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Had your imperial army not invaded: Japan's role in the making of modern China

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“HAD YOUR IMPERIAL ARMY NOT INVADED:”
JAPAN’S ROLE IN THE MAKING OF MODERN CHINA

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ABSTRACT

By 1936, the Guomindang had seemingly managed to secure its political dominance by nearly annihilating its main adversary, the Chinese Communist Party. In 1937, the Japanese army began a full-scale invasion of China that would forever change its political landscape. During the subsequent eight-year war, the Guomindang government collapsed, plagued by economic difficulties and internal corruption. Simultaneously, the small group of communists in Yan'an grew into a virulent force of opposition, with vast amounts of territory and the support of the masses. Nearly all components of this drastic turn of events can be linked to the imperialist expansion of Japan. This work seeks to analyze the specific ways in which the war of resistance against Japan resulted in the foundation of the People's Republic of China; through the weakening of the Guomindang, the strategic benefits afforded the CCP, and the opportunity for the communists to achieve mass mobilization.

CHAPTER 1:
FROM DYNASTIC RULE TO COMMUNISM

For the first half of the twentieth century, China experienced a near constant state of chaos and struggle, enduring conflicts both domestic and international. By the late 1940s, China had undergone three radical revolutions, two international conflicts, and countless internal battles and rebellions. After decades of instability, fighting finally came to an end in 1949 as the nationalist government, under the leadership of the Guomindang (Kuomintang),¹ fled to the island of Taiwan and the Chinese Communist Party founded the People's Republic of China.² In the short span of twelve years, this small, defeated group of communist rebels had grown to become the supreme government of a vast and populous nation.

The rapid growth of the Chinese Communist Party during the 1930s can most reasonably be explained through an examination of external pressures that transformed the political landscape on the Chinese mainland. In 1937, Japan laid siege to Beijing, igniting the Second Sino-Japanese War. The subsequent eight years of Japanese aggression proved to be to the detriment of the nationalists, while lending great benefit to the communists. Japanese imperialism had a profound effect on the outcome of the Chinese Civil War fought 1946-1949, which resulted in communist victory and the formation of the People's Republic of China.

¹ This paper uses the standard pinyin system of transliteration for all Chinese names and places. Where other forms of transliteration may be more commonly recognized, parenthetical reference of the Wade-Giles transliteration is given with the first use of the name.

² Paul J. Bailey, *China in the Twentieth Century* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001) 149.

The Origins of Civil War

The roots of Chinese communism can be seen as early as 1911, when a number of socialist activists participated in the Xinhai Revolution that resulted in the overthrow of the Qing dynasty. Following the establishment of the first Chinese republic in 1912, more than thirty known socialists became members of parliament. In the early years of the republic, Chinese socialists organized a political party, disseminating literature to intellectuals throughout the country. Though Yuan Shikai, the first president of the Republic of China, officially dissolved the party in August 1913, Chinese socialists continued secret propaganda campaigns contributing to the political demise of Yuan Shikai in 1916.³

From its inception, Chinese communism virulently opposed foreign imperialism, linking first world⁴ exploitation of weaker nations with the global bourgeoisie's exploitation of the proletariat. As Chen Gongbo wrote in 1924, "Communism sprouts from the soil of foreign capitalism and imperialism."⁵ Beginning with the Opium Wars of the mid nineteenth century that led to China's loss of Hong Kong to Great Britain, western powers, along with Japan, repeatedly pillaged and exploited the middle kingdom.⁶ China lost influence over the Korean peninsula and the island of Taiwan through her defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War of 1895. As the Qing dynasty collapsed at the turn of the century, European powers seized a number of other concessions throughout eastern China. Foreign imperialism continued to plague China in the twentieth century. In 1915, Yuan Shikai agreed to a set of thirteen demands (originally twenty-

³ Chen Gongbo, *The Communist Movement in China*, edited by C. Martin Wilbur (New York: Octagon Books, 1966) 74-78.

⁴ The "first world" collectively refers to industrialized, economically developed countries such as the United States, Great Britain, and Japan.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁶ "Middle kingdom" is the direct translation for *zhong guo*, the Mandarin term for China.

one) of the Japanese prime minister, in an effort to postpone direct military conflict with technologically superior Japan. These concessions expanded Japanese economic influence throughout Manchuria and into Shandong. The Treaty of Versailles that brought an end to World War I redistributed German concessions in Shandong province to Japan, fueling anti-imperialist and anti-Japanese sentiment among the Chinese. By the late 1910s, foreign capitalists owned more than one third of all railways in China and maintained spheres of foreign influence throughout the mainland.⁷

In the early 1910s, the original President of the Republic of China, Yuan Shikai, dissolved the nationalist party and named himself emperor, attempting to establish a new dynasty.⁸ A number of Chinese provinces responded by declaring independence, with local warlords, particularly in the north, ruling sizeable areas of the mainland for nearly a decade. Outraged by Yuan's betrayal of the republic, the revolutionary Sun Zhongshan (Sun Yatsen) reestablished the Guomindang in the southern province of Guangdong (Canton) and began organizing opposition to Yuan Shikai. Following Yuan's death by natural causes in 1916, the Guomindang continued to engage in civil war against various warlords in the north in an attempt to unite the mainland and restore the republic. Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kaishek), the eventual

⁷ Bailey, *China in the Twentieth Century*, 19-34, 75-87; see also Chen Gongbo, *The Communist Movement in China*, 64.

⁸The "nationalist party" refers to the Guomindang (originally the Tongmenhui) organized by the revolutionary leader, Sun Zhongshan. The Guomindang was instrumental in the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and the formation of the Republic of China (1912-1949). The party continues to be a dominant political force in Taiwan.

Commander-in-Chief of the Guomindang, continued the efforts of Sun Zhongshan following Sun's death in 1925.⁹

On 4 May 1919, student protests broke out in Beijing against imperialism and the government's concessions to foreign powers. From this student movement, a number of Marxist organizations emerged including the Young Socialist Group and the National Labor Union. Twelve delegates from socialist cells throughout China (and forty-one other attendees) gathered in Shanghai for two weeks beginning July 20, 1921. In response to what they believed to be the inescapable tendency of imperialist powers to control and exploit weaker nations, these delegates formed the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), calling for the emancipation of China from internal and external oppression through immediate social revolution.¹⁰

Originally, the Chinese communists adopted a policy of non-compromise in their attitude toward rival political entities. The members declared that the party "recognizes social revolution as our chief policy; absolutely cuts off all relations with the yellow intellectual class, and other such parties." After a year of growth and struggle, a number of changes were made in the policies of the CCP, most notably the willingness to cooperate with other political forces. With strong encouragement from the Communist International (Comintern) in Moscow, the CCP agreed to form an alliance with the Guomindang at the Second Conference of the Chinese Communist Party in July 1922. The communists acknowledged commonalities between the two groups, including a mutual opposition to "capitalistic imperialism and of militarist and

⁹ Sun Zhongshan, "Manifesto on the Restoration of the Provisional Constitution: June 9, 1916," in *The Kuomintang: Selected Historical Documents 1894-1969*, edited by Milton J. Shieh (St. John's University Press, 1970) 59-62; Bailey, *China in the Twentieth Century*, 100-103.

¹⁰ Chen Gongbo, *The Communist Movement in China*, 76-79; see also Hans J. Van de Ven, *From Friend to Comrade: The Founding of the Chinese Communist Party 1920-1927* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991) 85-90; Bailey, *China in the Twentieth Century*, 93-95.

bureaucratic feudalism.¹¹” In an alliance against warlords and imperialism, the CCP and Guomindang formed the First United Front. This alliance culminated in the Northern Expedition of 1926-27 that united eighty percent of the mainland under a central government in Nanjing.¹²

While successful in largely ridding China of warlords and establishing a central government, the Northern Expedition exposed internal conflicts within the Guomindang. As the territory and influence of the United Front grew, two clear factions emerged. The first, based in Wuhan, consisted of Wang Jingwei and the left wing of the Guomindang, along with members of the CCP. Those loyal to Jiang Jieshi comprised the second faction, containing the right wing of the Guomindang based in Nanchang. Aside from ideological differences, Jiang Jieshi and Wang Jingwei differed greatly in their treatment of the communists. CCP members enjoyed significant freedom under the party leadership in Wuhan, while Jiang Jieshi took a more dictatorial approach, closely supervising CCP members and supporters. Tensions between the two factions ignited the March 20th Incident of 1926, when an alleged assassination attempt on Jiang Jieshi led to arrests of more than twenty-five CCP members and their Soviet advisors at the Huangpu (Whampoa) Military Academy in Guangdong. The incident resulted in the Guomindang Central Executive Committee’s May 15 declaration that limited the number of CCP members in administrative positions and required review and approval for any CCP or Comintern directives.¹³

¹¹ “The First Program of the Communist Party of China 1921,” in Chen Gongbo, 102-103; “The Manifesto of the Communist Party of China adopted in July 1922 by the Second Congress,” in Chen Gongbo, *The Communist Movement in China*, 115; see also Lee Feigon, *Chen Duxiu: Founder of the Chinese Communist Party* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983) 166-170; Bailey, 96-100.

¹² Bailey, *China in the Twentieth Century*, 100-110.

¹³ Jacques Guillermaz, *A History of the Chinese Communist Party 1921-1949*, translated by Anne Destenay (New York: Random House, 1972) 99-101.

Conflict between Wang Jingwei and Jiang Jieshi culminated in a full split of the Guomindang in 1927, with Jiang Jieshi and the right wing usurping power and initiating a purge of leftist elements from the party. The Central Supervisory Committee (excluding members from the local government of Wuhan) issued a dispatch to the Central Executive Committee of the Guomindang on April 10, 1927 containing a list of those “found to be responsible of treacherous activities” and calling for a “purifying of the party from communist elements.” On April 12, Jiang Jieshi moved to disarm pro-CCP labor unions in Shanghai, resulting in the deaths of three hundred communists with more than five thousand others displaced. Violence against communists and Wang Jingwei supporters continued in other cities, with more than 2,100 arrested in Guangdong province.¹⁴

At the Fifth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party held April 1927, the communist leader Chen Duxiu, in accordance with directives from the Comintern in Moscow, advocated an alliance with the leftist Guomindang government in Wuhan.¹⁵ Chen maintained that revolutionary ideas could be spread more effectively under the protection of a military union with Wang Jingwei. As Comintern representatives in Wuhan began pressuring the government to form an official alliance with the CCP, Wang Jingwei grew increasingly suspicious of the communists, fearing that CCP attempts to gain military power were aimed at a planned coup of the Wuhan government. Wang Jingwei also became vulnerable to encroaching warlords,

¹⁴ “A Dispatch on the Need of Purifying the Party from Communist Elements,” April 10, 1927, in *The Kuomintang: Selected Historical Documents 1894-1969*, edited by Milton Shieh (St. John’s University Press, 1970) 135-136; Guillermaz, *A History of the Chinese Communist Party*, 124-125.

¹⁵ By this time CCP membership had risen to nearly 58,000, with eighty delegates present at the conference; Official histories of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) assert that future PRC leaders Mao Zedong and Liu Shaoqi voiced opposition to Chen Duxiu’s so-called ‘rightist’ position at the Fifth Congress, but were quickly silenced.

particularly Feng Yuxiang. These external pressures motivated the Wuhan government to enter into an agreement with the Guomintang in Nanjing. To evade the wrath of Jiang Jieshi, Wang Jingwei escaped to Europe, while a number of other Wuhan officials fled to Japan.¹⁶ As a first step toward rapprochement, all communists were expelled from areas under Wuhan's influence. To escape persecution, the Chinese communists retreated to the countryside, initiating a major shift in ideology and strategy for the CCP.¹⁷

The reunified Guomintang government in Nanjing made the extermination of communism from China its primary goal. In October 1930, Jiang Jieshi began a series of five anti-communist military campaigns directed against rural bases that the CCP had established in border regions throughout southern and western China. The first three campaigns were directed against the primary base of the CCP leadership in the Jiangxi-Hunan-Guangdong border region in the south. Occurring over the span of one year, each of these three campaigns consisted of a significantly smaller communist army evading nationalist forces, with great aid from surrounding topography that made the Jiangxi border region relatively inaccessible to the Guomintang troops. In September 1931, the Guomintang was forced to turn its focus temporarily away from communist annihilation to address conflicts with Japan in Manchuria and Shanghai.¹⁸

¹⁶ Yuan Shikai's general Feng Yuxiang converted to Methodism in 1914 and became a local warlord in present-day Hebei province following the collapse of Yuan's government in 1916. Often referred to as "The Christian General," Feng reportedly baptized his troops with fire hoses and outlawed gambling and prostitution in territories under his control; Wang Jingwei eventually became the puppet leader of the Japanese collaborationist government in Shanghai during Japan's occupation of eastern China, 1937-1945; Bailey, *China in the Twentieth Century*, 107-109.

¹⁷ Guillermaz, 133-139; see also Shanti Swarup, *A Study of the Chinese Communist Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966) 46-48, 72-105.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 228-234.

In 1932, after reaching an agreement with Japan that ended hostilities in Shanghai in the east, Jiang Jieshi returned to his goal of eradicating communism from China. The fourth anti-communist campaign, beginning June 1932, was directed at communist forces in the Hunan-Hubei-Anhui border region. With a force of 500,000 troops, nationalist forces attacked the fourth front army of the CCP, under the leadership of Zhang Guotao. Zhang's army, with a mere 25,000 troops, fled the border region and relocated to Sichuan province in the southwest where they awaited assistance from the first front army in Jiangxi.¹⁹

In the fifth and final anti-communist campaign, Jiang Jieshi sought to at last put an end to the nuisance of the CCP. All political, economic, and military resources were directed against the Chinese communists in this final campaign. Jiang Jieshi organized local militias and a secret police of 24,000 men to eliminate communist sympathizers within areas under nationalist control. Nationalist forces established strict blockades around communist zones, preventing all movement of traffic. With more than 800,000 ground troops and roughly one hundred aircraft, the Guomindang bombarded the communist base in Jiangxi province in October 1933. A defeated red army, under the leadership of Zhu De, managed to narrowly break through the nationalist blockade one year later, abandoning its base in Jiangxi and embarking on the epic Long March.²⁰

At the onset of the Long March, fighting and desertions had reduced the number of communist soldiers by half. Leaving behind the elderly as well as most women and children, nearly 86,000 communists left Jiangxi in October 1934. As the first front army fled from

¹⁹ Zhang Guotao, *The Rise of the Communist Party 1928-1938: Volume Two of the Autobiography of Chang Kuo-t'ao* (Lawrence, KS: The University Press of Kansas, 1972) 295-296; see also Guillermaz, *A History of the Chinese Communist Party*, 234-235.

