

Great Power Peace: Examining Why the Peace Between the Song
and Liao Dynasties Lasted Over One Hundred Years

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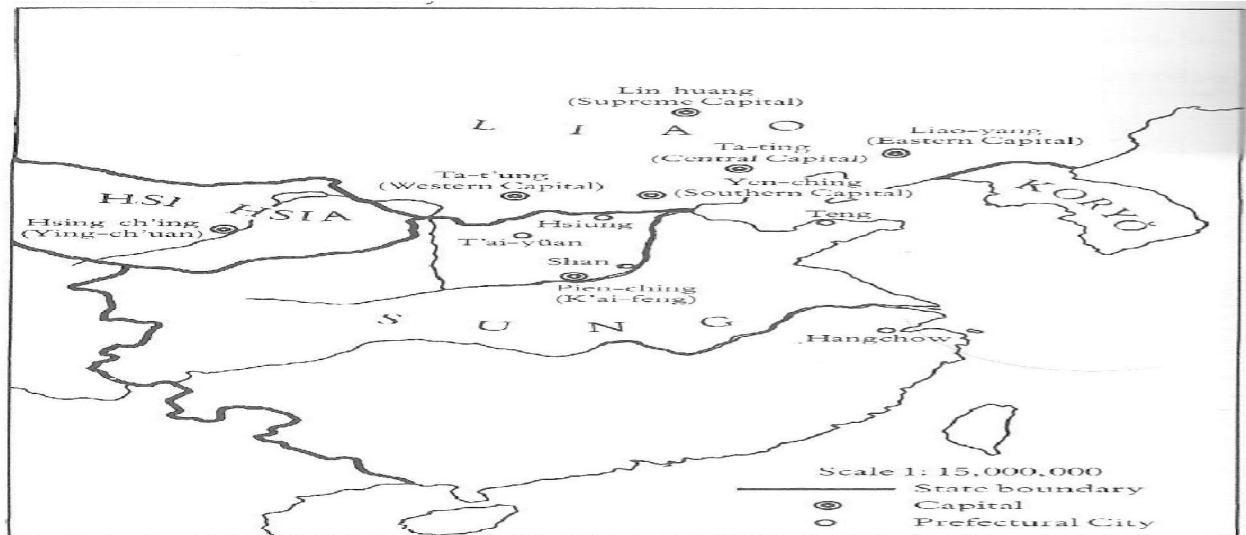
History Honors Thesis

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From the late tenth to the early twelfth century, the Song dynasty (960- 1279 A.D.) ruled nearly all of China proper.¹ During this period, the Song dynasty regularly confronted its powerful and older nomadic neighbor, the Liao (907-1125 A.D.). The Liao ruled a vast area including part of North China. Eventually, the Song and Liao fought a long on and off war over the part of North China known as the Sixteen Prefectures (See Map 2).² After the war, the two empires experienced over one hundred years of peace between them. This paper will examine why the two most powerful states in East Asia, the Song and Liao dynasties, managed to preserve peace for over one hundred years. According to a modern day theory of international relations, Offensive Realism, this extended period of peace between great powers should not have happened. The theory fails to explain why the peace occurred. Thus, by examining this case study, factors that could lead to great power peace today could be better understood, allowing for more accurate prediction of when conflict could occur.

Map 1: East Asia from Late 10th to the Early 12th Centuries³



¹ Paul Jakov Smith, "Introduction: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors," in Denis Twitchett and Paul Jakov Smith, ed., *The Cambridge History of China Vol. 5 Part One: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) pp. 14, 20-8.

² Smith, "Introduction," pp. 14, 20.

³ Tao Jing-Shen, *Two Sons of Heaven* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1988) p. 108

Offensive Realism is a sub school of realism developed by Jon Mearsheimer to specifically examine the behavior of great powers and is based on five assumptions. These assumptions apply specifically to nation states. First, the international system is anarchic, meaning there are no higher powers to enforce agreements between states. Consequently, states may take what they want because they cannot be sure other states will abide by an agreement. Second, states cannot be sure of the intentions of other states. This uncertainty results from the fluid nature of international relations, causing states to adjust their behavior quickly. This assumption applies to both two state and multistate systems. Third, great powers possess offensive military capability to hurt or even destroy other great powers. Fourth, the primary goal of great powers is to survive. Great powers strive to attain as much power as possible so as to maximize their chances of survival. Consequently, great powers attempt to change the international situation in their favor. The only great powers that are not revisionist are hegemons. Finally, great powers are rational actors leading them to think strategically about their options for survival within the international system.⁴ To back up his theory, Mearsheimer uses numerous case studies such as imperial Japan from 1868-1945, Germany under the leadership of Bismarck, and the Soviet Union, to name a few.⁵ However, every theory has its limitations. Mearsheimer admits to this and even says that it is inevitable that a theory will fail to explain certain events.

There is an inherent danger in using current day theories of international relations to judge the behavior of pre-modern states because of several key differences between pre-modern states and modern states involving the relationship of the population to the state,

⁴ John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001) pp. 30-36.

⁵ Mearheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, pp. 172-202.

administration, legitimacy, and nationalism. The modern state's legitimacy rests on a social contract where sovereignty is drawn from the consent of the governed.⁶ Even non-democratic states such as the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the USSR must pay lip service to their population by arguing why their policies are good for society as a whole. The modern state has a one on one relationship with its population. Citizens have a series of rights with reciprocal obligations in return. Citizens may have free speech but should participate in the political system in return. The state actively mobilizes its population for policy initiatives, because their legitimacy and success depends on public participation or support. To make this mobilization possible, the state actively promotes literacy among the population so they can absorb and better understand large and complex political issues.⁷ Fiscally, the state directly taxes its citizens and receives a cash payment, internal trade barriers are absent, and a national infrastructure is developed and maintained. Legally, there is a codified law code applied to the entire population regardless of wealth or status. These characteristics give the modern state greater ability to extract resources and mobilize its population.

There are a variety of pre-modern states ranging from tribal units to vast empires. For this paper, empires are the most relevant pre-modern states. Legitimacy is based on divine right, where the king emperor claims approval from a supernatural force to rule. They had an indirect relationship with their population. The pre-modern state lacked the resources to penetrate deeply into society, necessitating intermediaries. The state had to rely on local elites to help rule as they had the literacy necessary to do so. Consequently, the pre-modern state co-existed with semiautonomous local units, which placed an upper limit on the amount of

⁶Ernst Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983) p. 32,

⁷ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 32.

resources the state could collect.⁸ For example, the Qing Empire ruled over a vast area, but the state's control over those areas varied from region to region as there were different systems of administration to accommodate local elites.⁹ By contrast, the PRC extended its institutions and policies across the entire area controlled by the state.¹⁰

The pre-modern state placed a greater emphasis on defining the boundaries between classes.¹¹ Consequently, there was no codified law applied uniformly across the population as judgments were based on the status of an individual. There were exceptions, such as Legalism in China, making law the area where there was the least contrast between modern and pre-modern states. Also, populations in pre-modern states placed great emphasis on local custom, which further inhibited a national law code.¹² Fiscally, centralized empires taxed their citizens directly but taxes could be collected in the form of food or cloth. The state could also demand labor service as payment.

Beginning in the 19th century, the rise of nationalism marked another key difference between modern and pre-modern state. Nationalism is the creation and promotion of a particular national identity by a state. States sought to promote a national identity as a way to boost legitimacy to show they represented and promoted their populations' interests. A national identity can be defined as an "imagined political community that is sovereign and limited".¹³ Such an identity is "imagined" because a person does not see the vast majority of

⁸ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 13.

⁹ James A. Millward, *A History of Xinjiang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007) pp. 98-99.

¹⁰ John King Fairbank and Merle Goldman, *China: A New History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006) pp. 345-58.

¹¹ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 10.

¹² Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 10.

¹³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983) p. 6.

the people in the nation with whom he or she claims to share an identity.¹⁴ Consequently, mass ceremonies and habits are developed to promote the existence of that identity.¹⁵ This national identity does not have to be narrow but can be broad as well. For example, the American national identity encompasses many ethnicities and is used as a unifying force.¹⁶ The national identity is limited because a finite number of people are in it, but the number is elastic.¹⁷ A nation may have a state of its own or desire an independent state of its own.¹⁸

These fundamental changes in the characteristics of a state could have caused the norms that govern international relations to change. Since modern states have a larger capacity to extract resources, they can continue military operations longer, but must maintain public support or a façade of public support. Modern states must also deal with the pressures that nationalism exposes them to. These differences could have caused a fundamental difference in behavior in international relations. Such a change would negate Offensive Realism when examining pre-modern states, since it uses the behavior of nation states as the basis for the theory.

The differences between a modern state and a pre-modern state make it necessary to briefly show that Offensive Realism was mostly valid from the tenth to the twelfth centuries. First, the international system was clearly anarchic from the mid-tenth to the early twelfth centuries. There was no greater power to regulate disputes between the Liao and Song and ensure their compliance with agreements. Second, the Song and Liao were uncertain of the other's intentions. This uncertainty resulted from a fluid international system and a lack of

¹⁴Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 6.

¹⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 35.

¹⁶ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 26.

¹⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 7.

¹⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 7.

information. The Song feared a Liao alliance with a neighboring power, the Xi Xia, in the 1040s, but the Xia and Liao ended up fighting each other.¹⁹ The Liao worried about the offensive potential of the hydraulic defense network built by the Song, seemingly unaware that the Song only viewed the network as a defensive measure.²⁰ The multi-state nature of the international system further increased uncertainty. The Liao and Song gathered intelligence not only about each other but neighboring states as well and never had complete and fully accurate information about any of them. It also increased the complexity of their power calculations, because they had to consider what others would do or how their actions affected others.

For the most part, the Song and Liao empires thought rationally about their goals. Song Taizu conquered the southern kingdoms because there were more openings, and they were weaker than the Liao.²¹ The Liao wisely accepted Shi Jintang's offer to gain the strategic Sixteen Prefectures without a fight.²² However, it will be shown that this rationality had important limitations due to factional competition in domestic politics. Finally, each empire sought to survive through increasing their power and revising the international situation. The Song strengthened its power and chances for survival by limiting the political threat of its own military, conquest of the southern kingdoms, and the attempted conquest of strategic Liao territory.²³ To increase its chances of survival, the Liao conquered the wealthy kingdom of

¹⁹ Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven*, p. 63.

²⁰ Peter Lorge, "The Great Ditch of China," in Don Wyatt, ed., *Battlefronts Real and Imagined: War, Border, and Identity in the Chinese Middle Period* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) p. 68.

²¹ Lau Nap-Yin, and Huang K'uan-chung, "Founding and Consolidation of the Sung Dynasty under T'ai-tsu (960-976), T'ai-tsung (976-997), Chen-tsung (997-1022)," in Dennis Twitchett and Paul Jakov Smith, ed., *The Cambridge History of China Vol. 5 Part One: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) pp. 224-28.

²² Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven*, pp. 60-1.

²³ Lau and Huang, "Founding and Consolidation of the Sung Dynasty," pp. 215-28, 234-37 .

Bohai and extracted the strategic Sixteen Prefectures from China.²⁴ Offensive realism is mostly valid for the situation but clearly it has its limitations.

This paper will be divided into three sections. The first section will provide an overview of the sources of conflict, the military capacity of the two empires, and the geopolitical situation before the conflict. This overview will be followed by a discussion of the twenty-five year war between the two empires. It will be argued that this war between the two empires laid a foundation for a long lasting peace between them. The conflict blunted the offensive capabilities of each empire's military, making offensive military action by either side increasingly costly and unproductive. The cost of military action forced the Song and Liao dynasties to find a negotiated solution that was desirable to both parties, which resulted in the Treaty of Shanyuan of 1005.

