nos 27 and 34	100 soldiers
Red Cross Hospital no. 21	Unknown

SOURCE: North China Herald, 1 March 1932.

More than 500 people, a majority of Chinese soldiers, have been brought into the International Settlement and French Concession from behind Chinese lines during the last four days since the beginning of the big offensive launched by the Japanese. On Monday [29 February] when severe fighting took place on all the fronts, more than 250 soldiers were distributed in local hospitals. About 100 were received yesterday.¹²³

As we have seen previously, this was the time of a major frontal assault by the Japanese army.

I have not yet found any record of the actual situation and condition in these improvised hospitals. There is a brief presentation of the organization of the RCH for Wounded Soldiers no. 22, but it is purely descriptive.¹²⁴ There was also a group portrait of those who had been involved in work at the hospital, but no view of the soldiers.¹²⁵ Texts produced later and in different contexts are more critical. In a report about a week spent in a hospital for wounded soldiers, a voluntary nurse remembered how overwhelmed they were when a large number of wounded soldiers arrived, sometimes 300 in a single batch. Medicine was prepared by hand and production failed to cope with such massive numbers of arrivals.¹²⁶ Officers and regular soldiers received different treatment. Officers were treated at permanent hospitals like the Lester Chinese Hospital rather than in the numerous crash hospitals set up under the banner of the Chinese Red Cross.¹²⁷

There were divergent views about hospitals for wounded soldiers. In her 1934 testimony, a volunteer nurse made a devastating report. Her opening statement set

¹²³ *North China Herald*, 1 March 1932.

¹²⁴ Li Fen, 'Zhongguo hongshizi', p. 378.

¹²⁵ 'Zhongguo hongshizi di ershier shangbingyuan furen deng layuan weilao shangbing liuying' [picture], *Shengjiao zazhi*, 21.6 (1932), 1.

¹²⁶ Li Zhongyi, 'Shangbing yiyuan zhong de yi zhou', p. 150.

¹²⁷ *North China Herald*, 1 March 1932.

the tone: 'Here I do not have the feeling that this is a hospital for wounded soldiers. This is a floor of opened flesh and blood that makes one feel dizzy, a conservatory for disabled and yet surviving lives, a tragic and frightening place'. Wounded soldiers arrived in batches, to be placed almost at once in the slim coffins waiting for them. Some were put in coffins even before they died, their belongings taken away by hospital staff. Their wounds were horrible. The nurse was shocked to see the bodily damage and had a hard time just watching the doctors put their hands into these wounds and sew up the wounded. She observed facts and events that also created a genuine unease. She perceived the doctors as distant and even indifferent. They laughed too much. She also mentioned that officers received a better treatment and care by doctors than ordinary soldiers. They also received a larger share of the gifts received from the population.¹²⁸

In one incident, she recalled a violent altercation between two wounded soldiers, asking for treatment, and the chief doctor, who obviously held them in contempt and ordered them out to wait in line. They almost came to blows, but eventually the soldiers gave up. Quite clearly, medicine was in short supply and failed to meet the needs of doctors and soldiers. Certain doctors took advantage of their situation to extract money from the soldiers in exchange for medicine, especially morphine for those in pain. In one extreme case, the nurse saw a doctor amputate the leg of a soldier without any painkiller, not to mention anaesthesia. The soldier screamed so badly out of pain that fellow soldiers rushed to the room and beat up the doctor. The nurse's account ended with a riot by a hundred wounded soldiers against the staff of doctors, cursing them for their lack of care towards men who had sacrificed their lives on the front.¹²⁹ The text was an unambiguous denunciation of the poor state of hospitals for wounded soldiers.

After the war

Right after the conflict, the priority for both the Japanese army and the Shanghai Municipal Council (SMC) was to clean up the streets and remove the tons of refuse and debris that littered the streets and alleyways, as well as the dead bodies left behind. The SMC deployed a group of 150 coolies to remove about 300 tons of refuse daily.¹³⁰ From the news items published in the press, however, it appears that the bodies were for the most part those of people who had died from other causes than the conflict. These bodies were both coffined and uncoffined. Those in coffins could hardly have been casualties of the war as there was too much disruption to even obtain a coffin. Altogether, 757 bodies were removed by a gang of workers in an area north of Kungping and Chaoufoong Roads and east of Dixwell Road, well within the limits of the International Settlement.¹³¹ It seems that the end of the conflict and actual occupation of the area by the Japanese troops gave the SMC the opportunity to engage in a 'cleansing of Zhabei' and remove refuse and coffin dumps that had been in existence before the war.

