

Original Paper

On the Military Strategy and Tactics of the Red Army's Crossing of the Dadu River during the Long March

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Abstract

The Long March of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army created a great miracle in human history. This article is based on a historical review of eight important decisions and actions during the central Red Army's crossing of the Dadu River in the Long March, including feigning attack on Fulin, lightly taking Caluo, night raiding Anshun, forcefully crossing the Dadu River, dividing troops in Anshun, flanking and supporting from the right, galloping and advancing from the left, and courageously seizing the Luding Bridge, aiming to explore the military strategy transformation and the active defense strategy adopted by the Red Army during the crossing of the Dadu River in the Long March, this victory embodies the important historical significance and practical enlightenment of combining the spirit of courage and strategic wisdom, decision-making and tactical execution, and showcasing the military principles and tactics of fighting battles with no certainty of victory, displaying bravery, fearlessness of sacrifice and fatigue, and continuous combat, striving to annihilate the enemy in motion, and supplementing one's own military supplies by capturing those of the enemy. The triumph of "Crossing the Dadu River" is a shining example of perfect fusion.

Keywords

Long March, Battle of the Dadu River, Active Defense Strategy, Military Principles and Tactics

1. Introduction: The Great Epic: The Long March

In human history, the Long March led by the Communist Party of China's Red Army involved a total of four divisions (the first being the Central Red Army, later renamed the First Front Army; the second being the Red Twenty-Fifth Army, later merged into the First Front Army; the third being the Fourth Front Army; and the fourth being the Red Second and Red Sixth Armies, later merged with the Thirty-Second Army of the First Front Army). The Long March lasted over two years, Crossing 15 provinces and cities, engaging in over 600 important battles, crossing nearly 100 rivers, and climbing over 40 treacherous mountains, covering a total distance of over 65,000 li, the Long March created a great miracle in human history.

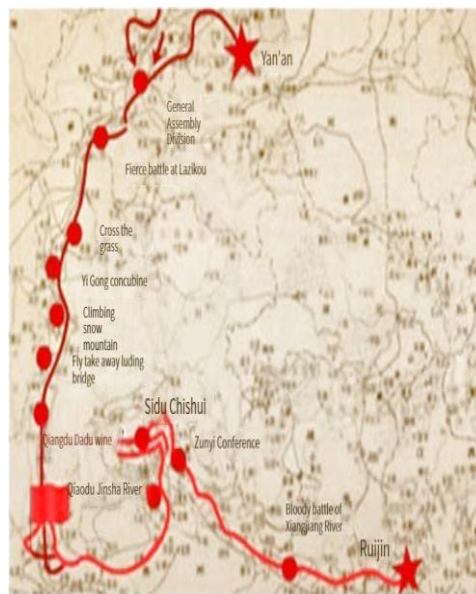


Figure 1. The Long March Route of the Red Army in Central China

2. The Important Decision and Action of Crossing the Dadu River

2.1 The Historical Background of the Battle of Dadu River

The Dadu River is the largest tributary of the Min River, with rugged terrain and fast-flowing water from Luding to Shimian in the middle reaches. On the 20th, the Red Army's advance team learned that the enemy had made Han Yuan Fu Lin a key defense point, and decided to divide their forces into two and cross the Dadu River. Liu Bocheng, Nie Rongzhen and other main forces chose the small road to Naruoba and Anshun Chang Ferry. The Historical Background of the Battle of Dadu River. The Dadu River is the largest tributary of the Min River, with rugged terrain and fast-flowing water from Luding to Shimian in the middle reaches. On the 20th, the Red Army's advance team learned that the enemy had made Han Yuan Fu Lin a key defense point, and decided to divide their forces into two and cross the Dadu River. Liu Bocheng, Nie Rongzhen and other main forces chose the small road to Naruoba and Anshun Chang Ferry.

2.2 Review of the Battle of Dadu River

Strategic issues require a comprehensive and systematic study of the overall situation and patterns. Marxists must take the whole picture into consideration. The Central Red Army's successful breakthrough of the Dadu River was a complete system consisting of eight important decisions and actions. The following flowchart shows the eight important decisions and actions of the Battle of Dadu River.