The second section of the paper will examine how the peace was consolidated by both the Song and Liao dynasties in the period between the years 1005-1050. Advocates of a non-belligerent foreign policy gained control of the Song government. The policy of conciliation was rational, but there was sometimes strong opposition to that policy. The factional competition shows an important limitation of rational decision-making. The available foreign policy options were limited to the acceptable range of policies a governing faction would implement. The Liao also focused on internal affairs and was occupied by other foreign policy adventures such as the war with the Koryo dynasty of Korea. The section will conclude with the first Sino-Tangut war of 1038-45 and the Liao campaigns against the Xi Xia, showing the full effect of the limitations of

²⁴ Dennis Twitchett and Klaus-Peter Tietze, "The Liao," in Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett, ed., *The Cambridge History of China Vol. 6: Alien Regimes and Border States 907-1368* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 70

the rational choice model. The Liao had an excellent opportunity to invade and should have, but declined to do so. Instead, the Liao threatened war and entered into negotiations with the Song to extract concessions. This decision goes against offensive realism which would have predicted that the Liao would have attacked the Song after it had been weakened by military defeats.

The final section of the paper will show how the Song became an expansionist empire again from 1068-1119 A.D. Emperors promoted an expansionist foreign policy, weakening the power of the non-belligerent advocates. Consequently, the peace was threatened between the Liao and Song, because the Song desired to eventually conquer Liao territory. The Song aimed to conquer small tribal kingdoms and the Xi Xia before moving to conquer the Sixteen Prefectures. The peace lasted in large part because of Xi Xia survival and Song wariness of bringing the Liao into conflict between them and the Xi Xia. Due to Song military defeats, the non-belligerent faction made a temporary revival but failed to stop the expansionist tide. The behavior of the Song during this period mostly fits with Offensive Realism, as it acted as a revisionist great power trying to change the international situation in its favor. However, the continued competition between domestic factions shows that this policy outcome was not inevitable and is further evidence of the limits of the rational actor model.

Military Capabilities of the Period

Cavalry and static defenses dominated military conflicts during the period from the tenth to the early twelfth centuries. Cavalry possessed greater mobility than infantry. As a result, cavalry could strike faster and harder than an infantry army. Cavalry armies enjoyed

their greatest advantage over infantry armies in the open field, where the greater space allowed them to use their superior mobility to maximum advantage.

The Liao-Song conflict exemplifies the advantages a cavalry army had over a predominantly infantry army. The ruling ethnic group of the Liao Empire, the Khitan, were pastoral nomads that migrated to different grazing areas based on the season. Horses were extremely important to the Khitan, and the Liao maintained an all cavalry army. In contrast, the Song was a sedentary empire that maintained a predominantly infantry army. The main battlefield was the open plains of Hebei, where the Liao could take full advantage of its mobility²⁵. Thus, the Liao could run down the Song infantry en masse when they defeated the Song in battle or quickly get away if their army lost the battle.²⁶ As a result, the Liao could inflict massive casualties on the Song in a victory and limit the damage to their own army in the case of a defeat. Furthermore, it was unlikely that the Song could develop a cavalry force that rivaled that of the Liao. The Song dynasty never controlled a part of Central Asia where the best warhorses were located. This circumstance left their cavalry force quantitatively and qualitatively inferior to the Liao.²⁷ Thus, the Song had to rely on its infantry army to beat the Liao. Failure was not inevitable. A Song infantry army could beat a Liao cavalry army as will be shown in the Northern Han campaign, but they were always at a distinct disadvantage in the open field.

²⁵ Peter Lorge, "War and the Creation of the Northern Song State," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1996), p. 59.

²⁶ Lorge, "War and the Creation of the Northern Song State," p. 33-4.

²⁷ Lau and Huang, "Founding and Consolidation of the Sung Dynasty," p. 247.

Where the Song excelled was in static defenses and siege warfare. The Song used a variety of siege weapons such as trebuchets and team-operated crossbows.²⁸ The Song was as incapable of capturing a heavily fortified city as the Liao but was more willing to attack large targets. Thus, Song siege operations possessed the potential to have a major negative impact for the Liao. The Song army besieged major cities such as Taiyuan and Yuzhou, while the Liao mostly besieged forts and towns.²⁹ Static defenses of the Song and Liao were walled towns, cities, forts, and canals. The walls consisted of tamped earth with a wet or dry moat around the city.³⁰ The most heavily fortified part of a city was the gate, as that bore the brunt of the attack. Cities and forts included towers on the wall to protect soldiers from missiles and weather. Forts differed from cities in that they were established for purely military reasons and their size and population were often smaller than a county seat.³¹ Canals were mainly used by the Song and enabled faster transportation of supplies and troops to the front line, while the paddy fields around the canals limited Liao mobility. As will be shown below, static defenses helped tremendously in evening the fight between the Liao and Song. The Liao armies proved unable to capture strategic fortresses time and again, limiting the Liao's military effectiveness.

Finally, the Song and Liao had different methods and capacities to supply and fund their army. The Liao army always fielded an army without a supply train. This method allowed greater mobility but forced the Liao army to live off the land.³² The length of the Liao army's campaign depended on how far they penetrated enemy territory. If they were stopped, the

²⁸ Lorge, "War and the Creation of the Northern Song State," p. 52.

²⁹ Shui-lung Tsang, "War and Peace in Northern Sung China: Violence and Strategy in Flux, 960-1104," (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Arizona, 1997), p. 100 .

³⁰ Lorge, "War and the Creation of the Northern Song State", p. 63.

³¹ Lorge. "War and the Creation of the Northern Song State," p. 73. The Liao had walled towns in the Sixteen Prefectures where there was a predominantly Han population.

³² Lorge, "War and the Creation of the Northern Song State", p. 59.

army quickly used up the supplies in the surrounding area and was forced to retreat. The Song brought their supplies with them, which allowed them to stop for an extended period of time. However, if they extended beyond the range of their supply train, the Song army experienced major problems. Trouble with the supply line contributed to the failure of the 986 invasion of the Sixteen Prefectures and the 1081 invasion of the Xi Xia.³³

Over the long term, war was not in the interest of the Liao if there was no conquest. The Liao Empire contained a much smaller fiscal base than the Song as they only had a population of a few million, with the vast majority living in the Sixteen Prefectures. Repeatedly going to war put a heavy strain on the Liao's finances and risked social unrest.³⁴ In contrast, the Song government experienced increasing fiscal wealth. The central government successfully implemented policies that allowed them to bring tax revenue from the prefectures to the central government. The conquest of the first four southern kingdoms added about 1.6 million registered households to the tax rolls.³⁵ The annexation of the Wu Yue(See Map 3) in 978 added further wealth to the Song government. Also, the Song did not achieve its largest surplus revenue until 1021.³⁶ The Song was in a period of increasing revenue and could fight a war of attrition with the Liao if need be. Overall, the two empires were evenly matched which showed itself repeatedly in the conflict.

The Sixteen Prefectures

³³ Paul Jakov Smith, "Shen-tsung's Reign and the New Policies of Wang An-Shih," in Dennis Twitchett and Paul Jakov Smith, ed., *The Cambridge History of China Vol. 5 Part One: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) p. 475 Lorge, "War and the Creation of the Northern Song State", p. 241.

³⁴ Nap-Yin Lau, "Waging War for Peace?: The Peace Accord between the Liao and Song in A.D. 1005," in Hans Van deVen, ed., *Warfare in Chinese History* (Leiden, NE: Brill, 2000) pp. 191-2

³⁵ Lau and Huang, "Founding and Consolidation of the Sung Dynasty," p. 224-8 Peter Lorge, p. 210.

³⁶ Lau and Huang, "Founding and Consolidation of the Sung Dynasty under," p. 273.

The military conflict between the Liao and Song empires centered on an area in North China known as the Sixteen Prefectures. This area was located in Hebei and contains modern day Beijing.³⁷ The region was critical to both the Song and Liao for political, strategic, and economic reasons. It contained all the north-south passages between China and the steppe.³⁸ Whoever controlled them enjoyed a strategic edge as they could more easily attack and defend from the state on the other side of the mountains. The Liao gained control of the Sixteen Prefectures in 936 when they agreed to help the Later Jin (See Map 4) founder overthrow the Later Tang (See Map 3) in exchange for the prefectures.³⁹ The Sixteen Prefectures were very important economically to the Liao Empire. The majority of the Liao Empire's population lived in the Sixteen Prefectures and it was the Liao's center of commerce. If the Liao ever lost the Sixteen Prefectures, it would have crippled its empire.⁴⁰

For the Song, the Sixteen Prefectures had an extra political dimension. Control of the Sixteen Prefectures increased the legitimacy of the Song dynasty to rule because the prefectures were part of the Central Plain, which was the cultural heartland of China.⁴¹ Ruling over all of the Central Plain showed that a dynasty was fit to rule over the territories of former great dynasties such as the Han and Tang. Conversely, the failure to capture these territories damaged the legitimacy of the ruling dynasty. Due to the political value of the Sixteen Prefectures for the Song, war was very likely between the Liao and Song empires. There was a relatively peaceful period from 960-979 where the two empires enjoyed good political

³⁷ Lorge, *War and the Creation of the Northern Song State*, p. 2.

³⁸ Lorge, *War and the Creation of the Northern Song State*, p. 68.

³⁹ Naomi Standen, "The Five Dynasties," *The Cambridge History of China Vol. 5 Part One: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors* in Dennis Twitchett and Paul Jakov Smith, ed., (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) p. 87.

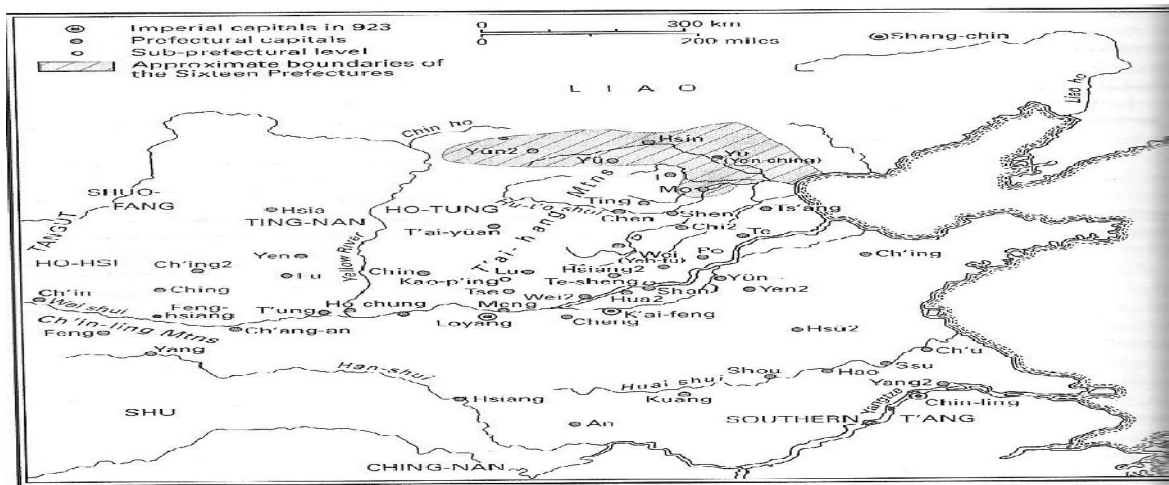
⁴⁰ David Curtis Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity in Eleventh-Century China: Sung's Relations with Khitan Liao*, (Leiden, NLD: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005) p. 41

⁴¹ Lorge, *War and the Creation of the Northern Song State*, p. 3.

relations.⁴² However, the Song was occupied with consolidating its position domestically and conquering the Southern Kingdoms. The Song was in no position to wage a war of aggression against the Liao during that period.