²⁰ Guillermaz, *A History of the Chinese Communist Party*, 235-240.

nationalist forces moving west, equipment and supplies were often abandoned to increase mobility. CCP numbers continued to fall as they negotiated treacherous terrain, evading the pursuit of nationalist forces. To escape further conflict with Guomindang soldiers in the southern province of Guizhou, Zhu De's forces turned northwest, taking a path that would ultimately lead them to Zhang Guotao's fourth front army in northern Sichuan.²¹

Zhu De's defeated army from Jiangxi met Zhang Guotao's forces at Maokung in Sichuan province, where the weaknesses of the CCP became increasingly evident. Zhu De himself reportedly admitted a severe lack of discipline among the red army at this time, noting their tendency to waste many bullets in the killing of animals for food, due to poor marksmanship skills. As high-ranking communist officials met to discuss the future of the communist movement, internal political conflicts began to surface. Zhang Guotao expressed strong disagreement over strategy with Mao Zedong, the newly elected chairman of the CCP. The conflict ultimately resulted in a split of the already fragile communist party, with Zhang Guotao's forces moving south and Mao Zedong's first front army moving north toward Shanxi.²² Those under Mao's leadership pressed on with minimal food and supplies, through mountains and swamps, abandoning men and animals along the way. In October 1935, a mere 4,000 communists arrived in rural Yan'an, Shanxi province to establish what would be the base of the

²¹ Ibid., 253-255; Bailey, *China in the Twentieth Century*, 117-119.

²² Various sources give differing accounts as to the specific events that led to the CCP split of 1935. Zhang Guotao's army met resistance from local minority groups and failed to establish a significant base in southern Sichuan; see Han Suyin, *The Morning Deluge: Mao Tsetung and the Chinese Revolution 1893-1954* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1972) 293-296; see also Zhang Guotao, 376-393; Guillermez, *A History of the Chinese Communist Party*, 259-261.

CCP for the next decade.²³ Twelve years later, this disorganized, defeated group of revolutionaries would gain full control of the Chinese mainland.

Historiographic Context

The reason for the unlikely rise of the CCP has been a subject of debate among scholars of modern China for a number of years. Some have cited the variance between policies and leadership abilities of Jiang Jieshi and Mao Zedong, while others have argued that communist victory was the result of foreign intervention. The secondary literature is primarily divided into works that attribute communist victory to the ineptitude of Jiang Jieshi, those that credit the appeal of Mao Zedong's social revolution, and those that emphasize the impact of the Second Sino-Japanese War.²⁴

A number of historians have placed blame for the defeat of the nationalists with the Guomintang Generalissimo, Jiang Jieshi. Many prominent scholars of East Asia, such as John Fairbank and Lloyd Eastman, have argued that the ineffective policies of the nationalist government and the inept leadership of Jiang Jieshi were ultimately responsible for the Guomintang debacle of 1949. According to these scholars, the Republic of China was plagued by internal corruption and poor military strategy that resulted in the total mismanagement of aid

²³ Bailey, *China in the Twentieth Century*, 118.

²⁴ Suzanne Pepper, "The Political Odyssey of an Intellectual Construct: Peasant Nationalism and the Study of China's Revolutionary History: A Review Essay," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 63, no. 1 (Feb. 2004): 105-125.

received from western powers, leading to the government's ultimate collapse. Similar criticism of Jiang Jieshi can be seen in the writings of Parkes Coble.²⁵

In the 1960s, a school of thought emerged regarding the significance of the communist leader Mao Zedong on the outcome of the Chinese Civil War (1946-1949). The socialist philosophy of Mao Zedong, or Maoism, differed from Leninism in that it focused primarily on the rural peasantry instead of the urban proletariat, which was largely nonexistent in China at the time of the revolution. In 1964, Donald Gillin noted the appeal of Maoist ideology for the peasantry, which constituted eighty percent of the population at the time of the 1949 revolution. Gillin emphasized the popular support for social and economic reforms of the communist party. Mark Selden conducted a similar study that noted the ability of Maoist economic policies, such as reductions in land rent and interest rates, to meet the needs of rural farmers. Selden's later research illustrated the significance of equitable tax policies introduced in communist controlled areas prior to the invasion of Japan. These scholars, along with George Taylor and Lucien Bianco, downplayed the significance of outside forces and argued that the foundations for communist victory were in place prior to the Sino-Japanese conflict.²⁶

²⁵ John Fairbank, *The United States and China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); Lloyd Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution: China Under Nationalist Rule 1927-1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974); Parkes Coble, *Facing Japan: Chinese Politics and Japanese Imperialism 1931-1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

²⁶ Donald Gillin, "Peasant Nationalism in the History of Chinese Communism," *Journal of Asian Studies* 23, no.2 (1964): 269-89; Mark Selden, *The Yen-an Way in Revolutionary China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971); Mark Selden, *China in Revolution: The Yen-an Way Revisited* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1995); Lucien Bianco, "Peasant Responses to CCP Mobilization Policies, 1937-1945," *New Perspectives on the Chinese Communist Revolution*, eds. Tony Saich and Hans Van de Ven (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1995); see also George Taylor, review of *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power: The Emergence of Revolutionary China, 1937 – 1945*, by Chalmers Johnson, *American Historical Review* 69 (1963): 228-29.

In 1962, Chalmers Johnson presented the single most influential work concerning causality of communist victory. In stark contrast to earlier arguments, Johnson noted the significance of Japanese intervention above all other factors. In his famous “peasant nationalism thesis,” Johnson argued that the Second Sino-Japanese War provided the opportunity for Mao Zedong to mobilize the peasantry against the Japanese imperialists and focus that support against the Guomindang following the defeat of Japan in 1945. Prior to the Second United Front,²⁷ the communists advocated resistance to Japanese aggression among rural farmers while Jiang Jieshi appeased the Japanese in order to continue his assault on the communist rebellion. According to Johnson, the victory of the CCP was a direct result of its ability to foster rural-based popular resistance against Japan. The communist stance against Japanese brutality afforded them legitimacy from the rural masses.²⁸

Chong-Sik Lee, a renowned scholar of communism in Asia, blatantly and passionately affirmed Johnson’s “peasant nationalism” thesis. By giving several examples of failed attempts by local communist leaders to mobilize peasants in the 1920s, Lee challenged the arguments of those who credited pro-peasant policies for ultimate communist victory. Lee, like his predecessor Johnson, argued that the Second Sino-Japanese War was the single most motivating factor for the embrace of communism by the masses. Several other notable historians, such as

²⁷ The Second United Front was a fragile alliance formed between the CCP and the Guomindang in 1937, in response to the Japanese invasion. The pseudo-alliance collapsed with the outbreak of the Chinese Civil War in 1946.

²⁸ Chalmers Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power: The Emergence of Revolutionary China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962); see also Bailey, 150.

Joel Migdal and Selig Harrison, shared Lee's ideas concerning the role of the war against Japan on peasant mobilization.²⁹

Recent decades have seen the emergence of a scholarship that accepts the indispensable role of Japanese aggression in the ultimate victory of communism in China, but questions Johnson's thesis of "peasant nationalism." Contemporary historians have investigated other ways in which the war with Japan influenced the outcome of the Chinese Civil War. Those who challenge Johnson's idea of mass peasant mobilization have often explored anti-Japanese movements among other classes, as well as the impact of Japanese invasion on military strategy for both the communists and nationalists.

Among the first to offer such an argument was Tetsuya Kataoka. While arguing that the conflict with Japan was the ultimate cause for communist victory, Kataoka placed greater emphasis on military strategy. According to Kataoka, the Japanese invasion isolated the Guomindang from its urban-elite power base in the east. The communists, now able to mobilize behind Japanese lines, avoided direct combat with the Guomindang. Kataoka also noted that in addition to gaining support from the peasantry, the Japanese invasion allowed communist forces to gain influence with rural elites and local gentry. Similar to Kataoka, Carl Dorris and Odoric

²⁹ Chong-Sik Lee, *Revolutionary Struggle in Manchuria: Chinese Communism and Soviet Interest, 1922-1945* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983); Joel Migdal, *Peasants, Politics, and Revolution: Pressures Toward Political Change in the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974); Selig Harrison, *The Widening Gulf: Asian Nationalism and American Policy* (New York: Free Press, 1978); see also Michael Underdown, review of *Revolutionary Struggle in Manchuria: Chinese Communism and Soviet Interest, 1922-1945*, by Chong-Sik Lee, *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 16 (July 1986): 135-137.

Wou credited the war with causality, but saw “peasant nationalism” as part of a greater, anti-Japanese movement that extended beyond class lines.³⁰

A number of scholars of modern China have suggested the significance of Japanese aggression during the 1930s and 1940s in the weakening of the Guomintang. Qi Xisheng noted the inability of the Guomintang to build support after the Japanese invasion forced the nationalists to relocate to Chongqing in the west, a region in which the Guomintang held minimal control. Other historians, such as Wu Tianwei, Ramon Myers, and Thomas Metzger, emphasized the ways in which the Japanese invasion forced the Guomintang to turn its focus away from the activities of state-building in order to confront a superior military power.³¹

The case of China in the 1930s illustrates a set of circumstances that are conducive to socialist revolution. After centuries of autocratic rule and decades of unrest, China had become a land with a weak central government and competing political factions. A century of foreign exploitation culminated in the invasion of Japan, when a growing anti-imperialist sentiment merged with communist ideology to mobilize the masses for revolution. The Second Sino-Japanese War is of further significance due to its contribution to the triumph of Maoist ideology, which was later exported to revolutionary movements throughout the globe.

³⁰ Tetsuya Kataoka, *Resistance and Revolution in China: The Communists and the Second United Front* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); Carl E. Dorris, “Peasant Mobilization in North China and the Origins of Yen-an Communism,” *China Quarterly*, no. 68 (1976): 697-719; Odoric Wou, *Mobilizing the Masses: Building Revolution in Henan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994).

³¹ Qi Xisheng, *Nationalist China at War: Military Defeats and Political Collapse 1937-45* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1982); Wu Tianwei, *The Xi’an Incident: A Pivotal Point in Modern Chinese History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 1976); R.H. Myers and T.A. Metzger, “Sinological Shadows: The State of Modern China Studies in the U.S.,” in *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 1980, 4: 1-34.

By 1936, the Guomindang had seemingly managed to secure its continued political dominance by nearly annihilating its main adversary, the Chinese Communist Party. In 1937, the Japanese army began a full-scale invasion of China that would forever change its political landscape. During the subsequent eight-year war, the Guomindang government collapsed, plagued by economic difficulties and internal corruption. Simultaneously, the small group of communists in Yan'an grew into a virulent force of opposition, with vast amounts of territory and the support of the masses. Nearly all components of this drastic turn of events can be linked to the imperialist expansion of Japan. As Mao Zedong himself stated to a visiting Japanese delegation in 1964,

Had your imperial army not invaded more than half of China, the Chinese people would not have been able to unite to oppose you, and the Chinese Communist Party would not have been able to seize state power.³²

This work seeks to analyze the specific ways in which the war of resistance against Japan resulted in the foundation of the People's Republic of China; through the weakening of the Guomindang, the strategic benefits afforded the CCP, and the opportunity for the communists to achieve mass mobilization.

³² Mao Zedong, "Discussion with Members of Japan's Socialist Party," July 10, 1964 in *Long Live the Thought of Mao Zedong* (N.p., 1969) 533.

CHAPTER 2:
JAPAN'S WEAKENING OF THE GUOMINDANG

Prior to the Japanese invasion, the Republic of China enjoyed ten years of relative prosperity under the governance of the Guomintang (Kuomintang) or “nationalist party.”³³ Following the Northern Expedition of 1926-1927, the Guomintang, under the leadership of the Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai Shek), established a central government in the eastern city of Nanjing. Emerging from the political decay that followed the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the failure of Yuan Shikai's government, the nationalist regime managed to establish a measure of stability throughout eastern China and maintain its dominance for a decade despite domestic opposition from residual warlords and a persistent communist insurgency.³⁴

After ten years of Guomintang rule, the Lugouqiao or Marco Polo Bridge Incident in northern China on July 7, 1937 instigated the Japanese army's invasion of the Republic of China and marked the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War.³⁵ The subsequent eight years of

³³ This chapter contains multiple references to the Guomintang, (originally the Tongmenhui) organized by the revolutionary leader, Sun Zhongshan. The Guomintang was instrumental in the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and the formation of the Republic of China (1912-1949). The party continues to be a dominant political force in Taiwan. All mentioning of the “republic” or “nationalist party” refers to this political entity. Also, all references to “China” or “Chinese,” unless otherwise specified, refer to the Guomintang, as it remained the official government of the republic into the 1940s.

³⁴ Following the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, Yuan Shikai led a brief republican government that ultimately failed in 1917, after Yuan proclaimed himself emperor. No central government existed until the establishment of Jiang Jieshi's Nanjing government in 1927. The Northern Expedition refers to the collaborative military campaign in which the CCP and Guomintang defeated local warlords in the east to unite eighty percent of the mainland under one central government. see Bailey, *China in the Twentieth Century*, 68-80.

³⁵ Since 1931, Japan had occupied the three northeastern provinces of present-day China (collectively referred to as Manchuria) under the auspices of the puppet emperor of Manzhouguo, Pu Yi. On the night of July 7, Chinese soldiers responded with fire to an

fighting would result in the deaths of millions of Chinese people and dramatically alter the political landscape of the Chinese mainland.³⁶ The invasion proved especially devastating for the Guomindang, which became the direct target of Japanese aggression in the early years of the war. As the Japanese Premier Konoye stated on December 22, 1938, the Japanese government resolved to carry out “military operations for the complete extermination of the anti-Japanese Guomindang government.”³⁷ The war of resistance against Japan severely weakened the Guomindang’s authority and legitimacy in China, making Jiang Jieshi’s government vulnerable to growing domestic opposition in the late 1940s. The Japanese army served to isolate the Guomindang geographically, politically, and economically, facilitating its ultimate defeat at the hands of the communists in 1949.

Geographic Isolation and the Weakening of the Military

The immediate consequence of the Japanese invasion was the geographic isolation imposed upon Jiang Jieshi’s government. Prior to 1937, Guomindang power was highly concentrated along the eastern coast. Eastern cities such as Nanjing (Nanking), Shanghai, and Guangzhou (Canton) were home to the largest numbers of Guomindang party members, and

unannounced Japanese military training maneuver on the border of Manzhouguo and the Republic of China. The Japanese army used this event, referred to as the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, to justify its invasion and occupation of China, 1937-1945. See Bailey, *China in the Twentieth Century*, 120-143.

³⁶ In 1978, the Guomindang government in Taiwan claimed to have sustained more than eight million casualties during the Second Sino-Japanese War. See He Yingqin, *Who Actually Fought the Sino-Japanese War 1939-45* (Taipei, Taiwan: Lee Ming Company, Inc., 1979) 4-5.

³⁷ Premier Konoye, “Statement by Premier Konoye December 22, 1938,” in Harold S. Quigley, *Far Eastern War 1937-1941* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1942) 283.

served as bastions of nationalist influence amid a sea of rural disunity and regionalism.³⁸ While the government of the republic had managed to gain nominal control over ten provinces during its ten years of dominance, its legitimacy was most securely established in the coastal provinces of Zhejiang and Jiangsu, which contained both of China's major political and economic centers: Shanghai and the Guomintang capital, Nanjing.³⁹

Following the siege of Beijing in July 1937, Guomintang military leaders attempted to predict Japanese strategy for the occupation of China. Most suspected that Japan would quickly overtake northern China (where Guomintang influence was nominal at best) and then expand southward. A previous agreement negotiated in 1932 between the expanding Japanese empire and the Republic of China had established a demilitarized zone around the coastal city of Shanghai. In August 1937, Jiang Jieshi moved forces into this demilitarized zone in an effort to provoke a Japanese attack, expediting the movement of Japanese troops into southern China where the Guomintang maintained greater influence. Claiming he would "drive the Japanese into the sea," Jiang Jieshi utilized sixty percent of the republic's total forces at Shanghai, battling the invading Japanese forces from the north and guarding the eastern coast from possible reinforcements.⁴⁰ The Guomintang managed to resist successfully the Japanese throughout October, but on November 5 the Japanese General Yanagawa landed on the Chinese coast at Qinshawei, south of Shanghai, with 30,000 troops. Japanese forces from the north and south

³⁸ Dian Hongmao, *Government and Politics in Kuomintang China 1927-1937* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972) 180; 31-32.