¹²⁸ Li Zhongyi, 'Shangbing yiyuan zhong de yi zhou', pp. 145–48, 162.

¹²⁹ Li Zhongyi, 'Shangbing yiyuan zhong de yi zhou', pp. 151–52, 161–63.

¹³⁰ *North China Herald*, 22 March 1932.

¹³¹ *North China Herald*, 5 April 1932.

The fate of wounded soldiers after the war mostly eluded my attempt to get a sense of how they were treated by the state and society. Published stories or accounts of visits to wounded soldiers in hospital mostly followed the same trope of valiant soldiers who were just eager to see their wounds healed in order to go back to the frontline. Their visitors, usually schoolboys or girls and students, would come to express their gratitude and support for those who had sacrificed their lives and bodies to the cause of repelling the Japanese invasion. They brought small gifts and sang patriotic songs.¹³² Another text told the story of a wounded soldier in hospital behind the lines waking up after medical treatment. Mostly it was about patriotism, but above all, it was about the common people who voluntarily contributed goods and food to soldiers. The physician conveyed this message about the complete dependence of soldiers both at the frontline and of course behind the lines on people's contributions. He criticized directly the government for its inability to support the war effort. It is not obvious whether this is fiction or reportage. It fits in-between, but the purpose of the message is clear: patriotism was stronger than Japanese weapons.¹³³

I have no record of how wounded soldiers reacted after the conflict. There is a passing mention of a committee for the management of wounded soldiers, but it was cited only in relation to producing statistics on the nature of the wounds of soldiers. The *North China Herald* mentioned an incident in which a group of forty wounded soldiers attacked the police station in Minong village. They were staying at the twenty-first RCH in the village when they suddenly rushed to the police station, smashed furniture, seized seven rifles and several hundred rounds of ammunition.¹³⁴ Quite interestingly the *North China Herald* at the very same time published a letter from a British soldier on behalf of a group of seventeen soldiers still in hospital in Australia seventeen years after the end of WWI. The veteran appealed to receive letters from anyone. The paper went on about men who lived in constant pain and under constant attention by reason of the ravages of war, and had suffered the tedium of hospital existence for seventeen years.¹³⁵ The paper made no mention of the fate of the Chinese soldiers wounded and seriously or permanently disabled during the recent conflict with Japan in the city.

Wounded soldiers could indeed cause trouble. It was apparently a significant enough issue to deserve discussion in a book that covered the lessons to be drawn from the war with Japan. Yet the proposal to restore order and discipline among the soldiers who had suffered physically was mostly about teaching them the sense of their sacrifice, of their honour and dignity.¹³⁶ In 1933, a soldier — fictional or

¹³² Hu Tian, *Hu zhan xiezhen* (Chengdu: Xinxin yinshuash, 1938), pp. 158–60, 170–73; 'Shangbing yiyuan jisuo', *Beiyang huabao*, (1933), 917, 2. It is about a hospital for wounded soldiers, probably in North China. It mentions the role of the city — Tianjin? — Youth Association (Qingnianhui) in helping the wounded soldiers with various chores (writing, buying things, etc.) and entertaining them (as well as doing propaganda work). Initially, the hospital was constructed with straw and mud, there were no beds or bed covers. Eventually the president (Zhuxi) gave 400 yuan and beds and covers were purchased. The local civic association (Difang weichihui) also contributed beds.

¹³³ Zhong Yi, 'Shangbing', *Guowen zhoubao*, 10.26 (1933), 1–4.

¹³⁴ *North China Herald*, 31 May 1932.

¹³⁵ *North China Herald*, 17 May 1932.