The ultimate failure to conquer the Sixteen Prefectures left a revanchist legacy at the Song court. The prefectures brought up emotions of shame, frustration, and anger.⁴³ Indeed, the obsession over the prefectures from Song officials and emperors was more than what rational thinking would warrant. The prefectures were important strategically, but the Song still found ways to effectively defend its empire. In addition, the Sixteen Prefectures were not as important economically to the Song. With the conquest of the Southern Kingdoms in addition to its Northern territories, the Song had a large and sound financial base from which to draw income. Yet, the Sixteen Prefectures repeatedly appear in Song politics and remained a major political issue at court.

Map 2: Location of the Sixteen Prefectures⁴⁴



⁴² Wang Gungwu, "The Rhetoric of a Lesser Empire: Early Sung Relations with its Neighbors," in Morris Rossabi, ed., *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and its Neighbors, 10th-14th Centuries* (LA: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 50-1.

⁴³ Jing Shen Tao, "Northerners or Barbarians: Northern Sung Images of the Khitan," in Morris Rossabi, ed., *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and its Neighbors, 10th-14th Centuries* (LA: University of California Press, 1983) p. 79, Lau and Huang, "The Founding and Consolidation of the Sung Dynasty," p. 267.

⁴⁴ Standen, "Five Dynasties," p. 86

The Geopolitical Situation Before the Conflict

East Asia experienced major political change starting in the mid-ninth century. In 840 A.D., the Uighur Empire collapsed, leaving a power vacuum on the Mongolian steppe.⁴⁵ In 880 A.D., the Huang Chao rebellion, led by the failed examination candidate, Huang Chao, effectively destroyed the Tang dynasty.⁴⁶ Huang sacked the capital, Chang An, and created the power vacuum that allowed for the final disintegration of the Tang Empire. The Tang lingered on as puppet emperors before being formally ended in 907 A.D by Zhu Wen, founder of the Later Liang dynasty.⁴⁷ (See Map 3) Korea also experienced political decline as the Silla dynasty decayed and was replaced by the Koryo dynasty.

The first to benefit from the political decline were the Khitans under the leadership of Abaoji (872-926). The Khitans were based in Southern Manchuria. Abaoji gained control of the Khitans in 907 A.D., because the previous leader suffered repeated military setbacks fighting against a North China warlord. He led many campaigns that bore fruit late in his life. In 919, Abaoji finally conquered several rival tribes. He conquered large tracts of Inner Mongolia and, in 925, led a military campaign that reached all the way to the former Uighur capital on the Mongolian steppe. Most importantly, he conquered all of Manchuria when he defeated the state of Bohai shortly before he died, which brought in a large amount of wealth.⁴⁸ Abaoji started a wise precedent by treating conquered people with care and letting them keep their

⁴⁵ Michael R. Drompp, *Tang China and the Collapse of the Uighur Empire*, (Liden, Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2005), p. 37.

⁴⁶ Mark Edward Lewis, *China's Cosmopolitan Empire: The Tang Dynasty* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009) p. 71.

⁴⁷ Lewis, *China's Cosmopolitan Empire*, p. 72.

⁴⁸ Twitchett and Tietze, "The Liao," p. 65-6

culture and mode of administration intact.⁴⁹ This dual administration policy helped gain the Liao legitimacy and the loyalty of those conquered.

Domestically, Abaoji concentrated power in himself. Due to the increased sedentary population under his rule, he adopted aspects of Chinese dynasty practice to increase his legitimacy. Instead of an election after his death to select the next leader, he named an heir, built a temple to Confucius, and finally declared himself Emperor in 916 (r. 916-926).⁵⁰ Members of the Khitan elite attempted to block these changes and overthrow Abaoji, but he successfully resisted all these attempts. Not all his changes went as planned; his wife and members of the Khitan elite passed over his choice of heir for another one of his sons, who became Liao Taizong (r. 927-947).⁵¹ Liao Taizong strengthened the empire further by acquiring the Sixteen Prefectures in assisting the Later Jin overthrow of the Later Tang. Emperor Shizong (r. 947-951) formally divided the Liao Empire into Northern and Southern administrations.⁵² It was a wise decision making Abaoji's precedent official policy. It avoided social unrest and loss of legitimacy from trying to impose nomadic customs on the Han population or vice versa. As a result of this state building, by the time the conflict with the Song began in 979, the Liao possessed a large military, the fiscal resources to conduct large scale campaigns, and a more centralized power structure.

Another nomadic power that benefitted from the fractured political situation were the Tanguts (Xi Xia). The Tanguts were based in the Ordos region, which is the area inside the

⁴⁹ Twitchett and Tietze, "The Liao," p. 59

⁵⁰ Twitchett and Tietze, "The Liao," pp. 62-3

⁵¹ Twitchett and Tietze, "The Liao," pp.68-9

⁵² Twitchett and Tietze, "The Liao," p.77

horseshoe-like bend of the Yellow River.⁵³ The Huang Chao Rebellion allowed the Tanguts to expand and legitimize their power base, because they had helped suppress it, gaining them greater prestige.⁵⁴ They successfully resisted all attempts by dynasties in North China to conquer them.⁵⁵ The Tanguts too had a conflict with the Song but made peace with them in 1006.⁵⁶ The Tanguts went on to be important players in the international system on multiple occasions.

While the Liao and Tanguts were busy expanding and in a process of state building, China was in a state of political turmoil. As shown by the four maps below, there was a high amount of political turnover, as many of the states in the north and south were short lived. South China was divided up among various states known as the Southern Kingdoms.⁵⁷ None of the Southern Kingdoms managed to conquer the others. Indeed, none of them possessed the capacity to conquer all of China with the possible exception of the Southern Tang. Overall, there was relatively less warfare among the Southern Kingdoms than in the north and as a result economic development flourished.⁵⁸ The south ended up providing much of the wealth and population for the Song.⁵⁹

Due to the fractured political situation in the south, a dynasty that reunified the north was in a good position to conquer and obtain the wealth of the south. However, the Five

⁵³ Ruth Dunnell, "The Xi Xia," in Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett, ed, *The Cambridge History of China Vol. 6 Alien Regimes and Border States 907-1368* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 171

⁵⁴ Dunnell, "Xi Xia," p. 163

⁵⁵ Dunnell, "Xi Xia," pp. 165, 169

⁵⁶ Dunnell, "Xi Xia," p. 177

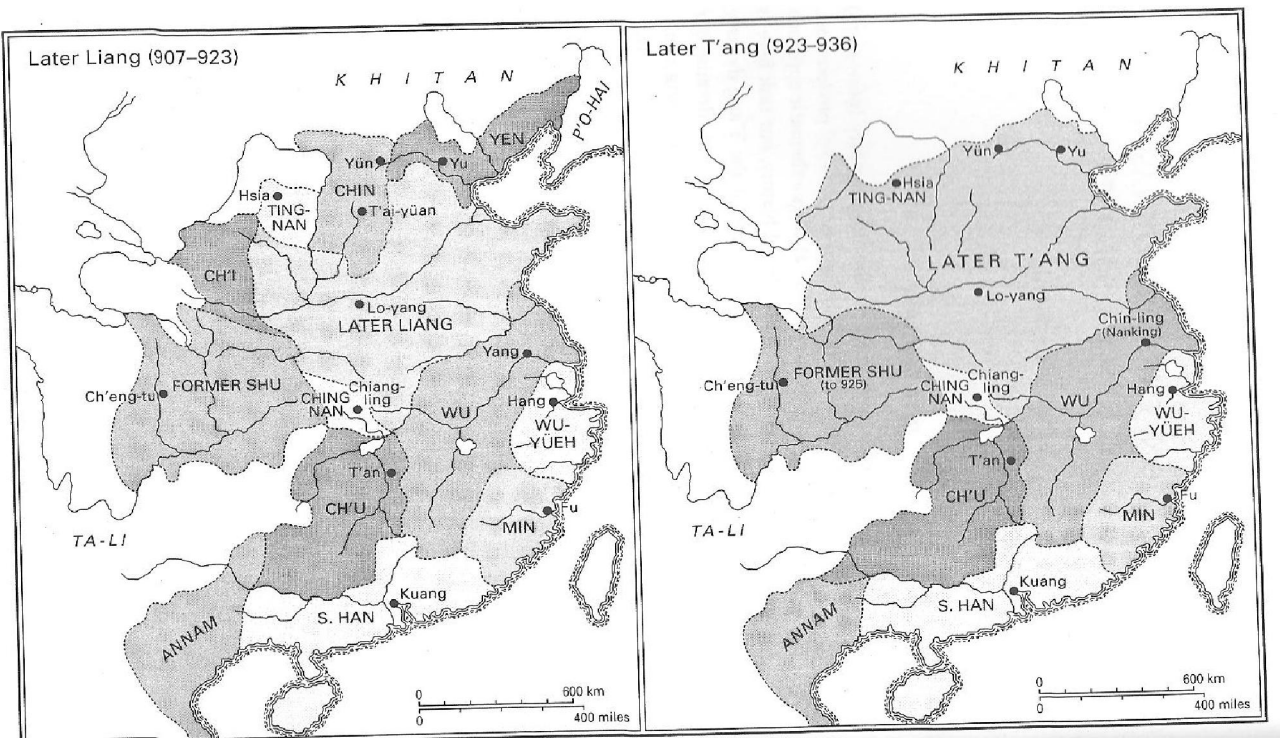
⁵⁷ Hugh R. Clark, "The Southern Kingdoms Between the T'ang and Sung," in Denis Twitchett and Paul Jakov Smith, ed., *The Cambridge History of China Vol. 5 Part One: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) p.133.

⁵⁸ Clark, "Southern Kingdoms," pp. 174, 188-9, 194-7.

⁵⁹ Clark, "Southern Kingdoms," p. 205.

Dynasties in the north were plagued by military coups or external foes. The Later Liang dynasty failed to unify all the north and was in the end, destroyed by their rivals, the Li family who established the Later Tang Dynasty.⁶⁰ However, the Later Tang court soon experienced trouble with its military and governors. Military coups dethroned two emperors and the dynasty was eventually destroyed by the provincial governor, Shi Jingtang, who founded the Later Jin dynasty.⁶¹

Map 3: Five dynasties and Southern Kingdoms 1⁶²



Shi was an old rival of the current Later Tang Emperor before the latter came to the throne. The Later Tang increasingly grew suspicious of Shi and eventually backed him into a corner that forced him to either accept humiliation or to rebel.⁶³ When Shi rebelled, he did not

⁶⁰ Standen, "Five Dynasties," p. 71.

⁶¹ Standen, "Five Dynasties," p. 85.

⁶² Smith, "Introduction," p. 2

⁶³ Standen, "Five Dynasties," p. 85

have the power to defeat the Later Tang on his own so he requested Liao assistance. To gain their support, he offered the Liao the Sixteen Prefectures and tribute.⁶⁴ By offering such strategic territory, Shi left his government open to Liao attack, but it showed how serious he was about gaining Liao assistance. Liao Taizong quickly seized the opportunity and sent 50,000 Liao troops to aid the Later Jin troops, which then defeated the Later Tang.⁶⁵ The Later Jin and the Liao experienced good relations until Jintang died and his heir was replaced by another son. Relations deteriorated between the Jin and Liao, as the Jin tried to assert its independence. The attempt failed and the Later Jin was destroyed by a Liao invasion.⁶⁶ The Liao tried to establish itself as master of North China but was ousted by the founder of the Later Han.⁶⁷ The Later Han proved to be an ineffectual dynasty and was overthrown in a military coup by its military commander, Guo Wei, who founded the Later Zhou.⁶⁸ The remnants of the Later Han fled to Taiyuan and founded the Northern Han kingdom.