³⁹ While historians have questioned Jiang Jieshi's motives for provoking the Japanese attack on Shanghai, it is likely that Jiang intentionally provoked an attack on a major population center, hoping to expedite sympathy and monetary aid from the West; *Ibid.*, 1-3.

⁴⁰ See Qi Xisheng, *Nationalist China at War: Military Defeats and Political Collapse 1937-1945* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1982), 41-47.

marched toward each other, carving a path of destruction that resulted in the fall of Shanghai and the death of more than 300,000 Chinese soldiers and civilians.⁴¹

Following its victory at Shanghai, the Japanese army moved inland along the Chang Jiang (Yangtze River) to Nanjing (see Map 2.1). The exhaustion of Guomintang forces at Shanghai had left the city virtually undefended. As the Japanese army approached Nanjing in late November, the government of the republic was forced to abandon its capital. Fearing Japanese pursuit, the Guomintang Generalissimo chose to relocate the government to the far western city of Chongqing in remote Sichuan province.⁴² Nanjing fell to the Japanese in a mere five days, as Chinese soldiers fled west along the Chang Jiang to Wuhan.⁴³ Six months after the initial invasion, the Guomintang had sustained more than 450,000 casualties and had been forced to abandon its major centers of culture, commerce, and political power.⁴⁴

The last remaining industrial city of the Chinese republic lay at Wuhan.⁴⁵ Before moving into Wuhan in 1938, the Japanese strategically captured the city of Guangzhou (Canton) in the far south through which seventy-five percent of all Chinese imports had passed following the fall

⁴¹ Ibid., 45.

⁴² Like Nanjing, Shanghai, and Wuhan, Chongqing is also located on the Chang Jiang (Yangtze River). At the time of the Second Sino-Japanese War, Chongqing was part of the vast province of Sichuan, which has since been divided by the government of the People's Republic of China into Sichuan province and the Chongqing municipality.

⁴³ Though briefly mentioned in the body of this text, the battle of Nanjing, commonly referred to as "The Rape of Nanking" is perhaps the most infamous display of Japanese aggression during the second world war. It is estimated that the Japanese army killed nearly 200,000 Chinese civilians in less than one week, with countless others raped and wounded. See Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* (New York: BasicBooks, 1997).

⁴⁴ Qi Xisheng, *Nationalist China at War*, 45.

⁴⁵ Like Nanjing and Shanghai, Wuhan lies on the Chang Jiang (Yangtze River). Wuhan is to the southwest of Nanjing and is the capital of Hubei province. (see map)

of Shanghai one year earlier. With Guangdong, the Japanese also captured the railroad leading to Kowloon in British Hong Kong, preventing the flow of arms from western countries to the dramatically weakened Guomintang. Cut off from its only remaining route to the sea, the Guomintang surrendered Wuhan to the Japanese October 25, 1938. Fifteen months after the outbreak of war, the Guomintang had surrendered all of its urban centers, losing control of the vital Chang Jiang and all access to the sea.⁴⁶

Although the Guomintang government had been pushed into the far west as early as 1938, armed skirmishes continued along Japanese lines into the early 1940s as Japan became preoccupied with its efforts in Manzhouguo and Southeast Asia.⁴⁷ Threatened by allied forces in the Pacific, Japan recognized the need to connect its territory and consolidate its power over China and Indochina. In an effort to connect a continental railroad linking Japanese territories in Korea, eastern China, and Vietnam, the Japanese began Operation Ichigo in spring 1944. The campaign squelched any hope of formidable Guomintang resistance, resulting in the death or disbanding of nearly 750,000 Chinese troops. As Guomintang soldiers fled into the west to avoid the rapidly approaching Japanese army, they were forced to abandon valuable arms, with an estimated 23,000 tons of weapons and ammunition lost during Operation Ichigo alone. As the Japanese forces pushed south, they also gained control of Hunan province, a vital rice-producing region essential for feeding nationalist China in the west.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Qi Xisheng, *Nationalist China at War*, 52-59.

⁴⁷ Manzhouguo (Manchukuo) is the name given to the Japanese puppet state established under the emperor Pu Yi in Manchuria. See Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003).

⁴⁸ Qi Xisheng, *Nationalist China at War*, 75-80;

Map 2.1. Ichigo Plan



Source: Ibiblio: The Public's Library and Digital Archive, "The U.S. Army Campaigns of World War II: The China Defensive, (map)," <http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USA/USA-C-ChinaD/maps/USA-C-ChinaD-3.jpg> (accessed 28 January 2010).

*The map depicting Operation Ichigo uses the older, Wade-Giles system of transliteration for the names of Chinese cities, while this paper primarily uses the newer, pinyin system. As a result, the spelling of the names of some cities on the map, such as Chongqing (Chungking), Beijing (Peiping) and Guilin (Kweilin), differs from the spelling in the text.

By the end of the war in 1945, Japan had dramatically weakened the Guomintang army. Beyond the loss of life and weaponry, the loss of territory proved especially devastating for the Guomintang when tensions with the communists, who had gained influence and territory in the east, escalated to civil war in 1946. Cut off from ports, urban centers, food-producing regions, and the majority of the Chinese population, the Guomintang's geographic isolation during the

Second Sino-Japanese War contributed to the weakening of the nationalist government politically and economically.

Diplomatic Isolation and the Loss of Political Capital

Japan's invasion also had significant diplomatic and political consequences for the Republic of China. After the brutal defeat at Shanghai, Jiang Jieshi and his wife, Jiang Song Meiling, pleaded with western powers for monetary and military aid.⁴⁹ Japan's demonstration of its aggression and military might in Manchuria and eastern China prevented a number of western powers from coming to China's aid. Fearing the reaction of the powerful and aggressive Japanese military, Great Britain initially refrained from aiding the Guomintang government, hoping to protect its colonies in Hong Kong and Singapore. On January 4, 1938, Great Britain finally agreed to the construction of a route allowing the transport of supplies through Burma into China, but continued to deny Jiang Jieshi's multiple requests for monetary loans, fearing it would ignite direct conflict with Japan. Other member states of the League of Nations, while expressing sympathy toward the Republic of China, also feared Japanese aggression. In an attempt to appease the Guomintang government, the League of Nations issued an ambiguous resolution on 20 January 1939, that asked member states to "refrain from taking any action which might have the effect of weakening China's power of resistance and thus of increasing her difficulties in the present conflict," but stopped short of asking states to send direct aid to China.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Wang Zhonghui, "China's Foreign Relations During the Sino-Japanese Hostilities 1937-1940," in Jiang Song Meiling, ed., *China Shall Rise Again* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1941) 118-125.

⁵⁰ "Resolution of the Council of the League of Nations adopted January 20, 1939," in Harold S. Quigley, *Far Eastern War 1937-1941*, 329-330; see also Bradford A. Lee, *Britain and*

The Second Sino-Japanese War also brought about a dramatic loss of political capital for the Guomindang. While rural peasants in the interior accounted for the vast majority of the Chinese population, the Guomindang government's primary base of support consisted of capitalist elites in urban centers along the eastern coast. The fifteen-year gap between the fall of the Qing dynasty and the establishment of the Nanjing government had created a power vacuum in China that had given rise to a number of local warlords, concentrated in the north and west (see Map 2.2). The prolonged instability of the Chinese state in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries replaced any previous sense of national identity with regionalism, with many Chinese maintaining stronger allegiances to regional authorities than to the newly formed central government in Nanjing. As a result, the Guomindang was able only to establish firm control over two coastal provinces during the Nanjing decade (1927-1937): Zhejiang and Jiangsu (containing both Shanghai and Nanjing).⁵¹

The blatant lack of a shared national identity throughout the provinces compelled the Guomindang to become heavily militarized in the 1920s. Recognizing the disunity of the Chinese people, Jiang Jieshi instituted a period of "political tutelage" in which provinces were pressured to remain loyal to the Guomindang through military force.⁵²

the Sino-Japanese War 1937-1939: A Study in the Dilemmas of British Decline (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1973) 85-87.

⁵¹ Qi Xisheng, *Nationalist China at War*, 141; Guomindang Bureau of Statistics, *Chung-kuo Guomindang tang-wu t'ung-chi chi-yao* (Nanjing, ROC: 1944) 1; Dian Hongmao, *Government and Politics in Kuomintang China*, 1-5.

⁵² Jiang Jieshi, "China's March Toward Democracy," address given to the Third Session of the People's Political Council, Chongqing, February 21, 1939, in *Resistance and Reconstruction: Messages During China's Six Years of War 1937-1943* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1943) 84-86.

Map 2.2. Nationalist China, 1928-1937



Source: Robert A, Lynn, ed., “Nationalist China 1928-1937 (Map)” at Orders of Battle (Ravi Rikhye, 2006) <http://orbat.com/site/maps/historical/chine%20civil%20war%20usma/chinese%20civil%20war%20map%2002.jpg> (accessed January 25, 2010). This map illustrates the contrast between the small area of firm Guomindang control along the eastern coast, and the larger territories of semi-autonomous warlords in the interior.

While Jiang maintained that this period of military rule was a temporary step on the road toward democracy, the actions of the Guomindang regime suggested a movement toward fascism, with little evidence of intent for democratization.⁵³ The Guomindang leadership

⁵³ The period of “political tutelage” often referred to in the writings of Jiang Jieshi was allegedly based on Sun Zhongshan’s “Three Principles of the People” (San min chu) and used as justification for the lack of democratic reform during the Nanjing decade (1927-1937). The

maintained that “without self-defense, self-government cannot be developed.”⁵⁴ Consumed with consolidating his power and increasing the amount of territory under Guomintang influence, Jiang Jieshi failed to create any true sense of legitimacy among the Chinese population in the 1920s-1930s. When the Japanese army invaded in 1937 and brought about a rapid and severe weakening of the Guomintang military, Jiang Jieshi lost his only method of maintaining the allegiance of the masses. The absence of Guomintang military presence throughout the provinces allowed for the rise of a more organic nationalist movement in the 1940s under the leadership of the CCP.⁵⁵

The forced relocation of the nationalist government to western Chongqing also had significant political consequences. In the late 1930s, the Guomintang had little control over Sichuan province, with virtually no significant influence in the neighboring provinces of Qinghai or Xikang.⁵⁶ The southwestern region of China remained the major center of feudal warlordism into the 1930s. Power struggles between local militarists had prevented any socioeconomic growth within the region, with more than 470 armed conflicts between various warlords

generalissimo argued that China must first be securely united under a strong (ultimately dictatorial) central government before opposition voices could be tolerated. This philosophy of governance differed greatly from communist policies of political participation and peasant mobilization in the Jiangxi Soviet (1927-1934) and during the Yan’an years (1934-1949). See Jiang Jieshi “China’s March Toward Democracy,” address given to the Third Session of the People’s Political Council, Chongqing, February 21, 1939, in *Resistance and Reconstruction*, 84-86. See also Bailey, *China in the Twentieth Century*, 110.

⁵⁴ C.E. Gauss, “The Ambassador in China (Gauss) to the Secretary of State,” Chongqing, March 27, 1944, in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers 1944, China*, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957) 385; “The Manifesto of the Extraordinary National Congress of the Kuomintang April 1, 1938,” in *The Kuomintang: Selected Historical Documents 1894-1969*, edited by Milton J. T. Shieh (New York: St. John’s University Center for Asian Studies, 1970) 177-182.

⁵⁵ Chalmers Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power*, 24-25.

⁵⁶ The province of Xikang no longer exists in the present People’s Republic of China. Its territory is included in the Tibet (Xizang) Autonomous Region.

occurring between 1911 and 1938.⁵⁷ Preoccupied with resisting the Japanese invasion (and later the growing communist movement) in the east, the Guomintang was unable to assert its dominance over the region surrounding its new capital. The city of Chengdu, also in Sichuan province, became the center of anti-government militarism in the 1940s, where warlords reportedly captured and hoarded food supplies, contributing to inflation and the continued weakening of the Guomintang regime.⁵⁸

In addition to forcing the nationalist government into the territory of militant warlords, the Japanese invasion separated the Guomintang from the majority of the Chinese population, including its main base of support in eastern urban centers. In 1943, American diplomats in China noted the devastation to Guomintang political power in central and eastern China, as areas behind Japanese lines fell under the influence of collaborationist regimes or the CCP.⁵⁹ By June 1940, the Guomintang government had lost nearly 30,000 kilometers of long-distance telephone lines (half the total at the outbreak of war) further cementing its isolation from eastern China.⁶⁰

While claiming to have united with the CCP in a shared defense of China against the Japanese, Jiang Jieshi initiated a blockade of communist controlled areas in northwestern China,

⁵⁷ American Office of Strategic Service (OSS) Memo, February 1945 in Amerasia Papers, vol. 2, no. 259, 1359-1363.

⁵⁸ Qi Xisheng, *Nationalist China at War*, 143-146.

⁵⁹ Collaborationist regimes were cooperative governments organized by the Japanese with Chinese puppet leaders in urban centers, such as the Wang Jingwei collaborationist regime in Nanjing. The CCP established local governments in rural areas behind Japanese lines, as will be discussed in later chapters of this work; John Service, "Memorandum by the Third Secretary of Embassy in China (Service), Temporarily in the United States," January 23, 1943 in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1943, China*, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957) 193-195.

⁶⁰ Zhang Kia-ngau, "Free China's Reconstruction Work in the Field of Communications," in *China Shall Rise Again*, edited by Jiang Song Meiling (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1941) 163.

preventing travel or trade between Yan'an and Chongqing.⁶¹ Foreign journalists and military personnel were not permitted to pass the blockade (per restrictions imposed by Jiang) and the Guomindang broke radio communication with the communists to the north on January 14, 1944. While hoping to protect Guomindang controlled areas in the west from communist influence, this block of communication further contributed to the diplomatic and political isolation of the Guomindang, enraging foreign diplomats as well as Chinese peasants suffering in the east.⁶²

Entries found in the diary of British journalist, Robert Payne, emphasized the political devastation for the Guomindang in eastern and central China as a result of the war with Japan. Payne, who traveled throughout China during the years of the Japanese occupation, criticized the actions of Jiang Jieshi, claiming that he was a leader disconnected from the majority of the Chinese people. Payne argued that Jiang Jieshi's isolation from soldiers and peasants during the war with Japan caused the Chinese people to lose confidence in the Generalissimo. Payne's assertions claimed to reflect the attitudes of people living in central and eastern China, arguing that peasants were unforgiving of a government that seemed to have abandoned them. In contrast to statements made about the Guomindang, the diary argued that messages from the communist leadership resonated with the masses, partly because of the communication facilitated by the proximity of Yan'an, the communist capital, to peasants living in the interior. Payne's

⁶¹ Yan'an, in the northwestern province of Shaanxi, housed the headquarters of the CCP from the end of the Long March in 1935 throughout the era of the Second Sino-Japanese War.