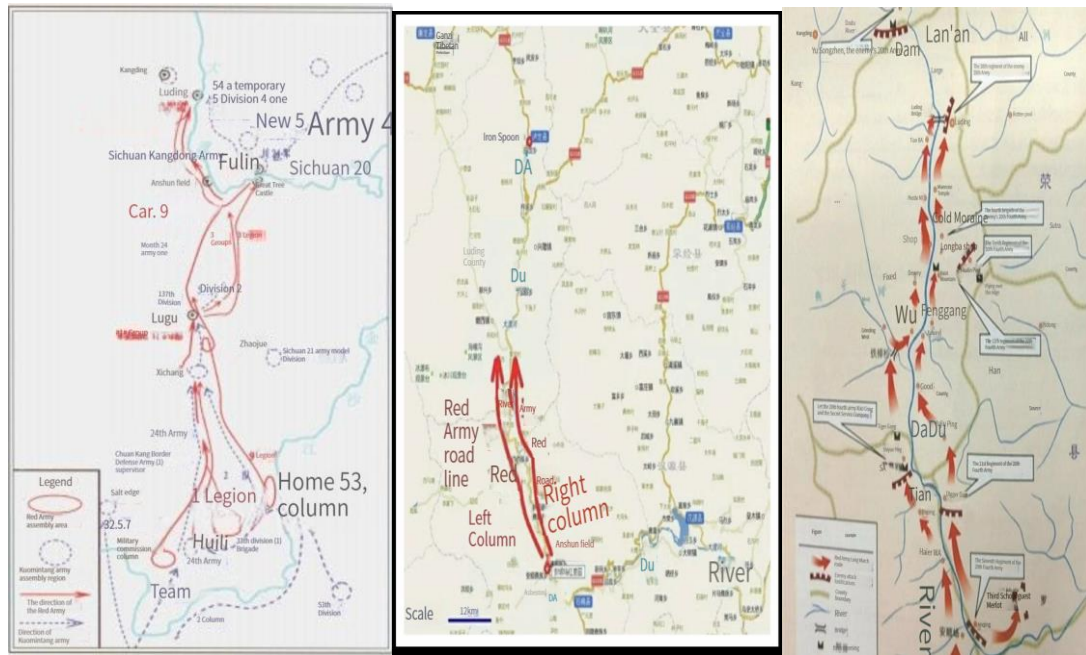
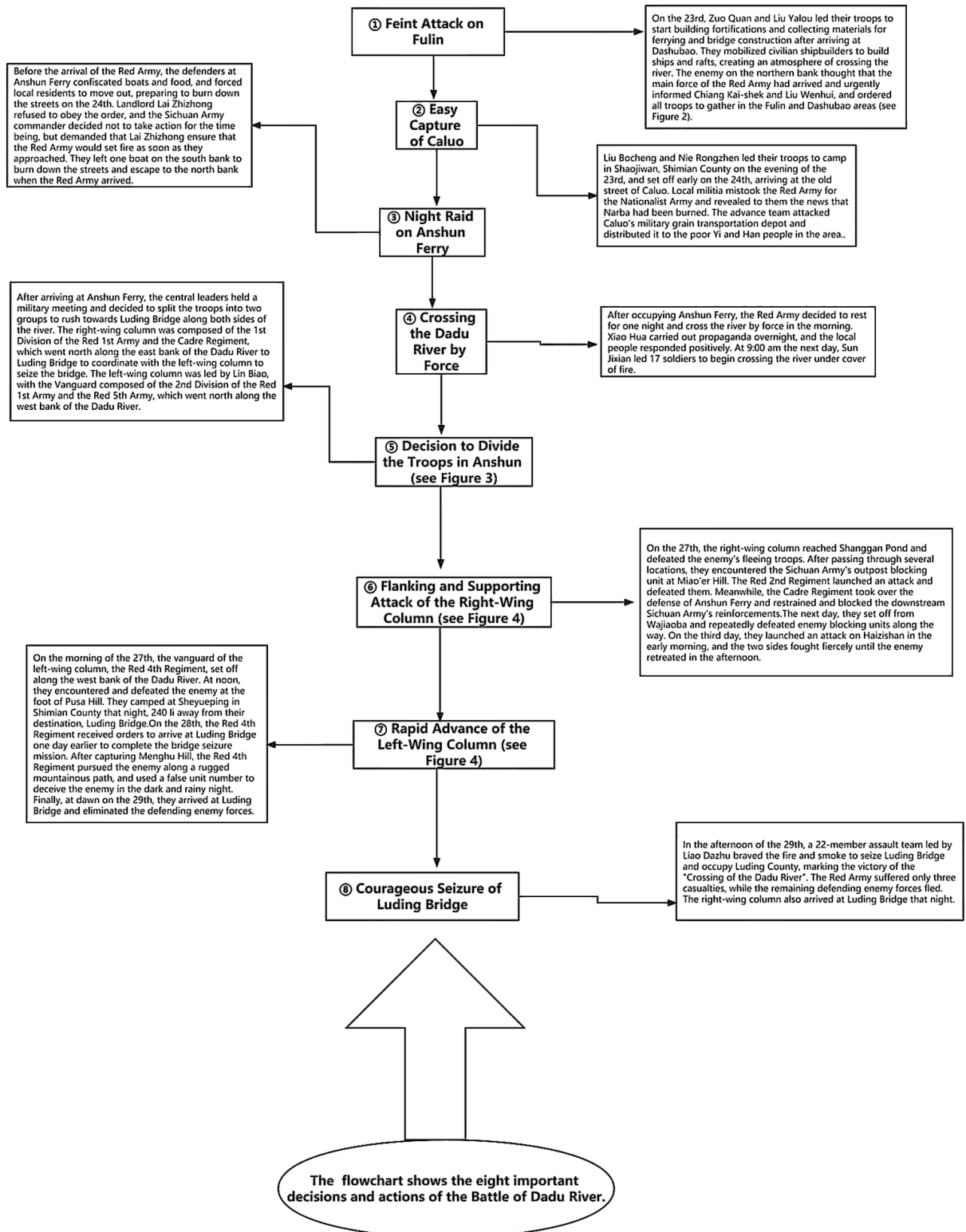


