

## **SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT: RESEARCH ON CHINESE HIGHER EDUCATION DURING THE WAR OF RESISTANCE AGAINST JAPANESE AGGRESSION (1931-1945)**

**Yanjun HUANG\*** 

Universiti Sains Malaysia, School of Humanities, Minden, Penang; Shaoguan University, School of Education Science, Zhenjiang District, Shaoguan City, Guangdong Province, China, e-mail: hhlhyj@126.com

---

**Citation:** Huang, Y. (2025). Survival and development: Research on chinese higher education during the war of resistance against japanese aggression (1931-1945). *Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites*, 59(2), 939–951. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.59238-1470>

---

**Abstract:** China's higher education system demonstrated remarkable resilience during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931–1945), a period marked by national crisis, instability, and widespread destruction. Universities and colleges were forced to evacuate from war-torn regions, often relocating to remote and underdeveloped areas in the country's interior. Despite facing immense logistical and resource-related obstacles, these institutions continued to function, embodying the spirit of Higher Education Resilience. This study investigates how Chinese universities adapted under wartime conditions, focusing specifically on how they preserved Educational Quality, aligned with National Defense, and maintained Intellectual Independence in the face of adversity. Drawing on 17 semi-structured interviews with scholars, educators, and individuals closely connected to this historical period, the research employs a qualitative methodology grounded in thematic analysis. The three-step coding process revealed critical themes that capture the multifaceted response of higher education institutions during the war. Among the most significant were the adaptability of academic administration, innovation in curriculum design to support National Defense Alignment, and the maintenance of academic rigor despite the scarcity of materials and infrastructure. A notable outcome of university relocation was the unintentional stimulation of regional development, as academic institutions brought intellectual resources and cultural vitality to inland provinces. Participants also emphasized that universities served as crucial sites for sustaining Chinese cultural identity, promoting national unity, and resisting intellectual repression, thereby safeguarding Intellectual Independence. Despite the physical and psychological toll of war, faculty and students persevered, contributing to both the war effort and the preservation of knowledge. This research contributes new perspectives to the discourse on crisis-era education by highlighting how higher education can remain robust even in extreme conditions. The findings illustrate that Higher Education Resilience is not merely institutional survival, but also the capacity to uphold core educational values and respond to national needs. Ultimately, the study underscores that universities play a vital role in national recovery and development, particularly in times of profound turmoil.

**Keywords:** Higher Education Resilience, War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, Educational Quality, National Defense Alignment, Intellectual Independence

\* \* \* \* \*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-1945), commonly referred to as the Second Sino-Japanese War, was a pivotal conflict in modern Chinese history that set the stage for profound social, political, and economic transformations (Gordon, 2006). The war began with Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and escalated into a full-scale war in 1937, culminating in significant hostilities that lasted until the conclusion of World War II in 1945 (Gruhl, 2017). Chinese inhabitants saw everyday instability, civilian crimes, and violent military battles throughout this time. Tens of thousands were killed and many more brutalized in the 1937 Nanjing Massacre. Nanjing was known for its suffering. The complex political environment and the invasion's impact on China's Nationalist government under Chiang Kai-shek and the Communist Party under Mao Zedong affected the public's response (Alitto, 2023).

Chinese higher education was crucial throughout the crisis. Higher education institutions are vital hubs for intellectual, social, and political discourse, shaping national identity and preserving the nation. Universities produced and preserved knowledge during wartime as academics and students upheld academic rigor while fighting foreign invasion (Dryburgh, 2022). Fighting forced several colleges, including Peking and Tsinghua, to move to safer western and southern China (Table 1). This method preserved educational continuity and allowed these institutions to realign their goals with societal needs throughout the crisis (Elman & Woodside, 2023). Higher education also promoted national unity and awareness. Universities were hubs of political mobilization and civic engagement, with students protesting the Japanese and supporting the war via research, propaganda, and community service. Some students joined the military, while others did educational outreach to boost battle spirit. Higher education and nationalistic passion helped develop a collective Chinese identity during a difficult time, spurring tenacity and defiance.

After the conflict, higher education curriculum and teaching methods changed significantly. As the battle worsened, technical and military education increased to meet national needs. To align education with state goals, institutions adjusted their curricula to teach national military, agricultural, and wartime industrial skills (Hu, 2021). This adaptability showed that higher education is crucial to national survival and advancement during a crisis, as well as intellectual development.

---

\* Corresponding author

Higher education institutions' resilience throughout the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression shows their adaptability (Garver, 2016). Despite resource shortages, dislocation, and political constraints, universities fulfilled their basic goals while supporting national defense and recovery. Chinese higher education's turbulent past shows how educational institutions may stabilize, innovate, and evolve throughout crises (Alitto, 2023).

Table 1. Key historical events impacting Chinese higher education (1931-1945)

Year	Event	Impact on Higher Education
1931	Japanese invasion of Manchuria	Universities in Manchuria forced to close or relocate; increased focus on national defense.
1937	Outbreak of full-scale war between China and Japan	Many universities relocated to western China; disruption of academic activities.
1937	Nanjing Massacre	Major universities in Nanjing shut down or moved; widespread destruction of facilities.
1938	Relocation of Peking University, Tsinghua University, and Nankai University to Kunming	Formation of the National Southwestern Associated University; ensured educational continuity.
1941	Entry of the United States into World War II	Increased international collaboration in education; military training integrated into curricula.
1945	End of World War II and Japanese surrender	Universities begin reconstruction; focus shifts to rebuilding the educational system.

Previous research on violence in schools had some interesting findings. Some scholars have shown that higher education institutions survived and helped national resilience and recovery (Liu, 2023). Colleges helped shape national identity throughout wartime by fostering a sense of community and purpose among students and faculty. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of educational quality during crises, showing how institutions may adapt their curriculum to meet societal needs (Peng, 2023). Despite such contributions to the subject, we still have no idea about how higher learning institutions responded to the war, especially during the Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (WU, 2020). The intellectual independence-national defense alignment-educational quality interrelationship in China has been sparingly researched amid considerable research into educational institutions' conflict resilience (Киселева, 2022). Previous studies tended to lack a comprehensive framework that addressed the various roles of higher education institutions during this momentous era. Intellectual freedom, coping, university migration, quality of education, alignment with national defense, and the function of higher education in regional development during times of war are investigated here to address these challenges. This research endeavors to investigate how higher education institutions adapt and thrive in spite of problems.

This study delves into the resilience of universities during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, focusing on how they adapted to overcome wartime challenges. It addresses how universities contributed to the development of the region, guaranteed the quality of education, and preserved intellectual independence while keeping up with national objectives. With a qualitative approach, the research employs semi-structured interviews with institutional leaders and educators who directly experienced the conflict, achieving valuable insights into the lived experience of higher education students during the period. Through an examination of the complex nature of educational resilience, the research provides additional insight into the interactive dynamics between education and sociopolitical contexts, achieving lessons for relevance in contemporary higher education institutions facing crises.

