Allying with the Jin to Subjugate the Liao: Decision-Making and Demise of the Northern Song State, 1120-1127

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Abstract. From 1005 AD to 1120 AD, the Chinese Song Empire (960 AD —1179 AD) and its northern neighbor, the Khitan Liao Empire (907 AD —1125 AD), maintained an unprecedented friendship due to the Treaty of Chanyuan signed in 1004 AD. However, in 1120 AD, the Song decided to ally with the Jurchen Jin, a newly rising power in Northeast China, in an attempt to subjugate the Liao and recover the Sixteen Prefectures (modern-day Beijing, Hebei, Shanxi, and Tianjin), a Liao territory inhabited by Han Chinese. This decision, later known as Allying with the Jin, was seen as not only a betrayal of the friendship that the Song and the Liao had established and maintained, but also the greatest mistake that Emperor Song Huizong (1082 AD—1135AD) and his scholar-officials made, for it directly led to the demise of the Northern Song Dynasty seven years later. Why did the Song Empire decide to break the status quo, abandoning the hard-won peace with the Liao and instead ally with the Jin? Scholars like Zhang Yun Zheng attribute the decision-making to Song Huizong's incompetence as an emperor. Other scholars like Nicolas Tackett believe that nationalism among the Song elites drove the alliance. This paper shall explore the role nationalism played in the Song-Jin Alliance and examine the roles of external forces in the decision-making process that eventually led to the downfall of the Northern Song Dynasty. This paper will also examine other historical conclusions that result from prior Song-centric research, as this paper ultimately concludes that military pragmatism was a more significant contributing factor to the Song-Jin Alliance than was nationalism.

Keywords: Song Huizong, Jurchen, Khitan, nationalism, military pragmatism.

1. Introduction

From 1005 to 1120, the Chinese Song Empire (960—1179) and its northern neighbor, the Khitan Liao Empire (907—1125), maintained an unprecedented friendship due to the *Treaty of Chanyuan* signed in 1004. During their hundred years of peace, they sent envoys to each other and treated the envoys from the other country with great honor. When the Song envoys arrived at the Liao's capital, Yanjing, the Liao officials welcomed them, suggesting that the Song and the Liao were just like one family, to which the Song ambassadors responded, "since antiquity, there has never been a friendship like the one between our courts!"

However, in 1120, the Song decided to ally with the Jurchen Jin, a newly rising power in Northeast China, in an attempt to subjugate the Liao and recover the Sixteen Prefectures (modern-day Beijing, Hebei, Shanxi, and Tianjin), a Liao territory inhabited by Han Chinese. This decision was seen as not only a betrayal of the friendship that the Song and the Liao had established and maintained, but also the greatest mistake that Zhao Ji, Emperor Huizong of the Song (1082-1135), and his scholar-officials made, for it directly led to the demise of the Northern Song Dynasty seven years later.

Why did the Song Empire decide to break the status quo, abandoning the hard-won peace with the Liao and instead allying with the Jin? Some scholars attribute the decision-making to Emperor Huizong 's personal attributes. Scholarly explanations include his love for art, which led to his negligence of court and military affairs, and his ambition to have a niche in history. With his blind belief in the Song's military strength and desire to recover the Sixteen Prefectures, Emperor Huizong decided to ally with the Jin. However, this argument falls short because it ignores the larger historical context. In *Emperor Huizong,* Patricia Ebrey points out that the recovery of the prefectures was not Huizong's whim, but something that the Song court had debated on ever since the Song Empire was founded in 960. In addition, Emperor Huizong was not the only one supporting allying with the Jin

in the Song court; important officials such as Wang Fu, Zhao Liangsi, and Tong Guan also advocated for the alliance.

Other scholars believe that nationalism among the Song elites drove the decision-making. In *The Origins of the Chinese Nation: Song China and the Forging of an East Asian World Order*, Nicolas Tackett argues that even educated elites before the Song Dynasty tended to emphasize the differences between Chinese and non-Chinese. According to Tackett, it was not until the eleventh century that the determinative for one's ethnocultural identity shifted to be based on ancestry rather than geography or environment: having Han ancestry meant being Chinese, and being Chinese meant being part of the Song Empire. Since the people dwelling in the Sixteen Prefectures were historically Han, then the land should rightfully belong to Song. However, in Hilde De Weerdt's review of Tackett's work, she criticizes Tackett for making unsolid arguments based on limited sources. She suggests that nationalism was only received by some high court officials instead of the whole educated elite class. This raises the question: what role did nationalism play in the Song's decision-making of allying with the Jin?