⁶² C.E. Gauss, "The Ambassador in China (Gauss) to the Secretary of State," Chongqing, January 18, 1944, in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1944, China*, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957) 309-310.

diary affirmed the apparent loss of legitimacy for the nationalist government as a result of its geographic isolation during the war with Japan.⁶³

As Japan further threatened Jiang Jieshi's power by decreasing the Guomindang's territory, legitimacy, and military might, the Generalissimo became increasingly fearful and dictatorial. In 1938, Jiang outlawed a number of mass political organizations and dismissed the republic's National Assembly, which eliminated political participation in areas under Guomindang control.⁶⁴ To combat growing domestic opposition, the Guomindang employed a force of secret police to seek out and persecute dissidents in areas under its influence.⁶⁵

These actions by the Guomindang regime outraged students and leftists who had once been loyal to the republican government. As a result, intellectuals left the Guomindang en masse during the latter years of the Second Sino-Japanese War.⁶⁶ Feeling that Jiang had betrayed the republic and hopes for democracy, students, writers, and professors began publicly criticizing Jiang Jieshi. In a February 1944 speech, Dr. Sun Fo of the Central Training Corps gave a speech claiming that the Guomindang had "forgotten the very substance and method of

⁶³ Robert Payne, *Chinese Diaries 1941-1946* (New York: Waybright and Talley, 1970) 232-233.

⁶⁴ "A Review of Kuomintang-Communist Relations 1921-1944," in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1944, China*, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957) 51-57.

⁶⁵ John Service, "Memorandum by the Third Secretary of Embassy in China (Service) Temporarily in the United States," Washington, D.C., January 23, 1943 in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1943, China*, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957) 193-195.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 193-195.

democracy...assumed the attitude and habits of a ruling-caste and [had] come to regard itself as the sovereign power entitled to a special position and to suppression of all criticism.”⁶⁷

The increasingly dictatorial tendencies of the Guomindang regime, as it struggled to recover from the devastation brought about by the Japanese invasion, also created tensions with western powers, specifically the United States. American diplomats in China during the war expressed great frustration at Jiang Jieshi’s insistence on attacking political dissidents instead of focusing primarily on resisting Japan. On January 23, 1943, American diplomat John Service wrote that Jiang had begun turning his military focus away from Japan to eliminate communism, employing secret police throughout the provinces and using vital military resources to prepare for an offensive against communist strongholds in Hebei province.⁶⁸ Tensions between western diplomats and Jiang Jieshi escalated into 1945, when the former U.S. Ambassador to China, C. E. Gauss, predicted that the CCP would win the inevitable civil war due to the fact that foreign powers could not give the Guomindang enough aid to compensate for the profound weaknesses in Jiang Jieshi’s government.⁶⁹ While some scholars have argued that such examples suggest that Jiang Jieshi’s ineptitude was the ultimate reason for the defeat of the Guomindang, a broader examination of preceding events shows that Jiang’s move toward fascism in the early 1940s was

⁶⁷ Dr. Sun Fo, “Democratization of the Government and Planned Economy,” February 23, 1944 in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1944, China*, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957) 385.

⁶⁸ John Service, “Memorandum by the Third Secretary of Embassy in China (Service), Temporarily in the United States,” January 23, 1943 in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1943, China* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957) 193-199.

⁶⁹ C.E. Gauss, “The Ambassadorship of Major General Patrick J. Hurley 1944-1945,” in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1945, China* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957) 64-68.

a reaction to the dramatic weakening of his political power as a direct result of the Japanese invasion.⁷⁰

Economic Consequences of the War

In addition to weakening the Guomintang through geographic and political isolation, the Second Sino-Japanese War also proved exceptionally destructive to the economy of the Republic of China. The Japanese invasion imposed a tremendous financial strain on the Guomintang government, with an estimated 100 billion Chinese yuan spent in military expenditures and another 36 billion U.S. dollars lost in the destruction of property.⁷¹ As the threat of Japanese militarism in the Pacific made other nations initially hesitant to come to China's aid, the Guomintang government was forced to bear the cost of resistance alone in the early months of the war. Funding the resistance proved especially difficult to a government far removed from its primary sources of revenue. The Japanese invasion separated the Guomintang from major population centers in the east, rendering the government powerless to collect taxes from wealthy urban capitalists. With little administrative control over underdeveloped western provinces, the Guomintang was unable to produce necessary revenue to independently fund its military efforts.⁷²

Beyond military costs, the Japanese invasion also robbed China of a number of its most resource rich provinces. Statements by both Chinese and Japanese officials illustrate Japan's

⁷⁰ See Lloyd Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution: China Under Nationalist Rule 1927-1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974); see also Parkes Coble, *Facing Japan: Chinese Politics and Japanese Imperialism 1931-1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

⁷¹ He Yingqin, *Who Actually Fought the Sino-Japanese War 1939-1945*, 4.

⁷² H. H. Kong, "Holding China's Financial Front," in *China Shall Rise Again*, edited by Jiang Song Meiling (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1941) 73.

desire to gain access to raw materials in China, which were vital to Japanese industry.⁷³

Agricultural products from northeastern regions, once essential to the subsistence of the Chinese people, fell under Japanese control as Guomintang forces were pushed into the west. Minerals crucial for industrialization, such as coal and iron, were also concentrated in areas under Japanese control. In a plea for foreign aid, a report issued by the Guomintang in 1938 concluded that without these resource-rich provinces all of China would perish. Recognizing the important role of economics in successful resistance, the report concluded, “In the end, the loss of economic freedom will bring about the extinction of our nation.”⁷⁴

The scarcity of food and resources outside of Japanese territory caused dramatic inflation in western China during the war. By 1943, the prices of food staples in Sichuan province were reportedly increasing at the rate of ten percent per week. From June 1 to July 6 of that year, the price of rice in Chengdu doubled, sparking anti-Guomintang rebellions and exacerbating the government’s political difficulties in the region. American diplomats in Chongqing in the 1940s reported that prices in the capital were often 100 times higher than those before the Japanese invasion, with prices in the southern city of Kunming often reaching 200 times those of the pre-war era. As prices continued to rise, middle-class supporters of the Guomintang in Chongqing became increasingly impoverished, compounding the government’s loss of political capital.⁷⁵

⁷³ Jiang Jieshi, “Statement by General Chiang Kaishek 26 December 1938,” in Quigley, *Far Eastern War*, 284-285; Premier Konoye, “Statement by Premier Konoye December 22, 1938,” in Quigley, *Far Eastern War*, 283.

⁷⁴ “Manifesto of the Extraordinary National Congress of the Guomintang April 1, 1938” in *The Kuomintang: Selected Historical Documents 1894-1969*, edited by Milton J. T. Shieh, 173-175.

⁷⁵ George Atcheson, “The Chargé in China to the Secretary of State,” July 25, 1943; August 31, 1943 in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 437; Hull, “The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in China (Gauss),” 25 January 1943, in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 199.

Japan also contributed to the devastation of the Chinese economy by smuggling and purchasing goods from unoccupied territories, bringing them into areas under Japanese control. In 1943, employees of the Bank of China in Guilin claimed that Japanese spies used large amounts of counterfeit Chinese currency to purchase goods in Guomintang China.⁷⁶ Reportedly having acquired the plates necessary for printing the currency during the battle of Hong Kong in 1941, the Japanese flooded unoccupied China with false currency, through the purchase of “strategic materials.” Such actions proved doubly devastating to the republic’s economy, creating an increased supply of money while simultaneously draining China of goods.⁷⁷

While the Japanese contributed heavily to dramatic inflation in Guomintang areas during the 1940s, Jiang Jieshi’s actions aggravated the weaknesses of the Chinese economy. Instead of addressing smuggling and trade along border regions between occupied and unoccupied China, Jiang focused a great deal of resources on blockading the CCP to the north. While Jiang Jieshi failed to address the causes of inflation along the border of Japanese territory, the Guomintang leader requested and received some \$700 million in aid from the United States, hoping to combat inflation and stabilize the economy. In 1944, Jiang Jieshi sent a letter to U.S. President Roosevelt demanding more monetary aid to address inflation, threatening to withdraw support of American troops in China if his demands were not met. When confronted with the advice of economists, Jiang maintained that American economists did not understand the Chinese economy. By 1944, however, the weaknesses in the Chinese economy were so profound that U.S. Ambassador to China, C.E. Gauss claimed, “No amount of American money in the United States to the credit of

⁷⁶ Guilin is a city in the present-day Guangxi Autonomous Region in southern China.

⁷⁷ George Atcheson, “The Chargé in China to the Secretary of State,” 23 July 1943, 25 July 1943 in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 435-437

China could remedy China's financial and economic situation any more than if the whole of our machine gun output were hypothecated to China and remained in the United States."⁷⁸

The Guomindang's geographic and diplomatic isolation contributed further to its economic collapse. The relocation of the capital to western Chongqing placed the Guomindang in a region that contained virtually no modern industry, forcing the nationalist government to attempt to industrialize western China while engaging in a military conflict with the Japanese in the east. Limited routes for the transportation of goods made this industrialization significantly more difficult. In 1940, Dr. Wang Zhonghui, Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Republic of China, noted obstructions to trade as a result of a Franco-Japanese agreement that ended all traffic between China and the outside world via Indochina. Other Guomindang officials emphasized the devastating impact of the closing of the Burma Road constructed by the British in 1938.⁷⁹ According to the Guomindang Minister of Industrial Reorganization, the loss of this trade route left the government in Chongqing completely isolated from the world except for a few small supply routes through Russia. Wang claimed that it would have been better to sacrifice a province of China than to lose this strategic connection with the outside world, arguing that the government was now faced with the reality of "limited means and a dark economic future."⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Ibid., 435-437; C.E. Gauss, "The Ambassador in China to the Secretary of State," 16 January 1944, in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 837-839.

⁷⁹ Lee, *Britain and the Sino-Japanese War 1937-1939*, 85-87; Payne, *Chinese Diaries*, 94-95.

⁸⁰ Wang Zhonghui, "China's Foreign Relations During the Sino-Japanese Hostilities 1937-1940," in *China Shall Rise Again*, edited by Jiang Song Meiling (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1941) 136-141; see also Jiang Jieshi, "New Life in Wartime," in *Resistance and Reconstruction: Messages During China's Six Years of War 1937-1943* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1943) 152.

Conclusion

By 1945, the once stable government of the Republic of China lay in ruins. As the Japanese army forced the Guomintang to abandon its territory and weaponry, it weakened a regime whose political dominance had been maintained solely through military strength. The destruction of the Guomintang military and the retreat of Jiang Jieshi into the remote west created a power vacuum in the east that gave rise to a more authentic, rural-based nationalist movement. Abandoned by their government and suffering at the hands of the Japanese military, the Chinese masses became increasingly receptive to communist messages of national salvation. With the absence of Guomintang presence in the north and east, the CCP presented itself as the alternative to Japanese collaboration. Following the withdrawal of Japanese forces in 1945, the Guomintang regime found itself unable to recover from the political and economic damage it endured at the hands of the Japanese. With few resources or political support, Jiang Jieshi lacked the tools necessary for the salvation of his government from organized communist opposition.

CHAPTER 3:
COMMUNIST EXPANSION BEHIND JAPANESE LINES

In the 1930s, Jiang Jieshi sought to eliminate the communist insurgency that threatened the stability of his regime. Following a series of five anti-communist military campaigns, the Chinese Communist Party abandoned its base in southern China and embarked on the epic Long March to the north. As a result of the Guomindang's relentless efforts at annihilation, by the time of the Japanese invasion, the CCP had been reduced to a small, disorganized group of rebels, pushed into rural exile in one of the most impoverished regions of northern China. With the increasingly evident threat of Japanese invasion, the leadership of the CCP attempted to make amends with their pursuers through a proposed mutual resistance of Japan. In 1937, the CCP issued a resolution in favor of a second united front, calling for cooperation between the communists and the Guomindang based on the need for national salvation from the threat of Japan.⁸¹

Despite the initial alliance between the communists and nationalists, The Second Sino-Japanese War impacted the Guomindang and the CCP in very different ways. The war bankrupted the Guomindang government, dramatically weakening its military and political influence. In contrast, the Japanese invasion had a significantly positive impact on the CCP. With Jiang Jieshi forced to address the foreign invaders, the communists were given a respite

⁸¹ The first united front occurred in the 1920s, when the CCP and Guomindang formed an alliance against feudal warlords and imperialism. The alliance culminated in the Northern Expedition, which united eighty percent of the mainland under a central government. The alliance collapsed in 1927. See Bailey, *China in the Twentieth Century*; 100-110. See also Guillermaz, *A History of the Chinese Communist Party*, 124-125; Mao Zedong, "Policies, Measures and Perspectives for Resisting the Japanese Invasion," July 23, 1927 in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, edited by Bruno Shaw (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1970) 109-110.

from the violent attacks that had threatened to annihilate them in the 1930s. As Japan pursued direct military battles with Guomintang armies, the CCP was able to orchestrate guerilla attacks at the enemy's flanks and rear, organizing resistance behind Japanese lines that would later be mobilized against the Guomintang during the subsequent Chinese Civil War of 1946-1949. By 1945, the Guomintang was dramatically weakened, forced to wait in western China for the other allies to defeat Japan, while the CCP was expanding its territory and influence in the east. The Japanese invasion separated the two rival political parties, protecting the struggling CCP, giving the communists the opportunity to expand their territory, influence and military with minimal interference from the Guomintang.⁸²

Expansion of Communist Territory

The Japanese invasion significantly aided the CCP's efforts to increase the amount of territory under its control. This expansion was not merely a de facto result of the Japanese invasion but a calculated move on the part of the CCP. Aware of the opportunities afforded them by Japan, the leadership of the CCP often spoke of their ultimate goal of a new central government in China. The communist leader Mao Zedong called for party leadership to "expand armed forces freely and independently, set up base areas unhesitatingly...and build up united front organs of political power under the leadership of the CCP."⁸³ The communists' route of escape from Jiang Jieshi's military campaigns in the 1930s took them to rural Yan'an in the northern province of Shaanxi. As Japan threatened military invasion and forced Jiang Jieshi to address international concerns, the communists sought first to establish a secure base in Yan'an,

⁸² Edgar Snow, *The Battle for Asia* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1941) 200; Bailey, *China in the Twentieth Century*, 117-119.

⁸³ Mao Zedong, "Freely Expand the Anti-Japanese Forces and Resist the Onslaughts of the Anti-Communist Diehards," May 4, 1940, in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, 217-218.

and then to expand gradually their influence outward through Shaanxi and into neighboring provinces. This strategy was largely successful in that it filled the power vacuum created in the east by the Guomindang's retreat into western China in 1937 (see Map 3.1).⁸⁴

The CCP's strategy of territorial expansion during the war tended to mimic that of the invading Japanese army. Like the Japanese, the CCP sought to establish a strong base in northern China, then expand to the south, eventually moving westward during the civil war 1946-49. Expanding behind Japanese lines, the CCP gained significant pieces of territory throughout eastern China during the war. The communists established base areas in three distinct areas: The Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border region in northern China; Hebei, Shandong, and Anhui in central China; and Jiangxi in southern China.⁸⁵ The fact that CCP expansion mirrored that of the Japanese invasion illustrates the thoughtful planning of the communists and the significance of the war for the growth of the CCP.