Beyond historical analysis, the findings will inform strategies for maintaining academic integrity, adapting to evolving societal needs, and ensuring institutional sustainability in uncertain times. The study offers significant implications for scholars, educators, and policymakers striving to enhance the resilience of modern higher education systems, emphasizing the critical role of education in societal development and crisis response while guiding institutions worldwide in fostering adaptability and long-term stability.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931–1945) changed Chinese history by causing social upheaval and disaster in various locations (Alitto, 2023). Higher education has several challenges.

Chinese universities and colleges, once intellectual and cultural beacons, had to change after the war. Bombings, mandatory evacuations, and poor infrastructure forced several colleges to shift inside (Киселева, 2022). Chinese higher education has persevered despite many challenges. Paradoxically, the war years saved and advanced higher education, setting the groundwork for future developments. The linked academic conversation shows how higher education maintained national morale and intellectual energy throughout this tough time (Aso, 2024). Many experts believe higher education promotes intellectual inquiry and critical thinking despite external constraints. The move of institutions to impoverished areas during conflict exposed isolated individuals to new ideas and fostered regional prosperity, enabling higher education across China (Yu, 2013). Despite higher education's vital significance in the nation's survival, academic autonomy and integrity were threatened. Several factors emphasize the necessity of understanding higher education now. This significantly enhances crisis understanding of national survival, politics, and education.

## Higher Education Resilience

Higher education resilience refers to universities' and colleges' capacity to endure, adapt, and recover from crises while sustaining their core missions of teaching, research, and community engagement (Baker, 2024). It involves the

ability to innovate in response to adversity, ensuring that educational institutions remain functional and relevant. During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931–1945), resilience in higher education was evident in institutions' efforts to sustain operations, safeguard intellectual vitality, and fulfill national needs despite wartime disruptions. Scholars such as (WU, 2020) have analyzed resilience in higher education through the lens of organizational resilience, examining how universities navigate economic, political, and social challenges.

Wei-mu (2021) expanded on this model by highlighting the importance of leadership, managing resources, and working with communities to keep higher education afloat in times of crisis. Chang (2021) also posited that universities, in the past, redefined themselves during wars by utilizing difficulties as drivers of development, as was witnessed during the World Wars in Europe and America. In the Chinese setting, scholars have well-documented the resilience of universities against external limitations, with special focus on the impact of war on education.

These universities not only sustained education provision but also helped in military and societal demands, strengthening their crucial function in national stability. In addition, discussed postwar changes in resilient institutions and maintained that wartime adaptations left an enduring legacy in China's educational system. The authors' research highlights the necessity of incorporating historical experiences into current education, insisting that resilience in higher education transcends crisis management to influence long-term academic and societal development.

### **University Relocation**

University migration may be spurred by conflict, natural disasters, political instability, and economic hardship, frequently compelling institutions to reshape departments, relocate campuses, or transfer staff and students temporarily or permanently, all of which have implications for culture, academic programs, community outreach, institutional mission, and logistics of educational provision (Henshaw, 2024). During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931–1945), Chinese universities had to move in large numbers, heavily influencing education. Institutional mobility has attracted extensive research with studies identifying not only the shortcomings but also advantages of wartime and disaster-induced university relocations. Hu (2021) pioneered research on adapting institutions to climate change, emphasizing the dedication of universities to delivering education in adverse conditions, and Garver (2016) examined how wartime relocations caused schools to conserve cultural and scholastic norms.

The wartime displacement of students and teachers has been recognized as a watershed occasion that ushered in collaboration and creativity in higher education. Detailed studies on Chinese universities during the War of Resistance reveal the transformative power of migration; Hung (2023) argues that resettlement not only saved universities but also led to curriculum expansions in engineering, agriculture, and public health, maintaining education in harmony with national defense and postwar reconstruction work. Perry (2020) highlights how emigrating academics made collaboration and information exchange more possible, making research more efficient and the building of new academics' networks, which persisted far beyond the duration of the war. In addition, psychological and social effects of student and educator migration have been explored, in which Lee (2015) set out to establish that exercise contributed to sustaining resilience and amplified feelings of belongingness among those displaced.

In spite of great disruptions, students and teachers tended to report a greater sense of purpose and belonging, which ultimately enriched their educational experiences and institutional cohesion in times of crisis.

### **Educational Quality**

Educational quality is the amount to which schools effectively teach, encourage critical thinking, and equip students to solve problems in accordance with individual and community needs. It includes educational setting, institutional resources, student support services, learning results, teacher effectiveness, and curriculum relevance. Different academic areas have studied educational quality extensively. The alignment of learning objectives, teaching techniques, and evaluation systems is fundamental to educational success, according to (Liu, 2023). They emphasize constructive alignment, which requires all aspects of education to work together to promote learning. Educational quality is typically examined in historical literature through social variables and pedagogical alignment. A new study highlights the complexity of educational quality throughout the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression.

Perry (2020) shows how the struggle forced institutions to change their trajectories to serve government goals. As schools emphasized practical skills throughout the war, educational programs became more important. However, research shows that this adaptation has major drawbacks. Academic quality and depth have sometimes declined due to a lack of experienced instructors, financial constraints, and the challenges of offering relevant education in a rapidly changing context. Quality and relevancy have been debated in modern writing. Studies also demonstrate that institutional support and leadership are necessary for educational quality during crises. Lee (2015) found that higher education institutions with comprehensive support systems for students and staff, including professional development, mental health services, and community engagement, were better at maintaining educational quality during wartime. This shows that academic curricula, institutional environment, and support methods affect educational quality.

### **National Defense Alignment**

National defense alignment strategically aligns educational institutions, especially higher education, with national security interests. It aligns academic programs, research, and institutional resources with a nation's military sector aims and priorities. It discusses mobilizing intellectual resources for military and strategic purposes, creating national security curricula, and university-defense partnerships. During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-1945),

Chinese colleges evolved to support the nation's military and address important issues (Lowry, 2024). Academics have long been captivated by education and national security. Early efforts, like Lee (2015), considered using education to support national security. This mobilization frequently involves implementing defensive technology research or enlisting educators and students in the military. National defense alignment stems from discussions regarding education's role in nation-building, especially during wartime. Chinese colleges improved national security through curricular changes and research during the War of Resistance (Henshaw, 2024).

Recent research on national defense alignment, notably during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, have improved our understanding. Universities strengthened national defense by aligning their courses with the government's urgent needs during the fight (Gardner, 2024). This collaboration encompasses defense-related research, student and staff participation in military activities, and military training. Research shows that colleges and government agencies collaborated to solve wartime problems.

### **Intellectual Independence**

Intellectual independence refers to the ability of individuals or institutions to engage in critical analysis, creative thought, and knowledge generation without interference from government, commercial entities, or other external influences, and in higher education, it allows teachers and students to explore diverse perspectives, challenge prevailing paradigms, and develop innovative solutions to complex problems (Mulvey & Lee, 2024).