Through exploring the role that nationalism played in the process of this decision-making, this essay argues that compared to internal nationalism, military pragmatism is a more significant contributor to the alliance between the Song and the Jin. Such a military pragmatism was not driven by Song officials; instead, it was a product of the rise of the Jin State and the decline of the Liao Empire. Thus, this essay contributes to the current scholarship by examining the often-ignored roles that the Jurchens and the Khitans played.

2. Zhao Family's Good Child: a Liao official surrendered to the Song

On March 2nd, 1115, Emperor Huizong received a red wax pill from Xiongzhou (modern-day Hebei province), a frontier prefecture between the Song and the Liao. In that wax pill was a secret message from Ma Zhi, a Liao official. Ma Zhi conveyed his willingness to collaborate with the Song Empire and the plan to ally with the Jin to subjugate the Liao. Emperor Huizong was excited upon receiving it. However, Ma Zhi and his proposal eventually caused the Song Empire to collapse.

Ma Zhi was a Han Chinese who lived in the Yan region (modern-day Beijing). For generations, his family had been the aristocrats of the Liao Empire. Ma Zhi himself was a Chamberlain for Attendant, a major official in charge of all Court Gentlemen and of the Emperor's personal counselors and bodyguards. Ma Zhi was one of the most important actors in allying with the Jin, for he was not only the initial proposer but was also responsible for the Song's negotiation with the Jin as they signed the Treaty Conducted at the Sea.

Why would an aristocrat from the Liao facilitate the Song to fight against his own country? Surely, the Liao had been stable and powerful for more than a hundred years, accepting the Song's annual payment from the South while exacting the Jurchens from the North. However, according to Ma Zhi, the Liao gradually declined due to corruption and faction conflicts. When Emperor Tianzuo, the last emperor of the Liao, succeeded to the throne, the Liao had long ceased to be the powerful empire that it used to be. But while the Khitans declined, the Jurchens grew in power. Led by Wanyan Aguda (1068—1123), the Jurchens rebelled against the Liao, captured many prefectures and counties, and soon established the Jin (literally "Golden") State in 1115. Ma Zhi had long recognized the decline of the Liao. In order not to decease along with his country, he planned to surrender to the Song.

Ma Zhi's first step was to build personal connections with some Song officials during their previous visits to the Liao Empire. In 1111, when the Song and the Liao were still allies, Tong Guan, a eunuch and powerful courtier of Emperor Huizong, visited the Liao to celebrate Emperor Tianzuo's birthday. During Tong Guan's stay in the Liao, Ma Zhi visited his dwelling multiple times. By the time Wanyan Aguda claimed himself as emperor in 1115, Ma Zhi realized that Liao was in unprecedented danger and it was time for him to defect to the Song. Therefore, via the prefect of a Song prefecture, Ma Zhi delivered the wax pill to the Song Empire. In the letter hidden in the wax pill, Ma Zhi morally justified his surrender by claiming that he had long been convinced by the

teaching of Confucius—"a dangerous country I don't enter, a chaotic state I don't stay"—and that he would take his whole family to the territory of the Song and restore their Han Chinese identity.

Ma Zhi also informed the Song that it was not at all difficult to defeat the Liao. Ma Zhi suggests that the balance of power was shifting in the north and Liao's tyranny had resulted in the rising Jurchens' grave hatred towards the Khitans. Therefore, if the Song were to ally with Jin, attacking the Liao from the south while the Jin attacks from the north, the Liao would be easily defeated.

After reading the letter, Huizong asked Tong Guan and Cai Jing, his most trusted officials, to evaluate Ma Zhi's proposal. Knowing that defeating the Liao would mean the recovery of the long-lost Sixteen Prefectures, Tong Guan was very interested in the alliance. Cai Jing, however, remained conservative. Eventually, after ten days, the two agreed that Ma Zhi and his proposal could be of great use and recommended that secret arrangements be made to help Ma Zhi cross the Song-Liao border.