Although the Five Dynasties were plagued by coups, they gradually strengthened the throne so that by 951, the provincial governors were no longer a threat, leaving the imperial army itself as the last force necessary to bring under centralized control.⁶⁹ Due to a stronger central government, the Later Zhou was able to attempt military conquest. The Later Zhou conquered parts of two southern kingdoms and even two of the Sixteen Prefectures which

⁶⁴ Standen, "Five Dynasties," p. 87.

⁶⁵ Standen, "Five Dynasties," p. 88-9.

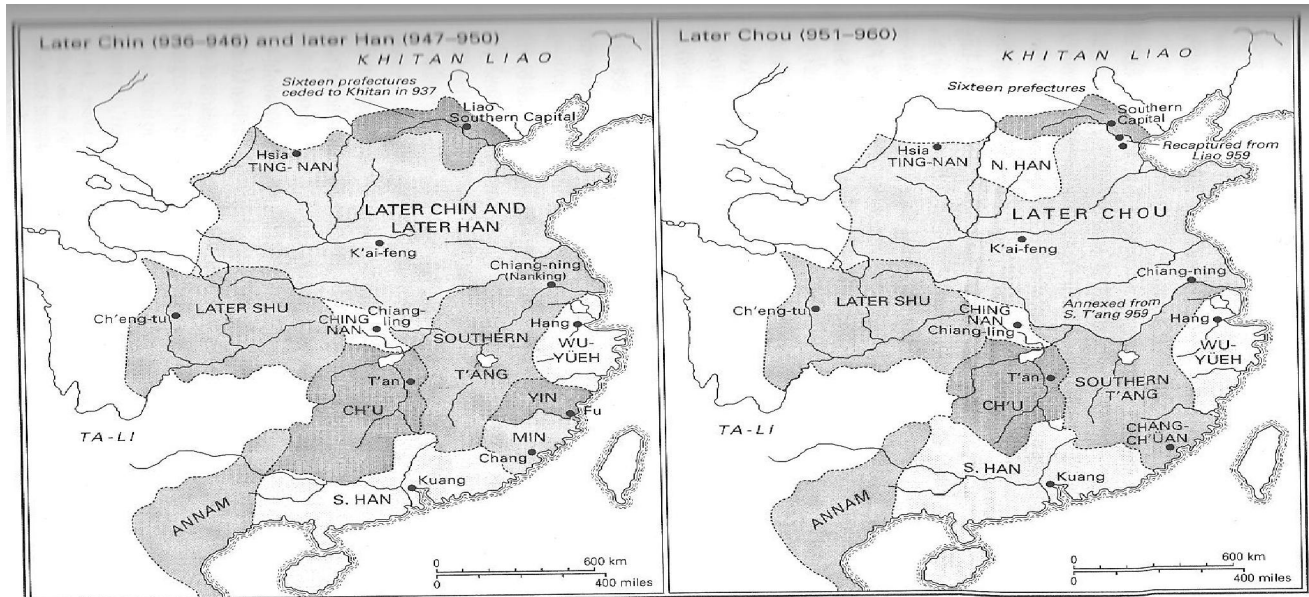
⁶⁶ Standen, "Five Dynasties," p. 101-2.

⁶⁷ Standen, "Five Dynasties," pp. 102-4.

⁶⁸ Standen, "Five Dynasties", p. 110-12.

⁶⁹ Standen, p. 112. This is shown through the fact that the Latter Han and Zhou were over thrown by their overall military commanders and that no governors rebelled during the Latter Zhou.

became known as the Guan'an region.⁷⁰ The second Later Zhou emperor died in 959 and an infant succeeded to the throne, setting the stage for one last military coup.



Map 4: Five Dynasties and Southern Kingdoms 2⁷¹

Zhao Kuangyin executed a military coup in 960 and founded the Song dynasty. Taizu (960-976), as he was known posthumously, put an end to the cycle of military coups by implementing a combination of reforms that successfully restrained the military.⁷² With the dynasty internally consolidated, Taizu embarked on a series of campaigns of conquest. Either acting on the advice of his chief minister or because the south provided more openings, Taizu directed his military campaign to the south. The Song conquered each of the southern kingdoms with relative ease. The Southern Tang resisted the longest at fifteen months but fell in the end.⁷³ Taizu passed away in 976 and his brother, known posthumously as Taizong (976-

⁷⁰ Standen, "Five Dynasties," pp. 124-9.

⁷¹ Smith, "Introduction", p. 3

⁷² Lao and Huang, "Founding and Consolidation of the Sung Dynasty," pp. 216-19

⁷³ Lao and Huang, "Founding and Consolidation of the Sung Dynasty," pp.224-8.

997), succeeded him. Taizong acquired the last of the Southern Kingdoms, Wu Yue, without a fight.⁷⁴

The Start of the Conflict: Song Taizong's Northern Han Campaign

With the south conquered, the Song turned its attention toward the north. In 979 A.D., acting on the advice of the general, Cao Bin, Taizong ordered an invasion of the Northern Han.⁷⁵

In terms of the theory of offensive realism, it was no surprise that the Song attacked the Northern Han. The elimination of Northern Han would allow a clear path toward the strategically important Sixteen Prefectures.⁷⁶ Also, the Song possessed a large amount of wealth and had developed a capable and powerful army that was more than a match for the Northern Han forces and was capable of winning even if the Liao intervened. The Song showed its military might. The Liao sent a relief army to aid Northern Han. The Song army defeated the Liao forces, inflicting heavy casualties.⁷⁷ The Song victory proved to be a decisive factor in the campaign. The Liao defeat left Northern Han isolated, and it surrendered after a fifteen-day siege of its capital.⁷⁸

The victory is a prime example showing that a cavalry was not all powerful in the field. The Liao army had the advantage, but still lost to an army that was most likely predominantly infantry soldiers. The Song army was arguably at its best in 979 and as its victory in the Northern Han campaign showed, was capable of defeating the Liao in the field. It was the tool

⁷⁴ Edmund H. Worthy Jr., "Diplomacy for Survival: Domestic and Foreign Relations of Wu Yueh," in Morris Rossabi, ed., *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and its Neighbors, 10th-14th Centuries* (LA: University of California Press, 1983) p.34.

⁷⁵ Lorge, "War and the Creation of the Northern Song State," p. 216.

⁷⁶ Twitchett and Tietze, "Liao," p. 85

⁷⁷ Lorge, "War and the Creation of the Northern Song State," p. 218.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 220-2.

of a revisionist power, which the Song was at this time in Offensive Realism, and was to be taken seriously.

With the success of the Northern Han campaign, a Song invasion of the Sixteen Prefectures was all but guaranteed. The successful conquest would have left all questions of legitimacy answered, and defeating a major power in the process would have further increased Song prestige and legitimacy. Even looking at the situation from the perspective of Offensive Realism, the conquest of the Sixteen Prefectures was the next logical step, as it would add a strategic barrier between the Song dynasty and the Liao Empire

The Blunting of Song Offensive Military Power

Shortly after the conquest of the Northern Han, Taizong ordered the invasion of the Sixteen Prefectures. The timing of the invasion was bad as the Song troops were exhausted and not rewarded.⁷⁹ The Song army quickly reached Yuzhou, modern day Beijing and the key to the Sixteen Prefectures. However the Song failed to take the city. The Liao counter-attacked and inflicted a severe defeat on the Song army.⁸⁰ The defeat ended the campaign and forced the Song to be temporarily on the defensive.

Even if Taizong had waited to rest his troops, it would have been difficult to defeat the Liao. The Liao cavalry's advantage in the open field gave them an edge over the predominantly infantry army of the Song. Fighting with exhausted and low-spirited troops increased the likelihood and scale of the defeat. If the Song suffered a defeat on such a scale again, it would end their chances to capture the Sixteen Prefectures. They would have lost too many of the capable infantry that stood a better chance at defeating the Liao. In the years after the 979

⁷⁹ Ibid, p.223 .

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 225.

invasion, the war settled into a stalemate. Each side scored sizeable victories, but nothing was decisive.⁸¹ As a result, the Song army's offensive potential remained, but so did the Liao's ability to defend its empire.

By 986, the Song felt confident enough to launch another invasion of the Sixteen Prefectures. The passage of seven years was a rational step by the Song as it had to rebuild its strength while dealing with Liao invasions. The political importance of the Sixteen Prefectures also guaranteed another attempt at conquest. They were just too politically important for the Song to give up after one failed campaign. Initially, the invasion went well as the Song captured multiple towns.⁸² However, the Song army advanced too quickly and overstretched their supply lines. As a result, the Song retreated to resupply before resuming the advance.⁸³ Unfortunately, the Liao counterattacked around the same time and inflicted a massive defeat on the Song military.⁸⁴

The failed campaign ended the Song's desire to conquer the Sixteen Prefectures for the time being. The defeat cost the Song most of its crack infantry troops. Thus, the Song did not have the skilled manpower necessary to defeat the Liao cavalry army. It was a rational move by the Song to switch to and stay on the defensive. Indeed, the Song focused on building their defenses, which included a series of canal systems that greatly increased their ability to defend against the Liao.

The Frustration of Liao Military Power

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 227-9, 232.

⁸² Ibid, pp. 237-240.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 242.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 243.

From an Offensive Realism perspective, it would be expected that the Liao would try to revise the international situation. The Song had invaded twice and damaged an important region of the Liao Empire, giving the Liao ample incentive to attack the Song and reduce its military power. The Liao attempted to do just this by implementing a punitive expedition strategy that climaxed with its 1004 invasion.

The Liao did not immediately implement a punitive expedition strategy to secure its border. From 989 to 999, there was peace between the Song and Liao empires, and it is not entirely clear why the Liao did not attack at this time.⁸⁵ Regardless, the Liao began their punitive expedition strategy with their 999 invasion. The Liao army achieved repeated victories in the field but failed to take fortified cities.⁸⁶

The Song response was twofold. Emperor Zhenzong (r. 997-1022) led a personal campaign part way to the front to boost morale, provide an extra layer of defense to prevent further penetration of Song territory, and show his resolve to defend the empire.⁸⁷ On the front lines, the Song Commander, Fu Zan, adopted a passive defense strategy of staying behind city walls. The strategy denied the Liao victory.⁸⁸ By keeping the Song's military power in fortifications, the Song army limited the Liao's penetration of Song territory. As a result, the Liao retreated after using up the supplies in the area.⁸⁹ Adding to the failure of the campaign, the Song army caught the Liao as they were retreating and inflicted ten thousand casualties and captured numerous weapons.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 248.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 250, 252.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 251.

⁸⁸ Ibid, pp. 251-3.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 254.

⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 255.

The campaign showcases the limitations of the Liao army. The Liao could defeat the Song in the open field but was unable to successfully besiege fortified cities. When the Song kept their army in fortifications, the Liao could not take and hold Song territory. They could also not advance far without the high risk of their retreat being cut off and attacked from the front and rear. Without taking the fortified cities, the Liao could not deliver the decisive blow to the Song army and the Song's threat lingered.