This is particularly crucial during periods of political or societal unrest when the independence of academic institutions is in jeopardy, for instance, during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931–1945), when Chinese universities struggled to keep up with outside pressures while trying to maintain intellectual independence. Later research has also emphasized intellectual independence across this period, as Suzuki (2021) demonstrates the manner in which Chinese institutions maintained independence by making use of networks of specialists and socially salient studies that enabled them to navigate ideological constraints and maintain academic standards. Liu's work shows that intellectuals then realized their obligations to society and the need for intellectual autonomy, which led many to study warfare and strategic defense so they could contribute to national security without compromising scholarly integrity, showing how universities can balance intellectual endeavor with national interest.

### **Regional Development**

Regional development strengthens economic, social, and environmental systems, improving residents' lives. Infrastructure development, social justice, economic diversification, and environmental sustainability are included. Educational, infrastructural, healthcare, income, and employment factors determine regional growth. Higher education institutions' ability to solve regional challenges, stimulate innovation, and boost local economies affects regional development. Educational institutions changed to better serve their communities throughout the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-1945). Higher education and regional expansion were vital. Regional development research has dominated economic geography and development studies. In studying regional inequality, Myrdal (1957) and others focused on economic and social concerns. Myrdal's cumulative causation theory shows how initial advantages in some places can start a growth cycle that perpetuates inequality, emphasizing the necessity for focused development. Higher education institutions can boost local innovation and economic growth, according to education and regional development studies. Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff (1997)'s "triple helix" model promotes academics, business, and government in regional development. This paradigm states that universities may boost economic growth by studying local needs, cooperating with companies, and teaching residents.

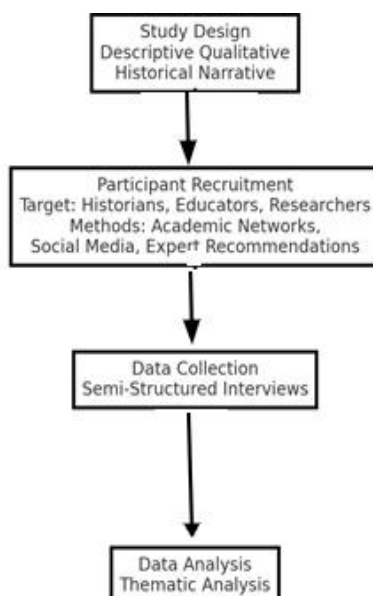


Figure 1. Flow Diagram of Methodology

## METHODOLOGY

This descriptive qualitative investigation studied the influence of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-1945) on Chinese higher education institutions' resilience and development. The use of the descriptive methodology captures depth and variety in participants' experiences and learning, making it possible to develop rich, subtle history narrative. This methodology provides scholars with rich, detailed understanding of how individuals think about and understand the educational impacts of a significant historical event.

Qualitative interviewing was utilized to uncover individual and collective memories of higher education during the wartime to show how resilience and growth had been shaped. Semi-structured interviews were the primary method for data collection used, and the flexibility and scope of the study allowed participant inquiry. Through semi-structured interviewing, participants were able to voice their thoughts openly while providing feedback on research goals. The semi-structured approach urged respondents to discuss and provide relevant stories and commentary that structured questioning would not have generated. The historical context of the study necessitated this tactic since it was possible for the participants to contextualize their modern perspective on higher education in respect to past heritages (Figure 1).

This study recruited 17 participants with backgrounds in Chinese higher education during the War of Resistance, including historians, instructors, and researchers. Exclusion criteria removed individuals with minimal historical knowledge or direct wartime experiences to maintain a focus on historical narratives. Recruitment methods included academic networks, expert referrals, social media, and historical forums to ensure a diverse and knowledgeable sample. This approach facilitated broad outreach and engagement with qualified participants.

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of respondents. The respondent selection criteria were carefully designed to ensure a knowledgeable and relevant sample. Participants were required to have an interest in Chinese history, particularly the educational landscape during the War of Resistance, with backgrounds in academia, historical studies, or personal research. The exclusion criteria were implemented to maintain the study's focus on historical narratives rather than direct wartime experiences, which could introduce bias. The recruitment strategy combined academic referrals, social media outreach, and engagement in historical forums, ensuring a diverse and well-informed participant pool.

Table 2. Profile of Respondents

Respondent ID	Gender	Age	Occupation	Education Level	Relationship to Topic	Experience/Knowledge Source
R1	Male	65	Historian	PhD in History	Expert in Chinese education history	Academic research and publications
R2	Female	58	University Lecturer	Master's in Education	Focus on higher education policies	Academic experience
R3	Male	70	Retired Educator	Bachelor's in Arts	Taught during the post-war period	Personal teaching experience
R4	Female	50	Educational Researcher	PhD in Educational Studies	Research on wartime education	Scholarly articles
R5	Male	73	Historian	Master's in History	Specialized in modern Chinese history	Family accounts and archival research
R6	Female	65	Former Student	Bachelor's in Science	Attended university during wartime	Personal family stories
R7	Male	60	Cultural Critic	PhD in Cultural Studies	Analysis of education's role in society	Research and family narratives
R8	Female	55	Writer	Bachelor's in Literature	Focus on educational reforms	Historical research and writings
R9	Male	68	University Professor	PhD in Sociology	Studies on social impacts of education	Academic publications and teaching
R10	Female	62	Family Historian	Bachelor's in History	Documenting family experiences during the war	Oral histories from family members
R11	Male	67	Policy Analyst	Master's in Public Policy	Analysis of wartime policies on education	Government reports and research
R12	Female	54	Educational Consultant	Master's in Education	Consulted for wartime educational programs	Professional consulting and research
R13	Male	72	Archivist	Bachelor's in Archival Studies	Focus on educational archives during war	Archival work and historical documentation
R14	Female	61	Historian	PhD in History	Research on gender and education in wartime	Scholarly publications
R15	Male	66	Sociologist	PhD in Sociology	Studies on educational resilience	Research studies and publications
R16	Female	59	Journalist	Bachelor's in Journalism	Reporting on historical education	Interviews and historical analysis
R17	Male	64	Documentary Filmmaker	Master's in Film Studies	Documented stories of wartime education	Film projects and interviews

This qualitative study used semi-structured interviews with selected participants to gather their histories and opinions on Chinese higher education during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-1945). The interviews sought open-ended responses to allow participants to express their opinions while guiding the discussion toward research goals.

An interview guide of open-ended questions was created to obtain participants' views on wartime higher education. The inquiries examined educational institution resilience, conflict education quality, and higher education's role in regional development. The interview guide also suggested additional in-depth discussions regarding participants' experiences or ancestors' stories. Table 3 shows interview protocol of the study.

Table 3. Interview Protocol

Variable	Interview Questions
Higher Education Resilience	1. How did Chinese higher education institutions demonstrate resilience during the War of Resistance?
	2. Can you provide examples of specific institutions or initiatives that adapted to the challenges posed by the war?
	3. In your opinion, what factors contributed to the resilience of these educational institutions?
University Relocation	1. How did the relocation of universities impact the educational landscape during the war?
	2. What were the challenges faced by relocated institutions in maintaining educational quality?
	3. Can you discuss any long-term effects of university relocations on higher education in China?
Educational Quality	1. How did the quality of education change during the War of Resistance?
	2. Were there specific subjects or disciplines that were more affected than others?
	3. What role did faculty and resources play in maintaining educational quality during the wartime period?
National Defense Alignment	1. How did higher education align with national defense efforts during the war?
	2. Can you provide examples of educational programs or curricula that were specifically designed to support the war?
	3. What impact did this alignment have on students and faculty?
Intellectual Independence	1. In what ways did the war influence the intellectual independence of higher education institutions?
	2. How did faculty and students navigate censorship or government influence during this time?
	3. Can you discuss any movements or initiatives that promoted intellectual independence during the war?
Regional Development	1. How did higher education contribute to regional development during the War of Resistance?
	2. Can you identify any specific regions that saw significant changes in educational initiatives due to the war?
	3. What long-term impacts on regional development can be traced back to the wartime education policies?