A few days later, Emperor Huizong personally greeted Ma Zhi in Extended Felicity Hall. Having lived in the Liao Empire for generations, Ma Zhi brought to Huizong Emperor a good knowledge of both the Liao government and the Yanjing area. In addition, Ma Zhi presented a more detailed discourse on allying with the Jin, encouraging the Song to attack the Liao and recover the Sixteen Prefectures. Impressed by Ma Zhi, Emperor Huizong made him the Director of Palance Library and granted him a new name: Zhao Liangsi, which is translated literally as "Zhao family's good child." Zhao Liangsi would later become one of Emperor Huizong's most trusted envoys in Song's negotiation with the Jurchen Jin State.

3. Court debate: Nationalism versus Military Pragmatism

Even though the proposal first was made in 1115, it was not until 1120 that the Song Empire and the Jin State signed the Treaty Conducted at the Sea and formed their alliance. During the five years, Empire Huizong had been presented many arguments for and against the alliance. The first presentation was, of course, made by Zhao Liangsi. During his meetings with Emperor Huizong, Zhao Liangsi elaborated on the feasibility of the plan. He argued that the Jurchens were a strong, reliable ally by emphasizing their successful uprising. Within a year after Aguda claimed himself emperor, the Jurchens were able to occupy Dongjing, one of the Liao's five capitals. In addition, as the Jin State fought more battles, it seized the Liao's weaponry and horses, convinced Liao generals to switch sides, and eventually grew stronger. In fact, even some non-Khitan tribes renounced the Liao domination and joined the Jurchen advances. "The Jurchens hate Liao to the bone, and Emperor Tianzuo had been corrupted. If this court (the Song) travels by sea from the Shandong peninsula to the Liaodong peninsula, befriending the Jurchens and attacking the Liao along with them, we can accomplish great things."

Zhao Liangsi then justified the legitimacy of the campaign by arguing that the Song army was not conquering any new land but merely recovering what was rightfully theirs. He described the Han Chinese living in the Liao not as part of the Liao but as people who used to be ruled by the Song, insinuating that they have long desired to be part of the Song. Zhao Liangsi reasoned that, "Your majesty, [this campaign would be created based on your] concern over the suffering of your subjects and ambition to recover China's old territory. You would reprimand on behalf of Heaven and reduce disorder with good governing. Once the Song army arrives, they would be greatly welcomed." But if the Jurchens managed to conquer the Liao on their own, Zhao Liangsi warned, the Song would be in great trouble.

Zhao Liangsi's proposal faced much opposition among the Song officials. They reasoned, "ever since ancestry, even though there had been such a path that connects Song with the barbarians, it has been prohibited from usage for hundreds of years. Once we start to use it, I am worried it won't bring the Central State any benefits." The officials were against traveling by sea to meet the Jurchens because they worried that Song would put itself at risk once it breaks the barrier that separated the barbaric Jurchens and the civilized Han. In addition, while Zhao Liangsi described a bright future, the military expert General Tan Zhen believed that the Liao army was still formidable and the Song

army was unprepared for war. The prefect of Zhending, a local official of the frontier, agreed with Tan Zhen in this aspect. He suggested that, first, different from what Zhao Liangsi had claimed, the Han Chinese in Yan was not disloyal to the Liao. Second, the fodder reserved in the northeast would be depleted within a year and could not afford military campaigns of such scale. Third, the Song soldiers were had long been used to peace and not ready for war.

Nevertheless, Wang Fu and Tong Guan were very supportive of the alliance. Wang Fu emphasized the importance of the Sixteen Prefectures. He further claimed that the only issue worth discussing was whether to ally with the Jin to restore that region. Wang Fu reasoned that "although North and South have gotten along for a hundred years, we have been suffering repeated humiliations (from the North) for several reigns. The best military strategy is to hide one's weaknesses and to attack when one's enemy is blinded. If we do not take [the region] now, the Jurchens will get stronger and the old territories of the Central Plain will never be ours again." Tong Guan argued that the Song should take advantage of the Liao's turmoil to regain the prefectures. In addition, he presented to Huizong a specific plan.

