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From Kuomintang to Communist: the struggle of Fan Yusui to Unite the Chinese

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Abstract

Fan Yusui, who had experienced the Chinese battlefields of World War II and the Chinese Civil War, always fought for the unity of the Chinese nation. He joined the Kuomintang in the early stage of his political career, and after experiencing wartime society, he saw the true nature of the Kuomintang. Finally, he broke with Chiang Kai-shek in 1949 and joined the Communist Party of China. This article explores the reasons behind Fan Yusui's struggle to unite the Chinese people and his shift from the Kuomintang to the Communist Party of China.

Keywords: Fan Yusui, National Political Assembly, World War II, Chinese Civil War

Introduction

Fan Yusui (1893-1983) was a veteran of the Kuomintang (KMT) with extensive experience in modern politics both in Shandong and across China. He joined the KMT early in his career and served as a member and standing committee member of its Central Executive Committee, as well as a legislator. He studied abroad multiple times and participated in the 'Movement Against Yuan' and the 'May 4th Movement.' From October 1938 until the end of the National Political Assembly in March 1948, he played a significant role in state affairs and was dedicated to uniting the Chinese people.

Initially, Fan strongly supported the KMT, writing numerous anti-communist articles and even blocking the Communist Party of China (CPC)'s proposal to form a coalition government during National Political Assembly. However, after the victory in the Second Sino-Japanese War, he was deeply disillusioned to see Chiang Kai-shek abandon Sun Yat-sen's New Three People's Principles, break his promise to 'implement constitutional government after the victory of the Second Sino-Japanese War, return power to the people, and resolve the conflict between the KMT and the CPC through political means,' and instead prepare for civil war, which tarnished the KMT's reputation. This became a turning point for Fan, leading him to formally sever ties with Chiang Kai-shek.

An anti-communist after the initial cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of China

During the initial cooperation between the KMT and the CPC, Fan Yusui's cousin Wang Leping was appointed to Shandong to prepare for the establishment of the Kuomintang's Shandong Party Department. Wang Leping was a key figure who had introduced Sun Yat-sen's thoughts to Fan

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in his early years. Fan was recommended as a member of the preparatory committee and was later elected to the Standing Committee. In the winter of 1925, Wang Leping was arrested by the warlord Zhang Zongchang and subsequently left Shandong for Beijing, and then Guangzhou. During this period, Fan took on greater responsibilities within the provincial party department and frequently represented it at meetings. Fan wrote in his memoirs:

From Mr. Sun Yat-sen's advocacy of cooperation between the KMT and the CPC until his death in Beijing in March 1925, I maintained a good working relationship with the CPC. After Mr. Sun's death, tensions between the KMT and the CPC gradually increased in three main areas. Despite these conflicts, due to the severe oppression of revolutionaries by the warlord Zhang Zongchang, a common enemy at the time, I continuously strived to reduce and ease these contradictions in order to unite against the common threat.⁴

After the split between Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Jingwei, Fan was assigned to serve as an officer in the Central Propaganda Department of the KMT. He later transferred to serve as chief secretary of the Wuhan Political Branch, Standing Committee member and Organization Director of the Party Department in Hankou Special City, and editor-in-chief of the Republic of China Daily in Hankou.⁵ During his time as editor-in-chief, his main task was to write editorials. In less than three months, he wrote nearly 30 editorials, the majority of which were anti-communist, with a few being anti-Chiang.⁶ The main titles were 'The accelerated performance of the old trick', 'The fight against Chiang and the Anti-Communist', 'the future of the Communist Party of China', 'the reactionary lessons to us' and so on.

Participate in National political Assembly (Guo Min Can Zheng Hui)

Brief description of National Political Assembly

National Political Assembly was an advisory body established during the Second Sino-Japanese War, succeeding the National Defense Council (Guo Fang Can Yi Hui). As the Second Sino-Japanese War fully erupted, the primary conflict in Chinese society shifted to the struggle between China and Japan. This shift united the KMT, the CPC, other anti-Japanese factions, the military, and civilians under a common banner of patriotism, leading to a nationwide resistance effort. Additionally, the World Anti-Fascist Front encouraged China to unite and defeat Japan. This external pressure facilitated the cooperation between the KMT and the CPC and the formation of National Political Assembly. Concurrently, the urgent need for a unified front in the war led to a demand among all segments of Chinese society for a platform where all anti-Japanese forces could engage in national politics.⁷ The CPC was particularly committed to establishing a cooperative organizational structure with the KMT. However, due to the CPC's

⁴ Y. S. Fan, 'Review of ninety years old' in Cultural and Historical Data Research Committee of Shandong Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, eds., *Selected Collection of Cultural and Historical Data of Shandong Province, Vol. 16* (Shandong: Cultural and Historical Data Research Committee of Shandong Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, 1985), p. 6.

⁵ Lideng Wang., & Zhenyou Li, 'The deeds of Fan Yusui, an outstanding democratic figure - Vice Chairman of the 1st, 4th and 5th Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference' in Suling Wang, eds., *Rizhao Literature and History, Vol. 8* (Shandong: CPPCC Rizhao Literary and Historical Friendship Committee, 2001), p. 100.

⁶ Fan, *ninety years old*, p. 10.