Interviews were conducted in various formats, including in-person meetings and video conferencing, depending on participants' geographical locations and availability. Each session lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes, allowing ample time for participants to delve into their thoughts and share detailed accounts. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent to accurately preserve their narratives for future research. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim after each interview to allow data analysis while maintaining the participants' voices. Field notes from interviews, including contextual observations and nonverbal signals, were added to the transcripts to aid comprehension. Analyzing participants' stories was more comprehensive using transcripts and notes.

A three-step thematic analysis technique by Clarke & Braun (2017) was used to analyze the data. The selection of the three-step thematic analysis by Clarke & Braun (2017) was motivated by its systematic method of finding and interpreting patterns in qualitative data. The approach permits a structured but adaptable analysis, which is particularly appropriate for historical research. Data familiarization started the coding process, where transcripts were read and reread, and initial thoughts were recorded. In the second step, open coding was used to pull out significant segments from the transcripts. For example, mentions of "wartime educational adaptation" were coded under more encompassing themes such as "institutional resilience." The last step was to work on these codes to turn them into overarching themes, making them coherent and in-depth in nature (Braun & Clarke, 2019) (Figure 2).

Code System	Regi...	Intel...	Nati...	Edu...	Uni...	Hig...
Regional Development		80	55	48	21	9
Intellectual Independence	80		55	48	21	9
National Defense Alignment	55	55		48	21	9
Educational Quality	48	48	48		21	9
University Relocation	21	21	21	21		9
Higher Education Resilience	9	9	9	9	9	

Figure 2. Code Relation Browser

The researcher identified relevant data items, annotated them, and used descriptive labels to summarize the participants' results. The researcher iteratively reviewed transcripts as new codes emerged and refined current codes to reflect patterns. The goal was to create a complete set of codes that accurately showed the data and emphasized the main study issues. In the third step, the researcher categorized the original codes into themes to summarize the study. This included organizing related codes into themes that captured participants' experiences and opinions (Figure 3). Critical analysis of the classified data revealed themes by examining the intricacy of individual stories and the overall trends from the interviews. The themes were tweaked to match the data and the study's goals. The researcher used reflexivity by reflecting on their preferences and biases during the investigation. Reflexivity was essential to ensure that the analysis was based on participants' voices and experiences, not the researcher's theories.

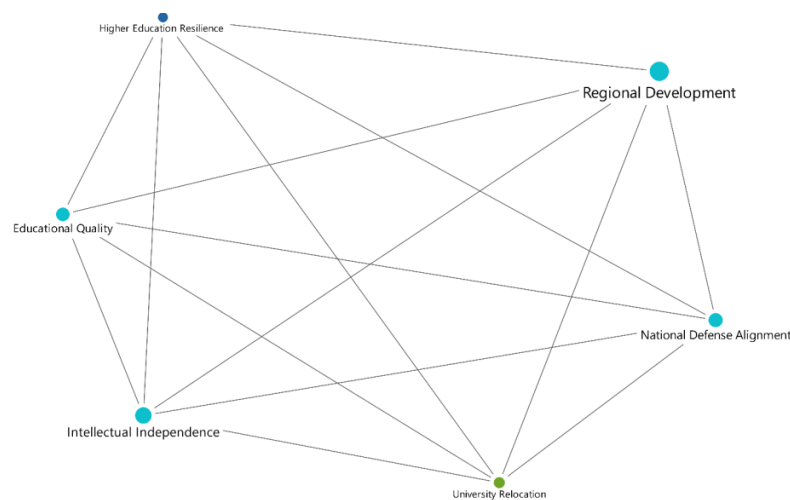


Figure 3. Code Map

### Findings

Chinese higher education institutions flourished throughout the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-1945) to promote national survival and attain regional aims. Thematic analysis of 17 semi-structured interviews with historical specialists revealed these organizations' endurance, intellectual independence, relocation, alignment with national security, and regional development function. Institutions' role in defining China's higher education environment during and after the war was highlighted, as were the obstacles and creative solutions used during warfare. Each issue analyzes how higher education institutions meet social and national needs under difficult situations. landscape during and after the war was underscored, as were the challenges and workarounds employed in wartime. Every issue examines how higher education institutions serve social and national interests under challenging circumstances. Table 4 outlines dominant themes and sub-themes based on the research, highlighting the multi-faceted influence of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression on higher education. It depicts how universities showed resilience through institutional adjustment, student mobilization, and management of resources in the face of relocation and academic continuity challenges. The table also highlights the alignment of education with national defense, intellectual independence struggles, and the contribution of universities to regional development. These findings all highlight the long-term impact of wartime education policy on postwar academic and socio-economic frameworks.

Table 4. Themes and Sub-themes

Theme	Sub-theme
<b>1. Resilience of Higher Education Institutions</b>	1.1: Institutional Adaptation
	1.2: Student Engagement and Participation
	1.3: Resource Management
<b>2. Impact of University Relocation</b>	2.1: Displacement Effects
	2.2: Changes in Academic Offerings
	2.3: Community Engagement
<b>3. Educational Quality During the War</b>	3.1: Variability in Educational Standards
	3.2: Subject-specific Changes
	3.3: Student Experience
<b>4. Alignment with National Defense</b>	4.1: Integration of National Defense Themes in Curricula
	4.2: Collaboration with Military Entities
	4.3: Broader Societal Implications
<b>5. Intellectual Independence</b>	5.1: Challenges to Academic Freedom
	5.2: Emergence of Alternative Intellectual Discourses
	5.3: Resilience of Scholars and Students
<b>6. Role in Regional Development</b>	6.1: Education and Regional Development
	6.2: Provision of Vocational Training
	6.3: Long-term Impact on Local Economies and Societies

Theme 1.1: Resilience of Higher Education Institutions: Semi-structured interviews illuminated higher education institutions' resilience throughout the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. These institutions' flexible methods, community support, and excellent resource management ensured educational continuity during this turbulent time, participants said.

Sub-theme 1.1: Adaptive Strategies: Higher education institutions used inventive methods to handle wartime challenges, according to respondents. Many schools focused on practical, relevant courses that addressed social issues. R2 said "We were necessitated to adjust swiftly during the conflict." We prioritized agricultural and military training for the nation. R6 said, "The university was not solely an institution for education; it was converted into a training facility for the war effort." We were driven to solve problems and innovate. Also, many responders stressed teaching technique flexibility.