However, not all military officials were aligned with Tong Guan. General Chong Shidao (1051—1126), in particular, argued that "Today's matter is like when a burglar enters our neighbor's house. We not only choose to not help our neighbor but instead decide to rob him along with the burglar." General Yang Keshi refuted Tong Guan's claim, saying, "We have not prepared for this war at all. If our plan goes sideways, it does not matter if we die. What I am worried about is that we will bring humiliation to our country. I suggest that we think this through before acting rashly." While Tong Guan remained silent, General He Shen responded, "You call yourself someone who is feared by thousands, but all I see today is a coward. If we eventually conquer the Liao, the people of Yan would definitely welcome us. How is it possible to be otherwise?"

Despite the objections, Emperor Huizong decided to send an envoy to the Jin in 1118, tentatively suggesting the possibility of an alliance. Yet such a decision evoked an even greater objection. Zheng Juzhong (1059-1123) insisted that a war would be enormously costly in both manpower and capital, and that maintaining the status quo and paying subsidies to the Liao would be much more cost-efficient. Deng Xunwu (1055-1121) warned Emperor Huizong against blind faith in his army and prompted him to ponder about whom the Song would rather have as its neighbor, the weak Khitans or the strong Jurchens. An Yaochen (1086-1162), a scholar with no official standing, reasoned that a war against the Liao might put the Song under the threat of the barbarians from not only the north but from the south. An Yaochen asked Emperor Huizong to think about how difficult it had been for his ancestors to maintain peace with the Liao Empire. He suggested that Emperor Huizong would be able to appease his ancestors and subjects by simply blocking the Song border, restoring the friendship, and preventing the barbarians from invading China. Even Cai Jing, who had previously spoken for Ma Zhi in 1115, expressed his lack of confidence in a war. For Cai Jing, the campaign was very likely to fail especially because it would be led by Tong Guan. When Emperor Huizong brought up Tong Guan's earlier victories against Xi Xia, Cai Jing disputed that those victories should not be attributed to Tong Guan's leadership. By that moment, Emperor Huizong seemed to have been convinced by officials who were against the alliance. For example, he commended An Yaochen for speaking up.

It took Emperor Huizong a long time to make his decision. The emperor once avoided stating a position in a court discussion without Cai Jing. When Emperor Huizong asked about the situation in the north, Zheng Juzhong responded that it was not the right time for the Song to break their alliance with the Liao. Yu Shen agreed with Cai Jing that a decision should not be made before deliberation. Emperor Huizong then asked Bai Shizhong (?—1127). But while Bai was hesitating, Wang Fu interrupted, "China's old territory has long been in the hands of the barbarians. Today Heaven gives signs that Your Majesty will achieve great things. If we do not seize the opportunity, I fear we will regret it." Huizong smiled and said, "Everyone else says it cannot be done. Only you say it is possible. This makes it difficult (for me) to make a decision. Let's postpone it for a while."

A few days later, Emperor Huizong threw a banquet for high officials, with whom he discussed the alliance with the Jin State. When everyone was mellow with wine, Emperor Huizong abruptly

took out a piece of paper and passed it on to Tong Guan. On behalf of the emperor, Tong Guan told Cai Jing and other ministers that they should sign their names on that paper if they supported the alliance. Cai Jing and the others were shocked. They asked Tong Guan to report back to Huizong that they would not sign before they discussed the matter further with the emperor. Different from Cai Jing and others, Wang Anzhong agreed to sign, saying, "I was born and raised in the north. I heard that the people of Yan strongly desire to be reincorporated...I will sign it." The others remained silent. Wang Fu was appointed the Grand Councilor and the emperor conferred on him a jade belt. The emperor dismissed other officials and decided with Tong Guan, Wang Fu, and Wang Anzhong that they should ally with the Jin. According to Zhou Hui, a scholar born in 1126, Tong Guan, Wang Fu and Wang Anzhong were responsible for this fatal decision.