⁷ F. Q. Wang, *Huang Yanpei and National Political Assembly*, PHD Thesis (Shandong University, Shandong Province, 2008), p. 14.

limited strength and lack of international support, the KMT rejected its proposals, forcing the CPC to strive for the creation of a similar institution to facilitate cooperation. As the ruling KMT sought cooperation, it had to address political and democratic issues. Therefore, it implemented a limited form of political democracy based on local autonomy, allowing the CPC and other parties to 'participate in politics.' In August 1937, the National Defense Council was established. Chiang Kai-shek, the chairman of the Defense Supreme Council, appointed political advisors from the CPC, the Youth Party, the National Salvation Association, leaders from the rural construction faction, and representatives from various sectors such as education, diplomacy, and the military, as well as senior KMT representatives. The National Defense Council served as the highest advisory body to the Defense Supreme Council and later became the foundation for National Political Assembly.⁸ After the provisional National Congress of the Kuomintang in 1938, preparations for the National Political Assembly were also placed on the agenda. On April 12, 1938, the National Government promulgated the Regulations on the Organization of National Political Assembly. The same year, on July 6, the first session of the first congress was held in Hankou. National Political Assembly lasted until the opening of the National Congress on March 29, 1948, marking its conclusion after 10 years. Over this period, four sessions were held, comprising 13 meetings. The organizational structure and the number of proposals for each session are detailed in Figure 1 and Table 1.

Figure 1: Organizational Structure Chart of National Political Assembly

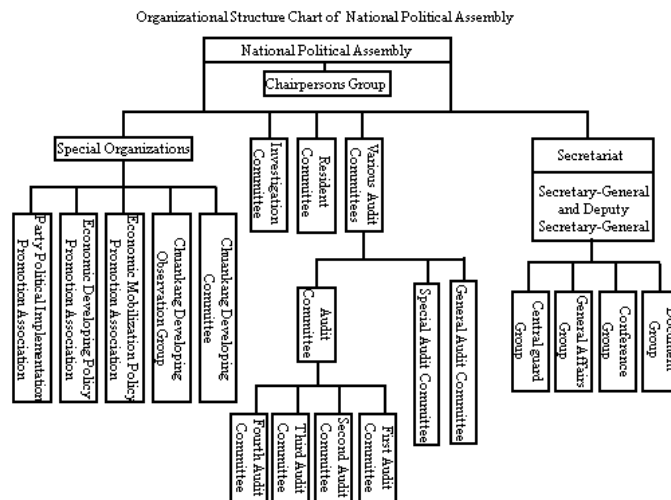


Table 1: The Proposals For Each Session of National Political Assembly

8 Y. Zhou, 'Research on the relationship between National Political Assembly and all political parties in China: 1938-1948', *Chongqing Social Sciences*, no. 9 (September 2005), pp. 5-6.

Category Item Session	First Session					Second Session		Third Session			Forth Session			Tot al
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	1	2	3	1	2	3	--
Proposals by Members	12 1	9 3	8 3	8 2	7 8	15 5	11 5	25 5	17 9	20 0	42 2	43 6	48 0	269 9
Proposals by Governm ent	9		1 3							2				24
Total Proposals	13 0	9 3	9 6	8 2	7 8	15 5	11 5	25 5	17 9	20 2	42 2	43 6	48 0	272 3
Resolutio ns Passed	12 0	8 0	9 6	8 2	7 8	15 2	11 5	25 5	17 9	20 2	41 5	43 6	48 0	266 6

The Reasons for Fan Yusui's Participation in National Political Assembly

After the September 18th Incident, the factions within the KMT united, and Fan Yusui was appointed as the Director of the Henan Daoqing Railway Bureau and a member of the Kuomintang Central Organization Committee. In 1936, he resigned from his position as Director of the Railway Bureau and traveled to Britain under the guise of a railway investigation. While in Europe, he studied parliamentary politics and Fabian socialism at the Faculty of Political Economy at the University of London. Concurrently, he was elected as a member of the Kuomintang Central Party Committee.

In 1937, following the 'July 7th Incident' and the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, Fan Yusui and Deng Fei-huang felt a deep sense of responsibility in the face of the national crisis and believed they could no longer remain in school. They abandoned their studies and returned to China. At that time, Fan had a clear plan: during the war, he would not engage in government work or take on any official positions. Instead, he sought to join a public opinion organization where he could express his views on the war of resistance and democracy. The establishment of National Political Assembly provided him with such a platform, and he became a member of the Assembly.⁹

Since July 1938, Fan Yusui had been working in National Political Assembly. At the first meeting of the Assembly, he expressed the following opinions:

While National Political Assembly was a unique organization and its representatives were not formally elected, thus not a true public opinion body in a formal sense, it functioned as one in practice. This was because the government had included individuals from various political parties and sectors, effectively making it a representative body of public opinion. For the Assembly to meet public expectations and build faith in democratic politics, it was crucial that

9 Y. S. Fan, 'Memories of my appointment as a member of the Shandong Provincial Party Committee of the Kuomintang' in Cultural and Historical Data Research Committee of Shandong Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, eds., *Selected Collection of Shandong Cultural and Historical Materials*, Vol. 7 (Shandong: Shandong People's Publishing House, 1979), p. 66.

it accurately conveyed the people's opinions and that the government adopted these views. This would ensure the foundation of a democratic system. Therefore, he urged the participants to perform their duties diligently and called on the government to provide effective leadership.¹⁰

Fan Yusui's participation in National Political Assembly

Table 2: Overview of Fan Yusui's Participation in National Political Assembly

	The first meeting	The second meeting	The third meeting	The fourth meeting	The fifth meeting	Selection basis
The first session (members)	Members of the resident committee during the recess	Members of the resident committee during the recess	Members of the resident committee during the recess	Members of the resident committee during the recess	—	Candidates selected under Article 3 (B) of the Regulations on the Organization of National Political Assembly
The second session (members)	—	Members of the resident committee during the recess	none	none	none	Candidates selected under Article 3 (D) of the Regulations on the Organization of National Political Assembly
The third session (members)	—	—	none	none	none	Representative of Shandong province
The fourth session (members)	—	Members of the resident committee during the recess	Members of the resident committee during the recess	none	none	Representative of Shandong province
<p>Note:</p> <p>Article 3 (B): Among the people who have served in local public and private organs or organizations in Mongolia and Tibet, have the fame or know the situation of the local political and social changes, they shall choose any six person (four in Mongolia, two in Tibet).</p> <p>Article 3 (D): Select fifty persons who have served in important cultural or economic</p>						