R5 said scholars must be more creative. They sometimes taught outside or in impromptu classrooms with available supplies. This adaptation allowed education to survive the fighting's physical and logistical hurdles.

Sub-theme 1.2: Community Support: Local support has helped higher education institutions survive. Institutions and communities collaborated to foster solidarity, according to respondents. Communities supported schools: "Individuals contributed resources, organized food drives, and offered shelter for students." Collective action was necessary for survival. R3 said "I recall the townspeople accommodating displaced students and faculty in their residences." Aid strengthened our resilience and connection. This community engagement prioritized education and social well-being with institutional aid.

Sub-theme 1.3: Resource Management: Participants said resilient behavior required effective resource management. Institutions must prioritize vital demands owing to limited resources. R9 said, "We must be exceptionally resourceful." We persisted despite severe supply shortages at certain colleges. In this age, respondents believed institutions used distinct fundraising techniques. R11 says: "Universities requested assistance from alumni and local businesses." Fundraising was vital to starting. Despite their limits, these proactive resource management measures show the institutions' commitment to education. "Institutions routinely exchanged faculty and pooled their resources." R10 stressed academic collaboration. Our pragmatic approach maintains educational quality regardless of situations. University survival throughout the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression illustrates a diversified approach to problem-solving. Adaptable curriculum, teaching approaches, and resource management kept education functioning throughout this tough period. Despite limits, responses indicate a sincere dedication to education and Chinese higher education's inventive culture, proving the war's huge influence on institutional survival.

Theme 2: Impact of University Relocation: Semi-structured interviews exposed university relocation's consequences during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. Respondents discussed relocated institutions' problems, educational offers, and long-term effects.

Sub-theme 2.1: Challenges of Relocation: Institutional relocation produced logistical and operational issues. Responders described their shift problems. R3 said, "Everything was disorganized during our relocation." We lost many supplies, and numerous students and staff had to flee their homes. R7 said, "The endeavor of identifying appropriate space for classrooms and dormitories was substantial." Many people had to learn in improvised classrooms, which was poor (R7). Significant impact on student enrollment. R5 said "The ambiguity of the situation dissuaded numerous students from pursuing their education." Some enroll in the military, while others cannot handle the tumult (R5). Due to low enrollment, institutions received less funding and aid.

Sub-theme 2.2: Changes in Educational Offerings: Participants reported that institution migration changed instructional programs significantly. Courses were modified during the conflict to reflect changing situations. R8 said, "The war necessitated a focus on practical skills." We taught military science, engineering, and agriculture to prepare pupils for future difficulties. This pragmatic change kept institutions relevant during national turmoil. The focus on fundamental needs hurt some specializations, R6 said. This age repressed humanities and social sciences. "Resources were redirected to subjects that could directly support the war effort," R6 said. This tendency affected education quality and students' subject perspectives.

Sub-theme 2.3: Long-term Consequences: As respondents considered the period's effects, university relocations' long-term effects became clear. Migration changed many institutions' identities: "Many universities that relocated were never quite the same." They lost some historical importance and status, requiring years of rehabilitation (R10). R9 also noted how displacement affected postwar educational policies. "The conflict and ensuing displacements profoundly transformed the higher education landscape in China." It started a conversation about flexible, mobile, and disaster-ready schools, according to R9. The essay discusses China's higher education potential and wartime repercussions. Respondents acknowledged their perseverance from these trials. R11 says "Despite the adversities, the experience imparted the significance of adaptability and resourcefulness." These notions remain relevant (R11). A complex combination of obstacles and adaptations results from university relocation during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. Despite logistical issues and instructional emphasis shifts, institutions gained purpose and resilience. These displacements have changed not only specific institutions but overall China's higher education system, demonstrating the negative effects of war on educational systems.

Theme 3: Educational Quality During the War: The examination of educational quality during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression revealed how wartime situations affected instruction efficacy and methods. Participants noted educational disparities, local challenges, and the impact on the student experience.

Sub-theme 3.1: Variability in Educational Standards: Participants reported significant educational quality differences between urban and rural locations, notably within institutions. So, "Universities in metropolitan areas were able to sustain a certain level of quality due to superior access to resources, whereas those in rural regions faced significant challenges" (R5). This disparity showed wartime educational disparities. R4 stated, "Many professors were conscripted or departed for safety." This caused undertrained teachers, lowering training quality (R4). The loss in staff experience lowered instructional quality, increasing unhappiness among eager students.

Sub-theme 3.2: Subject-specific Changes: The conflict shifted attention to national needs. Multiple fields showed large declines throughout this decade. R2 said "The quantity of humanities courses was markedly reduced." We had to prioritize wartime skills, which left many of us unprepared for academics (R2). Practical classes trimmed a full education, leaving students uninformed. R8 said, "We were necessitated to abbreviate our science curricula to meet the exigencies of wartime." We had to address urgent concerns quickly, sacrificing depth for expediency (R8), making the work difficult. Due to circumstances, teachers had to forego quality and thoroughness.

Sub-theme 3.3: Student Experience: Respondents considered how their education affected their entire student experience during the debate. Many expressed dissatisfactions with their schools. R3 said "The persistent threat of



violence and the scarcity of resources hindered our ability to concentrate on our studies. "We existed in a state of anxiety." (R3). Ambiguity hindered learning and student engagement. R9 also stressed the psychological impact of conflict on students, saying, "We were not merely students; we were observers of a national catastrophe." Stress prevented us from focusing on other issues "(R9). Emotional stress affected pupils' academic performance and motivation, hurting their education. However, other respondents said the difficulties fostered student togetherness. R10 said "We identified methods to support each other despite numerous challenges." Student groups offered a secure space for problem-solving and learning (R10). This camaraderie showed students' resilience and adaptability. Students and institutions struggled during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, as seen by educational quality. Education, topic matter, and student experiences were altered by wartime situations. Student dedication and solidarity during wartime instability dramatically improved education despite numerous negative repercussions.

**Theme 4: Alignment with National Defense:** Educational policies and procedures were changed to help the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression in higher education and national defense. Participants stressed the alignment's social effects, military engagement, and national security curriculum.

**Sub-theme 4.1: Integration of National Defense Themes in Curricula:** Wartime respondents stressed the necessity to incorporate national security into the curriculum. R6 says: "Curricula were restructured to include subjects such as military science and national defense strategies." Students needed the skills to complete tasks amid disagreement (R6). Integration made education relevant and connected with national objectives. It also noted that "universities held lectures and seminars focused on patriotic education, emphasizing the importance of national unity and resilience" (R11). These programs promoted national engagement and student responsibility.

**Sub-theme 4.2: Collaboration with Military Entities:** The increased cooperation between military units and educational institutions showed the link to national defense. Participants discussed their military and educational preparedness collaborations. R4 said "The military and various institutions cooperated to create specialized training programs." We used military resources and experience (R4). This partnership helped military personnel and students share information and skills. The partnership increased student engagement, according to R8: "Military professionals taught pupils actual defense capabilities. It made our fighting training more practical "(R8). Military expertise in academia bridged theory and practice.