A number of scholars, including Chalmers Johnson, have seen the beginnings of the communist revolution as a grassroots peasant movement later harnessed by the CCP.⁸⁶ As the Japanese army threatened villages throughout China, a number of peasants began fighting back through roughly organized, ill-equipped groups orchestrating guerilla-style warfare against the Japanese. Communist expansion during the war was largely accomplished through the consolidation of these small guerilla units who were given training, arms, and organization by

⁸⁴ As the Japanese army marched toward the Guomindang capital, Nanjing, in 1937, Jiang Jieshi moved his capital to the western city of Chongqing, which lay on the Chang Jiang (Yangtze) in Sichuan Province (now the Chongqing municipality); See Qi Xisheng, *Nationalist China at War*, 41-45.

⁸⁵ Mao Zedong, "Interview with the British Journalist James Bertram," October 25, 1937, in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, 118-119.

⁸⁶ Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power*, 1-5.

the CCP. Abandoned by the central government and seeking a way to resist the Japanese army, peasants behind Japanese lines increasingly gave their loyalty to the CCP. As a result, the CCP greatly increased its presence throughout interior provinces. By the mid 1940s, the Japanese military noted the significant territorial expansion of the communist Eighth Route Army in northern China.⁸⁷ By March 1945, the CCP administered nineteen small guerilla zones and controlled 535 miles of coastline.⁸⁸

Expansion of Communist Influence

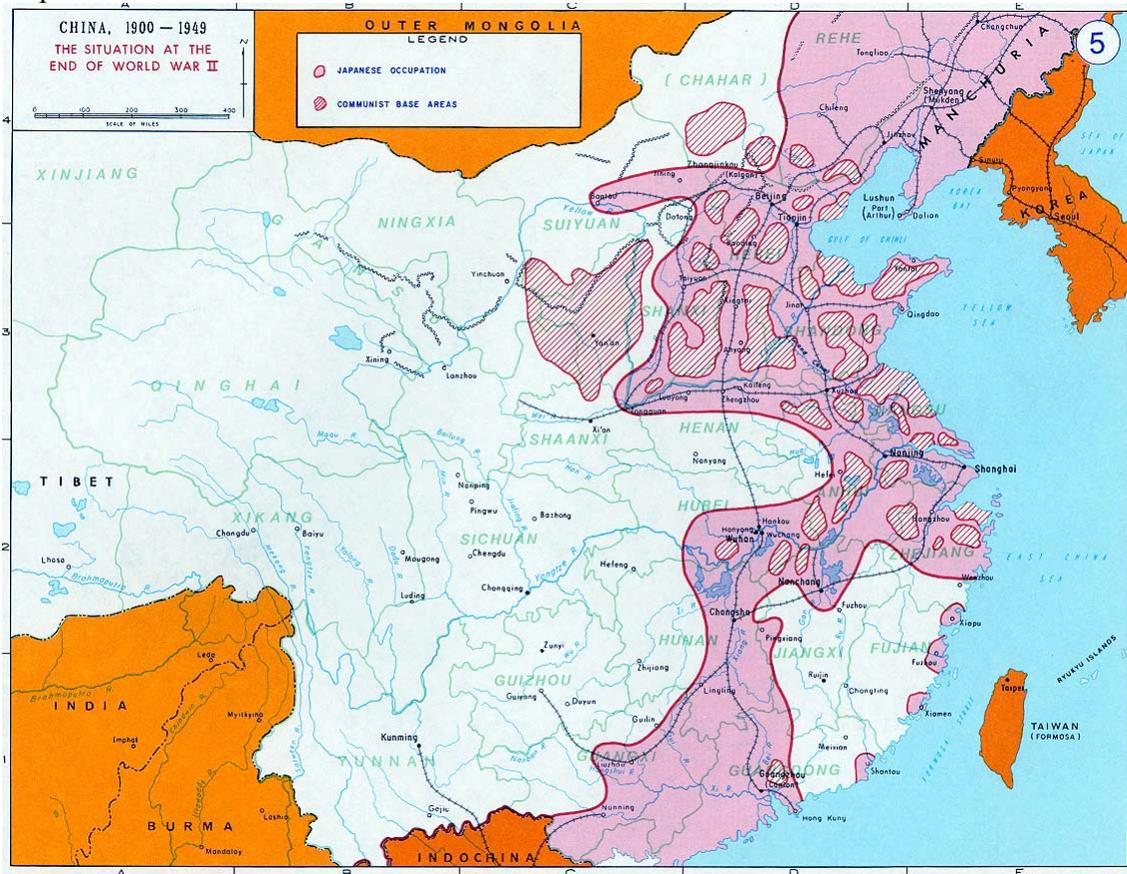
In addition to dramatically increasing its territory, the CCP gained valuable political influence over the Chinese masses during the period of the Second Sino-Japanese War. The Japanese established puppet governments or “collaborationist” regimes in eastern urban centers, with administrative seats filled by Chinese defectors, such as the Wang Jingwei collaborationist government in Nanjing. With the lack of Guomindang political presence in the east, the Chinese masses were forced to choose between collaborating with the Japanese or cooperating with the communists in resisting foreign invasion. While collaborationist governments were primarily centered on major cities, such as Nanjing or Beijing, the CCP sought to organize local governments in rural areas, where the majority of the Chinese population resided. By the late 1930s, three Chinas existed: the Guomindang and warlord-controlled areas in the West,

⁸⁷ Mao Zedong, “Expose the Plot for a Far Eastern Munich,” 25 May 1941 in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, 237.

⁸⁸ Dong Biwu, *Memorandum on China’s Liberated Areas: A Factual Report on Chinese Areas Liberated from Japanese Occupation*, (San Francisco: May 18, 1945) 10; see also Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power*, vii.

Japanese-collaborationist regimes in eastern cities, and communist-controlled areas behind Japanese lines in rural central and eastern China.⁸⁹

Map 3.1. The Situation at the End of World War II.



Source: Robert A, Lynn, ed., “The Situation at the End of WWII (Map)” at Orders of Battle (Ravi Rikhye, 2006)<http://orbat.com/site/maps/historical/chine%20civil%20war%20usma/chinese%20civil%20war%20map%2002.jpg> (accessed February 23, 2010).

The spread of communist-led local governments behind Japanese lines clearly illustrates the expansion of CCP influence during the war. In May 1938, Mao Zedong proclaimed the establishment of the Shanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region government, illustrating that communist influence in the region surpassed that of the Guomindang a mere ten months after the

⁸⁹ Bailey, *China in the Twentieth Century*, 117-120.

initial Japanese invasion.⁹⁰ This move by the CCP can be seen as a first step toward the consolidation of its power in the north.⁹¹ The organization of a communist-led government spanning territory from three provinces was a significant move foreshadowing the eventual communist dominance of China. The establishment of such local governments would not have been possible without the Japanese invasion, strongly suggesting the significance of the Second Sino-Japanese War for the CCP.

From its organization in 1938, the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border region in the north served as a base from which the CCP expanded its influence. In the late 1930s, the communist leaders in this border region began forming “organs of anti-Japanese democratic power in northern and central China.” In 1940, the CCP established the Hebei Provincial Assembly and the Hebei Administrative Council, showing an expansion of organized CCP political influence into central China within two years of the establishment of its original Border region.⁹² The CCP continued its expansion southward throughout the 1940s, gaining the support of millions of Chinese peasants and local gentry. By April 1945, CCP membership totaled more than 1.2 million with a population of 95.5 million under the influence of communist-led local governments.⁹³

The establishment of local governments in communist areas allowed the party to connect with the peasantry and implement a proposed form of government in stark contrast to that

⁹⁰ Ibid., 120-143.

⁹¹ Mao Zedong, “Proclamation by the Government of the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region and the Rear Headquarters of the Eighth Route Army,” May 15, 1938 in Selected Works of Mao Zedong, 127-128.

⁹² Mao Zedong, “New-Democratic Constitutional Government,” February 20, 1940 in Selected Works of Mao Zedong, 213-215.

⁹³ Mao Zedong, “China’s Two Possible Destinies,” April 23, 1945 in Selected Works of Mao Zedong, 281-282.

administered by the Guomindang. Unlike the increasingly dictatorial Guomindang, the CCP advocated expanded suffrage in areas under its control. In March 1940 Mao Zedong proclaimed, “Every Chinese who reaches the age of 18 and is in favor of resistance and democracy should enjoy the right to elect and to be elected, irrespective of class, nationality, sex, creed, party-affiliation or educational level.”⁹⁴ While compliance with the general platform of the CCP was a prerequisite for participation, such statements by the communist leader show clear efforts to engage the peasantry in government, politics, and resistance. United States Ambassador to China C.E. Gauss noted the benefits of increased participation for the communists, asserting that “all sections of the population give enthusiastic support to the war because of the self-government and political programs of the Border Governments.”⁹⁵

While making great efforts to expand its influence, the CCP allowed non-party members to hold the majority of administrative positions in the local governments it organized. The CCP established governments under a system of thirds: one third of the leadership of a given region must be CCP members, one third must be non-party leftist progressives, and the remaining third must be moderate candidates (“neither left nor right”). While ensuring that each government maintained substantial CCP influence, this policy contributed to the unity of the masses and prevented the alienation of non-party members in local politics. Mao Zedong emphasized the political benefits of the thirds policy, noting that allowing non-leftists to have a voice in government helped to rally communist support among the middle bourgeoisie and local gentry.

⁹⁴ Mao Zedong, “Current Problems of Tactics in the Anti-Japanese United Front,” March 11, 1940, in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, 215.

⁹⁵ “Border governments” refer to communist-controlled territories (also called “Border regions” in many translations of primary sources from CCP leadership). “The Ambassador in China to the Secretary of State,” March 17 1944, in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1944, China IX* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1954), 381; see also Forman, *Report from Red China*, 98-103.

Mao also noted that the system of thirds was not set to rigid quotas but was established as a rough, proportional guide for localities to follow.⁹⁶ While the policy allowed for non-CCP moderates and leftists to participate in government, the CCP restricted voices it viewed to be “rightist.” Traitors (including collaborationists) and anti-Communists (including Guomindang sympathizers) were firmly suppressed in communist areas. However, this intolerance for rightist dissent in spite of greater political participation may have been in reaction to Jiang Jieshi’s attempts to infiltrate communist areas with secret police.⁹⁷

After winning support through increased participation and well-articulated messages of anti-Japanese resistance, the CCP slowly began introducing its Marxist agenda in the border regions. A number of socialist policies were implemented, geared to benefiting the peasantry. The workday in the border regions was set at ten hours with a goal to shorten it to eight hours. To promote greater equality, land rent was reduced by twenty-five percent and the poorest of peasants were exempted from paying taxes. Educational opportunities, facilitating the

⁹⁶ Despite later developments in the history of the People’s Republic, during the Yan’an years (1935-1949), Mao was far from a dictator. While Mao became the author of revolutionary ideology and the philosopher behind communist government, the communist military remained largely under the leadership of other figures, such as Peng Dehuai and Zhu De during the era of the war with Japan. See Snow, *The Battle for Asia*, 175-177; Mao Zedong, “On the Question of Political Power in the Anti-Japanese Base Areas,” March 6, 1940 in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, 214-215; see also George Atcheson, “The Chargé in China to the Secretary of State,” July 8, 1943 in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1943, China* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1954), 279-281.

⁹⁷ See John Service, “Memorandum by the Third Secretary of Embassy in China (Service), Temporarily in the United States,” January 23, 1943 in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1943, China* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957) 193-199; Mao Zedong, “On Policy,” December 25, 1940 in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, 219-220.

dissemination of communist ideology, were made available through village schools and literacy groups.⁹⁸

The economy in the border regions centered on agriculture. Soldiers were required to farm in between periods of training and fighting. When soldiers reportedly had difficulty farming in rough terrain, communist leaders enlisted the help of rural farmers to cooperate with the military in supplying food for army rations.⁹⁹ Border regions were to work toward self-sufficiency, with Mao proclaiming, “We must not depend on the outside at all.” Production was promoted not only in the established border regions, but also in loosely organized guerilla zones and other “liberated areas.”¹⁰⁰ The CCP saw economic growth as key to the defeat of Japan and the end of China’s national subjugation.¹⁰¹

The war with Japan also allowed the CCP to implement economic policies that fostered popular support for the communists. Prior to the Japanese invasion, the rural peasantry had been nearly bankrupted by heavy taxation. Communist leaders in border regions abolished forty-two taxes enforced by previous regimes. The primary source of revenue for newly established local governments was an export tax on goods such as salt, wool, and hides. No taxes were levied on land. Instead, farmers were required to contribute to “National Salvation and Public Food Consumption,” a stockpile of food used for army rations and the self-sufficiency of border

⁹⁸ Ibid., 219-223.

⁹⁹ Snow, *Battle For Asia*, 171-175.

¹⁰⁰ Here, “liberated areas” refers to areas under communist control. This term is used frequently in sources written by communist leadership.

¹⁰¹ Mao Zedong, “We Must Learn to Do Economic Work,” January 10, 1945 in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, 278-279; Mao Zedong, “Production is Also Possible in the Guerilla Zones,” January 31, 1945 in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, 280-281.

regions. The farmer's cooperation with this policy illustrated the CCP's success with the peasantry; who voluntarily contributed fifty percent more than the required amount in 1939.¹⁰²

Increased Military Might

The Second Sino-Japanese War also had a significant impact on the communist military. CCP forces faced a number of unique challenges during its resistance of Japan in the 1930s-1940s. Following the fall of Wuhan in 1941 and the retreat of nationalist forces into western China, guerilla forces and rural militia (organized by the CCP) became a primary threat to Japanese domination in central and eastern China.¹⁰³ As communist-orchestrated attacks at the invader's flanks and rear successfully weakened sections of the Japanese army in the early 1940s, leading Tokyo radio stations began to proclaim that communist forces were the greatest enemy of Japan in China.¹⁰⁴ In response, Japan focused a significant portion of its military efforts against CCP forces in the latter years of the war. The communist leadership noted this change in Japanese strategy, with Mao Zedong arguing that only thirty-six percent of Japanese troops and five percent of collaborationist troops were attacking Guomindang-controlled areas, while communist forces endured the majority of Japanese attacks.¹⁰⁵ Other sources confirm significant challenges for the communists due to Japan's targeting of rural areas, with journalist Robert Forman reporting,

¹⁰² Snow, *Battle for Asia*, 320-342.

¹⁰³ Wuhan lies on the Chang Jiang (Yangtze) in Hubei Province. For more information on the Battle of Wuhan, see Qi Xisheng, *Nationalist China at War*, 52-59.

¹⁰⁴ Snow, *Battle for Asia*, 200-201.

¹⁰⁵ Mao Zedong, "On Coalition Government," in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, 285-299.