With Wang Fu, Wang Anzhong, Tong Guan, and Zhao Liangsi's strong advocacy, the Song Empire and the Jin State signed the Treaty Conducted at the Sea in 1120 and officially became allies to subjugate Liao. But the decision did not extinguish voices of objection. For instance, in 1122, Song Zhao (1078-1162) argued that the Jin would soon direct their spearhead at the Song once they conquer the Liao. Song Zhao reasoned that after a century of friendly relationship, the once barbaric Khitans had been "civilized" and could be trusted to keep their vows. The Jurchens, on the other hand, were "belligerent, bloodthirsty, and inhumanely cruel." Song Zhao also warned, "If the Jurchens one day decided to break our alliance and violate our agreements, China would fall into calamity." Lastly, he pointed out the stupidity and corruption of officials such as Wang Fu and Tong Guan. However, Wang Fu and Tong Guan prohibited people from discussing the decision. Therefore, Song Zhao was banished and his arguments rejected.

Due to the lack of primary sources, it is not possible to reconstruct how Emperor Huizong ended up supporting the alliance. However, a reading of existing primary sources suggests that nationalism seemed to play a major role in this process. Despite the advocates using nationalist arguments, that Yan and Yun belonged to the Song because Han Chinese lived there, there is no shortage of voices opposing the alliance. Therefore, even if the opposers also had nationalist thinking, such an ideology did not stop them from resisting the alliance.

Consequently, it would be misguiding to attribute the alliance solely to nationalist thinking. On the surface, Ma Zhi's surrender seemed to be a product of nationalism, as Ma Zhi himself could serve as an example of a Han who lived in the Liao territory and yet wanted to return to the Song. However, Ma Zhi's decision to surrender to the Song was based more on consideration for his personal safety. As he wrote in the surrender letter, "a dangerous country I don't enter, a chaotic state I don't stay." After all, if Ma Zhi's surrender was truly motivated by his wish to live with his Han compatriots, why did he wait until 1115, when the Jurchens' aggression became overwhelming and the Liao was in imminent danger?

Furthermore, nationalism was not a major concern for every participant in the court debate. Although the supporters used a lot of arguments related to nationalism, they could not persuade their opponents for whom nationalism did not seem so important. This suggests that nationalism was not the mainstream ideology, and was not likely the main reason for the alliance.

4. The Song-Jin Alliance: The Treaty Conducted at the Sea

From 1118 to 1120, both the Jin and the Song sent many envoys to each other to negotiate the details of the alliance. Even though previous Song envoys had visited the Jin State, Ma Zheng was the first Song envoy that was able to meet with key Jurchen leaders, including Wanyan Aguda. Satisfied with the meetings, Aguda sent a number of Jin emissaries to Kaifeng along with Ma Zheng. The Jin emissaries carried an official proposal that if a joint campaign were launched against the Liao, the Song and the Jin would each retain whatever territory they captured. This was the first of a number of diplomatic visits that led to the Jin-Song alliance that was later referred to as the Treaty Conducted at the Sea, as the envoys traveled on the Bohai Sea to bypass the Liao that was between the Song and the Jin.

While these envoys were traveling back and forth between the Song and the Jin, the Liao envoys were at work as well. The more powerful the Jurchens grew, the more frequently Liao sent envoys to the Jin. In 1118, for example, the Liao sent six missions to the Jin court. In 1120, Emperor Tianzuo promised become a vassal state of the Jin. However, Jin officials reacted, "The Liao army had many military defeats, so they sent envoys to ask for peace. They are only covering up their true intentions with empty words and use it as a strategy to stave off our attack. We should discuss advancing and attacking them." Aguda did not accept anything that the Liao suggested. Instead, he asked the Liao to cede three of its five circuits, send members of its royal family as hostages, admit Jin's superiority in diplomatic relations, and pay an annual tribute. Feeling it difficulty to accept those demands, the Liao turned them down. As a result, the Jin continued their advances.

In February 1120, Emperor Huizong learned that the Liao and the Jin could not agree on a treaty, and the Song court began to step up its diplomatic efforts. While it did not take them much effort to agree on attacking Liao, the Jin and the Song was wrangling over post-war land ownership issues. During April and May of 1120, Zhao Liangsi visited the Jin State to meet Aguda. While Zhao Liangsi was there, he witnessed the Jin's conquest of the Liao's Supreme Capital and was impressed with the Jurchens' military strength. When Zhao Liangsi met with Aguda, Aguda orally agreed that the Yan territory would be returned to the Song Empire. However, Aguda did not make it clear if other parts of the Sixteen Prefectures, including the Liao's western capital, Yun, would be returned to the Song.