**Sub-theme 4.3: Broader Societal Implications:** The higher education-national security link had major socioeconomic effects. Participants said this approach helped kids build a national identity. R10 said "The focus on national defense imparted a deep sense of purpose within us." "We perceived ourselves as integral to a greater entity" (R10). This sense of connection and loyalty to the national cause fostered friendship beyond individual interests. R7 cautioned against this linkage, saying, "National security was vital, but it often overshadowed other schooling issues. "We risked compromising our objectivity" (R7). This perspective shows the disconnect between national goals and holistic education. Higher education's role in national security during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression shows a smart response to wartime challenges. National security issues in the curriculum, military cooperation, and the societal effects of this alignment demonstrate the relevance of education to the national agenda. This emphasis fostered student solidarity and purpose, but it also raised questions about the balance between national goals and holistic education, which would impact Chinese higher education.

**Theme 5: Intellectual Independence:** Understanding intellectual autonomy throughout the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression showed how universities preserved academic integrity. Participants recognized academic independence, intellectual discourses, and student and teacher goals for autonomous thought.

**Sub-theme 5.1: Challenges to Academic Freedom:** Participants claimed higher education institutions struggled to retain academic autonomy throughout the crisis. Political conflict and violence can inhibit intellectual progress. R2 said "The political climate impeded our ability to investigate specific themes." Teaching and research need caution (R2). This climate hampered academic debate and analysis. R9 said "Censorship was a widespread occurrence among professors." Due of reprisal, subversive or anti-war emotions were difficult to express (R9). This limited pupils' exposure to other ideas and shaped the curriculum and academic atmosphere.

**Sub-theme 5.2: Emergence of Alternative Intellectual Discourses:** Despite these limitations, many respondents considered alternative intellectual discourses as a tool to resist influences. R8 adds "We commenced an investigation into alternative paradigms of thought in reaction to the limitations." "A sense of urgency existed in the reclamation of our intellectual freedom" (R8). IP freedom inspired academics and students to experiment and create. R5 investigated how subterranean networks propagate alternative ideas: "We formed study groups that functioned autonomously from conventional academic structures." This connected us to ignored ideas and ideals. These networks gave academic freedom-loving students and academics intellectual autonomy and companionship.

**Sub-theme 5.3: Resilience of Scholars and Students:** Researchers and students needed intellectual autonomy. Wartime education emphasized autonomous inquiry and critical thinking. R10 noted resilience, "We developed the capacity for critical thinking and the ability to interrogate the narratives presented to us." We needed this expertise to survive. Students felt empowered throughout school by critically interacting with topics. Intellectual freedom was also highlighted by R11: "The conflict taught me to raise challenging questions. Mild resistance to the status quo was liberating "(R11). This inquisitiveness, fostered by difficulties, demonstrated higher education's requirement for intellectual autonomy.

Analysis of intellectual independence during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression reveals a complex relationship between resilience and higher education issues. Despite academic freedom, alternative intellectual discourses and student and faculty resistance showed a dedication to independent thinking. These events substantially affected Chinese higher education and intellectual freedom consciousness throughout national struggle.

**Theme 6: Role in Regional Development ;**Higher education institutions' contributions to regional development

during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression showed how they adapted to local demands while benefiting society. The participants evaluated the long-term consequences of institutions on local economies and society, vocational training, and education and regional growth.

Sub-theme 6.1: Education and Regional Development: Respondents said institutions helped local residents during the crisis by addressing their concerns. R7 says "Our university assumed a leadership position in the region, coordinating initiatives to assist local farmers and businesses impacted by the war" (R7). The institution's support for the community during difficult times showed its regional development commitment. R4 stressed that "Education was not solely the transmission of knowledge; it also involved the application of knowledge to practical issues." We kept the local economy alive by participating in community events (R4). Aligning educational aims with community needs shows how higher education promotes regional growth and resilience.

Sub-theme 6.2: Provision of Vocational Training: Higher education institutions' regional development strategies now include vocational training. Participants stressed the need of giving pupils conflict resolution tools. R9 stated, "We instituted pragmatic courses to enable students to get skills that were directly useful in the industry." This was vital to our community's survival. This focus on vocational training showed how educational systems may adjust to shifting socioeconomic conditions. Also, "By offering training in fields such as agriculture, mechanics, and healthcare, we successfully developed a workforce equipped to meet the urgent demands of our region during the war" (R8). This approach empowered children, built resilience, and boosted the local economy.

Sub-theme 6.3: Long-term Impact on Local Economies and Societies: Respondents typically noted higher education's long-term benefits on local economy and society. They remarked that wartime efforts aided advancement. R3 claims that wartime relationships with local industries and communities lasted long after the war. The institution has become a regional development player. This long-term partnership between schools and local groups showed the benefits of wartime teamwork. R10 said, "Post-war, a considerable contingent of graduates emerged as community leaders, applying the skills and knowledge gained during their education to foster regional development" (R10). This conclusion stressed higher education's ability to change society and people. The War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression research shows how higher education institutions helped local communities in many ways. Long-term cooperation, professional training, and higher education helped address regional concerns and build resilience. These experiences and initiatives provide the framework for future progress, demonstrating the importance of higher education in regional economic and social development.

## DISCUSSION

This study identifies the salient contribution of higher education toward constructing national and regional identities amidst the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-1945). It investigates the role played by universities in stimulating regional development, adaptability, relocation tactics, academic excellence, intellectual freedom, and national safety throughout this dynamic period. The research aims to highlight the flexibility and resilience of institutions of higher learning in coping with wartime crises, as well as to unveil the lasting impacts of the war on higher education policy in China.

One of the overarching themes from this research is the resilience of universities in the midst of war-related adversity. Interviewees stressed that universities proactively worked to survive and function in spite of the war. Most institutions had modified their curriculum to meet the needs of national security, showcasing their dedication to supporting government initiatives. The long-term impact of this adjustment influenced postwar higher education policy, resulting in the incorporation of national security issues and patriotic education into university courses. Previous research on educational resilience indicates that institutions react to outside limitations by transforming adversity into opportunities for development and applicability. The interviews upheld that education had a central part in building social resilience, since the participants acknowledged gratitude for the wartime assistance of their institutions and educational programs. The resilience theme also indicates emotional and psychological resilience of students and teachers. The participants narrated how teachers and students collaborated in upholding an academic atmosphere amid adversity. This cooperative strategy is similar to other past examples in which schools offered stability and hope in times of national crisis.

The second of these themes, the effect of university migration, discusses how migration offered opportunities and challenges for institutions. Several respondents commented that forced relocations interfered with academic continuity and resource access. However, migration also compelled universities to reexamine operating strategies. The long-term effect of these war-time displacements was the decentralization of Chinese higher education, as campuses established branch facilities and new learning centers in less-affected regions, many of which continued to operate after the war. Previous studies on educational resilience highlight how institutions react to operating and geographical constraints. The migration induced by the war led to innovation, as institutions were compelled to develop new pedagogical and outreach strategies. However, relocation also had profound psychological effects, as students and teachers suffered from emotional trauma due to displacement.