10 K. Y. Zhang, ed., *Renewal of Political Participation Materials of National Political Assembly* (Chongqing: Chongqing Press, 2016), p. 506.

organizations for more than three years and have fame or work hard on national affairs and be believed for a long time.¹¹

As shown in Table 2, Fan Yusui participated in the work of every session of National Political Assembly, with an almost perfect attendance rate. He was repeatedly elected to serve on the resident committee during recess periods (which convened every two weeks). The primary tasks of the resident committee included listening to policy reports from various government ministries, raising questions, and making recommendations to the government. Additionally, its responsibilities were later expanded to include investigative tasks and entrusted inquiries.¹² At the congress, Fan Yusui proposed several measures, including '*Requesting the Government to Establish an Investigation Committee on Central Political Institutions*' and '*Requesting the Assembly to Discuss in Detail the Methods for Convening the National Assembly (Guo Min Da Hui)*'. In addition to debating with progressive forces during the meetings and submitting several proposals, he also periodically published his opinions in various Kuomintang newspapers.

Fan Yusui's proposition

During his time with National Political Assembly, Fan Yusui's views were mainly focused on four areas: the Anti-Japanese War, democratic politics, railways, and youth education, and each aspect is beneficial to unite the Chinese.

Regarding the Anti-Japanese War. Fan's initial stance was discouraging rather than motivating. He saw little prospect for a successful outcome and thus spread capitulationist views in the newspapers. When the Nationalist Government retreated to Wuhan, he published an article titled '*Inside the International*' in a journal edited by Tao Shengxi. The central idea was that if a country is convinced it cannot win either on the battlefield or through diplomacy, it should acknowledge diplomatic defeat before the situation becomes dire and avoid a humiliating treaty after military defeat. This position essentially advocated for peace and surrender to Japan. However, as the Japanese forces continued their relentless advance and the nationwide resistance grew stronger, Fan's view on capitulationism changed. The Japanese invaders aggressively pushed forward, capturing Beijing, Nanjing, Shanghai, and Wuhan, demonstrating their determination to destroy China. Furthermore, after Wang Jingwei publicly announced his surrender to the Japanese in Hanoi, and despite the central army's continued retreat, the enthusiasm of the Chinese people for resistance increased. This clearly showed that the Chinese were resolute and unyielding. Additionally, as Britain, the United States, France, and the Soviet Union declared war on the fascist powers of Germany, Italy, and Japan, the global conflict was solidified.¹³ After changing his view on capitulationism, Fan published an article titled 'The American Loan and Our Resistance'. In this article, he analyzed the international situation and argued that Britain and the United States were consistently willing to assist China and had no intention of allowing Japan to annex it. The success of British and American loans was seen as a concrete manifestation of this support. Fan expressed his views in the article:

11 Anon, 'Regulations of National Political Assembly(1938)' in Jishun Du & Yawei Yin, eds., *Archives of the Republic of China, Volume 5, Part 2, Politics (1)* (Jiangsu: Jiangsu Ancient Books Publishing House, 1998), pp. 869-872.

12 Y. W. Wang, *Memoirs of Wang Yunwu* (Beijing: Jiuzhou Publishing House, 2012), p. 5.

13 Fan, *ninety years old*, pp. 1-25.

In the complex and tumultuous landscape of international relations, we must recognize Japan as our sole enemy and strive to mobilize all international friendly relations to counter it. The Soviet Union, Britain, the United States, and France are supporting us, while Germany is an ally of our adversary. The Soviet Union, being our ally, will not assist Japan. In addition to providing direct support, Britain and the United States are also applying substantial pressure on Japan through measures such as restricting the import of enemy goods, imposing heavy taxes, and boycotting Japanese products. This form of economic retaliation functions similarly to sanctions but is more flexible, as it does not require coordinated action and can be undertaken unilaterally. The combined effect of international support and our sustained resistance represents two significant forces exerting pressure on the enemy. Our objective is to demonstrate to the enemy that China will not yield, thereby forcing them to reconsider their policy towards China, which represents a pivotal moment for achieving victory.¹⁴

In his later years, Fan actively advocated for the unity of domestic parties in the fight against the war. In March 1945, he published an article titled 'Unity and Unity: The Key to the Situation' in the journal *Democratic Politics*. In the article, he stated: 'To achieve an early victory, it is imperative to swiftly resolve the current deadlock between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of China in order to address the national crisis. The inability to unify the nation at present is a disgrace to the Chinese people.'¹⁵ He analyzed the reasons and difficulties that made concessions challenging for both the KMT and the CPC at that time, asserting that China would be unable to cope with future international situations if it could not achieve unity. He advocated that, regardless of the high demands from the CPC, the government should make every effort to seek compromise and cooperation. Cooperation should neither be permanent nor continue only until Japan had fully surrendered.¹⁶ Of course, at that time, Fan Yusui was fundamentally still working to safeguard the interests of the KMT. Ultimately, he raised the fundamental issue of whether the government needed to reform its politics and change its style of work.

Regarding democratic politics. Fan Yusui firmly believed in bourgeois parliamentary democracy and had great faith in the so-called socialism of the British Fabian Society. He believed that capitalism could transition peacefully to socialism through a parliamentary majority. Although he supported the Kuomintang, he despised Chiang Kai-shek's fascist dictatorship and the extreme corruption, inefficiency, and incompetence of his government. To eliminate these two major issues within the Kuomintang, Fan believed that the party needed to be transformed by abolishing its one-party rule and implementing constitutionalism. He envisioned that after the victory in the Second Sino-Japanese War, Chiang Kai-shek would have no reason not to fulfill his promises: ending the period of political tutelage, abolishing the KMTg's one-party dictatorship, and implementing constitutional government. There was no reason not to recognize the CPC as a legitimate political force, to continue cooperation between the KMT and the CPC, and to resolve all disputes through political consultation to achieve peaceful reunification. Once a democratic coalition government was established, Fan believed that, with the assistance and supervision of new political forces, the KMT would no longer be

14 Y. S. Fan, 'The American loan and our resistance', *Today's ten day*, vol. 17 (January 1939), p. 9.

15 Q. Y. Hu, ed., *Democratic Politics, the second and third joint issue* (Chongqing: Democratic Politics Society, 1945), p. 32.