The Liao's limitations showed up in subsequent campaigns as well. The campaigns from 1001 to 1003 bore little fruit. Liao military limitations and Song defensive measures prevented any permanent gains. The 1002 campaign was notable for the Liao's change of strategy. The Liao attacked in the summer instead of the fall, catching the Song off guard, but nothing decisive occurred.⁹¹ The lack of success was very costly to the Liao. The repeated campaigns put a heavy burden on Liao finances and were not sustainable over the long term if the campaigns were not showing results.⁹²

Unfortunately for the Liao, the situation was not getting any better for them. In addition to the walled cities, the Song were building a series of canals that Peter Lorge calls "The Great Ditch of China."⁹³ The canal system provided faster transportation to the frontier, allowing for better rested soldiers and a decreased supply burden on the local population in Hebei.⁹⁴ The canal system also increased agricultural production in the area, further increasing the logistical support to the army and the tax revenues to the central government.⁹⁵ On the tactical side, the canal system countered the Liao's mobility. This advantage gave the Song time to close their

⁹¹ Lau, "Waging War for Peace?," pp. 195-7

⁹² Lau, "Waging War for Peace?," pp. 191-2

⁹³ Lorge, "The Great Ditch of China," p. 59.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p.62- 3.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 63.

cities' gates, increasing the chances of successful defense.⁹⁶ Also, the Song army could pin the Liao against the paddy fields around the canals and the canals themselves, which negated the mobility of their cavalry. This evened the odds of the fight for the Song army, increasing their chances of victory.⁹⁷ The Liao kept to routes that avoided the canals, but those paths were disappearing. Zhenzong endorsed the completion of the system, bringing the resources of the central government to fill in the gaps of what was previously a local government effort.⁹⁸

The canal system looked all the more threatening to the Liao because they understood the offensive potential of the canal. The canals could be used as a staging area for invasions.⁹⁹ However, the Song only viewed the canal system as a defensive measure. Although the canal system had been under construction since 993, the central government did not endorse it until after Zhenzong's ascension, because members of the court thought that it made the Song look weak.¹⁰⁰ An endorsement of the canal system would signal to officials in the government that the Song did not have the ability to conquer the Sixteen Prefectures and the goal was to defend the empire.

Abandoning the conquest of the Sixteen Prefectures could not have been an easy decision. The prefectures had major political value to the Song. It seems likely this implication delayed official sanction of the canal system from the central government. The Song did not want to admit that it could not conquer such important territory. The decision to build the canal system shows a pragmatic aspect of the Song and put one of the key parts for peace in place. The Song no longer aimed at conquering the Prefectures and accepted its current

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 64.

⁹⁷ Ibid, p.64.

⁹⁸ Ibid p. 61.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 62

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 61.

territorial size, but the Song did not trust the Liao in a peace deal. The Liao needed to force the Song to the negotiating table and achieve a political solution.

From the rational choice perspective of offensive realism, this was becoming all the more urgent. The military expeditions were costly but not producing results for the Liao. Furthermore, the Song was tightening the gaps in its defenses, making the strategy all the more futile and fiscally dangerous. The Liao needed a military action large enough to force the Song to the negotiating table.

The Shanyuan Campaign and Its Treaty

In late 1004, the Liao launched a massive military campaign personally led by the Empress Dowager and Emperor Shengzong (r. 1082—1031). However, the Liao ran into heavy resistance. Once again, the Liao failed to take fortified cities. The most notable failure occurred at Yingzhou in Hebei. The Liao besieged Yingzhou for three weeks and suffered thirty thousand casualties before lifting the siege.¹⁰¹ The Liao responded to these failures by bypassing these fortresses.

The strategy allowed the Liao to penetrate further into Song territory, but left their retreat vulnerable to being cut off. The willingness to use such a strategy showed that the Liao were ready and anxious for a political settlement. The death of their leading general, Xiao Dalin, in a skirmish made the Liao all the more anxious for peace.¹⁰² From an Offensive Realism perspective, the Liao strategy was very rational since it appears the main goal was to force the Song to the negotiating table. Penetrating further into Song territory made the invasion appear more threatening and increased the chances the Song would come to the negotiating table.

¹⁰¹ Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, p. 58.

¹⁰² Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven*, p. 14.

Fortunately for the Liao, they succeeded in bringing the Song to the negotiating table, allowing for the resolution of the conflict. The invasion caused much anxiety at court, with some officials arguing for Zhenzong to flee to the south. However, due to the efforts of Kou Zhun and General Gao Qiong, Zhenzong led an army to Shanyuan. On the way to Shanyuan, the Song and Liao dynasties began negotiations.¹⁰³ Zhenzong did not trust the Liao but they had penetrated far into Song territory and he was worried about the failure of a military engagement, which made him willing to take a risk on negotiations.

Both sides had ample incentive to conclude a peace agreement. For the Liao, their retreat could be cut off and their military force had proved unable to conquer territory. For the Song, the troops at Shanyuan were inexperienced and Shanyuan was easy to besiege.¹⁰⁴ The Liao wanted the Guanan area in exchange for peace, but Zhenzong rejected that deal.¹⁰⁵ Then, Zhenzong sent the official Cao Liyong to offer annual payments. Eventually, the Liao accepted the Song offer of annual payments. The agreement became known as the Treaty of Shanyuan and the terms were as follows:

1. The establishment of a friendly relationship between the two states
2. Annual payments of 100,000 taels of silver and 200,000 bolts of silk to the Khitans by the Song as "military compensation"
3. The demarcation of borders between the two states
4. An agreement that neither side should detain robbers and fugitives
5. An agreement that neither side should disturb the farmlands of the other

¹⁰³ Lorge, "War and the Creation of Northern Song China," pp. 261-2.

¹⁰⁴ Lau, p. 211.

¹⁰⁵ Lorge, "War and the Creation of Northern Song China," p. 266.

6. An agreement that neither side should construct new fortifications and canals along the border
7. A pledge of a solemn oath with a religious sanction in case of contravention¹⁰⁶

The military conflict leading up to the peace treaty was one of the major reasons the peace lasted over a hundred years. The military defeats and frustrations showed that each side could not use military force to achieve their goals. War cost the Liao and Song Empires too many resources, making a compromise necessary. Consequently, the peace was on a solid foundation and the threshold for war was raised very high. Each side got something it wanted from the other. The Song retained territorial integrity at a relatively cheap cost. As Shiba Yoshinobu points out, the Song ran up a huge trade surplus that allowed them to get back the entire payment from the Liao.¹⁰⁷ The Liao maintained their territorial integrity by getting the Song to formally accept the Sixteen Prefectures as part of Liao. The subsidy allowed them to build their Central Capital and was a significant portion of the tax revenue.¹⁰⁸

Song and Liao behavior followed offensive realism during the conflict. Each side sought to increase its survival through attempted conquest or punitive military expeditions against the other. For the most part, each side thought rationally during the conflict and the uncertainty of the other's intentions was relevant as well. Offensive Realism would predict that the Song or Liao would break the agreement once one of them built up enough power or the other had declined enough that war was worth the risk. Since the Song and Liao were part of a web of

¹⁰⁶ Translation of text taken from Tao, "Barbarians or Northerners," p. 68 These are the translated terms.

¹⁰⁷ Shiba Yoshinobu, "Song Foreign Trade," in Morris Rossabi, ed., *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and its Neighbors, 10th-14th Centuries* (LA: University of California Press, 1983) p.98

¹⁰⁸ Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven*, p. 24.

states, opportunities were likely for renewed war. If one engaged in war with one of the surrounding neighbors, the other might see it as an opportunity to attack and increase its relative power. If such a tempting opportunity presented itself, sufficient internal support was necessary for peace was needed to ensure enforcement of the treaty.

Liao Foreign Policy, Post-Shanyuan to 1038

Members of the Liao court in favor of the Treaty of Shanyuan did not need to do much to strengthen internal support for it. The treaty terms were favorable to the Liao and thoughts of southern expansion were dashed by the stubborn and effective resistance of the Song. More importantly, the Liao was busy securing its borders and establishing favorable relations with other states. Thus the Liao was busy revising the international situation in its favor, exactly what Offensive Realism would predict.

The most notable example of Liao's strategy was its conflict with the Koryo dynasty of Korea a few years after the signing of the Treaty of Shanyuan. In 1010, the Koreans rejected vassal status to the Liao. In response, the Liao embarked on multiple campaigns to coerce Korea back into vassal status. The Liao campaign achieved early success with the sacking of the Korean capital.¹⁰⁹ However, the Koreans continued to resist and the conflict dragged on for years. In 1018, the Koreans severely defeated a Liao invasion.¹¹⁰ However, the armed aggression accomplished its goal. In 1020, the Koreans accepted vassal status again.¹¹¹

As the campaign shows, the Liao was not interested in conquest or extracting as many resources as possible. As long as they had agreements that were favorable for them, the Liao

¹⁰⁹ Twitchett and Tietze, "Liao," p. 111.

¹¹⁰ Twitchett and Tietze, "Liao," p. 111.

¹¹¹ Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven*, p. 80.

emperor and his court were willing to keep the peace. Liao behavior was in accordance with Offensive Realism, but it is arguable that the Liao did not push for as much as they could have obtained.

Song Foreign and Domestic Affairs, Post-Shanyuan to 1038

In the years after the peace treaty, Emperor Zhenzong became more lethargic.¹¹² At the same time, he made a conscious effort to hear multiple opinions during policy discussions. These circumstances created an opening for factional competition. As the emperor became more lethargic, a power vacuum was left open. If a faction could consistently gain imperial support, they would be in a position to determine and implement government policy. For a better understanding of the factional struggles, it is necessary to have a brief overview of key institutions and players in the Song government.

The emperor, Secretariat-Chancellery, and Bureau of Military Affairs were the most important policy makers. If an emperor was decisive and assertive enough, he could make his preferences the policy of the empire. In the absence of an assertive emperor, there was a power vacuum that could lead to coalitions of officials competing with each other to gain power over government policy. The Song had many lethargic or non-activist emperors, leaving a particularly large power vacuum because the Song system demanded a strong and activist emperor.¹¹³ Consequently, factional conflict often ensued, with rival leaders of the bureaucracy vying for power.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Karl F. Olsson, "The Structure of Power Under the Third Emperor of Sung China: The Shifting Balance After the Peace of Shan-Yuan," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1974) pp. 57-8, 68.

¹¹³ Huang and Lao, "Founding and Consolidation of the Song Dynasty," 229-241.

¹¹⁴ Paul Jakov Smith, "Introduction," pp. 24-6.

For foreign and military policy, the Commissioner of the Bureau of the Military Affairs was a very important player. In general, the Bureau oversaw border defense, logistics, and military preparation.¹¹⁵ Due to the important matters the Commissioner dealt with, he had easy access to the emperor and his policy recommendations had great weight in any debate.

An equal, if not more important position to influence government policy was the Chief Councilor, because he headed the Secretariat-Chancellery.¹¹⁶ The Secretariat-Chancellery had tremendous authority over administrative affairs despite the fact that its powers overlapped with those of other parts of the bureaucracy.¹¹⁷ In addition, the Chief Councilor enjoyed the highest status in the bureaucracy. Consequently, he too had easy access to the emperor and his opinions on any matter carried influence.¹¹⁸ A Chief Councilor was in the best position to build coalitions and influence government policy as a whole.

The Chief Councilor and Commissioner of the Bureau of Military Affairs were Wang Dan and Wang Qinruo, respectively, from around 1006 to 1017. These men had different positions on foreign policy. Wang Dan advocated conciliation while Wang Qinruo favored a more belligerent foreign policy. The principal time of competition between their two opposing views occurred between 1006-1010. The debates showcase the potential of an irrational decision by the standards of Offensive Realism and support the case that the potential for such an occurrence should be taken seriously.