Even though Zhao Liangsi was told by Emperor Huizong to try to get the Yan area back, Song's expectations rose as Zhao Liangsi brought up the Yun area, which was also inhabited by Han Chinese and would therefore belong to Song by the same logic. On the other hand, as Jin won more battles with the Liao, Aguda realized that he had no need to give the lands that his armies conquered to Song. For this reason, even though they agreed to ally to attack Liao, the Song and the Jin never agreed on how to divide Liao's territory after the war.

On July the eighteenth, 1120, the Jurchen emissaries carried the first formal written agreement between the Song and the Jin. It was an elaboration on what Aguda and Zhao Liangsi agreed on during their conversations. First, Jin admitted that Yanjing and its surrounding areas were the old territories of China and would be returned to the Song on the condition that the Song paid the same amount of silver and silk to the Jin as it did to the Liao. In addition, if the people of Yanjing fled to other regions of the Liao Empire due to warfare, the Song cannot occupy those regions. Second, if the Khitans were to surrender to either one of them, neither the Jin nor the Song should accept it. The Jin's letter did not mention Datong or other parts of the Sixteen Prefectures whatsoever.

Not long after the first letter, Emperor Huizong wrote back to Aguda on November the twentieth. In the letter, the emperor accepted everything that the Jin raised in the first letter. The Song also added that during their pincer attack, the Song should not cross Jin's border and the Jin should not cross the Song's. Lastly, the letter said, "if you do not conduct a pincer attack during the war, you cannot obtain what we promised you."

However, along with this letter, an agreement annex was also sent to Jin; this was where the disagreement emerged. First, the Song wanted to discuss the details of the attack. The agreement annex said that the Song should dispatch its troops from Yan, Yin, and Shuo once the Jurchen at the East arrive in *Yun*, the prefecture furthest to the West. The failure to arrive in Yun is a violation of the treaty. Under this condition, the Song would not need to make any payment to the Jin. Second, in addition to Yan, the Song demanded the entire Sixteen Prefectures, which once belonged to the Han Chinese empire. Towards the end of November 1120, Ma Zheng visited Aguda again. One of his missions was to reassure the Jin that the Song would commit troops to defeat Liao. But more important, Ma Zheng was there to continue the discussion regarding the Liao's Western Capital regions (modern-day Datong, Shanxi province).

In January 1121, Jin responded, "We promised to give back Yan and its surroundings. Your letter says that if we do not conduct a pincer attack, then we no longer have a deal. But if you insist that you want the west capital, we will not help with your military activities. If you do not agree with the conditions, I hope you can let us know. Due to such uncertainty, we cannot offer an accurate date for

you to attack." This letter marks the disagreement between the Song Empire and the Jin State. First, the Jurchens have repeatedly ignored the discussion regarding returning the other fifteen prefectures. It would not be incomprehensible to extrapolate that Aguda did not wish to give up all Sixteen Prefectures to Song. Second, despite tactful language, this letter shows that the Jurchens did not want to travel all the way to Yun either. Therefore, after three letters between Jin and Song, even though they agreed to ally to attack Liao, they never settled on their approaches or how to divide Liao's territory after the war.

The Song-Jin negotiation further shows that even if nationalist thinking thrived in the Northern Song Dynasty, it was not the main reason for the Jin-Song alliance. As it was written in their agreement, the Song would not attempt to recover any other land besides Yan even if the Han people of Yan escaped to other parts of the Liao. If the Song attacked the Liao with the aim to reincorporate the Han people, then the Song would not have readily accepted such a request. This proves that the launching of the war was less motivated by nationalism than it was the desire to recover a piece of land.