16 Hu, *Democratic Politics*, p. 33.

able to engage in dictatorship and corruption as before. The democratic government would inevitably undertake comprehensive reforms and progress. This would not weaken the KMT's political leadership but rather strengthen it, allowing the party to remain the largest for a long time.¹⁷

In 1944, Fan Yusui resigned from his position as Director of the Party Department of Shandong Province and returned to Chongqing at the end of August. From then on, he mainly engaged in activities related to National Political Assembly. During the five years from his resignation until the Shanghai Liberation in 1949, he devoted his efforts to parliamentary activities. He aspired to realize Dr. Sun Yat-sen's vision of constitutional government and the Three People's Principles based on the Western parliamentary model. Therefore, he advocated for the abolition of one-party dictatorship and the implementation of parliamentary elections involving all parties under conditions of peace, democracy, freedom, and equality. He envisioned a party organization government with a parliamentary majority, while parties not in government would supervise the administration. As a member of the KMT, he naturally hoped for his own party to govern. However, he believed this should be achieved through gaining the people's trust, rather than through feudal dictatorship and repression. Based on this principal idea, he published several articles in newspapers and compiled two pamphlets: one titled National Political Assembly and the other The Chinese Constitution. Additionally, in 1945, he sent a letter to Chiang Kai-shek urging the abandonment of the civil war. In 1946, he provided a list of so-called 'democrats' within the KMT to Marshall, the special envoy of the President of the United States. He also participated in the drafting of the Constitution and the election of National Congress representatives and legislators. All these actions were driven by his central idea.¹⁸

Subsequently, Fan openly disregarded the opposition from the CPC and the general public, actively participating in the elections for National Congress representatives and legislators, and contributing to the drafting of the KMT constitution. According to his later memoirs, he believed that under the circumstances, it was impossible for Chiang Kai-shek to abandon his anti-Communist stance and avoid civil war. However, based on years of historical experience, he concluded that Chiang would not win and would eventually be unable to sustain his position. At that point, parliamentary power could be used to force Chiang to step down, with the Vice President negotiating with the CPC to form a coalition government and achieve domestic peace.

Therefore, during the constitutional elections, Fan actively worked to unite with factions opposing the Central Club (cc faction) and other hardline elements, striving to secure seats in the National Congress and the legislature. In the 1948 Kuomintang vice-presidential election, he actively supported Cheng Qianzhong among the four candidates: Sun Ke, Yu Youren, Li Zongren, and Cheng Qianzhong. In the second round, where Sun Ke and Li Zongren were the final candidates, Fan supported Li Zongren, who was elected. In the election for the president of the legislature, he actively recommended Tong Guanxian, who won against his opponent and was elected.¹⁹ At the time, Fan was complacent that it was the beginning of his victory in parliamentary activities.

Fan wrote 'the Chinese constitution'²⁰ in 1946, the main content covers two parts: one is the five

17 Fan, *Memories of my appointment*, p. 66.

18 Fan, *ninety years old*, pp. 1-25.

19 Fan, *ninety years old*, pp. 1-25.

20 Y. S. Fan, *Constitution of China* (Shanghai: China Cultural Service, 1946), pp. 1-70.

constitutional grass and constitutional amendment into the comparative study, another is the political consultative conference constitutional amendment principle criticism, appendix part is 'question zhang Junmai (for five constitutional grass modification principle of solutions)'. This book has 70 pages, fulling of Fan's idea and vision of democratic politics.

Regarding railways and youth education. Fan had a profound interest in railways and youth education, deeply connected to his early experiences. In February 1932, he was appointed as the director of the Railway Bureau in Jiaozuo, Henan Province, and also served as a member of the Central Organization Committee of the Kuomintang. By the end of 1935, he resigned from his position as the director of the Daoqing Railway. Under the guise of a railway trip to Europe and using funds from the Daoqing Road Bureau, he traveled to England in February 1936, fulfilling his long-standing aspiration to visit the country. From 1933 to 1934, he published a number of articles about railways in 'Transportation Magazine', including 'Reasons for the Delay in Foreign Debt Payment on Daoqing Road and Future Repayment Methods',²¹ 'The Past and Future of Daoqing Railway Freight Rates',²² 'Overview of Daoqing Road's operating expenses in the past ten years and its improvement steps'²³ 'Daoqing Railway Business Arrangement and Public Works Construction Plan'.²⁴ Upon joining National Political Assembly, he had the opportunity to offer his advice. At the second meeting of the fourth session, Fan, along with five other members, voiced strong objections to the omission of the Yunnan-Myanmar Railway from both the Ministry of Transport's written report and the Minister's oral presentation. Subsequently, the railway was included in the five-year post-war railway construction plan.²⁵ Fan also expressed dissatisfaction with the personnel system, which involved laying off old employees and recruiting new ones after a new official took office, and he raised concerns with the Ministry of Transportation on this issue.²⁶ Additionally, Fan was deeply invested in the Chinese youth movement. In his article 'On the Concept of the Country and Freedom with the Youth,' he emphasized that the youth should not only embody patriotism and a national perspective but also undergo rigorous military training and advanced military education to contribute effectively to national defense and development.²⁷ In 'The Way of the Future Youth Movement,' he proposed three key objectives: enhancing national morality, fostering independent academic thought, and developing physical fitness to build a superior nation.²⁸ Furthermore, during the first meeting of the second session, Fan and others proposed that the Ministry of Education coordinate youth

21 Y. S. Fan, 'Reasons for the Delay in Foreign Debt Payment on Daoqing Road and Future Repayment Methods', *Transportation Magazine*, vol. 2, no. 7 (May 1934), p. 91.