In 1006, the Tangut leader Li Deming requested the mourning rights that came with his nominal position in the Song bureaucracy after his mother passed away. Wang Qinruo took the

¹¹⁵ Olsson, "Structure of Power Under the Third Emperor of Sung China," p. 104.

¹¹⁶ Olsson, "Structure of Power Under the Third Emperor of Sung China," p. 99.

¹¹⁷ Olsson, "Structure of Power Under the Third Emperor of Sung China," p. 103.

¹¹⁸ Olsson, "Structure of Power Under the Third Emperor of Sung China," p. 103.

belligerent position that the request be denied, because Li Deming did not come to request them in person. Wang Dan advocated that the court must grant him the mourning rights in order to pacify the northwest. Zhenzong agreed with Wang Dan and granted Li Deming the mourning rights he requested and other honors.¹¹⁹

The debate shows the limitations of the rational thinking model. Dan and Qinruo operated under different assumptions that affected what was a rational choice. Underlining Wang Qinruo's argument is that Li Deming did not show proper respect to the Song court. Consequently, Li Deming did not deserve the respect and honor of receiving the morning rights that went with his position, regardless of the power politics consequences. On the other side, Wang Dan thought peaceful and strong relations were needed with neighboring states. With their different assumptions, the potential existed for an irrational decision, but Zhenzong rationally choose to grant the mourning rites. The Song had just concluded wars with the Liao and the Tanguts, necessitating a conciliatory foreign policy to rebuild internal strength. Sparking a diplomatic spat that could lead to a more serious situation would not serve that goal.

In the years after this debate, Wang Dan continued to promote a conciliatory foreign policy. In 1008, Li Deming requested grain for famine relief. The vast majority of the bureaucracy advocated that the request be denied. However, Wang Dan advocated that the Song give the Xi Xia the grain if Li Deming came to Kaifeng. It was in the interest of the Song to give the famine relief, because the need to avoid belligerent relations and focus on internal strength was still present. Furthermore, the Song did not need to risk the Tanguts raiding their territory for the grain if the Song did not give it to them. However, the sheer number of officials

¹¹⁹ Olsson, "The Structure of Power Under the Third Emperor of Sung China," p. 158.

who were against giving the grain made it a real possibility that an irrational decision would be made. However, Zhenzong backed Wang Dan's proposal, and the Tanguts were given the grain in the capital.¹²⁰ Also, by 1008, Zhenzong had become dissatisfied with the Treaty of Shanyuan's provisions. Instead of undermining the treaty's provisions, Zhenzong decided to carry out the Sacrifices to Heaven and Earth to bolster Song prestige in relation to the Liao.¹²¹

The year 1010 saw conciliation firmly entrenched as the guiding foreign policy principle of the Song. As noted, above, the Koryo-Liao conflict started at this time. At the Song court, Zhenzong solicited advice about a possible Korean request for military assistance. Wang Dan advocated that the Song should reject any Korean request, because they had not sent tribute in many years. Zhenzong accepted Wang's advice and ordered that Korean embassies should not be given passage into Song territory.¹²² As a result, several Korean missions requesting military assistance failed to gain entry into Song territory.¹²³ This policy was the right decision. There was military parity between the Song and Liao making any military operation risky. Koryo was no great power and only marginally increased the chances of a Song victory in a war with the Liao. Add the Song difficulties for offensive operations and it was likely that Song military intervention on behalf of Koryo would fail and further weaken the Song relative to the Liao.

The potential of an irrational decision has to be taken seriously. The 1008 debate over handing over grain is a good example of the risk of an irrational decision. The majority of the bureaucracy was against the request, but Zhenzong's preference for conciliation being the main reason that prevented an irrational decision. There were multiple contextual factors in the Song

¹²⁰ Olsson, "Structure of Power Under the Third Emperor of Sung China," p. 173.

¹²¹ Olsson, "Structure of Power Under the Third Emperor of Sung China," p. 162-172.

¹²² Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven*, p. 81.

¹²³ Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven*, p. 80.

that increased the chances of an irrational decision. The Song Empire had endured multiple defeats and humiliations and members of the bureaucracy appeared determined to prevent further humiliations. Zhenzong's own dissatisfaction with the Treaty of Shanyuan shows dissatisfaction in the Song government that the Sixteen Prefectures were not conquered and that the Song was sending the Liao payments. However, the memory and lessons of the war with Liao greatly limited chances of an irrational decision toward the Liao, as shown by how quickly the Song ruled out military intervention on behalf of Korea. The limitation of the rational choice model showed its full effect and that the Song was not the only power to be affected by them during the Song-Xi Xia war of 1038-44.

The Song-Xi Xia War of 1038-44

Relations between the Song and Tanguts under Li Deming's leadership were not perfect. Li adopted a belligerent attitude toward the Song on multiple occasions, which led to occasional tension between the Tanguts and Song.¹²⁴ However, relations were largely peaceful overall. This situation came to an end with the accession of Yuanhao to Tangut leadership in 1032. A very capable general who was responsible for conquering several oasis states in Central Asia, he wanted the Song to recognize him as an equal. In 1038, he declared his own dynasty and started a war to force the Song to recognize him as an equal.¹²⁵ The war took place along the border between the Ordos region and the rest of China proper, where the two empires met.

¹²⁴ Olsson, "The Structure of Power Under the Third Emperor of Song China," p. 178. In one particular instance, it was reported to the court that the Tanguts were getting Chinese on the border drunk in preparation for incursions.

¹²⁵ Michael C. McGrath, "Frustrated Empires: The Song-Tangut Xia War of 1038-44," in Don Wyatt, ed., *Battlefronts Real and Imagined: War, Border, and Identity in the Chinese Middle Period* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) p. 157.

Yuanhao gained early success. In 1040, at the battle of Sanchuan, Yuanhao defeated a Song army and inflicted around 20,000 casualties.¹²⁶ This prompted the Song to attempt an offensive.¹²⁷ Before the Song could mount an offensive, Yuanhao attacked again. The Song counter-attacked, but it went badly. Song forces lost over 6,000 troops and several field commanders.¹²⁸

The Song defeats sent reverberations throughout international relations. The Liao debated whether to attack the Song or not. An official, Xiao Hui, argued that the Liao should take advantage of the Song's current weakness and attack. Initially, Emperor Xingzong (r. 1031-1055) agreed to the policy proposal. However, the retired Prime Minister, Zhang Jian, interceded and advocated that the Liao should send an envoy to ask for the Guannan region. Emperor Xingzong followed Zhang's advice.¹²⁹

The Liao envoy reached the Song court and requested the Guannan region, but Emperor Renzong (r. 1022-63) refused. The Song official Fu Bi was sent to negotiate with the Liao about this issue.¹³⁰ At the Liao court, Emperor Xingzong continued demanding the Guannan region. Fu Bi successfully resisted all Xingzong's attempts at persuasion. Emperor Xingzong relented in his demands for the Guannan region.¹³¹ However, Fu Bi was in a very weak negotiating position and would have to give up something. The Liao obtained an increase in annual payments. Also, the Liao agreed to pressure the Xi Xia to make peace with the Song¹³²

¹²⁶ McGrath, "Frustrated Empires," p. 161.

¹²⁷ McGrath, "Frustrated Empires," p. 164.

¹²⁸ McGrath, "Frustrated Empires," p. 165.

¹²⁹ Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven*, p. 60.

¹³⁰ Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven*, pp. 60-1.

¹³¹ Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, p. 210-12.

¹³² Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven*, pp.61-2.

The negotiations clearly show the limitations of the rational choice model of offensive realism. Offensive realism would have predicted that the Liao would have attacked the Song in 1042 to conquer territory and deliver a massive blow to the Song, which would have been fighting on two fronts. More importantly, the Xi Xia had inflicted multiple and large defeats on the Song army. These defeats indicated a weakened Song army. When considering that the Xi Xia was smaller and weaker than the Liao, it was quite possible the Liao could have obtained even larger and more significant victories against the Song.

Yet, Emperor Xingzong declined to attack the Song. Indeed, he eventually relented on his demands for territory. He was in a very strong negotiating position, and if he had persisted and backed up his demands with a credible threat of war, he may have gotten the Song to give up territory. The fact that he did not pursue such a course shows that Xingzong did not want war but simply wanted to gain some sort of material benefit from the Song. It seems that Emperor Xingzong was satisfied with peace even though war could have quite possibly left the Liao in a better situation.

His actions did not come without negative consequences for the Liao. In 1043, Li Yuanhao raided the Liao frontier.¹³³ He was apparently dissatisfied that he had gained nothing from his victories over the Song while the Liao gained benefit because of his efforts. The Liao requested that the Song join them in a military operation attacking the Xia. Instead, the Song seized the opportunity to make peace with the Xi Xia without granting them diplomatic

¹³³ Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven*, p. 63.

equality.¹³⁴ The Liao never reprimanded the Song for denying its request. It was busy fighting the Xi Xia and was defeated.¹³⁵

Domestic politics proved to be decisive in preventing war between the Liao and Song during the Song-Xi Xia War. However, domestic politics could not always be relied upon to prevent war. A faction or emperor that favored conquest could gain control of the government. This change in domestic politics was an especially real possibility in the Song. The shame of failing to conquer the Sixteen Prefectures was always there and could find expression if the right emperor or official was in control of the government. The next section examines how this happened in the Song and its consequences for international relations in the region.

The Renewal of Song Expansionism

From the end of the Xi Xia war to 1067, the domestic situation in the Song was for the most part calm, and there was no major change in attitudes toward foreign policy. This situation changed in 1067 with the accession of Emperor Shenzong (r 1067-1085). Shenzong was determined to conquer the Sixteen Prefectures and the Ordos region to wipe out the shame of past Song military failures.¹³⁶ Indeed, he was representative of a growing group of generals and officials that did not accept the international situation as it was. Many officials acutely felt the humiliation and shame of failing to conquer politically important territory and wanted aggressive action as a result.¹³⁷

Shenzong himself immediately acted on this desire for conquest by approving a scheme to conquer the Xi Xia prefecture of Suizhou on the Song-Xi Xia border. The Song successfully

¹³⁴ Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven*, p. 65.

¹³⁵ Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven*, p. 66.

¹³⁶ Smith, "Shen-tsung's Reign and the New Policies of Wang An-Shih," p. 353.

¹³⁷ Tsang, "War and Peace in Northern Sung China," p. 382.

captured Suizhou, but the campaign led to larger conflict from 1070-1071, where the Song failed to expand territory beyond Suizhou, now renamed Suide. In the process, the Song suffered multiple defeats, showing the pressing need for military reform.¹³⁸

The campaign illustrates the political potency of Shenzong's irredentist ambition and that it went against rational thinking. The objective of conquest was not irrational. The Song had multiple reasons to weaken the Xi Xia or conquer it. The Xi Xia attacked the Song border again during the mid 1060s and the Xi Xia threatened to conquer a Tibetan kingdom called Qingtang. If that happened, the Song's access to horses would have been more restricted while the Xi Xia would have been a stronger force if it attacked the Song again.¹³⁹ How Shenzong went about achieving this goal was irrational. Shenzong did not undertake a proper assessment of Song military capability. Indeed, Shenzong approved the plan in secret, relying completely on the assessment of the officials who carried out the campaign.¹⁴⁰ Thus Shenzong's enthusiasm got the better of him and the Song suffered defeats as a result. He would have to find ways to improve the Song military's capabilities and the state's ability to fund campaigns.