5. The Song Fleeing on the Eve of the Battle due to the Fang La Rebellion

In November 1120, Tong Guan began preparing for an attack on Yanjing (modern-day Beijing). But the Song did not launch the attack until the Jurchens sent a letter to urge the Song to do so in May 1122. When the Song army finally entered Liao territory, it was defeated by the Liao troops. The Song's late arrival and defeat can be partially attributed to an uprising led by Fang La (?—1121). In December 1120, just as Song was preparing to attack Liao, Emperor Huizong learned that a strong rebel force had captured several cities, including the major city of Hangzhou. Local officials, who would like to demonstrate their administrative and military skills to their superiors, avoided reporting the rebellion. Instead, they tried to handle put it down on their own. Therefore, by the time Emperor Huizong learned about Fang La's Uprising, the situation had gone from bad to worse. On December 21st, Emperor Huizong ordered General Tan Zhen, who was about to attack Yan, to turn to the rebels instead. At the same time, Emperor Huizong tried to learn more about what was going on. Chen Gou (?-?), the fiscal intendant of the Huainan region, reported to Emperor Huizong that Fang La rose in Qingxi with fewer than a thousand men, but had expanded his force to more than ten thousand. Chen also suggested that Emperor Huizong send more troops to deal with Fang La. Having accepted Chen's suggestion, on January 1st, 1021, Song Huizong sent a second capital army commanded by Tong Guan, the general commander for attacking Liao, to southern China.

Even though the imperial army was able to suppress Fang La, the cost was enormous. Approximately one million adherents and two million civilians lost their lives. Six prefectures and fifty-two counties suffered from the rebels 'looting and burning. Moreover, more than ten thousand Song soldiers were assigned to the repression, consuming much of the Song's fiscal resources and manpower. This could help explain the Song army's repeated defeats when fighting the Khitans.

In May and June of 1122, Chong Shidao led the Song army to attack the Liao twice and lost both times. In October, Generals Liu Yanqing and Guo Yaoshi led ten thousand Song soldiers in an attempt to conquer Xiongzhou and failed again. In December, Tong Guan tried to conquer Yan. But fearing that the Song would once again fail, he asked the Jurchens for help. Within days, the Jurchens conquered Yan. When Song envoys asked the Jin State to hand over Yan, the Jurchens refused and quoted the Song's letter against the Song, "if you do not conduct a pincer attack during the war, you cannot obtain what we promised you." Instead, Aguda made a new demand: in addition to Song's annual payment to the Jin, the Song has to pay additional taxes if they want Yan. After multiple negotiations led by Zhao Liangsi, they settled on an additional million thousand copper coins of annual payment in exchange for Yanjing.

It is worth noting that the Song's failure in its confrontation with the Liao army was not solely due to Fang La. Since Emperor Shenzong's reign (1067—1085), the song maintained a large yet weak military force. To make things worse, Tong Guan embezzled the military funds during Huizong's

reign, which weakened the Song military day by day. Thus, even if Fang La's Uprising did not occur, there was no guarantee that the result would be any different. Similarly, the Song's late arrival cannot be completely attributed to Fang La. In fact, it only took the Song five months to suppress the rebels; by April 1121, the rebellion had already been put down. However, the Song did not attack the Liao until May 1122. A possible theory is that the Song was reconsidering their alliance with the Jin to subjugate the Liao. In 1121, the Song army was exhausted and the treasury was empty and Emperor Huizong regretted attacking the Liao. Furthermore, many officials continued to oppose the alliance. Yuwen Xuzhong (1079–1146), for example, reasoned that the Song's military and financial resources were only sufficient to maintain domestic order, not enough to wage war against other countries. Like many other officials, Yuwen warned Emperor Huizong of the threat Jurcherns would pose if the Khitans no longer stands between the Song and the Jin. Even Chong Shidao, the general who commanded the attacks, opposed attacking the Liao.

6. Conclusion: Nationalism or Military Pragmatism?

By a reading of primary sources, previous sections demonstrate that the influence of nationalism was limited in the processes of the Song's military decision-making. Ma Zhi fabricated arguments for his well-being and political career prospect; many officials strongly opposed the alliance as they did not believe in the nationalist sentiment among the Han Chinese living in the Liao territory; and through the state letter exchange, it is obvious that under the moralist claim of bringing the Han Chinese back to the Chinese state, what the Song state really cared about was expanding its territory.