22 Y. S. Fan, 'The Past and Future of Daoqing Railway Freight Rates', *Transportation Magazine*, vol. 2, no. 2 & 3 (January 1934), p. 333.

23 Y. S. Fan, 'Overview of Daoqing Road's operating expenses in the past ten years and its improvement steps', *Transportation Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 9 (July 1933), p. 36.

24 Y. S. Fan, 'Daoqing Railway Business Arrangement and Public Works Construction Plan', *Transportation Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 6 & 7 (April 1933), p. 169.

25 Anon, *The Ministry of Transport's reply to the traffic inquiries of the political advisors at the Second Meeting of the Fourth Session of the National Political Assembly* (The Ministry of Communications, 1946). pp. 1-39.

26 Anon, *The Ministry of Transport's reply to the traffic inquiries of the political advisors at the third Meeting of the Fourth Session of the National Political Assembly* (The Ministry of Communications, 1947), pp.1-38.

27 Y. S. Fan, 'Study on national concept and ideological freedom with Youth', *Youth Guide*, no. 18 (November 1938), p. 7.

28 Y. S. Fan, 'The way of the youth movement's future', *Three People's Principles Semi-monthly*, vol. 9, no. 5 (July 1946), p. 9.

education in occupied areas.²⁹ This reflects his profound commitment to advancing youth education in China.

Analysis of the Reasons Behind Fan Yusui's Shift from the Kuomintang to the Communist Party of China

The Enhancement of Fan Yusui's Understanding

Understanding is a progressive and evolving process. Fan Yusui's experiences during the first cooperation between the KMT and the CPC, his courage for innovation, and his patriotic spirit played crucial roles in his ideological evolution over the ten years of National Political Assembly.

Initially, Fan Yusui was not inherently opposed to the CPC. During the first period of cooperation between the KMT and the CPC, he collaborated effectively with the CPC, with no significant disputes. However, his later contentious stance at the National Political Assembly was largely driven by alignment with the interests of his own party. During National Political Assembly, the CPC's well-reasoned and courteous remarks, along with their significant contributions in the wartime struggle behind enemy lines, played a vital role in the victory of the Second Sino-Japanese War. These efforts allowed the KMT, centrist parties, and other non-partisan individuals to reassess the strength and role of the CPC. National Political Assembly provided the CPC with a substantial political platform, which, in turn, deepened Fan Yusui's understanding of the CPC's principles and policies.

Secondly, he is open to new ideas and innovations. Fan Yusui's readiness to accept new ideas and embrace reform was evident throughout his life. Influenced in his youth by Wang Leping, a member of the China Tong Meng Association and a student at Jinan Higher School, Fan was inspired to adopt revolutionary ideas against the Qing Dynasty. He joined the revolutionary army to defend Zhucheng's independence, marking the beginning of his revolutionary journey.

In 1914, after returning to Jinan and being admitted to Provincial No.1 Middle School, Fan joined the China Tong Meng Association through Wang Leping's introduction. He continued his studies at Beijing Higher Normal School in 1917, where he was profoundly influenced by the academic thoughts of John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, and Henri Bergson. During this period, Fan engaged in engineering and anarchist activities and actively participated in the May Fourth Movement. He was arrested and detained by the Northern warlord government for approximately one month for his protests against the 'Paris Peace Treaty.'

In November 1919, Fan, along with 14 other students including Song Jie, Wang Tongzhao, Xu Yanzhi, and Zheng Zhenduo, founded the Dawn Society and launched 'Dawn' magazine. The magazine aimed to promote social reform through scientific research and progressive ideas. Although 'Dawn' magazine ceased publication in the summer of 1921, its influence was notable, particularly in introducing Marxism and the Russian October Revolution to Chinese progressive circles. Zhang Guotao even mentioned 'Dawn' in his report on the early activities of the Communist Party of China during its first National Congress.

In 1922, Fan helped organize the Great Alliance of the Civil Rights Movement in Beijing. By

29 Zhang, ed., *Political Participation Materials*, p. 506. Originally records of the First Congress of the Second National Political Assembly, compiled and printed by the Secretariat of National Political Assembly, 1941.

February 1924, he, along with fellow leaders from the Kuomintang Shandong Province Party Department, including Wang Leping, Ding Weifen, Chen Mingyu, Gao Bingfang, Yu Enbo, and Chen Gan, established a private Jiaoao Middle School in Qingdao. This school aimed to inspire and educate aspiring youth, later evolving into public Jiaoao Middle School and Qingdao Municipal Middle School.

Fan's progressive outlook and willingness to embrace new ideas positioned him among the forward-thinking individuals of modern China. As he deepened his understanding of the CPC during his decade at National Political Assembly, he became increasingly convinced of its principles. This evolving perspective led him to believe that the CPC was a party worthy of the Chinese people's trust and capable of leading them toward democratic politics.

Lastly, Fan Yusui's profound patriotism and dedication to his country were particularly remarkable. His active participation in the May Fourth Movement and the founding of Jiao'ao Middle School to cultivate aspiring youth exemplify his commitment. When the Second Sino-Japanese War erupted, he abandoned his studies in England to return to China and fight. His firm rejection of Wang Jingwei's attempt to recruit him and his strong condemnation of Wang's treasonous acts further highlight his unwavering loyalty. After the war, as the nation faced immense suffering, widespread displacement, and severe shortages, Fan's deep concern for the country's dire state and ongoing conflicts underscored his genuine dedication to national recovery and the well-being of its people.³⁰ Therefore, Fan resolutely opposed the civil war between the KMT and the CPC. In October 1945, he wrote to Chiang Kai-shek, urging him to end the civil war, recognize the legitimacy of the CPC, and resolve the conflict through political means. His deep patriotism and commitment to the country led him to become disillusioned with the Kuomintang and to see hope in the CPC.