Figure 2. Map and Route of the Long March across the Dadu River Battle Zone 2, 3, 4



3. The Formation of Active Defense Strategy Adopted in Crossing the Dadu River

Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, the Red Army on the Long March achieved victory in the face of the encirclement and suppression of millions of Nationalist soldiers. Overcoming harsh natural conditions and life-and-death trials of blood and fire, they traveled for two years and crossed fifteen provinces and cities, covering tens of thousands of miles. Finally, they converged in Shaanxi and Gansu, presenting a magnificent scene in the history of Chinese and foreign wars.

mobile warfare, and a certain degree of centralization and planning in terms of command and organization. Other aspects remain guerrilla, primitive, and cannot be generalized with foreign armies, nor are they exactly the same as the armies of the Kuomintang. Therefore, in a sense, this kind of regular warfare is an elevated form of guerrilla warfare.”

3.1 *The Military Strategic Transformation of the Red Army Before the Long March*

The military strategic transformation, although it involved a series of significant changes in specific combat policies, forms, and principles, was primarily characterized by a shift in combat forms. The correction of the sixth plenary session of the third central committee of the Communist Party of China in September 1930 enabled the realization of the strategic transformation of the Red Army. However, the misjudgment of the war situation led to a military strategic guidance transformation of the Red Army during the anti-encirclement campaigns, including left-leaning military adventurism, military conservatism, and military escapism. The failure of the fifth anti-encirclement campaign forced the Red Army to embark on the Long March, which was a history of anti-encirclement campaigns and a just defensive war distinguished by Marx. After the Sixth Plenary Session of the CPC Central Committee in 1930, Mao Zedong objectively assessed the military situation of the Red Army, stating that “the so-called regular warfare in China is only manifested in the concentration of forces, the conduct of

3.2 *The Theoretical Sources and Formation of the Military Thinking of Active Defense Strategy*

Sun Tzu once said, “To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.” The famous Western military theorist, Carl von Clausewitz, believed that defense was a stronger form of warfare based on waiting for the enemy and the advantageous terrain, but he strongly opposed passive defense. “Defense as a form of combat is not just a shield, but a shield made up of clever attacks.” He believed that from the beginning of defense to the end of the attack, it is a natural extension of war, and passive resistance and pure defense are absurd.

Marxist classic authors also have insightful discussions on the active defense strategy. Marx pointed out that “defensive warfare does not exclude offensive actions in the process of war events.” Engels said, “Defense should not only be passive, but also draw strength from mobility, and whenever there is an opportunity, defenders should take offensive actions.” “The most effective defense is still active defense carried out by offensive actions.” “Passive defense, even with good weapons, will undoubtedly fail.”

Mao Zedong made a profound and insightful discussion on the essence of active defense. Mao Zedong said, “As far as I know, any valuable military book, any relatively intelligent military strategist,

regardless of ancient or modern times, regardless of strategy or tactics, opposes passive defense. Only the most foolish or the most arrogant people would consider passive defense as a magic weapon.” He also explicitly pointed out that “offensive defense, also known as decisive battle defense, refers to the active adoption of defensive strategies with offensive characteristics; while pure defense, also known as passive defense, refers to the passive adoption of defensive strategies. In fact, pure defense is only superficial defense. True defense should be active, aimed at preparing for counter-attacks and offensives.” In the Red Army’s Long March and anti-“encirclement and suppression” war, a theory and principles of active defense strategy were formed, which laid a solid foundation for the formation of Mao Zedong’s military thought.