If not nationalism, what motivated the Song to recover the Sixteen Prefectures? One possible reason is the land's military significance. The land was of continuous mountains and dangerous terrain, thus making whoever possess the land have a great advantage in wars. If the Sixteen Prefectures were part of the Song state, the Song would be able to resist the invasion of the northerners very effectively. But since the Liao occupied it, they could easily gallop to the south and sweep across the central plains. In addition, this area has the ideal weather and conditions for raising fine horses, which were one of the most critical resources during the cold weapon era.

Even before Emperor Huizong's reign, the Song Empire had been thinking about recovering the Sixteen Prefectures. After establishing the Song, the Taizu Emperor (927-976) planned on attacking the Liao. However, his Prime Minister Zhao Pu suggested he unify the southern part of China first before confronting the strong Khitans. When the Taizong Emperor (939-997) came to power, he organized two large-scale northern expeditions to recover the Sixteen Prefectures. Both were aggressive and determinant, but both failed. From then on, the Song court no longer took the initiative to attack but instead started to build defensive measures on its northern borders.

The change in interstate power dynamic finally provided the Song with an opportunity to achieve its territorial recovery. Since its establishment in 916, the Liao Empire had been powerful. During Emperor Shengzong's reign (972—1031), the Liao Empire was receiving annual payments from all three of its surrounding states: Goryeo from its East, Xia from its West, and Song from its South. During his 49-year reign, Emperor Shengzong of the Liao followed almost every principle of good governance. Among others, he reexamined wrongfully convicted cases, promoted talented people to important positions, investigated corrupted administrators, educated his own children and grandchildren, provided timely relief to disasters all over the country, and refused the tribute of women from Goryeo. Among all the emperors of the Liao, he reigned for the longest time and is referred to as "Shengzong," literally "the best emperor."

Even in the first few years of Daozong's reign (1055—1101), the Liao Empire was flourishing. Emperor Daozong sought the honest opinions from his ministers, asking the high officials about the ways to govern the country. He established many schools, encouraged his people to engage in agricultural production, and provided relief for the poor. But shortly, "Liao Daozong issued an order for the officials to expose each other's shortcomings and rewarded informers more each time… The emperor now could only listen to words that please him." Emperor Daozong also caused a crisis of

imperial power, leading to constant rebellions around his empire. In addition, due to his extravagant support of the Buddhist monks, the Liao's social workforce was greatly weakened. When Tianzuo Emperor came to power in 1055, the Liao Empire had undergone decades of governmental corruption and faction conflicts and had ceased to be the powerful empire it once was.

But at the same time, the Jurchens, after suffering from the Liao's suppression for generations, became a rising power in northeast China and rebelled against the Liao. They were able to capture one of Liao's five capitals the same year they established their dynasty. From 1020 to 1022, the Jurchens captured the remaining four. At that time, the Liao could do nothing but negotiate peace. From 1115 to 1125, the Jin turned down all the proposals from Liao and finally captured Emperor Tianzuo, which marks the end of the Liao Empire.

In conclusion, while internal nationalism did play a role, the external reasons are equally unneglectable when examining the reasoning behind the decision-making. The recognition that decisions are not purely self-driven is also valuable in understanding the demise of the Song, which many scholars blame the alliance with the Jin for. When we examine the options the Song had at the time—allying with the Jin to subjugate the Liao, allying with the Liao to resist the Jin, and not interfering with their conflicts at all—allying with the Jin was the best choice and the one that would best protect the Song.

If the Song were to ally with the Liao, their weak armies might be able to slow down the Liao's demise, but it would still be inevitable for the Liao to perish given the fact that the Jin was much stronger than the Song and the Liao. And once the Liao was gone, the Song would inevitably be in great danger as the Liao's ally. If the Song were to do nothing, the Jin could easily occupy the Liao's land. As Jurchens' rejection of the Liao's negotiations of peace suggests, the Jin State, just like any other newly established regime, had a strong desire for expansion. As the Jurchens' conquest of the Sixteen Prefectures would give them a great military advantage, it is very likely that they would invade the Song as well. In short, the Jurchens and the Khitans cornered the Song in a difficult position where allying with Jin was the only option.

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