Fan Yusui has effectively discerned the true nature of National Political Assembly

A closer examination reveals that National Political Assembly is far from being a genuine 'public opinion organ'. Firstly, it does not acknowledge the legitimate status of the anti-Japanese parties. Secondly, it was organized by the KMT, which dominated with up to 84% of the seats. Thirdly, the participants were selected by the Kuomintang central government; although they were representative, they did not fully reflect the will of the entire nation. Fourthly, National Political Assembly's authority was restricted. Officially, it had the right to discuss government policy principles, receive government reports, make proposals, investigate tasks assigned by the government, and review the state's general budget. However, all resolutions required approval from the Supreme Council of National Defense before being forwarded to relevant departments, thereby limiting their binding effect on the government. Clearly, such an organization was not a 'public opinion organ', but rather an 'advisory organ' under the control of the KMT.³¹

The KMT held an absolute majority among the participants, and any proposal unfavorable to the party was consistently rejected by the Secretary-General or Deputy Secretary-General. This tactic was commonly used by the KMT. For example, in September 1944, Lin Boqu, a member of National Political Assembly from the CPC, traveled from Yan'an to Chongqing to attend a political conference of the Assembly. He proposed abolishing the KMT's one-party dictatorship

30 X. L. Zhou, 'Zhang Lan's Ideas and Character during National Political Assembly', *Journal of Shanghai Institute of Socialism*, no. 6 (December 2013), p. 55.

31 Zhou, *Research on the relationship*, p. 5.

and establishing a coalition government. In response, Fan was instructed to speak and obstruct the proposal by arguing that 'the Kuomintang had declared its intention to implement a constitutional government after the war's victory, and given the current tight wartime conditions, conducting elections was exceedingly difficult.'³²

Among the participants, the KMT constituted the vast majority, as explicitly stipulated in the Regulations on the Organization of National Political Assembly, making the achievement of genuine democracy impossible. When Fan joined the organization, he became familiar with its operational processes. The rejection of Lin Boqu and other proposals representing the KMT serves as a prime example of this. Although Fan understood the nature of National Political Assembly, he still harbored illusions about the KMT and Chiang Kai-shek, aspiring to place the KMT in power and thereby overlooking its inherent flaws. In his memoir, he wrote:

In October 1938, after the KMT government retreated to Wuhan, it sought to win public support by pretending to address the issues between the Kuomintang and the CPC, implement constitutional governance, and return power to the people. To this end, the government established a so-called political advisory body, the National Political Assembly, which was purportedly intended to represent public opinion. At its founding, Wang Jingwei served as the president. With his support, I participated in the organization as a resident member until the body was dissolved in 1947. In reality, National Political Assembly was merely a tool of the KMT.³³

Fan Yusui was not genuinely trusted by the Kuomintang

Initially, Fan was aligned with Wang Jingwei's faction. In December 1938, when Wang Jingwei invited him to Hong Kong, Fan refused and denounced Wang's treasonous actions. Wang's betrayal dealt a heavy blow to Fan. Consequently, Fan's activities were closely monitored by Chiang Kai-shek's agents for an extended period. For instance, 'one of my radios was confiscated by the Chongqing Garrison Headquarters on the pretext that it was not registered.'³⁴ In the spring of 1942, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Zhu Jiahua, head of the Central Organization Department of the Kuomintang, met with Fan Yusui and asked him to go to Shandong as the chairman of the provincial party department. Soon after, Fan received the appointment and was summoned by Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang's remarks primarily involved attacking and falsely accusing the CPC and the Eighth Route Army of undermining unity, disobeying orders, engaging in separatism, and actively expanding their forces. Chiang Kai-shek instructed Fan to go to Shandong and rigorously implement the KMT's anti-communist measures. He repeatedly emphasized his trust in Fan Yusui and instructed him to follow the directives of the Central Organization Department. Chiang also asked Lin Wei to provide Fan with a secret code and to report directly to him via telegram if any issues arose. Despite serving as the chairman of the provincial party department in Shandong in accordance with the KMT's requirements, Fan did not fully earn Chiang Kai-shek's trust.

In early 1943, Fan Yusui injured his right hand in a fall while riding a horse. Despite multiple treatments from Yu Xuezhong's military doctor, his condition did not improve, leaving three of his fingers stiff and unable to flex. Fan decided to seek private medical treatment in Beijing

32 X. L. Wang, 'A brief biography of Fan Yusui', in Sen Li, eds., *Wulian Cultural and Historical Data, Volume 2* (Shandong: Wulian County Cultural and Historical Data Committee of the CPPCC, 1987) , p. 40.