4. Tactics and Principles Adopted in Crossing the Dadu River

4.1 No Battle Without Certainty

On May 26, 1935, Mao Zedong visited the stone monument at Yi Wang Ting and remarked, “If Shi Dakai was a talented strategist, why didn’t he go straight up the left bank and enter Xikang? Why didn’t he go down to Dashubao and turn back to Xichang Basin? Or why not go further down to the Min River on the east of Daliangshan? The maneuvering area there is quite large, isn’t it?”

The Anshun decision involved dividing the troops, with the right-wing column advancing towards Luding Bridge to distract the main forces of the Sichuan Army, thereby reducing the pressure on the left-wing column and playing a supporting role in encircling the enemy. Under the command of Ke Baoceng and Nie Rongzhen, the troops were led by high-quality cadres and had strong combat capabilities. At the same time, they also considered the worst-case scenario, avoiding the risk of failure, making it a “double insurance” battle.

4.2 The Spirit of Brave Fighting, Fearlessness of Sacrifice, Fatigue and Continuous Combat Was Fully Demonstrated in the Crossing of the Dadu River

The night attack on Anshun, the rapid advance of the left-wing column, and the capture of Luding Bridge, which embodied the importance of speed in warfare and the race against time to compete with the enemy for every second, as well as the heroic feat of covering 240 kilometers at high speed. This fully embodies the style of fighting, fearlessness of sacrifice, fatigue, and continuous combat. The key to the success of the “Flying Over the Luding Bridge” campaign lies in both the “flying” and the “capturing”. The rapid advance laid the foundation for the heroic capture, and without the impressive speed, victory would have been impossible. Although the bridge was captured in Luding, the starting point was in Shimian, especially the “Shi Yue Ping” in Shimian, which can be regarded as the “takeoff site” for the Red Army’s “Flying Over the Luding Bridge” campaign.

4.3 Strive to Annihilate the Enemy in Motion

The successful “Feint Attack on Fulin” attracted and diverted the enemy’s attention and strategic focus, adopting the strategy of “advancing eastward with a diversionary force.” The flexible and mobile tactics made the enemy relax their defense along the line from Anshun Field to Luding Bridge, gaining

time and creating space for the main force of the central Red Army. In the overall strategic situation, “Feint Attack on Fulin” became the “opening move” for the Red Army’s successful crossing of the Dadu River. Throughout the process, it embodies the form of warfare primarily based on mobile warfare.

4.4 Supplement Oneself by Capturing the Enemy’s Food and Forage

The easy capture of Cailuo provided abundant food supplies and important intelligence, avoiding an encounter with the Sichuan Army’s main force and pointing the way for the next step of action. The Red Army played a positive political propaganda role by distributing food to the local people, creating a good environment, and contributing to the smooth passage of the follow-up troops.

5. The Historical Significance and Practical Implications of Crossing the Dadu River

5.1 Historical Significance

In the Battle of Crossing the Dadu River, the Central Red Army successfully defeated Chiang Kai-shek’s attempt to turn it into a “second Shidai Kai,” declaring the failure of the Nationalist Party’s strategy of encirclement and suppression. Although there were still obstacles from Nationalist troops along the Long March, such as the Lushan-Baoxing defense line and the treacherous Lazi Pass, and Chiang Kai-shek’s pursuit after settling in northern Shaanxi, these threats were relatively small compared to the past encirclement and suppression. The Central Red Army was no longer in danger of being completely wiped out. Former US National Security Advisor Brzezinski personally inspected the Long March and pointed out that the Battle of Crossing the Dadu River was the most decisive battle in the Long March. Snow also pointed out in “Red Star Over China” that the crossing of the Dadu River was one of the most important events in the Long March. When Zhu De met with the 18 heroes who seized the Anshun ferry, he praised them for saving the Red Army and the revolution. It can be seen that it is not an exaggeration to say that the crossing of the Dadu River was another “turning point” in the Long March of the Red Army, which had a transformative impact on the Chinese revolution.

5.2 Practical Implications

The Battle of Crossing the Dadu River in the Long March of the Red Army has left us with valuable cultural heritage. In order to better protect and tap into the cultural resources of the Long March, we need to coordinate the efforts of all parties, improve hardware configuration, and promote the transformation of the protection of Long March cultural resources from local entities to regional integrated development. This involves the participation and cooperation of various levels of government, enterprises and institutions, social organizations and other aspects, and requires joint efforts from all parties. In addition to improving hardware configuration, we also need to deepen our research. This requires us to strengthen our research on the Long March culture, excavate its connotation and value, and provide theoretical support and ideological guidance for the inheritance and development of Long March culture. At the same time, we also need to strengthen software support,

including digitalization, networking, and informationization, and promote the transformation of Long March cultural resources from emergency protection to sustained development of the industrial chain.

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