¹³⁶ Zhang Xuewu, *Song Hu kangzhan suo de*, pp. 230–31.

non-fictional? — published a ‘self-account’ of his feelings as a wounded soldier lying in hospital, confined to his bed for three to four months, wondering what would become of him, and crying over a friend who no longer came back to visit him because war had taken his life.¹³⁷ A short story was also published about a soldier who had fought in Shanghai and was back home in Canton. The ex-soldier got into a fight with the owner of a shoe shop because the latter refused to sell him only one shoe and insisted on selling him a pair, even though the soldier had lost one foot in the war. The court confirmed that the soldier had to purchase a pair of shoes. The writer sympathized with the ex-soldier who could not even save a little money by purchasing only one shoe and offered the advice to have a shoe custom-made.¹³⁸

There was little disabled soldiers could rely on after they were demobilized. Unless they had a family to support them, they were bound to become beggars, their sacrifice forgotten, except as a tragic memory.¹³⁹

Concluding remarks

A day of national mourning for those who fell in the Sino-Japanese hostilities in Shanghai with flags at half-mast was declared throughout China. A memorial service was held at Suzhou on 28 May with Wu Tiecheng, the mayor of Shanghai, in attendance. Hundreds of wreaths and banners eulogizing the deeds of the nineteenth and fifth armies were presented.¹⁴⁰ One can only wonder why this day of mourning was held in Suzhou and not in Shanghai: due to Japanese hostility combined with a fear of spontaneous reaction by local organizations outraged by the agreement signed by the Chinese government after the ‘victory’. After the war, a space was reserved in the cemetery for the fallen soldiers of the NRA in Nanjing, near Sun Yat-sen’s tomb. Seventy men from the nineteenth army and fifty-eight from the fifth army were buried there to remain as a permanent reminder of their courage and sacrifice for the nation. Each army erected a memorial stele that would be destroyed by the Japanese in 1937.¹⁴¹ A year later, a delegation by the Youth Association of Furen University paid a visit to veterans still in hospital. This is the only record I have found so far of public concern for the victims of the 1932 conflict.¹⁴² In Shanghai, the municipality erected a memorial, which hosted an annual commemoration, mostly by private initiative, every year until 1937 when the monument was destroyed in the course of the conflict.

Monuments and celebrations, however, could not erase the legacy of war for wounded soldiers, especially those who were maimed in combat, and there were many of them. A post-war publication devoted five pages to disabled soldiers with amputated limbs. The captions all emphasized their courage and sacrifice, but none addressed the issue of their future.¹⁴³ There was no indication as to how the central

¹³⁷ ‘Shangbing zi shu’, *Kongde xiaokan*, 5 (1933), 21–23.

¹³⁸ Qian Renkang, ‘Shangbing de beiai’, *Shiyue tan*, 15 (1933), 16.

¹³⁹ Li Zhongyi, ‘Shangbing yiyuan zhong de yi zhou’, 161.

¹⁴⁰ *North China Herald*, 31 May 1932.

¹⁴¹ Zhang Zhizhong, *Diwujun canjia Song Hu kang Ri zhan*, p. 140.

¹⁴² ‘Furen daxue gongjiao qingnianhui pai daibiao weilao shangbing’, *Tianzhu gongjiao baibua bao*, 17.3 (1933), 55–58.

¹⁴³ See *Song Hu yu Ri xuezhuan da huashi*.

state or their original unit supported them if they ever did. A later analysis of the situation of wounded soldiers during the 1937 conflict showed that soldiers were often disconnected from their units, lost their wages, and, while in hospital, received a tiny sum of money for their support. Basically, they starved unless they received money or food as gifts. Many of those who fought were Cantonese who probably went back or were sent back to Guangdong. The citizens of Shanghai probably just forgot them over time. Whatever their fate, there was no mention of them in the newspapers at the time of the annual commemorations. In fact, this article concludes with the sad observation that the voice of the ordinary soldier was simply lost. Paradoxically, the only lasting memorial to the 1932 battle actually stands in the city of Guangzhou. It is a monument to the memory of the soldiers of the Cantonese nineteenth army which even today remains a *lieu de mémoire* for the relatives of the fallen soldiers and a place of annual commemoration by officials.¹⁴⁴ The master narrative of resistance tells the story of the unshakable patriotism of soldiers and unwavering bond between army and people in Shanghai in 1932. Yet this heroic narrative fails to address the actual experience of combat, of casualties, of bodily damage, and of trauma, both for the soldiers and the civilian population. The Shanghai battle announced the frightening massive waves of destruction WWII would unleash on European and Japanese cities, then as the so-called Cold War set in against recalcitrant colonized territories in Southeast Asia.

Notes on contributor

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¹⁴⁴ Zuo Shuangwen and Guan Zhao, 'Guangzhou shijiu lujun Song Hu kangri zhenwan jiangshi lingyuan', *Kang Ri zhanzheng yanjiu*, 1 (1996), 235–40; *Guangzhou ribao*, 4 September 2010.