33 Fan, *ninety years old*, pp. 1-25.

34 Fan, *ninety years old*, pp. 1-25.

without permission. After a week of treatment in Beijing, he bought some topical medicine and returned to Shandong. This incident caused a significant uproar: the CC faction of the Shandong Provincial Party Department reported to the Kuomintang Central Committee, accusing Fan of colluding with the Japanese puppet government. Chen Guofu, the leader of the CC faction, ordered a thorough investigation into this false accusation in Chiang Kai-shek's name. During his tenure in Shandong, Fan sent six telegrams and received four replies from Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang twice assured him that Li Xianzhou would be able to enter Shandong, but despite waiting, Li never arrived. Furthermore, Chiang did not provide any further instructions and ordered both Li Xianzhou and Yu Xuezhong to withdraw from Shandong. Fan felt deeply hurt and dissatisfied, considering it a grave insult and mockery from Chiang.³⁵ After learning of these developments, Fan Yusui left Shandong and returned to Chongqing in August without prior instructions. Upon his arrival, he immediately submitted his resignation to Zhu Jiahua, who refused to accept it. After some time, Zhu proposed a compromise: instead of returning to Shandong, Fan would establish an office in Fuyang, northern Anhui Province, where the Shandong provincial government had also relocated. Consequently, in the spring of 1944, Fan moved to Fuyang. In July, Chiang Kai-shek suddenly transferred Zhu Jiahua to the Ministry of Education and appointed Chen Guofu as the Minister of Organization. Taking advantage of this change, Fan resigned as the chairman of the Shandong Provincial Party and returned to Chongqing at the end of August. Thereafter, he primarily focused on activities related to the National Political Assembly. This period of Fan's political career was marked by distrust and dissatisfaction, but it allowed him to fully engage in the political activities of National Political Assembly. Additionally, Fan Yusui's son, Fan Zhimin, mentioned that in 1944, his second brother's plane crashed, and they suspected he might have been assassinated by Kuomintang agents.³⁶

Fan Yusui was disappointed with the corruption in the Kuomintang

During the more than 20 years of KMT rule on the Chinese mainland, corruption among officials increased significantly. Particularly during the later stages of the Second Sino-Japanese War and throughout the civil war, Kuomintang officials, buoyed by their anti-Japanese achievements, became increasingly arrogant and corrupt, with bureaucratic corruption reaching levels even worse than those of the Beiyang era. The American government, disillusioned by the corruption and incompetence of the KMT, lost confidence in them. In June 1944, American diplomat David Tse reported to Vice President Wallace that 'government and military institutions, from top to bottom, are marred by unprecedented and blatant corruption.'³⁷ In July 1947, U.S. President Truman's special envoy, Wei Demai, led an investigative delegation to China. After examining cities of China such as Nanjing, Beijing, Tianjin, Hankou, Shenyang, Lushun, Qingdao, Jinan, and Taiwan, Wei Demai and his team were profoundly shocked by the widespread corruption and inefficiency among Kuomintang officials. On August 22, he delivered a speech at a joint meeting of all Nationalist government ministers, denouncing the 'corruption and inefficiency at

35 Fan, *ninety years old*, pp. 1-25.

36 Z. M. Fan, 'Remembering my father Fan Yusui' in Sen Li, eds., *Zhucheng Cultural and Historical Data, Volume 12* (Shandong: Cultural and Historical Data Research Committee of Zhucheng Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, 1992), pp. 133-136.

37 L. L. Xiang, *A complete history of Sino-American Relations* (Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2002), p. 193, p. 243.

all levels of government' and calling for the removal of corrupt and incompetent officials.³⁸ Chiang Kai-shek was well aware of the pervasive corruption within the KMT's party branches, various levels of government, and the military. Although he initially resolved to implement stringent measures to combat corruption, his efforts were ultimately unsuccessful for various reasons. Corruption within the KMT worsened from the wartime period (especially during the occupation period) through the full-scale civil war, eventually reaching an uncontrollable extent. Corruption had infiltrated the very 'bone marrow' of the KMT, becoming a widespread issue. Few members of the KMT, government officials at all levels, or military officers remained uncorrupted, with over 90% of senior Kuomintang officers having personal business interests.³⁹

In contrast, although Fan was an early member of the KMT and held high-ranking positions, he lived a relatively hard life. This becomes more evident through the account of his son, Fan Zhimin:

At that time, my father was a senator of the KMT, but life was tough. We had only a small plot of land around our house. My father would have me help him plant corn, tomatoes, eggplants, and peppers. It was then that I realized my father was capable of doing farm work, unlike many officials who only knew how to enjoy privileges without contributing. He was approachable and did not have the airs of an official, being indifferent to his own comfort and appearance. As a result, my brothers and I rarely had new clothes during our childhood; simply being well-fed and clothed was sufficient.⁴⁰

In 1945, Fan published an 'Open Letter to Mr. Zhang Junmai and Mr. Zuo Shunsheng'⁴¹ in the first issue of *Democratic Politics*. In this letter, he questioned why politics and the military had become so corrupt. He mentioned that Chairman Chiang had initiated the New Life Movement to help reform officialdom and analyzed, from a historical perspective, why this social movement had had limited impact. In the same year, in the article 'Unity: The Key to the Current Situation', Fan argued that the Kuomintang government needed a complete overhaul, with a particular emphasis on the need for sustained efforts in financial reform:

After the KMT completed its Northern Expedition and established the National Government, its primary focus was on training officials and eradicating corruption. However, over the past 19 years, corruption not only persisted but worsened, and political tutelage remained widespread, with no county in the country achieving full autonomy.⁴²

All of this indicates that corruption was a very serious problem at the time. Fan Yusui repeatedly emphasized this issue, but the entrenched nature of the problem meant that it could not be resolved effectively, ultimately leading to the KMT's loss of public support.

The civil war shattered Fan Yusui's illusions about democratic politics

In 1945, with the Japanese surrender and the victory in the war, both the Chinese people and international opinion eagerly called for a peaceful, democratic, and unified China, rather than

38 Xiang, *A complete history*, p. 243.

39 W. G. Hu., & Q. H. Zhou, 'Chiang Kai-shek failed to fight corruption', *Lantai World*, no. 7 (July 2019), p. 159.

40 Fan, *Remembering my father*, pp. 133-136.

41 Y. S. Fan, 'An open letter to Mr. Zhang Junmai and Zuo Shunsheng' in Qiuyuan Hu, eds., *Democratic Politics, Issue 1* (Chongqing: Democratic Political Society, 1945), p. 50.