This study also investigates the efforts of institutions of higher learning to maintain academic quality during war. The respondents described how financial constraints, disruption of the academic calendar, and changes in curricular focus affected the quality of education. Despite these setbacks, innovative strategies were implemented to maintain academic integrity. Educators utilized non-formal settings and community-based materials to enhance learning. This period emphasized the importance of educational flexibility in shaping postwar higher education policies, which culminated in the institutionalization of flexible learning environments and interdisciplinarity. Resilience studies of education show that institutions rely on creativity and local resources to endure adversity. Participants emphasized equipping students with the capacity for postwar reconstruction through the promotion of critical thinking and inquiry-based learning. Even in restraint, teachers made efforts to produce an intellectual setting that fostered curiosity and debate.

The fourth, alignment with national defense, describes how the universities played roles in military pursuits in the war. Nationalism, patriotic education, and military education were embedded into the university curriculum, validating the national security agenda. Wartime educational ideology carried through in post-war university curriculum in the sense that political ideology found strong roots within Chinese higher education and impacted the autonomy of faculties as well as students. Nation-building literature indicates that education was crucial in the propagation of national ideology and collective identity. Respondents in this research considered how universities made students feel a sense of national responsibility, placing intellectual communities to the side of the war effort. But this tight connection between academia and national security was at the expense of intellectual autonomy. Respondents complained about stifling dissent and limiting academic freedom (Perez Mena, 2024). The long-term effect of this ideological convergence was the perpetuation of state control over university administration, impacting the autonomy of faculty and ideologically shaping higher education policy orientation.

The phrase "struggle for intellectual autonomy" appears as a motif in historical accounts of wartime education. All the participants in this research recalled struggling to reconcile intellectual curiosity with national responsibilities, but wartime constraints curtailed academic freedom. However, some academics attempted to maintain academic standards and student agency. The war's impact on academic autonomy continued into postwar China as ideological domination of universities continued to influence research priorities and teaching practices. Past studies indicate that universities have an important role in promoting critical thinking and diversity, especially during periods of social turmoil. The implications of this study are consistent with wider discussions of the role of universities in mediating political pressure while upholding academic standards (Lowry, 2024). The last theme, the role of universities in regional development, brings out how the universities played an active role in contributing to local communities during wartime. Interviewees confirmed that several universities put into place vocational training schemes to give local communities skills to recover from the war. Postwar education policy, shaped by this wartime focus on community involvement, encouraged university-community collaborations and regional economic programs. Institutions also cooperated with the local industries and businesses, and funded agricultural training and infrastructure building (Chang, 2021). The cooperation not only served the interests of the local communities but also allowed students to experience learning from practical situations, thus reinforcing the extended role of higher education beyond classroom environments. The emphasis on regional development corroborates the literature on universities as agents of economic and social change. Compared to other nations devastated by the war, such as the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, other nations also had universities play a significant role in regional reconstruction, with vocational training and labor development being included in postwar education policy. This cross-national comparison demonstrates the overall function of higher education institutions in national reconstruction following wartime dislocation.

A comparative method adds depth to our understanding of how tertiary education systems responded to crises of war throughout the world. For example, in Britain in World War II, universities acted by focusing on scientific research in the interests of national security, as Chinese universities did during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. Similarly, Soviet universities during World War II were heavily involved in state-sponsored war efforts, and their post-war educational policy carried a very strong taste of ideological training and technical education. These examples serve to illustrate the general trends in wartime education wherein universities follow national agendas but at the cost of intellectual freedom.

This study provides us with significant information regarding how the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression shaped Chinese higher education. The Changes brought about by the war impacted post-war higher education policy, intensified national security problems, regional involvement, and ideological control in universities (Alitto, 2023). The continuous integration of ideological education into Chinese universities, decentralization of universities, and the long-term impact on faculty autonomy are all indicative of the long-lasting legacy of this war experience. Universities were proved to be resourceful, adaptable, and able to shape national identity and collective memory. Through its analysis of how educational resilience interacted with regional development and national security, this research adds to the broader understanding of how universities perform during periods of crisis. What happened at Chinese universities between these years provides a valuable lesson for today's debates regarding the social resilience, ideological power, and postwar reconstruction functions of higher education.

### **Implications**

This study has significant theoretical implications for crisis-stricken higher education institutions, stressing the necessity of resilience and accommodation in times of uncertainty. Through an investigation of how higher education leaders and educators responded to the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, the study departs from the conventional view of higher education as solely cerebral and instead proposes its essential engagement with national identity and nation-building. The findings show that universities are not only centers for learning; they become pillars of political authority and social cohesiveness during times of crisis. Analyzing the intersection between education and socio-political movements allows researchers to analyze how institutions navigate nationalist pressures while maintaining their core academic responsibilities. Moreover, the study sheds light on intellectual freedom in academia, demonstrating how members of staff made an effort to uphold academic honesty in the face of external ideological pressures. Their efforts underscore the importance of having an environment welcoming to divergent opinions, particularly in challenging political climates. These findings set the stage for further investigation into how contemporary universities around the world manage academic freedom and socio-political pressure, particularly in regions that face geopolitical tensions or changes in ideology.

In addition to its theoretical contributions, the study offers practical implications to the contribution of higher education to regional development and national security, particularly in the recovery process from war. The study highlights how universities can contribute directly to socioeconomic reconstruction through increased engagement with the community,

encouragement of vocational training, and coordination of academic programs with regional needs. This perspective provides valuable guidance to both policymakers and educators, calling for them to envision colleges as instruments of social change and not independent schools. Through putting great emphasis on community engagement and aligning courses with national purposes, institutions of higher education can enhance both their relevance and their enduring influence. More importantly, the research analysis of national security alignment demonstrates how education can shape crisis response planning. By integrating national defense subjects into the curriculum without sacrificing academic integrity, universities can prepare students to address pressing global challenges.

This information is particularly useful for educational leaders developing interdisciplinary programs that address national needs in addition to intellectual curiosity. In summary, the research points out that universities need to adopt an inclusive approach that goes beyond intellectual excellence to include resilience, intellectual independence, and local development in an effort to be viable agents of national progress in a world that is increasingly complex.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

This study provides valuable insights into the role of higher education institutions during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, highlighting their contributions to national identity, resilience, and socio-political stability. However, the findings may have limited generalizability due to the historical specificity of China's wartime experience, which was shaped by unique sociopolitical factors such as foreign occupation and nationalism.

Collecting data through semi-structured interviews as the main source provides in-depth qualitative information but is also essential to introduce subjectivity, as the views of the respondents cannot be fully representative for all higher education stakeholders across time. Subsequent studies should involve a combination of interviews, quantitative questionnaires, and historical records to get a more complete view of the long-term consequences of wartime adjustments on educational institutions. Moreover, although the research is centered on academic leaders and teachers, it does not consider the voices of students, local communities, and governments, whose experiences throughout the war were pivotal in influencing the development of higher education. Student motivations, their response to institutional reforms, and their expectations during conflict would provide a more comprehensive view of the role of higher education in crisis. The report further prioritizes linking more education to national security and regional development but continues to overlook the long-term implications of wartime innovations on postwar education. Examining how universities' war-driven transformations impacted their postwar trajectories, institutional self-perceptions, and policy agendas may better reveal the long-term implications of educational resilience in crises.