In part because of his desire to conquer the Xi Xia and Liao, Shenzong backed the reforms of Wang Anshi. The government established a tea monopoly in Sichuan. The profits from the monopoly were used to buy over ten thousand horses a year from the Tibetans.¹⁴¹ To further increase the supply of horses, the government established a Public Horse Breeding program where families took care of horses in exchange for a tax exemption.¹⁴² The Court also established a training academy for army officers and the Baojia system, a militia type of

¹³⁸ Tsang, "War and Peace in Northern Sung China," pp. 401-410.

¹³⁹ Tsang, "War and Peace in Northern Sung China," p. 379.

¹⁴⁰ Tsang, "War and Peace in Northern Sung China," p. 403.

¹⁴¹ Smith, "Shen-tsong's Reign and the New Policies of Wang An-shin," p. 471.

¹⁴² Tsang, "War and Peace in Northern Sung China," p. 367.

organization that aimed to use farmers as soldiers, to bolster military strength as well.¹⁴³

Concurrently, Wang's more famous domestic reforms led to a large amount of wealth being accumulated by the government to be used for military expeditions.¹⁴⁴

While the military and economic reforms were ongoing, the Song government restrained itself in its dealings with its two powerful neighbors. The Song experienced two border disputes with the Liao in 1072-73 and 1074-75 respectively. The Song government resolved these situations by either complying with Liao demands or negotiating a solution.¹⁴⁵

The Song had not given up on its efforts to conquer the Xi Xia and the Liao. The Song was first attacking weaker targets that brought with them resources or were of strategic importance before attacking the Liao and Xi Xia. In the southern frontier regions of the modern day provinces of Sichuan and Hunan, officials such as Xiong Ben and future chief councilor Zhang Dun successfully conquered or negotiated the acquisition of large tracts of land.¹⁴⁶ The conquest of land in the south increased tax rolls or valuable resources.¹⁴⁷ Also, Shenzong and Wang Anshi fervently supported the venture of general Wang Shao to capture the Tao river area, in the northwest border with the Xi Xia, and to defeat the Tibetan leader Muzheng. Part of the justification of these actions was to force the Tanguts to spread their forces thin.¹⁴⁸ The Song defeated Muzheng and conquered most of the Tao River area in 1074.¹⁴⁹

Shenzong's Xi Xia Campaign

¹⁴³ Smith, "Shen-tsung's Reign and the New Policies of Wang An-shih," pp. 407-14, 471.

¹⁴⁴ Smith, "Shen-tsung's Reign and the New Policies of Wang An-shih," pp. 414-435.

¹⁴⁵ Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven*, pp. 69-72.

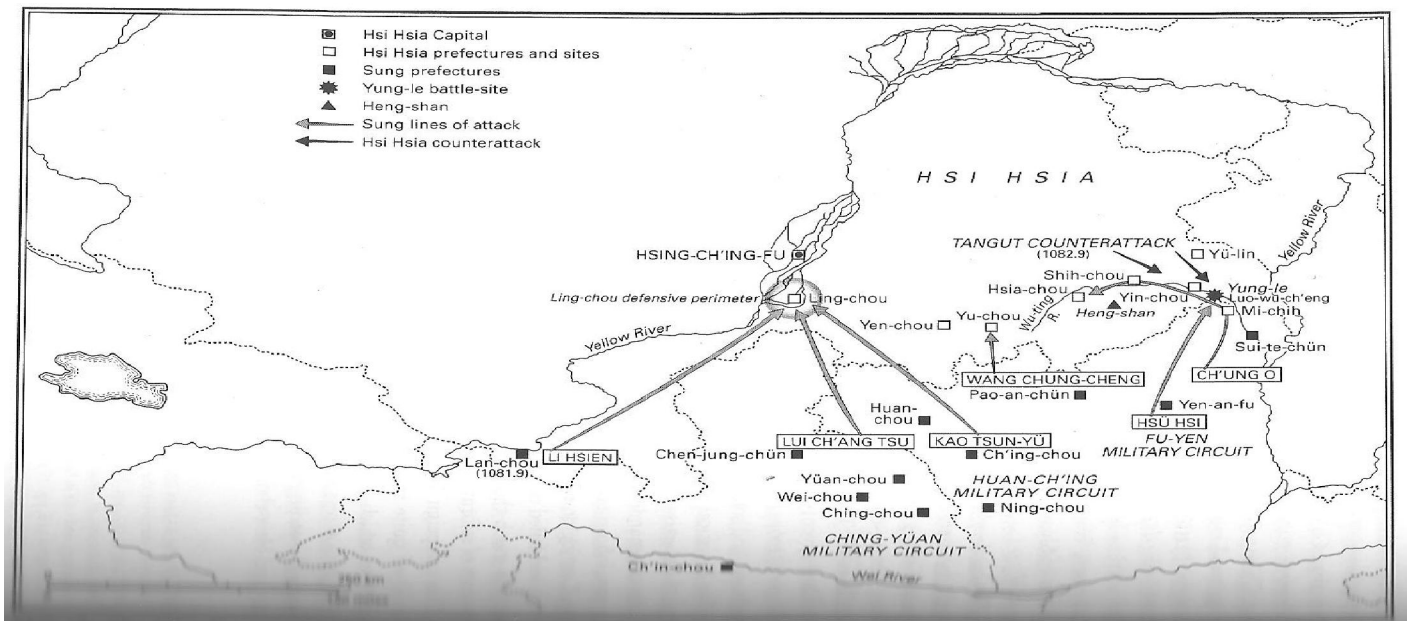
¹⁴⁶ Richard van Glahn, *The Country of Streams and Grottoes: Expansion, Settlement, and the Civilizing of the Sichuan Frontier in Song Times*, (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1987) pp.97-104.

¹⁴⁷ Van Glahn, pp. 98, 101, 128.

¹⁴⁸ Tsang, "War and Peace in Northern Sung China," p.393.

¹⁴⁹ Smith, "Shen-tsung's Reign and the New Policies of Wang An-shih," p. 468.

Song success against the tribal groups made a campaign against the Xi Xia inevitable. Shenzong would not be denied his chance to avenge the shame of previous defeats. From an Offensive Realism perspective, war was likely. The Song enjoyed a decisive wealth advantage over the Xi Xia while the military reforms increased combat effectiveness. Furthermore, icy relations between the Xi Xia and the Liao left them more vulnerable to Song invasion. All the Song needed was the right opportunity to invade.



Map 5: The 1081 Xi Xia Campaign¹⁵⁰

That opportunity came in 1081. The Empress Dowager of the Xi Xia imprisoned her son for trying to move closer to the Song and for reportedly trying to turn over the Southern Ordos region to the Song.¹⁵¹ Shenzong began actively preparing for war.¹⁵² Using offensive realism, this decision was quite rational. The Song had built up a large war chest while its military had conquered a tribal state near the Xi Xia. If the conquest was successful, the Song would gain

¹⁵⁰ Smith, "Shen-tsung's reign and the New Policies of Wang An-shih," p. 474.

¹⁵¹ Smith, "Shen-tsung's Reign and the New Policies of Wang An-Shih," p. 473.

¹⁵² Tsang, "War and Peace in Northern Sung China," p. 432.

new pastures for horses and increased population. Also, the Song would have far easier access to Central Asia and their supply of quality war horses. With such resources, the Song would have enough resources and military might to once again wage war against the Liao. Indeed, in terms of the theory of offensive realism, it would have been a rational choice to wage war at some point against the Liao. For the peace to be maintained, the Xi Xia had to successfully resist the Song invasion.

The Song invasion force was divided into five armies led by the Generals Li Xian, Gao Zunyu, Liu Chang Zuo, Wang Zhong Zheng, and Chong O. Initially, their efforts went quite well. The Song armies scored multiple and significant victories against Xi Xia, defeating cavalry armies varying in size from 20,000 to 80,000.¹⁵³ These victories allowed Li Xian to capture the city of Lanzhou on the Yellow River and for Gao and Lui's armies to reach the key Xi Xia city of Lingzhou. At this point, the campaign ran into lack of food. This lack of food undermined the combat capability of the Song soldiers, prevented Wang and Chong from reaching Lingzhou and led to bickering among the commanders who did reach Lingzhou. The Tanguts used this opportunity to execute a flood attack that forced the Song to retreat. Li Xian's army achieved one of the few permanent gains of the campaign with the capture of Lanzhou and retreated back to that city after learning about the defeats of the other armies.¹⁵⁴

The first campaign saw multiple Song victories, showing military reform had a positive effect on Song performance. Thus, it was quite rational that the Song tried another invasion the following year. The leader of the campaign, Xu Xsi, chose a logistically indefensible position and

¹⁵³ Tsang, "War and Peace in Northern Sung China," p. 434-5.

¹⁵⁴ Tsang, "War and Peace in Northern Sung China," p. 436-7.

it was a complete disaster, leading to over 15,000 casualties.¹⁵⁵ The failure of the second campaign led Shenzong to abandon expansionism. He died in 1085 and his young son, Zhezong (r. 1085-1100) came to the throne, leading to renewed factional competition.

Continued Factional Competition

Because Zhezong was a minor, a regency was instated. The Empress Dowager backed the anti-reform faction led by Sima Guang, which subsequently rescinded the New Policies and purged most of the reform faction.¹⁵⁶ Also, the anti-reform faction completely rejected offensive military action, dismissing it as mere adventurism.¹⁵⁷ The rejection of offensive military action was shown in the peace agreement of 1089. In the 1089 agreement, the Song did not give up Lanzhou but ceded other territory along the border that revised the border in favor of the Xi Xia.¹⁵⁸ This position once again shows the limits of the rational choice model. In Offensive Realism, no policy maker would reject offensive war as an option and cede land unless the foe far out classed them. This was not the case with the Song and Xi Xia. Although the campaigns ultimately failed, the Song inflicted multiple defeats on the Xi Xia. Offensive realism would not have predicted such a move, considering the two empires were militarily equal, with the Song military possibly being superior. Clearly, the anti-reform faction operated under different assumptions than Offensive Realism expects. Even when the Xi Xia launched an offensive and broke the peace in 1093, the Song did not retaliate with a counter offensive of its

¹⁵⁵ Smith, "Shen-tsugn's reign and the New Policies of Wang An-shih," p.476-7.7

¹⁵⁶ Ari Levine, "Zhezong Reign (1085-1100) and the Age of Faction," *The Cambridge History of China Vol. 5 Part One: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors* eds. Dennis Twitchett and Paul Jakov Smith (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) p. 487-502.

¹⁵⁷ Levine, "Zhezong Reign (1085-1100) and the Age of Faction," p. 506-7.

¹⁵⁸ Levine, "Zhezong Reign (1085-1100) and the Age of Faction," p. 508.

own.¹⁵⁹ The anti-reform faction stuck to their non-belligerent foreign policy. Xi Xia aggression was a circumstance meant to be endured.

The resurgence of the anti-reform faction represented the last attempt to shore up internal support for a conciliatory foreign policy. If this faction had solidified political power, not only would the peace have been on excellent footing, but surrounding states would have worried less about a possible Song invasion. However, Zhezong came of age in 1093, and he idolized his father. He brought the reform faction back into power, and the anti-reform faction was removed from government.¹⁶⁰ The removal of the reform faction did not signal a return to a rational foreign policy. The reform faction, led by Chief Councilor Zhang Dun, reinstated a belligerent foreign policy, and war was renewed with the Xi Xia three years later, after the Song had built enough wealth to launch campaigns again. Thus foreign policy also distinguished the two factions. To be a member of the reform faction was to promote expansionism. A lack of resources was a circumstance meant to be overcome. Once again the Xi Xia had to survive if the peace between the Liao and Song empires was to be preserved. If the Xi Xia were conquered, the Song could very well have acquired the resources necessary to launch a war against the Liao Empire.