The Eight Route and New Fourth Armies together represent something less than one-fifth of the total Chinese forces facing the Japanese. These Communist troops, however, engage 49.5 percent of all the Japanese forces in China today, as well as over 90 percent of nearly 800,000 puppets.¹⁰⁶

Through a series of “mopping-up campaigns,” the Japanese army orchestrated violent attacks against the rural population of central and eastern China, hoping to eliminate residual resistance in areas behind Japanese lines.¹⁰⁷

In addition to enduring increasingly frequent Japanese attacks, the communist army and militia also faced significant challenges as a result of the CCP’s strained relationship with the Guomindang, who retained control of the internationally recognized government of the Republic of China. On January 17, 1941, Jiang Jieshi ordered that the CCP’s New Fourth Army be incorporated into the Guomindang army and that command be consolidated under Guomindang generals. The CCP rejected this order as counterrevolutionary, claiming that Jiang Jieshi had presented an unreasonable demand of unilateral submission. In an attempt to bring the rebellious communist forces under his control, Jiang Jieshi ordered the New Fourth Army to cross the Chang Jiang, leading CCP forces into an ambush. With nearly eighty thousand troops, the Guomindang attacked the New Fourth Army, orchestrating an eight-day massacre that resulted in the deaths of more than five thousand communist soldiers and the capture of the CCP General Yeh Ting.¹⁰⁸ The event, referred to as the New Fourth Army Incident or Southern Anhui

¹⁰⁶ “Puppets” refers to Japanese organized collaborationist regimes. See Lawrence K. Rosinger, *China’s Wartime Politics 1937-1944* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1944) 33-36; Robert Forman, *Report from Red China*, 125.

¹⁰⁷ Dong Biwu, *Memorandum on China’s Liberated Areas*, 7; see also Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power*, 4-5.

¹⁰⁸ The attack of the Southern Anhui or New Fourth Army Incident was led by the Guomindang generals Gu Zhudong and Shan Guan Yunxiang, who had both fought for the Guomindang in the anti-communist annihilation campaigns of the 1930s; Mao Zedong, “Order and Statement on the Southern Anhui Incident, January 20, 1941 in *Selected Works of Mao*

Incident, brought an official end to the fragile alliance between the CCP and Guomintang. As part of Jiang's blockade of communist areas in northern China, the CCP stopped receiving foreign aid from the central government in Chongqing, forcing the communist-led resistance to be primarily self-sufficient. The self-sufficiency of communist areas became increasingly crucial when the Chinese communists stopped receiving aid from the Soviet Union in 1943.¹⁰⁹

Despite these challenges, the CCP managed to increase drastically its military might during the Second Sino-Japanese War. This was largely due to the communists' nontraditional approach to warfare. While the Guomintang maintained a more conventional military approach of conscripting and training full-time soldiers, the CCP armed citizens in territories under its influence and organized the peasantry into militias. Philosophies of communist resistance focused on total mobilization, in contrast to the Guomintang's approach of resistance by government alone. The Guomintang criticized the CCP's policy of arming rural populations, with Jiang Jieshi stating, "When we reach the point where the whole nation must take up arms, then we know we shall have to sacrifice to the very end without the slightest hope of avoiding suffering by some sudden turn of fortune."¹¹⁰

Zedong, 222-223; see also Snow, *Battle for Asia*, 169-171; C.E. Gauss, "The Ambassador in China to the Secretary of State," November 20, 1943 in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1943, China* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1954), 280-281.

¹⁰⁹ While many sources are unclear as to the precise motivation behind this shift in Soviet policy, American diplomats suspected the flow of Soviet aid to the Chinese communists was hindered by increased Guomintang presence in western provinces (especially Xinjiang); see William Harrison Standley, "The Ambassador in the Soviet Union to the Secretary of State," July 20, 1943 in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1943, China* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1954); see also Dong Biwu, *Memorandum on China's Liberated Areas*, 7-8.

¹¹⁰ Jiang Jieshi, "A Turning Point in our Struggle," in *Resistance and Reconstruction: Messages During China's Six Years of War 1937-1943* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1943) 52.

Despite the opposing philosophy of the Guomindang government, the CCP slogan, as articulated in 1937, was “total resistance by the whole nation.” Mao Zedong proclaimed, “A war of partial resistance by the government alone without the mass participation of the people will certainly fail.”¹¹¹ Thus, resistance in the Border regions required the involvement of virtually the entire population. This strategy extended beyond direct combat, with farmers producing food for army rations while women organized knitting groups that provided blankets and clothes for soldiers.¹¹²

The CCP strategy also differed from that of its enemies in that it incorporated a greater understanding of the unique needs and conditions of China. Unlike Japan, China was a vast and backward country, with limited technological means and large amounts of territory. The CCP utilized such conditions to its advantage, engaging in mobile warfare to out-manuever the larger, Japanese army, which had less understanding of Chinese topography.¹¹³ Geography became a central consideration in CCP strategy, with specific scenarios outlined for guerilla warfare in the mountains, plains, and river valleys of rural China. In contrast to the Japanese, the CCP also took prisoners of war, treated them humanely, and used them to gain strategic information about the enemy.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Mao Zedong, “For the Mobilization of All the Nation’s Forces for Victory in the War of Resistance,” August 25, 1937 in Selected Works of Mao Zedong, 113-118; Mao Zedong, “The Situation and Tasks in the Anti-Japanese War After the Fall of Shanghai and Taiyuan,” November 12, 1937 in Selected Works of Mao Zedong, 124.

¹¹² Snow, *Battle for Asia*, 322.

¹¹³ Mao Zedong, “The Strategic Role of Guerrilla Warfare Against Japan,” in Selected Works of Mao Zedong, 171.

¹¹⁴ This need for specific strategies in various topographical situations further illustrates the expansion of CCP territory and influence over multiple regions; Mao Zedong, “Problems of Strategy in Guerrilla War Against Japan, May 1938 in Selected Works of Mao Zedong, 133.

Due to the mobile nature of guerilla warfare, the lack of heavy arms and equipment proved advantageous to communist-led militia in various regions. Tanks and armored vehicles slowed CCP mobility and were useless due to the fact that the CCP had no access to the fuel and spare parts necessary to operate and maintain such vehicles. To prevent other enemy forces from using abandoned arms, most CCP militia groups burned or destroyed the military equipment they confiscated. An exception to this general pattern of CCP strategy toward arms and equipment is the New Fourth Army in eastern and southern China. The New Fourth Army was the most well equipped CCP resistance force, due to its proximity to collaborationist governments, who were supplied with arms by the Japanese army. The New Fourth Army was often able to steal arms and other equipment from Japanese and collaborationist regimes in surrounding areas.¹¹⁵

The Japanese invasion also gave the CCP the opportunity to reconnect with loyal soldiers left behind during the Long March. Nearly 30,000 communist troops were left behind in Jiangxi to cover the rear of the CCP's retreat into the north in 1934. While the Guomindang claimed to have eliminated communist resistance in the region, a number of CCP members and supporters retreated into the surrounding mountains, where they remained until the westward retreat of the Guomindang in 1937. With the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, the surviving communist soldiers were organized under General Han Ying into militia that carried out guerilla attacks on the Japanese in southern provinces, including Hubei, Anhui, Zheijiang, Fujian, Jiangxi, Hunan, Guangdong and Guangxi. Isolated from the primary CCP base in northern Shaanxi, these attacks were originally orchestrated blindly, with General Han Ying having no contact with CCP leadership in Yan'an until late 1937. These residual militia groups helped to re-establish

¹¹⁵ C.E. Gauss, "The Ambassador in China to the Secretary of State," November 20, 1943, in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1943, China* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1954); see also Payne, *Chinese Diaries*, 351.

communist presence in the south, complementing the CCP's northern expansion from Shaanxi. Han Ying's forces were eventually consolidated with the New Fourth Army, which continued military operations throughout central and southern China into the 1940s.¹¹⁶

By the end of the war with Japan, the CCP maintained significant military presence throughout eastern China in three major geographic areas. The Eighth Route Army remained primarily in northern China, centered on the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border region. The New Fourth Army fought mainly in central China, surrounding Anhui Province. Remnant forces left behind after the Long March maintained a significant communist presence in southern provinces, including Jiangxi. By 1945, communist forces included more than 910,000 soldiers, with another 2.2 million in the militia.¹¹⁷ The CCP's strong military presence in various regions during the Japanese invasion left the communists poised for victory against the Guomindang after Japan's withdraw.

Japan's occupation of China throughout the 1930s and 1940s virtually eliminated the nationalist party's presence in the east, allowing for the expansion of the Chinese communists. The communists seized the opportunity afforded them by the Sino-Japanese War to introduce the peasantry to a revolutionary form of government that emphasized political participation and equality. This radically different approach to government, combined with the CCP's successes in resisting the Japanese, won legitimacy and popular support for the communists, allowing them

¹¹⁶ Dong Biwu, Memorandum on China's Liberated Areas, 5-6; see also John Service, "Report by the Second Secretary of Embassy in China," August 31, 1944 in Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1943 China (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1954), 385.

¹¹⁷ Snow, *Battle for Asia*, 176; Dong Biwu, Memorandum on China's Liberated Areas, 4; Mao Zedong, "China's Two Possible Destinies," April 23, 1945 in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, 281-282.

to greatly increase their military might through voluntary militia, while the Guomindang was forced to rely heavily on conscription.¹¹⁸

While CCP total membership was reduced to a mere four thousand at the time of the Japanese invasion, the communists by the defeat of Japan in 1945 were in control of a population comparable to that of the United States at the time. Noting the significant expansion of the CCP's territory, influence and military as a result of the Sino-Japanese War, multiple observers, including journalists, foreign diplomats, and Mao Zedong himself, accurately predicted the CCP's eventual dominance of the Chinese mainland.¹¹⁹ Beyond the strategic advantages it afforded the CCP, the Second Sino-Japanese War also gave the CCP access to the peasantry, which greatly aided the communists' ability to lead an organic, rural-based nationalist movement. This proved to be perhaps the most significant factor in the CCP's ultimate victory over the Guomindang in 1949.

¹¹⁸ Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power*, 17-19.

¹¹⁹ Robert Payne, *Chinese Diaries*, 339-352; see also General G.C. Marshall to President Harry Truman, June 30, 1946, in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1946, The Far East, IX* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1954), 1271-1272.

CHAPTER 4:
PEASANT NATIONALISM REVISITED

The ideology of the Chinese communist leader, Mao Zedong, differed from that of earlier communist revolutionaries elsewhere in that it placed significant emphasis on the role of the rural peasant. In the 1930s, China had experienced very limited industrialization, resulting in an exceptionally small class of industrial workers, with poor, rural farmers accounting for nearly eighty percent of the total population. Unlike Marxism or Leninism, Maoism called for a social revolution that redistributed wealth and property to the peasantry rather than advocating the rise of the urban, industrial proletariat. Thus, Mao called for a sinification of Marxism, emphasizing the practice of Marxist theory as it applied to the Chinese case. Communist theory and ideology were amended to bring about immediate social change in China, as Mao rejected the tendency of some intellectuals to revere the ideas of Marx and Lenin as dogma. Instead, Mao emphasized the usefulness of communist ideology in the mobilization of the masses, passionately asserting,

Our comrades must understand that we do not study Marxism-Leninism because it is pleasing to the eye, nor because it has some mystical value...It is only extremely useful. ...This is a type of childish blindness, and we must start a movement to enlighten these people...Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin have repeatedly said, "Our doctrine is not dogma; it is a guide to action."¹²⁰

As Mao rose to prominence in the latter years of the Jiangxi Soviet, his ideas of a rural-based revolution became more prominent in CCP philosophy than the urban model of Lenin. As other communist thinkers, such as Chen Boda and Zhou Yang, contributed to Mao's

¹²⁰ Mao Zedong, "Directive Letter of the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region Government to Each County on Implementing Better Troops and Simple Administration," December 4, 1941 in *The Rise to Power of the Chinese Communist Party: Documents and Analysis*, Tony Saich and Benjamin Yang, eds., 1067; see also Peter Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 2005) 324-336.

revolutionary philosophy, the CCP targeted the vast, rural population with its message of social revolution. Prior to the Long March, communist areas in the south enacted a number of policies aimed at empowering the peasantry, such as equitable taxation, lower interest rates and reduced land rent.¹²¹ Although these policies served to articulate and demonstrate the attitude of the CCP toward the peasantry, they failed to achieve the party's ultimate goal of mass peasant mobilization prior to the Japanese invasion.

In Mao's 1938 essay, "On Protracted War," the communist leader argued that the unity of the Chinese people was the most important condition of victory and noted unsuccessful attempts at peasant mobilization prior to the war against Japan.¹²² Earlier nationalist movements in China, such as the Xinhai Revolution or the May Fourth Movement,¹²³ were orchestrated by educated, urban elites, a class that accounted for a very small percentage of the total Chinese population. Prior to the outbreak of war in 1937, peasants throughout China based their identity more on ties to local villages than to an abstract, unstable concept of a modern Chinese nation, creating a nationalist movement that was "a head with no body."¹²⁴ In the late 1930s, the invading Japanese

¹²¹ Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution*, 330; see also Mark Selden, *The Yen-an Way in Revolutionary China*.

¹²² Mao Zedong, "On Protracted War," in *Essential Works of Chinese Communism*, ed. Winberg Chai (New York: Pica Press, 1970), 129; see also Guillermaz, *A History of the Chinese Communist Party*, 129-135, 155-156; This challenges arguments presented by historians, such as Mark Selden, who minimize the effect of the Second Sino-Japanese War on the success of peasant mobilization; see Mark Selden, *The Yen-an Way in Revolutionary China*.

¹²³ The foreign-educated Sun Zhongshan (Sun Yat Sen), with support from the military and urban elites, orchestrated the Xinhai Revolution of 1911 that resulted in the overthrow of the Qing dynasty. The early government of the Republic of China (under Yuan Shikai) virtually ignored the Chinese masses and eventually succumbed to protests, such as the May Fourth Movement, against concessions made to imperialist powers; see the first chapter of this work for more information on the early Republic of China; see also Bailey, *China in the Twentieth Century*, 43-60.

¹²⁴ Chalmers Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power*, 23-25.

army brought the politics of national identity to the countryside, enabling the communists to achieve mass mobilization.

Theories of Modern Nationalism

In his 1962 work, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power*, Chalmers Johnson argued that the Maoist version of Marxist ideology provided a national myth¹²⁵ for an anti-Japanese movement among the Chinese peasantry. Johnson asserted that the Chinese communist revolution was in fact a nationalist movement, uniting and mobilizing the masses against domestic and foreign oppression. Johnson's thesis is supported by the apparent shift in CCP propaganda, during the period of the Second Sino-Japanese War, from Marxist messages of class warfare to those calling for national salvation. According to Johnson, economic incentives did not provide sufficient motivation for revolution among the peasantry prior to the Japanese invasion. Since the invading Japanese army did not distinguish between villagers and guerilla fighters, the entire, rural Chinese population endured violent attacks.¹²⁶ The actions of the Japanese in the late 1930s aroused parochial villagers and sparked a peasant movement, later harnessed by the CCP. Johnson argued that communist ideology fostered the desire to create a powerful, united, and independent China.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Later scholars specializing in the phenomenon of modern nationalism have emphasized the necessity of a "national myth" or shared ideology. See: Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 1986).