42 Y. S. Fan, 'The significance and mission of the Sixth Complete Congress' in Qiuyuan Hu, eds., *Democratic Politics, Issue 4* (Chongqing: Democratic Political Society, 1945), p. 48.

further civil conflict. However, Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT defied these expectations by continuing their anti-Communist and anti-people policies. Not only did Chiang fail to fulfill his long-standing promises of implementing constitutional government, returning political power to the people, and resolving the conflict between the KMT and the CPC through political means, but he also focused on consolidating control over areas previously occupied by the Japanese and puppet regimes while actively preparing for war against the Communist Party. In Fan Yusui's memoirs, he wrote:

Seeing the KMT, which had proudly upheld Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles, being so thoroughly undermined by Chiang Kai-shek—who professed adherence to these principles while failing to genuinely uphold them—and witnessing the party's prestige being shattered, I, as a long-time member who had followed the KMT for over thirty years, felt deeply heartbroken.⁴³

In October of that year, with the intention of saving the KMT, Fan Yu-sui sent a letter to Chiang Kai-shek, urging him to cease the civil war, recognize the legitimacy of the CPC, and resolve the conflict between the two parties through political means. He also recommended reorganizing National Political Assembly to increase the representation of the CPC and other political parties. The aim was to establish a democratic coalition government, with senior positions within the government remaining predominantly occupied by KMT members. Fan believed that this approach would not only restore the KMT's tarnished reputation for one-party rule but also preserve its political dominance. Despite being a proposal designed entirely for the benefit of the KMT, Chiang Kai-shek found even this reformist suggestion unacceptable. The letter was met with no response and sank without a trace. Subsequently, Fan Yu-sui, with a forward-looking perspective, engaged in the parliamentary process by running for National Congress representative and legislator, and contributed to the drafting of the KMT constitution.

Just as Fan Yu thought he had achieved a successful start in parliamentary activities, the KMT's situation deteriorated dramatically in 1948. After the Liaoshen, Huaihai, and Pingjin battles, the KMT's several million troops had suffered significant losses, with only a few of the so-called elite units trained and equipped by the Americans remaining. Despite the natural barrier of the Yangtze River, Nanjing city of China had descended into chaos. Chiang Kai-shek, at his wit's end, decided to relocate the Kuomintang Central Committee and government agencies to Guangzhou city of China. At the same time, he attempted to delay the conflict once again by issuing a so-called peace statement on New Year's Day, 1949.

After the Huaihai Battle, Fan Yu believed that if the war continued, the KMT would inevitably face complete collapse. To prevent the extinction of the KMT, he considered two potential strategies: First, he proposed writing to Chiang Kai-shek, suggesting that he request assistance from the American troops stationed in China to defend the Yangtze River, thereby preserving the southern bank of the Yangtze as a negotiating asset. Second, he advised Chiang to resign immediately, appoint Li Zongren as president, and declare a ceasefire to initiate peace negotiations. The first proposal did not come to fruition. However, due to significant pressure from various sources, such as the Hubei Provincial Council and Bai Chongxi, Chiang ultimately announced his resignation on January 21, with Li Zongren assuming the role of acting president. The following day, Li, in his capacity as acting president, issued a statement expressing willingness to use the eight points outlined in Chairman Mao Zedong's January 14 declaration

43 Fan, *ninety years old*, p. 6.

as the basis for negotiations. After several complications, Li Zongren sent a KMT peace delegation led by Zhang Zhizhong to Beijing to negotiate with the CPC. A peace agreement was drafted through these negotiations, but it was ultimately rejected by the KMTg, leaving the path to peace obstructed. During the peace negotiations, Fan made the final decision to sever ties with Chiang Kai-shek. Amid the chaos of the Kuomintang government's evacuation to Guangzhou city of China, Fan went to Shanghai city of China, contacted Democratic Revolution friends such as Chen Mingshu and Guo Chuntao, and took refuge at his friend Ma Heng's home. After the liberation of Shanghai city of China, Fan reestablished contact with Shao Lizi and Zhang Zhizhong in Beijing city of China, who then invited him to the capital.

In the spring of 1949, Fan Yu resolutely abandoned the KMT and traveled to Peiping (now Beijing city of China), where he joined the CPC and received a warm reception. Fan promptly joined the 'Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang' (abbreviated as the Revolutionary Committee), where he was elected as a member of the Central Committee of the Democratic Revolution, chairman of the Shandong Provincial Committee of the Revolutionary Committee, and vice chairman of the Shandong Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). In his article 'The Impact of the Revolution of 1911 on Me,' he wrote:

For more than 30 years, I have personally experienced that under the socialist system led by the CPC, the people have truly enjoyed the broadest democratic freedoms. The democratic ideals I had long yearned for have only now become a reality. At eighty-nine years old, I remain sharp and vigorous. This is solid evidence that my enjoyment of people's democracy has contributed to my health and longevity.⁴⁴

Conclusion

Fan Yusui's transition from a staunch KMT member to a member of the CPC can be attributed to several factors, with the primary reason already discussed above. The most significant factor was that his ideal of 'democratic politics' remained unrealized. Prior to the founding of New China, during his ten years of involvement in National Political Assembly, he devoted his political career to uniting the Chinese people. In 1949, he found a new direction in life and eventually enjoyed the fruits of democratic political success. Democratic politics is a method and process that uses public power to peacefully manage conflicts, establish order, and achieve values such as equality, freedom, and popular sovereignty. During World War II and the Chinese Civil War, Fan was one among many striving to unite the Chinese people and realize and implement democratic politics. In the future, young people will need to continue this effort collectively.

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⁴⁴ Y. S. Fan, 'The influence of the 1911 Revolution on me' in Anon, eds., *Selected Cultural and Historical Data of Shandong Province, Volume 12 (the 70th anniversary of the 1911 Revolution)* (Shandong: Shandong People's Publishing House, 1981), p. 74.