Moreover, the study is also beset by the conflict between nationalism and academic freedom, a pertinent issue that emerges from historical backgrounds and into educational contexts of today. With changing political weather and ideological conformity pressures in various regions of the globe, understanding the historical struggle of universities to maintain intellectual freedom can enlighten contemporary discussions on academic freedom.

Future research will require examination of the ways that current academic institutions confront outside influences and preserve their positions as loci of critical discourse and social advance. Comparing conclusions reached based on experiences of the past to today's dilemmas allows scholars to more accurately assess higher education's capacity for promoting resilience, flexibility, and intellectual autonomy within more stormy geopolitics.

### **CONCLUSION**

During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, higher education institutions demonstrated resilience, adaptability, and social responsibility, playing a crucial role in sustaining national progress and fostering regional development amid crisis. This study identifies six key themes: higher education resilience, university relocation, educational quality during conflict, intellectual autonomy, national security alignment, and regional growth, highlighting how these institutions not only survived but actively contributed to societal stability. Strategic migration by the universities exemplified their ability to adapt within a changing context and reaffirm linkage with host communities and industry to foster constant learning and national advancement. Moreover, aligning programs with national defense initiatives pointed toward the institution's role in the preparation of citizens with a survival level of competency, assisting their broader role within society over intellectual objectives. The study also highlights the challenges that students and teachers face in preserving intellectual integrity under political oppression, as respondents value diversity, critical thinking, and intellectual freedom despite oppression - a basic requirement of higher education and active citizenship. Further, the role of universities in local development was discovered as they reacted to local socioeconomic challenges, initiated community programs, and carried out postwar reconstruction through education-oriented activities. This research underscores that the significance of higher education extends beyond academia; it serves as a crucial mechanism for addressing societal issues, fostering national identity, and promoting economic resilience. The experiences of wartime educational institutions demonstrate how education can be a powerful tool for overcoming adversity, reinforcing the long-term impact of higher education on social cohesion, identity formation, and national stability.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, Y.H.; methodology, Y.H.; software, Y.H.; validation, Y.H.; formal analysis, Y.H.; investigation, Y.H.; data curation, Y.H.; writing - original draft preparation, Y.H.; writing - review and editing, Y.H.; visualization Y.H.; supervision, Y.H.; project administration, Y.H. The author has read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** Not applicable.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Data Availability Statement:** The data presented in this study may be obtained on request from the corresponding author.

**Acknowledgments:** The research undertaken was made possible by the equal scientific involvement of all the authors concerned.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## REFERENCES

- Alitto, G. S. (2023). The War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. In *The Uniqueness of Chinese Civilization in World History*, 273-282, Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-0710-6\\_24](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-0710-6_24)
- Aso, E. (2024). The War Complex and Us: The Representation of the Sino-Japanese War and Cosmopolitanism in Empire of the Sun, When We Were Orphans, and My Shanghai, 1942–1946. In *Japanese Perspectives on Kazuo Ishiguro*, 179-202, Springer.
- Baker, M. (2024). Energy, Labor, and Soviet Aid: China's Northwest Highway, 1937–1941. *Modern China*, 50(3), 302-334.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589-597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>
- Chang, V. K. (2021). Recalling Victory, Recounting Greatness: Second World War Remembrance in Xi Jinping's China. *The China Quarterly*, 248(1), 1152-1173.
- Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12(3), 297-298. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613>
- Dryburgh, M. (2022). Re-centring education in Manshūkoku (1931–1945): school and family in Chinese oral history. *Japan Forum*, 34(1), 1-15.
- Elman, B. A., & Woodside, A. (2023). *Education and society in late imperial China, 1600-1900*, Vol. 19, Univ of California Press.
- Gardner, T. (2024). 'Our friends the Chinese': Australian advisers and images of China in the world wars. *History Australia*, 21(1), 54-71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14490854.2024.2309630>
- Garver, J. W. (2016). China's Wartime Diplomacy. In *China's Bitter Victory*, 3-32, Routledge.
- Gordon, D. M. (2006). The China-Japan War, 1931-1945. *The Journal of Military History*, 70(1), 137-182.
- Gruhl, W. (2017). *Imperial Japan's World War Two: 1931-1945*. Routledge.
- Henshaw, J. (2024). Overcoming a stigmatic past: National Central University students in Nanjing, China, and the politics of wartime history. *Modern Asian Studies*, 58(1), 78-100.
- Hu, B. (2021). *History, Memory and Identity: Rediscovering the Sino-Australian Relationship through Wartime Propaganda, 1931–1945*. ResearchSpace@ Auckland].
- Hung, C.T. (2023). *War and popular culture: resistance in modern China, 1937-1945*. Univ of California Press.
- Lee, S. H. (2015). The Japanese Empire at War, 1931-1945. Ed. Richard Overy. *The Oxford Illustrated History of World War II*, 35-73.
- Liu, J. (2023). *From Classroom to War of Resistance: Chinese Military Interpreter Training During World War II*. Taylor & Francis.
- Lowry, C. (2024). *Blood on Their Hands: Japanese Military Atrocities 1931-1945*. Pen and Sword Military.
- Mulvey, B., & Lee, B. N. (2024). The intellectual-state relationship and academic freedom in China: a reappraisal. *Studies in Higher Education*, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2024.2332407>
- Peng, L. (2023). Chapter Four 1937–1949: From the War of Resistance to Civil War. In *A History of China in the 20th Century*, 527-698, Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-0734-2\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-0734-2_6)
- Perez Mena, F. (2024). The Geopolitical Origins of Modern Chinese International Thought During the Republic of China (1912–1949). In *Contender States and Modern Chinese International Thought: From the Republican era until the Chinese School of International Relations*, 59-92, Springer Nature Singapore. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-2151-1\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-2151-1_3)
- Perry, E. J. (2020). Educated acquiescence: How academia sustains authoritarianism in China. *Theory and Society*, 49(1), 1-22.
- Suzuki, S. (2021). Chapter 10 "The World Is Marveling at Japan!": Japanese Strategies to Avoid its "Crisis of Confidence". In M. Sebastian & W. Christian (Eds.), *Crisis Narratives, Institutional Change, and the Transformation of the Japanese State*, 265-288, SUNY Press. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1515/9781438486109-014>
- Wei-mu, R. (2021). The Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese aggression 1. In *Contemporary Studies on Modern Chinese History III*, 141-179, Routledge.
- Wu, M. (2020). A history of the Chinese War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. *Journal of Modern Chinese History*, 14(2), 329-330. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17535654.2020.1853415>
- Yu, X. (2013). *Buddhism, War, and Nationalism: Chinese Monks in the Struggle Against Japanese Aggression 1931-1945*. Routledge.
- Киселева, А. Р. (2022). Influence of Chinese historical memory of the Sino-Japanese War 1937–1945 on current relations between China and Japan. *Россия в глобальном мире*, 24 (47). <http://doi.org/10.48612/rg/RGW.24.2>