¹²⁶ The military strategy of the CCP during the early years of the Second Sino-Japanese War was characterized by guerilla warfare. See Chapter 3 of this work. See also Mao Zedong, "Problems of War and Strategy," in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, ed. Bruno Shaw (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1970) 171.

¹²⁷ Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power*, 1-5; 30.

Since Johnson's early work on peasant nationalism, a number of other scholars have given significant attention to the development of mass nationalist movements in the twentieth century. In 1983 and 1991, Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson presented two works that remain key elements of the theoretical framework for the study of contemporary nationalism. In his work *Nations and Nationalism*, Gellner argued that as European states shifted from agrarian to industrial societies, increased mobility created a need for homogeneity that fostered the rise of modern nationalism. Expounding upon the ideas of Elie Kedourie,¹²⁸ Gellner attempted to apply western models of nationalism globally, arguing that the imperialist destruction of traditional cultures created a need for a new homogeneity in the developing world, similar to that experienced in Europe as a result of industrialization.¹²⁹ In his discussion of colonial Africa, Gellner suggested that the administrative policies of colonial powers fostered a union of the oppressed peoples of a given territory based on shared limitations rather than on a shared culture.¹³⁰

In contrast to Gellner, Benedict Anderson¹³¹ took a less Eurocentric approach, arguing that modern nationalism began in the late eighteenth century in the Americas and was later exported, via Europe, to Asia and Africa. According to Anderson, nationalism first emerged through a shared sphere of communication among creoles in the new world. In the eighteenth century, a print revolution in the Americas produced a significant number of provincial

¹²⁸ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983); Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism in Asia and Africa* (London: Routledge, 1971).

¹²⁹ The term "developing world" refers to non-industrialized regions primarily in Asia, Africa, and Latin America; Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 129.

¹³⁰ Kedourie has suggested similar nationalist reactions to imperialism in the developing world; See Kedourie, *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*; Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 81-84.

¹³¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991).

newspapers read primarily by creoles and avoided by European officials. Anderson argued that these spheres of communication shaped the current borders of nations throughout the Americas. Anderson's work also emphasized the significance of pilgrimage in the development of modern nationalism in Asia and Africa. Shared educational and administrative paths (often dictated by colonial rulers) among individuals from various towns or cities fostered the development of an "imagined community," centered on the destination of these pilgrimages.¹³²

While Johnson's revolutionary work illustrated the significance of Japanese imperialism in the development of the modern Chinese nation, scholars have yet to discuss in adequate detail the ways in which this process occurred. Decades after Johnson, Gellner and Anderson gave greater insight into the rise of modern nations, noting patterns of common limitations, shared spheres of communication, and pilgrimage in Europe, Latin America, Southeast Asia and Africa. Expounding upon the ideas of Johnson, and using the theoretical framework established by Gellner and Anderson, this chapter seeks to examine the specific ways in which the communist party achieved mass mobilization in China during the Second Sino-Japanese War. The Chinese Communist Party unified and mobilized the masses for revolution by fostering shared spheres of communication, creating administrative and educational pilgrimages centered on Yan'an, and educating the masses of their shared limitations.

Spheres of Communication

As in the case of American creoles in the eighteenth century, printed publications played a key role in the development of a shared sphere of communication among the Chinese masses

¹³² Anderson elaborated in detail about the role of pilgrimage in the formation of "imagined communities," citing examples in New Spain, French Indochina, and the Dutch East Indies; see Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 53-60; 116-123; 127-129.

and communist leaders in the 1930s-1940s. Mao Zedong emphasized the importance of print in CCP strategy at the Yan'an Forum of Literature and Art in May 1942, when he proclaimed,

In our struggle for the liberation of the Chinese people there are various fronts, among which there are the fronts of the pen and of the gun, the cultural and the military fronts. To defeat the enemy we must rely primarily on the army with guns. But this army alone is not enough; we must also have a cultural army, which is absolutely indispensable for uniting our own ranks and defeating the enemy...¹³³

Each division of the CCP army traveled with a small printing press and disseminated communist literature and propaganda to the masses throughout the mainland.¹³⁴ As communist territory and influence expanded in eastern China, messages from Yan'an were delivered to the masses via communist newspapers, such as the Liberation Daily (Jiefang Ribao).¹³⁵

The Liberation Daily, the official newspaper of the communist party, began publication in Yan'an in 1941. Collaborationist regimes in urban areas such as Nanjing, Beijing, and Shanghai banned the newspaper due to its explicit anti-Japanese messages, limiting the Liberation Daily's audience to farmers and local gentry in rural areas.¹³⁶ Jiang Jieshi's strict blockade of traffic between communist territory and western areas under Guomindang control further limited the readership of the Liberation Daily to central and eastern China.¹³⁷ Thus, the

¹³³ Mao Zedong, "Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art May 1942," in Selected Works of Mao Zedong, 246.

¹³⁴ Robert Payne, Chinese Diaries 60.

¹³⁵ Prior to the Liberation Daily, local governments under communist influence produced a number of earlier newspapers. See Robert Payne, Chinese Diaries, 360.

¹³⁶ The Japanese established governments operated by collaborating Chinese officials in urban areas in eastern China in the 1930s, including the scorned Guomindang leader Wang Jingwei's collaborationist government in Shanghai. See Chapter 1 of this work; See also Bailey, China in the Twentieth Century, 130-131.

¹³⁷ Harrison Forman, Report From Red China (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1945) 100.

Liberation Daily became the primary source of news and information for the demographic constituting the majority of the Chinese population: rural peasants in the east. The newspaper became a direct avenue of communication between Yan'an and the Chinese masses, fostering a grassroots movement against foreign imperialism and capitalist oppression.

While written articles in the Liberation Daily provided an effective means of communication with the relatively educated local gentry,¹³⁸ the CCP encountered significant challenges when using the written word to address the millions of illiterate peasants found in communist controlled areas.¹³⁹ In response, the CCP adopted an official policy of eliminating illiteracy. In a 1936 letter to future defense minister Lin Biao, Mao stressed the importance of literacy campaigns among the peasantry, specifically noting the importance of the peasantry's ability to read newspapers.¹⁴⁰ As part of Mao's eleven-point plan for national salvation, two thirds of the curriculum used in primary and secondary schools focused on literacy, with each peasant charged with learning at least one thousand characters. In addition to combating illiteracy, peasants in villages throughout China participated in CCP organized newspaper reading groups, making the delivery of communist messages a shared activity, further contributing to the unity of the masses.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ In addition to poor, rural farmers, Mao's social revolution also called for the mobilization of local gentry or "petty bourgeoisie." These local elites were found to be less dangerous than the "national bourgeoisie" which included officials in the Guomintang government. See Mao Zedong, "Win the Masses in Their Millions for the Anti-Japanese National United Front," in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, 85.

¹³⁹ Mao Zedong, "The United Front in Cultural Work," in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, 277-278.

¹⁴⁰ Mao Zedong to Lin Biao, 1936, in *Mao Papers: Anthology and Bibliography*, ed. Jerome Chen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970) 4.

¹⁴¹ Forman, *Report from Red China*, 98.

To appeal to its largely illiterate audience, the CCP distributed publications that often included vivid colors and graphics,¹⁴² as well as significant numbers of cartoons. These images, often accompanied by a short phrase of a few written characters, comically displayed the party's attitude toward current events and political figures. These graphics also served to shape the uninformed public's opinion on various aspects of China's domestic and international conflicts. Most notably, the cartoons published in the Liberation Daily contributed to the shared contempt of the masses for Japan, Germany, and the Guomindang. In 1943, the CCP began an aggressive anti-Guomindang campaign in the Liberation Daily, including a number of cartoons connecting Jiang Jieshi with Nazi Germany and Japan. In many of these cartoons, Jiang is portrayed as an ignorant puppet of foreign imperialists, falsely claiming to support peace while secretly fueling conflict.¹⁴³

The CCP also took a more creative approach to communicating with the illiterate masses. To effectively communicate with their peasant audience, the CCP organized troupes of actors and commissioned them with conveying newspaper content in a theatrical manner. Presented in the dramatic *yang ge* style of poem and song, "living newspapers" delivered news and propaganda to the peasantry throughout communist China.¹⁴⁴ These performances included

¹⁴² While microfilm copies of the Jiefang Ribao appear in black and white, the original printing was apparently colorful enough to be noted by foreign observers. See Chang-tai Hung, *War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China 1937-1945* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994) 234.

¹⁴³ Jiefang Ribao (Liberation Daily), August 25, 1943, 4; See also C. E. Gauss to the Secretary of State, Chongqing, March 17, 1944, in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1944, China IX* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1954), 381-382.

¹⁴⁴ *Yang ge* is a traditional style of Chinese drama, especially popular throughout rural villages in Shaanxi, Shanxi, and Hebei provinces. Yang ge dramas are characterized as being easy to understand, as they are often performed in local dialects with repetition of information crucial to the plot. See William Theodore de Bary and Richard Lufrano, eds., *Sources of Chinese*

pieces referring to Germany, France and America, connecting the previously isolated peasantry with distant lands and forcing local villagers to renegotiate their perceived identity in a larger, global context.¹⁴⁵ Using emotionally evocative language and imagery to depict Japanese brutality in neighboring provinces, living newspapers were also used to instill hatred of the Japanese among peasants, militia, and soldiers. Multiple sources note a repeated village drama depicting the horror of Japanese invasion.¹⁴⁶ In addition to local actors, traveling drama troupes from Yan'an performed the same pieces in multiple villages, allowing for uniform messages that contributed to a sense of community among the Chinese peasantry.¹⁴⁷

Pilgrimage

In addition to fostering unity among the peasants through shared channels of communication, the CCP also established paths of educational and administrative pilgrimage for peasants from various villages, centered on the wartime communist capital, Yan'an. Isolated from urban collaborationist governments and blockaded by the Guomindang in the west, many peasants regarded Yan'an as the seat of central government during the war. Cut off from traditional universities in Beijing or Kunming, Yan'an also became the only large center of learning in communist areas during the Second Sino-Japanese War.¹⁴⁸

Tradition, vol. II (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001) 104; See also Robert Payne, Chinese Diaries, 342-345.

¹⁴⁵ Forman, Report from Red China, 93-96.

¹⁴⁶ Edgar Snow, Red Star Over China (New York: Randomhouse, Inc., 1944) 100-105; See also Chang-tai Hung, War and Popular Culture, 223.

¹⁴⁷ Mao Zedong to the Yenan Peking Opera Theatre, September 1, 1944, in Mao Papers, 77.

¹⁴⁸ Robert Payne, Chinese Diaries, 358-359.

The CCP's aggressive campaign to educate the rural masses established a system of higher learning, made available to villagers throughout rural China. In a speech given in October 1938, Mao asserted, "all party members should study . . . and help to educate members with less schooling."¹⁴⁹ In a later speech given October 30, 1944, Mao reaffirmed the CCP's commitment to education, proclaiming that a "dull-witted army cannot defeat the enemy." During the period of the Second Sino-Japanese War, peasants in areas under CCP influence benefited from the establishment of primary and secondary schools, irregular village schools for adults, and literacy classes.¹⁵⁰ According to foreign observers, each village in communist China included one day and one night school, facilitating the education of both youth and adults. As early as 1939, communist areas had more than 860 primary and secondary schools, 208 night schools for adults, and more than 700 character study literacy groups. CCP education measures also established mobile, circuit schools for peasants living in the most rural areas, and offered academic lessons in the fields to prevent any interference with subsistence farming.¹⁵¹

American journalist Harrison Forman noted the impact of education reforms for the peasantry in his account of a local election in a village located two hours' walk from Yan'an. According to Forman, a candidate for local office "added that he thought his fellow villagers ought to put special emphasis on education. This was a new world they were living in—a world that reached beyond their little village limits, and they and their children should prepare

¹⁴⁹ Mao Zedong, "The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War," in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, 164-165.

¹⁵⁰ Mao Zedong, "The United Front in Cultural Work," in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, 277-278.

¹⁵¹ Edgar Snow, *The Battle for Asia* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1941) 273.

themselves for greater responsibilities.”¹⁵² The statements reportedly made by this peasant in Shaanxi province illustrate the significance of education in the renegotiating of identity for rural peasants in 1940s China. Faced with the reality of international conflict and educated by the CCP, peasants eventually came to view themselves as members of a larger community of Chinese nationals, rather than isolated villagers.

Collective pilgrimages to the Anti-Japanese Resistance Military and Political University (Kangda) in Yan’an further facilitated the imagining of a shared community among the Chinese masses. Sitting atop the communist educational system, the university was attended by peasant and “petty bourgeoisie” youth from throughout communist China. At the university in Yan’an, rural villagers were taught Marxist theory, establishing an ideological foundation for the forthcoming revolution. Kangda graduated approximately 10,000 students per year in the 1940s. All students able to make the treacherous pilgrimage to Yan’an were given free tuition, asked only to provide their own uniforms and bedding.¹⁵³

Student pilgrimages to Yan’an were notoriously dangerous and difficult. Jiang Jieshi’s blockade of CCP controlled areas prevented many students from reaching the communist capital. Many students who encountered Guomindang soldiers were forced to return home or taken to General Hu Zongnan’s reform school, the nationalist army’s counterpart to Kangda. Referred to as a concentration camp by CCP leadership, General Hu’s reform school pressured students to renounce communism and work for the Guomindang army.¹⁵⁴

Despite significant challenges, thousands of youth from central and eastern China traveled to Yan’an for communist education. According to foreign observers, countless others

¹⁵² Forman, Report from Red China, 99.

¹⁵³ Snow, The Battle for Asia, 274-278.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 260-261.

considered such pilgrimages, asking how they might enter schools in Yan'an. The famous Chinese writer Lu Xun proclaimed, "The road to Yan'an is for China's youth the road to life."¹⁵⁵ Repeated mention of educational pilgrimages to Yan'an in popular discourse and contemporary literature suggests the significance of Yan'an as a symbol of the newly imagined community of the Chinese masses. Shared connections to Yan'an, through experienced pilgrimage, or tales of pilgrimage from friends, family and literature, made the wartime communist capital the center of emerging Chinese mass nationalism.

During the era of the Second Sino-Japanese War, the CCP also sought to establish Yan'an as the seat of central government for portions of the population under communist influence. As the communists consolidated power behind Japanese lines, officials from Yan'an organized local governments in villages throughout central and eastern China. The organizational structure of these governments reserved certain positions for peasants, workers, and minority groups.¹⁵⁶ Mirroring the structure of local governing bodies, committees in the central party leadership also reserved positions for workers and poor peasants.¹⁵⁷ The CCP's appointment of peasants to administrative positions at various levels of party leadership parallels Anderson's description of administrative pilgrimage in French Indochina.¹⁵⁸ According to Anderson, limitations placed on administrative pilgrimage in the French colony resulted in the breakup of Indochina into three separate nations: Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. In contrast to the French in

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 259.

¹⁵⁶ Mao Zedong, "The Role of the Communist Party in the National War," in *The Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, 161; see also Forman, *Report from Red China*, 56; 98-100.

¹⁵⁷ Mao Zedong, "The Struggle in the Ching Kang Mountains," in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, 32-33.

¹⁵⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 127-133.

Indochina, the CCP incorporated individuals of various classes from different provinces into party leadership, thereby facilitating the emergence of a single, united, nationalist movement.