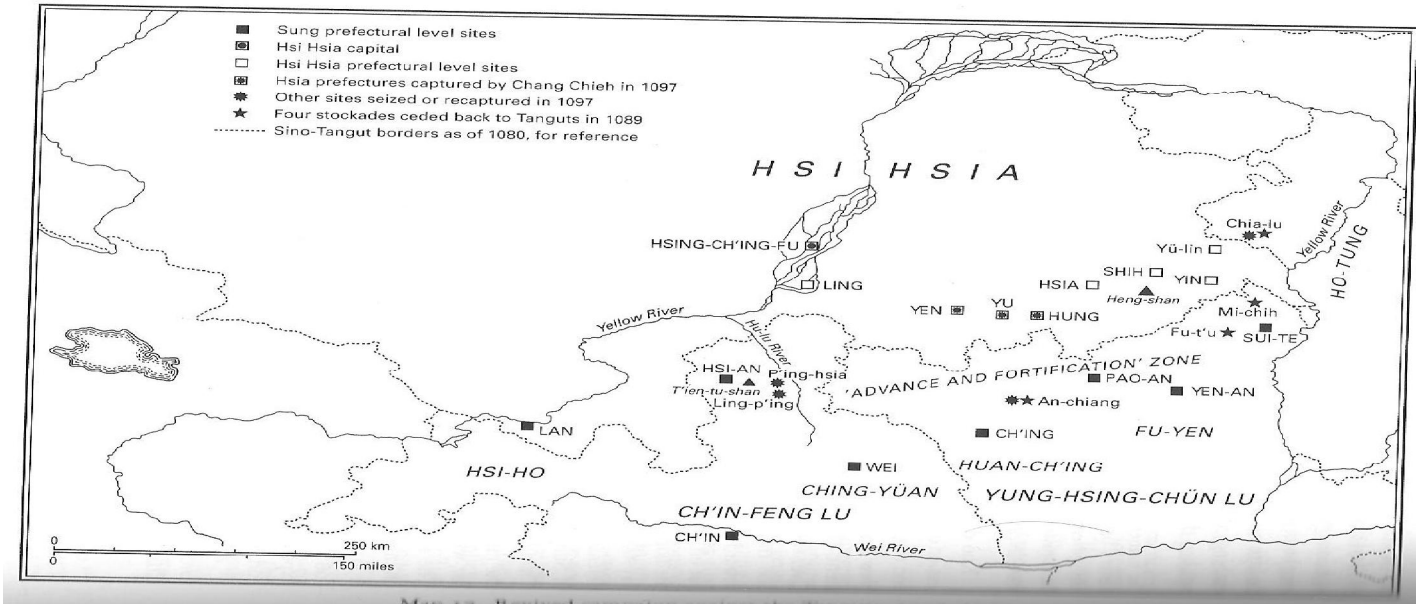
The Campaign of 1097-1099

The campaign of 1097 to 1099 proved to be the greatest period of military success for the Song against the Xi Xia. Using an advance and fortify strategy, the Song was able to bring the Xi Xia state to its knees and was in good position to eliminate it. The fact that the Song did not do so after Liao diplomatic intervention shows the lasting legacy of the defeats of 1081-

¹⁵⁹ Tsang "War and Peace in Northern Sung China," p. 463.

¹⁶⁰ Levine, "Zhezong Reign (1085-1100) and the Age of Faction," pp. 531-43.

1082. The Song was rightfully weary of bringing the Liao into the conflict and fighting on two fronts.



Map 6: 1097-1099 Campaign against the Xi Xia¹⁶¹

The key to Song success in the war was an advance and fortify strategy where the Song would fortify a taken area before moving on to another area and repeating the process. General Li Huiqing was especially adept in using this strategy. He built nine strategic forts that revised the border in favor of the Song.¹⁶² The Xi Xia initiated a counter offensive to reverse Song gains by targeting the important Song fortress of Pingxia. The campaign failed disastrously. The Song lifted the siege of Pingxia and followed with a counter attack of their own, which inflicted a massive defeat on the Xi Xia and led to the capture of even more Xi Xia territory.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Levine, "Zhezong Reign (1085-1100) and the Age of Faction," p. 550.

¹⁶² Tsang, "War and Peace in Northern Song China," p. 479-80.

¹⁶³ Tsang, "War and Peace in Northern Song China," pp. 482-86.

At this point, the Song had successfully revised the international situation in their favor. Xi Xia military power had been temporarily neutralized and the Song had an excellent opportunity to advance further into Xi Xia territory and possibly eliminate the Tangut empire and become a major threat to the Liao Empire. The Liao realized this and quickly intervened, sending a diplomatic mission to the Song court demanding they make peace with the Xi Xia. Simultaneously, the Liao emperor conducted a hunting expedition near the Song border, signaling that the Liao might intervene militarily as well.¹⁶⁴ With this diplomatic pressure, the Song made peace with the Xi Xia but kept the conquered territory.¹⁶⁵

The Song was effectively contained by an awareness of its own limitations. The Xi Xia proved to be a very worthy opponent for the Song. Only if the Song faced the Xi Xia one on one would the Song be capable of defeating the Xi Xia. Thus it is quite understandable that the Song would be cautious about provoking further Liao involvement in the conflict. The Xi Xia inflicted major defeats and even the potential of Liao military involvement posed the real risk that Song gains would be erased. With the Liao intervention, the Xi Xia was saved, preventing the Song from gaining access to the resources of the Xi Xia and opening a gateway to Central Asia. Without this, the Song could not build up the capability to attack the Liao and the length of the peace was extended.

The Song never again would have such an opportunity to revise the international situation in their favor. The Xi Xia recovered from their defeats in the 1090s, as the Song learned firsthand. Although the expansionist impulse was temporarily subdued, the reform faction was still ascendant and an expansionist foreign policy was part of who they were.

¹⁶⁴ Tsang, "War and Peace in Northern Sung China," p. 487.

¹⁶⁵ Tsang, "War and Peace in Northern Sung China," pp. 488-90.

Inevitably, there were more wars with the Xi Xia. However, the Song never had the same battlefield success. Worse, the Song was humiliated multiple times, leading to hundreds of thousands of casualties.¹⁶⁶

With such a weakened Song army, the peace was likely to last a while as the Song did not have the capability to attack the Liao or even defeat the Xi Xia. However, the rise of the Jin changed all that. The Jin eventually destroyed the Liao. In this situation, the Song felt there was an excellent opportunity to recover the Sixteen Prefectures and it allied with Jin. After the Liao was fatally crippled, the Song launched two military operations to capture the Sixteen Prefectures from the remnants of the Liao but failed both times.¹⁶⁷ Eventually, the Song provoked a Jin invasion leading to the loss of all of North China.

Conclusion

Looking at the factors that contributed to the peace, the role of conflict, domestic politics, and the multistate system were crucial for why it lasted so long. Of the three, the role of conflict is most intriguing. The prolonged conflict did leave a lasting animosity between the two empires. The Song quickly seized the opportunity to attack the Liao as soon as it was clear that the Liao was greatly weakened from Jin defeats. However, the war forced the leaders of the Song and Liao empires to compromise and agree to terms that were acceptable to both. At the same time, their relative military parity sent a clear message to each empire that the status quo could not be changed anytime soon. It was very important that both sides wanted peace by the end. If one side or the other had a distinct military advantage over the other, the peace

¹⁶⁶ Levine, "The Reigns of Hui-tsung (1100-1126) and Ch'in-tsung (1126-1127) and the Fall of the Northern Song," in Dennis Twitchett and Paul Jakov Smith, ed., *The Cambridge History of China Vol. 5 Part One: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) pp. 617-22.

¹⁶⁷ Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven*, pp. 87-91.

would not have lasted as long or might not have happened at all, especially if the Song was the stronger military power. It would have gone on to conquer the Sixteen Prefectures and bring about the fall of the Liao Empire. Thus it seems that armed conflict can only lay a foundation for peace if military parity is maintained leading both sides to compromise.

The multistate system and domestic politics were both required to maintain and extend the peace. The absence of one or the other would have resulted in war between the Song and Liao Empires before the rise of Jin. Domestic politics set the conditions of policy making. There were a limited number of policy options available which depended on the preferences of the emperor or the dominant faction. These emperors and factions undermined the rational choice model of offensive realism by rejecting the notion that the primary goal was to survive by revising the international situation in their favor. When that happened, the actions offensive realism would predict did occur. The most glaring example of this was Xingzong's decision not to attack. It could not be taken for granted that any domestic group would hold power for a prolonged period of time. Consequently, groups in any state in favor of a certain foreign policy position must be on guard and always push for more people with similar or the same positions to be in government and hold key offices.

Since factions favoring a belligerent or expansionist foreign policy could gain control of policy, domestic politics could solely maintain the peace between the Liao and Song Empires. The multistate system was also important in preventing war between the two empires. Indeed, the multistate system was the biggest reason why the Song did not attack the Liao from 1068 to until the 1120s. The Song was effectively contained by the survival of the Xi Xia, preventing it from obtaining the necessary resources to conduct a war against the Liao.

Finally, comments on the validity of Offensive Realism are necessary. Offensive Realism was generally accurate. It is very useful in analyzing the Song-Liao war and the foreign policy actions of Emperor Shenzong of the Song. It is also good for explaining why there was a high level of political support for peace with Liao in the Song despite Song displeasure with the Treaty of Shanyuan. Even when the theory is undermined by domestic politics, it is still useful. For example, it is still able to explain why the Song stopped their war against the Xi Xia in 1099.

Offensive realism proved to be mostly valid for the situation, which reflects positively on its use for modern day international relations. However, the same factors that undermined the theory for the Song-Liao war still exist and are even prevalent today. Domestic politics could quite possibly lead states to reject the offensive realism tenet of increasing one's power by revising the international situation in one's favor. This occurrence is more likely to occur in democracies where periodic elections guarantee that different options are made available. These different policies options could very well operate under different assumptions than Offensive Realism and lead to what the theory would consider to be non-rational outcomes.

In today's international environment, the globalised world may be even more effective today in preventing conflict between two great powers than the multistate system of the Song and Liao. Great powers today have global influence and are involved on multiple continents simultaneously spreading out a great power's resources. The best example of that today is the United States with military bases and interests all over the world. This situation leaves the United States to focus on one or two regions with the Middle East and South Asia taking up the bulk of its time and resources. Whether or not it could it could wage a potential war against another great power while being heavily involved in all these regions remains an open question.

Thus Offensive Realism is a useful tool for analyzing international relations. As with any theory, a person must keep in mind its limitations and what is learned from the instances for which it cannot explain the event.

Appendix A: List of Rulers

Northern Song:

Taizu (960-976)

Taizong (976-997)

Zhenzong (997-1022)

Renzong (1022-1063)

Yingzong (1063-1067)

Shenzong (1067-1085)

Zhezong (1085-1100)

Huizong (1100-1126)

Qinzong (1126-1127)

Liao:

Taizu (916-926)

Taizong (927-947)

Shizong (947-951)

Muzong (951-969)

Jingzong (969-982)

Shengzong (982-1031)

Xingzong (1031-1055)

Daozong (1055-1101)

Tianzong (1101-1125)

Appendix B: Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms

Five Dynasties:

Later Liang 907-923

Later Tang 923-936

Later Jin 936-947

Later Han 947-951

Later Zhou 951-959

Ten Kingdoms:

Wu 902-937

Former Shu 907-925

Wu-Yueh 907-978

Southern Han 917-971

Chu 927-963

Later Shu 934-965

Southern Tang 937-975

Northern Han 951-979