Shared Oppression

In addition to creating spheres of communication and shared pilgrimages, the Japanese invasion facilitated the rural population's awareness of its shared oppression. As Mao Zedong stated in an interview with British journalist James Bertram, ". . . the Japanese imperialists have irrevocably brought the Chinese people face to face with the danger of national subjugation."¹⁵⁹ As the Japanese army forced its way inland, soldiers raped and killed hundreds of thousands of rural Chinese. As Johnson noted in his discussion of rural "mopping up campaigns," such demonstrations of brutality compelled the peasantry to take action, proving to be the ultimate motivating factor in the mobilization of the rural masses.¹⁶⁰ Beyond Johnson's initial understanding of the significance of Japanese brutality, it is essential to note that the victimization of the rural population was a shared experience, having not only the power to spark retaliatory violence, but to unify isolated villagers through their common suffering.

Tales of Japanese brutality were circulated throughout communist China in a variety of ways. Accounts of suffering in neighboring provinces were featured in communist publications, such as the *Liberation Daily*, and also became an integral part of CCP military training. Communist soldiers were taught the history of Japanese aggression (beginning with the First Sino-Japanese War of 1895) and taken to pillaged villages to witness firsthand the destruction brought about by the Japanese. At these villages, soldiers and militia encountered survivors who

¹⁵⁹ Mao Zedong, "Interview with the British Journalist James Bertram," in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, 118.

¹⁶⁰ Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power*, 4-5.

relayed stories of Japanese atrocities. While in communist China, journalist Harrison Forman accompanied communist soldiers to a raided village in Shaanxi. According to local villagers,

. . . a raiding party of Japs carried off truckloads of women whom they violated unspeakably. Many were killed for resisting; others, horribly mutilated. Some became permanently deranged. Of those who straggled back to the village many committed suicide.¹⁶¹

The mobilizing power of Japanese brutality is evidenced by the fact that the CCP was able to build a large army comprised solely of volunteers, in contrast to the smaller Guomindang army built through conscription.¹⁶²

In similar fashion, the CCP emphasized the shared limitations of the masses under Jiang Jieshi's government in order to mobilize resistance against the Guomindang in the years leading up to the civil war (1946-1949). As the nationalist government in Chongqing grew increasingly weak politically and economically, Guomindang authorities fought for survival by silencing opposition and imposing heavy taxes on those living under their control. The U.S. Ambassador to China, C.E. Gauss, reported that Sanyuan, a village just north of Xi'an in Shaanxi, rejected the authority of the nationalist government due to the imposition of heavy grain taxes on poor farmers. Gauss also added, "a continuation of the present practices of the officials is likely to result in the peasants' welcoming the communists, who went to great efforts to conciliate the populace."¹⁶³ In August 1938, the Guomindang demonstrated its intolerance for dissent as three mass organizations sponsored by the CCP were outlawed. One of the few organs of government

¹⁶¹ Forman, Report from Red China, 45.

¹⁶² Johnson, Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power, 18.

¹⁶³C.E. Gauss to the Secretary of State, Chongqing, March 27, 1944, in Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1944, China IX (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1954) 384.

permitting political participation under the Guomintang, the National Assembly, did not convene during the war with Japan.¹⁶⁴

Presenting a stark alternative to the increasingly authoritarian attitudes of the Guomintang, the CCP emphasized peasant participation in government. The CCP organized elections for local offices in various villages with supervisory committees consisting of farmers, workers, and teachers. Other leadership organizations, such as the Border Regions' People's Political Council, included members from various backgrounds, including peasants, intellectuals, and soldiers.¹⁶⁵ The communist leader, Lin Biao, praised such reforms, claiming that elected officials held all administrative seats in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia border region.¹⁶⁶

The CCP also emphasized shared limitations by appealing to traditionally oppressed groups such as youth, women, and minorities. In addition to Kangda, Yan'an was also home to a women's university. Most of the four hundred students came from peasant backgrounds in Japanese occupied territories.¹⁶⁷ An article written by Lin Biao in 1940 illustrated the CCP's focus on women and youth. In areas where communist troops were stationed, young people distributed literature for the soldiers and women worked as nurses. According to Lin, some women even volunteered to fight and were given military training. In addition to appeals to youth and women, the CCP pandered to ethnic minorities. A number of positions in local governments were reserved for minority groups, such as Mongols or Hui Muslims in the north.

¹⁶⁴ C.E. Gauss, "A Review of Kuomintang-Communist Relations 1921-1944," in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1944, China IX* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1954) 51-52.

¹⁶⁵ Forman, *Report from Red China*, 98-100.

¹⁶⁶ Lin Biao, "The Imperialist War in Europe: World Events as Seen from Moscow 1940," in *Lin Biao: The Life and Writings of China's New Ruler*, ed., Martin Ebon (New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1970) 161.

¹⁶⁷ Snow, *Battle for Asia*, 274-275.

The CCP's emphasis on the universal oppression of the Chinese masses, presented as similar to the Guomindang oppression of the CCP, proved a powerful method of uniting the population and fueling "peasant nationalism."¹⁶⁸

Conclusion

It is impossible to prove precisely when the shift from local identity to national identity occurred in the minds of Chinese peasantry. No written accounts exist from the peasants themselves since the masses were largely illiterate at the onset of the Second Sino-Japanese War.

In the words of Eric Hobsbawm,

We know too little about what went on, or for that matter still goes on, in the minds of most relatively inarticulate men and women, to speak with confidence about their thoughts and feelings toward nationalities and nation-states which claim their loyalties.¹⁶⁹

Similar to trends observed elsewhere in the twentieth century, available sources suggest that spheres of communication, educational and administrative pilgrimages, and shared experiences of oppression assisted the CCP in its ultimate goal of mass mobilization in China.

During the Second Sino-Japanese War, the CCP, as directed by Mao Zedong, initiated a social revolution that contributed to the development of authentic, mass nationalism on the Chinese mainland. While the Japanese invasion weakened the Guomindang and provided strategic military benefit to the CCP, perhaps the war with Japan was most significant in that it made the peasantry receptive to the CCP's message of revolution. Plagued by Japanese brutality and the failure of the nationalist government to appropriately respond, the peasantry was

¹⁶⁸ Lin Biao, "The Imperialist War in Europe," 157-166; Forman, Report from Red China, 56-60.

¹⁶⁹ Eric J. Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism since 1870: Programme, Myth, Reality (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 78.

compelled to acknowledge the necessity for revolution. Building upon the foundation laid by Japan, the CCP seized the opportunity for mass mobilization, fostering the rise of nationalist sentiment through communication, pilgrimage, and participation.

CONCLUSION:

THE BIRTH OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC

The impact of Japan's occupation of China became increasingly evident following the defeat of Japan by the allied powers in 1945. More than 1.5 million Chinese died as a direct result of the Japanese invasion. During its occupation of China, the Japanese army had served as a buffer between the communists and the nationalists. The Second Sino-Japanese War interrupted the power struggle between these domestic foes, allowing only for minor clashes between the two rivals, including the New Fourth Army's ambush in Southern Anhui and Jiang Jieshi's attempts to attack communist areas through the use of secret police. During Japan's occupation of China, the communists recovered from their near defeat of the mid-1930s while the Guomintang government decayed as a result of its political and economic isolation. When direct, armed conflict between the two political parties resumed in 1946, the Guomintang army lay in ruins while the stronger, popularly supported CCP stood poised for victory.¹⁷⁰

Though Japan announced its intent to surrender a mere four days after the U.S. bombing of Hiroshima (August 6, 1945), the Japanese army in China formally surrendered to the government of the Republic of China on September 9, 1945 in Nanjing. Although the formal agreement was presented to Guomintang general Ho Ying Ch'in and specified the surrender of Japanese troops to the Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi, the CCP's established dominance behind

¹⁷⁰ Bailey, *China in the Twentieth Century*, 144-150.

Japanese lines enabled the communists to negotiate local surrenders and disarm a number of Japanese units throughout the provinces.¹⁷¹

The Japanese invasion had allowed the communists to establish bases in central and eastern China while isolating the Guomintang in the west. Due to its proximity to areas recently controlled by Japan, the CCP was able to quickly acquire large amounts of arms and territory as Japanese forces surrendered and withdrew. Immediately following the Japanese surrender, the communists expanded northward into Manchuria, aided by the ideologically similar Soviets that had disarmed the Japanese in the region. The communist military leader Lin Biao began organizing soldiers of the failed Japanese puppet state of Manzhouguo under CCP leadership, significantly increasing communist military might in the north.¹⁷²

While the Guomintang also sent military leaders to the north and east, their efforts were unsuccessful. The distance between Guomintang-controlled areas and Japanese strongholds in the east delayed the nationalists' arrival to these areas after the Japanese surrender. By the time Guomintang military officials reached the region, communist influence and military presence were well established. In response to growing communist dominance over Manchuria, Jiang Jieshi sent significant numbers of nationalist troops to the north. This move proved futile as the Guomintang forces sent to Manchuria had been fighting against the Japanese to secure supply routes to nationalist China through Burma and Indochina to the far south. This distance further delayed the Guomintang's arrival in northeast China, illustrating yet another way in which the war with Japan gave a significant advantage to the Chinese communists.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ F. F. Liu, *A Military History of Modern China 1924-1949* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1972) 226-227.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 228.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 229-230.

The increasingly dictatorial tendencies of the Guomintang regime in the mid-1940s also negatively impacted its ability to gain legitimacy among citizens and soldiers in territories previously controlled by the Japanese. In January 1946, the Guomintang outlawed the CCP and attempted to re-establish military rule over the Chinese mainland. Peasants, grown accustomed to the more democratic policies instituted in communist-led local governments, rejected Jiang's dictatorship, further cementing the masses' support of the communists. The Guomintang treated the Chinese soldiers of fallen collaborationist governments exceptionally harsh, leading many to defect and support the CCP who emphasized unity and equality. As Jiang Jieshi struggled to regain control of the eastern coastal areas where his power had once been strongest, his political capital and limited military means proved unable to compete with the communist-led nationalist movement that had begun in the countryside during the war with Japan.¹⁷⁴

Despite the blatant frustration of American diplomats and President Truman with Jiang Jieshi's ineptitude in the mid-1940s, the United States government continued its financial and military support of the Guomintang throughout the Chinese Civil War. Recognizing the gravity of the Guomintang's plight by the spring of 1946, American diplomats in China pressured Jiang to negotiate a "third united front" with the CCP. The Chinese communists, however, had grown dramatically in the months since Japan's surrender and were no longer willing to compromise with the unpopular Guomintang. In July 1946, Mao Zedong announced the creation of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which included the former New Fourth and Eighth Route Armies, as well as large numbers of soldiers from Manzhouguo and fallen Japanese collaborationist regimes. With the amalgamation of its militia, armies, and newly acquired troops

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 228-230.

into one organized military machine, the CCP had become an insurmountable threat to the Guomindang government.¹⁷⁵

From 1947 to 1949, the communists continued to establish their dominance of China, expanding from their bases in the north and east. Through channels established during the Sino-Japanese War (including newspapers, schools, literacy groups, and other mass organizations) the CCP maintained communication with the masses, clearly articulating its agenda and cementing the unity of the Chinese population through the shared experience of its struggle against Guomindang militarism.¹⁷⁶ The Guomindang's ties to the United States proved to be to its detriment, as communist leaders highlighted the relationship as proof that Jiang Jieshi was allied with foreign imperialists seeking, once again, to subjugate the Chinese people.¹⁷⁷ While the CCP prevented inflation in areas under its control by issuing food and small luxuries directly to soldiers in lieu of payment, the communists cut off food supply routes to Guomindang areas, exacerbating the economic plight of the nationalist party. By January of 1949, the CCP controlled all of China north of the Chang Jiang.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ F.F. Liu, 240-243.

¹⁷⁶ Benedict Anderson has noted similar phenomena among American creoles in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly in the colonies of New Spain. As creole pioneers called for independence from metropolises, newspapers circulated among natives and creoles fostered a sense of nationalism through the perceived shared experience of struggle against colonial rule. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 53-60.

¹⁷⁷ Early cold war tensions between the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. further demonized the United States and the Guomindang, as communist leaders compared the anti-communist alliance to the anti-communist agreement between Nazi Germany and Japan in the 1930s. See Mao Zedong, "Whither the Nanjing Government?" April 4, 1949 in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, 398; see also Mao Zedong, "Talks with American Correspondent Anna Louise Strong," August 1949 in *The Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China*, Winberg Chai ed. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1972) 60-64.

¹⁷⁸ F. F. Liu, 243-245; 264.

Forced to acknowledge the military might and popularity of the CCP, the Guomindang began negotiations toward a peace agreement in the spring of 1949 while secretly sending arms, troops, and the majority of its treasury to the island of Taiwan. After reaching an agreement with the communists that faulted the Guomindang for the Civil War and accepted the establishment of a coalition government, Jiang Jieshi ultimately rejected the Agreement on Internal Peace on April 15, 1949, to the outrage of the Chinese communists. On April 21, 1949, Mao Zedong and Zhu De issued a resolution ordering the PLA to,

Advance bravely and annihilate resolutely, thoroughly, wholly and completely all the Guomindang reactionaries within China's borders who dare to resist. Liberate the people of the whole country. Safeguard the independence and integrity of China's territory and sovereignty.¹⁷⁹

At midnight on April 20, PLA soldiers crossed the Chang Jiang, moving south into the last stronghold of the Guomindang. In four days, the CCP took Nanjing, the Guomindang capital. As Guomindang forces throughout the south defected to the CCP, the communists gained control of the southeastern provinces of Guangxi and Guangdong. By late summer, all those loyal to Jiang Jieshi had fled the mainland for Taiwan.¹⁸⁰ In October 1949, Mao Zedong proclaimed the foundation of the People's Republic from the new communist capital in Beijing.¹⁸¹

While various factors contributed to the CCP's ultimate victory in its twenty-eight year struggle against the Guomindang, the Second Sino-Japanese War proved to be the most significant factor leading to the establishment of a communist state on the Chinese mainland. Despite the intervention of other foreign powers, such as the U.S. or the U.S.S.R., Japan's imperialist expansion had a far greater impact on the political landscape of modern China.

¹⁷⁹ Mao Zedong and Zhu De, "Order to the Army for the Countrywide Advance," April 21, 1949, in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, 399-407.

¹⁸⁰ F. F. Liu, 266-270.

¹⁸¹ Bailey, *China in the Twentieth Century*, 155.

Though a number of scholars have emphasized the missteps of the Guomindang and the successful policies of the CCP, these factors would not have had significant impact without the Japanese invasion that weakened the Guomindang and allowed for the expansion of the CCP. Furthermore, the Japanese invasion was significant in that it brought about a shift in the identity of the Chinese people. The shared experience of Japanese brutality, and the necessity of resistance, fostered the development of a community among the rural masses throughout various provinces. As the peasantry came to identify themselves as part of a larger movement that extended beyond their local village or province, the CCP served to educate and mobilize the masses, facilitating the construction of a unique, “Chinese” identity. By Japan’s defeat, the CCP emerged as the clear leader of the newly imagined Chinese nation. After more than a century of conflict, revolution, and foreign domination, it was the Chinese Communist Party that ultimately established a unified and sovereign state in China.

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